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'Approaching the real': an historical and autobiographical account of foreign language teaching in a middle school

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'APPROACHING THE REAL':

an historical and autobiographical account of foreign

language teaching in a middle school.

by

John Michael Daniels

Thesis submitted for the Ph.D. Degree in the School of Education, Durham
University, England, March 2009.

Dedicated to my six grandchildren: Amélie, Henry, Morgan, Ella, Conrad and Scarlett with the hope that they will also enjoy an engagement with otherness.

ABSTRACT: 'Approaching the Real' – an historical and autobiographical account of foreign language teaching in a middle school.

This historical narrative provides the account of a professional life as a foreign language teacher and the personal development which is part of this process. Central to this thesis is the introduction of a series of language learning initiatives to address the challenges of teaching foreign languages in a middle school. The title of the research 'approaching the real' is based on the consideration that the target language and culture is absent from the classroom and that our efforts in teaching a language are focused on the need to represent an absent reality. As a 'translated' and adapted form of the target language there is a need therefore to 'approach the real' and drama, (through role-play and improvisation work) is seen as a mechanism for reducing the distance from the target language and culture.

This thesis is also, however, about providing opportunities for pupils to 'experience the real' through participation in a French exchange. Here the pupil is transported into a different environment and routine and there are problems associated with 'culture shock' and the need to adjust to differences. Pupils are given a different perspective on what previously, they are likely to have taken for granted.

Through a comparison of classroom foreign language learning with the exchange, it proves possible to develop a model for foreign language learning based on these experiences. The unpredictable, disorganised nature of real communication, where the cultural context of the situation is central, contrasts with the disciplined pattern of the classroom with the emphasis on language structure. While promoting the case for extending pupils' language opportunities, a case is also made for the use of new technologies to enable contact with someone from another culture.

DECLARATION

"The thesis is the work of the author alone, and has not been submitted for a degree at any university."

Signed: *R. Oamie*

Date: 31. 3. 09

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'Approaching the Real'

STAGE ONE   PURPOSE AND POSITION

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

1. INTRODUCTION

The central element of this thesis is the description of a professional-life teaching foreign languages over a thirty-five year period, from 1971 until 2007. There is also, however, in this autobiographical account, the narrative of personal development, which precedes and continues during this time. The account will be linked to the wider context of language teaching in Britain.

The absence of autobiographical accounts of foreign language teaching with younger pupils over this period provides an original element to the research. This is not however, a routine account of middle school foreign language learning but centres on a concern to extend the opportunities for foreign language learning for pupils aged 9-13 years. As such, the research describes the introduction of a series of language learning initiatives. These can be seen as a response to a personal concern that the classroom in which language learning takes place, is an artificial environment, providing only limited opportunity for practical, active language work. The title for the thesis 'approaching the real' reflects this focus on learning initiatives designed to 'approach the real' target language and culture, as represented by France and the French.

The purpose, objectives and nature of the research are set out in this chapter. It will introduce the actors in this narrative: the author and pupils who have roles to play in the different learning environments created or experienced, but also, the middle school which provides the opportunity for these different initiatives to take place.

The chapter establishes a direction for the narrative of the research, providing a structure to this autobiographical account of foreign language teaching and

learning. It will be important, in this opening chapter, to touch on some of the key elements of the research, putting down markers and flagging up issues, which will be covered in more detail in the chapters, which immediately follow. Those chapters concerned with the mechanics of the thesis, which establish a suitable methodology to address the objectives of the research, as set out in this chapter, and an historical overview of the literature on foreign language and culture learning to provide a context to the learning initiatives described. We will be able once we have established a suitable methodology for this research to extend the objectives for the research into research questions at the end of chapter two and these will then provide the focus for the direction of this analysis of foreign language and culture learning, questions we will seek to answer at the end of the narrative, in the concluding chapter of the research.

Table 1.1 Contents of Chapter One: Introduction

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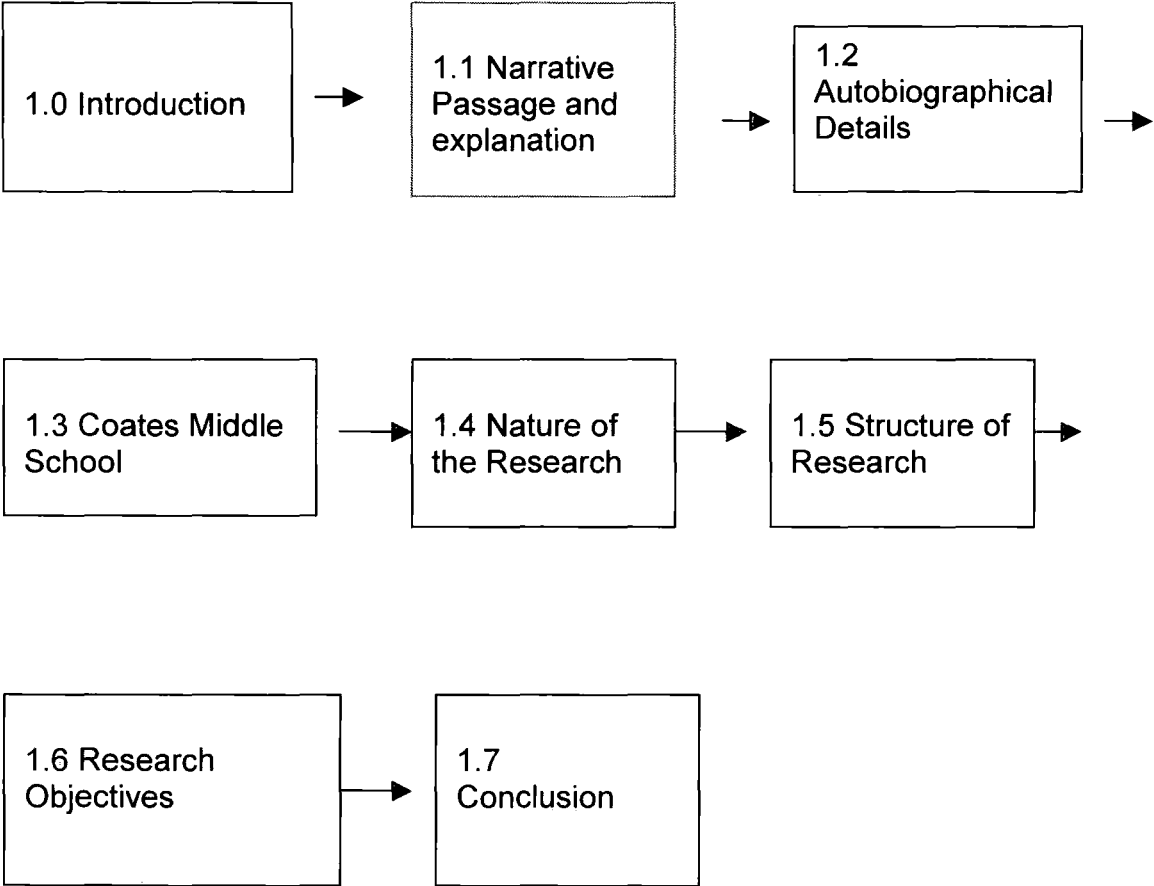
To introduce the research and to emphasise the nature of this account we begin with narrative. This is an account of the annual journey, which took place over a ten-year period at the beginning of each French exchange visit from Ponteland in Northumberland, where Coates Middle School is situated, to Saint Brieuc in Brittany.

1.1 NARRATIVE PASSAGE: The Exchange Journey to France

The large, luxury coach – you're not supposed to call them buses – pulls into the school-yard at eleven o'clock on a pitch black October night. It's a quite different experience for pupils to be at school at this time, the first of a whole series of differences they will encounter during the journey and the week's stay in an unknown French family, which follows. The coach is loaded and goodbyes said and we leave on the long journey down to Portsmouth for the morning ferry to Le Havre. Experience suggests it's better to leave at night, the distance and separation perhaps appearing less dramatic, when it's dark outside and the journey seems more of an adventure.

It takes six hours to cross from Portsmouth to Le Havre during the day, a long journey after a night travelling. If there are times when the crossing happens in fine, calm weather there are also, the occasions when the sea is rough. These are the times you remember. Children ask how long, when are we going to arrive? It isn't easy to have to say: only another five hours as the ship plunges and shakes and the waves strike. Once in France we travel a further four hours from Normandy to Brittany. For those looking up from the video playing, the environment outside the coach is now French: the countryside, advertisements, sign-posts and buildings have undergone a transformation.

The coach pulls into the school-yard at Collège Jean-Macé with difficulty, due to the great crowd gathered there. Our pupils look anxiously out of the window at this mass of unknown French people, who speak another language and do many things differently. There is a system to ensure that the children are placed

as quickly as possible with their partners and family. English pupils are gathered in a tight group by their luggage; we call out in turn, each name and their new French partner steps forward and with them, a mum or dad or whole family. And there is a first cultural element, the French don't just want to shake hands, there is also, a good deal of kissing, more than our pupils are accustomed to, certainly from those they don't know. And so with arms around shoulders and given help with heavy suitcases, each little group moves towards an unknown car which drives on the 'wrong' side of the road, towards an unknown house, (which may be some way off), where they are to spend a whole week.

1.1.1 Narrative Explanation, the significance of the journey to France

To begin this research with an account of the French exchange journey is to privilege the narrative element which is central to the research as a whole and also, to be able to make a number of points and identify a number of general themes which will be constant throughout this thesis.

The first point to make is that the pupils involved in the exchange are taking part in something very different from their normal experience and routines. Whatever experiences they have had of travelling abroad previously, will be nothing compared with this week in terms of the direct contact as individuals - without the support of their parents - with a different language and culture.

The French exchange experience represents one of the opportunities described in this thesis where there is direct contact with the target language and culture. It represents therefore in the terminology adopted for this research a 'real' experience of the foreign language and culture, the furthest element in a continuum representing the different language and culture experiences the school is able to offer. Other developments such as intensive language weeks, while providing the opportunity to speak French and experience a simulated form of the culture, do not provide the same genuine experience, however authentic we are able to make them. What these two elements do share however, is a journey away from the familiar to a different environment and at

the end of the period, a return to normal school and home routines. In the case of the exchanges the journey, as we show, is however, more dramatic.

The theme of journey is also important in terms of its abstract concepts. Each narrative is about a journey, the fixing of a series of events in a chronological frame (Rapport, Overing, 2000). This account is the narrative of a personal journey of development as a language student, student teacher, then, foreign language teacher and later headteacher.

1.2 AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

This autobiographical research represents autoethnography, a concept we will discuss in the next chapter. One of the areas to consider is the position of the author in work of this kind. It is important to provide an account of my own background, as this directly impacts on the research and provides a context to the work, 'the recognition that readers are entitled to know where I am coming from,' (Jordanova, 2000:1).

1.2.1. Early Years

I was born in Leicester and educated in private boarding schools in the south of England; a distinct contrast with my working life as a teacher spent entirely in the state system. Initial success at school was somewhat limited and identified as a 'late developer' there was the unspoken hope that something more positive would happen at a later date. In the final year, there was a measure of academic success, although a foreign language was not among the subjects in which I achieved a certificate.

This lack of foreign language success is relevant. Unlike many foreign language teachers, I was not encouraged to teach French by my own success in the language classroom. The motivation for becoming a language teacher came from time spent living abroad. Attitudes to classroom learning and a belief in extending the foreign language experience beyond this environment are a

central element in this research, an element linked to my own experiences of foreign language learning.

Performance and role-play are themes that have a special significance for this research. My own school success as an actor[1], is a further important influence in this research. It is evident from some of the diary entries that I see myself as playing a particularly interesting role as for example, the foreign language student living abroad.

1.2.2 The autobiographical context to the research

A personal reason for wanting to write a thesis of this kind is to try and step back and make sense of a working life spent as a foreign language teacher. It is natural to want to review the period and to try and evaluate the different initiatives and measures introduced, and to see how these reflect language teaching and learning methods in use during the period under review.

1.3   COATES MIDDLE SCHOOL

For a description of the school and its environment, there is the brief outline provided by the most recent school inspection carried out by Ofsted[2].

> Richard Coates School[3] is situated in Ponteland in Northumberland and serves that village, the local rural areas and the west of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds. The full ability spectrum is represented in the intake but overall attainment on entry to the school is average. Pupils are of White British heritage with

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[1] Playing the role of Hamlet in my final year in school.

[2] The Office for Standards in Education, the national body responsible for the quality of teaching and learning and the education provided by schools in England and Wales[2].

[3] During the period covered by this thesis the title of the school changed from Coates Endowed Middle School to the current name of Richard Coates Middle School. We have chosen to call the school in this research as the simpler Coates Middle School, the name by which the school is generally known.

a very small number of Asian or Chinese backgrounds,' (Ofsted, 2007:1).

Unpacking some of the details provided by this brief analysis and extending them, we would want to emphasise the diversity of social backgrounds. This was highlighted by a display set up in April 2002 to represent the Coates Community and Culture.

The display in a prominent position in the entrance hall, promoted the message of diversity. Pupils in the distinctive maroon blazers were shown in the different locations where they lived. Some pupils were photographed standing in locations where no other houses were visible, only large stretches of open countryside; in other photographs, (for some of the Newcastle children), no countryside was visible, only rows of houses. Differences in environment matched, as would be expected, by differences in the socio-economic backgrounds of children.

1.3.1 Middle schools in Northumberland

Coates is a middle school, part of a three-tier system of education currently operating in Northumberland, which differs from the more usual two-tier system generally operating in England and Wales[4]. The Coates Middle School prospectus from 2003 explains the three tier system of first schools up to age 9, middle schools from age 9-13 years and high schools from 13-18 years. This prospectus promotes, as might be expected the middle school system and the advantages it has over a two tier approach.

> The middle school provides an alternative to the standard system in the UK where children transfer from primary schools to a large secondary school at the age of eleven. Pupils remain at Richard Coates for a further two years before moving on to high school at 13. We see this as a distinct advantage. It enables us to use our knowledge of pupils' individual needs to ensure that they are able to build on and extend

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[4] In the traditional English system, primary schools cater for pupils from the beginning of their education until age eleven and secondary schools until the end of their period of schooling.

their achievements from KS2[5] to the more challenging and rigorous work of KS3, while remaining within the familiar surroundings of the middle school, (Coates Middle School Prospectus, 2003:5).

The text responds to the needs of a school prospectus to advertise the school to prospective parents and promote the advantages of a particular school's education, where parents have the choice of deciding for themselves the school for their children.

A further distinctive area associated with middle schools is the 'enhanced curriculum' available to pupils in KS2, that sector of the school where in most parts of the country children would still be in primary schools. This 'enhanced curriculum' concerns the specialist areas and specialist teachers available to the larger middle schools, compared to primary schools. This is an important factor for this research where specialists include a French teacher.

The school prospectus provides some information on the curriculum available in a middle school:

> Most lessons will be taught in the pupil's classroom but specialist areas are available for such subjects as art, design technology, ICT, science and music (...) Many of the subjects which make up the curriculum in Year 5 will be familiar to pupils from their previous schools, but they will also benefit from some new subjects and the chance to work with a wider range of specialist teachers. Pupils will extend their knowledge in the key areas of literacy, numeracy and science and cover new material in such foundation subjects as environmental studies, French, music and design technology,' (Coates School Prospectus, 2003:4).

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[5] KS2, KS3 = Key Stage 2 (for pupils aged 8-10) and Key Stage 3 (for pupils aged 11-13) respectively of the National Curriculum

French is an integral part of the curriculum, from the moment pupils enter the school aged nine. We follow in chapter three, the introduction of primary French in England and the particular issues concerning middle school French in Northumberland.

1.4 NATURE OF THE RESEARCH, background, conceptualisation, theory

As an account of nearly four decades of foreign language teaching, this thesis is historical research, more specifically historical narrative, (Elton, 1967). It involves the process of representing in the here and now elements of the past that are no longer present ('La représentation présente d'une chose absente', Ricoeur, 2000:8). The thesis therefore, needs to reconstruct the past from the evidence available. The problems associated with this process come from the challenges to history from post-modernism, as we will discuss in the next chapter. The authority of the author is called into question and with it, the need to acknowledge in this thesis, as with all history writing, the choices the author makes as he selects those elements from the past which are to be included in the narrative account. As an autobiographical account this element is more immediately apparent but it also, points to the need to incorporate into the text information on the actual process of constructing the thesis. This area has been addressed through the inclusion of passages from my PhD diaries, which demonstrate the point at which key developments concerning the theorising and conceptualisation of the research occurred.

The historical nature of the research while providing the methodology for the reconstruction of my professional life as a foreign language teacher, also has important implications for the conceptualisation of the research. Background reading on historiography (Elton, 1967; Evans, 1997; Ricoeur, 2000; Jordanova, 2003), clarified this role of the historian in representing through the process of selection and the arranging of material, an absent past. This suggested the evident parallels of this process with classroom foreign language learning, where the actual language and culture is also absent and has to be represented. This is particularly apparent where the teacher, as in this research,

is involved in creating his own language and culture learning programmes, where there is a necessary choice involved as elements of language and culture are 'translated' and packaged into a format which make them accessible to pupils. The notion of 'translation' comes from anthropology and a similar post-modern questioning of the author's authority, as the anthropologist 'translates' his observations into a written form in order to make them accessible, (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Sturge, 2007). Seeing the foreign language and culture introduced into the classroom as a 'translated' version of the 'real' target language and culture is a different way to conceptualise the process of foreign language teaching and learning and one I have found particularly useful.

Historiography provided the methodology for treating the different primary sources available for the construction of the narrative – diaries, questionnaires, school documents and published articles – and also, confirmed a direction for the research. It is however, the literature on foreign language and culture learning which provides the theoretical framework on which the thesis is constructed. The need to provide the context to the foreign language learning, taking place at Coates Middle School, means that the review of the relevant literature in chapter three, covers a period qualified as a 'revolution' in language learning techniques, (Pennycook, 2004). The literature review, we will see, covers the key developments of audio-visual language learning, communicative competence and task-based learning with a look at the key theories behind these developments, as well as the practical implications of these different methods for classroom learning and their influence on the initiatives introduced.

These theories drawn from historiography and anthropology and the post-modern critique, when taken with the nature of the different initiatives introduced for pupils, helped clarify the focus for the research. This materialised as a concern to investigate the relationship of school-based foreign language learning with the 'real' target language and culture. A concept which led to classifying the different learning initiatives in terms of 'approaching the real', where there was a need to represent an absent language and culture, (often

through the use of drama), with 'experiencing the real' involving a journey and direct contact with the target language and culture.

'Approaching the real' is part of the process of making language and culture learning as effective as possible and necessarily involves a relationship with the language and culture, which is the focus for learning - in this case France and French. It is a theme we can identify in different foreign language learning methods, as we see below.

Once you begin however, to provide pupils with the opportunity to take part in experiences, which bring them into direct contact with the target culture (such as participation in foreign exchanges), you introduce a different element of reality. Children on an exchange are living with the culture and language by staying in a French home with a French family; the 'real' seen in terms of the actual cultural experience.

The use of these metaphors to frame a concept is evidently, a device to clarify the explanation of different procedures, 'the links between metaphor and the manner in which a given topic or area of enquiry is conceptualized,' (Holme, 2004:12). In our case it helps drive forward our understanding of the nature of the language and culture learning initiatives described in this research, helping us to differentiate between two kinds of learning experience and in the process, (through an exploration of the relevant theoretical implications for the 'real' in foreign language learning), to formulate a theory of 'approaching' and 'experiencing the real'.

The concept of the 'real' in foreign language learning comes, as we will see, from a number of sources, (Guberina, 1964; Littlewood, 1981; van Lier, 1995). For Guberina this involves his theoretical examination of the audio-visual system and the need to place the student in a 'natural situation as in real life', (Guberina, 1964: 16). Littlewood and van Lier are also, concerned with the nature of the language learning environment. For Littlewood this is about extending mastery of structures to the point where they can be used 'to communicate in real situations' (Littlewood, 1981: ix). Van Lier's concern is with

'meaningful learning', which he sees as hardly 'seeming possible within a traditional grammar approach,' (van Lier, 1995: 49). He contrasts 'using language in context,' from the sorts of things 'contained in grammar books and dictionaries,' (ibid). This importance attached to context is reflected in his view of the importance of learning through 'participation in meaningful events,' (ibid).

What becomes clear is that some alternative to a total reliance on classroom learning may be called for. As Capel-Davies exclaims: 'Will curriculum always equal classroom ?' (Capel-Davies, 1988:143). Only Hawkins really tackles this area, as he considers classroom foreign learning in terms of rehearsal for a performance which may never take place with his view that 'much that has passed for language teaching (...) has been mere rehearsal, not followed by performance', (Hawkins, 1987:x).

1.5   STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH, organisation and development

The research is set out as a series of stages – described by Jordanova (2003) as periodisation - grouping chapters around a central theme. As a narrative account the stages follow a chronological order and represent periods in the development of language and culture learning at Coates Middle School. We will consider each of these in turn.

This first stage, 'Purpose and Position', sets out the background to the research before tackling the methodology adopted to handle this historical narrative. The final chapter in this stage is a thorough investigation into the relevant literature on foreign language and culture learning, an examination which includes primary school developments in keeping with the nature of middle schools.

The 'Acculturation' stage of the research which follows, is an account of my time spent as a student in France, Switzerland and Italy before returning to England to train as a foreign language teacher. It is important to establish why this section has a place in this thesis. As the autobiographical account of a foreign language teacher, the narrative needs to include personal developments. While it would be possible to ignore the first years spent abroad and begin for

example, with the time spent training as a foreign language teacher in Northumberland, this would mean that the formative nature of this period of acculturation and adaptation to new cultures would be missing. This would not be important if these years did not have a significant impact on the language learning initiatives later introduced. It is clear, as I examine the diaries and other primary sources from this period, that the concern to make foreign language learning more 'real' and the determination to provide opportunities for pupils to experience at first hand the 'real' target language and culture, is linked to personal encounters with the 'foreign'. This is associated with one particular aspect of foreign language and culture learning, the appeal of the 'far horizons' of the 'real' target language and culture existing outside the classroom walls. This brings in the appeal of the exotic and foreign as in different and culturally rich. Tourist studies provide us (MacCannell, 1967; Strain, 2003) with a theoretical background for the appeal of the exotic and our need to seek out authentic environments, 'real' situations. The important point is made however, that the exotic and different is not only about distant geographic places but can equally represent cultural distance. The same problems of 'culture shock' and the need to acculturate to a new environment are apparent from the beginning of the period of training as a student foreign language teacher at Northumberland College of Education.

The next stage of the research entitled 'Approaching the Real' is concerned with the first period working as a foreign language teacher. The title of this section matches the title of the thesis and reflects the implicit problem of foreign language and culture teaching, we have already discussed: the need to represent the absent target language and culture in the classroom. The importance of drama as a mechanism for reducing the distance separating classroom learning from the 'real' language and culture is discussed and examples are given of the way lessons contain improvised drama and role-play work to simulate 'real' situations. This is the place in the thesis where there is a discussion of the need to 'translate' elements of language to make them accessible for pupils, (as considered above), linking this process to the language learning initiatives introduced. The most important element in this stage is the intensive language work which in its final format represents the

extended use of drama to create a situation of 'imagined reality', (Verriour, 1981) with pupils accepting the 'big lie' (Wagner, 1979) of being involved in a period of 'secret agent' training at an outdoor centre in the Lake District. This particular enterprise taking place outside the classroom, remains the ultimate example, (described in this thesis), of an 'approach to the real'[6]. What is apparent from earlier research into language acquisition during intensive work, is that words apparently only partially known from classroom learning become more fully acquired through the catalyst of the intensive experience, a process described as 'vocabulary dormancy', (Daniels, 2004).

The logical way to extend the intensive language work is to involve pupils in an actual encounter with the 'real'. This is the subject for the next stage of the thesis, 'Experiencing the Real'. The French exchange programme with Saint Brieuc provides the opportunity for pupils to stay with a French family for a week. The nature of this experience contrasts strongly with the 'approaches to the real', the focus for the previous stage. The journey involves the transportation (Schechner, 1988) from a familiar environment and routines to 'immersion' for a short period in a French family, an experience which has more impact than the intensive language experiences. Pupils in this new environment feel 'culture shock' and need to adjust to their new circumstances. There are interesting contrasts here with classroom foreign language learning, the lack of control and the unpredictable nature of the experience but also, that fact that the culture element now seems to take precedence over language. It is the context of a particular situation which, leads pupils to use whatever strategies are available to them for communication. The central question from the exchange is whether this 'experiential learning' (Kolb, 1984) activity leads to any more permanent understanding for those who participate. The argument here is that pupils have needed to adjust and develop a new schema (Bartlett, 1932) to cover this experience and that this may lead to an 'expanded perspective, (Whalley, 1997). A second consideration in this stage is the problem of how the intensive experience of a minority of pupils can be extended to all pupils in the middle school, with the description of the introduction of a range of different

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[6] In spite of pupils signing a contract to speak in French throughout the intensive period, this is however, not a 'real' but created language and culture experience.

learning initiatives and the focus for learning on the skills needed to cope with the exchange experience. A further element in this stage and the one with which it begins, is the personal experience of working as an exchange teacher in France.

The final stage in the thesis, is concerned with a comparison of the two key elements of 'approaching' and 'experiencing the real' and seeks to bring together the different theoretical elements which help provide a focus on these two areas. The ambition here is to establish from these theoretical foundations, a model to cover the 'approach' and 'experience of the real'. This final section of the thesis is also, the place where there is a discussion of a proposal for a 'language and culture centre' at Coates Middle School. This provides an alternative focus for foreign language and culture learning by emphasising a third way, the use of modern technological innovations to create a 'virtual reality' which would enable all pupils to have contact with someone from another culture. This ultimately unsuccessful proposal, leads in the concluding pages of the thesis to a discussion on the problems associated with the enclosed nature of foreign language learning in England, with its exclusive focus on classroom learning procedures. The argument is made here that there is the need for a post-modern approach to foreign language learning, which would critically examine how the target language and culture is represented in the classroom, how through the process of 'translating' the 'real' foreign language and culture, it is transformed into something different: a 'classroom foreign language', which conforms to the demands of the school environment. In this reading the 'real' can be seen, almost as an inconvenience, a distraction from the tradition of foreign language learning which has grown up over a number of years and which has become the accepted face of languages in the curriculum of English schools. Following Rorty[7] (1989), we would see the need for 'new vocabularies', new ways of considering foreign language learning, which would somehow privilege the role of 'performance' (Hawkins, 1987).

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[7] 'The method is to describe lots (...) of things in new ways,' (Rorty, 1989:9).

1.6   RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

We are now in a position to establish the objectives for the research. At this introductory stage these need to be set out in their most basic form, which we will then extend as a result of our investigation into the historical and foreign language aspect of this narrative. This will provide more precise indications of what we want to achieve in this thesis and to link these to the methods chosen to analyse the data available to us, as we reconstruct the period under review.

The research objectives match the three elements of the research we have identified. We want to provide the narrative of thirty-five years spent as a foreign language teacher and the period of self-development, recording the introduction of a range of different methods, which characterise this period.

At the same time we will want to record the particular French learning initiatives introduced at Coates Middle School to encourage foreign language and culture learning and place these within the context of language teaching over this period.

Finally, we will want to examine how the different learning opportunities provided for pupils at Coates Middle School can be seen to 'approach' or to 'experience the real' as represented by the target language and culture.

1.7   CONCLUSION

I marked the end of my professional life as a foreign language teacher by walking away from school at the end of the final day to my home, sixty miles away. One of the impressions from this walk serves as a metaphor for the narrative of this research. As you come closer to your destination after walking for a period of some days, you become aware at a certain point that the landscape around you, and because this is North Northumberland, the hills and approaching sea, become familiar, are recognisable as known features. Or perhaps, you initially fail to recognize some well-known landmark because it's seen from a different angle and perspective. Only as you enter the final stages of the journey does the landscape, like an optical process, blend together and come into the correct focus. And, as you take the final steps which will bring you home, you realise, for the first time, that the landscape now conforms to your experience of it, the hills are those you look on and the view of the sea, the one you see each day as you walk down the village street. It is familiar, the appreciated part of your life, you then know you have arrived.

This autobiographical research into teaching and learning began several years ago and since then, I have become familiar with a range of different areas of historiography, sociology, anthropology, applied linguistics, intercultural learning and postmodernism. It is only really now however, that there is an understanding of how the different initiatives which make up this thesis are relevant to the research as a whole. The different elements have slowly come into focus and therefore make sense and the purpose behind the research has, in the process, become clear.

Walking into Retirement,
20 July 2007, from
school to home.

home
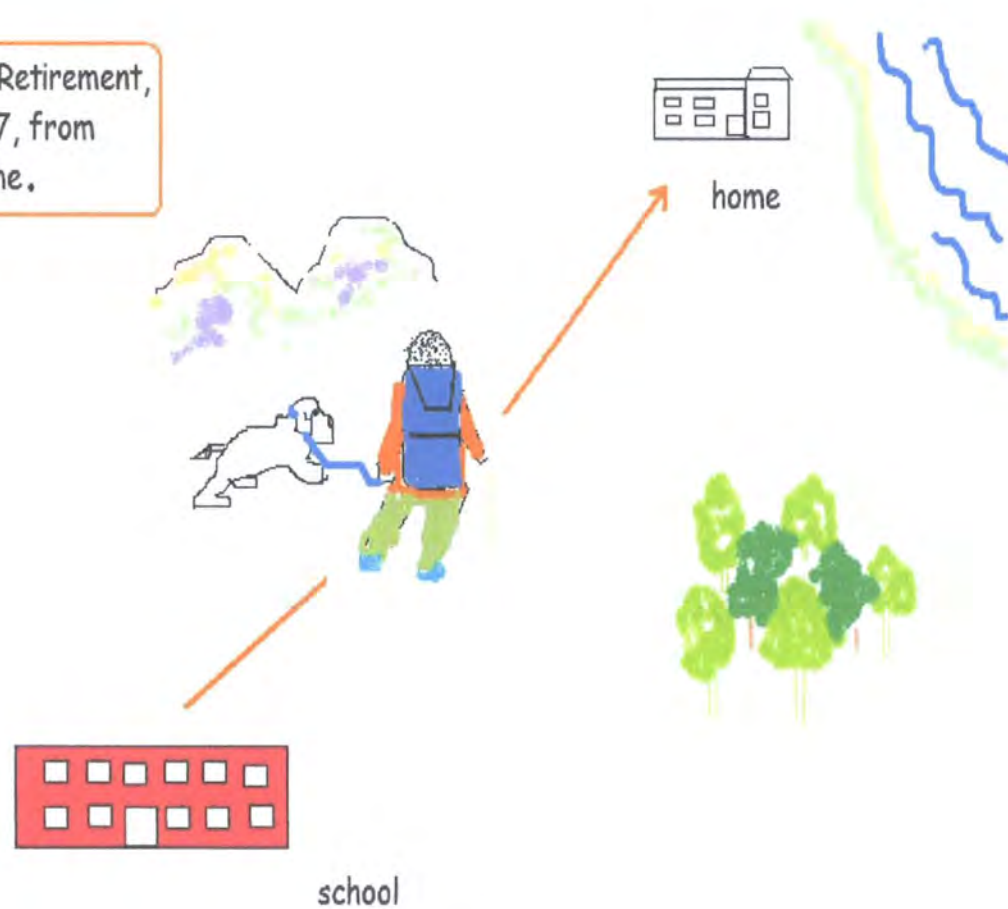
school

CHAPTER TWO   METHODOLOGY

2.0   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to look at how this narrative of foreign language and culture learning in a Northumberland Middle School can be told and to find suitable methods to address the objectives for the research as set out in the previous chapter. Part of this process involves an examination of the nature of the data on which the research is constructed and how it can best be handled to realise the research objectives. This chapter on the research methodology is first therefore, about making a number of decisions about the way this thesis is to be written. Decisions, which will ultimately affect our ability to satisfactorily record the narrative of the period under review and the outcome of the research as a whole. It is useful at the beginning of this chapter therefore, to clarify the objectives for the research, as we consider how they can be achieved through the methods we adopt in this account.

The first objective for the research is to provide a historical narrative, the narrative of thirty-five years working as a foreign language teacher in a Northumberland middle school, as well as the period of self-development which preceded and continued during this time. In order to provide this narrative we have a range of sources: diaries, school documents, pupil comments and published articles. These represent the data, we will need to use in order to construct the different periods of the narrative.

In our examination of the nature of the research, we were able to establish three strands: the historical element from the need to reconstruct activities which took place in the past; an autobiographical element due to the presence of the author in the events described and finally, the foreign language and culture learning element which is the focus for the research as a whole. As we write the narrative we need to take into account these three strands. We need in this chapter to look at the process of writing history, (historiography), in particular historical narrative and to consider autobiographical writing through an examination of autoethnography.

This chapter is concerned more with the procedures for constructing the research and therefore with the first two of our strands, history and autobiographical writing. We will leave to the next chapter a review of the relevant literature on foreign language and culture learning, in order to provide a context to the research. This will also enable us to situate the different learning methods according to how they represent the target language and culture and in this way 'approach the real'.

Table 2.1   Contents of Chapter Two: Methodology

2.0 Introduction	→	2.1 Data Analysis, Ethical Issues, Validity	→	2.2 Narrative Passage and explanation	→
2.3 The Research as History	→	2.4 Autobiographical Research, Autoethnography	→	2.5 Constructing the Narrative	→
2.7 Research Objectives and Research Questions	→	2.8 Conclusion			
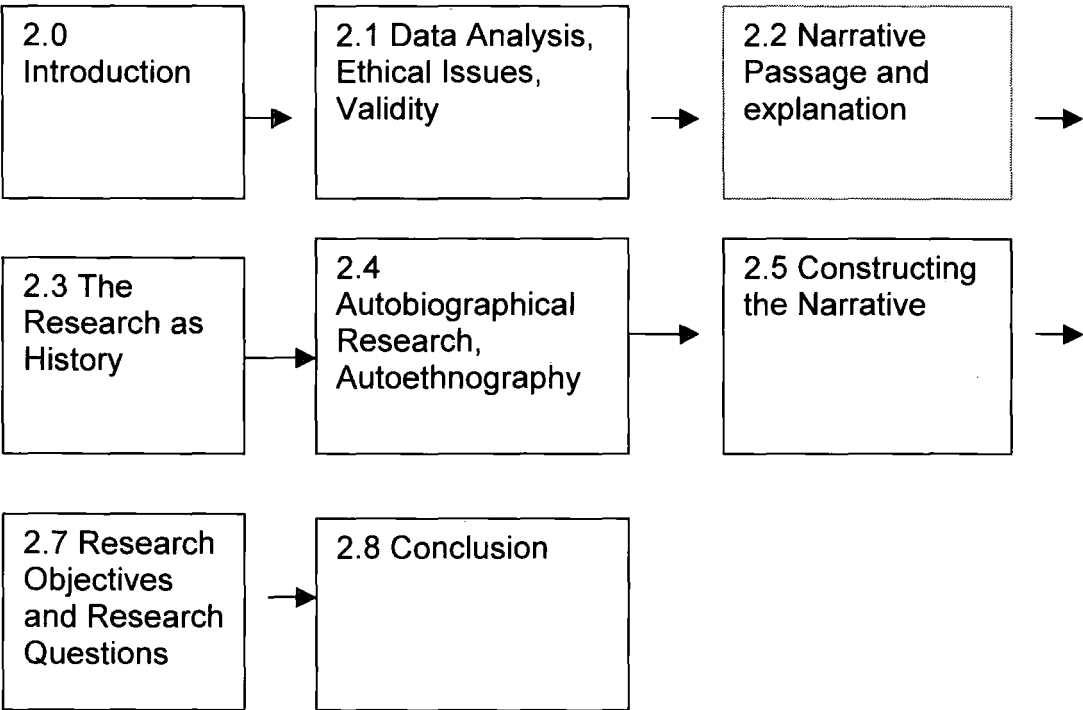
2.1 DATA ANALYSIS, VALIDITY, ETHICAL ISSUES

The three elements of how the data collected through the research process is analysed, how the research processes can be validated and the ethical considerations surrounding this process, need to be addressed here. More generally, we need to consider these aspects within the overall concern to provide as accurate a representation as possible of the narrative period and the learning initiatives described.

2.1.1 Data Analysis

The process of data collection will proceed through the narrative and each element of data will be subject to analysis. A discussion of the historical aspects of the research will help us with the analysis of documents and enable us to classify these according to whether they come into the category of primary or secondary sources and the values which can be attached to them. In general terms, close text analysis will prove the method most effective in the analysis of the sources available for scrutiny, although on occasion, where diaries are used as a primary source, grounded theory will be used.

Mention of the use of diaries as a source of evidence brings us to the autobiographical nature of the research and the problem this poses in terms of the validity of the material. We will look specifically at the area of autobiographical memory to help us addresses the problems of bias and also, will find in our investigation of autoethnography how problems associated with this area can be addressed.

2.1.2 Validity

The validity of the research as a whole is closely associated with the autobiographical nature of the thesis. This is a personal view of what took place and our investigation into the postmodern influences on history writing will show us the extent to which an author's personal perspective is evident, as the historian constructs and assembles his version of events. By emphasising this personal and autobiographic aspect, we can endeavour to apply the necessary checks and balances to ensure the validity of what is written.

2.1.3 Ethical Issues

While pupils' work in the form of diaries and questionnaires are used as data this material is usually only represented as extracts and only the pupil's first name is used, together with their age. The material used was collected as part of the assessment and data collection procedures, which formed part of the different initiatives. At the end of the exchange pupils would hand in their diaries and were aware they would be subject to scrutiny.

An important element in the validity of the research and our processing of the data available is associated with our ability to represent the research in a clear and comprehensive manner. This is about visualising the research and being able to communicate this representation to others. A visit to the 'Dynamic Earth Experience', in Edinburgh surprisingly provided an indication of how this matter could be handled.

2.2 NARRATIVE PASSAGE: The Dynamic Earth Experience, Edinburgh

'The *Mother Earth of all adventures: (.. .) you can journey to the centre of the earth, go time travelling back to the beginning of time, wander through a tropical rain forest (...) birds squawking, monkeys chattering, leopards roaring, crickets chirping, there's no mistaking it, you're in the tropical rainforest. Our Education Programme offers an immersion, multi-sensory experience that will stimulate pupils' imaginations and bring the curriculum to life. With a broad variety of Environmental Studies geography, and biology topics, everything your pupils see will open their minds and challenge their perceptions,' (Dynamic Earth @* www.dynamicearth.co.uk, accessed 20.10.08).*

I'm in Edinburgh with my French grandson Henry[8], twelve, and we've come especially to visit the 'Dynamic Earth' experience, 'one of the city's biggest tourist attractions.' A lift journey begins the experience with images of stars and

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[8] Having two French and two American grandchildren is perhaps a reflection on the cosmopolitan approach of a foreign language teacher which is passed on to children through holidays abroad and an encouragement to travel .

their formation, of galaxies and the whole business of the creation of the universe. Eventually, the 'time machine' comes to an unsteady halt and the doors open.

Now free to wander on at our own pace, we follow the story of the development of life on earth from the 'primeval soup' and first bacteria, onwards through the flowering plants, until finally we have mammals and primitive man.

As we come to the different natural environments making up today's world, selections have to be made. The funds available from the National Lottery are insufficient to enable us to experience all the different kinds of ecosystems. There is a room to cover the arctic, antarctic worlds (with a large lump of ice in the centre), and then a representation of the South East Asian rain forest with some splendid, model trees reaching right up to the considerable height of the chamber and some less effective models of the fauna, with a cartoon like orang-utang and an unhappy looking toucan in the branches.

Completing our journey through time we are brought to the challenges of the present and our own world. A final lift journey takes us back to where we started from, some one and a half hours previously. We are released back again into the by now, dark streets of Edinburgh, suitably enlightened by our experience.

2.2.1 Narrative Explanation

The Dynamic Earth Experience provides us with an example of how history, the history of our planet, can be represented from its formation as part of the cosmos up to the present time, a chronological account which, is clearly narrative history. It is particularly powerful and appealing as a representation, because it provides a lived experience, which uses the full range of multi-media and interactive methods in order to create its special atmosphere and tell its story. This is not a 'real' experience, we don't actually get to visit the rain forest but a simulation, a 'virtual reality'.

The relevance of this experience for our own research is that it is able to demonstrate more clearly for being multi-dimensional, the different elements that go into an historical account, than a purely literary text would be able to show. It makes us more susceptible to the processes of deconstruction, to enable us to understand how the whole has been put together in order to achieve the end result. There is also importantly, a link between the nature of the experience being created, this participation in a series of simulated environments - 'there's no mistaking it, you're in the tropical rain forest', (promotional writing from Dynamic Earth website, 2007), with some of the initiatives described in this research which seek to provide for pupils as real a situation as possible, to the genuine foreign language and cultural experience.

The point to make is that there would be a number of different ways to narrate the story of our planet and deciding how this should be done, involves an important element of choice and that this is true of all history writing (Evans, 2000). The second point is, that although there may be a line of history to follow when dealing with this vast topic we are, as with all history, unable to know for sure exactly what happened. We are not able to find out exactly what took place :

> not all the past is recoverable, and the study of history is necessarily confined to that part of it of which evidence either survives or can be reconstructed ' (Elton,1967:20).

From our own perspective, the business of recovering the past is difficult, not because it took place such a long time ago, but because there was little interest in retaining evidence in the form of relevant documents related to different aspects of language and culture development.

It is surprising in fact that so much data has survived and we need to reflect on why this should be so. Was there some ulterior motive, which led me to retain documents, which had no apparent further use? Jordanova addresses this point as she discusses history as the 'transformation of memories': 'Historians

rely on the memory of others when it comes to sources; they require others to have conserved and to want to remember the past for their professional existence' (Jordanova, 2000:124).

The final point we would want to make is that this experience of visiting the Dynamic Earth represents a performance, a performance in which the visitor is an active participant. The journey, 'time travelling' which involves being transported into a different environment, provides an experience, which is not routine and is likely to represent something substantially different to anything previously experienced. The organisers are keen to make visitors see themselves as playing the role of time-travellers to make the activity more exciting and to involve the participants more thoroughly. How successful they are at achieving this depends to a large extent not just on the material available to create this atmosphere of participation, but how well it can be sustained and this relies on the work of the various guides who accompany the visitors. What we have therefore is the use of drama, in the form of role-play to help reduce the distance separating us from the past and there are interesting parallels to the use of drama to carry out a similar function to bring us, not back to the past, but into closer contact with a foreign language and culture.

A key point to emphasise is the fact that at the end of the session, when the journey is completed, the visitor is returned back into the 'real' world and comes back out into the streets of Edinburgh. This is an element we will see emphasised in performance theory (Schechner, 1988), which we will consider below.

2.3 THE RESEARCH AS HISTORY

Our task in this research on a thirty-five year period of middle school foreign language and culture learning is to write history. As we do this, just as for Dynamic Earth, we have to try and reconstruct the past. Decide, from the evidence available to us, how best this can be done. While we have seen

(Elton, 1967) that it is impossible to return to the past, which has now disappeared, we can try to represent it, using the sources at our disposal to recreate, as best we can, what has taken place.

We have in this chapter first, to cover a number of areas specifically concerned with the theory and process of historiography and to establish the particular category of history in which this account comes. In the process, we need to identify the characteristics and criteria for writing history of this kind. We need finally, to establish an overview of the research and place the different learning initiatives chronologically, a process of visualisation, which will enable us to better appreciate the nature of the foreign language learning programmes we are dealing with. It is also, however, about linking these different initiatives with the specific foreign language learning periods in which they occur.

The importance of this final point is made by Jordanova: 'in order to manage the past it has to be classified and (...) one of the most important forms of classification is periodisation, the function of which is, 'to lend to past times a sense of meaning, order and coherence,' (2000:120).

2.3.1 Historiography

In trying to reconstruct the past, we have to be aware that we are being selective, choosing which parts of our own personal experience we wish to represent and how these different sections are to be arranged in order to narrate the story. Evans (1997) compares the work of an historian with that of a sculptor and sees the data available for processing as a 'rough-hewn block of stone', which has to be made into a statue. 'The statue was not waiting there to be discovered, we made it ourselves and it would be perfectly possible for us to have made a different statue from the one we finally created. On the other hand we are constrained not only by the size and shape of the original stone, but also by the kind of stone it is', (Evans, 1997:148).

We will return to this aspect of history in more detail later in this chapter, as we examine the role of the author in the construction of history and the postmodern influences on history writing. We need first to consider the sources available to us and before that identify the nature of the history writing in which we are engaged.

2.3.2 Historical Narrative

This narrative of foreign language learning comes into the category of historical narrative. Elton (1967), considered narrative history to be the most important area of the discipline and he provides us with a definition:

> Real narrative history (…) differs from (…) chronicle writing by being composed because the historian wishes to say about history something that is to him important (…) and because he has in mind a pattern, a scheme of his bit of the past, which is articulated around a central problem, (Elton, 1967:155).

It is useful to examine this statement more closely because it helps clarify a key purpose of this research. The first point is that the historian chooses 'a bit of the past' which is of importance to him but also, because, and this is the interesting point, he has identified a particular 'pattern' and 'scheme' in this area which is 'articulated around a central problem'. Narrative writing is not therefore, just an account to be analysed but history, which has a specific purpose, an identified focus for investigation.

If we apply this definition to our own research, we then have first, an area of study, which is of particular interest (because it has been personally experienced): the thirty-five years of foreign language and culture teaching and learning from 1963-2007. Next, the pattern, 'articulated around a central problem' is for us, the relationship established through the different learning initiatives and teaching methods with the 'real' target language and culture, in this case French and France.

Historical narrative provides us therefore, with a method and direction for carrying out this research. It both indicates what we are doing, providing an account of nearly four decades of foreign language teaching and learning; and also identifies a purpose, the investigation of the way the 'real' language and culture is represented in the different activities undertaken whether in the classroom or outside it.

2.3.3 Historical Evidence, the use and interpretation of sources in history

For Jordanova the criteria for judging 'the adequacy of historical writings' relate to three aspects of the discipline: 'the use and interpretation of sources; the aptness and effectiveness of conceptual frameworks; and the quality of the writing itself,' (Jordanova, 2000:94). We have established the conceptual framework and will concentrate on trying to ensure the quality of the writing. We are left then, with the importance of the 'use and interpretation of sources,' which as the first element in the list is given a certain priority.

The role of sources in reconstructing the past is central. There are usually seen to be two kinds of sources, primary and secondary, although the distinction between the two is not always clear, (ibid). Primary sources cover: 'all original documents produced at the time one is studying, and the implication is that these bear direct witness to the events, people, processes of that moment,' (ibid:95). While secondary sources 'are the writings of other scholars, not necessarily historians, but anyone who has commented upon a historical situation, possibly using primary sources, without being a participant in it,' (ibid).

However, in this autobiographical account where a good deal of data is drawn from material produced in the course of carrying out the different learning initiatives or diaries which cover the different periods of the narrative, the situation is somewhat different. Here primary sources will include school documents, diaries, pupil questionnaires and published articles. Secondary sources the theoretical basis on which the learning programmes are founded, text-books used in the classroom and government and local education authority documents.

It is one thing however, to have suitable texts available in order to be able to construct the narrative, another to make sure that this data is interpreted accurately, as Jordanova indicates. Evans reminds us that 'documents are always written from someone's point of view, with a specific purpose and audience in mind,' (Evans, 1997:80), and he goes on to emphasise a point we need to bear in mind as we analyse our own sources, the importance of establishing the purpose and audience for a specific document. This brings us to the importance of exercising caution in the interpretation of texts:

> Through the sources we use, and the methods with which we handle them we can, if we are very careful and thorough, approach a reconstruction of past reality that may be partial and provisional, and certainly will not be objective, but it is nevertheless true, (Evans, 1997: 249).

This passage comes from 'In Defence of History' (Evans, 1997) where, as the title of the book suggests, Evans is writing to defend history from the concerted assault of postmodernism and the new kind of history writing, the product of this time.

2.3.4 Postmodernism, the historical, literary and visual turns

Central to our own research is what postmodernism can tell us about writing history. While a good deal of his book is critical of the postmodern movement and in particular, of its anti historical bias, Evans is able to appreciate the role postmodernism can have in ensuring the validity of the texts being used to represent the past: 'It has forced historians to interrogate their own methods and procedures as never before, and in the process has made them more self-critical (...). It has led to a greater emphasis on open acknowledgement of the historian's own subjectivity,' (Evans, 1997:148).

It is apparent that there is a 'literary turn' in history writing. Postmodernism for Evans: 'has shifted the emphasis in historical writing (...) back from social-scientific to literary models, and in so doing has begun to make it more accessible,' (ibid). He goes on to explain the process of history writing in the age of postmodernism: 'the stories we tell will be true stories, even if the truth they tell is our own, and even if other people can and will tell them differently', (Evans,1997:250).

What is clear is that in order to provide the kind of 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) needed to reconstruct the initiatives with which we have been involved, it will be necessary to use a number of different sources. These will include documents coming from the local education authority and government as well as those produced internally by the school. There will also be diary entries written by both the author and pupils (which will provide key elements of the narrative), completed questionnaires providing feed-back from pupils on different experiences and photographs. The photographs selected to represent each stage of the research represent the 'visual turn'. Peim defines this area: 'the visual is seen as offering a specific form of knowledge that requires its own modes of apprehension (...) a complimentary form of historical knowledge,' (2005:11).

In the same way as the need to submit text to careful analysis, photographs are subject to their own specific methods of interpretation[9] (Mietzner, Myers, Peim, 2005).

We have discussed the historical narrative aspect but not as yet, the autobiographical nature of the thesis, the fact that this narrative is the author's own account of the period under review. This clearly has considerable implications for the research as a whole and we need to explore this area next.

2.4 AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH

This section of the chapter needs first to establish the autobiographical foundation for the research and the narrative element this contains. Then, from this theoretical basis we are in a position to discuss the decisions made about the structure of the thesis and to deal with a number of problems associated with writing historical, autobiographical narrative of this kind.

These problems concern how the author, the subject of the autobiographical account, is to be represented in the narrative and how the narrative itself with its description of theoretical concepts, personal development and school initiatives, can maintain a consistent approach in the face of such diversity. There is also, the problem of how the actual process of constructing the thesis can be included in the narrative, so that the point where new conceptualisation helped define the direction of the research and the writing process is established. Finally, we need to consider the validity of the autobiographical approach and to what extent autobiographical memory is a reliable element in the process of narrative writing.

What will become clear as we investigate this area, is how some of the key themes which are present throughout this research are encountered first here. Narrative and the autobiographical is necessarily the record of development, of change, as the subject of the account comes up against a range of different

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[9] This is an area we will consider further below, as we look at narrative illustrations.

experiences in the course, as here, of a professional life. There are turning points and there is also transformation, a word we will have cause to consider in some detail, as we investigate later, both my personal experiences living abroad and also those of pupils as they 'experience the real' target language and culture. Transformation links both to performance theory, (Schechner, 1988) and experiential learning, (Kolb, 1984). We turn to Bruner's definition of autobiography to make this point.

> A narrator in the here and now, takes upon himself or herself the task of describing the progress of a protagonist in the there and then, one who happens to share his name. He must by convention bring that protagonist from the past into the present in such a way that the protagonist and the narrator eventually fuse and become one person with a shared consciousness. Now in order to bring a protagonist from the there and then to the point where the original protagonist becomes the present narrator, one needs a theory of growth or at least of transformation, (Bruner, 2001: 27-28).

The process of writing autobiography can also be described as autoethnography and we turn next to this area.

2.4.1 Autoethnography

> I start with my personal life. I pay attention to my personal feelings, thoughts and emotions. I use what I call systematic sociological introspection and emotional recall to try to understand an experience I've lived through. Then I write my experience as a story. By exploring a particular life, I hope to understand a way of life,' (Ellis, Bochner, 2005:737).

This passage is a reminder that the author cannot in autobiographical writing be an anonymous figure but has to be a presence throughout the narrative account. Autoethnology is described as 'an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural,' (Ellis, Bochner, 2005: 739). The process is seen as:

'looking outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience,' and then looking inward, 'exposing a vulnerable self,' (ibid).

This aspect of the vulnerable self and a tendency to concentrate on addressing personal problems and difficulties, such as illness or personal crisis, is where the theory of autoethnology is less relevant to my own research. It suggests that we need to be selective in our adoption of the techniques associated with this process.

Autoethnology provides us however, with an appropriate method for addressing the autobiographical aspect of the research. It suggests for example, that there should be passages which provide insights into the thinking of the time and also, where relevant, the author's personal feelings.

We return now to the problems we raised above concerning the writing of autobiography, which we can now define in terms of autoethnographic procedures.

2.4.2. Presence of the author in the narrative

The first identified problem to deal with is the presence of the author in the narrative and initially, the choice of personal pronoun. We need to decide the form in which this thesis is written, whether as an autobiographical account the author's presence should be emphasised through the use of the personal 'I' throughout the thesis, or the traditional 'we' of academic writing should be used.

There is a justification for adopting a double approach and using both the 'we' and 'I' forms in this narrative: 'In personal narratives social scientists take on the dual identities of academic and personal selves to tell autobiographical stories about some aspect of their experiences in daily life,' (Ellis, Bochner, 2005:740). We would argue therefore, that we are distinguishing between these two aspects of the thesis through the use of different personal pronouns; 'we' for the academic writing which is the standard element of the thesis, and 'I' for when personal comments, thoughts and feelings need to be expressed. The practical exercise of writing the thesis proved the suitability of this system by using 'I'

when the personal nature of a particular remark could be emphasised. It also meant that the shared nature of the work described could be highlighted and also, that the theoretical elements given more weight, by generally persisting in the use of the traditional 'we' form.

The second element in ensuring the 'visibility of the author' in the account comes back to the importance of primary sources, because we need to ensure that we can draw on the feelings of the time, as we comment on our views concerning particular developments or procedures. While for the self-development period there are personal diaries, which make this process possible, (both for the time living abroad as a student and also as an exchange teacher), it may be more difficult to reconstruct feelings associated with school developments.

A slightly different aspect of this area but one, which will need to draw on the same material of primary sources, is to ensure that the thinking of the time is evident, at the point where new learning initiatives are introduced and concepts established.

2.4.3 **Emphasising the autobiographical element in the thesis**

In the process of writing the first few chapters of this research it became apparent that an additional approach to telling the story of the developments taking place was useful. This was represented by a 'narrative passage' coming immediately after the introduction to each chapter. This narrative section provides the opportunity to write a personal account from the present perspective of what has taken place. In this way it represents a literary approach (Jordanova, 2000: 78), which should be distinguished from the use of the kind of direct evidence available in the primary sources used later in the same chapter to explain different developments. So, for example, at the beginning of the introductory chapter of this research, there is a narrative account of the exchange journey to France. It is described from memory, a very

vivid memory however, based on more than a decade of travelling annually with pupils on the exchange to Saint Brieuc. The record of any single journey provided by a diary extract would not have the advantage of the synthesis which is possible when considering the characteristic of the journeys as a whole and the impact they had on pupils. The significant elements of the narrative passage can then be discussed in the explanation which follows.

The intention in writing narrative passages of this kind is to drive forward the story by drawing attention to some particularly relevant element which is to be considered in more detail in the writing which follows. This approach is evident in historical narrative and is associated with postmodernism, (Evans, 1997). Arnold for example, begins each chapter with what he describes as 'true stories', accounts which are based on the historical knowledge available but which are rewritten by him in a style which brings the action to life: 'Here is a true story. In 1301 Guilhem de Rodes hurried down from his Pyrenean village of Tarascon to the town of Pamiers,' (Arnold, 2000:1).

We need however, to distinguish the historical narrative of Arnold, from the narrative of this research which as well as being historical is also autobiographical in nature. This provides the thesis with its own specific character and identity. Narrative studies (Webster, Mertova, 2007) focus specifically on this aspect of narrative which is in turn based on an autobiographical approach. The question is therefore, how does the writing we are describing as 'narrative passages' fit into the format for autobiographical, narrative writing. It is clear that a key element is the importance of the reflective approach. Quoting Grumet (1976, 1981) Webster and Mertova make the following points:

> experiences are reclaimed through a reflective process that begins by allowing the mind to wander, and continues by providing rich descriptions in order to situate the narrative. It is only in the freshness and immediacy of our narratives of lived experience that curriculum can be reconceptualised, since the narratives reclaim entire areas of experience,' (Webster, Mertova, 2007:9).

The points we wish to retain are the notion of the reflective process providing 'rich descriptions in order to situate the narrative'. I would argue that this represents precisely the nature of the passages of narrative writing used as an introduction to each chapter of this thesis. The fact that there is a narrative passage for each chapter, helps provide a consistent approach to the description of different experiences and initiatives.

2.4.4   Ensuring transparency in the construction of the thesis

The use of notes taken from the research journal, which has accompanied the writing up process of the thesis is capable of showing two important elements. First, the point where a particular choice is made as to the way the thesis is constructed. Second, how through the process of writing, not only did a better understanding come of the material under review, but also, importantly, the development of some of the key aspects of the research, in particular, using the notion of the 'real' in foreign language learning as a suitable focus for the research, the 'central problem around which the research is articulated', (Elton).

To demonstrate this process we can identify a point in the construction of the thesis where a particular understanding came about the nature of the research and how this could be constructed. This note comes from reading an unpublished PhD thesis (Gates, 1995), where the research question was formulated as: 'How can a teacher know herself, understand her formation and influence her renewal and evolution,' (1995:47). A quotation copied into my PhD diary with the following comment.

> *This is not going to be an easy ride! But although initially the concept of construction of self is not related to my own research, there is undoubtedly a sense in which I should be tracing my own development and in the process charting a somewhat similar process of construction of self. A construction as an intercultural person, diaries illustrating this progress?*
>
> *(PhD, diary, 1.11.07)*

Ellis and Bochner provide support for this approach: 'you'll need to explain in your dissertation the kinds of decisions you made and on what grounds you made them'. The importance of establishing a reaction and relationship with readers is further emphasised:

> The narrative rises or falls on its capacity to provoke readers to broaden their horizons, reflect critically on their own experience, enter emphatically into worlds of experience different from their own and actively engage in dialogue regarding the (...) implications of the different perspectives and standpoints encountered. Invited to take the story in and use it for themselves,' (Ellis and Bochner, 2005:748).

We would hope that the language learning initiatives described in these chapters would encourage foreign language teachers to look at the possibilities for extending the opportunities and experience of their own pupils.

2.4.5 Autobiographical memory

Autobiographical memory is the final problem for us to consider as we look at the construction of this historical narrative. It is not surprising to find that recording memories has similar characteristics to the process of history writing in that: 'memories are always reconstructions of past events to meet the needs of current concerns, (Bartlett, 1932 quoted by Conway, 1999:240). Conway (1990) discusses autobiographical memories and identifies a number of key characteristics: 'autobiographical memories will typically be complex events

(e.g. a wedding), will contain self-reference, will usually feature sensory, perceptual and reflective information fairly equally, and will be closely related to other memories,' (Conway, 1999:241).

To what extent this recall is likely to be an accurate representation of what took place is considered. Conway talks about interpretations, where what the event means to the person concerned, may influence the accuracy of the remembering: 'many autobiographical memories may (...) consist of interpretations of events and include sensory and perceptual features as well as information about current thoughts, wishes, motivations' (Conway, 1999:9). Conway goes on to make a key point about the validity of autobiographical memories: 'autobiographical memories may be accurate without being literal and may represent the personal meaning of an event at the expense of accuracy' (Conway, 1999:9).

There is also a more central point to examining autobiographical memory due to the research itself being autobiographical in nature. We are not just talking therefore about isolated elements within the research associated with autobiographical memory, but the actual position I have now on developments taking place thirty years ago. What to make therefore of Conway's assertion that autobiographical memories are perhaps 'never true' but represent 'literal representations' of events? This needs to be taken into account as we deal with our representations of the past.

Turning specifically to diary writing, which is one of the primary sources used in the research, Conway suggests that : 'subjects who kept diaries recalled more older memories,' (Conway, 1990:34).

2.4.6   Narrative: Narrative Illustrations

As a foreign language teacher one of the skills you learn, particularly when encouraged to use only the target language, is to rely on as many devices as possible to ensure pupils understand the different elements of language. Course material provides a whole range of flash cards and taped excerpts, and photographs in text books. There are however many occasions when it is

useful to be able to draw in order to make yourself understood. The drawing is then appropriately labelled with the French word beside it.

Narrative Illustration 2: Isolated element from 'Walking Home' drawing

In the same way as text in the form of a narrative passage can act as an explanation and clarification of what is to follow in the chapter, so can an illustration. We have chosen to use the term "narrative illustration" to represent an illustration which is drawn specially in order to emphasise and draw attention to a particular element in the narrative of the research.

The theoretical foundation for the use of such 'narrative illustrations' matches those for photographs we have discussed previously and represent another example of the 'visual turn'.

We now need to turn to the application of these methodological procedures.

2.5 CONSTRUCTING THE NARRATIVE

Our focus now is on the research process itself, considering first, the different elements which go to make up this historical narrative, before looking at the data from which we can reconstruct this period.

2.5.1 Overview of the research process

The first step in this process is to be able to provide an overview of the research as a whole, a model to represent the different periods, which go to make up the narrative. There are two elements to distinguish here, personal development experiences and foreign language learning initiatives. We need to set this material out chronologically, so as to be able to later link the different initiatives to the context of foreign language teaching and learning with reference to what was happening elsewhere, (in England in particular and how this came to be applied in Northumberland middle schools). A further element to take into consideration is the different roles in which the author was involved during this narrative period, ranging from foreign student and then student foreign language teacher up to headteacher. This has some implications for the research in terms of the responsibilities but also influences, which came particularly from later positions. Influences which, as we will see, are reflected in some of the initiatives introduced and the proposal to build a language and culture centre.

Table 2.2 below sets out this overview of the research[10]. Following Jordanova's emphasis on the importance of periodisation, ('measuring time and giving names to discrete periods,' 2000:105); it will be seen that some learning programmes in this table are given capital letters to categorise them as periods. This is because, both in terms of the length of time they lasted, but also, because of the distinctive nature of the learning experiences and the influence they had on foreign language and culture learning at Coates Middle School, they should be considered as distinct.

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[10] Appendix: A2.1 and A2.2 provide further information about the time spent living abroad and the nature of the school initiatives.

Table 2.2   Model   for   Research   Process,   personal   development experiences and language learning initiatives

PERIOD   SPENT
LIVING
ABROAD
1963-1968

Grenoble,
Neuchâtel,
Florence

Language, social
science studies
at foreign
universities

'Spectacle'
French Show,
1975

Expédition
au Pays
de
Neuchâtel

Exchange
Teacher in
France
1992/1993

INTENSIVE
LANGUAGE
WORK 1983-
1992

Invented Language
Work 1991, 2000-06

FRENCH,
ITALIAN
EXCHANGES
1993-2007

'Les Bonbons
Magiques' 1993

STUDENT
TEACHER
N/land
College
Education.
1968-1971

Language and
Culture Centre
2003. 2004

1960s	1970s		1980s	1990s	2000s

foreign student   student   French teacher
                     teacher   ──────────────────────────────►

                                    deputy-headteacher   headteacher

Notes

[ ] = personal development experiences

[ ] = foreign language learning initiatives

2.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Now that we have considered the historical aspects of the research, we can return to the research objectives before establishing the research questions which this thesis will seek to answer. A situation made more complex by the range of different areas this research covers, with its historical narrative, foreign language, culture learning and finally autobiographic dimensions.

2.6.1 Research Objectives Revisited

This research seeks to provide a narrative of a period of personal development and a thirty-five year period of foreign language teaching and learning. This is not however, now that we have examined the historical context, merely a chronicle of the period providing an account of what happened and when. The research represents historical narrative and is therefore concerned to provide an analysis of the period and to explore a particular aspect of foreign language and culture learning, 'articulated around a central problem,' (Elton, 1967).

This means that the relationship of foreign language learning with the 'real' which, we have already identified as an objective for the research, takes on a central position as part of the historical narrative, becoming the focus for the research as a whole, a way of linking the range of different teaching methods and learning programmes which are described in the narrative process; a consistent theme as the chronology of the thirty-five year period unfolds.

This research needs to identify therefore, the relationship of the different initiatives introduced in the middle school language learning with the 'real' seen in the terminology of the research as either 'approaching' or 'experiencing the real'.

There are two implications from this. We need first, clearly, to analyse how different initiatives are positioned in relation to this terminology of the 'real'. Also, however, we need to try and identify the genesis for these initiatives: Do they come from the ambient characteristics of middle school learning or the climate of foreign language learning of the time, or can they perhaps, be traced

to other areas of the curriculum such as drama? What is clear is that there is a real importance in discovering the 'thinking of the time', tracking down those notes and comments, where they still exist, which can help detail a process which led to the introduction of different initiatives.

It also, means that a particular status is given to certain elements of the different learning initiatives. In the first place the learning environment has a particular significance as the location in which learning takes place and which therefore is directly referable to its proximity to a 'real' language and culture situation. Then, the learning and teaching methods in place and the opportunities they provide for practical active language work, will have implications for the nature of the learning taking place.

2.6.2   Research Questions

We are now in a position to set out the research questions.

1. What significance does the analysis of this autobiographical, narrative account of personal-development and a professional life, over thirty-five years, as a middle school French teacher have for the practice of foreign language and culture teaching and learning?

2. To what extent can the different measures introduced to develop foreign language and culture learning at Coates Middle School, recorded in this narrative, be seen in relation to 'approaching the real' or 'experiencing the real' as represented by the target language and culture of French and France?

3. What is the genesis for the different learning initiatives described in this narrative, what specific influences and experiences led to the introduction of these measures for extending foreign language and culture learning?

2.6.3 Sources available to construct the narrative[11]

Now that we have clarified the purpose of the research and have defined the research questions, we can turn to the sources available from each period to help us reconstruct the narrative and try to answer the research questions. To do this we need to preserve the distinction between personal development elements and learning initiatives. While the sources for each initiative will be discussed in turn, the appendix contains a list of the different experiences and initiatives and the sources available to reconstruct them.

The personal development needs to be seen as a formative period and we will want to try and plot how the influences and experience of these periods impact on later learning initiatives in the middle school. There are some direct links such as the pupil exchange programme following on from the teacher exchange experience, which was an intended consequence for both schools involved.

It is likely that the extended experience of French language and culture, which these periods represent, might well translate into a personal concern to develop a more genuine language and culture learning environment, a closer 'approach to the real'. We will need to see what evidence is available to support this hypothesis.

The evidence to enable us to answer the research questions is largely present in the primary sources available. While the final analysis of the research and its implications and significance will have to wait until the final stages of this thesis, it will be important to explore in each of these learning experiences, their

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[11] See Appendix: A2.5 and A2.6 for details of the sources available to construct this narrative

specific place in the narrative as a whole; what kind of position they represent in terms of the 'real' and finally whether we are able to trace, from the surviving data, their origins.

In relation to the final point it is worth emphasising that school initiatives were often seen as deliberately innovative; associated more with the contrast and extension they provided to the routine of classroom learning, a point which we will see, relates to Hawkins' (1987) view of language learning as rehearsal and performance, as reviewed in the next chapter on the literary background to the research.

The nature of the school documents which form a key element in our ability to reconstruct different initiatives are worth considering in more detail.

2.6.3.1 School documents as sources

School documents, for a specific initiative, might represent an initial document setting out the objectives for a particular programme of learning and the anticipated outcomes.

In addition to the school documents setting up the language experience and detailing the learning programme taking place, there is also here, additional material relating to pupil comments and the data produced as part of the language acquisition research being undertaken at the time.

While therefore, there are some elements specific to each learning initiative, others will be common procedures to all learning programmes of this kind with the need to set out objectives, inform parents, and report on outcomes.

2.6.3..2 Establishing criteria for analysing language and culture developments

The criteria for analysing the different learning initiatives needs to be established to enable us to consider each initiative in terms of certain key elements, associated with the objectives for the research and the research questions, as set out above. There is the objective for each learning programme, the methods used to achieve this target, the number and age of participating pupils together with the teachers or teaching assistants who are also involved, where this is relevant. There is also, and this is an important element for this research, (where a number of the initiatives take place outside the classroom), the learning environment in which the particular programme takes place.

By establishing the criteria on which language learning initiatives can be assessed, we are able to provide a consistent approach to our analysis. While still retaining a similar concern to understand what, for example, a particular document represents within the context of the time it was produced.

One primary source, the diary entries, are susceptible to more rigorous treatment through close text analysis and this will be applied where there is a need for closer scrutiny of particularly significant periods in this narrative.

2.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has established the methodology for the research and investigated the implications for writing this historical narrative. Of the three elements identified in the introductory chapter as key elements for the research: the historical nature of the study, the autobiographical form of the account and the foreign language and culture learning focus for the thesis; the first two have been considered here, leaving the next chapter to provide the foreign language and culture context of the research.

It has been important to establish the historical nature of this study into foreign language and culture learning over a period of four decades. The issues concerning the reconstruction of the past have been explored and the importance of the primary sources in this process stressed.

The importance of the autobiographical element in the research has been made clear through the investigation of autoethnography and the need to ensure that the author is a presence throughout the discussions taking place.

Approaching the Real

STAGE ONE   PURPOSE AND POSITION

CHAPTER THREE

THE LITERATURE ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND INTERCULTURAL TEACHING AND LEARNING, within the context of middle school education.

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the literature foundation on which the present research is based. It establishes the key areas of this literature and identifies how they impact on the learning initiatives described in the thesis. As the research is based on an autobiographical account of middle school language and intercultural teaching and learning over a thirty five year period, the literature review tracks the different trends and developments in theory and method which occurred over this time. The focus is on developments taking place in foreign language learning as a whole and looking at how these are promoted in England and appear in Northumberland, as they are translated into practical systems of French learning.

A number of key elements need to be taken into account at the beginning of this literature chapter. In the first place we need to distinguish between the methods of foreign language learning which are practiced at each particular point of time and the underlying theories, which have led to this approach, (Richardson, Rodgers, 1987). The process whereby a particular method finds its way into classroom practice also needs to be considered, this is not always easy to track due to a lack of surviving evidence.

There is too the importance of distinguishing in the writing, those theories contemporary to the time which underlie the different methods in use, from more recent theories able to provide a new understanding of the learning

process. There is also, another perspective, where an existing contemporary theory, unknown at the time, is able to provide clarification and explanation at the current point of time. This situation has become evident during the writing process of this thesis, where the chance to review the different learning initiatives has led to a more complete understanding of the research as a whole. This is why in this chapter and elsewhere in the research, it will be important to establish my thinking at the time.

We will want, as we consider the different theories and methods of foreign language learning, to position them within the framework of how they represent a 'real' French language and culture, the theme for this research. It was the theoretical explanation of the audio-visual language learning system (Guberina,1964, see below), with its concern to provide simultaneously a visual and aural element for pupils, matching in this way, the 'real' first language learning process, which was part of the theorising at the time and which suggested this theme as providing a suitable framework within which the research could be placed.

The middle school context to the research means the literature examination covers both the primary and secondary areas of foreign language learning, in keeping with the age range of pupils in the middle school from nine to thirteen years, (covering the final part of the primary sector ages 9-11 and the first part of the secondary sector, ages 11-13). The development of primary French learning and the discussion surrounding this initiative, providing a different element in our examination of the literature on foreign language and culture learning.

As the research is concerned with learning initiatives taking place outside the classroom it is important to include in this chapter those literature accounts which examine previous work of this kind and to look to Hawkins (1978, 1987) for both an account of this process and the philosophy behind these developments.

As an autobiographical account, the developments in foreign language learning over this period represent a lived experience. The realisation of the different methods as learning programmes, (in the form of teaching resources), was what I handled as a teacher in the classroom, in the daily routine of teaching children French. This experience of classroom practice provides us, as we will see, with the chance to comment on the different teaching methods by reference to the personal experience of operating these different systems.

Table 3.1 Contents of Chapter 3: Literature on Foreign Language and Culture Learning'

| 3.0 Introduction | → | 3.1 Narrative Passage and explanation | → | 3.2 Theory, Method and Classroom Application 1970s-2000s | → |

| 3.3 Acquisition, Environment, Motivation | → | 3.4 Theoretical aspcts of culture learning | → | 3.5 Primary French Learning in the middle school context | → |

| 3.6 Rehearsal v Performance, Hawkins and the argument for immersion | → | 3.7 Conclusion |
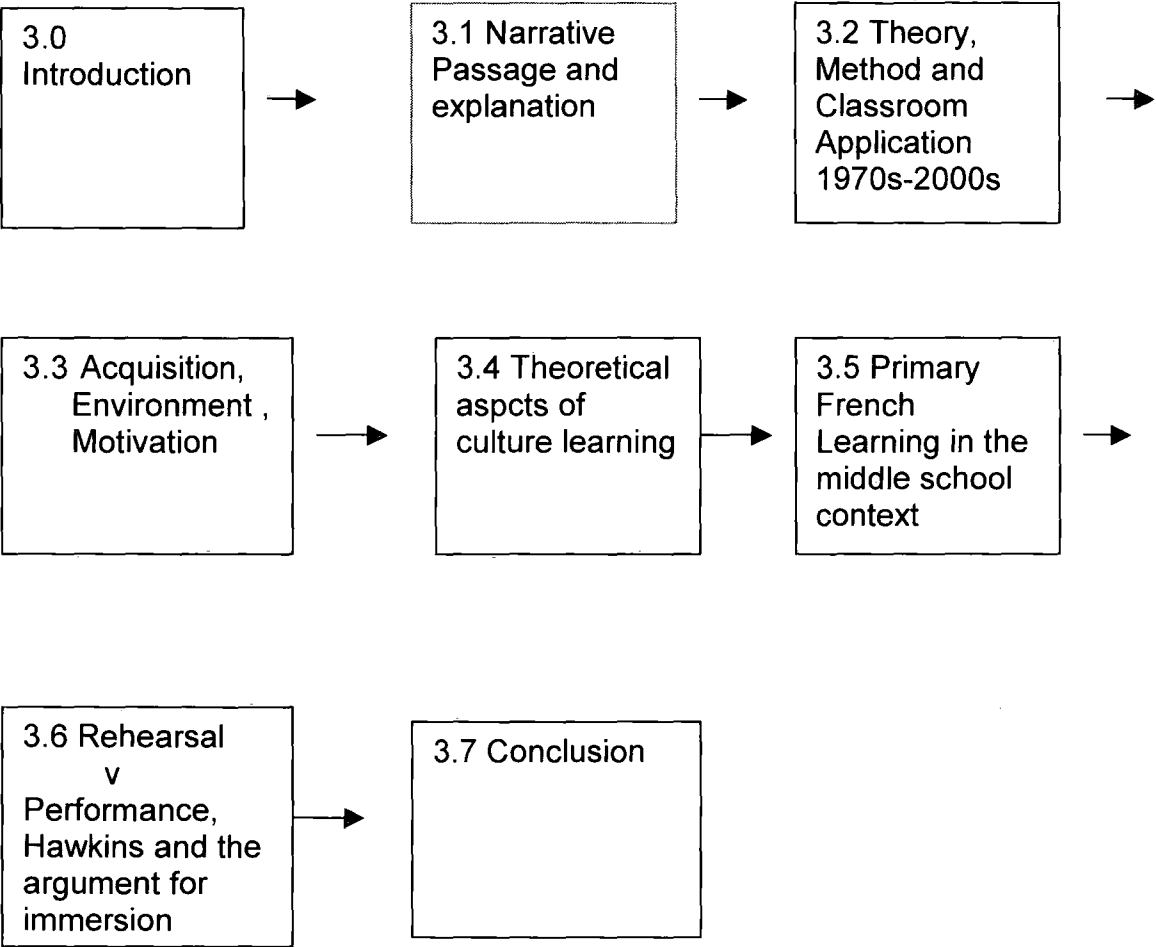
3.1 NARRATIVE PASSAGE

I have travelled to the Gaillac area of south-west France and left behind the grey, wet Northumberland autumn. Here is a place where in late September the sky is vivid blue and there is still plenty of warmth to the sun. Each morning I get up early and walk to the small town of Salvagnac. A walk, which takes me up past oak woodlands and fields of sunflowers, along quiet tree-lined roads with long views over rolling countryside, where an occasional stone dwelling and crumbling barn appear to have been there since always, this is rural France to perfection.

As I reach the town perched on its hilltop, there is an encounter with the local population as they go about the routine of their early morning business; the old man in blue overalls and beret who comes out of his door and wanders slowly into his garden to look over the potted geraniums, as he must do every morning; the boy heading down the hill to l'école, a large school-bag on his back; the man standing in the sun on the main street who recognises my daily presence and offers me a hand to shake.

In the small 'boulangerie' (a blue artisan baker, sign outside the shop), the 'boulanger' himself comes out from his bakery to serve me. I order my 'baguette', a croissant and 'pain au chocolat' and there is the ritual of wishing each other a good day on leaving. Next, a short walk to the 'maison de la presse' to buy 'Le Monde' with a similar mutual exchange of greetings and good wishes, before heading back down the hill to the place we are staying and 'petit-déjeuner' in the sun.

What the local inhabitants make of this Englishman walking up the hill every morning with his dog to buy bread is not recorded.

3.1.1 Narrative Passage Explanation

We have already indicated how the 'real' in foreign language learning represents the central problem around which the thesis is focused, providing a context from which the different learning initiatives introduced can be positioned. It is useful here therefore, as we begin our examination of the literature on foreign language and culture learning, to return to a consideration of the 'real' but this time from the perspective of the theories and methods used in foreign language and culture learning.

We are concerned in the narrative passage with representation, a representation of one experience of France, which may conform to some of our expectations if we go there for a holiday and seek a certain rural French environment. In line with the theories of representation (Hall, 1997), it represents a personal experience, a reflection of what is there, seen through my eyes but there is also an element of the construction of the image, based on the limited experience of what is observed, together with my previous knowledge of France.

What we have therefore is an aspect of France, for there is no way that our experience of this small town of Salvagnac, (one among many similar attractive hill top towns in the area), can represent the 'real' France. It is not even certain that our observations are entirely accurate. In the first place each morning walk is different. The mornings become colder as the week progresses and the walk through the town means different people are encountered: the man in blue overalls is replaced one morning by his unsmiling wife and it may be the baker's wife who serves me bread. One morning, the long walk up the hill leads to the discovery that the 'boulangerie' is closed on a Thursday. It also later transpires (on talking with members of the local community) that the image of the local, traditional village bakery has to be changed, when it is discovered that the bread is not baked on the premises but comes from another 'boulangerie' situated elsewhere. Each day then, has it's own narrative, valid for the one day only, a personal perspective which may need adjusting as more information becomes available and as a result, gives us a better understanding of what is happening.

In spite of these uncertainties, (which we will see are themselves aspects of the 'real'), what we would be able to do is to apply this representation of Salvagnac to the study of French language and culture. Using the town as a focus, we could package the different elements into a format, which could then be delivered to pupils as a learning programme. There would be a number of different ways of doing this, which would reflect the different foreign language teaching methods we will be considering in this chapter. We will return to this theme in the conclusion to this chapter.

Where from the perspective of this research does this bring us, as we battle with the notion of the 'real' in foreign language and culture learning? Orvell in an exploration of American Culture from 1880-1940 in a book entitled 'The Real Thing', identifies a dominant mode in the early part of the period as:

> the tendency to enclose reality in manageable forms, to contain it within a theatrical space, an enclosed exposition or recreational space, or within the space of a picture frame. If the world outside the frame was beyond control, the world inside of it could at least offer the illusion of mastery and comprehension,' (Orvell, 1989:35).

It might be argued that this quotation has nothing to do with foreign language learning or education. We can see however, the foreign language classroom also 'as a substitute for the 'real' world', (Damen, 1987:7), enclosing a certain reality of the target language and culture, a representation of this culture in a manageable form through the flash cards and cassette recordings, the classroom posters and text book illustrations. This is a point Zarate makes: 'le travail sur les représentations de l'étranger a toujours été un enjeu implicite dans la classe de langue,'[12] (Zarate, 1993:41). The choice of how this representation is constructed and what methods are used to present this culture, this element of the 'real', is what we need to consider next, as we examine the different methodologies introduced during the period under review.

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[12] 'Work on how the foreign is represented has always been an implicit focus for language classes.'

Before turning to an exploration of these theories and methods, we need to try and get closer to a definition of the 'real', which will serve our current purposes. Dortier's definition has the advantage of focusing on the social sciences and therefore provides a more practical take on the problem than a philosophical approach might provide.

> En matière de sciences humaines on admet que la realité sociale est en partie une reconstruction de notre regard. Ne serait-ce que parmi l'infinité des phénomènes de notre environment, l'esprit ne cesse de sélectionner certains et de les interpreter[13], (Dortier, 2002:91).

He stresses therefore the personal element in the 'real', our view of how things are which, (like the process of building up a representation of Salvagnac or the act of constructing the history of this narrative), provides us with our own representation of the 'real'.

Dortier goes on to explore the fugitive nature of the 'real', the unstable character of the way we see things, which our own narrative account of the daily walk into Salvagnac has also, confirmed.

> Nous sommes donc condamnés à frequenter le monde – à l'observer, le décrire, le toucher – mais sans l'atteindre complètement. Le réel c'est donc l'horizon de la connaisance. Et comme tout horizon qui se respecte, il s'éloigne au fur et au mesure que l'on avance vers lui, [14](ibid).

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[13] *In the area of social sciences we accept that social reality is partly constructed through our personal view. If only because among the infinity of phenomena, the mind never ceases to select some of these in order to interpret them.*

[14] *We are therefore condemned to frequent the world – to observe , describe and touch it – but without completely reaching it. The real is therefore the horizon of our knowledge. And as with all self-respecting horizons, it withdraws further off as we move towards it.*

As a teacher of French language and culture to children over a thirty-five year period, the author has worked with a range of learning resources, which represent the design and procedures based on various approaches to language learning (Richardson, Rodgers, 1987), centred around particular representations of French language and culture.

As we review the history of the theories, methods and classroom application of the different methodologies over this time, we will want to examine their approach to the 'real', how through the teaching methods employed they are able to capture a representation of French language and culture.

3.2   THEORY, METHOD AND CLASSROOM APPLICATION, 1968-2007

The need to provide a clear structure to this chapter suggests the importance of considering chronologically the different developments in language and culture learning during the period under review, in order to correspond with the different stages of the narrative of the thesis. Each element can then be linked to those school based initiatives, which are the subject of this research. The target for the chapter is therefore, to establish the theoretical and methodological context to the different middle school developments in foreign language teaching and learning from the 1970s until the present time. This would provide a point of reference, a road map, as the school initiatives are described in later chapters[15].

Before disappearing into the dense mass of literature on foreign language and culture learning there are two points to consider. First the distinction and relationship between theory, method and application and second, the treatment of the two components in the research: language and culture learning.

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[15] Appendix: Table A3.1 provides according to the five stages of this research the learning trends for each period which the stages cover, also, the national scene in England and links this with the personal development or school initiatives taking place at the time.

3.2.1 The Distinction between Language and Culture Teaching

A decision has been made to follow the historic development of intercultural learning by including it within the account of foreign language learning developments. As the narrative proceeds it will be seen that the area of intercultural learning steadily becomes a more distinct and more important element, until finally, as we consider the 'experience of the real', it is the cultural aspect that becomes more prominent.

3.2.2 Approach, Design, Procedure

If a theory is: 'a statement of a general principle based upon reasoned argument and supported by evidence,' (Richards, Platt, Platt, 1992:228); then, a method is: 'a way of teaching a language based on systematic principles and procedures (...) an application of how a language is best taught and learned,' (ibid).

The foreign language teacher in the classroom may not be aware of the theory behind the language learning he or she is conducting, 'being trained to teach, not to think about second language learning,' (Cook,1991:1). What he will be aware of, (as this is the tangible element with which he is engaged on a daily basis), is the methods being used to teach the language.

A good deal of emphasis in this chapter will be on method but we need also, to consider the underlying theories and to bear in mind the distinction between theory and method. Klippel (2004: 616-621) examines method and is surprised to find comparatively little literature available in this area. She draws on the work of Richards and Rodgers (1986) to explore the nature of method, providing a link to theory and an explanation of how method leads to classroom application.

For Richards and Rodgers method is seen as a three-tier process beginning with an approach based on theory, applied to the achievement of particular goals. The next step is the design of a programme of learning which concerns the organisation, the role of the teacher and learner, together with the choice of

suitable tasks and materials. The final stage in this process is procedure as the method is operationalised and applied to classroom learning.

The advantage of this analysis is that it provides us with a format for discussing the different methods and theories and their application to classroom teaching in this chapter. If we place method as the central element of the process and consider this aspect first, we can then, look back to establish the theory behind the design of a particular method and then forward to its application in the classroom.

It will also be necessary to consider some of the key underlying theories of language acquisition in addition to looking at the specific theories behind the introduction of different teaching methodologies.

The application of any teaching method will be influenced by a series of such issues as government policy for foreign languages, the influence of the local education authority on suitable ways of delivering the language curriculum and finally, school policy and finances associated with the ability to purchase the appropriate teaching materials. Historical analysis into method in foreign language teaching has emphasized this point, (Klippel, 2004, 1994, Howatt, 1984, Musumeci, 1997).

An important consideration as we embark on an examination of the different methods of language teaching over this period is that at the classroom level there is a practical element to consider : 'methods have rarely been implemented in an unadulterated form,' (Klippel, 2004:618-619). This is because teachers will adapt them for their own use, choosing, ' those procedures and proposals which are in tune with current educational values, which coincide with their subjective theories, which are supported by a wide variety of published materials and finally which prove effective and easy to use,' (ibid)).

Any chronological ordering of methods in foreign language learning also, needs to bear in mind that as a new method comes in, elements from previous methods are likely to be still retained (Grenfell, 2007, see below).

3.2.3 Foreign Language Teaching Methods from 1963-2007[16]

We need to begin our investigation into foreign language teaching methods over this period by finding in the literature a suitable overview of the developments taking place, before considering the key methods in more detail. Pennycook (2004) provides us with a global view of developments while Grenfell (2007) looks at the specific situation in the United Kingdom.

Both authors have as a starting point the grammar translation methodology, the traditional manner to teach modern languages based on the methods used for teaching the classics. The change which took place is described by Pennycook as a 'revolution in language teaching that is focused on the direct method,' (Pennycook, 2004:277) and he then traces the developments which followed from audiolingualism through audio-visual methods and a series of new methods associated with the 1970s, before bringing the account to an end with 'the modern era of communicative language teaching and task-based learning," (ibid).

Grenfell emphasises the hybrid nature of modern language teaching before the mid-1980s with grammar translation methods 'predominating in the classroom', and classroom interaction taking place in English. He points, as does Pennycook, to the influence of the theories from structural linguistics and behaviourist psychology on the introduction of audio-lingual and audio-visual learning methods, (Grenfell, 2007:18).

The point to make is that Grenfell's focus is on modern language learning taking place in the secondary school and his account of the grammar translation method and instruction in English does not, as we will see, match the

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[16] Appendix: Table 3.2 links foreign language learning methods and national initiatives to personal development and the different initiatives introduced to Coates Middle School.

Northumberland middle school French teaching experience in the 1970s and 1980s.

Grenfell explains the survival of traditional teaching methods in the secondary school with pupils aged 11+ by reference to external examinations, the 'O' level syllabus with its emphasis on: 'translation, dictation, and writing in which accuracy scored the highest marks. Tests in speaking and listening were also included, but these made up a minority of the marks; their content and style was also quite 'literary,' (ibid).

The period is characterised by Grenfell as a kind of interaction between traditional and progressive approaches and he points out that communicative language teaching methods were beginning to impact on modern language learning, particularly, and this is an important point, not in the foreign language classroom but in English as a foreign language. He distinguishes the key elements of this process as favouring an orally based approach as the focus for language learning and an interactive methodology. He underlines the fact that the new General Certificate for Secondary Education for modern languages, which emerged in 1985, had taken on many of these new influences.

> Testing, and by implication teaching, was reconfigured in terms of the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Equal weighting was supposedly given to each of these; transactional-interactional language was stressed with such notions as the 'sympathetic native speaker' and pupil as host or 'tourist' as principles to guide FL learning and teaching," (ibid).

This is an important statement, which needs to be examined in more detail by reference to personal experience of classroom practice. Assessing pupils in terms of the four skills meant that courses (*Avantage, Tour de France*) would incorporate assessment opportunities where pupils' *scores* in each of the four attainment targets could be collected. The problem came with assessing spoken language skills in terms of the time taken to conduct adequately this part of the assessment procedure. In contrast the listening, reading and writing

exercises were much easier to operate as whole class activities. There are implications here for the weighting of foreign language learning towards those activities, which can be most readily carried out and assessed in the classroom and reflects Grenfell's point about 'supposedly equal weighting'.

The second point to examine in Grenfell's statement is the implicit notion of role-play, of acting out situations, which comes from the concept of the pupil as host or tourist. One pupil in role is the tourist asking for directions to a hotel for example, or the station, while his partner in the role of 'sympathetic native speaker', provides an appropriate answer; activities which can be played out in pairs and then demonstrated in front of the class. This kind of drama role-play work becomes a staple of foreign language classrooms. It represents also, an example of how the 'real' can be represented in the classroom, the enclosing of 'reality in manageable forms' (Orvell, 1989:35), we have discussed above.

For our purposes where the research involves middle school children aged from 9-13 there are some different influences and impacts to take into consideration and these we will need to consider separately below. Grenfell does however next give prominence to the National Curriculum in Modern Foreign Languages which:

> aimed to establish a broad consensus that learning foreign languages should proceed through an interactive, inductive approach to communicative competence rather than by way of grammar learning and application, (ibid).

It is clear from these two overviews of the history of modern foreign language teaching that the period in which the author has been personally involved has been characterised by the introduction of a number of new initiatives and changes. Pennycock provides a word of caution when reviewing modern foreign language teaching in terms of a progression from weaker traditional methods to more modern teaching and talks about 'a problematic progressivism, whereby whatever is happening now is presumed to be superior to what happened before,' (2004:278).

This is an interesting point and as we review the different methods it isn't necessarily clear that one teaching method is an improvement on a previous system. What is evident from this overview is that at certain points government influence in the form of national policies, impact on foreign language learning, with for example, the emphasis on assessment and task based learning, which comes with the National Curriculum.

This overview of foreign language learning enables us to now set out the key developments in teaching methods as a narrative from 1960-2007.

3.2.4   The Direct Method and Audio-lingual Language Learning

We need to concentrate on those teaching methods which had the most impact on middle school French learning in Northumberland: audio-visual language learning and communicative, task-based teaching methods. It is useful first, to trace the move away from the grammar translation tradition in foreign language learning, the 'revolution', which came about through the use of the 'direct method' and audio-lingual teaching methods.

The audio-lingual method was a teaching method introduced in the United States during the 1939-1945 war as a way to develop language skills in the military. The focus was on spoken language skills developed largely through the language laboratory, with extended sessions listening to and repeating speech sounds in order for them to become automatic.

The Direct Method is of more importance to us here in that, in its determination to replace the traditional grammar translation methods, it sets out a number of principles for how foreign languages should be taught, imitating the way children learn their first language: 'emphasising the avoidance of translation and the direct use of the foreign language as a means of instruction in all situations,' (Pennycook, 2004: 178).

We are moving away from a foreign language learning situation where in order to interact with the target language you have to first translate it into your own, to one where there is to be no translation and all teaching is carried out in the foreign language. The direct method in its concern to imitate first language learning principles moves towards a more 'real' language learning situation. This is confirmed by exploring further what the system represented: 'concrete meanings of linguistic items are introduced through lessons involving objects,' (ibid), while for abstract ideas the process is one of association. It is clear that pictures are also to be used to present vocabulary, but the importance of using the objects themselves where possible, rather than their representation, is associated with the concern to imitate first language learning situations and is something we will want to consider further later.

The direct method, like the audio-lingual method promotes spoken language over written because of a 'common belief that pupils learn a language by listening to it and speaking it,' (Pennycook, 2004:177), which is again a concern to follow first language acquisition methods. The need to match first language learning methods can only however, be taken so far: 'imitation and an artificial language environment are needed in the classroom,' (ibid). This brings us to the central concern of the language learning environment and the need to imitate or simulate 'real' language learning situations which will be a consistent theme of this chapter and the research as a whole.

3.2.4.1 Audio-Visual language methods

Audio-visual language teaching represents one of the key methods introduced as part of the move from grammar translation methods. We need to consider at some length this area, as throughout the 1960s and 1970s this was the key method used to teach foreign languages in English schools, particularly for the early years of language learning.

We will look first at the nature of audio-visual learning (AVL) and the development of appropriate teaching materials. We will then want to examine how this method impacted on the national and local foreign language scene by looking at the work of the Audio-Visual Language Association. Finally, we will

examine the theoretical background to this learning and teaching method, which we will suggest has particular relevance for this research.

3.2.4.2 Audio-Visual teaching and learning

Audio-visual language teaching 'a method (..) based on the coordinated use of visual and auditive technical media,'. This exists in 'strong' versions where, 'the simultaneous use of pictorial and auditive material is dominant', and a 'weak' version 'in which pictorial and auditive materials are used only as a component within language instruction or, more frequently, with both elements dissociated from each other,'(Reinfried, 2004:61).

From the English perspective it represented the method, which foreign language student teachers were instructed to deliver from the 1960s and which provided the framework for course material such as the *Nuffield Introductory French Course, En Avant* produced by E.J. Arnold & Son Limited of Leeds; the first edition of which was produced in 1965. The official title of the course makes its audio-visual language status and primary school designation clear: Nuffield, Audio-visual French Course for Primary Schools.

Unfortunately, although middle school primary foreign language learning became established using audio-visual methods, the primary school French initiative itself proved, as we will see, unsustainable.

Stern (1967) enthusiastically records the Nuffield development and the nature of this audio-visual material it made available to primary teachers.

> A remarkable feature is the care that goes into the preparation of materials (....) founded on clearly thought-out principles of language and language teaching. The course is described as audio-visual. There is emphasis on speaking and listening and various visual aids are brought into play, flannelgraphs in the first stage, posters in the second, and for more advanced stages filmstrips and films are planned, (Stern, 1967:122).

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As a member and sometime, (although not very active), committee member of the local branch of AVLA, (the Audio-Visual Language Association) which promoted audio-visual learning, I was personally involved in this period of 'revolution' (Pennycook, 2004), giving a demonstration lesson to AVLA members at a Saturday morning conference in March 1973, using Coates Middle School pupils and suitably orthodox audio-visual methods. This was an activity, which directly led to a year's part-time teaching post for post-graduate primary French students in a Newcastle college of education[17] (in addition to my middle school French teaching commitments).

3.2.4.3 The theoretical background to audio-visual language learning

We need to turn to the work of Guberina to look more closely at his theoretical explanation of the audio-visual method. The passage below is the one most usually referred to, when discussing his work:

> When a child learns his mother tongue, he primarily relies on the presence of a reality. The acoustic signal for the objects is only a supplementary representation of these same objects. In the first phase of searching for a name for an object, the quickest way is to see the object (i.e. the reality) and to refer to it by its name. The beginner does not know the words of a foreign language. It would therefore be useless for him to hear them, unless there is a visual stronghold,' (Guberina, 1964: 4).

In a natural first language acquisition process therefore, it is the presence of the actual object (as we saw for the direct method) which is the key element in the understanding process, without the object the sound means nothing, linking the sound to the object, (as Guberina describes it: the 'reality') and providing a name for it, fixes the object. This signifying practice is associated with the work of Saussure and the theory of representation (Hall, 1997:24). Guberina brings this natural, first language learning process back to foreign language acquisition

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[17] The person currently teaching this course had just become a language adviser and wanted someone to continue with his primary French course who showed the necessary commitment to an audio-visual approach.

by pointing out that 'the beginner does not know the words of the foreign language,' and that therefore there is no point in them being heard without the support of what he describes as a 'visual stronghold'. In first language acquisition this will be the actual object while, as is made clear below, for the foreign language learning situation, this is the representation of the object through an illustration.

The audio-visual method is based therefore on the simultaneous presentation of an object or illustration with a sound, which is then activated for classroom purposes. Courses such as the *'Nuffield En Avant'* learning programme have therefore the taped recording together with the presence actual or represented, (through an illustration), of the objects being named as described by Stern above.

This is however, the first stages of foreign language learning and we need to extend this investigation to explore how more dynamic aspects of language come to be represented.

For Guberina the central problem of understanding is solved 'by means of pictures,' and in this way 'reality is represented as in real life by expression in speech, through a dialogue,' (ibid). The picture is seen as representing 'not only objects, people and natural phenomena, but also the basic situations of everyday life,' for when 'the meaning is represented by a picture and corresponding sound-signal, the basic function of language is achieved, i.e. the expression of meaning by sound,' (ibid).

Understanding is therefore achieved through pictures, which represent reality, but the pictures are not of individual objects but of situations taken from everyday life. The sound support therefore is no longer a single word but needs to take the form of a dialogue.

If we focus on one instance to illustrate this process, we can look at unit two of stage 3 of the *En Avant, Nuffield course.* The Léon family is preparing to go off on a camping holiday. Paul, the twelve year old son, goes to load his football

and fishing rod into the car (a Citroen 2CV) and unloads in the process the jack which will be needed later in the story when the car gets a puncture.

The picture illustration here (in the form of a poster) is Paul with a football and fishing rod in his hands looking into the car where there is a bag taking up a good deal of space. The dialogue played on the tape-recorder to represent this moment is as follows:

> Paul: Tiens, qui est-ce qui a mis ça dans la voiture? Qu'est-ce que c'est? Un sac! Il prend trop de place. Je vais le sortir tout de suite; puis je vais mettre mes affaires dans la voiture.

The teacher in this situation is able to point to the different objects and actions illustrated on the poster to correspond with the elements of language emanating from the tape-recorder.

At the end of his 1964 article, Guberina sums up the audio-visual language method, and in the process, revisits this concept of the representation of reality:

- Learning a language from a text which describes realistic situations such as travelling, living, residing

- This description should develop in a logical fashion *as if* it were a reality (...)

- A picture interpreting any expression is a permanent link between the expression and reality

- The presence of the picture enables the expression to represent the reality.

- The student is placed in a natural situation *as in* real-life (...) This vocal expression is explained through the picture, and thus returns to reality.

And finally:

- The tape-recorder and the picture achieve the transfer of life to dialogue, so that the person learning a foreign language finds himself in a natural situation of reality, and in its linguistic expression.

> (Guberina, 1964:16-17; the emphasis was not in the original document.).

It is not surprising given this emphasis on viewing classroom learning in terms of representing an absent language reality through pictures and sound that this should provide the trigger for using this notion as a framework for the present thesis. We refer below, to the notes in my PhD diary, which first make this link.

This would seem significant for own research.

The impression that there was something of a watershed when in the language lesson it was no longer possible to use real objects, (pens, pencils etc, people names, actual colours) and had to revert to pictures in a text book, flashcards etc marked something significant.

The whole purpose of intensive work was to try and create a more real experience ... a reality which was no longer artificial.

Can look at this concept of reality as a measure. We would want to try and measure foreign language learning as a measure of reality.

Intensive language work even though with an imaginary framework creates a reality as pupils listen to the instructions before going out to carry out the surveillance or other activity.

> *Exchange work is also very much about meeting reality, a language and culture reality head-on with all that means about culture shock etc.*
>
> *This notion of reality will have to be examined further but might just provide a consistent link through the different elements of the whole research thesis.*
>
> *(PhD Diary: 3.9.07)*

The 'as' and 'as if' comparisons emphasized in the Guberina passage, link this theoretical explanation to the performance theory of Schechner (1988, see below). Here the 'is' situation represents the real experience and the 'as' or 'as if', a simulation of an actual encounter. A concept which also links, as we will see below, with Hawkins' notion of 'rehearsal' and 'performance' in foreign language learning.

We would question the suggestion that the learner subject to a classroom presentation through audio-visual methods 'finds himself in a natural situation of reality' - there are too many mechanical elements, (possibly malfunctioning) to confound this position. In this research such classroom learning situations would represent 'approaching the real', the notion of 'a natural situation of reality' being reserved for pupils involved in such activities as a French exchange programme, where in the terminology we have adopted they 'experience the real'.

The criticism of the audio-visual language system concerned the rigidity of the method which allowed little place for creativity. Also, a German study identified four problems associated with the AVL method: inadequate support of oral teaching by the lack of written materials ; the exclusive reliance on dialogue in beginner classes; the neglect of writing skills and the failure to develop grammatical awareness in learners, (Renfried, 2004:62). These are criticisms, which are probably less valid when applied to the *Nuffield En Avant* course. Here a writing component was present, after the first year of work, although there was less attention to grammar and certainly a tendency to rely on dialogue.

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3.2.5 Communicative language teaching

Communicative language teaching represents the major trend in language teaching methodology following the audio-visual movement of the 1970s and early 1980s. Communicative language teaching brings us up to the present in terms of teaching methodology 'the modern era of communicative language teaching and task-based learning,' (Pennnycook, 2004:277). This underlines the links between communicative language teaching and task-based, graded objectives language learning. We will also see that the period is one associated in the UK with a modern foreign language being offered to all pupils and the questions about the purposes of mfl, which this raised. We need to begin however with a definition of communicative language teaching:

> Communicative language teaching (CLT) refers to both processes and goals in classroom learning. A central theoretical concept in communicative language teaching is communicative competence, a term introduced into discussions of language use and second/foreign language learning in the early 1970s (...) Competence is defined in terms of the expression, interpretation and negotiation of meaning and looks to second language acquisition research to account for its development (...) Identification of learner communicative needs provides a basis for curriculum design," (Savignon, 2004:124).

Savignon (1972, 1974, 1997) is an early authority in this area and has helped define the field and it's worth looking more closely therefore, at this definition. If CLT involves both processes and goals, then we are talking about both learning objectives, as well as how teaching is carried out. In terms of an objective and theoretical concept, there is this notion of communicative competence, the ability to use the foreign language for practical purposes and the definition for this: 'expression, interpretation and negotiation of meaning,' point to a functional-notional concept of language. Language here, is seen in terms of meaning potential and Savignon talks about 'the centrality of context of situation in understanding language systems and how they work,' (ibid: 125). Finally we have a dramatic change in direction from previous foreign language learning, with the learner now placed at the centre of the learning process and it is

around the perceived needs of this learner that the learning programme is constructed. This, as we will see, links to task-based and graded objectives discussed below.

We seem to have moved decisively from a method with objectives – AVL - to an objective with methods – communicative competence through communicative language teaching, a notion supported by Richards and Rogers (1986) who see CLT as an approach rather than method of language learning. Language here is social behaviour associated with the involvement of learners in communication. For Savignon the 'essence of CLT is the engagement of learners in communication to allow them to develop their communicative competence,' (Savignon, 2004:124). This is because involvement in communicative events is seen as 'central to language development,' (ibid).

Communicative language teaching is particularly important to this research for the links it provides to intensive language work. This is because first the intensive work takes place during the period when communicative language learning was prevalent in foreign language classrooms in the UK and second, because it represents the kind of engagement of pupils in communication which are, in Savignon's view, 'central to language development'.

3.2.5.1 The application of CLT to classroom learning
Achieving communicative competence is, as we have seen, the objective of CLT and any system which seeks: 'to enable human beings to communicate with each other in the everyday practical world,' (Savignon, 2004: 124), has to decide how best this can be achieved within the classroom environment in which learning generally takes place.

Hymes (1971) first coined the phrase 'communicative competence', to represent the use of language in social context, the observance of sociolinguistic norms of appropriacy,' (Savignon, 2004:125). There was clearly some concern about how appropriate social context could be introduced in the classroom with this 'focus on native speaker culture and the difficulty, if not impossibility, of authentically representing them in a classroom of non-native speakers,' (ibid).

We come back again to the concern about creating reality in foreign language learning as raised by Guberina above. For Guberina, as we have seen the authenticity centred on the actual process and mechanics of learning a foreign language, the concerns here are more about placing learners in a situation where they are able to interact with the language, as they communicate with each other which points to a focus on the learning environment.

Savignon looks to define 'communicative competence', in the context of classroom learning.

> the term communicative competence (...) characterize(s) the ability of classroom language learners to interact with other speakers, to make meaning," (Savignon, 1972).

Presumably, 'other speakers' refers to those pupils with whom they share the classroom as learners. The question however, is what kind of activities are going to generate appropriate pupil interaction to 'make meaning'?[18] The question of authenticity was raised by Hymes, as a necessary element in communicative language teaching and Rixon in her article on this topic underlines this connection: 'for a period in the 1980s, the notion of authenticity became very closely associated with the tenets of communicative approaches,' (Rixon, 2004: 69).

It follows from Savignon's views on the importance of the 'context of situation' (Savignon, 2004: 128) that CLT 'cannot be found in any one textbook or set of curricular materials,' because 'strict adherence to a given text is not likely to be true to the processes and goals of CLT,' (ibid). There is therefore an encouragement to use the theoretical basis of communicative competence in order to develop 'materials and methods appropriate to a given context of learning,' (ibid). This is precisely what a number of the different learning initiatives described in this thesis are concerned to do.

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[18] The negotiation of meaning is a theme we will return to as we look at the demands made on pupils by particular learning environments.

For a view of what was actually taking place in foreign language classrooms in Britain at the time of the introduction of communicative language teaching in the 1970s and 1980s, we can turn to what is described as 'probably a unique record,' (Mitchell, 1988: xi). This is the research carried out in Scotland as part of the CI project (Communication interaction in elementary foreign language teaching in formal settings) set up by the Scottish Education Department and carried out by Stirling University under the direction of Richard Johnstone. Various publications (Mitchell, Parkinson, Johnstone, 1981; Mitchell, 1985) describe this research but perhaps the most interesting for our purposes is Mitchell's 1988 book recording: 'the outcome of a research project which documents the efforts of Scottish comprehensive school teachers implementing a communicative approach in the early years of secondary schooling,' (back cover of volume). The classroom observations on which this research is founded documented: 'changes and innovation in the context of the British language classroom,' concluding that 'the picture presented in the forgoing pages of this report must bring much encouragement,' (Mitchell, 1988:165). Traditional approaches such as repetition drills had virtually disappeared and there was now 'contextualisation of many structural exercises,' (ibid). The positive nature of the changes are examined in more detail:

'The communicative use of the target language had been considerably extended, both through its increased use for classroom management purposes, and through a greater frequency of teaching/learning activities, involving the message orientated, creative use of French (most notably, of open ended role play),' (Mitchell, 1988:165).

The mention of role play is of particular importance to this thesis for, as we will see in chapter four, this is one of the ways in which we argue that an 'approach to the real' target language and culture can be made and for which we provide the example of the intensive language work introduced at Coates Middle School. For Mitchell role play together with simulation work 'can systematically and economically introduce the learner to a wide range of situations in which he/she may expect to get involved in *real life* language use, (Mitchell, 1988:64,

the emphasis is mine). This is about role play providing learners with a 'wider experience of the target language', developing in participants: 'the full range of linguistic and social knowledge and their interactive skills,' (Mitchell, 1988:65) For Mitchell such activities achieve 'the unpredictability criterion for communicative language use,' (ibid) which we will be associating with the 'real experience' of the target language and culture available to those pupils who participate in a French exchange programme.

The reality of classroom based foreign language learning, however and Mitchell accepts that communicative role play work and simulation activities 'were relatively uncommon,' (1988:65), is that it's based on a programme of learning of which the textbook is a central part. Writing nearly twenty years later therefore, Sercu can state: 'more than anything else textbooks continue to constitute the guiding principle of many foreign language courses throughout the world,' (Sercu, 2004:626) and while they reflect the different theories of language learning prevalent at the time, there is also a certain textbook tyranny which imposes: 'particular teaching styles onto teachers and learning styles onto learners, allowing insufficient space for teacher or learner creativity, presenting a highly fragmented picture of the foreign culture and stereotypical tourist views of the target people,' [19](ibid).

The solution of course is to develop a two tier approach where the routine of classroom learning with a necessary reliance on the use of textbooks and a structured learning programme, is complemented by the development of 'materials and methods,' which provide the opportunity for a more practical and communicative approach taking place outside the classroom. We will see the theory for this set out when we discuss rehearsal and performance and the work of Hawkins (1987).

It is also, true that in keeping with the need for learning programmes to reflect 'different theories of language learning', we are going to see textbooks which reflect CLT systems and theories. This is the point where communicative

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[19] We will look further at problems associated with textbooks in chapter eleven as we examine authenticity and the classroom environment.

language teaching links to task-based learning and graded objectives. Savignon in a review of those terms which 'refer to features of CLT,' includes: 'process oriented, task-based and inductive or discovery oriented learning,' (Savignon, 2004: 128). We need to examine this area next.

3.2.5.2 Task-based learning and graded objectives

Page in an article on graded objectives provides us with an account of exactly the kind of changed focus in foreign language teaching which came about in the 1970s and which led to communicative language teaching. This was a time when, 'many more pupils were being taught an mfl' and pupils along with their teachers 'became increasingly frustrated at their apparently unsuccessful language learning and abandoned it as soon as possible. Something had to change,' (Page,2004:246).

> Teachers began to ask questions they had never asked before. If this course is not suitable for my learners, what course would be? What is French for and why am I teaching it?

He then proceeds to address these questions:

> The answers came surprisingly easily. A suitable course would be one which would engage the interest of the learners by being relevant to their lives and providing a reasonable hope of success. The purpose of French or any other language is to enable human beings to communicate with each other in the everyday practical world. The purpose of language teaching should not be primarily the production of grammatically correct written sentences. The reason for teaching French was to offer insights into a different culture and into the nature of language and to provide a language competence of practical use,' (ibid).

The context here is important: the extension of modern foreign language learning to a wider range of pupils and the lack of success of this process, leading to questions about the purpose of MFL learning. The 'easy' answers focuses on the involvement of pupils, (courses having a relevance for them), and successful outcomes to the learning process. All of which is straightforward enough, as is the principle that language teaching should not have as a primary concern the production of grammatically correct sentences, but should involve cultural insights and provide practical language skills. The question of course is how is this to be achieved? What would demonstrate practical language

competence? How can we provide opportunities where pupils are able to communicate in the target language in the everyday practical world?

The answers to the questions are associated with drawing up of tasks, which can be assessed in the language classroom and for examination purposes. Page champions a causal link between the development of graded objectives in the United Kingdom and the move 'towards a more communicative approach,' (Page, 2004:247). He claims that GOML (graded objectives in modern languages) in this way 'changed completely the direction of MFL teaching in the UK,' (ibid) and makes this clear in his description of what courses of this kind would look like and how they would differ from previous foreign language learning material.

> A suitable course would have to have characteristics markedly different from those currently on offer. Learners should not to have to wait five years for official recognition of their success; the course should be divided into smaller steps, each of which would be rewarded. Existing examinations were defined purely by task with no indication of the range of language or grammatical complexity involved. The new course should define what learners would need to know in terms of language behaviours and exponents,' (Page, 2004:246).

In terms of examinations and assessment, Page compares the norm-referenced existing systems which produced a rank order with new criterion referenced tests, where marks are awarded for the successful completion of tasks. The tasks themselves, 'would mirror what is required of language users in the real-world, and materials would be authentic,' (ibid).

We return to the area of the 'perceived needs' of the language learner. Page asks the question, 'what does the young learner want to say to French speakers?' (ibid:247). What comes from this perspective is that the importance of the native speaker, (which in previous systems was the accepted model for learning procedures) is relegated and in its place, language is now approached

from a non-native speaker point of view, whose needs now need to be addressed.

This is where the concept becomes more difficult and in his commendable enthusiasm Page perhaps misses the point, when he considers the needs, for the young learner in the UK, who may not in fact want to say anything to French speakers and his or her needs are likely to depend on an actual or potential contact with France which may not exist or be forthcoming.

So for example, when Page asks, (as he considers roles and settings, a key area for graded objectives): 'what social roles would our learners be playing and in what circumstances?' (ibid), he should probably adjust 'would' to 'could' and the comprehensive 'our learners' to 'some young people'. It means that the assessment process is not only going to be based, as is necessarily the case, on a simulated situation but the basis on which this role-play is set up, is unlikely to correspond to the experience of those taking the test. The perceived need is therefore likely to be an artificial one for the majority of pupils, particularly for those living in the North of England in an area such as Northumberland.

Our critique here is not based on the concept itself but only on the claims on which this concept is apparently constructed. We will see for example, that the notions are particularly relevant to this research, where experience of France during an exchange programme leads to a focus on the needs, (language and intercultural) of participants. There is also, the problem of how to make the needs of those participating in the exchange relevant to other pupils who do not have this opportunity. Page's talk of participants on a school trip to France needing 'to buy ice-creams, postcards,' and those living with a French family 'needing to express likes, dislikes and exchange personal details,' (ibid), are all therefore familiar language concerns from our own experiences.

This provides us with a further example, this time from an assessment perspective, of school-based foreign language learning practice 'approaching

the real' as an attempt is made to represent a genuine situation susceptible to being encountered in France.

We need to turn briefly next to an example of the practical application of graded objective testing in Northumberland.

3.2.5.1 'La Grenouille D'Or'

In 1984 a project was set up in Northumberland to provide French graded tests for middle school pupils, the 'Grenouille D'Or'[20]. As one of a team of six language teachers from middle schools, I was part of the group working with the language adviser on this project, and was closely involved in the work. Unfortunately little direct evidence remains from this initiative, largely because it had to be abandoned during a period of union disputes which lasted a number of months and meant teachers were unable to take part in activities of this kind.

The proposed system was composed of three levels to match the first three years of French learning, each level represented by the colours of the tricolore 'bleu, blanc, rouge'. The final level led up to the award of the grenouille d'or (the golden frog). A series of tasks were drawn up for each level which concentrated on spoken language skills because it was felt that the written and reading skills were already well catered for in the standard course material.

The project was true to the main features of the GOML schemes as set out by Page, (Page, 20004:246):

- Practical language to be used in everyday purposes;
- Short-term objectives described in a series of levels
- Each level provides defined usable language and points forward to higher levels
- Authentic tasks and materials;

[20] Page describes: 'the dissemination of these ideas (...) and the formation of groups of teachers who set up their own (...) schemes is an interesting example of how new ideas can achieve public recognition if the circumstances are favourable,' (Page, 2004:246).

- Criterion-referenced assessment; certificates awarded at each level state the language skills required.

3.3 ACQUISITION, ENVIRONMENT, ENGAGEMENT,
underlying theories of foreign language acquisition

We return at this point to examine in more detail underlying theories of language acquisition, which represent, in some cases, the approach aspect for the different teaching methods (Richards, Rodgers, 1986). McLaughlin's 1987 examination of this field is useful as a contemporary account for the period in general and for an evaluation of the different theories. Of the general theories McLaughlin addresses, there are four we will consider here: Krashen's monitor model; the interlanguage theory; linguistic universals and the acculturation/pidginization theory. We will want however, to bring our account up to date by including such later elements as the socio-linguistic theory (closely associated with CLT), which will have had little direct impact on the teaching methodology of the period under review, but helps us to understand better the developments taking place.

Our concern here is not to review in detail each theory but to focus on those elements, which have direct relevance to this research. The need for a more extended view of theory comes from the fact that those theories we have already considered are in McLaughlin's expression, 'limited to specific phenomena', instead of being concerned with wider aspects of foreign language learning. We need to look at the areas of language development to try and explain the importance of the learning environment and the actual process of acquisition with the role motivation and engagement have in the success of pupils' foreign language learning.

The most effective manner to do this is to consider these general theories of language acquisition and learning therefore, under the specific headings which have particular relevance to this research: the learning environment; language development; motivation and engagement.

3.3.1 Language acquisition and the learning environment
– linguistic universals and sociolinguistics

Chomsky considers environment in the context of the process of language acquisition and growth: 'something that the child does, (...) something that happens to the child placed in an appropriate environment, (Chomsky, 1988, 135).

Acquiring a language (in this case a first language) for Chomsky isn't just about the act of learning the language but something that takes place automatically where the environment is an appropriate one. And the quality of this learning environment is explored further in terms of its direct consequence on language acquisition:

> The difference between a rich and stimulating environment and an impoverished environment may be substantial in language acquisition as in physical growth or, more accurately as in other aspects of physical growth, the acquisition of language being simply one of these aspects, (ibid).

More recent work on sociolinguistics provides a useful way to review the abstract nature of Chomsky's work in terms of practical language use, extending this concept of the importance of the language environment, this time, in terms of second language acquisition. Hall (2002), considers this point: 'while acknowledging that one needs to have a biological capability to learn language, a sociocultural perspective argues that what we actually learn including a conceptual understanding of language itself is shaped by our history of lived experience in our communicative environments, (Hall, 2002: 66).

The notion of 'lived experience' taking place in 'communicative environments', closely matches the work on communicative language teaching we have been considering and points to the advantage of creating different learning environments outside the classroom. Hall (referring to the work of Snow et al

1991 and Wu et al, 1994), extends this theme: 'development of linguistic skills in an additional language is strongly related to children's engagement in activities employing those skills in the target language rather than to their access to decontextualised linguistic structures associated with the target language,' (Hall, 2002: 59).

Wu's research on bilingual pupils in particular, found that: 'those learners who were restricted to learning French in the classroom showed a difference in written and oral performances across conditions, doing better on writing tasks, and doing most poorly on orally contextualised tasks,' (ibid). The reason for these different performances was, 'due to the learners' lack of opportunities to develop oral contextualising skills in their classroom activities,' (ibid).

Hall concludes from this research that:

> The kinds of communicative activities constituting the environment of language classrooms shaped in fundamental ways the learners' abilities and skills to use the target language,' (Hall, 2002:60).

What we need however, is a theory which confirms this process, addressing directly the question of language acquisition and development.

3.3.2 Language acquisition and development, input and intake

The monitor model proposed by Krashen is seen as probably the theory of language acquisition which, at the time (1970s, 1980s) was most influential in terms of classroom learning (McLaughlin, 1987:19). It made a strong distinction between acquisition and learning: 'what is consciously learnt is only available to learners as a means of monitoring (...) language which has already been acquired through an unconscious process,' (Brumfitt, 2004:414). The unconscious learning process for Krashen is acquired uniquely through communication. As McLaughlin explains it, language acquisition: 'comes about through meaningful interaction in a natural communication setting,' (McLaughlin, 1987:20).

Krashen writing in 1988, a year later than McLaughlin's critique, reproduces a number of the original articles on his monitor theory.

> Monitor Theory hypothesizes that adults have two independent systems for developing ability in second languages, subconscious language acquisition and conscious language learning, and that these systems are interrelated in a definite way: subconscious acquisition appears to be far more important,' (Krashen, 1988:1)

He then goes on to compare language acquisition with first and second language acquisition in children and underlines the importance of 'natural communication,':

> Language acquisition is very similar to the process children use in acquiring first and second languages. It requires meaningful interaction in the target language – natural communication – in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding, (Krashen, 1988: 1)

This would provide exactly the kind of theoretical background to explain the development of oral contextualising skills outside the classroom and Brumfit explains the popularity of Krashen's theory in the 1980s 'partly because it seemed to offer an explanation of why language learners in formal classrooms so often fail to achieve fluency in the target language,'[21] (Brumfit, 2004:414).

There are other elements of Krashen's theory which are of interest to us in this research. The 'affective filter' hypothesis argues that learners have 'to be willing and able to allow comprehensible input to act on their minds', (ibid), and this filter acts as a barrier to acquisition, introducing the element of motivation and engagement to foreign language learning which we will discuss further in the next section.

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[21] Krashen is keen in a later publication, (Krashen, 1988:1) however, not to be identified as someone who is denigrating language learning taking place in a classroom environment and seems to be aware of the criticisms leveled at his theory in this respect.

Unfortunately however Krashen's theory was not supported by empirical evidence. An indicator of McLaughlin approach to Krashen is evident from the very beginning of his analysis: 'according to Krashen the (monitor) theory is supported by a large number of scientific studies in a wide variety of language acquisition and language learning contexts,' (ibid). McLaughlin makes clear that in his view, shared by many authorities, this cannot be supported. He sums up Krashen's Monitor Model as follows:

> Many researchers working in the field agree with him on basic assumptions, such as the need to move from grammar-based to communicatively orientated language instruction, the role of affective factors in language learning, and the importance of acquisitional sequences in second-language development. The issue here is not second-language teaching, but second-language research and whether Krashen's theory is successful. The answer, obviously, is that it is not,' (McLaughlin, 1987: 57-58).

3.3.3 Fossilisation and acculturation, interlanguage and adaptation

There is a consistent theme in the theories we have already considered, of the importance of the learning environment in language acquisition. So, if some environments are better than others what actually distinguishes them in terms of language development? In the best learning environments we would anticipate a steady progression and development, as new vocabulary and structures are learnt and become acquired. Here we view the less successful aspects of language learning, where this progression stalls. While we have, with the rejection of Krashen's 'monitor theory', no grand overarching theory on which to build an explanation of the processes of language acquisition in different environments, we do have a focus on the process of language building and how this can become 'fossilised'. Also, there is importantly, a link between the language elements of acquisition and those social and cultural factors, which are central to foreign language acquisition associated with the concept of adaptation and acculturation.

3.3.3.1 Fossilisation

The term interlanguage (Selinker,1969, 1972) refers to 'the interim grammars constructed by second language learners on their way to the target language,' (McLaughlin, 1987:60). For Selinker the development of the interlanguage is seen as 'different from the process of first language development because of the likelihood of fossilization in the second language,' (ibid).

Fossilisation 'is the term used to describe incomplete language learning,' (Daniels, 2004:218), 'identified by certain features of the learner's language being different from the speech of the target population,' (ibid). It was a theory that as we will see, took on particular importance for the intensive language work described in chapter seven. The argument is that if certain elements of language remain only partially developed through classroom learning that intensive language work is able to act as a catalyst to bring these elements of vocabulary to active language status.

However, in order for this to be the case it would be necessary to establish that the concept of fossilization, which suggests a permanent condition, could be reversed given suitable conditions. This is something the author was keen to establish:

> 'The permanency of fossilization has also now been questioned by Selinker (1992) who modifies 'the definition of fossilization to an empirically more manageable concept of plateau in L2 learning rather than cessation of learning.' He considers that 'it is impossible to show that a given individual has stopped learning,' (Daniels, 2004: 219).

This fitted with the notion of 'vocabulary dormancy', which we will see was a concept developed to represent elements of language, specifically vocabulary, which were only partially known through classroom learning but became fully acquired through the catalyst of intensive language work. This process is explained in the same entry on fossilisation and links changes to the linguistic

environment, which in turn matches Chomsky's view of the importance of this area in language development:

> The fact that Selinker has specifically included children's foreign language learning in the fossilisation process raises a number of interesting points in terms of the permanence of the phenomenon. Here a change in linguistic environment or increased motivation might well lead to elements of language, which had previously been fixed at an intermediate stage, becoming fully acquired. In this case because the process is not permanent, fossilisation would be an unsuitable description. For language material which became reactivated following a stagnant period, 'vocabulary dormancy' might be a more accurate description, with for example vocabulary dormancy referring to works which were only partially known becoming fully acquired, (ibid).

Although this entry dates from 2004, it was originally established as part of the research into intense language learning published in 2000 and to which we will want to return later.

It is interesting to notice, finally, before leaving this area that McLaughlin in his evaluation of the theory of interlanguage, considers that 'what seems to be happening is that 'interlanguage' is a term used by people of various theoretical persuasions and that the more interesting and testable hypotheses are being generated by these theories rather than by Interlanguage theory per se. Thus researchers have begun to look at the linguistic, sociolinguistic and psychological processes that underlie interlanguage development,' (McLaughlin, 1987:81).

This brings us to acculturation an area we will initially investigate here and return to at regular points in this research.

3.3.3.2 Acculturation and culture shock

Acculturation is the process of adaptation to another culture and as such would be closely associated with culture learning. However, as McLaughlin makes clear when he discusses acculturation, the language and cultural elements are closely linked: 'part of this process involves learning the appropriate linguistic habits to function within the target-language group,' (ibid). He draws attention to the social and psychological distance hypothesis of Schumann:

> Second language acquisition is just one aspect of acculturation and the degree to which a learner acculturates to the target language group will control the degree to which he acquires the second language, (Schumann, 1978).

The interesting point, highlighted in acculturation theory, is the concept of a social and psychological distance separating a person from a different culture, a distance which needs to be crossed through adaptation to the new cultural situation:

> social and psychological distance influence second-language acquisition by determining the amount of contact learners' have with the target language and the degree to which they are open to the input that is available, (McLaughlin, 1987:111).

Psychological distance is seen as being the result of 'various affective factors', that concern the learner as an individual, such as resolution of language shock, and culture stress, integrative versus instrumental motivation, and something called ego permeability which, although not specifically defined here, is presumably associated with a person's ability to adapt.

This is more usually described in terms of 'culture shock': 'the psychological and social disorientation caused by confrontation with a new and alien culture. This process is seen as, 'part of the routine process of adaptation to cultural stress and the manifestation of a longing for a more predictable, stable and understandable environment,' (Furnham, 2004:163).

In this thesis the psychological distance is evident first as the narrative follows my personal experience of encountering different cultural environments in France and Switzerland and needing to adapt and acculturate to these new circumstances. Later, it is the focus on the experience of pupils as they encounter different learning environments as they participate in a French exchange and live with a French family.

Acculturation for this research is a defining feature of those 'experiences of the real' (such as participation in a French exchange), when compared with 'approaching the real', (associated with activities which have to represent an absent target culture). A distinction centred on the need to physically travel to the different cultural environment and adapt to the new circumstances. Or, where the foreign language and culture learning takes place in the classroom, using simulation and the mechanism of drama to reduce the social and psychological distance and in this way 'approach the real', target language and culture. It is to the culture learning theories which we turn to next.

3.4   THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF CULTURE LEARNING
related to the context of the research

It is only in the later stages of this narrative of the methods and theory of foreign language and culture learning that the specific culture element begins to have more prominence. We will reserve for later a more extensive review of culture learning. Here our concerns are more modest, we need to examine within the context of the two major teaching methods of the period, (audio-visual language learning and communicative language learning), the position given to culture learning and intercultural communication and where possible link these to the developing theories of culture. As a later stage of the research involves the use of data from pupil exchanges to create learning resources, we will also look to providing a theoretical basis for this process.

3.4.1 Culture learning as 'background information', AVL course

Stern, as we have seen, makes a strong argument for the importance of primary foreign language learning for cultural understanding, however, the *Nuffield En Avant* course which was the vehicle for this learning, is more concerned with the mechanics of language learning, as it makes war on the outdated grammar translation methods.

We can illustrate this with an examination of stage 3 of *En Avant* (1968) for pupils aged eleven, where the aims of this learning programme include: 'The extension of children's knowledge of France and the French people,' (ibid: 6)

How this extension of children's knowledge of France and the French is to be achieved is not specifically discussed. The nature of the course material, often does however, provide this 'background material'. So, the first unit of stage 3 is a geography lesson on France, complete with a large blank map with mountains and rivers where the appropriate names are be added. There are also the situations around which the dialogues are constructed which 'relate to incidents in the lives of some typical French children, their family and friends,' (ibid:7). This material is specifically identified as intending to provide background information.

The phrase 'background information' is a useful way to describe any cultural element in this AVL course. Through following the different narratives pupils would be able to pick up knowledge about France and the French but this element is a minor consideration, when compared with the drive to develop foreign language skills. Byram, examining English pupils learning French, talks about 'incidental learning', as they are presented with an account of how French people live in the course of their learning, (Byram, 1989:50). It is also true that spending time talking in English about matters concerning France and the French people was generally not accepted practice in the 1970s.

3.4.2 Communicative language and communicative culture competence

The move in foreign language teaching to develop communicative competence among pupils provides an opening for the development of cultural studies, seen as an integral part of this process. This is because the 'study and acquisition of language (...) must take place in the context of cultural study,' (Byram, 1989:56).

A useful modern overview of the situation comes from Savignon who makes it clear where communicative language teaching (CLT), stands in relation to culture learning:

> CLT is properly seen as an approach, a theory of intercultural communicative competence, (Savignon,2004:128).

This brings us back to the importance of considering together the two elements of language and culture learning which are so closely linked. Communicative language competence is seen to merge with intercultural competence as the cultural context in which communication takes places is considered.

We need to turn next however, to examine how the communicative competence teaching methodology translated intercultural learning into teaching resources. To do this we can turn to course material from the communicative competence period. To maintain a consistency of approach we will choose the course offered for pupils aged eleven which will enable us to make a direct comparison with the earlier audio-visual methods considered above.

By 1992, twenty years from our previous examination of Year 7 French learning at Coates Middle School, the *Heinemann, Avantage* course was the medium for modern foreign language learning and had replaced *En Avant*. Unlike the *En Avant* course at this stage, there is now a pupil text-book and it is on referring to this that we can investigate the cultural elements of the course from a pupil perspective.

What is noticeably absent from the promotion of this course is any mention of cultural or intercultural learning. However, looking through the text-book it is clear that another element that has changed is that although there are many illustrations as for En Avant, there are also now, a good many photographs. The photographs are of children of the same age as the classroom learners, their houses and bedrooms and also the town they live in (Darnetal, near Rouen). This helps make the link between the two different environments, that of the pupils portrayed in the text book and the English pupil in the classroom more clear. The narrative and dialogue passages which marked the earlier *En Avant* course are now replaced with topic areas: 'Salut, Toi et moi, Famille et copains …' and so on, where there is no story to follow.

It seems therefore that the cultural content is again incidental rather than overt, that pupils learn about France and the French through following the different units and topic areas but that this is again incidental learning and not a focus for specific attention, unless the teacher decides to make it so.

3.5 THE DEVELOPMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING IN PRIMARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Primary foreign language education represents one of the major developments, taking place in foreign language learning over the period covered by this narrative. It has a central place in this thesis on middle school foreign language and culture learning where the first two of four years are, as we have seen, primary based.

A number of distinctions need to be made when comparing primary MFL learning with what was happening in the secondary phase. In the first place it was necessary to provide the arguments in favour of introducing this new element into the primary curriculum. Secondly, as primary foreign language learning in state schools represented an innovation, there were particular issues to address and decisions to be made about the nature of the teaching and

learning which would need to take place, in order for this development to be successful. We will examine these below.

Further distinctions need to be made between the strictly primary school foreign language learning and what was happening in those parts of the country with middle schools where, unlike the rest of the country, foreign language learning for primary aged pupils proved sustainable.

The fact that middle schools in general and Coates Middle School in particular, were able to maintain foreign language learning in the first two, (primary) years is of central importance for this thesis. Only on the basis of this early French learning was it possible to extend the foreign language experience of pupils in the final two years, through the introduction of a range of different learning initiatives.

3.5.1 Arguments in favour of introducing foreign languages in the primary school

Doyé (2004), provides an overview of primary foreign language education. He makes a clear case for the advantages of introducing foreign language learning at an early stage:

> Since the 1960s an increasing number of educationists have demanded that primary education should include the teaching and learning of foreign languages (...) the greater flexibility of the human brain during childhood and the high motivation of young children to engage in verbal activities were seen as the main reasons for the introduction of primary foreign language teaching, (Doyé, 2004:480).

The passage quoted below comes from *Foreign Languages In Primary Education* and here, Stern sets out arguments for the early introduction of foreign languages, not just for practical reasons but for cultural ones too, associated with the way we see other countries and cultures and the need to move away from a parochial view associated with our own country, towards (what he terms), a more international outlook.

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An international outlook came to be regarded as something that cannot
be grafted on a prejudiced adult mind. It must grow and must be fostered
from infancy. (...) as a matter of contacts, exchanges, travel and study in
other countries – and also the learning of languages. Everywhere in
these attempts the language barrier seemed to be the one major
obstacle that prevented a thoroughgoing internationalism. Looked at in
this light, an early acquaintance with other countries and their languages
became an essential of the most basic education everywhere, (...) of the
factors that create the most profound in-group isolation the linguistic one
is perhaps the most powerful. Without overcoming it at least once in the
course of growing up, the world of others remains a closed book and the
individual is left in this respect in an egocentric phase of development –
in the Piagetian sense of the word. The other fellow beyond the mountain
never becomes quite real. The educational consequence is clear. The
learning of a second language must be regarded as a necessary part of
total personality formation in the modern world, since it should enable a
person to live and move freely in more than one culture and free him
from the limitations imposed by belonging to and being educated within,
a single cultural group and a single linguistic community," (Stern, 1967:3,
the emphasis is mine).

The underlining in this passage was made in my own copy of Stern's book in
1968. It shows where the writing of Stern made a particular impact on the new
foreign language student teacher. Returning after spending five years living
abroad and now adapting to a northern English culture, involved its own
process of acculturation, (as we will see); the notion of personality formation
and the ability to move freely between cultures are likely to have proved
particularly relevant. It provides an indication of the thinking of the time,
representing perhaps, not only an agreement with the arguments for teaching
French to primary pupils but also, those personal reasons for wanting to be a
French teacher of primary pupils.

What Stern would not have anticipated is the change in the nature of the society in the United Kingdom by 2007. Doyé underlines the multi-cultural world in which children now grow up. The 'other fellow' is no longer 'beyond the mountain', but may well be sitting next to you in the classroom and living next to your house. More importantly still, you yourself may come from a different culture and the English language you encounter in the primary school may already represent a foreign language for you.

> The environment in which most children grow up today is no longer monocultural. They have contact with members of other cultures and direct experience of foreign influences from an early age onwards. Their local environment is often multicultural already; their peers come from different backgrounds; the objects which they work and play with come from distance places, (Doyé, 2004:480).

What immediately strikes us as we read Stern's and Doyé's persuasive arguments for the introduction of foreign language teaching in primary schools is that they were written some forty years apart. Only now, four decades later is there beginning to be anything like universal primary foreign language learning in English and Welsh schools[22].

We need to briefly examine why this is so, considering at the same time the slightly different context of middle school foreign language learning as it applies in Northumberland, before returning to the main themes of language and culture learning and teaching.

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[22] 'The take up of languages in primary schools has gone very well, and a recent survey suggests that already some 70 per cent of primary schools are now offering a language or are close to doing so,' (DfES, Languages Review, 2007: 3).

3.5.2 Issues concerning the introduction of a foreign language into primary education

Doyé makes it clear that there is now (2004), acceptance that foreign languages should be part of the primary curriculum: 'The question is no longer whether, but how foreign languages can be taught; effectively at the primary level,' (Doyé, 2004:480).

Teaching foreign languages effectively in the primary school raises it is true, a number of specific problems, (Doyé, 2004: pp 480-483).

However, the question which needs answering is even given these issues, not in themselves as we see below, insurmountable, why it has taken so long for primary foreign language learning in the United Kingdom to become embedded. The answer comes from the results of the rigorous investigation into the early initiative in primary foreign language learning carried out by Burstall (1968, 1970, 1974) for the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER).

The 1970 report together with a number of positive points such as heads assessing the impact of introducing French as being very beneficial, uncovers some more negative elements which are of particular interest to us:

- many pupils found it difficult to learn French without some form of visual support
- most pupils agreed that it was harder to understand tape-recorded French than the French spoken by the teacher.
    (Synopsis to French in the Primary School, Burstall, 1970)

It was however, the 1974 report that made a real impact. Johnstone (2004) examining the 'chequered career of modern languages at primary school', talks about the 'collective trauma engendered by the negative evaluation of French in English primary schools' (Burstall et al., 1974).

This report reached the negative conclusion that by the age of 16 no significant difference existed between those who had learnt French in

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primary schools and those who had not. When these result became known early language learning suffered a severe setback, (CILT, 2004 : pp13,14).

Instead of addressing the problems raised in the 1974 report, authorities decided on the drastic but economic measure of abandoning primary foreign language learning. All the arguments in favour of foreign language learning in the primary school, as outlined above, were therefore at a stroke abandoned. The exception to this situation was, as we will see children of primary age in the middle schools.

3.5.3 The introduction of modern foreign languages in middle schools in Northumberland

While there is a general lack of evidence to cover the area of middle school French learning during the 1979s and 1980s, two existing documents enable us to reconstruct this period. The first of these dates from March 1974 and is the report circulated to all middle school French teachers in Northumberland from a nation-wide Department of Education and Science conference held in January 1974 for 9-13 Middle schools and 13+ High schools, the title of the conference was Modern Languages in Middle and High Schools. The second document dating from ten years later in 1984 is a general review of the curriculum in Northumberland Schools at the time, which contains valuable information on modern foreign languages and their place in the middle school curriculum. What we have therefore, is evidence for the national picture for middle school French learning in the year that Burstall's critical report on primary French learning was produced, and a Northumberland document with evidence of the position ten years later.

3..5.4 DfES Conference on Modern Languages in Middle and High Schools, 1974

The document[23] is 'a brief summary of some of the major points which emerged in discussion,' (DFES, short course N800, January 1974:1), during this conference, set up to 'discuss the place of Modern Languages in areas with

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[23] See appendix A3.3

transfer from middle to high schools aged 13,' and attended by middle and high school teachers, language advisers and HMIs. This was a consultation exercise to review the position of middle and high school foreign language learning. It should probably be seen in the context of the questions surrounding the future of primary French language learning prior to the publication of the Burstall report later in the same year, (which had the drastic consequences we have examined).

This surviving document becomes therefore, a valuable primary source as we examine middle school foreign language learning in England at this period. It is of interest historically, specifically because it is not a final published and edited report but a three page summary written shortly after the conference had taken place.

The report came to me in May 1974 as head of the French department at Coates Middle School with a written note asking for its return to the headteacher with comments. The fact that the document has survived, suggests that it was never returned and that no comments were forthcoming.

The areas of particular interest to us in this report are: the age of starting French and the position of French in the Middle School. Consideration of 'the age of starting French', found that 'nearly all areas with 9-13 middle schools have decided on a four year middle-school course starting at the age of nine,' (ibid). So, at this critical time, middle schools were keen to continue with early French learning with pupils aged nine, because it enabled schools 'to use the Nuffield/Schools Council materials and to benefit from some of the enthusiasm generated by the scheme,' (ibid).

The mention of 'enthusiasm generated' by the Nuffield material is an interesting comment on resources soon to be abandoned in primary (not middle) schools as they rejected foreign language learning. There was also however, what is described as: 'a fairly strong feeling that the age of starting ought to be reconsidered, at least in some areas,' (ibid). This was due to problems associated with the number of MFL teachers available and also an awareness

of 'the practical problems faced by High Schools accepting children at 13 with widely different experiences of French,' (ibid).

There are therefore, problems associated with middle school foreign language learning. Despite concerns there is however, a clear commitment to middle school French from the conference, which is apparent from the 'strong rejection' of the suggestion that foreign language learning was 'in some way an inappropriate field of study in the middle school,' (ibid: 2). The fact that this proposal is raised at all, indicates however, the negative attitude to middle school French learning of some of those attending the conference, in spite of the strongly positive reaction of most to this specific suggestion.

A number of issues and practical suggestions are made on the topic of middle school French learning. It was felt important that teachers should do their best to 'fit in with the general pattern of working in the middle school.' Although the isolated nature of the subject was felt to preclude 'full integration of French into other areas of work,' although 'inter-relation of topics was often easy,' (ibid:2).

There was also an examination of the role of the specialist French teacher and a surprising, (given the shortage of available specialist teachers), view that completely specialist French teaching was not desirable. 'It was hoped that every middle school would have at least one teacher able to direct the work throughout the school, and act as a consultant to less well qualified colleagues,' and that this teacher 'might give lessons, observed and followed up by others,' (ibid); a remarkably progressive notion for the 1970s. However, there was also a view that each teacher offering the subject should teach his or her own class and not more than two others,' and a warning that ' teachers should not be required to teach French against their will,' (ibid).

3.5.5   French and the middle school curriculum, Northumberland, 1984

'The School Curriculum in Northumberland' document published in 1984, (ten years after the above DFES conference on modern languages and the Burstall report of the same year), provides an update on the position of foreign languages within the middle school curriculum and also how foreign language

teaching was seen within this education authority at a time when a foreign language learning experience for pupils in years five and six (aged nine to eleven years) was generally only available to middle school pupils in England.

The document provides a number of general points about the curriculum among which there is one which talks about the need to offer children in Northumberland a suitably broad curriculum, 'which strives to be relevant to their needs as individuals, as members of a community and as citizens in a rapidly changing world', (Northumberland County Council, 1984:5).

Foreign language learning is introduced to pupils from their start at the middle school and the aims and objectives for French learning are set out:

Foreign language

1. achieve a measure of practical, communicative competence in French

2. gain insight into the concerns of Humanities and Social Studies by means of the direct contact with another culture provided by the study of this foreign language; and

3. gain further insights into the concerns of language in general through knowledge of French, (Northumberland County Council, 1984: pp 29-30).

The key element in the document is however, the confirmation that French is to be an integral part of the curriculum offered to all middle school pupils including those in the primary years 5 and 6. This is evident when the recommended curriculum for middle schools is proposed and a model timetable drawn up to show the different proposed contact time for each subject area over a week of lessons (we retain only the French element).

Table 3.2 Curriculum model for middle school French teaching

Subject	year 1, (9+)	year 2, (10+)	year 3, (11+)	year 4,(12+)
French	4 lessons	4 lessons	4 lessons	4 lessons

The number of lessons of French is set out for each year as part of a curriculum model based on a 40 period week (in itself a somewhat surprising suggestion representing 30 minute periods, whereas for most schools this would be forty five or fifty minute lessons).

The issues raised by Doyé concerning the introduction of a foreign language in the primary school do not apply in the context of middle school learning where a specialist teacher will have responsibility for organising and teaching most of the subject.

3.6 REHEARSAL V PERFORMANCE,

Hawkins and the argument for immersion, intensive language work

The echo of the questions raised earlier by Page concerning the rationale behind foreign language learning in schools, ('what is French for? Why am I teaching it? What kind of course would be most suitable for my learners?), in spite of his attempt to do so, has not really been satisfactorily answered. And we could look to a different interpretation and a different set of answers to those which have been set out in this literature chapter. Answers that are perhaps closer to 'real' (first language) learning systems as promoted by Guberina , or to the spirit of communicative language learning as set out by Savignon. Even from the abstract linguistics of Chomsky, we have seen an importance attached to the quality of the learning environment for language development.

Instead of a reliance on a simulated approach to the 'real', it would be satisfying to see in academic writing on foreign language teaching and learning, a willingness on the part of different authors to look up from the immediate perspective of classroom-based foreign language learning, to consider further horizons, alternative possibilities; even a passing acknowledgement of other

opportunities, more real experiences as a way of developing genuine language and culture opportunities and, in this way, achieving the 'cultural insights and the ability to communicate in the everyday practical world' (Savignon, 2004:126).

We will want to argue in this thesis that the culture of foreign language teaching in general, tends towards a particular orthodoxy associated with classroom learning and although, the content of this classroom learning has undergone, as we can see from this review, a process of considerable change, it tends to remain just that, resolutely classroom based.

Only in this final section, as we look at the work of Hawkins and his associates do we find a concern to stretch foreign language learning beyond its traditional and limiting horizons. The element conspicuously missing from this account of the literature on foreign language and culture learning has been an examination of any language learning initiatives taking place outside the classroom and a wider investigation of any alternatives to the classroom learning language environment.

Hawkins is described as an innovator with practical experience as a classroom foreign language teacher, before becoming director of the new Language Teaching Centre at the University of York in 1965 (Grauberg, 2004:258). It is while at York that Hawkins became: 'increasingly dissatisfied with the conventional one-period-a-day foreign language timetabling,' and 'explored ways of intensifying language teaching,' (ibid).

It is worth examining the work of Hawkins in more detail as it has particular relevance for this research. He coined the phrase, which became a catchword for the isolated position of foreign language teaching in the English school curriculum, 'gardening in a gale'.

> Picture the foreign language teacher's daily task. The class arrives for a lesson babbling excitedly in English about the day's doings. The teacher shuts the door on English speech patterns, enclosing the pupils within

the 'cultural island' of the language classroom, and for 40 minutes strives like a keen gardener to implant in the recalcitrant soil a few seedlings of speech patterns in the foreign language. Just as the seedlings are taking root and standing up for themselves, the bell goes and the class is dismissed into the English language environment,' (Hawkins, 1987:97).

What is particularly important about this extract is that it is looking at the context of foreign language teaching as an element of the whole curriculum. Also, instead of limiting himself to an analysis of the problem, Hawkins is able to propose solutions: the use of immersion strategies in foreign language teaching. The philosophy behind this approach is set out in the clearest terms. For Hawkins foreign language teaching is seen as a rehearsal that rarely leads to performance:

> We are now able to see why so much that passed for language teaching (...) has been mere rehearsal, not followed by performance. Rehearsal in the classroom was sometimes followed by performance but only for the select few (by extensive reading of texts whose meaning mattered to the learner or by immersion in the language on study visits abroad). For them rapid acquisition of the language followed, (Hawkins, 1987: x).

Hawkins feels that foreign language acquisition is most effective where once the learner has done the rehearsal part, ('learnt the lines, an essential stage otherwise he would have nothing to say,' (ibid)), he can then concentrate on the performance. The two elements are seen as the medium (rehearsal, learning the language) and message (performance, using the language for practical communication purposes). And he goes on to point out that 'merely relaying other people's messages in obedience to teacher or text-book (...) does not make the language stick for average learners,' (ibid).

A review of intensive learning initiatives taking place in England produced by Hawkins with Perren in 1978 provides a useful account of the different kinds of out of classroom foreign language learning taking place at that time which was extended to a second edition in 1988. The term intensive has replaced

immersion here, with immersion used to describe more extensive periods of exposure to the target language such as the immersion French language schools for English speakers in Canada.

Placing the work of Hawkins within the context of the present research, we can see that he is almost alone in considering out of classroom foreign language learning. In the epilogue to Hawkins' 1988 book on *Intensive Language Teaching and Learning,* Capel-Davies writes the following:

> **Will curriculum always equal classroom ?**
> Although day-to-day obstacles are posed by the school environment in which, we work, a clearer recognition of the underlying issues still apparently needs to be fought for at the highest administrative levels (...). Recent publications from the DES and HMI, while asserting that communicative competence is the main objective, still emphasise the virtually unchallenged primacy of classroom practice in reaching this goal (Capel-Davies, 1988:143).

There was no awareness, on the part of the author of this thesis, of the work of Hawkins prior to the intensive language work carried out with pupils at Coates Middle School (see chapter seven below). It is clear however, that Hawkins provides the arguments in favour of developing out of classroom foreign language learning initiatives and the rationale behind this kind of approach. The use of drama terminology as metaphors for describing the process (rehearsal, performance) is particularly appropriate given the specific role of drama, which this research argues is a mechanism for reducing the distance separating foreign language learning from 'real' language and culture experiences (see below).

The initiatives described in Hawkins' volume on intensive language work, although often involving older pupils, maintain the same kind of learning programmes and dynamics as those described in this research and reveal the same concern to provide practical active language opportunities, taking place outside the classroom.

3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a history of foreign language and culture teaching from the 1960s until the 2000s within the context of this research into middle school language developments. It has necessarily been a long and complicated narrative.

We will be able to link elements explored in this literary review to the author's own experiences as a foreign language teacher over this time through the personal development taking place and the different learning initiatives introduced in the middle school described in the pages which follow.

Additional aspects of the literature on foreign language and culture learning will occur in later chapters of the thesis, where these become relevant to the text.

To complete this chapter we return to Salvagnac and examine how the different teaching methods we have been discussing might represent this town in south-west France in terms of a French language and culture learning programme.

An audio-visual learning scheme for middle school pupils would want to place the learning within a narrative, perhaps using the schoolboy encountered as a central figure who would then become involved in a number of situations or adventures in the town and surrounding countryside. Situations represented in the form of taped dialogues, presented simultaneously with suitable illustrations. There would be a reading book to go with this material, (introduced once the elements of language had first been introduced as spoken language), to consolidate the story together with the vocabulary and structures it contained.

In contrast, using a communicative language teaching approach would be likely to involve a textbook and tape-cassette of recordings with a number of units based on the different places in the town: the boulangerie, the school, the restaurant/hotel, the gendarmerie for example. And for each place there would

be a number of key elements of vocabulary and listening comprehension exercises based on taped dialogues with a focus on the functions of language rather than its grammatical structure. The nature of this course material would focus on a number of tasks, which could then form the basis of an assessment process, which would be an integral part of the learning. Pupils would need to show they were able to cope with a number of scenarios which they would be likely to encounter as a tourist visiting the region with their family.

Each of these teaching methods would provide a representation of the town of Salvagnac. For the audio-visual method the story content would be likely to mean that the images of the town and surrounding country would form the backdrop to the story, as the protagonist and his friends became involved in the different episodes of the unfolding adventure. In the communicative language teaching programme, there would be the chance to use real photographs of the different places in the town as well as of its inhabitants.

An initial comparison of these two systems might suggest that the communicative language system provided the most accurate representation of the town of Salvagnac. However, in terms of pupil involvement, here the different units represent isolated elements where there is little unifying characteristic but a constant repetition of new elements of vocabulary, listening comprehension passages, reading comprehension passages and the first elements of writing and spoken language work. What the audio-visual course would provide in contrast, is a narrative set in the environment of the south-west of France, and as a narrative there would be characters with whom pupils could identify and a story line to follow.

What would happen however, if we were keen to take a different approach and instead of constructing a learning programme, (making a representation of Salvagnac for use in the classroom, an 'approach to the real'), we were to provide for pupils an experience of the real? This would mean taking a party of pupils to stay in the town, perhaps as a field-trip staying in a hostel or better, with French families. The objective for the programme could be to play out a particular drama narrative or more simply to act as ethnographers collecting

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information about the area and its population through carrying out interviews with the local population.

The focus for this research is, as we have already indicated, a concern to extend foreign language learning for pupils. To do what would seem to be most appropriate for a subject concerned with another language, to journey towards that new and different cultural environment and in the process to 'experience the real'.

STAGE TWO: ACCULTURATION

Link with previous stage: Stage One has set out the context and method for the research process and established the nature of the research as historical narrative. In Stage Two the narrative begins.

Photo 2.1: Turin, Italy, February 1963: international students on tour, (author on left).

Contents:

Chapter four: part one, Grenoble University, the first year living abroad; part two: living in an international students' home in Switzerland;

Chapter five: student teacher at Northumberland College of Education.

Appendix references: A4, A5

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT
LIVING ABROAD, 1963-1968

French language studies at
university of Grenoble. Mixing
with other English speaking
students: American, English,
Israel, Dutch, Scots.

GRENOBLE 1963-1964

London
?

KEY
DECISION
Continue
language
studies
instead of
starting
work in
London

French language studies
then, social science
studies at University of
Neuchatel, Switzerland.
Separate from English
speakers.

NEUCHATEL 1964-1968

Living in
international
students' home.
Shared experience
of living abroad.

MAISON DE
CHAMPREVEYRES

ici on parle
francais

Narrative Illustration 4.1

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Approaching the Real

STAGE TWO   ACCULTURATION

4.0   INTRODUCTION TO STAGE TWO

As we begin this stage of personal development and acculturation, we need to see this process in terms of the impact of the 'real' foreign language and culture. We encounter here for the first time therefore, a number of ongoing themes associated with this and closely linked to the whole research process. Themes repeated as the 'experience of the real' is extended to pupils in a later stage of this narrative. There is the journey from familiar surroundings to a new language and cultural environment, the initial period of culture shock and the need to adapt to this new foreign scene. Finally, and critically, a concern to try and discover whether the 'experience of the real' leads to any change and transformation in the actor involved in this performance .

We need to be quite clear why this account of personal development has a place in this thesis. The time spent living abroad needs to be seen as a particularly formative period, which led to the decision to become a foreign language teacher with a particular agenda for foreign language and culture learning.

CHAPTER FOUR   GRENOBLE, NEUCHATEL, FLORENCE,

five years spent living abroad as a foreign student.

4.01   INTRODUCTION

At eighteen I was sent to spend a year in France, to learn French as a suitable preparation for a life working in the insurance business in the City of London. It was a traditional way for someone from my public school background to fill the transition from the organized and disciplined environment of boarding school to the start of a business career. Having knowledge of France, the French language and way of life, was seen as a valuable asset for any future occupation.

My time in Grenoble lasted from October 1963 to May 1964 and then, instead of returning to England for a career in insurance as intended, there was further time spent living abroad, first in Switzerland, (for three years), then Italy. At the end of this period I returned in September 1968 to England to become a student teacher at Northumberland College of Education. Something happened to change the direction of my life, which resulted in my becoming a foreign language teacher. This chapter provides the narrative for this period.

From the extensive data we have available in the form of diary entries for Grenoble and the first period at Neuchâtel, we need to focus on those areas which are going to enable us to describe the acculturation and adaptation which took place and in particular, to try and understand how this led to the decision to become a language teacher.

The Grenoble diaries provide evidence for the process of acculturation, beginning with 'culture shock' and showing by the end of the time spent there, some measure of adaptation. We will concentrate therefore, on evidence for changes in identity as the public school boy slowly adapts to the new foreign environment. There are also, those relatively few but important occasions when, unlike the typically rather distant engagement with French culture, there are extended conversations in French. Conversations which are capable of changing perspectives and leading to transformation, (Schechner, 1967).

The Neuchâtel experience is very different and involves not the acculturation into Swiss society so much, as into the international community of Champréveyres, a students' home.

4.1 NARRATIVE ACCOUNT

There is first, as with all these accounts, the journey, travelling from London to Grenoble. From the long journey by air and train I remember a particular incident. A crowded train and an old woman dressed in black coming to sit in the vacant place next to me. She must have said, she wanted me to move some of my baggage, so she could place her packets on the overhead rack. She made herself clear, presumably through gestures, because my school French had not equipped me for dealing with any practical situations. I must have made a fumbled attempt to create some space which was unsuccessful, because she then said to me with a gallic shrug: 'tant pis'[24], as she found an alternative place for her bags. The phrase was retained, the first French expression to be learnt in a year's engagement with France, not the most encouraging phrase to begin a year's experience of living there.

The first days at Grenoble, before lectures at the university began, remain as memories of wandering around the town in bright sunshine, knowing no-one and feeling isolated and vulnerable. Lying on my bed in the tiny room of my lodgings, I would hear voices I thought were speaking English and dashing down the steps to the street, (a street so old and narrow that the roofs of each side dipped towards one another, as though wanting to establish a closer relationship), only to discover that it was in fact, French being spoken.

From this time, there is an accident in the main square, Place Gambetta, which was close to where I lived. I noticed a crowd had gathered and joining the group saw someone of my own age lying in the street with a head wound and people trying to stem the flow of blood with the only thing they had to hand, the pages of a newspaper, which shocked me as being inappropriate. I remember how the victim, a small figure in glasses, looked frightened and bewildered, as he lay

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[24] Too bad.

there waiting for medical attention and hearing someone say 'americain'; a student like myself then, who didn't speak the language or understand the customs. And then the ambulance came and he was taken away with the siren sounding.

4.1.1. Narrative Explanation

The narrative describes a long journey to reach and experience the 'real' French language and culture and then, the first impressions of this new and different environment. My experience of France and the beginning of a period of personal development, a time spent living abroad for five years, before the decision to become a foreign language teacher, leads to a return to England.

What the passage makes clear is the 'culture shock'[25] of the first stages of a foreign experience of this kind. The feelings of isolation and bewilderment which comes from 'not being able to understand, control and predict another's behaviour', (Furnham, 2004:165). And the accident incident is surely remembered because it draws attention to the vulnerability and insecurity of the new foreign student and the fear of what might take place in this different and unknown environment.

This is a common experience of all beginnings of this kind, ('a normal reaction as part of the routine process of adaptation,' Furnham, 2004:163). The questioning why the decision has been made to go and live abroad and learn a particular language: the difficult passage that has to be gone through, before some kind of acculturation takes place and the person begins to adapt to their surroundings. The negative phase of these first days in Grenoble, is replaced in this narrative with a much more positive experience, one, which we will see, does not involve engaging however, with the surrounding French language and culture but of being part of a group of English speaking students, the French scene remains a backdrop to the narrative.

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[25] This is a key and defining element of any 'experiences of the real' where the encounter with the different language and culture means there is a need to adapt. For a full definition of 'culture shock', see section 3.4.3.2 above.

Table 4.1 Contents of Chapter Four, Section One: A Year in Grenoble

4.0 Introduction	→ 4.1 Narrative Passage and explanation	→ 4.2 Diary Analysis	→
4.3 Changing Identity	→ 4.4 Interactions	→ 4.5 Acculturation	→
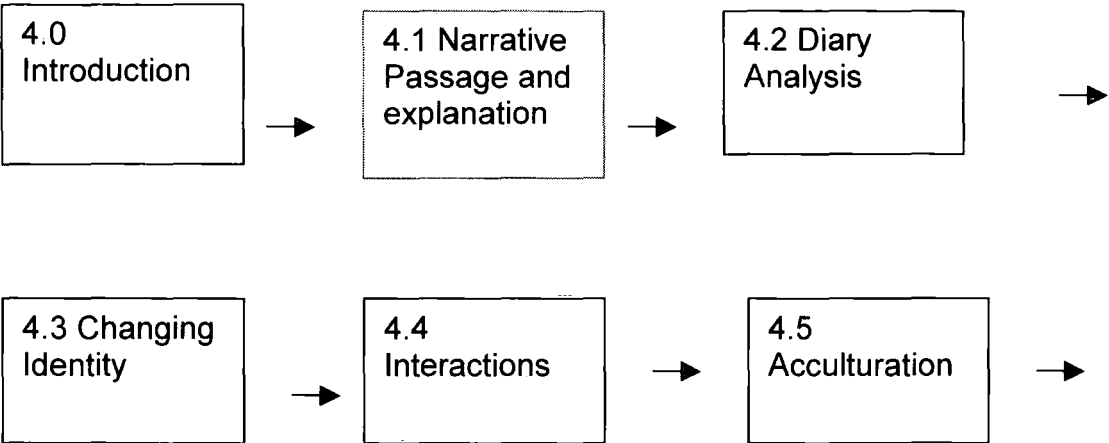
Section Two: Neuchâtel, Switzerland; Florence, Italy.

4.6 Introduction	→ 4.7 Narrative Passage and explanation	→ 4.8 Maison de Champréveyres	→
4.9 Intercultural Competence	→ 4.10 Florence, Italy	→ 4.11 Conclusion	
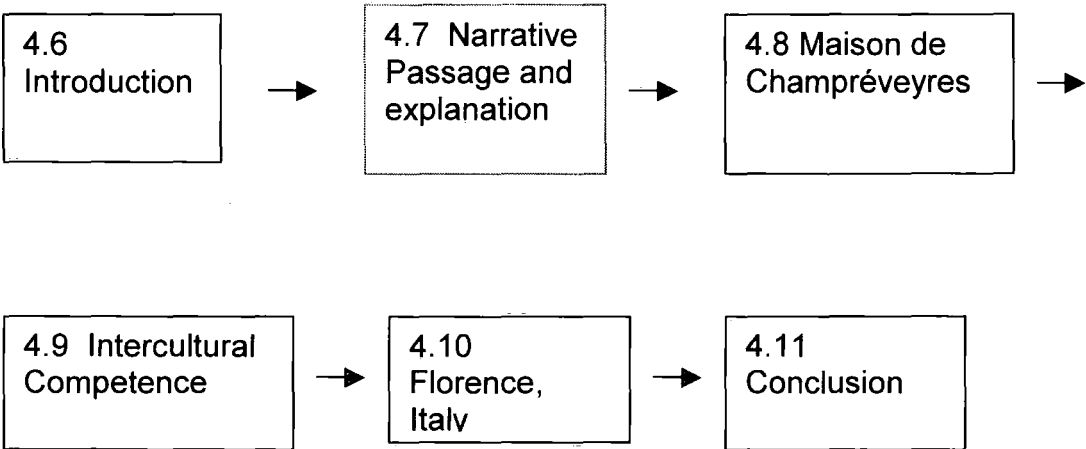
4.2 DIARY

establishing a suitable theoretical framework for the analysis of the diaries

It will be important to be able to handle the quantity of data available in a systematic manner. At the same time, there is a need to place this element of the research within the theoretical framework of acculturation and the adaptation to a different culture

The system of analysis identified as the 'thematic framework' developed by Ritchie and Spencer during the 1980's at the National Centre for Social Research, provided the principal procedure for analysing the data available[26]. The 'thematic framework' is used to classify and organise data: 'the task is to identify recurring themes or ideas. These may be of a substantive nature –such as attitudes, behaviours, motivations or views (...). Once these recurring themes have been noted, the next step is to devise a conceptual framework or index, drawing (...) upon the recurrent themes', (ibid: 221).

The procedure would therefore be to read through the diaries a number of times to become familiar with the text and through this process establish the key recurring themes. These would then be identified and coded, with a third stage to the process, involving writing up a chart in which the key entries, listed by theme, could be set out for scrutiny. Finally, checking through the chart would lead to a reduction in the number of different codes as it became apparent that there was some duplication, with different codes covering similar areas. From these measures it would be possible to provide a more realistic analysis of the way in which my eighteen-year old self adapts to the first contact with a different culture.

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[26] This matches similar coding systems used for qualitative research (Strauss, Corbin, 1998: Basics of Qualitative Research).

4.2.1 Placing the Diaries within the Context of Research into Acculturation

It is important to place the process of adaptation revealed by the diaries, within the context of the literature on acculturation. This provides a theoretical framework on which to fully analyse the data generated by the diary entries. In particular, while a coding system enables the categorization of recurring themes, an explanation of these themes and the behaviour they reveal, will benefit from an examination of the literature in this area. How did my own experience fit in with the pattern for other students and what is the theoretical explanation for this?

We have already considered acculturation[27] and here we extend the examination of this area to explore the practical implications of this process. The point to emphasise is that the learner is required to make 'changes in both social and psychological behaviour.' A more complicated process, when the target culture involves a different language and where therefore, '..a key part of the acculturation process will involve language learning,' (ibid).

Acculturation, we have seen, can be assessed by analysing the distance which 'separates the learner from the target culture,' (ibid). This has important implications for our analysis of the diary entries. To to able to assess acculturation, we need to monitor the nature and quality of the interaction with French language and culture taking place during the year in Grenoble. This gives us a focus, as we choose those recurring themes for coding and enables us to discard those, which are not going to help us isolate the elements we require for assessing the level of acculturation taking place.

We are helped in this process by research designed to investigate the benefits associated with British language students spending a year abroad learning their target language, (Coleman, 1997, 1998, 2004; Murphy-Lejeune, 2003). This literature clearly fits closely with my own experience. A difference is that for many language students the year would involve working as a language

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[27] the process an individual has to go through in order to become adapted to a different culture,' (Daniels, 2004:1) see above section 3.4.3.2.

assistant teaching English in a French school. Coleman makes the obvious point that 'what learners do when abroad affects their learning', and emphasises the importance of the nature of the contact established with native speakers: 'the more they talk with locals the more they improve', (Coleman, 2004:583). Just being in the target country does not necessarily lead to extended contact with the local population and improved language skills: 'the false assumption made by many students going abroad that integration will be easy and that their language will improve automatically since they will be forced to use it all the time,' (ibid). While this fits closely with my own experience (as we will see below), there are other aspects of Coleman's work, which we would want to challenge. In particular in his key article on *Residence abroad within language study'*, *1997,* he makes the following point: 'we assume that to take part in natural interactions, about real-life topics, with native speakers, must be the ideal route for foreign language proficiency, (Coleman, 1997:1). For Coleman this is a myth, 'shared by teachers and students of foreign languages,' (ibid); however, the direction of this research is to privilege encounters of this kind, which provide 'real experience', the opportunity to perform the language in natural situations in contrast to the artificial learning environment of the classroom.

By identifying and naming certain stages and elements in the acculturation process, this research enables some elements of the diary to be identified which might otherwise have remained obscure and not been categorised. As we analyse the data generated through the coding process, we will find ways of explaining certain patterns of behaviour by drawing on this literature.

In a university town such as Grenoble with a large number of foreign students, it may not be easy interacting with the target culture. It becomes clear that the nature of the contact will be varied and involve in addition to French speakers and French nationals, contact with 'other strangers'.

> For most students, the emerging social fabric is motley and comprehends an assortment in variable quantity of secondary and primary contacts with other strangers or with natives. If the diversity and

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quality of their social contacts influences their appreciation of the stay abroad as a whole, these social contacts extend beyond the native group. The international group which promotes relationships among 'equal strangers', usually represents the main intercultural resource in the student experience, others playing lesser roles," (Murphy-Lejeune, 2003:109)

The notion of 'other strangers' is an important concept as we analyse the diary records and assess the levels of acculturation taking place.

A further element in Murphy-Lejeune's paper addresses the nature of the adaptation required of the intercultural traveller:

Changes are required in order to fit into the new given framework so as to make one's presence less glaringly visible. Adaptation means picking up small things borrowed from the natives – clothes, gestures, actions, habits ... The social cloak one puts on fits the local scene[28]. (ibid: 112-113)

The possibility that experience of a process of acculturation might be seen to cause changes to the identity and personality of the student involved in the process, comes from the work of Alred:

entering a situation in which the familiar is drastically reduced and customary ways of responding to circumstances are seriously challenged has the potential to change an individual in important ways, (Alred, 2003:14).

The whole process of acculturation and adaptation to a different culture needs to be placed within the framework of intercultural competence. Byram's (1989) work identifies the nature of this process and defines the objectives for this development. This literature will provide us with a means of interpreting individual diary entries and will enable us to assess more realistically how

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[28] A theme we will return to when we examine 'tourist immersion' in chapter nine.

different attitudes and behaviour can be understood in terms of a developing intercultural competence.

4.2.2 Diary Coding

Identifying a number of themes from the diaries was relatively straightforward after reading them through a number of times and taking into account the acculturation focus, to enable an assessment of the nature of the interactions taking place, the table setting out this data is available for consultation in the appendix[29]. The identified themes were:

- Family and school background
- Identity
- Interaction with the target culture
- Life choices
- Adaptation and acculturation

The last four of these themes are of interest to us here, in our concern to focus on the acculturation process and to plot any changes and transformation, taking place as a result of this 'experience of the real'.

4.3   IDENTITY

Reading through the diary it becomes apparent that a recurring theme is an awareness of how the experience of living abroad is affecting identity, that is to say the identity of the person I saw myself as representing at the time. We have seen that the literature (Alred, 2003), deals with this possibility and the changing character of a person spending time living abroad.

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[29] The process adopted by this research has been to consign all but the most important tables to the appendix, in order not to interrupt unduly the flow of the narrative.

The identity theme covers four sections, which reflect the movement of the narrative by considering 'former self', 'changing identity' and finally, 'future self'[30].

4.3.1 Former Self

The former identity is associated with the attitudes and culture associated with an English public school of the 1960's. This is apparent in such elements as language, accent and the use of certain English phrases and vocabulary and also, most visibly in a certain dress style which stands out as different from the dress of other students of different nationalities. Essentially entries in this category look back on previous experience which centres on the traditional public school life seen as 'oceans away from my life here in Grenoble,' (G.D. January Notes).

4.3.2 Changing Identity, transformation[31]

To be able to appreciate changes in identity requires an awareness of differences from a previous self. One aspect of this is made evident from the diary through the comparison with a new group of English students who arrived at Grenoble some months after myself. These students represent the product of an English public school education before the experience of living in France has made an impact on them.

> Everyday now in the intensive class there seems to be another English boy, unmistakable product of public school: sports or corduroy jacket, distinctive accent and often, old boy's tie as well. They do not like the French for the simple reason as was explained to me tonight that they are so un-British, whereas they like the other English people here as they all come from good families.

> Looking at this new lot I can only feel enormous disdain and look with

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[30] Full data on this area is available in the appendix in Table A4.1

[31] The term 'transformation' is used here to reflect the theoretical arguments associated with the changes coming from 'experiencing the real' associated with 'performance theory' (Schechner, 1988) which we have already discussed and which we will cover in more detail below.

relief at our crowd, (...)however, perhaps we first arrived in Grenoble in such a manner and have since changed – thank heavens ! (G.D.: 3.2.64)

The concept of distance from the target culture, which the literature underlines as a method of assessing acculturation, provides us with a valuable theme for analysing the processes taking place during the year in Grenoble and which this diary entry illustrates in a striking manner. The visible outer appearance providing a useful indication of how far any process of acculturation has gone: 'changes are required in order to fit into the new given framework so as to make one's presence less glaringly visible," (Murphy-Lejeune, 2003).

The passage suggests therefore, that in the three months already spent in Grenoble there had been a necessary personal change in identity away from the specific characteristics of the public school persona. The implication is that elements of the previous identity have been broken down through the experiences of living in Grenoble and coming into contact with a different culture and a range of 'other strangers'. This change is seen as a necessary step because there is a suggestion that without it the acculturation process would either not take place, or would in some way be hindered.

From the diary entries the acculturation process can be seen in terms of attitude, the attitude to the target French culture and the extent to which a person is seen as being open to this environment, itself a measure of intercultural engagement as we shall see. This openness may be apparent through a concern to want to fit in with the appearance of the surrounding people and not stand out: '...decided I must from necessity buy myself another pair of trousers and so will try and choose something cheap yet v. French', (G.D. : 26.3.04.).

The openness is also reflected in a changing attitude to French culture and people. Commenting on observations made from the balcony of my room, the following entry was made:

As I watch the French women with their full shopping baskets and long loaves of bread I find it surprising that they were once complete foreigners to me. I can now accept them and I think and hope the French will never be foreigners as the Italians, Germans or any other Europeans are. I have learnt something about them – if only a very little – about their habits and their humour and their life in general. *(G.D. :24.2.64)*

The tone of this entry is however, rather condescending. The observation is made both physically, from the balcony, and mentally from a distance. While the observer is able to accept French culture, there is no mention of being accepted in turn by the French culture with all that would mean in terms of engaging and getting involved with the surrounding French life.

This is a pervading theme of the Grenoble diaries. The company of fellow English students and 'other strangers', in particular Americans, means that it is always possible to withdraw into a comfortable and unchallenging environment. The French culture is therefore kept at a safe distance and does not make the kind of demands on the language learner which it would in a situation where the learner is isolated within that cultural environment, perhaps depending on this contact to earn a living.

The final section of the identity rubric, dealing with future identity, does however show how this particular year opened up an awareness of the need to take further the education process which had been started, with the possibility of spending a further year abroad, an option for me in a way that it might not have been for many others.

4.3.3   Future Life and Identity
Turning to the third element in identity, we consider those diary entries which refer to a future life and reflect a need to consider the future and the kind of life I want to lead.

This is something of a deciding time. What do I do? Where do I go? What happens after Germany[32]? Am I content to see myself as being a very average sort of person a junior underwriter at Lloyds meant to speak German and French living in Surrey or Sussex and commuting into town every morning spending his two weeks holiday in France or Italy?   (G.D. : 18.4.64)

The diary entry representing the category of future self, is concerned with life choices, making decisions about the future. The year in Grenoble would eventually however, lead to four years spent in Switzerland and Italy, not Germany. The proposed future working in insurance is for the first time called into question but there is as yet, no alternative suggestion for employment.

4.4   INTERACTIONS   with French Language and Culture

As we would expect from time spent in France, the interactions with French language and culture recorded in the diaries represent the most frequently occurring themes. This interaction is a constant factor in the daily routines whether it represents the French courses being followed, or the contact with French people or French speaking 'other strangers'. It is because most of these encounters are routine that they don't feature in the diaries. It is only when something particularly noteworthy takes place that it warrants a diary mention. What the interaction entries do provide however, is a pattern for the general nature of the contacts taking place.

The original coding system for this interaction proved too clumsy to be practical when setting out the information in chart format and had to be adapted. We will concentrate here on one key area covered by the diary categories[33]: individual contact involving extended communication in French

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[32] At the time there was the view that the year in Grenoble would be followed by a period in Germany.
[33] This data is set out in Table A4.2 of the appendix. The other categories not discussed further here are 'interaction with French friends and groups', 'interaction with French culture' and 'conflict situations, misunderstandings'.

Before considering the substance of these entries, it is worth looking at the language of communication. Whether the interaction is conducted in French, depends on how much English knowledge the different contacts had[34].

There is little focus in the diaries specifically on language, few mentions of new words learnt and phrases heard[35]. This seems surprising and indicates either that the diary was not seen as a suitable vehicle for noting down elements of language or that the language element itself was not given a great deal of priority. There is evidence however, that although far from being fluent, there was sufficient competence to be able to carry out the kind of conversations needed to participate in the extended communication sessions listed below.

4.4.1 Individual Contact Involving Extended Communication

We need to begin by examining the extended communication sessions. The first group of interactions are associated with the apartment where I leased a room and where, in spite of invitations to live with friends elsewhere, I stayed throughout my time in Grenoble. This was a small flat run by a Greek couple, Monsieur and Madame Demeris with one other lodger an Algerian student, Mustapha. As none of them spoke any English, all communication necessarily took place in French[36] and an awareness of a developing ability to speak to them is recorded:

> I have just had my first long talk in French with M. and Madame and also later Mustapha, the Algerian who has the room next to me. This is what I should have started years ago and am determined to repeat. This is

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[34] Whereas today English is widely spoken in France, in the 1960's this was far from being the case. There was also a concern among French contacts to make students of French use the language they were learning. This means most of the French contacts listed, represent communication in the target language.

[35] The only direct mention of vocabulary acquisition in the diary comes through reading: 'reading a few pages of Camus' 'La Peste', which is just beginning to interest me (I learnt several new and useful words from it today, such as the word to spit, which go with the words for groin and arm pits which I learnt before (...)to quote from Jeremy: 'every day a new word !'(G.D.: 1.3.64).

[36] Presumably the impact of the 'real' language would lead to the use of a number of strategies in order to communicate and negotiate meaning. Use of English words, signs etc which we will explore later as we consider the pupil experience of the exchange.

where staying in 6 rue Jean-Jacques Rousseau instead of moving into lodgings pays off, (G.D.: 30.1.64).

First impressions about Mustapha are not recorded but this diary entry suggests they would not have been very positive. The entry goes on to show an enthusiasm for developing contact with him. This would fit in with the trend we have identified of becoming more closely engaged with the surrounding culture, marking progress in the acculturation process, as the distance separating myself from French culture is reduced.

> I think I have been seriously mistaken about Mustapha, Madame told me his father was killed fighting for the French army by his fellow countrymen. To talk and become friendly with him, perhaps me teaching him English and vice versa, would be beneficial to us both I think and exchange of political views as well as language (he studies politics). Here is someone who has felt at first hand the Algerian, French troubles, (G.D.: 30.1.64).

Details about the nature of the conversation which took place, show how much a contact of this kind could extend the experience of a nineteen year old with limited knowledge of the wider world[37]:

> Our conversation tonight was politics, mostly anti De Gaulle[38] and I was told the reason for De Gaulle's support was the moderates were frightened of the options and unstability to the De Gaulle regime. The precedent to De Gaulle's present reign was also pointed out. Here is a general and war figure echoing Napoleon's tradition, (G. D. :30.1.64)

Further political education involved seeing a film with Mustapha on Algeria:

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[37] What we have here is the first indication of one of the developments associated with the 'impact of the real': changing perspectives, (Schema theory, Bartlett, 1932).

[38] French President in 1963.

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The film was shown in the municipal lecture room – a smart new building inside the police building. We were charged 3Frs entry and myself as capitalist had to pay for Mustapha as well as he had only a 50Frs note. Waiting for the film to start and taking stock of the rest of the audience I soon realized what I was in for. For the most part they were Algerians and other Africans with a minority of French, mostly with beards. Their politics are underlined by the articles I could see they were reading: 'La Voie Communiste' and one glorious article headed something about the bright star of black suppression. The film was introduced by a small Algerian (with beard) who at first had difficulty with his French but outlined some points of propaganda. Bad: imperialism and colonialism, American intervention in Panama, Vietnam (asking for their dismissal) and some good points which I can't remember but were probably African unity and Algerian wheat – while I ate some dates I had been offered and listened to the hum of Arabic comments. The films? The usual stuff and very boring; before: animals and deserts, sour faces; after Russian tractors, fertile land and smiling faces, (ibid).

Comments here make clear that while appreciating the exotic nature of the evening and engaging with otherness, there is still a real distance separating the learner from the different culture with which he is coming into contact. While in a previous entry the distance represented the view from a balcony and keeping an actual physical distance from the surrounding environment, here, the distance is represented by an attitude. Byram looking at attitude in relation to the intercultural learner has this point to make when considering the first objective for intercultural competence (the emphasis is mine):

'..willingness to seek out or take up *opportunities to engage with otherness in a relationship of equality*; this should be distinguished from attitudes of seeking out the exotic or of seeking to profit from others',

(Byram: 1997: 50).

A hitch-hiking trip from Paris to Lyon provides the opportunity to engage with otherness in a manner more closely linked to equality.

My troubles began two hours later, I was forced to give up hope of reaching Grenoble that night and had to face a night in Lyon with only 10 francs and after not having eaten all day. I decided rather to eat a bit than get a room and so had to while away the night. This I did by going to a cinema until about 11.30 p.m. then wandering about till I found the station where I sat and read about Molière. One was not supposed to go to sleep as at one stage during the night a gendarme came in and woke up several Algerians. There weren't any benches so I was forced to sit on my suitcase, what it must be like sleeping there every night, as I should think some of the Algerians do I can't imagine, (G.D.:14.4.64).

It takes an unusual combination of circumstances to reduce my situation for one night to that shared by the poorest elements of French society. This leads to a realisation of the harshness of their lives. My situation in contrast to theirs is quickly repaired, as a visit to a bank the next morning enables me to buy a train ticket for the final stage of my journey and a return to the normal, privileged routine of my life in Grenoble. The diary entry remains as evidence of an unusual experience and a momentary appreciation of the lives of others.

The hitch-hiking episode had definite advantages from this perspective although they weren't always appreciated fully at the time:

Although bits of this hitch-hiking were enjoyable and I was able to see a bit of France and speak French; by the end I became fed up with this asking someone to take you somewhere for nothing, begging business. As one Frenchman asked me 'Haven't you got enough money for the train?' (G.D. : 15.4.64).

However, the suggestion that this activity provided an unusual opportunity when compared with the rest of the year spent in Grenoble is worth exploring further. Hitch-hiking alone, represents coming down from the balcony and the observation of French society from a distance and asking, by standing at the side of the road waiting for a lift, to become part of it. The driver who stops

admits the hitch-hiker temporarily into their personal environment, for the time of the duration of the lift. None of the advantages of personal circumstances, which normally enabled a safe distance to be kept from the surrounding society and culture were valid in this situation. On each occasion it would be necessary to talk about myself and explain my situation to a stranger. The direction of the conversation, when the journey proved sufficiently long, might then well involve further topics: 'I succeeded with my lifts quite well however and reached Lyon after a last good long run of about 80kms, where I was forced to talk politics, by 4.00 p.m,' (G.D. : 14.4.64).

4.4.2 Role-play, adapting: the chameleon effect, performing a role

There is a further element to investigate as we look at the process of adaptation, associated with role-play:

> Adapting also means directing one's life as a play in which one performs a new role using different masks. Chameleon like strangers adapt to their surroundings, (Murphy-Lejeune, 2003: 112-113)

My experience of acting at school, seems to influence the way I saw myself. There is a diary entry which points to this, a particularly dramatic incident involving a Spanish friend, Martin which involved a dispute with a group of French students. Martin smashed a bottle of wine on the wall behind him and advanced menacingly on the French group with the broken bottle in his hand.

> Myself and one of the Frenchmen managed to get it away from him – at the expense of a slight cut - which delighted me, as Rosemary bound it up (....) I felt a regular hero and the whole thing especially walking back and trying to regain the friendship of Martin was very much like a film, (G.D. :22.1.64).

The important point is the comment made at the end. A number of extracts from the diaries have already pointed to an actor's perspective, seeing myself as playing a role, the Englishman abroad, speaking French and engaging with the local culture. Part of a heightened awareness of surroundings can perhaps be

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explained by a view of the surrounding environment as providing the scene in which the actor can perform.

4.5   ACCULTURATION AND ADAPTATION

To assess the nature of the acculturation and adaptation to French culture reflected in the diaries we need, as we have seen, to measure the distance separating the subject from this culture. The data provides us with a number of recurring themes, which help us to understand the influences I was subject to during this process.

Living in France with a French speaking family, coming into contact with a number of French speakers and following courses in French means there is a consistent presence of the target culture and language. However, the regular company of English and other English speaking strangers, means that the target culture is mostly sidelined and kept in the background; the analogy is with the kind of background music playing as you go about your business and of which you are aware but only occasionally are you able to pick out a specific tune which you recognize and then stop to listen to.

The kind of contacts with French people which have been coded as extended communication sessions, mostly take place by chance and do not form part of a regular pattern of the subject's student life in Grenoble. These casual encounters seem however, to represent an important part of the acculturation process, but their irregularity is perhaps partly explained through communication difficulties. More confidence and skill at communicating in French may have led to more regular and extended contacts with a number of French speakers.

There is also evidence for appreciating from a distance the French culture without wanting to engage more closely with it. The tourist or traveller[39] watches from a distance, the exotic and different world around him recognizing and appreciating the 'rich points' (Agar, 1994), from a distance.

There are few challenges, only occasionally do I have to engage with the culture - when made to participate in class or communicate with the driver who has kindly given me a lift. And yet there is an underlying challenge represented by the finite nature of the year and the uncertainty about the future. There is a need to make decisions, which may well have an effect on future life and career. A process which has become more complicated, not less so, by the experiences which have taken place in Grenoble and the changes in character and outlook which they have caused. There is an awareness that a year of this kind is unique and cannot be repeated. This is apparent from a diary entry made the following year and which critically reviews the experience:

> Grenoble was entirely unrealistic from every angle. We were all aware of the necessity of enjoying ourselves we carried this to ridiculous extremes. It was important to go to bed in the early hours to rise 10 ish and one stayed up purely for the sake of it (...) I was playing with new sensations and my actions were those of cinema actors and actresses in the same situations. One did entirely what one was supposed to do, (undated writing from post Grenoble period).

We need to see the Grenoble experience as a stage on a journey[40]. In the terms of Bruner (2001), this is the first stage for the protagonist who in the pages of this narrative moves from the distant there and then of Grenoble in 1963, to the here and now, as I look back in retirement and write this account. The journey might have ended after the Grenoble experience with a return, as suggested from one entry, to an anticipated existence working and living in the

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[39] This area will be considered in more detail in chapter nine, as we look at 'tourist studies' as a way of understanding the impact of the 'real' foreign language and culture on exchange pupils.

[40] See below Clifford (1997), on traveling.

South of England. Instead this 'experience of the real', triggers a particular response, which leads initially to a further three years spent abroad in Switzerland and Italy; and eventually to a life as a foreign language teacher committed to developing practical active language work. This is a mark of the acculturation which has taken place: 'feeling comfortable enough to (...) want to stay on for a while because they no longer feel so strange,' (Murphy-Lejeune, 2003: 112-113).

SECTION TWO: STUDENT IN NEUCHATEL, SWITZERLAND; FLORENCE, ITALY 1964-1968 - acculturation into an international students' community

4. 6 INTRODUCTION TO SECTION TWO

This section records the narrative of the period which followed Grenoble, three years living and studying in Neuchâtel, Switzerland and then finally, Florence in Italy. Both sections fit therefore, within the phase of personal development before a professional life as a foreign language teacher involves applying the language and cultural knowledge to educating middle school pupils in Northumberland.

As for the previous year, a diary provides some key material for personal development covering a three-month period at the start of the experience, continuing only intermittently beyond 1964 with the recording of incidents, seen as being particularly important. Regular diary entries are replaced by a mosaic of different materials which provide evidence for the processes taking place. This material includes photographs, personal writings; written comments of an autobiographical nature and publicity material for the Maison de Champréveyres, the students' home in which the years at Neuchâtel were spent.

The key focus for this section is the process of acculturation into the international student community of Champréveyres, a process which involves developing the necessary motivation, skills and behaviour associated with intercultural competence. We will therefore examine the theory of intercultural competence, then, look to apply these competencies in order to analyse the diary account, (available to us as a primary source), for describing this period and tracking the integration, which takes place.

We will need to extend our examination of the Maison de Champréveyres to analyse more closely what this particular international student environment represents, using theories from anthropology and also, social group theory. What we need to consider is the extent to which the international community at

Champréveyres represents a specific culture in its own right. It will also, be important to consider interaction with the surrounding Swiss community and their influence on the personal development process.

Finally, it will be necessary to place this personal development experience within the context of the research as a whole and to examine how the key concepts of 'approaching' and 'experiencing the real' can be applied to these experiences. Also, how performance theory (Schechner[41], 1988), provides a way of understanding this period with the concepts of 'transportation' to a different environment and the possible 'transformation' this can involve. This chapter needs to be seen therefore, as a further examination of the affect of the impact of the 'real' on the foreign student I was at this time.

4.7 NARRATIVE PASSAGE 2

This is the night for the elections to the student council of the 'Maison de Champréveyres'. Students who live in the home have gathered in the dining hall to take part in this important new event, (previously student councils had been selected by the director of the hostel). Now however, there is to be a democratically elected council. And so the Africans, Americans (North and South), Arabians, Asians and Europeans, who make up the international community of the hostel, are assembled to carry out their newly acquired democratic responsibilities. The diversity of nationalities and languages, matched by the range of political positions held from the Marxist communist allegiance of the Africans from Rwanda, (whose experience of imprisonment prior to being released to study in Switzerland has confirmed their militancy); to the contrasting extreme right wing politics of a student from Guatemala, Arturo whose association with the military regime of that country is marked by the appointment of his uncle as a European ambassador.

Following a certain amount of discussion, it is decided to proceed with the voting process and the list of candidates, of whom I am one, is written up on a

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[41] We have already encountered performance theory above as we considered the 'is' and 'as if' of real and simulated experience as we considered Guberina's theory of language learning. We will provide a more detailed explanation of Schechner's theories at a later point in this thesis, when we discuss in chapter six 'Spectacle' a theatre-in-education performance.

blackboard. Each student is given a piece of paper and informed, they are to write down the names of those they wish to see on the student council. A voting process, which is carried out under the strictest conditions to ensure the election process is not subject to any fraudulent practice. The ballot papers are then collected for counting. Arturo has the task of opening up each paper and reading out the names of the candidates listed. John, a Rwandan student, then records the number of votes by each name on the blackboard, under the close scrutiny of the whole student community. At the end of the process we have a new democratically elected students' council, of which I am pleased to be a member.

It is only later that any concern about the validity of this process is raised. Arturo proudly informs me that he had made sure the votes corresponded to his view of a suitable student council, through the simple strategy of not always reading out, the names actually recorded, but those he wanted to see appointed.

4.7.1 Narrative Explanation

This narrative account serves as a useful introduction to the Maison de Champréveyres, the students' home where I lived for the three years during my time studying in Switzerland. Not in terms of this particular example of ballot rigging, but from the indication it gives of belonging to a community of fellow foreign students and sharing with them the challenges of living in a foreign country. We will investigate below the nature of this particular intercultural environment and try to establish the influence this three-year period had on later developments described in this research.

The justification given to my parents for extending the period of study abroad was that it would give me the opportunity to bring my knowledge of French to a point where it would become more immediately valuable within a business context. This was the reason to ensure that a second year achieved its objectives and that I ended up with the necessary diploma and competency in French. It seemed sensible this time, to go to a different country and experience another French speaking cultural environment. Switzerland provided an ideal location and Neuchâtel a similar language centre to Grenoble. The more disciplined and systematic language learning approach provided for students

working towards the 'certificat d' études françaises at Neuchâtel University, provided more incentive to develop language skills and achieve the increased level of fluency in French needed to develop and further intercultural skills.

My time in Neuchâtel lasted from October 1964 to May 1968. The first year of French learning was extended to a further two years studying 'Sciences Sociales' as a regular, as opposed to foreign language, student. The final year of this period was largely spent in Florence, Italy as I studied for my exams in Switzerland, while learning Italian.

4.8   MAISON DE CHAMPREVEYRES

The international students' home in which I lived throughout the three year period in Switzerland, the Maison de Champréveyres was an establishment set up by the Église Réformée of Neuchâtel to provide, especially for those coming from third world countries, a place where students could live during their time of study at Neuchâtel University.

Information about the students' home and the reasons for it being created, are given in a leaflet produced by the Neuchâtel Reformed Church, 'Chantiers de L'Église'. The leaflet has a page of information about the background of the students who lived there: from four continents, twenty nationalities with forty male and eight female students covering a range of different religious beliefs.

A description of the facilities offered by Champréveyres but also, a key statement of intent, is included in the leaflet:

> *Une maison où on accueille 80 étudiants sans distinctions de race, de foi, dès l'age de 19 ans. Ils disposent tous d'une chambre individuelle, d'une salle de bains pour trois, d'un salon de lecture, de jeux et de rencontre par étage. Quatre chambres peuvent être offertes à des couples, (chantiers de l'église, 1964 :4)[42].*

There are photographs and brief biographies of some of the students. Francis, a student from Cameroun, on a church scholarship preparing his diploma for teaching French in his own country, who is in Europe for the first time and 'le foyer facilite son adaptation[43]'. And Abdullah from Mecca studying economics who is spending his second year at Neuchâtel, who appreciates the out of town position of the centre with its lake view and peaceful atmosphere, conducive to study, which he describes as a, 'climat de liberté et de respect mutuel'

4.9 INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE,
integration into an international student community

Intercultural Communicative Competence is defined as: the ability to interact effectively with people from cultures we recognize as being different from our own, (Guilherme, 2004:299).

It will become clear from the description of the Maison de Champréveyres that this particular students' home provides the opportunity for interaction of the kind described above to take place. We need to look more closely however, at the nature of intercultural communicative competence and the different elements, which go to make up this facility.

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[42] A centre provided for 80 students, without distinction of race or religion, from the age of nineteen. Students have an individual room, bathroom shared between three, a reading room, games room and a central meeting area on each floor. Four rooms can be provided for couples.
[43] The centre helps him to adapt.

The process of becoming interculturally competent is more complex than just realizing there is a 'they' and a 'we'. It entails awareness of the ever-evolving and struggling web of intra and intercultural meanings. Accordingly, Byram identifies several factors/savoirs, – savoir être, savoir comprendre, savoir faire/apprendre – for developing intercultural competence within foreign language/culture education. Furthermore Byram distinguishes 'savoir s'engager/critical Culture Awareness, as the centre of his model, which he describes as a rational and explicit standpoint from which to evaluate, (Byram, 2006:118).[44]

It is also apparent that the attainment of intercultural communicative competence is not a process, which happens instantly but one involving different stages, as the necessary attitude, knowledge and skills are acquired. There are therefore different stages of intercultural competence and work has been done in trying to assess these (Byram, 1997).

> work on identifying degrees of intercultural competence tends to focus on degrees of incompetence, stages on the way to a threshold of competence, (Byram, 1997:54).

This is important because it brings into focus the stages of the personal developments associated with ICC, which are likely to take place for each individual. The specific attitude required for intercultural competence, the knowledge and the skills needed. It therefore becomes possible to assess the time spent at Neuchâtel in terms of different stages in the acquisition of intercultural communicative competence. The year spent in Grenoble represents the first part of a process, which is extended in Switzerland with interaction, not just with the surrounding Swiss population, but also the international community represented by the students' home at Champréveyres. It will be this latter aspect of the time spent at Neuchâtel, which will provide the

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[44] Savoirs = knowledge of how to do something; savoir être, knowing how to be; savoir comprendre, the ability to understand; savoir faire/apprendre, the ability to do and learn; savoir s'engager, knowing how to become involved.

most important elements for analysis and the one, which will provide us with a focus for assessing the intercultural process.

It will be seen that in the account of this period a number of 'stages on the way to a threshold of competence' can be identified, related to the need to address some specific problems associated with achieving intercultural competence. These can be seen as a series of barriers. Barriers, which need to be surmounted if the intercultural development is to take place and the opportunities offered by the Maison de Champréveyres are to be realised. They centre on the foreign language skills required to be able to access the French speaking student community of Champréveyres and the attitude needed to participate fully in this society.

The Maison de Champréveyres represents for this narrative a specific environment where intercultural skills are needed in order to adapt and to fully integrate into this international student community. Its importance to the narrative as a whole, is that it provided the most important single experience of personal development and also, represented the longest period, three years out of the total of the five years, spent living abroad. It is a period that I will want to be able to link with the decision to become a foreign language teacher with a particular outlook on, and agenda for, foreign language and culture teaching and learning.

We need to establish a methodology for assessing integration at Champréveyres by first identifying the key theoretical elements associated with intercultural competence and the stages of this process. Then, we can define the particular characteristics of the Champréveyres environment, what makes it distinctive and analyse how the process and stages of intercultural competence can be applied to this specific context; how a student arriving at the centre would need to adapt. We can then finally, use the diary entries available to us to measure my own integration into Champréveyres.

4.9.1 Theories of applied intercultural competence

What we are trying to do here, is establish the intercultural needs of students engaging with the international student community represented by Champréveyres. In this respect the process approximates a task based intercultural activity, matching the foreign language learning systems, (see above, Section 3.3.51 Page, 2004:599).

What needs to be considered, as we explore these needs, is that we are not talking here about one national language and culture but an international culture formed as students from very different backgrounds come together into one community as foreign students (there are a few Swiss students in the centre but they represent a very small minority) within a foreign culture.

The work on an assessment process for intercultural competence is useful, as we look to apply the theories of intercultural competence to the Champréveyres experience. O'Regan and Lund, (2008) consider the theoretical models for intercultural competence and then set out the different assessment methods. The theories have three main strands: motivation, skill/knowledge and behaviour. In the INCA theory, (perhaps the most suitable for our purposes), these strands are then categorised according to six further criteria: tolerance of ambiguity, behavioural flexibility, communicative awareness, knowledge/ discovery, respect for otherness and empathy. Of these areas, the most pertinent are communicative awareness, respect for otherness and empathy. We will look at these areas more closely.

Motivation from this position is seen in terms of a 'willingness' to engage with the foreign culture; while knowledge is associated with specific skills seen in terms of an ability and finally, behaviour demonstrates the application of knowledge[45]. The skill of decentring and having an awareness of different perspectives would seem to be a key element for our concerns. We would also want to highlight the critical role of the foreign language in this situation, where

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[45] We will need to return to this area when we consider the needs of pupils to engage with the target culture when participating in an exchange.

entry into the community is associated with the willingness and ability to communicate in French.

What we have therefore is an approach based on motivation, skill/knowledge and behaviour and where there is a final process of integration. We need next to translate these theoretical elements into an appropriate intercultural assessment procedure for the context of the Maison de Champréveyres, which will allow us to analyse now, the experiences of forty years ago.

4.9.2   Skills needed for Maison de Champréveyres

Assessing intercultural competence at Champréveyres, is based on the identification of two key characteristics of the Champréveyres community: the international aspect of this community and the fact that this is a French speaking community. International from the different nationalities who live there, French speaking because the shared language of this community is French, both because of the location of the centre in French speaking Switzerland and because French is the common language for those who live there either, as a first or second language.

We need to look at these two characteristics, to see how they would translate into the specific intercultural competencies of motivation, knowledge/skill and behaviour. The nature of the intercultural environment means that for the student coming to Champréveyres, there is the need to be willing to engage with the international community and to have the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to do so. His or her behaviour would then reflect this ability.

We can now, look to the diary extracts[46] available to us, in order to find evidence for my integration into this community, by linking these to the categorie of competence we have established.

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[46] These are however, only available to us from the critical first period of Champréveyres.

Table 4.2   Engaging with international community at Champréveyres

Environment	motivation	knowledge/skill	behaviour
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY **(engaging with International Community)**	**Willingness to become involved:** 'I am enjoying very much the community spirit which was something I missed at Grenoble,' (ND, 31.10.64).	**Ability to engage:** 'It really is a pretty fantastic set up with such a diversity of nationalities. There are about four Arabs, Saudi Arabians, three from Mecca, a Persian, two Africans from Rwanda ..,' (ND, 18.10.64).	**Engaging with the members of the community:** 'After the meal tonight unintentionally, I got into conversation with two of the Africans. It was one of the most interesting conversations I have ever had. I was suddenly brought face to face with the other side of the problem. I considered the Congo sauvetage operation entirely justifiable having read the papers and seen the pictures of dead European hostages but now I can appreciate the other side,' (ND, 7.12.64).

The first diary extract indicates that the international community encountered at Champréveyres was seen by me to be a positive one, providing an enjoyable experience and there is already at this early stage an appreciation of the 'community spirit', a willingness therefore, to engage. An ability to engage with the international community comes from this possibility of encountering students from the range of different nationalities living there. The final element behaviour, shows how a positive attitude to the international nature of the community is reflected in behaviour, engaging with other members of the community from very different backgrounds to discuss political matters associated with the world affairs of that time.

This ability to engage would come into the category of 'acceptance' of the nature of the community and the opportunities it offered, in Bennett's (1993) characterisations of the different stages of intercultural competence, (see below).

The final, behaviour category links to the conversations recorded from Grenoble with Mustapha, the Algerian. Here however, the nature of the community mean that conversations of this kind are more likely to occur. The final statement from this diary extract 'now I can appreciate the other side', points to the influence conversations of this kind were having; previous attitudes and opinions are changed as a different perspective[47], that of the other side becomes apparent.

The need to communicate in French is the second criteria identified for living at Champréveyres. This links to the personal motivation of needing to make the most of this opportunity to spend a second year abroad, learning the language. The diary extracts point to a developing ability to communicate in French, as the opportunity for engaging in conversation is taken.

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[47] We will return to changed perspectives and the associated schema theory and experiential learning as we examine the pupil exchange experience in chapter nine.

Table 4.3   Speaking French in order to engage with Champréveyres community

Environment	motivation	knowledge/skill	behaviour
FRENCH SPEAKING ENVIRONMENT **Need to Speak French in order to participate:**	**Willingness to speak French:** 'I have been speaking quite a lot of French during the meals and things this week which I must try and keep up. I think it ought to be a house rule to do so,' (ND, 1.11.64).	**Ability to speak French:** 'I am actually quite pleased with my French today and am finding when I open my mouth the conversation comes much easier,' (ND: 2.11.64)	**Using French language:** 'One of the great things was that I was speaking almost entirely French with this Spanish, South American crowd,' (ND, 29.11.64). 'I have been speaking rather more these last few days with Francis Yango and the Guatamalan and I am beginning to find it easier to put my thoughts into words,' (ND, 31.11.64).

The next stage in Bennett's[48] theory of intercultural communication after acceptance, is adaptation before integration takes place, and there are signs here of adapting to this community. However, there is evidence for a barrier to integration from the diary entries. This comes from the English speaking community who are also living at this time at Champréveyres. It was important to reject the appeal of this group.

4.9.3 Rejecting English speaking community

Even more than at Grenoble, there was an English group I associated with during the beginning of my time at Neuchâtel, determined to have a good time and with the money to do so, as this extract indicates:

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[48] For Bennett these stages are: denial, defence, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, integration.

> This evening went to Neuchâtel in John's TR2[49] with Guy, where we did a tour of the popular spots: café bars, bars (21 club was full of American finishing school types, most attractive but surrounded by hundreds of Swiss escorts and hangers on. Rien pour nous,[50'] (ND, 17.10.64).

The passage demonstrates the attraction of this particular social life. It is clear from the diary entry for 19.2.65 that I was aware at the time that there really was no contest between these two competing societies: associating with the English community or becoming integrated into the international community of students at Champréveyres. Something had to come from the projected year in Switzerland in terms of French language competence, (an indication of developing language skills comes from the unusual use of a French phrase in the diary passage quoted above).

Describing this conflict between two options, spending time with an English speaking group or integrating with the French speaking international community, can be explained by narrative theory. Where there is problem or conflict to resolve, there is a 'move from an initial situation displaying equilibrium (the beginning), to a middle section where the problem appears, tension increases and disequilibrium results, and finally some kind of resolution (the ending), (Rapport and Overing, 2000:384)).

The diaries provide evidence for this process of conflict from the first months living at Neuchâtel. An initial period of association with the English group, is followed by a middle section of personal conflict as the competition between the two environments becomes clear and finally, a resolution with the rejection of the English group in favour of the international community at Champréveyres.

We can represent this development in terms of a specific process in the table below.

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[49] TR2 is a Triumph Sports' Car

[50] Nothing for us.

Table 4.4   Rejecting English Speaking Community

Objective	motive	knowledge/skill	behaviour
Adapting to Champréveyres by rejecting English speaking community:	**In order to integrate:** 'I have become ridiculously anti the tremendous time John, Guy and the English crowd are having here. Part of this very naturally is jealousy. I realise that I can't afford to do what they are, having already wasted a year in this manner which has given me a conscience',(ND, 19.2.65)	**Fr language skills:** 'What is the option? The option is to go around with Arturo (Guatemalan), and now Rolph and try and speak as much French as possible,' (ND, 19.2.65).	**Associating with members community:** 'We drank to international friendship and to our respective countries and I was invited to go to Spain some time with the Guatemalan,' (29.11.64).

The first stage is an appreciation of needing to reject the English speaking group. There is then a consideration of what this represents with a final example of integration with the 'drinking to international friendship.'

4.9.4 Integration

Once the rejection of the English speaking community has taken place it becomes possible to become more fully engaged in the life of Champréveyres. There is no evidence from the diary entries for this area and we have to look to other sources to reconstruct this period.

We have seen from the Narrative Passage above, on the student elections, that I became a member of the student council, becoming président the following year. As président there was the possibility to promote the Maison de Champréveyres and in order to address the concern to attract more students to the centre, I became involved with the director, Monsieur Pippy in a publicity campaign. Two posters and a leaflet were produced advertising the centre. The posters put over the message on the international nature of the community with one poster having a more dramatic message: ' Si vous ne cherchez qu' une chambre vous devez aller ailleurs[51]. The leaflet also, made quite clear that the centre saw itself as having a particular role to play in intercultural education, and follows the mission statement for the centre we have considered above[52].

Une Communauté fraternelle ......

Les divisions, les haines sont souvent les fruits de préjugés , d'incompréhension, de peurs. La maison de Champréveyres à Neuchâtel veut être, au nom du Christ, un lieu de rencontre et de rénconciliation où, dans une vie quotidienne communautaire, dans des clubs de loisir, dans des groupes de discussion et d'étude , des jeunes noirs, blancs, jaunes, de toutes races, de toutes religions, apprendront à se comprendre, décourvriront dans un esprit de tolerance la faiblesse des préjugés et la force de la fraternité,'[53] (Publicity brochure, 1966).

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[51] If you are only looking for a room you should go elsewhere.

[52] Appendix: A4.1 for a copy of two pages of this leaflet.

[53] Division and hate are often the result of prejudice, misunderstanding and fear. La Maison de Champréveyres wants to be in Christ's name, a place for meeting and reconciliation where through the daily community life, in the leisure clubs, in the discussion and study groups, young black, white, yellow people of every race and religion, will learn to understand one another and discover in a spirit of tolerance the weakness of prejudice and the strength of brotherhood.

While the choice of text has clearly, been guided by the director, there is a certain style which matches that of the posters and suggests my own involvement in this document.

To be président meant representing the other students and was evidence of being accepted into this international community, and points to the level of integration, which eventually takes place. A book on the town of Neuchâtel presented to me by the director is the only official record of my term as président which is described as: 'une présidence fructueuse, semestre d'été 1966.'[54]

4.10 NATURE OF CHAMPREVEYRES EXPERIENCE

The Champréveyres experience viewed from both a personal context but also, from the perspective of all those living within the students' home, is a temporary one, an experience which represents a stage in the lives of participants which may well impact on their future lives. It is however, only a single element which has preceding and subsequent stages, a formative period, coming from choosing to study in a foreign country and the linguistic and cultural demands, which emanate from this decision.

Social and cultural anthropology provides a means of interpreting the transitory experience of this kind, seeing life in terms of a journey and our lives as those of a traveller: 'anthropological knowledge derives from movement and represents itself through movement, anthropology as a study of travellers as well as by travellers' (Rapport, Overing,2000:269).

Clifford is particularly persuasive with his view that culture 'and its science anthropology', needs to be seen differently. Culture for him: 'comes to resemble as much a site of travel encounters as of residence.' In this way it is like: ' a hotel lobby, urban café, ship or bus,' (Clifford, 1997:24,25).

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[54] As a mark of recognition for a fruitful presidency, Summer Term, 1966.

We would want to retain here certain key words, which would seem to apply particularly to the Champréveyres experience: 'a site of travel encounters', 'sites of interaction' where there are: encounters between people to some degree away from home', (Clifford, 1997:31).

We would argue that the Maison de Champréveyres with its 'encounters between people away from home', represents a culture in its own right, that this coming together of students from different countries is a specifically cultural gathering with its own identity and characteristics.

It is likely that in comparison with more fixed cultures the dynamic, unsettled nature of Champréveyres will mean that whatever culture is in place is less evident and therefore more difficult to capture. We are looking to find therefore, the ways in which this culture might be displayed and the life of the 'maison', given a meaning and purpose. Culture is seen as using its specific symbols as a language, 'to read and interpret, to express and share meaning,' (Rapport and Overing, 2000:350).

> A public process, visible for others to see and tied to 'concrete social events and occasions, and expressive of a common social world', (ibid:351).

This passage provides us with a number of indicators for identifying cultural characteristics in the context of the Champréveyres experience. There would need to be enough cohesion and common purpose among the students making up the community for a *common social world* to be identifiable through *concrete events and social occasions*.

We can point to the political activities of the students at Champréveyres, (recorded in the narrative passage), as evidence of a community working together in order to achieve common goals, as well as the organising of social events. There are also, the posters and brochure produced to promote Champréveyres, publicly displayed on the walls of the university, as a

demonstration of the particular values with which the centre is keen to represent itself to the outer world.

Social Group Theory (Wetherell, 1996), looks at the ways a particular group identify themselves through their attitudes to others.

> Social representations are intrinsic to effective communication. When people interact through gossip, argue with one another in pubs, discuss political scandals over breakfast, they are building up shared pictures of the world, (Potter, 1996:140).

The foreign student community has precisely the kind of discussions over breakfast about what is happening in the outside world. It will be an indication of how closely the community has achieved its own specific culture as to whether this leads to a shared view of what is taking place, a difficult achievement given the diverse cultural backgrounds of the students. The recorded conversation on the Congo (Table 5.6.1) is an example of this: 'people who share representations agree in their understanding and evaluation of aspects of the world,' (ibid).

One of the ways in which students are going to feel a common identity is through this shared experience of living and studying as foreign students in Switzerland. While there will be differences between those who are identifiably not Swiss through their appearance, (African students in the Neuchâtel of the 1960's, when Swiss citizens were universally white). For others their identity as foreign students becomes evident in a number of different ways. This may be due to lack of fluency in French, a different accent to the specific Swiss French mode of speaking or differences associated with behaviour.

It will be these differences, which help a group identity to develop among the Champréveyres students. This identity will be influenced by the way they are treated by the Swiss people with whom they come into contact both in a positive and negative sense. A racial incident, when one of the members of the community, Pierre, answered an advertisement for a room in town, only to find

there was no longer a vacancy when his identity as an African was revealed; raised a feeling of anger and solidarity among all the members of the community.

4.9.6   American Interlude

Into this established international community, there comes each spring the annual migration of a group of some thirty American college students, mostly female, with their tutor from Syracuse University in upstate New York.

For a two month period the rhythm, style and pace of Champréveyres changes, the liaisons, the fraternity style theme parties ('Lucy in the sky with diamonds', with the dining hall decorated appropriately), the traditions, music and behaviour become those of American college students.

And when finally, the bus takes them away back on their journey to New York, we are left somewhat shaken and bemused, sometimes emotionally touched, by this unlikely American experience, to return to the routine French speaking world of the centre. This is performance theory (Schechner, 1988), not just the American group but the whole community of Champréveyres is 'taken somewhere' given a particular experience before reentering 'ordinary life just about where they went in,' (Schechner, 2003:270).

4.9.7   Integration with Swiss society

This chapter has concentrated on the process of acculturation into the international community of Champréveyres and has largely maintained a silence on the surrounding Swiss society. However, for two of the three years in Neuchâtel I had a Swiss girl friend, Chantal. And so inevitably, Swiss culture was seen through her eyes and the contacts she provided through her family and friends.

This was also a formative period, part of the process of achieving intercultural competence and many of the aspects of this process we have identified above

are evidently valid here. There is motivation and the requirement of French language skills and the need for appropriate behaviour.

The cold logic of these lines does not however do justice to memories which include one extraordinary winter night, when for her birthday she took me to a café in the hills, walking in the cold through the conifer forest, along pitch black paths, stopping to watch the moon and talking of Japanese prints.

4.11 FLORENCE, ITALY

Having failed to present myself for the exams in social sciences at Neuchâtel University in June 1966, I decided to study for the next session in Florence, where I would also learn Italian. This extravagant decision is covered in a diary note from the time.

> And so it's beginning to look as though I really shall be spending this year in Italy. I'm very suspicious of the way the idea excites me, how easy it is being to drop Neuchâtel to transfer affections to the unspoiled image of Italy. I wonder if I'm making a complete fool of myself, allowing my imagination to carrying me into something which is really extremely vague and perhaps unrealistic, (ND, 6.10.67).

The same entry provides the first diary evidence for a decision being made to become a foreign language teacher: 'Also, my contribution as a teacher or what have you, would I think be greater using this experience,' (ibid); hardly an enthusiastic endorsement for entering the teaching profession. What is clear however, and there is an awareness of this at the time, is Florence would be not only the most extravagant and least practical of the different learning environments encountered abroad, but would also represent a final exotic experience before returning to England.

> Italy is the final, the complete the absolute fantasy. The Etruscans, the Romans, Catholicism, the Renaissance, everything that is

unimportant to the direct materialism of a modern world but which represents colouring and embellishment to the ordinary through the arming of the imagination, (ibid).

The strategy of studying in Italy for Swiss exams surprisingly proved successful and returning to Neuchâtel in April, I passed exams in demography, introduction to law and psychology to gain a 'quart de licence'.

Meanwhile I had flown to England to be interviewed and been accepted for a place as a foreign language student at Northumberland College of Education.

4.12 CONCLUSION

We need to link this chapter to the central themes of this research and position this period, spent living abroad, in terms of our notion of 'the real' in foreign language and culture learning and also, to consider how this time can be seen in terms of Performance Theory (Schechner, 1988)) and the concepts of 'transportation' and 'transformation'.

On the basis of the terminology we have adopted for this research the experience in both Grenoble and particularly Neuchâtel would be seen as 'experiencing the real', actually engaging with the target language and culture. In the case of the Maison de Champréveyres, we have suggested that the experience is of engaging with a specific international culture associated with living in this community. However, here the 'real' language and culture would seem to be elsewhere, associated with the unknown tropical countries where most of the students came from, countries which remain as mysterious to me now forty years later, as they did then.

We have seen that the real is associated with a personal view and perspective and that as soon as we seem to engage with it, it disappears onto a further horizon[55], like someone climbing a hill who discovers that he hasn't actually reached the summit but has further peaks to climb, only in this case the process

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[55] See Dortier (2002) above, chapter 3, section 3.2.1.

is continuous. And so, as I experience at first hand the French and Swiss cultures or the international culture of Champréveyres, each in turn proves elusive, incomplete only a partial representation whose validity is in any case time linked, quickly passing its sell-by date, becoming historical data, which we have tried to reconstruct for this research.

At the same time towards the end of the time living abroad, there is an awareness of a new reality, a new horizon to engage with. As the process of becoming a teacher begins, the 'real' begins to be this focus, with a new acculturation period and 'approach to the real', as the world of education is prepared for and finally encountered.

The movement and journey, which is a consistent theme for this research, fits in with the notions of 'transportation' and 'transformation' as described by Schechner (1977). As a result of the experiences of living abroad, it was no longer feasible for me to pick up the planned business career in the City of London. There has been a 'transformation', which in practical terms represents a decision to go in a different direction and to lead a different kind of life, as a foreign language teacher: a language teacher bringing with me into the classroom, these experiences of the 'real' which, I would want to validate, among them, the Champréveyres experience, with its message of intercultural understanding.

The personal experiences of living abroad as a foreign student and the need to adjust and adapt to this different environment relate to similar processes involving the impact of the 'real' on pupils participating in a French exchange, (see chapter nine). The concern to extend school language learning to include direct experience of the target culture, is likely to come from this period with the legacy of the international community at Maison de Champréveyres leading to the proposal to create a language and culture centre, (which we will discuss in the final chapter), to promote international understanding.

Approaching the Real

STAGE 2 ACCULTURATION

CHAPTER FIVE :   FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDENT TEACHER

5.0   INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the period of transition from being a language student abroad to becoming a foreign language student teacher in England. A time of further self-development, which as we will see, provides its own set of challenges, a need to adjust and change in order to adapt to a completely different environment and set of circumstances. A situation where previous experience is no longer directly valid and where the narrative of living abroad has little relevance to those for whom this experience is unknown.

The period is very distinct, a key element in the narrative which represents a new act rather than a mere scene change. The actor, subject of the narrative, is required to play a different role, a decisive move away from what has gone before. This fits into the concept in narrative theory of a critical event, usually associated with a 'change experience ' (Webster, Markova, 2003:75). From the perspective of a career in teaching Measor (1985) identifies a number of 'critical phases', the first of these is entering the teaching profession, followed by the first teaching practice, both areas covered in this chapter. A critical event is one which is not always apparent until a later stage in the life story, but it is clear that: 'what makes a critical event 'critical' is the impact it has on the storyteller,' (Bohl, 1995).

It is clear from the diary extracts and the concern about the future that the years spent living abroad, for all their learning and personal development, lack purpose. Returning to England to become a student at Northumberland College of Education is to have a target and identified outcome from the three year period of study: to qualify as a foreign language teacher. The period is clearly

one of preparation for the 'real' experience of foreign language teaching. It forms therefore, an interesting parallel to the learning experiences later provided for pupils, as they learn about the French language and culture.

From the perspective of this research there are a number of questions we need to ask concerning the possible links between the different experiences undergone during the time at Northumberland College of Education and the later introduction of French learning programmes at Coates Middle School. Also, we need to consider the influence of the education thinking of the time as represented by the Plowden Report (1967), on the teacher-training programme experienced at Northumberland College.

Table 5.1 Contents of Chapter Five: Foreign Language Student Teacher

| 5.0 Introduction | → | 5.1 Narrative Passage and explanation | → | 5.2 Integrated Learning | → |

| 5.3 Reasons for Becoming a Foreign Language Teacher | → | 5.4 Northumberland College of Education | → | 5.5 Acculturation Process | → |

| 5.6 Conclusion | → | 5.7 Conclusion to Stage 2, Acculturation |
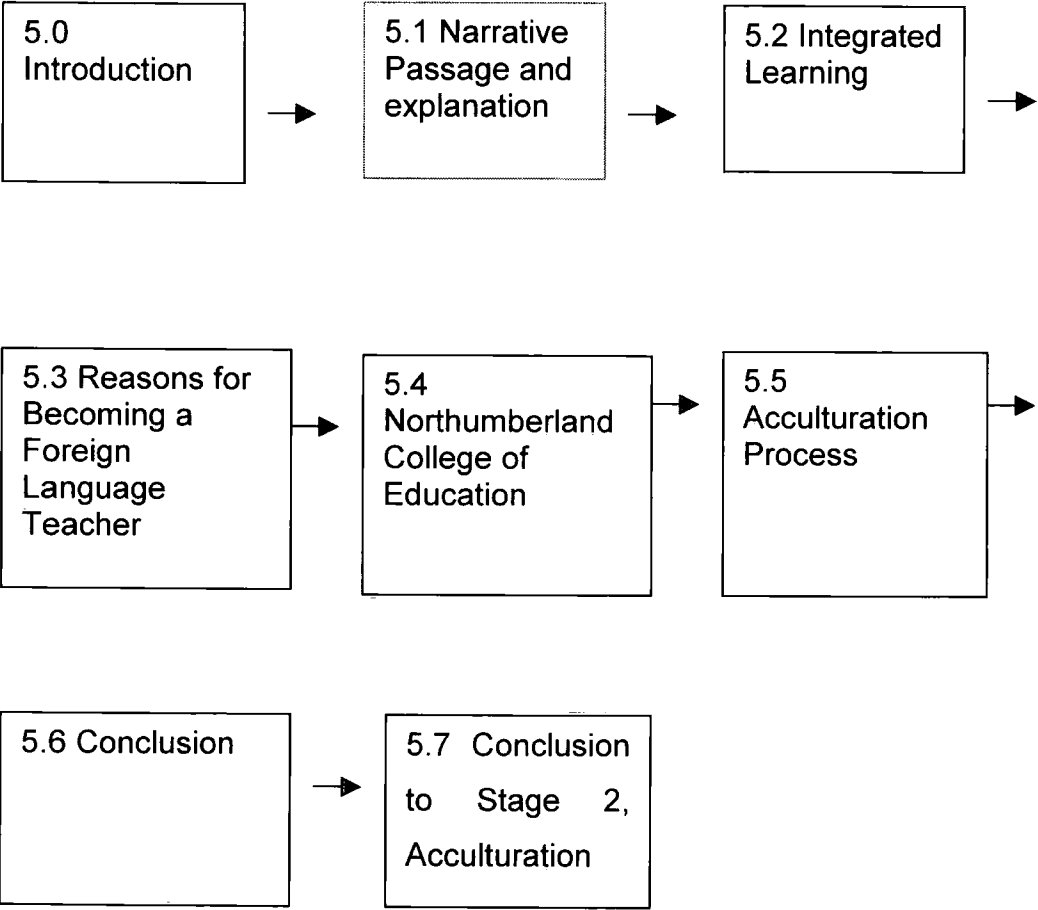
5.1 NARRATIVE PASSAGE   From the classroom window

I'm standing in the classroom of Newsham Primary School in Blyth waiting for the bus to collect me and take me back to college after a day's teaching, part of my first period of extended teaching practice. On the chair beside me are the carrier bags full of teaching resources and the precious practice file which records and analyses and plans every lesson and pupil response, ready for the rigorous scrutiny of my T.P. Tutor[56], the redoubtable but excellent Miss Morgan.

Looking out of the window on to the street beyond, I observe the ordinary, essentially English scene and there is a moment of revelation. I realise I now see the scene differently, from how it would have previously appeared. The street furniture the letter box, the telegraph poles, the carefully pruned trees lining the street, the road markings and crossing points, the rows of brick houses with their matching windows and doors and small front gardens, are no longer isolated elements making up a particular view. They have become dynamic elements with their own narrative, a narrative associated with how they function, the processes which bring the street to life, give it meaning and definition and which describe the business of an organised society.

As an apprentice primary teacher I can now read the scene, look beyond surface appearances and search for a different kind of understanding, the description of procedures. Each of the different elements has its narrative, probably available as a large colourful poster. So, for example, the journey of a letter from the moment of posting in the letter-box to the postman's mail collection, through sorting office, to a further journey, before the letter is finally delivered to its destination.

And the reason for this new understanding is that each separate element of the scene, or indeed the scene as a whole, can form the topic for project work, an integrated learning approach which incorporates the different areas of the curriculum around a central theme. Where children learn through doing and where the different disciplines become relevant, as there is a need to

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[56] Teaching Practice Tutor

understand further some elements of the process, the procedures under investigation in more detail.

Describing the view itself, can be part of this process and this is perhaps why as I look out onto the street scene, I find myself watching the red post van collecting the mail and imagining the next stage of the journey for the letters being collected. The reason the memory has remained is perhaps, because it marks a moment when there is an understanding of how learning can be structured and with it the realisation that I am thinking like an English Primary School Teacher.

5.1 Explanation of narrative passage

The narrative passage marks an element of autobiographical memory. From our review of this area earlier, we can consider that the memory has been retained through frequent rehearsal, something important enough for us to want to go back to in our reflections, and also that it will have a direct relevance to subsequent activities. Whether the memory is entirely accurate, (an element in autobiographical memory), is not really important, what is of more interest is the fact of it being retained.

There are two points worth unpacking from the narrative passage. The first is the influence the experience of working in a primary school and teaching a range of different subjects might have on any future French learning initiatives introduced at Coates Middle School. Second, is to see the passage as an indication of the distance that has been covered as the foreign student described in the previous chapter, is transported[57] into the learning environment of English state education in Northumberland. A 'transportation' which will require its own period of acculturation, associated with the need to adapt to this new environment.

Setting out the memory as a written text for the first time, enables me to see more clearly that it demonstrates the importance the methodology of primary, as

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[57] For a fuller explanation of 'transportation' and performance theory (Schechner, 1988) see below 6.7.2.3.

opposed to French, teaching methods had for me at the start of my period as a student teacher. It will become clear as we discuss the nature of teacher training at Northumberland College of Education, that the emphasis for the training is to produce primary school teachers. The first extended teaching practice therefore, involves a primary school placement where only a minimal amount of time, perhaps half an hour each day, is actually spent teaching, French, a peripheral element in the primary curriculum of the time.

The importance of this primary learning focus is clear from the narrative passage. After the first weeks' training as a primary school teacher, I find myself able to view a mundane street scene in terms of its educational potential; the possibilities integrated study would provide for studying the different procedures, which allow the street to function. We would anticipate that trends in primary learning, in particular an integrated study approach and the philosophy of learning through doing, are likely to have influenced middle school French teaching and the nature of the initiatives we will be describing.

From the staff-room window at Newsham there was the view of a disused pit heap, a reminder this was the industrial North of England, a place far stranger and more alien to me at the time, than lakeside Neuchâtel or the renaissance buildings of Florence. My teaching placements suggested college authorities felt the need for me to experience an industrial and working class environment. Perhaps this is a reason why this particular memory has remained, an appreciation of the different, English world in which I was now involved, centred on this one moment of reflection at the end of a tiring day's teaching.

5.2 INTEGRATED LEARNING AND LEARNING THROUGH DOING IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

To consider this area we can turn to the influential Plowden Report, *Children and their Primary Schools,* which appeared in 1967 and is therefore contemporary to the period. The report's objective was 'to consider primary education in all its aspects', (1967:1) and makes quite clear its child centred position: 'At the heart of the educational process lies the child. No advances in policy, no acquisitions of new equipment have their desired effect unless they are in harmony with the nature of the child, unless they are fundamentally acceptable to him,' (Plowden: 1967:7).

The Plowden Report is a review of primary education as it was in England in the 1960s. Our interest in the report is in how it sees such areas as integrated learning and project work; activities which involve active learning on the part of pupils. In the introduction to the report, the section on 'The Children in the Schools' sets down a number of questions the document seeks to answer: 'Has "finding out" proved to be better than "being told"?', 'Have methods been worked out through which discovery can be stimulated and guided and children develop from a coherent body of knowledge?' 'Do children learn more through active co-operation than by passive obedience?' (Plowden, 1967:2).

Some of the answers to these questions come from the section of the report entitled 'Children Learning in School'. So, for example in the section on 'Flexibility in the Curriculum', there is the following passage: 'The idea of flexibility has found expression in a number of practices, all of them designed to make good use of the interest and curiosity of children, to minimise the notion of subject matter being rigidly compartmental, and to allow the teacher to adopt a consultative, guiding, stimulating role rather than a purely didactic one,' (Plowden, 1967:198).

The kind of integrated study approach indicated in the Narrative Passage is linked to the idea of project work, which is discussed in the report at this stage:

The oldest of these methods is the 'project'. Some topic such as 'transport' is chosen, ideally by the children, but frequently by the teacher. The topic cuts across the boundaries of subjects and is treated as its nature requires without reference to subjects as such. At its best the method leads to the use of books of reference, to individual work and to active participation in learning,' (Plowden, 1967:199).

A further learning method discussed here is the 'centre of interest': 'It begins with a topic of such inherent interest and variety, as to make it possible and reasonable to make much of the work of the class revolve round it for a period of a week, a month or a term or even longer (...) much of the work may be individual', (ibid).

The comment made about this approach is the one, which interests us here: 'Children are not assimilating inert ideas but are wholly involved in thinking, feeling and doing,' (ibid). This then is learning by doing which we will consider in more detail in a later chapter.

From my time as a student teacher, I have underlined just one section in my battered copy of Plowden:

The sense of personal discovery influences the intensity of a child's experience, the vividness of his memory and the probability of effective transfer of learning,' (Plowden, 1967:201).

There is also talk of making the school environment as rich as possible. The area of discovery is seen as a useful 'shorthand description' of the kind of learning which is being promoted. The importance of the environment is emphasised: 'another effective way of integrating the curriculum is to relate it through the use of the environment to the boundless curiosity which children have about the world around them,' and there is also emphasis on providing different kinds of experiences:

Whereas once the teacher brought autumn leaves into the classroom and talked about the seasons and their characteristics, now he will take the children out to see for themselves,' (Plowden, 1967: 199).

The implications of this comment for our own research will be evident, as an encouragement to 'experience the real' leaving the classroom to explore the wider world of the surrounding environment, the importance the Plowden report gives to 'discovery'.

The Plowden Report is an investigation into primary education and is not directly concerned with middle schools 'we cannot give a description of a good middle school because they do not yet exist,' (Plowden 1967:462). However, some considerations of the suitable characteristics for this new type of school are set down: 'their work must be carried further than junior schools, their ways of learning be less stereotyped than those of secondary schools, (...) the middle school ought to provide the right environment for the last years of childhood as it passes over into adolescence,' (ibid).

The point we have to make, is that at the start of my period as student teacher, the influence of this approach to primary education, as promoted by Plowden, would be reflected in college of education courses at Northumberland College in 1968 and throughout the period of teacher training.

Before examining the nature of the teacher training provided by Northumberland College of Education, we need to track first the process, which led me to become a foreign language teacher.

5.3   REASONS FOR BECOMING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER

Diary sources from the beginning of 1968 narrate the process of applying to colleges of education in England, first unsuccessfully to Coventry and then

Northumberland College. The diary passage, written in Florence, indicates an awareness of the change in life style which was going to take place as I moved from being a foreign student in Italy to a student teacher in Northumberland; also, how I was likely to stand out as being different from other students.

> A post-card affair this morning curtly informed me that my papers were being sent on to Northumberland College of Education, name which conjures up the north if nothing does. With my being turned down by Coventry the whole question of my going to Teachers' Training College is posed again. If I was prepared to accept what would necessarily be four[58] tiresome years among people with whom I had little in common at a good college of education am I prepared to do the same at a lesser one? I find at present that I have far *too* great a tendency to dismiss these problems as being involved with a future somewhat distant. The life in Florence, making the distance one rather more of environment, than actual time'. (DF[59] 22.1.68: Florence).

Why become a teacher, if the process is seen in such negative terms? The same entry answers this question but suggests that there is the temptation to go and teach abroad: 'the image of myself teaching somewhere on the continent, finding reason and purpose in my desire to travel and live abroad with such a plastic occupation,' (ibid).

A more acceptable description of the reasons for becoming a teacher however, follow in the same passage.

> I want to teach and to teach in a state school because I want to transfer my experience and my ideas – it already sound corny and painful why 'my ideas' teaching has nothing to do with personal ideas, not the sort I'm going to do! (...) I'll have to start at the very beginning. There's the question of personal contact and the

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[58] The reference to a four year course would represent doing an additional year for the B.Ed. (batchelor of education) degree, whereas the course I followed was for three years.
[59] DF represents Diary Florence.

rewards of a job as worthwhile. There's the possibility of teaching French a subject which has a transcendent power among subjects in that the matter behind (it) is of such large scale importance to education in the way of presenting an alternative way of life and an appreciation of differences. Language is the barrier to any such appreciation (of a way of life) because only having learnt the language can the country concerned be open to investigation and understanding. (ibid)

The influence of the time living abroad, is clear in this passage and how this shapes the reasons for wanting to become involved in teaching French. The cultural emphasis is evident here 'alternative ways of life' and 'an appreciation of differences' and also how language is 'a barrier' to this appreciation. This fits in with the current sociocultural conceptualisation, which see: 'languages as dynamic living collections of resources for the accomplishment of our social lives', (Hall, 2002:28). Whereas previously living abroad represented direct interaction with another culture, now it becomes how to teach intercultural learning through language learning and seeing an 'appreciation of differences' as a key reason for doing so.

We will develop this discussion of intercultural learning below, as we examine to what extent the French course at Northumberland College covered this area and how the relation between language learning and culture learning was seen at this time. For the moment though we are concerned with exploring further my views in 1968, how my thinking at this period covered the reasons for wanting to teach French and how I felt the subject could be delivered in order to manage this 'appreciation of differences'.

There is of course the danger of my exaggerating the pleasure of visiting a foreign country with English people who would be uninterested in the more cultural aspects, and whose view of France would be limited to the beaches of Brittany or the Côte d'Azur, if at all. It does seem therefore that the importance of French in a junior secondary education is centred around this

question of the appreciation of a different way of life and the importance of such an element in today's world,' (D.F.: 22.1.68).

Talking about 'visiting a foreign country with English people' while not being very precise, may suggest how French teaching might involve visits to France. The use of this particular phrase also suggests a detachment and distancing of my then self, (as an international student in Florence), from the 'English people' with whom I would be working; perhaps an indication of the distance separating me from the new world I was about to enter and pointing to the adjustments which would have to be made. The repetition of this notion of appreciating a different way of life and the importance of this in the modern world are emphasised.

I return in the diary entry to how my own experiences of living abroad are directly linked to wanting to teach French. There is also, an interesting view of how I saw the language should be taught, prior to beginning the college course.

This fits in with my wishing to teach French and my experiences abroad of getting to know people of backgrounds and nationalities of the most diverse nature. It also influences the sort of way I should wish to teach French with the ultimate possible emphasis on speaking the language and showing films and so on of French village/town life so that the divorce between the learning of grammar parrot fashion in the classroom and the French as spoken in France is reduced as much as possible,' (ibid).

So, French teaching would be as practical as possible and should match the language encountered in France and this kind of spoken language approach with culture components, would balance the formal grammar learning routines in order to bring the experience more closely to 'real' French language and culture.

We have in this passage an important indication of a personal philosophy for language learning based on the experience of living abroad. However naïve and

badly expressed the sentiments may seem now and, betraying as they do a lack of understanding of the practical implications of teaching a foreign language to young children, the ideas conform to the direction of later initiatives.

It also, helps us to understand how the practical approach of project work and integrated studies, associated with primary education in the 1960s, (Plowden, 1967), would appeal, as they are first encountered in Northumberland College of Education.

5.4   NORTHUMBERLAND COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

In the absence of diary records, (apart, as we will see, from a negative first impression of Northumberland College), we need to turn to the publicity material produced by the college to reconstruct the nature of the teacher training taking place there.

5.4.1 Promoting the College – the 1966 Prospectus

The prospectus sent to me in Italy promotes through text and pictures a view of a modern looking establishment, (opened only four years previously), for some 750 students in an attractive country setting: 'secluded among trees and fields (...) near the village of Ponteland 8 miles north-west of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne' (Northumberland College of Education Prospectus, circa 1966). The photographs show students teachers going about their training – language students listening to tape recordings; environmental study students (suitably protected), around a hive; gymnastics and pottery activities and a dance workshop. Surprisingly, only one picture shows the interaction of a student with children, as a child is helped to climb a rope in a PE lesson. There are views of a modern looking library, canteen and a study bedroom - complete with studying student and a pleasant view of the campus green from the window - photographs clearly designed to encourage parents of prospective students, as well as the students themselves, to choose Northumberland College.

The prospectus sets out what would now be called its mission statement:

The college is concerned that, through their studies and through all other aspects of college life, its students should find opportunities to develop to the full their potentialities as human beings and teachers. The courses offered are therefore concerned not only with the enrichment of cultural resources and the acquiring of teaching skills; they seek also to quicken curiosity and imagination, to promote the discovery of new ways of gaining knowledge and understanding, and to develop lively and courageous attitudes to learning.'

(Northumberland College of Education Prospectus, 1966).

The prospectus statement: 'promote the discovery of new ways of gaining knowledge and understanding, and to develop lively and courageous attitudes to learning,' reflects the child-centred approach of the Plowden Report and the need to experiment with new systems and methodologies. To what extent the college developed activities, which responded to such encouraging values, is something we will want to explore, as we consider the nature of the courses on education and French.

Turning to more practical matters, it is made clear that the focus for the college is training primary school teachers but that there would be opportunities for some 'teaching experience in secondary schools,' for students in French or Mathematics. (College Prospectus,1966:2). This section has been underlined in pencil in my copy of the prospectus. Further, pencilled notes on the inside back cover indicate how the prospectus was viewed from my own perspective as a foreign language student in Florence:

Seems one of lower standard colleges, good for 2nd or 3rd choice but:

1. no BEd course
2. only primary courses
3. no mature students (but see amendments)

But there is also an acknowledgement of the quality of the campus position with a scribbled comment of: 'good site', (notes written on Northumberland College of Education Prospectus, 1966).

5.4.2 Promoting the College – the 1968 Prospectus

A new version of the Northumberland College prospectus came out 1968, the year I began my training. It importantly marks a change in the nature of the courses available to include a focus on middle school work in keeping with the move in Northumberland to go for this type of schooling: 'The College is specially interested in experimental approaches to the education of the 9-13 age range,' (ibid).

The new version of the prospectus is similar in approach to the original version and this time, contains more photographs of students with pupils. There is generally, a more relaxed style to the photographs, which include students in leisure activities in contrast to the earlier version, which emphasised an academic approach.

The decision to include photographs of this kind suggest that one way to appeal to prospective students is to emphasise the social aspects of college life, as well as the academic and teacher training elements of the three year course. A social life, which has a special impact on the narrative of this research, as it was here that I met my wife Anne, (an environmental studies student), we became married and had our first child during our time at college.

The prospectus provides details on the training provided for all student teachers who: 'follow a three year course in Education, including Physical and Health Education; a course in English; short courses specially designed with the Primary School Curriculum in mind; and one Main Course of their own choice

which is followed for three years,' (Northumberland College of Education Prospectus, circa 1966).

The 1968 prospectus signals a change in this programme with the introduction of a Foundation Course for the first year in college, a general studies course and investigation into child development. Part of this new course provided the opportunity, 'for working with children of various ages in different sorts of schools and the first teaching practice is an integral part of this course,' (Northumberland College of Education Prospectus, version: 1968).

The main courses, to which we turn next are: 'designed primarily for the furtherance of the student's own education. In them students find for themselves the power and value of the educational process which they are to be responsible for initiating in others,' (Northumberland College Prospectus, 1966).

5.4.3 The French Course at Northumberland College of Education
The two versions of the prospectus provide us with the details on this main course. We can also draw on our own experience to comment on the different elements.

We begin with the first 1966 version on French studies:

> The chief aim of the course is to help each student to become as fluent as he is able in the spoken and written language, to deepen his knowledge and awareness of French life and culture, and to equip him for teaching the language to children. To this end considerable work is organized in conversation and discussion groups usually under the direction of a French Assistant, together with intensive courses in the language laboratory to improve pronunciation and intonation. Work in literature is based initially on contemporary texts, with study of the writers' attitudes to problems facing man today. The approach is practical, and work is progressively conducted in French. Explanation of an investigation into audiovisual techniques of language teaching form

part of the course, and students have opportunities for observing and practising in schools, (Appendix to College Prospectus, 1966).

The second version of the document follows the appointment of Mr Norman White as head of department in 1968. The original statement on the French department set out above, is now expanded to five paragraphs. Where there is change is first, in a more detailed approach to how the student's own language skills will be developed.

More precision is now given in an expanded section on methodology which is of particular interest to this research:

> Explanations of, and investigations into the technique of language teaching, form an important part of the course, including a full examination of recent audio-visual and audio-lingual courses. Tutorial staff and students are responsible for all the French teaching carried out at a local Primary School, where the Nuffield Course, 'En Avant', is used', (ibid).

From the students' perspective probably the most important change comes from a final statement: 'All students are required to spend at least a month in France during their Second Year,' (ibid). Six weeks spent in Strasbourg were an added bonus for me, but probably of all the students at college, I was the person who had least need of such an experience.

5.4.3.1 Nature of French Course at Northumberland College in 1968

From the perspective of this research with its theme of 'approaching' and 'experiencing the real' what does the French course at Northumberland College in 1968 represent?

The language lessons and tutor session but also the cultural learning, clearly represent a way of 'approaching the real' target language and culture. Providing students with the language and culture skills they will require as teachers, as they enable in their turn, pupils to 'approach the real'. There is also the

'experience of the real' as students spend time, at least a month, living in France

The practical teaching experience provides students with the first opportunity to bring the target language and culture to pupils. The process of adapting the language into a form, which is accessible to pupils, both in terms of the language content but also, in the way it is delivered. The need to support the spoken element of the language with visual elements (Guberina, 1967) is one key element, which leads to the development of a series of strategies and the production of support materials. Areas which we will examine in more detail as we explore more closely the nature of audio-visual French teaching as it is practiced in the classroom.

5.5 ACCULTURATION TO NORTHUMBERLAND COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

On the sixteenth of September 1968 I travelled by train from my home in Leicester to Newcastle and from there by minibus to Northumberland College, to begin a new life as a student teacher. It represented a considerable change, a move in a completely different direction, which from a narrative theory perspective, as we have seen, would represent a critical event. Although diary entries from this period are very limited, there is an entry to cover the first evening at college which makes clear my awareness of the change taking place:

> I don't really want to put on to paper my present feelings but somehow such an activity might be a way to pass the time. The journey was uneventfully tiresome and I was particularly conscious of inevitably moving towards a complete change of environment, turning over to start afresh as I have been telling myself since being accepted,' (DNC, 16.9.68 Northumberland College).

One of the characteristics of changes of this kind is the difficulty of imagining what the experience is going to be like. Apart from the prospectus and contact with a student at Leeds College of Education, there were few points of reference for me to establish what life in a college of education would be like. There is also, often a feeling of discouragement as the reality of this new life is experienced in the first days, associated with anxiety that the choice to become part of this particular community may be the wrong one: 'nervousness due to one's being (un)able to envisage in any way the exact set up, has been replaced by an even more discomforting feeling of discouragement and general flatness,[60]'(ibid).

Then there are the new colleagues with whom the experience is to be shared.

> The room I'm in is shared with two others. I have a bottom bunk as came last. Seeing the assembled students is to feel somehow one has strayed into the wrong building. They are, or seem, so young and ordinary. I had tried to curb my free reining imagination but somehow was not capable of being just so basically realistic as was necessary, (ibid).

This passage is an important one and needs to be examined in more detail. The use of the word 'ordinary' shocks, when describing my fellow students, except through the contrast to the exotic world of foreign students with whom I had been surrounded in Florence and Switzerland. Ordinary then, in terms of lack of experience, students who had generally only just left school and who often came from the local area.

There is also the use of 'realistic', and we need again to apply our concept of 'approaching' and 'experiencing the 'real' to this account. This is a 'real' world I have entered but one which is alien to me in terms of my background and previous experience. This means that I need to adapt, there will have to be a period of acculturation, not associated with having to learn a new language but

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[60] What we have in this extract is a clear example of 'culture shock' as the full impact of a new and different culture is encountered, (see section 3.4.3.2 above). 'Culture shock' that happens even though this is not a foreign country where another language is spoken.

to do with adapting to a different culture, the culture of northern England but also, the culture of state education.

What is clear is the emphasis the entries make about an awareness of difference. Differences associated with the actual environment of the college of education and my difference to other students in terms of age (24 years old compared to 18 or 19 years), experience, education and general background.

Even the language of these entries points to this difference, the use of 'one' ('one's being unable to'), signalling a particular background and private school education. In my year at college, there were very few students who had been to private school. During a foundation lecture, one discussion period raised the question of how other students felt about private education. Roger Utterly[61], declared that he had in the course of his rugby playing encountered a number of ex public school pupils and didn't think much of them. At which point, my identity was of course revealed and the discussion moved onto private and state education.

The point to make here is that for me going to a college of education represented a change of culture. A moving away from my own comfort zone not just of family and background but also the recent experiences of being a foreign student abroad, to enter a new and different world, requiring a period of adjustment, of acculturation, in order to become familiar and happy with the new circumstances. The passage quoted above from the first evening represents an element of culture shock with the need to accept differences 'in behaviour from those with which they would be familiar from (my) own culture,' and the 'psychological and social disorientation caused by confrontation with a new or alien culture,' (Furnham, 2004:163). This is something we will need to consider in more detail, as it has importance for the research as a whole.

Adapting to a new culture may not involve a change in language or only a change in language. It is also associated with different ways of viewing the world around us. There can be different cultures within the same community,

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[61] Later to distinguish himself as English rugby captain.

cultures not necessarily characterised by using different languages but how language is used: 'common attitudes, beliefs and values are reflected in the way members of the group use language – for example what they choose to say or not to say and how they say it,' (Kramsch, 1998:6,7).

Changing environments, moving to a different reality, one difficult to imagine because it represents a substantial change to what has gone before, is one of the recurring themes of this research. On a personal level, the experience of going to college of education presents a similar need to adapt as those periods spent living in France or Switzerland.

The theme of acculturation has been a consistent theme in the chapters which make up this stage of the research. It will be an area to return to later when considering the different language and culture developments introduced at Coates Middle School and the demands they make on pupils to adapt to them.

The process of culture shock is forgotten as people move on from the initial challenging first experiences of a change in environment and culture and become adapted to the new world in which they are now living. Diary entries of the kind set out above, remind us however, of how it was at first.

The adaptation to the new environment of Northumberland College seems to have taken place fairly swiftly, although there is no direct evidence for this in the form of further diary entries or other primary sources. The narrative passage quoted earlier in this chapter highlights a particular moment of understanding, part of my autobiographical memory and which points to something of a 'transformation' in me as I begin to see things as a primary teacher would. This is part of the process of adapting to the new environment.

5.6 CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER SIX

This chapter provides an important and essential link between the time spent abroad and the start of the period as a French teacher. In this conclusion I want to sum up the elements of this chapter and then, in a final section bring to a conclusion this section of the research on acculturation, by considering the period of personal development as a whole and in the process, understanding how this stage fits into the research.

The documents available for consultation provide a view of the nature of the learning taking place at Northumberland College during the 1960s. They provide an indication that the teaching methods promoted, reflected the foreign language learning developments of the time, with the use of audio-visual language methods. They also point to the influence of the then, recently published Plowden Report, with its emphasis on learning through discovery and learning through doing. This suggests the college provided me with the formation I needed to become a foreign language teacher and also, pointed the way to involving children in the active learning, which would be the basis for many of the initiatives developed later.

The material we have been able to consider has also, enabled us to position the different kinds of learning being promoted in terms of 'the real'. The promotion by education tutors of the 'discovery methods' as championed by the Plowden Report (and evident from my own sudden understanding of the discovery world recorded in the narrative passage), point to the possibilities of taking children out of the classroom in order to experience at first hand a particular phenomena, a 'real' and not a simulated world.

5.7   CONCLUSION TO STAGE 2: ACCULTURATION

The period of personal development and acculturation, recorded in this stage of the research, is characterised by experience of very different cultural

environments: from the first year living in France at Grenoble, through the long period as a student staying in the international students' home at Champréyvres, the year as a student in Florence and finally the period of teacher training.

Each of these stages of the narrative has involved coming to terms with differences and adapting to new circumstances with an initial period of 'culture shock' such as that described on the first evening at college of education. How many children on exchanges will have similar feelings as they encounter the differences around them, on a first evening in a French home and find, as I did, that they were not capable of being 'just so basically realistic' about the situation they would find themselves in? What the 'real experience' represents is something we have trouble preparing ourselves for, as we encounter differences at first hand.

We have concentrated in this research on a relationship with the real, positioning the different teaching methods or experiences in terms of this element. However, at this point of the research, as we look back at the period spent abroad in France, Switzerland and Italy and contrast this with the world of education in England, the comparison of these very different environments indicates there is a further element we need to tackle associated with the 'real' we have been keen to define throughout these pages, but also, distinct from it.

This is exoticism, 'that which is introduced from or originating in a foreign (especially tropical) country or as something, which is attractively strange or remarkably unusual,' (OED).

The processes of acculturation described in these chapters, is also, about encountering the exotic, engaging with the foreign, which at first is strange and different but each time the acculturation takes place, with the personal domestication of these differences, the exotic moves away, further off to other countries still unknown. So, for example, there is the passage from the Grenoble diaries with the comment when viewing 'French women with their long loaves of bread' that: 'I find it surprising they were once complete foreigners to

me,' and the hope that 'the French will never be foreigners as the Italians, Germans or other Europeans are,'(G.D. 24.2.64). The passage goes on to explain why this should be so: 'I have learnt something about them (...) about their habits and their humour and their life in general,' (ibid).

In this way the 'exotic' is the 'real', something distant we approach and which on experience also, moves away. However the definitions of 'real' and 'exotic' are very different, on the one hand we have what is actual and a true representation, while on the other, we have almost the opposite, the strange, different and unknown. It is also true that as we move away from an experience and look at it as an element of the past, (as we are doing in this narrative), then, the experience we can no longer return to, attains again the aura of the exotic and unattainable, reached only in our memories and dreams.

One of the tasks for the analysis of this research will be to try to untangle the real and exotic and to come in this way to understand better, the relationship between these two concepts, which are central to an understanding of the representation of the foreign in language learning and therefore provide a key focus for this research.

There are plenty of examples of the exotic in the descriptions from the diaries of the period but it is the visual, which can perhaps best represent this process. It is important to establish that the exotic does not have to be, a 'view of distant horizons' as we have chosen, but could just as well be represented by the view of the pit-heap from the window of Newsham Primary School, on my first teaching practice.

For me there is the memory of one particular summer evening at Champréveyres when all of us, (members of the community), gathered out on the terrace, with the lake stretching out before us and a distant view of mountains, to take in the view and listen to someone, probably Arturo playing the guitar and singing in Spanish songs from home, as the sun went down. And from all the balconies on the surrounding apartments the locals came out to

watch and listen. This distant scene of far horizons is all the appeal of leaving home and going out to explore and discover.

In the context of this chapter on teacher training it was made clear that instead of bringing the autumn leaves into the classroom: 'taking the children out to see for themselves,' (Plowden, 1967:199) is far better. The next stages of this thesis will record the different learning developments introduced at Coates Middle School which seek to do just this: provide the opportunity for pupils, by taking them out of the classroom routine, to discover for themselves a foreign language and culture and from this experience, making one small aspect of the foreign, familiar.

STAGE THREE: 'APPROACHING THE REAL'

Link with previous stage: Stage Two investigated the period of personal development during the years spent living abroad and then training as a foreign language teacher. Stage Three begins the narrative of foreign language and culture teaching.

Photo 3.1: February, 1987, 'Mission Secrète', intensive language work.

Stage Contents:

Chapter Six: narrative of the first years spent teaching French and a French musical production, 'Spectacle'.

Chapter Seven: describes the development of intensive language work.

Appendix references: A6, A7.
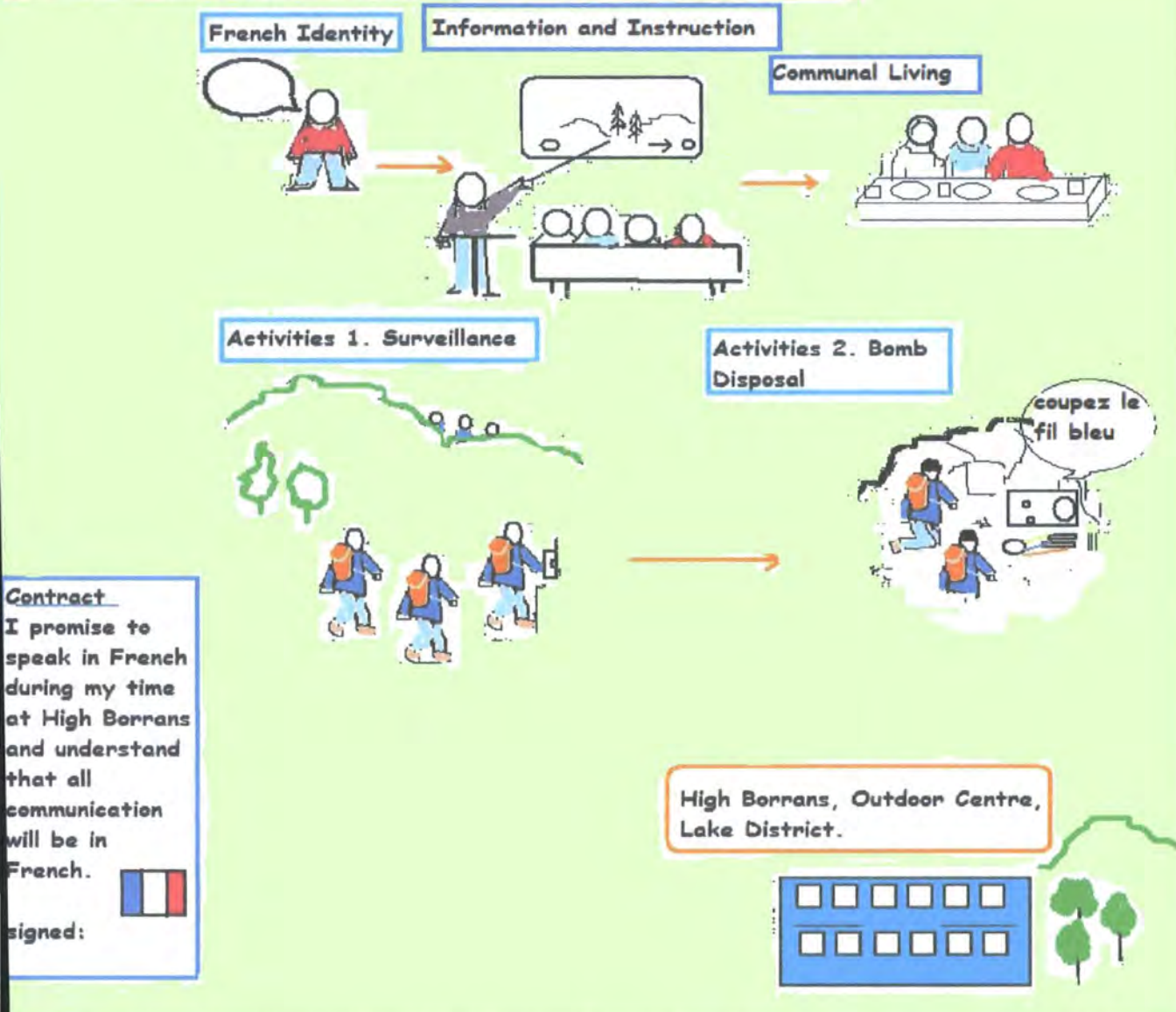
Narrative Illustration 6.1 'Mission Secrète', intensive language work at High Borrans in the Lake District, 'secret agent' training.

The illustration is drawn to represent the key elements in the intensive language learning programme at High Borrans. Pupils sign a contract promising to speak in French; they are given a French identity; there are some classroom exercises in the mornings as pupils follow the background story; the afternoon activities involve 'surveillance', 'bomb disposal' work and other elements of 'secret agent' training. Pupils stay in the High Borrans outdoor centre and therefore are involved in communal living within a French speaking environment.

Approaching the Real

STAGE 3, 'APPROACHING THE REAL'

CHAPTER SIX: INTRODUCTION TO FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING, 1970s

6.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the narrative of the first years' foreign language teaching. The theme for the period 'Approaching the Real' is about viewing the language and culture measures introduced to pupils in the classroom in terms of how the 'real' target language and culture is represented. This is the central problem around which this research is articulated and the importance of this stage for the research as a whole, is reflected in the use of the same title for this chapter and the thesis.

It is because we are unable to bring the 'real' French language and culture into the classroom that we have to represent it, provide a format, which is capable of providing the opportunities for language learning to take place. The language has to be programmed and packaged in such a way as to make its translation into the classroom possible This narrative account of this first period of foreign language teaching is about trying then, to 'approach the real', finding ways to make the process of foreign language learning more realistic. While a range of different learning activities are available, drama is found to be the mechanism best able to reduce the distance separating school-based foreign language learning from the 'real' French language and culture. Drama, this 'imagined reality' (Verriour, 1987), enabling through role-play and simulation, the creation of learning environments, which approximate the 'real' - 'as if' situations (Schechner, 1967).

The two chapters in this stage focus on the different ways in which drama is used for language teaching at Coates Middle School over this period. It will be necessary to examine the theory of drama-in-education and also theatre-in-education in order to place the different uses of drama within the context of drama teaching in general. The stage is divided into two chapters matching the narrative of the period. Chapter Six the account of the first period of foreign language teaching in the 1970s, includes the introduction of role-play and improvisation in French lessons. There is also, the use of theatre-in- education methods with the presentation of a French musical production, 'Spectacle'. The second chapter concerns the extension of drama work in foreign language learning to include intensive language work, taking place first at Coates Middle School and later, at an outdoor centre in the Lake District.

Table 6.1 Contents of Chapter Six : Classroom Language Learning and Theatre in Education

| 6.0 Introduction | → | 6.1 Narrative Passage and explanation | → | 6.2 Classroom Learning | → |

| 6.3 French Learning at Coates Middle School | → | 6.4 Creation of Foreign Language Learning Programmes | → | 6.5 Drama as Practice: 'Spectacle', French musical production. | → |

| 6.6 Representations of the 'real': authenticity, stereotyping and performance theory | → | 6.7 Conclusion |
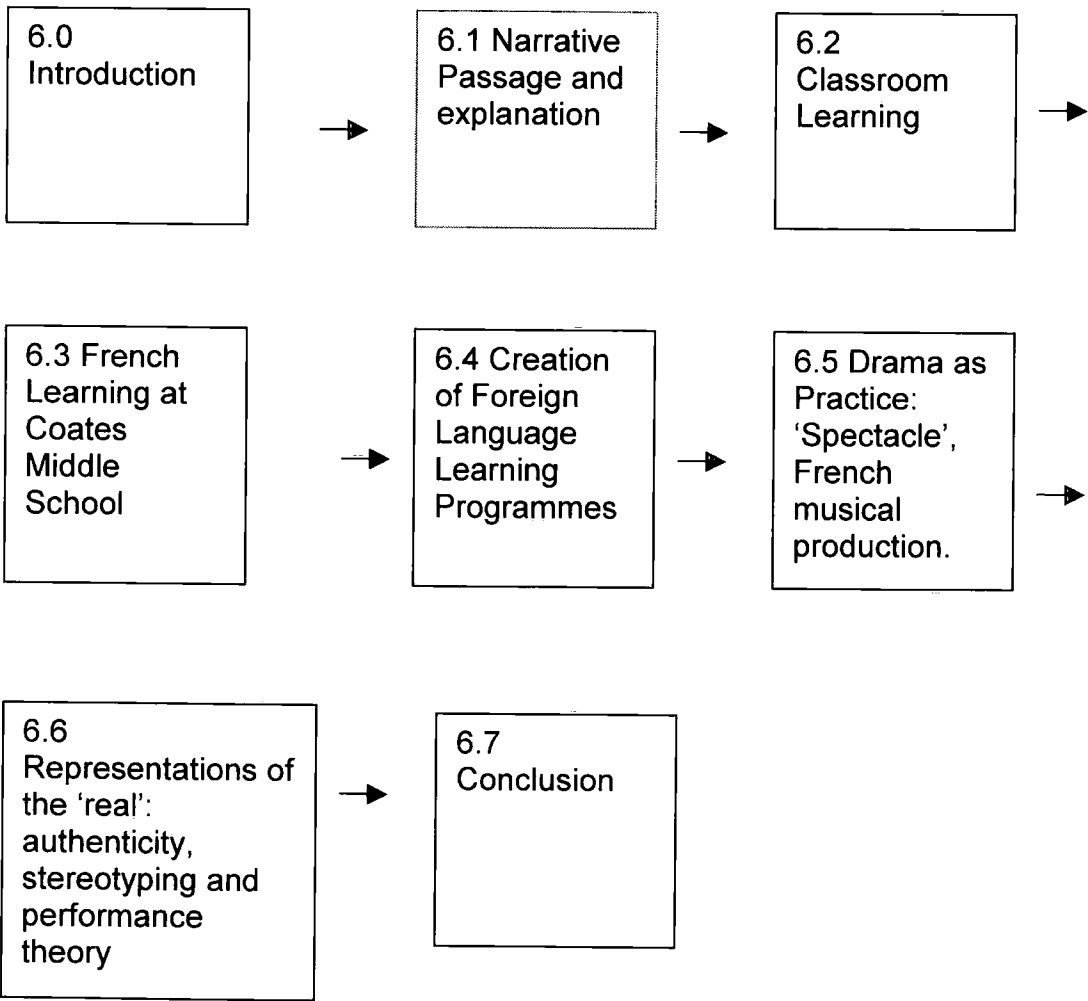
6.1 NARRATIVE ACCOUNT

Before the lesson, preparations are made. The heavy tape recorder is carefully set up, checking that the tape spool is going to play the correct story, from the beginning of the required section – rewinding represents a potential danger here, as the spool has been known to shoot off the tape recorder when fast forwarding and dramatically unroll itself on the classroom floor, to the amusement of pupils (as the French teacher anxiously tries to retrieve the tape spool and situation). The large A3 posters (coloured or black and white, depending on the unit), which represent drawings of the activities recorded on the tape, are carefully put into the correct order. They are placed on the desk ready to be held up at the appropriate moment, so text can match the visual representation.

Pupils enter the classroom and the French lesson begins. The teacher greets the pupils with 'Bonjour la classe' answered by, 'Bonjour Monsieur Daniels'. This is a class of pupils aged eleven and twelve years in their third year of learning French with four, thirty five minute lessons each week. The greeting is followed by a brief introductory phase of oral question and answer work, with questions on the day's date and weather and perhaps some quick vocabulary work on items around the classroom. Then, using quick sketches on the blackboard, the French family is represented with pin figures. The names of these characters are revised and written on the board beside each sketch as a prelude to the story they will shortly be listening to and in which the characters appear: Monsieur Léon, Paul Léon, Madame Léon and Marie Léon. Pupils are then instructed to: 'croisez les bras', 'écoutez bien l'histoire[62]'

The tape plays and the appropriate poster is held up in turn providing the narrative: the start of the long summer holidays and the 'famille Léon' going off for a camping holiday at the seaside. A story, which involves a problem: 'La voiture ne marche pas bien'[63]. Monsieur Léon, a rather large gentleman with a

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[62] Fold your arms, listen carefully to the story.
[63] The car isn't working properly

small moustache and a typical French look about him, stops the car and discovers there is a 'pneu crevé'[64]. The poster clearly shows a very flat tyre and concern on the faces of the members of the Léon family.

As the story finishes, the last poster is shown and the tape recorder is switched off. There are some questions about the story and the introduction of new elements of vocabulary. Cards containing the key phrases are held up and read out, pupils being encouraged to work out what they mean. Key elements of vocabulary are then, written on the board and copied into exercise books under the story's title: 'Où est le cric?'[65]. I move around the classroom to check progress and ask a question or two. To help understanding a number of little sketches are again used to provide the meaning of elements of vocabulary, where this is required.

As the lesson comes to the final quarter of an hour there is an improvised drama session. Pupils are chosen to play the key roles in the story and come to the front of the class to act out what happens next.

We know Paul is sent to the garage to borrow a 'cric', but this is not covered in the dialogue. There is therefore the chance to act out the scene as Paul arrives at the garage and talks to a 'mécanicien'. I talk through the situation with the class, still exclusively in French (any deviation from French being fiercely discouraged in the audio-visual approach), and together we work out the phrases needed. The garage is set up at one side of the classroom with the 'mechanic' looking as though he's busy mending an invisible car. Paul is then told by 'Monsieur Léon' to: 'Cherchez un mécanicien[66]', and so he rushes off to the improvised garage. More fluent pupils have been chosen from those volunteering to try and get the dialogue and drama off the ground. Help is needed as they try to use new vocabulary and material they already know, to improvise the dialogue.

Paul: Bonjour Monsieur.

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[64] A flat tyre.
[65] Where's the jack?
[66] Find a mechanic.

| Mécanicien: | Bonjour.. |
| Paul: | Un pneu .... crevé ....? ! |

(At which point there is a whispered consultation and the familiar phrase 'je voudrais ... s'il vous plait[67] , the standard phrase for all requesting is provided).

| Paul: | Je voudrais ..... (mimed word from me) .. un cric. |

Further consultation, this time with the mechanic centres around the need for him to find out where the car is and to drag out an 'où est la voiture? Another key phrase required as a regular element, in classroom French lessons.

| Mécanicien: | Très bien, où est la voiture? |

(And because the previous unit has involved directions, au nord, au sud[68])

| Paul: | Au sud. |

Applause is given for the performance, then the scene is repeated a second time with different players, before a final activity has pupils work on the same dialogue (now written on the board) with their partners. The bell for the end of the lesson sounds, the class is dismissed with an 'au revoir' and disappears for the rest of the day's lessons in English; while the next group assembles outside. The tape is returned to the beginning of the story, the posters are reordered and the blackboard cleaned. And the next lesson begins.

6.1.1 Explanation of Narrative account

This is the routine, the process of foreign language teaching with pupils using the audio-visual method, during the 1970s. The handling of different learning resources, the need to maintain the target language throughout the lesson and going from one class of children to the next, the role of the specialist French teacher in a middle school during this period.

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[67] I would like ... please.
[68] To the north, south.

The final stage of the narrative passage demonstrates how drama is able to extend the language-learning environment through improvisation. It is worth considering this point in more detail, as it has important implications for many of the drama-based developments later introduced at Coates Middle School. While it is possible to act out different sections of the story, (which are represented on tape and through the posters), this is a different kind of drama work. Improvised drama is being used here to create more active language work. Pupils are being placed in a situation where they need to use the foreign language practically, to find the way to communicate in order to deal with the specific task in hand. In order to do this, they will have to activate not just the elements of language, they are encountering in the current learning unit, but also those covered previously.

There is an element here of negotiation, (a key characteristic of improvised drama work, as we will see), as pupils work with the teacher to decide how they can address linguistically the situation they find themselves in, needing to explain to the mechanic what has happened, the need for a 'cric' and where the car with the flat tyre is to be found. The point is however, that while the situation encourages the development of spoken language skills, the process of improvised drama work takes pupils away from the standard classroom, foreign language learning routines and creates a different learning activity. Hawkins examines the nature of improvised drama work:

> And the work is goal oriented rather than language oriented; the participants are trying to get something done. The language is a by-product. There is an immediacy, a sense of actuality and authenticity in such work. A vicarious 'realistic context' which maximises comprehension and, yes, those desks must go – or be used as part of the drama! Pile them on top of one another and make a space,' (Hawkins, 1993:61).

The passage emphasises the special quality of improvised drama work, which with its creation of a 'realistic context' to the learning, gives an 'immediacy', 'actuality' and 'authenticity' to foreign language learning procedures. It remains

however 'vicarious' as Hawkins admits and the final lines also, suggest that the classroom may not prove adequate for developing the full potential of improvised drama. The search to create the space in which the foreign language can flourish, thorough the provision of a range of different learning opportunities, is what this stage of the research is about. It concerns the exploration of different learning environments, which seek to 'approach the real' and which achieve their most extended form in the intensive language work at High Borrans. Here instead of a classroom, where desks have to be 'piled up' out of the way, there is real space: the hills and moorland of the Lake District, in which to improvise the drama and practice the foreign language.

> Over the cage floor the horizons come,
>
> (Ted Hughes, The Jaguar: 1962).

6.2   CLASSROOM FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

There is an initial period of culture shock, particularly during the first year, as the new teacher becomes assimilated into this new and very different working environment, in which he has a particular and specific role to play. My time at Coates Middle School, coincided with the final year as a secondary school, before the change to middle school took place the following year in September 1972. As the first French teacher in the school I stood out as being different, someone associated with France, many pupils then and later during my career, thinking that I was, in fact, French.

This is not a period of the narrative we are able to reconstruct through diaries and although primary sources, in the form of documents and photographs exist for the key school initiatives which took place, (the French school productions and the intensive language work), there is no data available for the day to day routine of French teaching.

A valuable source for understanding what it was like to be a French teacher in the 1970s, teaching through audio-visual methods, is *'Teaching French'* written

by Rod Hares and published in 1979. This book has the advantage of being contemporary to the period and also being based on experience of the foreign language-learning scene in Northumberland at this time. Hares was a foreign language lecturer at Northumberland College during my time there and we worked occasionally together during this period. At least one entry in his book refers to pupils from Coates Middle School.

In addition to practical advice for French teachers about how to introduce effective group work, there is an appreciation in the book of the difficulties placed on the foreign language teacher involved in audio-visual language teaching. Hare's work shows an awareness, that the new methods placed a good deal of pressure on the teacher delivering this learning programme.

' "I don't have the confidence!" "I wish I knew what I was doing!" These are common sentiments expressed by many French teachers at sometime or other. "And there's the noise! We can't have them all talking at once without the other teachers complaining!" How often have colleagues commiserated with one another along these lines in the staff-room, the Teachers' Centre or on an organised course? Confidence, method, classroom discipline. At times these three seem to desert us when we don our French teaching identities. Yet there are more successful moments. There are teachers who are generally happy with their French-teaching. We all of us have encountered a few who produce consistently excellent lessons. Behind that excellence, there has frequently been a willingness to experiment and, almost always, the adaptation of classroom techniques that have proved sound in other areas of the curriculum,' (Hares, 1979:85).

The passage suggests many French teachers were having difficulty delivering the new practical language learning programmes and Hares talks elsewhere in the book about 'saving the French teacher's sanity,' (Hares, 1979:17). While this may be an overtly negative reading of the situation, it is true that many of the language teachers I trained with, changed from being French specialists to class teachers.

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It is also true, that looking again at the teacher's book for *En Avant*, I am reminded of the heavy demands made on the teacher as he or she handles the different elements of the course. There is something of a performance in this process. The magician-like qualities required as new visual or textual elements are displayed in rapid succession, like rabbits out of a hat, and the tape juggled to produce the correct passage to go with each one. A straightforward task when there is the time to set in place the different material, (at the beginning of the day or after a break period), but more difficult when there is no time to do this. A surviving timetable from 1973 makes this point clear. If we consider just one day in the working week, Monday, the succession of different classes in the day becomes clear[69].

We need to look more closely at a number of further points raised by Hares. In the first place, he talks about: 'when we don our French teaching identity,' and signals this perceptible change in identity, as a specific role is played by the person delivering the French lesson and switching to another language.

Hares, importantly also, associates success with those teachers who have been willing to experiment and adapt: 'classroom techniques that have proved sound in other areas of the curriculum,' (Hares, 1979:85).

The need to experiment has obvious, important connotations for this narrative, where a number of initiatives represent innovative approaches. Ways of trying out new methods for pupils to learn French, many of these coming from other areas of the curriculum such as drama. We will want to establish the drama background to these approaches. Where there is a difference, is that in my own case, these initiatives are often associated with activities taking place outside the classroom.

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[69] lesson 1 lesson 2 lesson 3 lesson 4 lesson 5 lesson 6 lesson 7 lesson 8

French 3.1	French 4.4	French 3.3	French 3.4	French 1.4	Free	French 4.1	French 4.3

Before looking at these learning initiatives, we need to understand first, the position of French at Coates Middle School in the 1970s, this will link to the section in chapter three of the literature review which set out the position for middle school French learning from a national perspective (the 1974 DfES Conference) and the later curriculum document from Northumberland Education Authority (1984).

6.3   FRENCH LEARNING AT COATES MIDDLE SCHOOL, 1970s

There was already from this first period of foreign language teaching, a concern to extend the learning opportunities for pupils. A primary source is available from this time written in my role as subject leader and although undated, comes apparently, from the 1970s. *A Review of French Teaching at Coates Middle School* [70] provides details about foreign language learning in the school at this time. It is the conclusion to the report, which is of most interest to us:

> French is at present an integral part of the Middle School Curriculum. It seems sensible in view of our continued involvement in a European Community it should remain so. For the subject to be covered adequately, it is important the optimum teaching conditions are obtained. The number and length of lessons and the availability of qualified teachers are factors which have a direct bearing on the quality of French teaching within a school. Not all children will either enjoy French or see its relevance and quite a large proportion of those who study French at Coates will not continue with the subject beyond the first year of the High School. It is important therefore that French is not seen as merely an academic subject for the abler pupils. The En Avant course has sufficiently varied and interesting material to involve the weaker children. For them to make progress however, they will need to work in a setted situation in the 3rd and 4th years. In addition, an emphasis on some of the fringe benefits of language learning such as French evenings and visits

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[70] See Appendix, section A6.1.

abroad will help make French a less artificial subject in the Middle School,' (undated Review of French Teaching from 1970s).

This passage is worth quoting in its entirety because it provides the school foreign language context, within which the learning developments described below take place, (a reference to the European Community is a reminder of an historic period when the United Kingdom was first becoming involved in joining Europe).

The most important section for this thesis however, focuses on the concern to motivate pupils and the appreciation that the reality of French teaching did not mean that all pupils enjoyed and were able to make good progress in French.

In this report written shortly after the French musical production, 'Spectacle', (described below) and a walking expedition to Neuchâtel, (part of the next chapter on 'experiencing the real'), these elements are seen as 'fringe benefits' of language learning. The most telling comment however, comes in the phrase which follows and with which the paragraph ends:

> make French a less artificial subject in the Middle School', (ibid, my current emphasis)

The phrase is not unique to this document but is picked up in the French Scheme of work report from the same period [71], a document possibly written prior to the more complete review and one, which goes into more detail about how out of classroom activities, have their role in improving pupil motivation.

> French evenings and visits abroad are both events which help to make French a less 'artificial' subject. The French evenings enable parents, whose support is obviously crucial, to be involved,' (French Scheme of Work, 1970s).

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[71] This is a standard document produced in the middle school to set out the objectives, system and process of learning in each subject area, see Appendix A6.2.

There is therefore evidence that one of the problems associated with teaching French, for me at the time, was that there was a danger of it becoming an artificial subject. Anything that is artificial is something that is an imitation, not real. It would appear therefore that right from the beginning of my time teaching, there was a concern to put in place activities, which would make the subject more 'real'. The claim we are making here might lack substance were it not for the passage which immediately follows:

> Visits abroad have the important function of bringing children actually into contact with the language and culture they are studying, (ibid).

The title for this thesis, 'Approaching the Real' was I thought, a present reading of past developments. Reading again, the first review of French teaching at Coates and the scheme of work from the 1970s, it is apparent that concern over the 'artificial' nature of language lessons was already being expressed. The time spent living abroad is likely to have influenced this position, as is my own experiences of learning French at school. There is the ambition to put in place something more extensive, (which never materialised):

> The ideal situation would quite clearly to be able to set up a regular 'base' in France with liaison with a local school. The children in such a situation would be able to really develop their language skills and their work could be extended to a study of the surrounding area,' (Review of French Teaching, 1970s page 3).

Before we look at the introduction of a French musical production 'Spectacle', we need to examine first, what the creation of different foreign language learning programmes represents and then, the nature of theatre-in-education work.

6.4 THE CREATION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE LEARNING PROGRAMMES

As we introduce the first of a series of learning initiatives created at Coates Middle School for foreign language and culture learning, we need to consider what work of this kind represents. The routine language and culture learning taking place in the classroom involves following a published learning programme in this case the *En Avant*, primary French course. What this course does, in common with all language courses, is to represent through the resources provided, the French language and culture to children, as we have discussed.

As soon however, as the teacher creates a learning programme, he or she is constructing their own representation of the 'other', the target foreign language and culture[72]. However, 'the other is never simply given, never just found or encountered, but made,' (Fabian, 1990:755). Representations are not 'innocent copies of external realities,' but 'are built out of the requirements of the receiving discourse,' (Sturge, 2007:8). This is an important point, the choices made about how this 'other' language and culture is represented are subject to the specific needs of school language and culture learning. The teacher has chosen to construct a programme of learning to develop pupils' language skills, one appropriate for their current level of learning. The level of the language used has to match therefore, the ability and knowledge of the pupils for whom it is intended.

This process of making choices, of constructing and arranging material in order to provide a particular representation, matches the processes of historiography. This as we have seen, is the basis on which this research is founded, as we try to reconstruct our own past experience in order to provide the historical narrative. And in the same way that historical study was challenged by post-modernism to review the process of writing history and recreating the past, so,

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[72] Rixon (2004) raises the point of authenticity in this respect: 'in authentic texts, the language data is genuine and may be expected to embody characteristics that specially devised-teaching materials fail to capture,' (Rixon, 2004: 68). However, the accessibility of authentic texts with younger pupils generally precludes their use.

anthropology and ethnology have been subject to challenges relating to the way other cultures are represented through their writing, (Clifford, Marcus, 1986; Sturge, 2007).

Sturge sees, 'ethnographic representation as a kind of translation,' (Sturge, 2007:17). The use of 'translation' to describe the process of making a culture available to others as a written anthropological text is of particular interest, first, from the culture element in foreign language learning but also, from a language perspective. It is the comment on the 'authority' of the text 'hiding the process of editing and translation that have gone on', (Sturge, 1986:8); which suggested it might be important to consider what happens as we create new language learning initiatives. At the same time a consideration of the 'translation' element here, would enable us to focus on the possible negative factors involved in this process.

> *Something important here about dynamic, of losing the motion and movement of the language to translate it into a format, a package susceptible to classroom usage, doing and the importance of verbs.*
>
> *(PhD diary: 24.11.08)*

'Spectacle', (a French musical production), provides us with a particularly clear illustration of this process. There is a decision to produce a performance where pupils, through sketches and songs, (and activities taking place around the school), provide a representation of France, its language and culture. However much this material seeks to be representative of authentic elements of language and culture, it has to comply with pupils' language skills and therefore involves adapting the target language to conform to this need. From the cultural perspective there are also adjustments to be made. Here the process involves choosing representative aspects of French culture, which are interesting and perhaps amusing, but which are also, susceptible to being translated onto the

stage as part of a performance. We will see, as we describe this initiative below, the process of cultural selection involves an element of stereotyping.

At the time when 'Spectacle' was produced in 1975, I had no knowledge of the theory behind representation, only a practical concern to put together a suitable programme in order to provide a performance and also, to ensure that the language level of this material was accessible to pupils.

In other initiatives described in this thesis, there is a more discrete representation of a particular aspect of language and culture. What is common to all the work, however, is this need to make choices about how to arrange the material and how to represent the 'other'. We have to 'translate' elements of the foreign language and culture in order for them to be available as appropriate and accessible elements in classroom learning, (the process of packaging, arranging and adapting the elements of language). So, in the same way as the ethnographer 'actively produces the 'reality' of the culture being studied by means of selection, editing and analysis,' (Sturge, 2007:8), the teacher is carrying out a similar task as they produce their own learning programmes and resources for foreign language and culture learning, an exercise we are describing as 'approaching the real'.

The point made in the note from the PhD diary quoted above, is that in the process of adapting elements of the foreign language for classroom use, there is a danger of reducing the flow of language by taking elements out of context and losing therefore the natural dynamics of the language. This marks a distinction with 'real' language. The elements of language we select and arrange for classroom learning become organised and predictable, unlike the undisciplined flow of natural language; a distinction we will consider more closely as we look at how pupils communicate during a French exchange.

It is inevitable if we are going to teach foreign languages in the classroom, as we need to, that there is a process of selection and arrangement as this 'translation' takes place. What we need to make clear however, is that in the process of doing so, we are moving away from the characteristics of 'real'

language situations which we would encounter on a visit to the target language and culture. The problem is that if and when, pupils actually have 'real experience' of the language, it is unlikely to match their classroom experience, unless an effort is made specifically to prepare them for this. It is the problem of an adaptation which has taken on its own separate existence, an independent entity: classroom foreign language learning.

Salman Rushdie in a recent article considers adaptation in its fullest sense. He sees the 'question at the heart of the entire subject of adaptation' in terms of the 'essence' of the original.

> My own view has always been that whether we are talking about a poem moving across a language border to become another poem in another tongue, a book crossing the frontier between the world of print and celluloid, or human beings migrating from one world to another (...) something is always lost in translation and yet something can also be gained. I am defining adaptation very broadly, to include translation, migration and metamorphosis, all the means by which one thing becomes another, (Rushdie, 2009:2).

The central point that Rushdie makes and which is of considerable importance to us here, is that the process of translation leads 'one thing to become another'. The language and culture we teach in the classroom in this reading is not therefore the same as the one we are going to encounter as we 'experience the real' target language and culture. To ignore this point is to place our analysis of 'approaching' and 'experiencing the real' on the wrong footing. The distinction we have made in the terminology between 'approaching' and 'experiencing the real' begins to be fundamental to this research, not the treatment of two similar entities but of two distinct elements. It is for this reason that the impact of the 'real' brings with it not just the need to adjust to a different environment and routines, but also, a world in which the language is dependant on the social context and behaves in an unpredictable manner to the controlled and organised language presented in the classroom.

We will want to return to this area as we discuss each learning initiative and will explore the concepts involved more thoroughly, in the final chapter of this research.

6.5 DRAMA AS PRACTICE

Before turning to a description of 'Spectacle', we need to consider briefly the theoretical elements of drama as they apply more specifically to this performance, which comes into the category of theatre-in-education as opposed to drama-in-education.

The concept of theatre-in-education tends to refer to a performance constructed by an external group, which is performed in school. In this case pupils usually have the role of audience with perhaps the possibility of some interaction taking place during workshops. This is different from the situation here, with 'Spectacle' where the performance is created internally and therefore, can match more closely the needs of pupils; where the pupils themselves perform to an audience of parents, friends and other pupils.

Fitzgibbon considers the contribution drama work in general and theatre work in particular, make to language learning :

> The single great advantage of drama and theatre for language
> acquisition: it is that they offer not language, but language in action,
> language in context, language at play,' (Fitzgibbon, 1993: 271)

We turn next to look more closely at the structure of 'Spectacle'.

6.6   'SPECTACLE' – FRENCH MUSICAL PRODUCTION

My responsibility for writing and producing the annual school musical and drama production for two years prior to 'Spectacle', meant that setting up this French spectacle was a relatively straightforward process. The question was what kind of production to perform. As in previous years it was a matter of writing something especially for performance. This had the advantage of freedom in the choice of topics but there were constraints in terms of the level of French language required, for pupils to be able to readily act out the different sketches and to sing the musical numbers.

Many of the relevant documents from the 'Spectacle' performance have been retained including photographs[73], the script for the different playlets, rehearsal notes, and a local press report. As we describe this event, we have therefore, the necessary primary sources to enable us to reconstruct this presentation and understand the purpose behind this evening of French culture and language.

It becomes apparent on viewing the photographs that what we have, is a certain representation of France. There are photographs taken from the performance and others from the various activities taking place around the school before the performance began. From the musical production, there are a number of press photographs: a guillotine scene[74] with pupils in appropriate costume; two pictures of pupils singing, one of younger children beautifully dressed in lace outfits and Brittany type bonnets, singing Alouette and a second representing a sing-along with the audience with instructions in French and English. A group photograph of a selection of the different performers is equally informative with French waiters, 'mousquetaires' and an English tourist. From the first part of the evening there is a local artist, (dressed in a French beret and smock), painting and rather too many photographs of a French perfume stall.

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[74] Appendix: A6.3

A series of colour photographs reinforce the messages but seem more successful in accurately recording the event. The first of these shows members of the audience going through the 'frontier' control as they enter school and have their passports (tickets) stamped by gendarmes dressed in kepis and blue shirts. There is a parade of waiters, a group of girls with umbrellas about to perform Brassens' 'parapluie' song to a dance routine and a Madame Fiffi whose outfit is heightened by the splendid red feather boar draped around her neck. A 'Napoleon' stands impassively staring at the camera in appropriate uniform, hand placed inside his coat.

Photo 6. 1   Pupil taking the role of Napoléon, 'Spectacle' 1975.

The press report includes a photograph from the guillotine scene and under the title: 'Boy who doesn't lose his head', there is a useful account of the event.

> execution forms part of a French style revue of short sketches, songs and dances, being performed on Thursday and Friday July 10 and 11. For the two evenings the whole school is going French.

> Visitors arriving by car will be stopped at a customs post and issued with passports. They will then drive on the right and park their cars. There will be a display of French cars, perfume, cheeses, stamps and food, as well as wine tasting.

At the revue which will take the form of a typical Paris café-cabaret, drinks will be served to part of the audience seated at tables. The nights are the joint effort of teachers, children and the school parent-teachers association,' (Newcastle Journal, Saturday June 28, 1975).

The newspaper report includes my comments as producer:

Mr John Daniels, the French teacher said yesterday: "fewer than 20 per cent of our children ever go abroad and only around 10 per cent ever visit France, so we're hoping that it will give our general French lessons more meaning, (ibid).

A second source for understanding the objectives behind the performance, come from a very similar French evening performed five years later. The Head teacher in his termly report to the school governors in March 1980, considered the role a performance, of this kind had for French teaching in the school:

The place of French in the Middle School curriculum is less well established than that of sport, and therefore, perhaps, needs more support and recommendation. The French evening held towards the end of term was an attempt to bolster the language both in the eyes of pupils, and perhaps more significantly, in the estimation of parents. A well attended evening saw pupils acting as gendarmes guiding parents around a multitude of activities connected with various stages of French teaching, prior to a general presentation of playlets, songs and entertainment. Much enjoyment and much learning derived from this event, which again was the result of considerable efforts by a dedicated group of staff, (Wolfenden, P. March, 1980:3)

The French evening is seen at the time therefore, not in terms of developing pupils' language or intercultural understanding, but essentially as a way to boost the place of French in the school curriculum, a way to increase pupil motivation by taking the subject out of the classroom and promoting it in the form of a musical production. This suggests that there is a need to do this, a place for

increasing motivation by making the subject more 'real' and reducing the distance, (geographical and cultural) that separates France from a Northumberland Middle School. While it is true some children experience travelling abroad and have actual contact with France, it is also true in the 1970s, (prior to the extended development of package tours), that for the majority of pupils this did not happen.

6.6.1 'Spectacle' as a representation of French language and culture

Following our earlier discussions of the representation and translation of a foreign language and culture, we will want to consider with hindsight what this presentation of France represents. What kind of 'real' France is being projected in the evening's performance. We need to address two issues here, the matter of authenticity and stereotyping. The extract below taken from the script for the Café sketch enables us to illustrate both concepts[75].

> *There is a slight pause then two 'garcons' are seen approaching from off stage right bearing an enormous tray. They are escorted by both the chef and the patron. The tray is placed on the table and the cover lifted with great ceremony (...) On the dish there is an enormous snail with grotesque colouring surrounded by lettuce leaves and tomatoes.*
>
> *Chef: "Voilà L'ESCARGOT MANKINOISE!"*
> *At this particular moment the snail decides to move and turns its head in the direction of Mrs Smith who is inexplicably on her feet, her hands clasped over her mouth. There is a piercing scream and she is suddenly running – down the steps and out through the door at the side.*
>
> *Mr Smith: "Darling! Come back ...."* and he rushes off to catch up with *her. The assembled French pause in amazement for a split second, then the Chef, a look of murder coming into his eyes draws a large kitchen knife from his* belt and with a *bellow of rage follows hard on their heels.*
>
> (Le Café script, 'Spectacle', July 1975)

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[75] The snail it will become clear is played by a small pupil, suitably made up with a snail shell on her back and a pair of feelers.

6.7 REPRESENTATIONS OF THE 'REAL': authenticity[76], stereotyping and performance theory

There are three theoretical and literary considerations to examine as we look at the 'Spectacle' French Evening and in particular the café sketch, the key section of which is set out above. We need to consider authenticity, then stereotyping, before examining the whole as an aspect of performance theory. As we explore how different language initiatives approach the 'real', we need to have some measure of what this represents.

6.7.1 Authenticity

Rixon addresses the area of authenticity in foreign language learning and defines the most prominent feature of this field as: 'the quality of the language data which is studied or which is used as a core activity' (Rixon, 2004:68).

She goes on to expand this definition, by suggesting that this is associated with the selection of a text originating from native speakers for teaching purposes. It is also, indicated that, 'for a period in the 1980s, the notion of authenticity became very closely associated with the central tenets of communicative approaches', (ibid).

What is absent from Rixson's article is an examination of authentic methods for foreign language learning, which would involve how the language is presented to pupils and the authenticity of the language learning environment. A language learning environment can be created within the classroom using drama techniques, or (as in many of the initiatives described in this research), using such techniques in a more extended form outside the classroom. We would see this definition therefore, as being too narrow and reliant on traditional classroom teaching methods particularly, associated with literary texts.

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[76] Authenticity is a topic we will return to at regular points in this thesis, to discuss finally in the last chapter.

A wider examination of the field is provided by Kramsch as she considers in particular the work of Widdowson and the suggestion that the key element in authenticity is the interaction between any text and 'the use speakers and readers make of it. Authenticity has to do with appropriate response,' (Widdowson, 1979:166).

Kramsch (1993), unlike Rixson examines authenticity in terms of the practical implications of the notion for classroom learning. She takes as an example a German menu used in the classroom 'as a genuine piece of cultural realia' but points out that by using it to 'practice reading prices,' (Kramsch, 1993:178), she has not used it in the way 'the restaurant management had intended', nor the way customers in that restaurant would use it. She returns to Widdowson to clarify an important consideration for authenticity: 'Authenticity depends on a congruence of the language producer's intentions and language receiver's interpretation, this congruence being effected through a shared knowledge of conventions', (ibid).

One of the problems for a thesis concerned with the field of early foreign language learning is to find that much of the literature addresses later stages of this process. The concentration on the role of literary texts is an example of this. The interesting point here however, is as Kramsch concentrates on how this particular piece of authentic realia is used in the classroom, she fails to look at its potential as a catalyst for improvised drama. The kind of work which would be a standard feature of the early foreign language learning classroom and which gets closer to the original intention of the document, as through drama the different elements on the menu are ordered in an appropriate manner. This brings the notion of authenticity right back to our own concerns to examine the field in terms of the French sketches in 'Spectacle'.

The snail sketch provides a setting, the French cafe which is realistic rather than authentic. It comes closer to being authentic because as part of the scene setting, a real café, modelled on the French version has been created, where waiters are actually serving wine. As an element of drama however, the sketch is clearly not authentic but part of a performance.

The link between authenticity and the 'real' in foreign language learning means that this is a topic we will need to return to at different points in this thesis. First, when we examine pupil engagement in intensive language work in the next chapter and finally in the concluding chapter as we consider the significance of the research as a whole.

6.7.2 Stereotyping

What interests us next is what the sketch shows in terms of the authentic French culture it is representing. The sketch is designed to make the audience laugh and to make this happen there is exaggeration, a dramatisation of a café situation. And in order to heighten this effect, the characters concerned are stereotyped. Not, it should be noticed, just the French characters - the French chef and 'patron' - but also the English clients, with their condescending approach to the native population. This is clear from the text: 'that was a funny little man with a bike shouting at us just then,' (Le Café script, Spectacle, July 1975).

> A stereotype is a view of an individual or a group of people held by others based on commonly held assumptions that may not be the result of direct personal knowledge of those people,' (Cherrington, 2004:574).

Cherrington goes on to consider that stereotypes, 'may include ideas not only about what people in a particular group may look like or how they talk but also about their general behaviour, traits, ways of thinking and even what type of food they like,' (ibid).

A question to ask about the snail sketch is how it would appear to a French person. Would they be amused or insulted by such a stereotyped representation of their culture, or would they find that the reaction of the English tourists to a French gastronomic delicacy, the amusing and interesting element?

A comparison with the Asterix cartoons is informative in this respect. *'Astérix ou la Parodie des Identités', (Rouvière, 2008)* examines how these stories

represent their heroes as stereotypical French characters, Asterix, ('le petit bonhomme destiné à faire rire'[77]) and Obélix, ('un gros lourdaud'[78]). Other nationalities are similarly represented as familiar stereotypes:

> Les auteurs d'Asterix abordent la représentation de l'identité étrangère par un biais attractif: les loisirs touristiques et le folklore, tels que les guides en véhiculent l'imagerie depuis la fin du XIXe siècle[79], (Rouvière, 2008:206).

The important point is that these stereotypes are recognisable:

> La transposition des stéréotypes a pour function première de reconstruire un fonds d'identité que le lecteur est appelé à reconnaître[80], (ibid).

Instead of the reader, (as in the Asterix cartoons) enjoying the familiar representations of cultural stereotypes; in 'Spectacle', it is the audience who are called on to identify and recognise French stereotypes in the performance. For Rouvière, the key element in this type of stereotyping, is a common approach, with both the French themselves and their neighbouring cultures being subject to the same kind of treatment.

The evening represents a performance, (which has already provided us with some key concepts) and we need finally to look at performance theory as a way of understanding what is taking place.

6.7.3 Performance Theory

Taking first, those who participate in performance, Schechner provides this explanation of the process of 'transportation' which takes place:

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[77] The small guy designed to make you laugh.
[78] A big clumsy oaf.
[79] The authors of Asterix deal with the representation of the identity of foreigners in an attractive manner through tourism and folklore, in the way that the guides have conveyed this imagery since the end of the nineteenth century.
[80] The transposition of stereotypes has as a first function the construction of an identity base that the reader is called on to recognise.

The performer goes from the 'ordinary world' to the 'performative world', from one time/space reference to another, from one personality reference to one or more others. He plays a character, battles demons, goes into a trance, travels to the sky or under the sea or earth: he is transformed, enabled to do things in 'performance' he cannot do ordinarily. But when the performance is over, or even as a final phase of the performance, he returns to where he started,' (Schechner, 2003:270).

Those who have performed in Spectacle, but also those who attend the show have to a certain extent been party to an experience of this kind. The performance has taken them somewhere else, which in this case, has been to a representation of French culture. To mark the change in environment has meant for the audience, going through passport control in order to enter this new and different world. For the performers the more important change is represented by the costumes they have to put on and the make-up they need to wear and the language they speak and sing.

The world which they experience, represents 'an imagined reality' (Verriour, 1993) and is as authentic as possible and while representing a certain type of Frenchness, is full of stereotypes. However, it is probably nonetheless, the closest representation of French language and culture we can manage, for the purpose of performing for parents and friends of the pupils involved.

When we come in the next stage and examine examples of 'experiencing the real', there is a real journey and not a virtual one to complete and the frontier being crossed requires real passports before an authentic foreign culture, can be encountered. Here the approach to the real becomes more actual, an 'is' and not an 'as if' situation (Schechner,2003).

Schechner distinguishes between two kinds of performance centred around the concept of 'transportation' and 'transformation' which we have already introduced above but which we need to explore in more detail here.

I call performance where performers are changed 'transformations' and those where performers are returned to their starting places 'transportations' (Schechner, 2003:270).

And he goes on to clarify this definition: 'transportations because during the performance the performers are taken 'somewhere' but at the end (...) they (...) re-enter ordinary life just about where they went in',[81] (ibid). There is a concern to emphasise how the performer goes from the 'ordinary world' to the performative world, from one personality reference to one or more others,' (ibid).

Performance theory helps us define the process taking place as pupils are involved in different language learning initiatives and transported into a new environment. We need to track back to the first notes written on its relevance for this research.

In response to the following quote from Schechner: 'people came to a special place did something that can be called theatre (...) and went on their way,' (Schechner, 1988: 176).

> Opens the door, to a series of ideas and considerations re performance, in my own account of language and culture initiatives: productions at Coates, of which Spectacle is the key from the research perspective.
>
> Looking at performance as contrast to routine. Providing a way to break the pattern of the day to day.
>
> (PhD notes, 26.11.07)

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[81] A link here to the Dynamic Earth Experience described at the beginning of chapter two.

This second note helps defines performance theory for the present research by looking at how a production like 'Spectacle' involves taking pupils out of their normal routine and placing them in a different language learning environment: the transportation Schechner refers to. The value of the theory for us, is that it covers all those learning initiatives which involve a journey or 'transportation'.

Can we see the French/Italian exchange in terms of a performance?
The pupils are taken somewhere different and are expected to perform within this new environment (...) in Schechner's parlance transportation.

(PhD notes, 25.10.07)

6.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter on the 1970s period of French teaching and learning at Richard Coates Middle School has provided an account of the nature of the learning taking place in the classroom and the first drama based initiative 'Spectacle'.

These elements can now take their place in the narrative and will form part of a more complete investigation as we analyse later in the thesis, the implications of these different learning initiatives. One of our concerns however, is to try to understand how such developments were seen at the time and to try to get close to understanding my foreign language teaching philosophy in the 1970s and a reminder that prior to embarking on a teaching career, I felt that teaching a foreign language was about getting pupils to appreciate differences.

Approaching the Real

STAGE 3, 'APPROACHING THE REAL'

CHAPTER SEVEN: INTENSIVE LANGUAGE WORK, 1980s

7.0 INTRODUCTION

The period of the 1980s is marked by the introduction of a number of further language learning initiatives at Coates Middle School designed to make foreign language learning more 'real'. At this time, classroom learning was identified as being 'artificial' in nature, as we have seen. In contrast, other activities (such as 'Spectacle' or the Expédition to Neuchâtel[82]) were seen as less artificial because of the opportunities they offered pupils for active, practical language use. We already have therefore, an explicit categorising of language learning opportunities at the time in terms of their artificiality. In our present terminology the negative quality of 'artificial' is replaced with the more positive notion of 'real', as in the 'real' language and culture, as used for communication in the target country. This chapter comes into the stage of the research dealing with 'approaching the real', because it is concerned not with providing an actual, 'real' experience of France but of simulating a French situation through the use of drama.

This chapter deals with the development of intensive language learning. The intensive language work was originally school-based but later became located in an outdoor centre in the Lake District, High Borrans. The intensive work taking place there, eventually evolved into a programme of learning, repeated annually and which had export value, with moves made to interest language publishing companies in the scheme and talks and training given to other foreign language teachers interested in the project. We will want to trace the genesis of this work, following the different steps, which led to the final format for this learning programme.

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[82] To be considered in the next chapter on 'Experiencing the Real'.

Reconstructing this key period is made possible as before, by the existence of a number of school documents setting out the programmes of learning, photographs taken of different activities and, a new element in this account: published articles which report what was taking place for a wider audience and analyse the nature of the learning. The final version of the intensive work formed the subject for an MA thesis on language acquisition, in particular, vocabulary acquisition. While this represents a separate research programme to the current thesis, it needs to take its place as part of the historical narrative being constructed and assessed as an element of personal and professional development.

As previously, it will be important to situate the developments within the context of language and culture learning taking place at the time. We will need therefore to link the intensive work to communicative language teaching and learning and how this process can be seen to influence the intensive learning initiatives introduced at Coates Middle School. It will also be important to look at the role of drama-in-education and how this influenced the creation and organisation of the intensive language learning programmes.

Table 7.1 Contents of Chapter Seven: Intensive Language Work

7.0 Introduction	→ 7.1 Narrative Passage and explanation	→ 7.2 Nature of Intensive Language Work →
7.3 Intensive language work as communicative competence.	→ 7.4 Drama and intensive language work	→ 7.5 Pupil engagement and authenticity →
7.6 Intensive work at Coates Middle School	→ 7.7 Semaine de la Révolution	→ 7.8 'Mission Secrète' →
7.9 Vocabulary Dormancy	7.10 Culture Learning and Intensive Language Work.	→ 7.11 Conclusion

7.1 NARRATIVE ACCOUNT

A group of twenty, twelve and thirteen year old pupils, three French assistants, and two teachers gather in the school hall. Final instructions are given in English while this is still a possibility. Pupils are reminded that on arrival at our destination, High Borrans, all communication will be in French. Signed contract forms are collected from each pupil at this point these set out clearly that the programme will be conducted in French and all communication will take place in this language. The coach is then loaded with the suitcases for the five-day stay at the outdoor centre in the Lake District, our home for the next few days. There is also, some special equipment, material we need to help create the new environment: the secret agent training-programme, with the story of Norbert Verdier and his disappearance and the task of trying to track him, the theme for the intensive activity week.

Then a journey, not a particularly long one, but important as a demonstration that the confining environment of the school with its established routines has been left behind. The journey represents a period of transition, before we arrive and a new learning environment is encountered.

High Borrans, is an outdoor centre set up in what was previously, the house and grounds of a shipping magnate from Liverpool. Surrounded by moorland, the centre gives the impression of being in the middle of nowhere, away from civilisation. We arrive and unload the coach and begin the routine reminders uttered as both question and command: 'tu parles en français?/!' Enforcing this procedure, makes pupils realise from the beginning that whatever question they have in English, the answer will only ever come back in French. If English still exists, in conversation among themselves, (in the dormitories for example, or as they ask someone else what it is they have to do, after a French explanation), English has now reverted to second language status. The official language in which all explanations and activities are carried out is now French. This French environment is established from the beginning. To mark the transition, there is the frontier control to pass. Once pupils have found their dormitory and moved their suitcases there, they come down, identity card in hand (with a new learnt

French identity, required as trainee secret agents), the role-play and simulation begins. The French assistants run the passport control, in role as officials, testing out each pupil to see whether they know their new names, can give their French address and occupation before the identity card is stamped.

The outdoor equipment is then issued the walking boots and gaiters, the long hooded waterproof anoraks, the haversacks and water bottles. A simple treasure-trail is the afternoon activity before supper. Next a night exercise, as fully equipped in their new walking gear, they set out into the dark Lakeside night to follow the directions they have been given, an outdoor centre type activity, the outward bound element, but set up as 'secret agent training' and conducted in French. Tomorrow there is the surveillance exercise, the intensive language week has begun.

7.1.1 Narrative Account Explanation

'Mission Secrète', represents the final and most complete and effective of a series of intensive language learning programmes introduced during the period of the 1980s. We will want to trace the genesis for this drama centred activity and to examine the theoretical framework for language activities of this kind. First however, we need to examine in a little more detail what the narrative account illustrates.

The change of environment is emphatic, the location of pupils' French learning has been transformed from the classroom to an out-door centre. While there are some reading and writing tasks, the emphasis here is on listening, speaking and doing. They are for the first time in a situation in which they are actually functioning in French, when within the centre itself and the communal living environment this provides. Also, however, when out on 'exercise' listening to coded messages in French on walkie-talkie radios or setting up road blocks to check documents; activities which require 'real', active language skills. This 'functioning in French', indicates that from a theoretical perspective we are creating a situation where the function of the language rather than its form, is privileged (Cook, 2000).

The drama element is of key importance here and enables us to create the environment within which pupils function. We are simulating not just a conversation, for example ordering in a café, as might happen, in the classroom, but placing a whole week's activity within a French context. The difference however, between this approach and most drama related activities, is that it is conducted entirely in French. There is a further level of the suspension of disbelief, the acceptance of a situation, which represents an 'imagined reality' (Verriour,1993). It would of course be perfectly feasible to undertake a similar week's activity in the outdoor centre, using the same drama techniques and a similar but English centred story line and conduct it entirely in English (a point raised, by some participants).

Sustaining this imaginary, unreal world and ensuring that the French is maintained and that pupils are able to accept the created environment in which they are functioning is not straightforward. The impression with all intensive activities is that at any moment the false premise on which the activity is founded will evaporate and the whole enterprise crumble and collapse. The image from the first session is one of needing to make the enterprise 'take off' and then once this is achieved, sustain this period of extended language use. A diary entry from 1985, before the first intensive week held out of school, expresses this concern:

> Problem remains, how are we going to inject sufficient pace and variety into proceedings to enable us to keep the project airborne for such a concentrated length of time. Time alone will tell.... (Notes:21.1.85).

The first attempts to do this, before a suitable learning programme was finally established for High Borrans, involved a good deal of trial and error. The success of these first ventures led, as we will see, to the final version of this work represented by 'Mission Secrète'.

7.2   THE NATURE OF INTENSIVE LANGUAGE WORK

The task we have now is to explore further the nature of intensive language work, linking it first to the notion of the 'real' we have been exploring in this thesis and situating this learning experience in the theory of education-in-drama and foreign language acquisition. A process which, will first involve an exploration of the theories of the time (Guberina 1964, Littlewood 1981, Heathcote 1979), before looking at more recent theoretical explanations. We can then try to establish in this way, the genesis for this particular learning development, tracing also, the different intensive programmes introduced at Coates Middle School, in particular the 'Révolution Française', with which this process began. This will enable us to return at the end of the chapter to look in more detail at 'Mission Secrète' and in this way to understand better how it represents 'an approach to the real'.

We need to bare in mind during this somewhat complicated process the ethnographic concept of 'translation' (Strage, 2007), as we explore what the intensive work represents in terms of the foreign language and culture. Also, to make sure that the chapter provides the data we need to answer our research questions with the need to establish the place this particular element of the research has in the context of the narrative as a whole; the relation of intensive work to the 'real' target language and culture and finally ensure that the developmental process for these intensive initiatives has been established.

7.2.1   Intensive Language Work: 'the need to use the foreign language realistically'.

In the absence of diaries, we have two primary sources, which enable us to construct this period and establish how it was viewed at the time. First, an undated A3 sheet entitled 'Towards a Working Knowledge of the Foreign Language, study of the effect of immersion on performance levels in spoken French', which from the use of the word 'immersion'[83] (later abandoned in favour of the more precise 'intensive') suggests it comes from the beginning of

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[83] See the discussion on the use of 'immersion' and 'intensive' language learning at the beginning of Stage Four below.

the 'Mission Secrète', work. The second document is an article I wrote with Barbara Porter published by Mary Glasgow in 1991. Both these sources predate the later article on 'Mission Secrète' published in 2000 and to which we will later refer, as we consider the language acquisition aspect of the intensive work.

The undated A3 sheet consists of a series of notes comparing classroom and intensive language opportunities, and considers the nature of the intensive language experience. The illustration reinforces the argument being made.

'Language Immersion

- Can provide pupils with opportunity to live the language

- Find themselves in situations where they need to use the foreign language realistically

- As are exposed to new practical situations considerably more demands placed on their language speaking than occurred in the classroom.

- The need to communicate becomes paramount and real

- Their learning environment has suddenly expanded immeasurably

- Once out of the classroom they come into actual contact with the material they have previously known linguistically from illustrations in text-books.

- As they walk across country they are crossing streams, seeing sheep, climbing over walls and needing to speak about them

- Learning through doing and speaking about it.
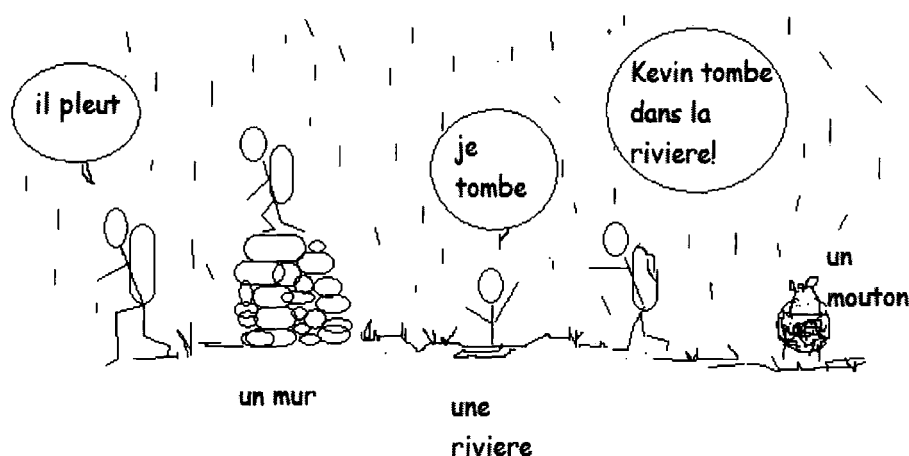
Illustration 7.1

'après-midi à la campagne, Région des Lacs[84] '.

(A3 notes on Language Immersion, undated).

The point we will want to make, as we consider this material and the words used to describe the intensive process, ('need to communicate becomes real'; 'they come into actual contact with'; 'needing to speak' about what they encounter'; 'needing to use the foreign language realistically'); is first that this experience is seen at the time as 'real' and therefore fits in with the terminology we are currently using [85]. The illustration makes this notion of 'real' more implicit, the foreign language is being used to describe real objects encountered. However, from our present standpoint as we write this thesis, this is no longer a 'real experience', which we are reserving for actual encounters with the target language and culture, provided by visits to France. This in our present terminology, is another form of 'approaching the real' rather than a 'real experience'. However, as such it represents the furthest level of 'approaching

[84] Afternoon in the country, Lake District.
[85] Because the activity takes place outside the target language, in a simulated situation, we would now describe it more fully as 'approaching the real'

the real' we are able to create and therefore, matches as we shall see, some of the characteristics of the 'real experience' in the need for example, to negotiate meaning and the importance of the shared context of the different situations encountered.

The second point to make is that the way the activity is described, closely matches the terminology of Guberina, (reviewed above), as he analyses the process of audio-visual language learning although this was not something I was aware of at the time.

Guberina is concerned, as we have seen, with the relationship of foreign language learning to the 'real' experience associated with first language acquisition. He talks about 'the presence of a reality' in this context. As he promotes the 'revolutionary' (Pennycook, 2004), new audio-visual language methodology, there is the need in classroom language learning for a picture which 'enables the expression,' (the recorded language element), 'to represent the reality,' (Guberina, 1964:16). Guberina also mentions the link to reality in terms of 'as if': 'this description should develop in a logical fashion *as if it were a reality,'* 'the student is placed in *a* natural situation *'as in real life'*, (Guberina, 1964: 16, the emphasis is mine). The 'as if' in real life, links Guberina to Schechner and the distinction between 'is' (real situations) and 'as if' (approaching the real) situations where the real situation is simulated.

The illustration of the intensive week above [86] demonstrates how students are placed 'in a natural situation as in real life'. The Mary Glasgow article of 1991 compares classroom and intensive language work and provides further evidence that this is how intensive work was viewed at the time.

> What the lessons have not readily done is given them a *real working knowledge* of the material. An immersion week makes *real* demands on pupils' language skills, encouraging them to draw on what they know to make themselves understood. The task is simplified through not being

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[86] The drama work provides 'the shared contextual framework' of 'secret agent training' within which the 'real' world is explored.

presented artificially by a text-book or story on tape: here, the pupil is part of what is happening. The language is brought into context and is *supported by reality*: the pupil who falls into the burn during a sabotage exercise elicits an automatic 'il tombe dans la rivière!' from his companion, a phrase originally introduced some far distant afternoon in school while following Xavier's riverside adventures,'[87] (Daniels, Porter, 1991: 5, the emphasis is added).

7.3 INTENSIVE LANGUAGE WORK AS COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

It is useful when looking at language acquisition theory to draw on writing from the 1980s, the focus for this chapter. This will enable us to place the 'Mission Sécrète' intensive work within the language acquisition theories of the time. A period closely associated with a communicative language approach with task-based learning and graded objectives centred on pupils' needs, as we have already established in chapter three.

Littlewood (1981) provides a key text for this period in *Communicative Language Teaching* :

> My purpose has been to suggest activities through which teachers can help learners to go beyond the mastery of these structures (of a foreign language), to the point where they can use them to communicate in *real* situations,' (Littlewood, 1981:IX, the emphasis is added).

We have, as for Guberina, an emphasis on the 'real' with the need for learners to 'communicate in real situations,' (ibid). This matches the objectives of the 'Mission Sécrète' intensive language learning programme as set down in the teachers' notes provided with the material (the emphasis was not in the original document):

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[87] Xavier's adventures from *En Avant, stage 1* when during a fishing trip, Xavier falls in the river.

Mission Secrète' is a week's course of intensive French for pupils who have studied the language for three or more years. The purpose of the course is to stimulate language learning by *creating a situation where French becomes natural to participants* in a way that is not usually possible in the classroom. The course aims to give pupils the confidence to communicate effectively in a foreign language,'

('Mission Sécrète', Teachers' Notes, 1989?: 2; emphasis added).

It looks therefore, as though the intensive language learning programme is very much a creature of its time. For Littlewood, communicative language teaching is characterised as paying, 'systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language, combining these into a more fully communicative view,' (Littlewood, 1981:1). And an 'efficient communicator' in a foreign language learning: 'need(s) opportunities to develop (...) skills, by being exposed to situations, where the emphasis is on using their available resources for communicating meanings as efficiently and economically as possible,' (Littlewood, 1981:4).

This emphasis is on meaning in language (function) as opposed to structure (form) but Littlewood is careful to give importance to both elements in language acquisition. And, in order to privilege meaning, it is necessary to look at setting up 'real situations' (Littlewood), which are likely to develop this element of language. Littlewood considers therefore a range of different learning possibilities and includes, unlike the later work of Cook (2000), the drama elements of improvisation and role-play as suitable ways to achieve this experience.

What Littlewood does not do, is consider language learning possibilities taking place outside the classroom, but he uses this environment as a point of reference. The learning activities he considers 'simulate the demands that will arise outside the classroom, where learners will likewise need to use language to solve immediate communication problems.', (Littlewood, 1981:39). He compares the functional communication activities he is recommending 'to the world outside the classroom', and considers their limitations.

The situations in which learners are asked to perform sometimes bear little outward resemblance to those, which they will encounter outside the classroom (...). Partly as a result of this lack of similarity with real-life situations, the learner's social role is unclear and generally irrelevant to the purely functional purpose of the interaction,' (ibid).

The 'outside environment' provided by intensive work, does as we will see, contain an element of 'unpredictability' in the language content, matching the 'real experience. This is about taking the foreign language learning out of the classroom to provide greater opportunity for practical active language work.

7.4 DRAMA AND INTENSIVE LANGUAGE WORK

The role of drama in helping to first create and then sustain the intensive language programme is central. A note written in 1989 reflecting on the elements which 'have clearly proved their worth' during the intensive work at High Borrans, emphasises the role for drama to:

> provide (a) catalyst to proceedings, make them believable,
>
> (notes prior to High Borrans 1989).

Looking at this statement more closely, we have here the two ways in which drama is seen to be crucial to the intensive language work. It provides 'a catalyst to proceedings' points to how the drama element is seen to drive forward the intensive process, to keep this activity functioning. More importantly, is the way drama makes the, (often unusual), activities pupils engage in 'believable'.

Verriour explains this phenomenon in a comment which links to the concepts of performance theory:

Participants within drama create the fictional world of the drama 'as if' the other world is a shared context of imagined reality, (Verriour, 1993:49).

This is a point also, emphasised by Fleming: 'drama tended to be seen as providing contexts which were a substitute for real experience', (Fleming, 2004:186).

What the drama element does therefore, is allow an activity such as 'secret agent training' to become believable through the drama process, this creation of an 'imagined reality', an 'imagined reality' which extends to changing the language used in order to conform to the nature of this imaginary environment.

We have suggested above, when examining the nature of the research as a whole, that drama can be seen to represent the mechanism which allows the distance separating a learning activity from a 'real' language and culture experience to be reduced. It does this therefore, by creating a believable environment, a 'shared contextual framework' (Verriour, 1993) in which the foreign language operates, ('as if' it was taking place in France), within a situation based on an 'imagined reality' or, to use Heathcote's term for this process, 'a big lie' (Wagner, 1979).

Dorothy Heathcote is important to turn to as a secondary source, as her innovative work in drama in education was influencing the teaching of the subject from the 1970s and is therefore contemporary to the period we are considering. The authorised account of Heathcote's work produced by Wagner in 1979, provides a description of the methods she used.

7.4.1   Dorothy Heathcote: Drama as a Learning Medium[88]

The ambition of Heathcote's approach in terms of the role of drama in education is made clear:

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[88] Dorothy Heathcote's drama methodology identified as 'process drama' (O'Neill, 1995) has been criticised by Hornbrook (1989). This criticism was based on the view that 'process drama', as practiced by Heathcote and Bolton, with its 'negotiated and structured improvisational activity in schools, denies students access to critical theatre heritage,' (Taylor, 1996:19).

The time has come to show all teachers (...) how they can use drama to achieve something that can not be attained as effectively in any other way,' (Wagner,1979:15).

What we have here is the claim that drama is capable of providing a special and unique element in education, which we would want to be able to link to its role as a catalyst in intensive language work. Wagner sets out at the beginning of her description of Heathcote's work, the objectives behind the drama work being used with pupils and how this can provide a novel approach for learning:

> (Heathcote) does not use children to produce plays. Instead, she uses drama to expand their awareness, to enable them to look at reality through fantasy, to see below the surface of actions to their meaning. She is interested, not in making plays with children, but in, as she terms it, burnishing children through the play. She does this not by heaping more information on them but by enabling them to use what they know, (Wagner, 1979:15).

This statement provides us with a number of important pointers. 'Looking at reality through fantasy' helps us understand how the drama element in the intensive work enables pupils to encounter the 'real' while staying in role as trainee 'secret agents'. This helps explain the apparent anomaly between the encounter with 'real' objects and the 'imagined reality' of the improvised drama.

The final statement in Wagner's passage also, has interesting parallels with intensive language work where pupils are drawing on the vocabulary and structures learnt in the classroom in order to be able to communicate in this new language environment and not, as we have seen, being given a whole range of new material[89], 'they have to use what they know,' in order to function during the intensive work. There is also, a clear intention in intensive work to 'expand

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[89] While there are a range of new words learnt specifically associated with the 'secret agent' theme, most words encountered are effectively familiar from classroom learning.

awareness' through drama and to experience the reality of the foreign language they are learning through the created act of fantasy.

Where intensive language learning departs from creative drama work is with the difficulty of enabling children to 'see below the surface of actions to their meanings'. This characteristic reflective approach of drama-in-education associated with negotiation, is not easy to achieve when carried out in the foreign language[90]. We will want however, to consider this area in more detail below, suggesting that there are ways in which this aspect of drama work can be identified in intensive language work.

We need to clarify how the work of Heathcote can be seen to impact on intensive language work and where it does not apply. To do this we can consider two key principles of Heathcote's theory. These are 'building belief' and using 'role in teaching'.

7.4.2   Dorthothy Heathcote: 'building belief'

> Everyone involved (in drama work) must at least try to accept 'the one Big Lie': that we are at this moment living at life rate in an agreed-upon-place, time and circumstance and are together facing the same problem, (Wagner, 1979:67).

> The instant it (the drama) isn't real, it stops, (Wagner, 1979:82).

If we translate this statement to the intensive language work, what we have, is pupils accepting the premise that they are engaged for example, in a 'secret agent training programme' This is the 'big lie' or for Verriour (1993) the 'imagined reality' on which the intensive work is based and on the acceptance of which, the whole enterprise depends. The cautionary second statement listed above, is particularly important. If this fiction isn't sustained, if at any point in the

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[90] Later work described in this thesis, in particular the pupil exchange programme do provide the opportunity for pupils to reflect on the language elements they have learnt and the culture features they have noticed. We will see that this is made possible through the pupil booklets which, focus on just such elements.

intensive process the 'imagined reality' of 'secret agent training', fails to convince the participants, the experience fails. This links to the comments made earlier about a feeling of needing to keep intensive work 'airborne'.

Another factor in 'building belief' is the role of adults involved in the drama work who have a key part in ensuring the belief in the drama is sustained: 'to use the authority of the role to keep the whole group functioning,'(Wagner, 1979:131).

The role of all adults involved in intensive work, the teachers and French assistants is a key element in establishing the validity of the exercise; in particular (and in contrast to a purely drama activity), the acceptance of the language medium in which the activity is carried out, French. The presence of a French speaking adult sustains and extends the 'big lie' by making the foreign language element more credible.

The involvement of the French assistants[91] in this process and their acceptance of the basis on which the intensive work was constructed is also important, as they too have to accept the 'imagined reality'. It is elements of their culture being translated and represented. A remark made by one of them Mireille, during an early 'Mission Secrète' week when the story line was more overtly associated with wartime resistance activities that her grandfather, (who had been in the resistance in the Marseille area), would be proud of her points to her engagement with the intensive work.

What we will need to try and establish below, is the extent to which pupils actually engage with this 'big lie'.

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[91] The French assistants are employed by Northumberland Education Authority to work in schools for a year to help with teaching French. For the purposes of the intensive work the French assistant working with Ponteland schools is joined by others for the intensive week.

7.5 PUPIL ENGAGEMENT AND AUTHENTICITY

In what has so far been written here, about the importance of drama work in the intensive language programme, there has been no direct mention of a pupil perspective. How in fact do the participants find the experience of intensive language work and what is their view on this 'approach to the real'?

Unfortunately, although we have data in the form of questionnaire answers for pupils' views on the 'secret agent training' programme, the focus for these questions was on foreign language acquisition. There is no direct information on their acceptance of the nature of the week, as we will see below, when we look more closely at 'Mission Secrète'.

Pupils are involved in a new and very different learning experience. The single element that identifies this experience, and helps give it a specific character, is that it takes place in French. The fact that they sign a contract promising to speak in French, before embarking on the experience, is significant in this respect. For pupils to be able to participate in the intensive work they have to accept this basic premise. To refuse to go along with this condition would make the intensive experience unworkable for them as individuals, and if this position was adopted by others, the whole intensive enterprise would come abruptly down to earth ('the instant it isn't real, it stops,') Wagner, 1979:82).

This raises an interesting point about pupil engagement, which links to van Lier's definition of authenticity (the emphasis is mine). This goes beyond a concern with the authenticity of the material available for studying a foreign language we have already discussed:

> (authenticity) has nothing to do with the origination of the linguistic
> material brought into the classroom (Widdowson's 'genuine' text), nor
> even with the kinds of uses to which material is put, i.e. the tasks and
> exercise devised for and executed in lessons. (..) Authenticity results
> from self-determination (knowing-what-you-are-doing), a commitment to

understanding and to purpose, and transparency in interaction (...) *authentication is basically a personal process of engagement*, and it is unclear if a social setting could ever be clearly shown to be authentic for every member involved in it.

<div align="right">(van Lier, 1996:127-8, quoted in Cook, 2004:172).</div>

The implications of this for intensive work is that this activity becomes authentic and is give authentication, through the engagement of the participants. The fact that pupils accept the strange premise that they are involved in a programme of 'secret agent training' conducted entirely in French and involving a number of unusual activities, (surveillance and sabotage work), makes the whole enterprise possible and gives it authentication. It becomes for pupils therefore, an authentic experience. We will want to see below how this kind of engagement can be explained (Wagner, 1979).

As van Lier suggests, there may be pupils who are less engaged and involved than others, there is some, if rather limited evidence available to confirm this from the questionnaire responses, (which we will consider below). A lasting impression of success associated with the intensive work and the pupils' sense of achievement, indicates that they found the experience authentic, accepting the unusual nature of the learning environment in which they participated. Accepting the authenticity of the experience means they are engaging with the particular 'imagined reality' of the intensive work.

7.6 INTENSIVE WORK AT COATES MIDDLE SCHOOL

There is a direct link between the work of Heathcote and our use of drama in intensive language work. This is associated with Backworth Drama Centre set up by Northumberland Education Authority in the 1970s and which followed the drama-in-education methods used by Heathcote and whose existence is a measure of her influence (Fleming, 2008: pers com.).The link between Coates Middle School and Backworth comes from the regular visits taken as a teacher with groups of pupils to the drama centre during the 1970s. This involved an over-night stay and two days of drama work. The nature of the work and the way it was carried out, I am aware now, matched the style of Heathcote's methods, based around improvisation and role-play. The bare hall with dark blue walls and blacked out windows (previously a school hall), became our working environment for the two days and was transformed into whatever scene was required as the improvisations developed.

Participation at around the same time in a teachers' training session in drama, consolidated an understanding of this approach. That the Backworth Drama Centre should be using such methods is not surprising, given the close proximity to Newcastle and the university's institute of education, where Heathcote was a lecturer.

Experiencing at first hand the potential for drama work and sustaining a drama narrative over a two day period, is likely to have given me the confidence to experiment with the use of drama to drive forward foreign language learning, specifically during an intensive language week.

7.6.1 Intensive language learning at Coates Middle School

We need at this point to bring together the different elements under discussion to illustrate the intensive language learning, taking place at Coates Middle School during the 1980s. By setting out the developments in Table 7.3 below, we are able to demonstrate a process and isolate the different elements, represented as stages, which lead to a final version of intensive language

learning, the 'Mission Secrète' work at High Borrans outdoor centre in the Lake District.

The wider context in which the intensive language work takes place, the drama in education work of Heathcote and experience of working at Backworth Drama Centre, together with the development of communicative language learning are placed at the beginning of the table. The experience of using drama work (in English) as part of the learning programme taking place at High Borrans in 1982 and 1983 is the first step in developing, the more ambitious, intensive foreign language work which is in turn drama based. A key factor in the development of the intensive language learning programme is provided by the possibility of working with the same colleague, an English teacher with responsibility for teaching some French classes at Coates, Barbara Porter in each of these initiatives. Working as a team we were able to draw up the different learning programmes.

The school-based intensive language programme, 'Révolution Francaise', is followed by the first experience of staying at an outdoor centre, this time at Ford Castle in North Northumberland. This represents a more challenging experience for pupils, with a more sustained and continuous contact with the foreign language, compared with the school-based experience where they return home at the end of each day. A second school-based intensive week is followed by the first version of 'Mission Secrète'. At first this is more overtly historical than later versions and is based on wartime secret agents in occupied France. A history theme is also evident in 'La Révolution Française' and 'L'Histoire de Jeanne d'Arc' learning programmes

We have already indicated above, the nature of intensive language work using the High Borrans experience as a model for this process. Here we can trace the genesis for this particular language learning initiative.

Table 7.2   Intensive Language Work at Coates Middle School

STAGE 1 Drama and language developments

Development of communicative language learning, focus on meaning not form, use of role-play and simulation in language classrooms (Littlewood, 1981)

Development of drama in education, work by Dorothy Heathcote (1979).

Backworth Drama Centre courses for Coates pupils, 1970s.

1982/3 Drama work in English at High Borrans outdoor centre in Lake District. Drama used to develop conservation theme.

STAGE 2 French Intensive Language work in school or at outdoor centre

1984 Intensive language 1: 'Révolution Française', school-based programme.

1985 Intensive language 2: Smuggler Story at Ford Castle.

1986 Intensive language 3: 'Jeanne d'Arc', school-based learning programme.

STAGE 3   Intensive French Language Work at High Borrans

1987 Intensive language 4: Mission Secrète version 1, theme based on wartime resistance action.

1988-1992 Intensive language 5, 6,7,8, 9: Mission Secrète final version, available to pupils of all abilities. Has a programme of learning containing listening and reading comprehension work, as well as outdoor adventure activities around a central narrative.

High Borrans represents a 5 day annual intensive language learning period.

Intensive language work continues until 1992 when, a pupil exchange programme is established with a collège in Saint Brieuc, France.

La Semaine de la Révolution – an account of an intensive week of French in a middle school [92], is a useful primary source for the first intensive language session in 1984. It represents how the intensive week was seen at the time and therefore falls into place in the narrative account of the period. The article provides a context for the intensive learning and explains why we were keen to develop further work of this kind: 'we had followed with interest the developments in the immersion method of foreign language learning. We were keen to experiment within a Middle School context,' (Daniels, 1985:139).

The key word here is 'experiment', there is a real sense in which the work is seen as an exploration of the possibilities for extending French language learning outside the classroom. The choice of a theme for the week is also explained and a familiar concern to sustain motivation:

> A theme then was required which would be capable of sustaining
> interest throughout the week. The French Revolution seemed ideal;
> a sufficiently powerful event with strong images of the guillotine and
> waving tricolores which everyone would be familiar with,' (ibid).

It is also very clear from the article, how drama was seen as a key element in ensuring the success of the venture: 'it was essential that we involved children from the very start, and it seemed necessary to try and inject a little more excitement into the proceedings. Drama and role-play seemed to be an obvious way to introduce the oral commitment we were looking for', (Daniels, 1985:140).

The theme of the French Revolution is seen as ideal due to the drama potential of this particular historical event. 'By giving each child an identity they would all be able to take a direct part in proceedings, and associate with the vagaries of their group's fortunes,' (ibid). The role-play element then enables us to exploit the differences in French society of the 18th Century in a way that shows the

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[92] Published in the British Journal of Language Teaching in winter 1985.

dramatic possibilities for work of this kind using 'drama to achieve something that can not be attained as effectively in any other way,' (Wagner, 1979:15); following Heathcote's methodology.

'To underline the inequality of the time, each person was given a sum of money in accordance with their position in society,' and this created the dynamics for the intensive week and the tensions required by the revolution narrative:

> We found that we had managed to create at a stroke the structured society and grievances which helped bring about the revolution. This indignation was fuelled the first morning break when coffee and cakes were served. While everyone had sufficient money for the coffee, the problem came with the cakes. Only royalty, the nobles and solitary bishop had enough for anything to eat and they proceeded to exercise their privilege. Marie-Antoinette proved the excellence of her casting by making some show of choosing the largest, creamiest, most jamful of cakes and eating it with every exaggerated show of enjoyment, (ibid).

If the potential for drama work and its essential input in intensive language work is made clear during this first session, there is also, an analysis of how drama can best be used. As this was intensive foreign language work, we were looking to create opportunities where language, the French language, would be needed for communication.

> The best drama work came not from the set pieces: the banquet, the trial, guillotining which had to have some preparation and were suitably spectacular, but from the unexpected. Here faced with a problem, a character was forced to find a language solution, a way of explaining satisfactorily to someone else what had happened, knowing that only the medium of French could be used, (ibid).

This is the negotiation of meaning we have referred to, an unpredictable language situation, which comes close to the 'real experience'. At the end of the article the question is posed on the benefits of the intensive week for

participating pupils: 'Were there any lasting benefits and to what extent were the language skills of the participants extended by the experience?' (ibid)

The answers to this are very positive and in line with what we have already seen in terms of the possibility for drama to engage pupils and through this to authenticate an experience (van Lier, 1996):

> The week did considerably boost motivation, particularly from those who had shown less interest in the subject previously. There was also a greater commitment to oral work from the children who had taken part and an improvement in their ability to express themselves in French.

> There were moments when children managed to surpass themselves and reach a level of oral fluency which they had never attained in the classroom. Language in certain instances became creative. A boy reaching saturation point at the end of a particularly tiring day declared 'la tête casse'. A girl frustrated at the teachers' inability to find the clues written for them to follow, came out with 'Oh man, regardez avec les yeux!' (Daniels, 1984:141).

There is a concern to compare the intensive language environment with the classroom learning situation which had previously been their only experience of foreign language learning. Given the amount of exposure to the target language (almost a term of French lessons concentrated into a single five day period), it would have been surprising if their language had not benefited. Pupil comments (taken from the questionnaire given at the end of the intensive period), also, compare intensive with classroom language learning.

> 'I though the week was really good. (...) I think it was good because it was a different way to learn French, instead of just doing verbs and exercises from books. It gave us an idea of what it was really like for the people of France with the bit about the cake and the banquet.' (Daniels, 1984: 142)

Pupils were left with a sense of achievement: 'They had surprised themselves by finding their 3.5 years of French enabled them to cope more than adequately with a complete week of French,' (ibid).

My final comment in the article brings us back to the key theme of this research: 'perhaps for the first time, the language became real to them,' (Daniels, 1984:141).

7.8 MISSION SECRÈTE

We need to return now to 'Mission Secrète' [93], the final version of intensive language learning in which Coates pupils were involved during the 1980s. While we have used this experience as a model for understanding the nature of intensive work in general, it is now important to look at how the work was seen at the time and to consider the implications for this learning programme. To do so we will want to examine in particular the ongoing themes of the thesis, examining how the experience approximates a real language situation, the way drama, as for Révolution Française, is able to deliver the intensive learning programme and how this specific learning environment provides the opportunity for pupils to develop their practical language skills. We will also want to examine the authenticity of 'Mission Secrète', seen (following van Lier, 1996) as an expression of the engagement of pupils in the intensive work.

In order to represent the experience of High Borrans, some twenty years later and to try to reconstruct what the week felt like at the time for the pupils and adults involved, we can draw on a number of primary sources. There is the MA thesis on the specific area of language acquisition during this period represented by the article published in the Language Learning Journal in Summer 2000. There is also however, the earlier article, which appeared in 1991. As an article written following the final intensive language session, it is more immediate in terms of its description of the 'Mission Secrète' learning

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[93] Appendix: A7.1, A7.2, A7.3.

programme. Finally, there is the photographic evidence and the narrative illustration placed at the beginning of this stage.

It is useful to begin with the photographic evidence and to consider one photograph.

Photo 7.1 'Capture' of a 'secret agent' during surveillance exercise, High Borrans, 1989

The intention behind the taking of this photograph is likely to be a concern to 'capture' an element of the 'secret agent' training and in the process, to show something of the nature of the intensive language experience as a whole. It is used as an image to represent the 'Mission Sécrète' intensive work. This is probably because the photograph illustrates the dramatic difference between the intensive language experience at High Borrans from the normal classroom French learning routine. This is not the kind of activity normally associated with French studies and the contrasting environments of school and intensive learning can be demonstrated by showing an image of this kind.

The photograph also shows what, from the language perspective, is a key consideration in the surveillance activity, the 'walkie-talkie', the element which ensures the foreign language context is maintained, during outdoor elements of the week. The walkie-talkie provides (in the days prior to mobile phones), an

authentic purpose for using the foreign language as two groups communicate, often using simple codes:

> A code is used: if the group is threatened by police action, they will say the weather is poor; if there are no problems, the weather is fine. They also have an alibi in case of capture –'je regarde les oiseaux[94],' (ibid).

The whole drama package of the intensive work, the 'big lie' (Heathcote), on which the 'Mission Sécrète' work is founded is represented therefore in the photograph, together with a symbol of the foreign language nature of this intensive experience and the different learning environment in which it takes place. A suitable choice therefore, to represent the High Borrans intensive language work.

7.8.1 The 'Mission Secrète', Intensive Language Learning Programme

The Mary Glasgow article provides a full account of the learning taking place, together with an assessment of the nature of this intensive experience.

> 'Mission Sécrète' is the product of several years' experience of French immersion[95] weeks. The theme of secret agent training has the advantage of combining the facilities of an outdoor centre – with its opportunities for hill walking, map-work and caving, in attractive surroundings – with a French situation: the participants are presumed to be training for clandestine operations in France,' (Daniels, Porter, 1991:5).

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[94] 'I'm bird watching.'
[95] It will be noticed that the programme is described at this time as an immersion week and not an intensive language period. The term immersion is reserved for: '.. programmes at primary school (where) the teaching of subject matter (is) through the medium of the immersion language by a teacher who is a native or highly fluent speaker,' (Johnstone, 2000: 189). In contrast intensive work 'represents a concentrated period of foreign language study, usually of relatively short duration which may contrast with traditional learning methods,' (Daniels, 2000:292). For this reason, the learning programme at High Borrans has since been more accurately described as an intensive learning experience.

If by now we are familiar with the nature of the intensive language period, we need to look more closely, as we have indicated, at what the experience represents in terms of a learning opportunity.

The learning environment provided by the High Borrans centre[96] gives pupils the opportunity to experience traditional outdoor pursuits such as fell walking and caving and spending a week in a Lakeland environment. Onto this actual experience, the intensive language work, through the use of drama, is able to transpose a French environment. The same contact with the outdoors happens, as it would for children on more conventional courses, but for the intensive participants, the language environment has changed to French.

There is in the final paragraph of the Mary Glasgow article, an argument for using intensive language work:

> Learning any modern language is a practical exercise; our intention while teaching is to enable pupils to use what they have been taught. They need to be shown what they can actually do with the language after three years of lessons, and an immersion experience of the kind described proves to them that in spite of their initial doubts they can survive and enjoy a period of intensive language work, (Daniels, Porter, 1991:5).

The final statement suggests that pupils involved in the work at High Borrans enjoy the experience. This is something we can look into more closely as we examine the answers to the questionnaire filled in by participating pupils. We would anticipate, following van Lier, that there may well be some pupils who are less enthusiastic about an experience, which is very different, from anything they will have tackled previously.

The claims being made for the language learning opportunities available from intensive language work require further investigation. To cover this area, we turn to the MA research undertaken on vocabulary acquisition during the

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[96] Readers are referred to the narrative illustration at the beginning of this stage for an overall view of the nature of the activities involved in 'Mission Secrète'.

intensive language experience, as recorded in the 2000 article in the Language Learning Journal, before bringing this chapter to its conclusion.

7.8.2 Pupil Response to Intensive Language Work

Questionnaires given to participants following the High Borrans experience provide us with evidence on how the intensive experience was viewed by participants. The format for the questionnaire itself is designed to provide data for the investigation into language acquisition taking place at the time. The final question gives the opportunity for general comments and a number of pupils have provided information here of value for our understanding of what it meant to be part of the intensive language programme.

The main features to retain from the data is that the general comments on the High Borrans experience are very positive and that pupils enjoy the range of activities available to them, accepting the unusual conditions.

Pupils feel their French has improved in some way. They manage best with their French in a variety of different situations: with the walkie-talkie radio exercise, at mealtimes (with a French speaking adult at the table they would be encouraged to talk about the day's exploits) being most frequently mentioned.

Many see vocabulary as the main difficulty they encounter: 'trying to remember what means what,' 'I could not find the right words most of the time.' Mention is also made of trying to ask questions and putting the language together to make sentences: 'joining the sentences together and describing things,' (as one pupil remarks, 'by the end of the week I had got the hang of sentences';). Such comments may point to an increasing awareness of the skills needed for communication as pupils function in French over an extended period.

The area where less French is spoken is when with their friends, particularly when no adult is present, this would match the notion of French becoming the official language for communication while English reverts to a subsidiary role. This however, is not always the case, one pupil answering the question on whether she now felt more confident of using French with: 'Yes, much more

confident, not with the teachers but with my friends,' and 'speaking in French to friends,' is given by another pupil as something she found difficult, (pupil questionnaire answers), suggesting this was something she was trying to do. This raises an interesting point. It is one thing to accept the 'big lie' (Heathcote) to enter into the spirit of the week and speak French during the official activities, quite another to talk in the foreign language when alone with your friends, for example, in the dormitory at night. This is taking the suspension of disbelief a stage further.

We can end this section with a final remark from one participant:
'Keep at it and you'll be impressed by what you can do. It's hard to speak in French at the start but you will soon get used to it. You remember words you will never use if you did not go,' (Andrew, pupil questionnaire answers, 1990)

7.9 VOCABULARY DORMANCY

The argument made for intensive language work is that it provides a learning environment which enables participants to function in the foreign language in a way that is more extended and effective – due to the need to speak in French in order to function – than would happen in the classroom. We would anticipate therefore, that such an experience would have a direct impact on pupils' French learning. The majority of pupils feel their French has improved and that they are more confident of speaking the foreign language. There are also the indications, as we have suggested, that pupils as they communicate during the week are learning how to handle the language, "by the end of the week I had got the hang of sentences'. Andrew's remark (quoted above), is particularly interesting in this respect when he says: 'you remember words you will never use if you did not go.' This seems to point to words introduced in the classroom, but not used in this learning environment, become available to him during the intensive period.

The MA research thesis into language acquisition during intensive language work focused on this specific area. The title for the article makes clear the

language claim being made for intensive learning: 'Intensive language work as a catalyst for classroom learning and an antidote for 'vocabulary dormancy'. The abstract to the article of Summer 2000 in the Language Learning Journal explains this further:

> This article is based on research into vocabulary development during an intensive French language period with middle-school pupils at an outdoor centre. In addition to pupils learning new vocabulary the research suggests that some elements of their vocabulary only partially known through classroom learning become activated by intensive work, which is seen as a catalyst for such 'dormant vocabulary,' (Daniels, 2000:13).

We can usefully trace the development of this hypothesis and the use of the dormancy metaphor by referring to the research diary kept at the time. In the MA research diary 3 covering the period from 9.9.91-5.9.92 there is an entry which refers specifically to the development of this thinking. This came at a point before the writing of the final chapter of the MA thesis when I was looking for a model to describe the nature of the language acquisition taking place during the intensive language period:

> "Worthwhile thinking of vocabulary development in terms of growth as words proceed towards native language competency. Notion here of active/passive words perhaps important but not in the way currently expressed. Term activation does suggest however that:

> Words are active according to the linguistic environment the learner finds himself in. This is because they are needed at that particular point of time (+ present as input, part of linguistic environment).

> In the classroom the words are introduced and therefore brought into focus, they are therefore at the seed stage. Whether germination takes place depends on the correctness of the learning environment (replace temperature, soil, sunlight with need, motivation etc).

A word has to be at the receptive state in order to proceed to full acquisition. Only once receptive status is reached can the word become dormant?"

The use of the metaphor 'vocabulary dormancy' to describe the partial acquisition of elements of vocabulary comes from a biological process: 'a biological state of minimal metabolic activity when growth ceases, primarily enabling organisms to survive periods of adverse conditions. Most plants or certain of their parts (...) undergo dormant periods,' (Dictionary of Life Sciences, 1983:112).

A first tentative description of 'vocabulary dormancy' is then set out:

> Dormancy
>
> Description of words which become fixed at a certain stage of development instead of proceeding to full acquisition status can not, realistically, be described in terms of fossilization. This term denotes a permanent fixing of certain features in language learning at a stage which is not commensurate with native language competence.
>
> However the term dormancy might be seen to provide a biological description transferable to the linguistic sphere. ' (ibid)

By the time the article is written for the *Language Learning Journal,* the notion of 'vocabulary dormancy' has been refined and extended:

> There does not appear to be a linguistic term to define words which do not become fully acquired in spite of being targeted for acquisition, but remain at an intermediate state of knowledge, unless they are reactivated through an increased need to communicate, a function which is provided by the intensive language sessions. While the term fossilisation is used to describe elements of language, such as accents

or specific structures which become fixed at a certain point (Selinker, 1972), the permanence of this phenomenon is not appropriate for words which can become activated when, as we have seen, there is an increased need to communicate. We propose therefore another biological term to describe the condition: 'vocabulary dormancy', (Daniels, 2000:18).

In the conclusion to the same article the specific focus for the research is returned to. The research into vocabulary acquisition has:

provided evidence for a significant increase in the number of words acquired by pupils. By recording the words at each of the testing stages it has been possible to show that some of the words were only partially acquired through classroom learning, 'dormant words', become activated by the intensive experience. Intensive language work is seen as a method of giving an impetus to pupils' spoken language skills by providing them with the opportunity of using the target language for an extended period where there is a genuine need to communicate,' (ibid).

Paul Meara, an acknowledged authority on vocabulary acquisition, in response to a personal letter asking for his views on 'vocabulary dormancy' replied:

It seems to me that what you are getting at here is the idea that certain types of knowledge don't get activated by classroom instruction, but require an intensive period as well. That strikes me as a very reasonable position, but you'll need to develop some much sharper tests if you want to examine it properly. In particular you'll probably need to look at tests of automaticity,' (Meara, pers com. 25.11.94).

It has not proved possible to investigate this area further. Meara's comments however point to the advantages of extending the language learning environment to include situations outside the classroom which provide an additional need to use the foreign language.

By taking a step towards 'approaching the real' and providing a learning environment where pupils can function in the foreign language, we are getting closer to 'real' language situations and the benefits for this can be plotted in terms of vocabulary acquisition.

We need to consider finally, the culture learning aspect of intensive language work.

7.10 CULTURE LEARNING AND INTENSIVE LANGUAGE WORK

The whole of this stage of the research has been concerned with 'approaching the real' and the role of drama as a method of reducing the distance from the target language and culture. Much of what we have discussed in this process, particularly in this chapter, has concerned specifically language elements. There is however, an implicit culture element which we need to return to now, linking this aspect to the theories of drama-in-education.

This comes from the 'shared context of meaning' which allow students to 'reach new levels of understanding' (Verriour, 1993:47) which comes from drama work.

> The teacher is charged with the responsibility of structuring the dramatic action in such a way that it reflects the needs of students, sustains their interest, and also challenges them to work towards a change in understanding in their conception of the world, (Verriour, 1993:47).

It is the final part of this quotation, which brings us to the culture implications of intensive language work. If we privilege the language aspect, we are in danger of ignoring the culture, which is an intrinsic part of it. If involvement in a lesson of improvised drama 'challenges' pupils 'to work towards a change in understanding in their conceptions of the world,' what does a week of activity taking place using a foreign language do in this respect?

We would want to argue here that the act of accepting the premise of a changed language environment and through the process of engaging and functioning in that foreign language for an intensive week of activities, is likely to change in some way pupils' 'conceptions of the world'. The culture element here is in the acceptance and appreciation of 'otherness', which this sustained use of another language is likely to promote. A theme which we will return to as we consider the impact of the 'experience of the real' on pupils participating in a French exchange.

7.11 CONCLUSION

The intensive language work carried out at Coates Middle School during the 1980s is a particularly important element in this research. It represents the first attempt to provide an additional environment for language learning by taking pupils out of the classroom to an outdoor centre in the Lake District and a period of 'secret agent' training.

It is clear from the statements of the time that this concern to address the problem of the 'artificial' nature of classroom language learning is present from this stage and that there is a consistent concern to provide 'real' language learning opportunities for pupils, ('perhaps for the first time the language became real for them,').

The intensive language weeks lasted over a period of nearly ten years and they represent probably the most important foreign language learning initiative introduced at Coates Middle School and certainly the most exhausting but exhilarating work undertaken with children. The intensive work came to an end with the year spent abroad as an exchange teacher and the decision, following this period, to set up an annual pupil exchange.

This intensive language work represents an 'approach to the real' through the creation of a simulated language and culture environment. It is replaced with the opportunity for pupils to experience a 'real' language and culture situation as

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they stay with a French family- an experience providing a whole new set of challenges and demands.

STAGE FOUR: 'EXPERIENCING THE REAL'

Link with previous stage: Stage Four examined the first years as a foreign language teacher in a middle school and the use of drama to create situations of 'imagined reality' such as during intensive language work. The 'approach to the real' of the previous stage is now extended to providing pupils with the chance to 'experience the real' through pupil exchanges.

Photo 4.1.   French home in Saint Brieuc with English exchange student (nearest camera).

Stage Contents:

Chapter Eight: identifies a number of key concepts associated with 'experiencing the real' and an account of a teacher exchange.

Chapter Nine: describes the experience of pupil exchanges

Chapter Ten: describes the introduction of a series of language and culture learning initiatives at Coates Middle School.

Appendix references: A8, A9, A10.

FRENCH EXCHANGE PROGRAMME,
SAINT BRIEUC, BRITTANY 1993-2001
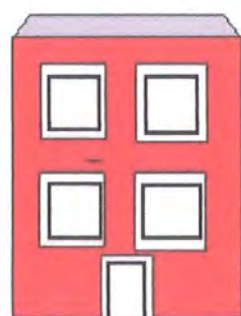
my house

Journey
bus England =
8 hours
ferry = 6 hours
bus France =
4 hours

Pupils are given a
French partner and go
to stay with them in
their house in France
for one week.

The moment of arrival, names
are called out and pupils step
forward to meet their French
family.
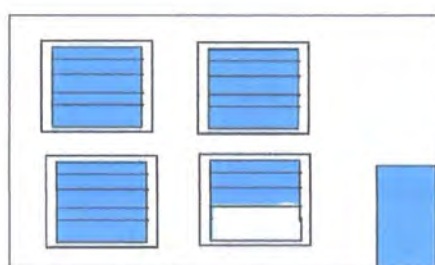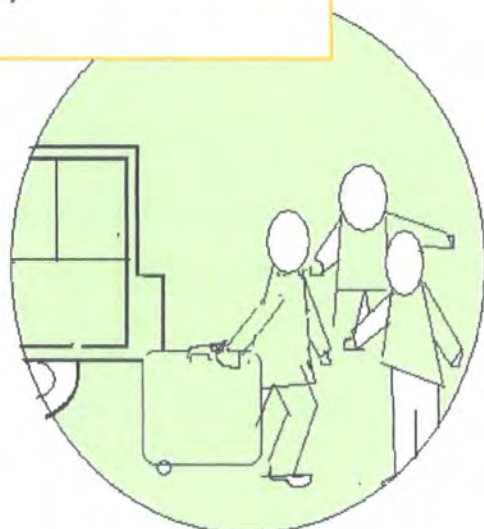
ma maison

Illustration 4.1
French Exchange, transportation.

INTRODUCTION TO STAGE FOUR

At this point in the research, we go beyond the 'approach to the real' in order to examine those opportunities which enable pupils to encounter the foreign language and culture, and 'experience the real'[97].

The notion of 'the real' has provided us with a convenient way to review different foreign language learning methods, situating these developments in terms of their relationship to the target language and culture. Experiencing the 'real' means there is no longer the need to use drama as a mechanism to simulate the foreign language environment by reducing the distance separating the target language and culture from classroom learning. Neither are we concerned here with the need to 'translate' the language and culture into a form suitable and accessible for pupils. Instead, there is a journey to make in order to reach the target culture and the need to find some kind of environment in which this encounter with the 'real' can be experienced. An environment in which the language and culture will be encountered as a living, functioning, natural entity, with all the problems this involves.

There are a number of issues to resolve as we describe these experiences of the 'real'. In the first place we need to look at the terminology with which the process of engaging directly with the target language and culture is described. Then, there is the fact that the contact with the target language and culture takes place in a specific location. This means there is an emphasis on geographic place and we link this key area to the narrative as a whole through the work of Paul Ricoeur on the 'witness'. Also, because the place concerned is situated abroad, there is a need to explore the tourist aspect of the exchange experience and the encounter with the foreign, which this involves. This will provide a link to the earlier 'acculturation' chapters.

This stage of the thesis is a suitable point to investigate 'experiential learning'[98], (Kolb, 1984), learning through doing, as we determine how pupils adapt to the

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[97] It is also, the point where my own 'experience of the real' is extended, as I spend a year on a teacher exchange to France.

new experiences they encounter, as they stay with a French family. It is also, important to investigate schema theory (Bartlett, 1932) and 'transformation' (Schechner, 1988), as we explore this process of adaptation to the new language and culture environment.

The involvement of only a limited number of pupils annually in the exchange programme means that there is a need to try and extend the experience to other pupils through the introduction of more realistic approaches in school, based on 'experience of the real'.

It would have been useful to have been able to include in this chapter on pupil exchanges data on the numbers of pupils who are annually involved in this experience. Unfortunately this information does not seem to be readily available[99].

Immersion

The need to clarify the terminology before proceeding to an investigation of the different opportunities provided for pupils 'to experience the real' (as opposed to 'approaching the real'), is evident from an earlier published article on intensive language learning:

> Confusion over terminology means that intensive work and language
> immersion are often used synonymously, (Daniels, 2004:293).

The use of the term 'intensive' is no longer entirely appropriate for the language and culture learning we will be describing in this stage of the research: 'experiencing the real'. Intensive language work for example, is directed and controlled, while an exchange experience, whether for the teacher or pupil, can't

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[98] An element of 'learning through doing' which has been present throughout this thesis and links to the 1967 Plowden Report.

[99] CILT (Centre for Information on Language Teaching) were consulted but were unable to find information on this.

be directed and can only be controlled to a limited extent[100]. The key factor in an exchange is that both the teacher and pupil is 'immersed' in the new cultural environment as they travel from their familiar school and family environments to be placed in a French school or, for the exchange pupil, home, a process the narrative illustration, at the beginning of this chapter, emphasises.

The traditional use of the term 'immersion' in language instruction: 'the teaching of subject matter through the medium of the immersion language' (Johnstone, 2004:189), has been extended through the concept of 'cultural immersion':

> 'Immersion Travel' has long been the province of student exchanges and language instruction. Today however, the idea of cultural immersion has reached far beyond that to become accessible, and highly popular, among travellers of all types.
>
> (from Cultural Immersion: A Deeper Travel Experience, Seale,
>
> Shelley, @ http://www.examiner.com/x, accessed 23.12.08).

Immersion in this sense, is about tourists being placed in an interesting cultural location and encouraging them to adapt to this new environment. One website provides a list of ten ways for the tourist to adapt ranging from eating locally, embracing public transport and dressing the part.[101] (Cultural Immersion: How to Blend in Like a Local When Travelling, ibid).

The term 'immersion' is a useful way for us to look at engagement with the foreign culture, providing a different manner to describe the processes involved in encountering the 'real', a use of the word, which extends the more limited concept used in tourist studies.

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[100] While the teacher (together with his partner in the hosting school) has a role in choosing the matching of pupils, what actually happens once the pupil is living with the exchange family is not something which can be specifically controlled. This includes the nature of the language and culture experience.

[101] 'There's no shame in being a tourist but try not to shout it from the rooftops. Adapt your style to local standards by avoiding shorts, fanny packs and a camera dangling from your neck ...'
(ibid).

To contrast and distinguish therefore, between the two different learning environments of the intensive language work and the exchange programme, we will follow the lead of travel and tourist studies in extending the use of 'immersion' to cover the experience of encountering the foreign language and culture during a period spent as an exchange student or teacher. This is the process of placing a person in a new cultural environment.

For immersion to occur it has to be situated in a specific place. The role of place in this thesis is one of the concepts we examine next.

CHAPTER EIGHT 'EXPERIENCING THE REAL' 1,

conceptual considerations and experience of a teacher exchange.

8.0   INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses first, a number of key concepts, before describing and analysing my personal experience as an exchange teacher. Central to this chapter and the stage as a whole is the importance of place. The 'experiences of the real', described here, are located in a specific place. When the place under discussion is situated abroad, as in the examples we are considering, then we need to address the nature of the 'foreign' and 'exotic' which this involves. This is why we begin this chapter by looking specifically through the 'tourist gaze' (Strain, 2003) to try and understand this aspect of the impact of the 'real'.

There are also at the beginning of this chapter a number of further key concepts to explore. This is a suitable moment in the narrative journey of this thesis to pause and take stock, from a suitably prominent position[102], at the way we have come and what lies before us. What was previously, a focus for foreign language and culture learning in 'approaching the real' (an absent element which needed to be represented in some form), is now actually encountered as we 'experience the real'. We will see that this has important implications for our understanding of the two terms and we will want to define precisely what the 'impact of the real' involves.

The concept, which brings together the key aspects of this encounter with the 'real', is the role of the witness, which while not exclusively involved with 'real experience', allows us to consider place within the historical framework of the narrative. Finally, there is the impact of an experience of this kind on participants in terms of changing perspectives, which will be introduced here and covered more fully in the next chapter. It will then prove possible, in the final stage of the thesis, to compare our characterisation of the 'real experience'

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[102] See Strain (2003) and the tourist gaze, below.

with classroom foreign language learning, enabling us to present a theory or model of 'experiencing' and 'approaching the real'.

The second section of the chapter concerns the experience I had as an exchange teacher working in a French school in 1992/1993. This opportunity of working outside Coates Middle School provides its own 'experience of the real' as represented by a particular collège in Saint Brieuc, Brittany, Collège Jean-Macé. This part of the chapter links therefore with those previous periods spent living abroad as described in this thesis. We would anticipate therefore a similar initial period of 'culture shock' and the need to make adjustments in order to adapt to the new circumstances.

As a result of this year as an exchange teacher, it was possible to set up an annual pupil exchange with the same school, which continued for more than a decade and which forms the subject for chapter nine.

8.01   Contents of chapter eight

8.0 Introduction →	8.1 Narrative Passage and explanation 1 →	8.2 Theoretical Considerations →
8.3 English teacher in France. →	8.4 Narrative Passage 2 →	8.5 Acculturation as English teacher in France →
8.6 Interaction with teachers →	8.7 Teacher pupil interaction →	8.8 'Approaching the Real': teaching English in France →
8.9 Change and transformation →	8.10 Conclusion	
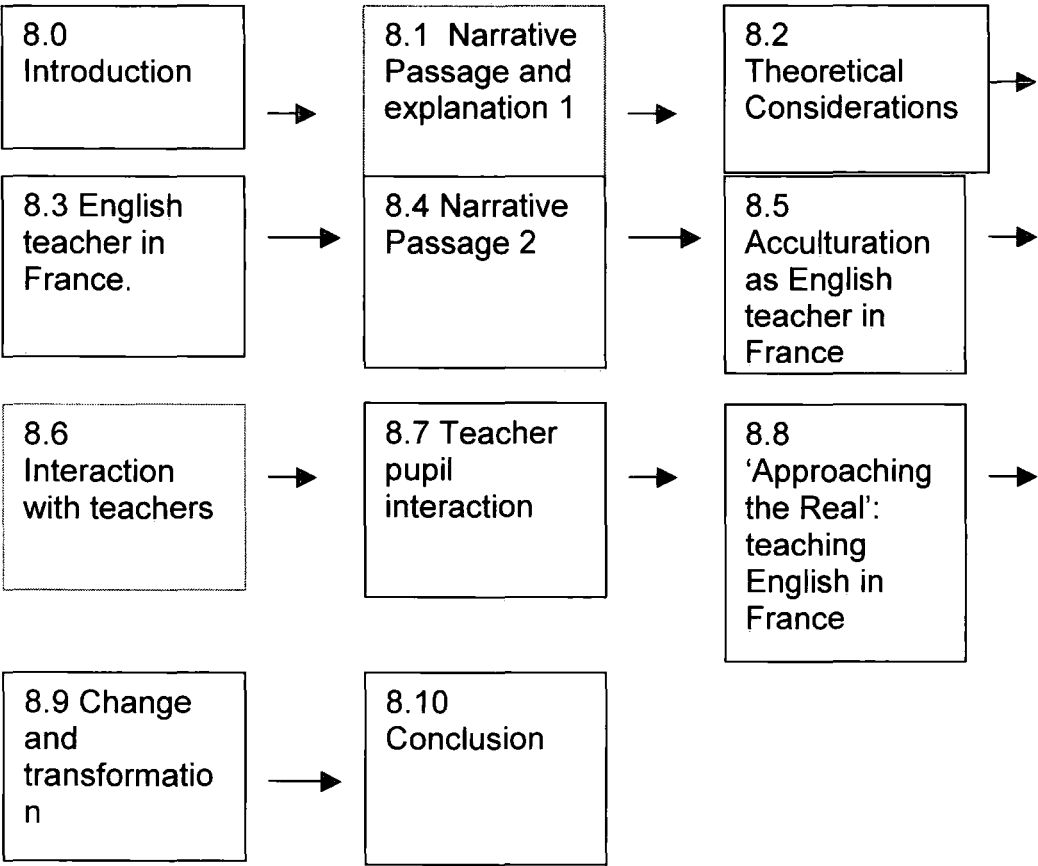
8.1 NARRATIVE ACCOUNT

The house is set right on the beach in an idyllic situation. There are open views across the pure white sand to the green waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Dolphins can regularly be seen dipping and diving as they feed on the plentiful fish in the area and squadrons of pelican fly languorously overhead in the clear blue sky. A further stretch of sea is located a few blocks of holiday homes behind the house and this lagoon separates the narrow strip of land from the mainland, viewed across the sparkling waters.

As you come to a new place, it's good to have an understanding of the lie of the land, how the landscape fits together[103], but here this is not straightforward. We can visit the beach and collect shells or walk along the narrow stretch of sand of the lagoon (an area which resembles a tropical island in its isolation and exotic wildlife). To be able to visualise how all of this, these disparate elements fit together requires an overview. There is on the first floor of the house a metal ladder heading up to a lookout tower, an ideal way to view the surrounding area and to make sense of the geography of this special landscape. However, as you climb the ladder you discover the trap-door into the tower has been bolted shut, (we are informed this is for health and safety reasons, a risk that clients might stumble and involve the owners in litigation).

We are left then with the need to create our own perspective of the way the land lies and more than this, to use the evidence at our disposal to construct a representation of this part of North West Florida, from our walks along the beach, from our observation of the wildlife and the people we encounter. From the physical perspective we have maps to aid us and this shows us how the landscape fits together. We also have guide-books and natural history field guides, to provide us with knowledge of how things are and what things are present. There is also however, the need to turn to our own imagination to help us in this representation, to model an impression of how this unusual land

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[103] The tourist attempts to extract herself from the scene and views the location from a point of view that delivers almost an abstracted vision similar to that of the map, (Strain, 2003:27).

formation – a narrow spit of sand stretching some fifty four miles – fits into the wider picture of the more familiar shape of Florida, the United States as a whole and the world of which it forms a part.

Although the period spent living in this particular environment is only a single week, being transported to such an attractive location and then later returning to our routine lives, means that we take back with us the image and memory of a specific and special place. An image, which is a representation of all the different characteristics, which identify the place for us, together with the particular experiences we have had there.

8.1.1 Explanation of Narrative Account

The process of representing a landscape, of constructing from the information available an understanding of how things are, introduces a geographical element to the research, the element of place (Ricoeur, 2005; Casey, 1993). The vocabulary used in the narrative passage indicates how the process of understanding place (representing, constructing), matches the work of the historian and anthropologist. It also suggests how place itself, (where as a person we spend time), has a key role to play in the construction of history; a process, which becomes more overtly historical once we leave the place concerned and try therefore, to represent something that is no longer there.

There is too, in the narrative passage a frequent element in this research of being transported from a familiar place and routine, (Schechner, 1988), often following a long journey, to a different place for a temporary period. Finally, there is the personal nature of this 'experience of the real'.

A holiday of the kind described above is hardly the challenging experience of, for example, pupils staying with a family in another country, but there is still the element of transportation. There are also however, other key aspects of a holiday experience, which link it to a French exchange, centred on being situated in a foreign environment. Tourist studies provide us with a different perspective on the experiences of an exchange pupil and also, teacher. We

need therefore to consider the tourist and travel elements involved in 'experiencing the real'.

8.2   THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

8.2.1 The Tourist Gaze, the impact of the foreign

In this chapter, which explores the experience of a year teaching in France, we will see, there is a need to adjust my perceptions of French culture in the light of the experience of working as an exchange teacher. For the exchange pupil, (discussed in the next chapter), the preconceptions of France and French culture will come from the image they have formed of France from the text books they have been following[104]. The 'experience of the real', which they encounter, is likely therefore, to have an impact, whether positive or negative. An impact which is described by Strain in terms of an 'expansion of perspective'[105] as 'the tourist temporarily leaves the niche of home life, with its narrow view of the world', (Strain, 2003:27).

The point to be made is the difference between this experience of a foreign land and the routine of everyday experiences.

> The renewed vision that supposedly characterises travel to exotic lands is seen as diametrically opposed to the quotidian experience of the already codified reality of our daily existence in our homelands, (Strain, 2003:5).

There are for Strain (2003) a number of strategies used by the tourist as they interact with the foreign experiences they encounter:

> A culturally constructed set of strategies for perceiving the 'exotic' – and for turning cultural differences into postcard visions (...) may inflect and

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[104] Where pupils have previously experienced France on holidays, there will be a different kind of adjustment to be made.
[105] Whalley (1997), talks as we will see of 'learning through perspective transformation,' (Whalley, 1997:111).

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possibly even shape to a good extent the nature of our cross-cultural perception, (Strain, 2003: viii).

This mediating process is explored by Strain in terms of the 'tourist gaze', (Urry, 1990), seen as: 'the operation of representation, authenticity, knowledge and experience,' (Strain, 2003: 2). That is to say that we bring with us on each voyage, the whole baggage of our previous experiences, the images and memories we have retained, our own personal collection of experiences into which library we slot each new encounter.

The notion here is of each person constructing their own view of the foreign encounter, in the same way that a written text may involve choosing and arranging the material in order to provide the account. This representation will depend on the nature of the encounter, the personalised experience of 'the real'.

The concept we have here, of 'codified lives' and changed perspectives points us towards schema theory (Bartlett, 1932), which will provide us with a way to investigate the exchange experience. The impact of the 'experience of the real' on the exchange teacher or pupil is a central concern of this stage of the research. We will need to investigate the changes, which take place as, for example, the exchange pupil adapts to their new and different surroundings and consider more closely whether this change can lead to something more permanent, a 'transformation' (Schechner, 1988), in concepts as a result of this experience.

8.2.2 J'y Etais[106] – Paul Ricoeur and the role of the witness

As an autobiographical and historical narrative I am personally immersed in the experiences I describe in this thesis. The role is that of witness to the events which take place[107]. This is an area covered by Ricoeur, as he brings together

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[106] I was there.

[107] A witness who, however, also, in many instances, has a role in setting up the incidents being observed.

in a simple formula, those history, geography and narrative elements with which this research is centrally concerned.

La déclaration explicite du témoin (…): *J'y étais,*[108] (Ricoeur, 2005: 183).

It is worth analysing this simple statement in more detail as Ricoeur himself does, by examining the components of the phrase.

Table 8.2   Representation of the Role of the Witness in History (after Ricoeur, 2005).
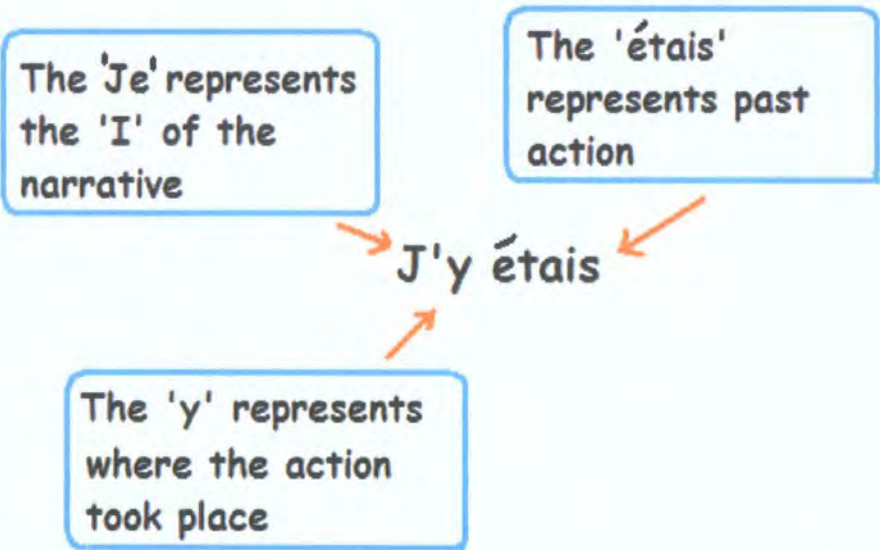
Ricoeur links the historical nature of the witness describing an event, which took place previously, with his personal involvement in what happened (seen by him), made possible by his presence at the scene.

L'imparfait grammatical marque le temps, tandis que l'adverbe marque l'espace[109],

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[108] the explicit statement of the witness .. says everything: *I was there.*)

[109] the imperfect tense marks the time, while the adverb marks the space.

The third and final element revealed, as the phrase is deconstructed, is the 'I' element (j'). This indicates the presence of the witness at the scene of the action:

> La specificité du témoinage consiste en ceci que l'assertion de realité est inseparable de son couplage avec l'autodésignation du sujet témoignant (...) ce qui est attesté est indivisément la réalité de la chose passé et la présence du narrateur sur les lieux de l'occurrence[110], (Ricoeur, 2005:204).

This returns us to the key concern of this thesis: the place of the 'real' and the personal nature of the witness' view of what has taken place, (this links to Ricoeur's central point of history's concern to represent in the present something which is absent). How things are seen, by the witness may not represent exactly what took place, (as we have already examined in our investigation of autobiographical memory). Our concern here however is not with this area, but to explore further the three key elements contained in the witness statement, history, geography and narration and how they relate to the research as a whole.

For our purposes this deconstruction of the role of the witness is particularly revealing. This is a reminder that the narrative account is itself autobiographical, with the principal witness to the events being the same person who chooses which elements to include in the writing of the history and how these different elements can be reconstructed for the research. An element we have already explored earlier in this thesis, as we looked at autobiographical memory and autoethnography.

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[110] The specific nature of the witness consists of the fact that the assertion of reality is inseparable from its link with the self declaration of the witness .. what is shown is the inseparability of reality from the past event and the presence of the witness at the scene of the action.

A final comment on the role of the witness as explored by Ricoeur is that the statement 'I was there', suggests that this is a static moment observed in the past and somehow, isolated in time. However, although (for example for judicial purposes), this may be adequate, the witness was carrying out activities before this particular recorded event took place, and is likely to continue to do so afterwards. It is this essentially dynamic aspect which gives an ongoing quality to the process of narrative and the concept of a journey which this involves.

8.2.2 The Geography of Place

Ricoeur's examiniation of the role of the witness in history has emphasised the importance of place, the geography of place, which we need now to consider. We turn first, to how place is defined from a geographical perspective:

> Place: a portion of geographic space. Space is organised into places thought of as bounded settings in which social relations and identity are constituted.
>
> (Dictionary of Human Geography, 2000:582).

While the study of space has been privileged, it is made clear that less attention has been given to place. Ricoeur in his discussion of this area refers to the work of Casey (1993)[111].

Casey's argument is to suggest that while time is a pre-eminent and controlling element in our lives, place has not been given recently, the full attention it deserves. This is reflected in the title of the work *Getting Back into Place: towards a renewed understanding of the place world*. His work is seen as offering: 'a comprehensive and nuanced account of the role of place in human experience (synopsis to *Getting Back into Place*, Casey, 1993). The association between time and place is made clear:

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[111] Le premier jalon sur la voie de la spatialité que la géographie met en parallèle à la temporalité de l'histoire est celui que propose une phénoménologie de la "place" ou du "lieu". Nous devons la première à E. Casey[111],' (Ricoeur, 2005:184).

There is no (grasping of) time without place; and this is so precisely by virtue of place's actively delimiting and creatively conditioning capacities. Place situates time by giving it a local habitation, (Casey, 1993:21).

Casey goes on to define the importance of place in our lives:

The power a place such as a mere room possesses determines not only *where* I am in the limited sense of cartographic location but *how* I am together with others (i.e. how I commingle and communicate with them) and even *who* we shall become together, (Casey, 1993:23).

If we place these comments into the context of this stage of the research on 'experiencing the real' target language and culture, we are emphasising the importance of place in the process of acculturation. Place is not just an environment, something to subject to analysis, but seems to have a more literary element which is apparent from the phrase 'spirit of place'[112] (Durrell, 1969). This helps locate the concept of place in terms of tourist studies, as we have considered above, the attraction of the foreign and exotic where things are done differently. This is an area which does not generally feature in the literature on foreign language and culture learning[113], but as we try to theorise the concept of the 'experience of the real', this element begins to take on a more prominent role.

The present thesis is closely involved with geography because while the historical narrative records the passage of time as a linear element, this is given definition by the events which are located and to a certain extent identified through 'taking place' – an interesting phrase in itself which links events to place – specific place. Also, the very nature of the research, as a narrative of foreign language and culture learning is associated with place seen as the 'real' target language and culture. So, the period of self-development is characterised by prolonged periods spent living in specific locations abroad and the language

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[112] Durrell, Lawrence, (1969) *Spirit of place: letters and essays on travel.* London: Faber and Faber.

[113] The task based language learning emphasis did however, concentrate on preparing pupils for tasks they might encounter on a trip to France, see Page above.

and culture learning initiatives introduced with pupils, are very often situated outside the school in such locations as High Borrans. Where the research is concerned with more standard learning procedures, these are also, located in a specific place, the learning environment of the language classroom.

We need to be clear what we are looking for from this examination of place in this research. The first concern is a better understanding of the concept of place. Next, we need to look as Casey, does at implacement, how we see ourselves within a certain place and displacement, what happens when we move somewhere else and the problems associated with this process. The concept of movement introduces the notion of journey (which in turn links to the narrative process).

There is finally, the ongoing consideration of how a specific place represented by the target language and culture (such as France), can be represented in the foreign language classroom, the focus for the learning taking place.

The point to make here is that these concepts are not very different from those we have already been considering. Tourist studies and intercultural learning are also concerned with place, as is the whole process of foreign language learning. A focus on place however, helps us to make better sense of the importance of this element in our 'experience of the real', provides us with another tool with which we can analyse the processes we are describing in this narrative.

The personal experience of working as a teacher in France represents a displacement from normal routines with an immersion in a different cultural environment, a specific place represented by a collège in Saint Brieuc, Brittany. This was an experience matched for pupils with the exchange programme, (the subject of the next chapter) where the element of place which is central for pupils, is the particular house in which they find themselves immersed for the week they spend in France.

We turn next, to an account of the period spent as an exchange teacher in France.

8.3 ENGLISH TEACHER IN FRANCE

There are three key primary sources we can draw on as we construct the period working as an exchange teacher in France from September 1992 until July 1993. In the first place, there is the diary written during the time at Saint Brieuc; then, a chapter published shortly afterwards, which analyses the experience of working as an English language teacher in France and finally, notes made during the time entitled: PAL (Practical Active Language), which represents a statement of intent, in terms of delivering English teaching and trying to introduce into a different setting, (the French education system), some of the initiatives tried out in Northumberland.

The diary extracts reflect closely the thinking of the time and provide an account of daily routine and experiences. They are important because they reflect changing attitudes and transformation, in terms of the interaction with other teachers and pupils and the French education system as a whole. The diary extracts come into a different category of evidence from the overview of the period published as a chapter in *Face to Face: learning language and culture through visits and exchanges, (Byram, ed, 1997)*, which provides a more reflective, later analysis of the experience[114].

Working in a French school for a year provides the opportunity to interact with a different cultural system, through the process of immersion as a member of the school community and in this way perhaps to become familiar with some aspects of the imaginative universe within which it operates.

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[114] Byram makes clear that the purpose of '*Face to Face*' *is:* 'to help all those involved in visits or exchanges in modern language education and learning to think more systematically about their work and to plan their activities more effectively, (Byram, 1997: back cover synopsis).

What (...) most prevents us (...) from grasping what people are up to is not ignorance as to how cognition works as a lack of familiarity with the imaginative universe within which their acts are signs,' (Geertz, 1973:13).

It is only with hindsight, that we can analyse the experiences recorded in this chapter in terms of the 'thick description' identified by Geertz. We will want however, as we examine the period through the diaries recording the year in France, to look for evidence of a developing understanding of another culture as represented by the experience of teaching at a collège and also, the local primary school at Saint Brieuc. It will also be important to assess the period in terms of any influences this year teaching in France, of 'experiencing the real', may have had on later foreign language developments introduced on returning to Northumberland.

There is an interesting symmetry in the change involved from being a French teacher in England to an English teacher in France. To place the protagonist of this narrative in a French school might almost be a literary device, invented to add interest to the plot by providing an experience, which brings into focus many of the ongoing themes of the research by placing them in a new context.

8.4   NARRATIVE PASSAGE 2

The first class drifts in, for the eight o'clock lesson it is still dark and the students wear anoraks, which they retain throughout the hour's course to combat the cold. The class monitors bring with them the two official registers: documents for me to complete, the list of those present and brief notes on the lesson being given and homework set. At this point the English lesson begins. The 'devoirs' (homework) is corrected with pupils marking their own work. There may well be a request for an explanation of why something is the way it is, clarification on a point of grammar which, as a native speaker I may have trouble answering, only knowing that something is right but not why this should be so. Then, there is a new grammar point to be introduced, 'la leçon', and with the help of the text

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books, exercises, in particular reading comprehension exercises, to be completed. The hour's lesson ends with the setting of homework and the class troops out to be replaced by a further company of young people.

There are four lessons happening, essentially in this way, each morning (one more than would be happening in the middle school in Northumberland) and a further three in the afternoon, seven lessons in the day compared with only five in England. This interaction of a single English, English teacher with a classroom of young French students, is interrupted by occasional visits to the 'salle des profs' (staff-room). A staff-room which shares the cold and draughty feel which characterises the school as a whole, as though someone had left a door open, (there are none of the comfortable armchairs for teachers to sink into as they return to adult company during break and lunchtimes, only the odd table and functional chairs). Individual teachers are transitory features of the staff-room, often living nearby or having teaching commitments in other schools. They are therefore, constantly in the process of just leaving, having delivered their lessons and giving the impression of having to be elsewhere as swiftly as possible.

Only one member of staff stays for lunch, and so, I share the company of the bearded librarian and information systems teacher. A person involved in radical politics. We have little in common and attempts at small talk, as we consume the generally reasonable school fare, are limited. I have the distinct impression that as an Englishman I am identified with all the wrong associations, a suspect cultural figure to one committed to Celtic emancipation and deliverance; now had I been Irish or Welsh or Scots, there might have been more to share, more common ground.

Afternoon lessons bring more of the same to the morning's quota of English teaching. Released at four, I return home usually by bus; back to a house where, I correct pupils' work and prepare the next day's lessons, a house where English is spoken and there is an English atmosphere.

8.4.1 Explanation of Narrative Passage 2

What we retain from the narrative passage setting out a description of the day's routine in this French school is inevitably, a number of key differences in the French education system to what takes place in England. These are to do with the timetable[115], (more lessons each day); the organisation of the school day, (no assembly or registration times); and differences associated with the fabric of the building. More importantly there are those differences associated with the working practice of teachers and pupils in the school, which, as we will see, have a real impact on the stranger coming to work in this new educational environment.

It is these differences we tend to notice first (Byram, 1997) as we engage with a different culture. They stand out precisely because they are not the same as we are used to. We will want to explore these differences as we deal with 'experiencing the real' and the process of adapting as an English teacher in a French school in a later section.

8.5   ACCULTURATION AS AN ENGLISH TEACHER IN FRANCE

The previous passages in this narrative relating to personal 'experience of the real' have indicated the different stages of acculturation taking place as I adapted to the new circumstances in Grenoble, Neuchâtel and Northumberland College of Education. The theory of acculturation and 'culture shock' have, (as indicated when we first discussed encountering the 'real'), accompanied us through the discussion of these different periods of adaptation. We have also added to these general theories, more specific ones able to match more closely the nature of each 'real experience'.

Therefore, if acculturation provided a suitable general theory for discussing the time spent in Grenoble, we were able to draw also, on research into students spending a year studying abroad which matched the nature of my own experience, (Lejeune-Murphy, 2003). Then, it was necessary to look at

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[115] Appendix: A8.1

intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1989), to describe acculturation into the Champréveyres, international community and also, social group theory (Wetherell, 1996).

A period teaching English in a French school is going to involve a further process of adaptation and adjustment, with an initial period of 'culture shock', before a final measure of acculturation is achieved. This is clearly a different experience to that of the foreign student studying in France. This time the actor has a specific role to play, a contribution to make in a French institution. We need to be able therefore to theorise this experience in terms of integration into the French collège. Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, (DMIS) provides a series of stages in acculturation, which are useful to us here, with integration as the final stage in the process. We consider these below, analysing at the same time the earlier experiences in terms of this model.

There is also, the exchange element in the experience and we can also look therefore, at theories specifically associated with an exchange, which is seen at its most basic as swapping one environment for another. For the exchange teacher this is the school environment, while for the pupil the environment is the home. Whalley talks about an exchange programme for Canadian students with those in Japan and 'learning through perspective transformation,' (Whalley, 1997:111).

The concept of changing perspectives we have already linked to schema theory, (Bartlett, 1932) which we will discuss briefly in this chapter before considering it in more detail in chapter nine, when we examine the pupil exchange which has a particularly central role to play in this research.

The teacher experience is less likely to be one leading to transformation, (as we have seen from the earlier experiences which resulted in a change in direction for my life), as this time I have a formed professional and personal identity. The impact of the real foreign language and culture on this occasion, is therefore likely to be more to do with how the experience can influence future school initiatives, both directly in the form of establishing an annual pupil exchange

programme with Collège Jean-Macé and indirectly through the introduction of a range of new learning resources, as we will discuss in chapter ten.

We have again here, as for Grenoble and the first period of Neuchâtel, a diary to draw on as we plot the different stages in the acculturation process.

8.5.1 The developmental model of intercultural sensitivity

Bennett's model of intercultural sensitivity has six stages divided into two sections. There are first the ethnocentric stages 'meaning that one's own culture is experienced as central to reality'; here the categories are: denial, defense and minimisation.

The second group of stages are in contrast 'ethnorelative': one's own culture is experienced in the context of other cultures'. This area is more relevant for our purposes, it consists of the following categories:

Acceptance of cultural difference is the state in which one's own culture is experienced as just one of a number.

Adaptation to cultural difference is the state in which the experience of another culture yields perception and behaviour appropriate to that culture.

Integration of cultural differences is the state in which one's experience of self has expanded to include the movement in and out of different cultural world views.

(from Bennett and Hammer, 1998:1).

We would see on the basis of these criteria a process of acceptance, followed by adaptation during the Grenoble experience. While for both Neuchâtel and Northumberland College of Education the process is more one of adaptation and finally, integration with integration into the international community, (becoming president of the students' council) and the educational world on qualifying as a foreign language teacher.

8.5.2 Diary of Teacher Exchange

The first question to ask when considering this key source is the purpose of keeping a diary:

> this account is becoming bogged down in a blow by blow account which have neither the inclination or time to pursue. What we are looking for in this document is impressions, telling descriptions and comment, interesting insights and pertinent something else,
>
> <div align="center">(B. D., 1992:5).</div>

The diary serves not just as a chronicle of what takes place but also, a commentary and analysis of the significance of the activities described. In this way, it recalls the other complete diary account which records, as we have seen, the first year abroad spent living in Grenoble, ('I have decided to write a diary because my environment and everyday life is particularly interesting,' (G.D., 1963:20.1.63).

It seems, from this first entry, that the diary writing has a certain ambition which points to the way the author sees himself and the experience he is embarking on. This is 'participant observation' (Monaghan, Just, 2000: 14), the teacher as ethnographer, recording for posterity the strange doings of other cultures. It is perhaps significant that the diary ends in April and does not cover the final stages of the exchange period. Is this a measure of the acculturation which has taken place, as the foreign teacher becomes more integrated, more accepted as a member of the collège?

The value of diary writing as a means of recording a cultural experience is underlined by Byram who in a direct reference to the author's use of a diary to record the experience of working in France has this to say:

> Daniels illustrates his account with extracts from his diary,
> a particularly useful tool for reflection and learning from experience.

It gives the writer the distance essential for profiting from experience whilst still in the midst of it, (Byram, 1997:15).

8.5.3   Immersion as a 'professeur d'anglais in a French Collège.

I am immersed as an exchange teacher in France in a new and different educational environment. The surroundings in which I find myself, the physical aspects of the French college, the place in which I am now operating as an English teacher, is a central element in this different environment. A specific feature of the place is noticed and recorded in the diary account, as an element which seems typical of French institutions as a whole and is echoed in other aspects of the education system:

> Am becoming obsessed by a tendency for French institutions to go for the same kind of floor patterns and tiling effect. Right at the beginning during the initial pre-rentrée, I was trying to work out what made this and other institutions have an atmosphere, look, quality of their own (...)The style (pattern) used on opaque windows, the pages of exercise books and so on, is the same pattern of 'petites carrées'[116] such as found on graph paper, (B.D., 7.10.1992:50).

And the ethnographer is keen to suggest an explanation for these newly identified phenomena:

> An explanation of why such patterns should be so prevalent is something else. Do children write on squared paper to discipline their approach, ensure no work gives way to blind unreasoned arguments, irrational techniques and uncontrolled thought processes ? (ibid).

Noticing differences of this kind is part of the process of adapting to the new system and represent first steps in the process of acculturation, getting used to the idea that the new French education system, I'm experiencing, will not be the same as the familiar one left behind in England.

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[116] Little squares, a grid system

Text-books used for French language and culture learning may present many of the differences between the school systems in England and France, it is only when these are actually encountered and experienced that they have an impact. These differences extend from the place itself to the way it is organised through the school procedures. We are surprised to find for example, that there are no whole school or class-based pastoral activities (such as assembly or registration), at the start of each day, but that pupils go straight to their lessons.

We know from our examination of place however, that it is the shared culture that 'characterises and shapes a given place,' and that we partake of places in common – and reshape them in common,' (Casey, 1991:31). We need to turn next to a key element in the acculturation process, the interaction with those teacher colleagues with whom the year in France is shared.

8.6 INTERACTION WITH TEACHERS

Interaction with teachers is the area for which the diary data available is most informative when it comes to demonstrating a changing perspective. It will also, provide us with an indication of how others see us. As we investigate this area, it is useful to be able to place the examples of interaction recorded within a theoretical framework to understand better the processes taking place.

Whalley extends and adapts Mezirow's (1991) theory of transformative learning to analyse what happens as his students are involved in a period of exchange. He proposes a range of possible attitudes to cover the different levels of acculturation, which take place, as the student adapts or fails to adapt to the new situation in which they find themselves. He then links the different elements to examples drawn from the student diaries, both Canadian and Japanese. Part of this process, and the one, which we want to use here, involves 'learning through perspective transformation,' (Whalley, 1997:111).

Whalley's concern was that there was then (1997), little in place to analyse the exchange process, a view shared with others, ('somewhat marginal in the

literature on language teaching methods acquisition,' (Byram, 1997:1). The fact that he demonstrates different elements of 'transformation' using diary entries, points to the possibility of using this methodology here, where there are also appropriate diary accounts to draw on.

The theme from the diary to which we can usefully first apply theories of transformation are those dealing with the interaction with teacher colleagues, particularly during the initial period spent in the school. The diaries reflect a sense of surprise and consternation, expressed in terms of feeling isolated, when it is discovered that there is a rather formal approach to me as a new member of staff and that the whole area of interaction with other teachers is not straightforward. This feeling of isolation we would want to associate with 'culture shock' as defined earlier. The best way to cover this topic is in tabular form, setting out the different elements accompanied with the relevant diary extracts: Table 8.3, set out below.

Changing perceptions, can best be shown by indicating the way I anticipated being received as an exchange teacher and comparing this to what actually happened. The title for this table 8.3, 'Culture Shock' places the data into the category of behaviour which differs to what we are used to.

Table 8.3   'Culture Shock'

Topic: interaction with French teaching colleagues	Reality (perceived)
General Expectation : it will be easy to enter into contact with and establish relationships with French teacher colleagues. The shared experience of working with young people will provide the necessary point of contact.	Diary entries record a feeling of isolation, particularly during the early period of the exchange and of surprise at how little interest there seems to be among French teachers in having an English colleague working alongside them.
Expectation 1 : French teachers will be keen to make an exchange teacher feel welcome in the school and to ensure they understand new procedures	*'Nobody seems very excited by my being there,' (B.D. 5.10.92:26)* The staff-room environment and resources do not lend themselves to the shared teaching community of England where teachers interact over a cup of coffee.
Expectation 2: there will be the opportunity to share with fellow teachers the experience of teaching in the school on a daily basis during break and lunchtimes in the school staff-room.	*'What tends to distinguish the Jean-Macé staff-room from the Coates variety is that there are practically no chairs. People therefore stand around and there is a feeling of a temporary pause before lessons begin again, '* (B.D, 11.11.92: 100). *'It's also, slightly discouraging to find after a term I'm still not addressed or known as John – what a curious beast the Frenchman is or is it the Breton?' (B.D. 10.1.93:136*

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New perspective: the problem can be redefined in terms of cultural differences associated with the way :
 	
    ■ teachers in France interact with one another
 	
    ■ French teaching contracts allow for work in different establishments
 	
    ■ there is no obligation for teachers to remain in school when not teaching
 	
    ■ many teachers live close to the school and will therefore always return home at lunchtime and often during the morning breaks.
	This area can therefore be explained as an aspect of experiencing the real; the need to adjust perspectives in order to be able to appreciate differences and to acculturate to a new situation: 'learning through perspective transformation': encountering an anomaly that cannot be given coherence by learning within existing meaning schemes. Only by critically reassessing our assumptions and redefining the problem can we resolve the dilemma,' (Whalley, 1997:111).

Drawing from a fairly extensive prior personal knowledge of France, there was the belief that French teachers would interact with one another in a similar manner to the colleagues I had left behind in Northumberland. My description of the interaction with teachers appears in the chapter in *Face to Face.*

> It would be natural for an outsider contrasting English and French behaviour patterns to expect English behaviour to be characterised by more formality and a greater reserve. However, there are various facets of the French cultural system, which mean that there is a certain formality

about, for example, a group of teachers as they go about their work and interact with their colleagues. First, there are certain barriers laid down to distinguish a casual working relationship from any kind of closer friendship. So the exchange teacher may be surprised to discover that he will be addressed as *vous* by most of his colleagues not just initially but right through the exchange period and that the kind of immediate first name relationship, which would be a prerequisite of the English staffroom, will not be so readily forthcoming, (Daniels, 1997:94).

A schema theory, (Bartlett, 1932) standpoint would describe what is happening here in terms of the adjustment of an internal representation of the French school as a result of this direct experience. Knowledge of the way things are in French schools has previously depended on how they are presented in pupil text-books (a 'staged authenticity' (MacCannell, 1999). This representation has to be changed as the real collège is experienced. In this particular case, there is the discovery that teachers in a collège have a different working pattern and interact differently among themselves to the system with which I was familiar from England.

8.6.1   Understanding How Others See Us

A further element to consider is a negative view of England when compared with other parts of the United Kingdom. One teacher expressed this view, he 'wouldn't want to visit England, Scotland, yes; Wales and of course Ireland,' (BD, 17.11.92:103-104). The diary entry picks up this theme:

> So much that is associated with England as seen on television, as read in the press, is negative from football hooligans (...) to royal indiscretions, pop music and punks, the IRA[117] and unemployment, social inequality and a very visible rich strata to society in formal attire in Rolls Royces, (BD, 17.11.92:103-104).

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[117] More correctly responding to the IRA campaign.

Whatever our own views on political issues this extract demonstrates how, as representatives of a particular country we have to contend with the perception others have of an English person and how he behaves.

8.7   TEACHER PUPIL INTERACTION

The element of the teacher exchange that is the focus for most concern prior to the exchange, is the interaction with pupils. This passage from *Face to Face* and the associated diary extract which follows, indicate concern over this unknown quantity, the French pupil and is associated with the first morning in the school.

> The imagination created all kinds of 'blousons noirs'[118] figures waiting outside and when I finally realised it was probably up to me to let them in and opened the door, I was surprised to see reasonably looking youngsters and agreeably fewer of them than had expected,
>
> (BD, September 1992:24-2)

The differences between French and English pupils are less evident than anticipated. There may be differences in appearance, from their uniformed English counterparts, but as an experienced teacher, I am able to recognise, the character of the pupils before me.

> Children are finally children be they French or English and from this first view, despite the different language and lack of uniform the types are intact. Hard working and conscientious, distracted and bored, small and petite, chubby (..) the initial characters are instantly recognisable. Twenty years of teaching children must have some spin off in judgement terms,
> (BD, September 1992:24-25).

This means that from this experience of working with French children in this particular collège in Brittany, there is not the same kind of need to change perspectives in terms of interacting with French pupils as there is with teachers .

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[118] Literally black leather jackets, but representing a rough youth element of French society

Differences in behaviour between English and French pupils are associated with the impact of the organisations which are in place to deliver educational targets: 'the ways the school system work on this raw material, in order to realise the kind of priorities and cultural identity each country sets out to achieve through its education system,' (ibid).

It doesn't take long for the exchange teacher to appreciate for example, that differences in behaviour focus in particular on the assessment system[119].

> The sight of pupils eagerly using their calculators to work out their average marks when work is returned to them, or an angry or tearful reaction to poor test marks would be surprising in an English pupil. They indicate a different attitude to work, (Daniels, 1997:93).

For French pupils, test marks (not just end of term tests, but those which take place as a regular part of assessing learning), have a real importance. What the assessment process manages to do is to provide pupils with an incentive to work, absent from much of English education. Pupils only have to look around them in the classroom to see those older classmates, who have already had to repeat a year for failing to achieve satisfactory results, to remind themselves of the need to work hard.

In terms of pupil/teacher relationship this is a key area:

> For exchange teachers the importance of this assessment process in their interaction with pupils becomes quickly apparent. French pupils will want to discuss with the teacher marks that do not appear appropriate and there will be a tendency to consider any work
> which is not counted towards the average mark as unimportant, (ibid).

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[119] an area covered in the training sessions provided by the British Council prior to leaving for France.

It is clear from the diary that the process of interacting with pupils is in many ways more straightforward than that with teachers. It is true that the environment in which the interaction between teacher and pupils takes place, the classroom is a familiar space in which to operate. This may be of significance when considering interaction with pupils. In contrast, the French staff-room is, as we have seen, an altogether different environment in terms of place, as well as interaction, to what is familiar from England.

8.8 'APPROACHING THE REAL', teaching English lessons

Teaching English to French pupils is what the exchange teacher has come to do. This is again, as for English pupils, learning French an 'approach to the real' in the terminology we have adopted. The need for the teacher to represent in the classroom a language and culture, which is not present is the familiar conundrum we have identified of representing in the present something that is absent.

By his presence, the English national teacher makes the process of learning the foreign language more authentic. The definition of authentic we have already encountered is useful in this respect: using resources naturally, for the purposes intended, (Rixon, 2004); an English teacher therefore, to teach English. There is not the element of pretence here, of the foreign language teacher using a language, which is not his own for purposes of communication and furthering in this way the artificial nature of the classroom foreign language environment. The teacher however, remains only one element within a foreign language classroom, situated away from the target language and culture and where there is the same need to represent an absent culture.

The advantages of having an 'authentic' English teacher have to be weighed up against the problems teachers will have in adapting to the new teaching environment in which they find themselves in order to become an effective foreign language teacher.

Apart from the casual authentic language and culture elements introduced into the foreign language classroom by the exchange teacher, there is also, importantly, the way the language is taught. We have already outlined above how the PAL document provides evidence for a concern to develop practical active language activities. It is therefore a question of how these can be introduced into the more formal working environment of the French education system.

8.8.1 Practical Active Language Work in France[120]

Over previous years have managed to establish a purpose and method for language teaching drawn from my experience in the classroom and particularly during intensive language work. This experience has been strongly supported by the examination of the literature on language acquisition and the development of a theoretical explanation of the process which resulted from the research into how pupils activated words during the intensive experience[121], (PAL, 21.2.93, Binic: 1).

In Brittany I find myself in exactly the kind of traditional language teaching environment, which develops receptive skills but is likely to present difficulties when it comes to spoken language competence. Generally speaking I think I can be reasonably content with the kind of language teaching approach and material I have used (...) The classes are responding well to the approach and material I have used, (ibid).

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These extracts from the PAL document written during the time in France, show the intention to pursue the kind of teaching initiatives being introduced at Coates Middle School into this new foreign language learning environment. The same document provides evidence for the approaches being used which tend to

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[120] Appendix: A8.2, A8.3.

[121] The reference here, is to the 'vocabulary dormancy' concept which we have discussed above.

focus on the spoken language of pupils: interviewing members of the class in English to fill in data about them; giving talks to the class on a chosen topic; carrying out a trial with a drama-based classroom theme; role-play work and giving a maths lesson in English.

The emphasis on role-play and drama work to help deliver the spoken language, reflects the view of drama as a mechanism for reducing the distance separating classroom learning from a 'real' target language and culture environment. This is the need to try and simulate within the foreign language classroom, situations which 'approach the real'.

Setting up an English theatre group was an attempt to work with a group of pupils over lunchtimes to produce a play in English about a French student on an English exchange ('The Exchange Student'), a play which, never in fact materialised, although rehearsals did take place[122].

This concern to develop practical language activities is associated with the theory of 'vocabulary dormancy', as the following extract makes clear:

> This year is an excellent opportunity to put my money where my heart is and test out the notion of 'vocabulary dormancy' – if ever there was a situation where dormancy theory could be demonstrated this is it. With little revisiting or comparatively (little), of vocabulary and structures in the year but a new recipe of largely new material each unit there must be considerable amounts which are never activated,' (BD, 1993:143).

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[122] Appendix A8.3 provides the script for this play which was never performed due to problems rehearsing at lunchtimes.

8.10 CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION

We need to complete this chapter by looking at evidence for more profound changes in terms of the way the experience actually led to any transformation in the author's concept of France and French culture. We have already looked at the theory of change and transformation as it applies to the interaction with French teachers, in terms of the concept of perceptions (Whalley, 1997).

We need therefore, at this point to try and represent the impact of the exchange period in terms of changing perspective. Table 8.4 sets out first, the situation prior to the experience, what takes place during the actual experience of teaching in France, and finally, what kind of lasting impact from the experience might be expected once the exchange period is completed.

There are of course other theories of change and this represents a first step in examining this area, before we consider the topic more thoroughly as we investigate pupil exchanges in the next chapter.

Table 8.4 Teacher Exchange as a process of change/transformation

Narrative demonstrates process of change/transformation as protagonist is brought from past to present, (Bruner, 2001). The diary account provides the record for this.

Pre Exchange

During Exchange

Post Exchange

Expectations for exchange period based on: prior knowledge of living in France and encountering French people; experience of foreign language teaching in England and training on French schools provided by British Council.

This knowledge represents a schema, (Burnett, 1934).

Process of adaptation and acculturation as the 'foreign reality' (Salvadori, 1997), is lived.

Interacting with teachers and pupils in France represents an example of needing to adapt to different cultural values and also of seeing ourselves as others see us (view of English).

Experience of teacher exchange and the changes in attitude required as part of the acculturation process (and reflection on this period), lead to a new perspective, a 'perspective transformation' (Whalley, 1997).

The schema of knowledge on French schools and pupils is adapted in the light of the experience of immersion.

Schechner's 'performance theory' examines how a person can be taken from a familiar place (transportation), go through a particular experience ('from one time space reference to another, from one personality reference to one or more others,' Schechner, 1977:270), before returning back to where he came from an experience that can lead to transformation.

The table represents the different elements and theoretical concepts, which can explain the process of change and transformation associated with the specific experience of a teacher exchange.

Bringing together a number of different theories and concepts, it represents a current view of the changes and transformations, which took place during the teacher exchange period and not the thinking of the time. We need to examine this in more detail in order to understand whether the year spent in France as an exchange teacher represents a period of transformation in the vocabulary of Schechner, (1988). It is to Schechner that we can most usefully first turn, in order to investigate this concept of transformation further.

8.10.1   Transportation and transformation

Our earlier examination of performance theory, (Schechner, 1988), emphasized how a person is taken (transported) from a familiar situation to a different environment. This change in environment requires the person to adapt to the new situation and play a new role, which from a cultural perspective we would see as a process of acculturation. A process of adaptation which is linked to 'the reorganisation of learners' cognitive and affective structures, a large scale modification and development of their schemata', (Byram, 1989:115); associated with the length of contact and the isolation from their own culture.

The key point is that the period spent in the new environment is not permanent and that after a passage of time, the person returns back into the world they originally came from. This fits with the process of the teacher exchange and the transitory nature of the experience. The whole question however, is to what extent the changes, which have to be made in order to fit into the new environment (during the period of transportation) have a lasting impact and result in any kind of transformation of the person concerned. How is it possible to demonstrate this?

For Bruner, it is the narrative account itself, (as we have seen[123]) which provides the description of this change, as a life history is recorded with all the changes, which this entails.

The diary account of the year as an exchange teacher becomes important, from its description of initial impressions and reactions to the new reality of working in France, which can then be set off against later points of view. In this way, the diary can indicate, as we have shown, changing attitudes and the actual process of acculturation taking place. We have been able to show, for example, how a prior assumption of how French teachers would interact with a new colleague proved mistaken, (Whalley's theory of 'learning through perspective transformation', (1997).

We take from the exchange experience, an understanding that in education as in other elements of the environment around us, things, can be done differently. There is not one set of values to follow and that the way we have developed our own educational system is a measure of the society in which we belong. This would mean we are not transformed so much as given a different understanding, a further appreciation of differences.

8.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter began with an examination of a number of conceptual elements: the narrator seen as a witness to the events which are described; the importance of place as an element in the narrative and an examination of how 'immersion' can provide us with a term to distinguish 'experiences of the real' such as foreign exchange from the intensive language work.

The time spent as an exchange teacher in France stands out in this narrative as an exceptional experience quite distinct from the routine of working as a French

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[123] Chapter two on methodology; the role of narrative in this historical, autobiographical account.

teacher in the same Northumberland school over a thirty five year period. There is an awareness, at the time, of the limited duration of this period and the inevitability of the return to normal working and living procedures. The passage below demonstrates this. It is also, a reminder of the impact of landscape ('the embrace of landscape', Casey 1997), the different surroundings with which we associate and remember our experiences of living abroad. A reminder that while we review the specifically intercultural elements of an exchange period, there is also the 'tourist gaze', an appreciation of the foreign place in which we spend our time. The need to appreciate while we are still there[124], the quality and differences of our surroundings, before these transitory elements, this fading reality, are available to us only as later reconstructions, through diary entries and photographs.

> I am out of a routine for one short year and will inevitably return to that routine. So these are really stolen moments which have to be made positive and real. Next year I will remember with difficulty (...) walking on the Chemin des Douaniers[125] with the great mass of blue sea before me and surrounded by wild flowers,' (B.D. 1993: 3.4.93).

One memory from the final period of the teacher exchange, points to being able to feel that the process of acculturation has taken place and that there is finally, a feeling of belonging to this different world of French education. It provides us with an appropriate way to bring this first chapter on 'experiencing the real', to a conclusion.

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[124] 'It's also about diminishing time, what before had seemed on occasion a drab routine (..) is now valued as a limited, finite experience,' (ibid).

[125] Custom Officers' Path, the coastal path that goes around the whole length of the Breton peninsula.

During a two day school trip to the Loire standing in the camping site with a cup of coffee as the sun came up and looking at the French teenagers around me I realised that I might well be seeing the scene from the outside, an English camper looking on a French school party , but at that moment I was part of the group, the 'prof d'anglais' an accepted feature and it was good to feel that I belonged,' (Daniels, 1997:99).

The temporary nature of the experience is valued as 'a limited, finite experience' one, which has taken us out of our normal routines and placed us in a distant, different, foreign and exotic environment. While feeling part of the French group there is nonetheless the realisation that this is a role being played, which will not be continued. There is an appearance of belonging, which will last only so long as this particular performance continues.

STAGE FOUR   **'EXPERIENCING THE REAL'**

CHAPTER NINE   'EXPERIENCING THE REAL' 2, the pupil exchange programme

> The only time when experience of another country becomes a part of the language learning course is when the teacher organises a visit or exchange, (Byram, 1997:1).

> When the purpose of foreign language teaching changed from being preparation for reading the great literature of a Culture to preparation for communication with people living in a culture, the notion of travelling to and having personal experience of another country became central to studying modern foreign languages, (ibid).

9.0   INTRODUCTION

The importance of place and the use of the term 'immersion' to represent the process of engaging with the target language and culture have been established in the last chapter. This has provided us with a method for treating those 'experiences of the real' with which this stage of the research is concerned. The account of personal development and adaptation taking place, as I worked for a year as an exchange teacher in France is here replaced by the personal development and adaptation of exchange pupils as they find themselves immersed with a French family. We will need however, to extend the theoretical concepts in order to consider their experiences, wanting in particular to apply the theory of transformation we have considered above to the pupil exchange. Trying to understand what effect the experience of staying with a French family might have on the twelve-year old English pupil and what kind of understanding they might retain from this experience.

This chapter, as pupils have for the first time an 'experience of the real', is also the place for a discussion of what this kind of opportunity means for foreign language and culture development. Our discussion of the intensive language work has already introduced a theme, which we need to explore more fully here. This is the concept of experiential learning - 'learning through doing' - (Kolb,1984). In the same way as the pupil engaged in surveillance activities at High Borrans encounters the 'real' objects that have previously been represented as text-book illustrations, so the exchange pupil finds herself surrounded by the actual items, for example in the kitchen, which previously have been encountered only in vocabulary lists or as flash-card illustrations. This is not the place to consider any further the concept of 'vocabulary dormancy', (see section 7.9), (there is a lack of sufficient data to enable us to do so), but what we can do is look more closely at the context and circumstance of language use within the 'real experience' of a pupil exchange.

The intensive language work developed, as we have seen, through a series of different learning initiatives until a final programme was developed of 'secret agent training'; there are a number of different 'experiences of the real' introduced for pupils before the regular French exchange programme with Saint Brieuc is established. This chapter will begin therefore, with a brief examination of the narrative of these developments which take place over a number of years and are concerned with providing pupils with an 'experience of the real', as they come into direct contact with the target language and culture.

Table 9.1   Contents of Chapter 9: 'Experiencing the Real'

9.0 Introduction	→ 9.1 Opportunities for Pupils to 'experience the real'	→ 9.2 Pupil Exchange Programme and narrative passage
9.3 Theoretical background to pupil exchange	→ 9.4 Nature of Exchange Experience	→ 9.5 Samantha's Diary Account of Exchange
9.6 Impact of the 'Real'	→ 9.7 Conclusion	
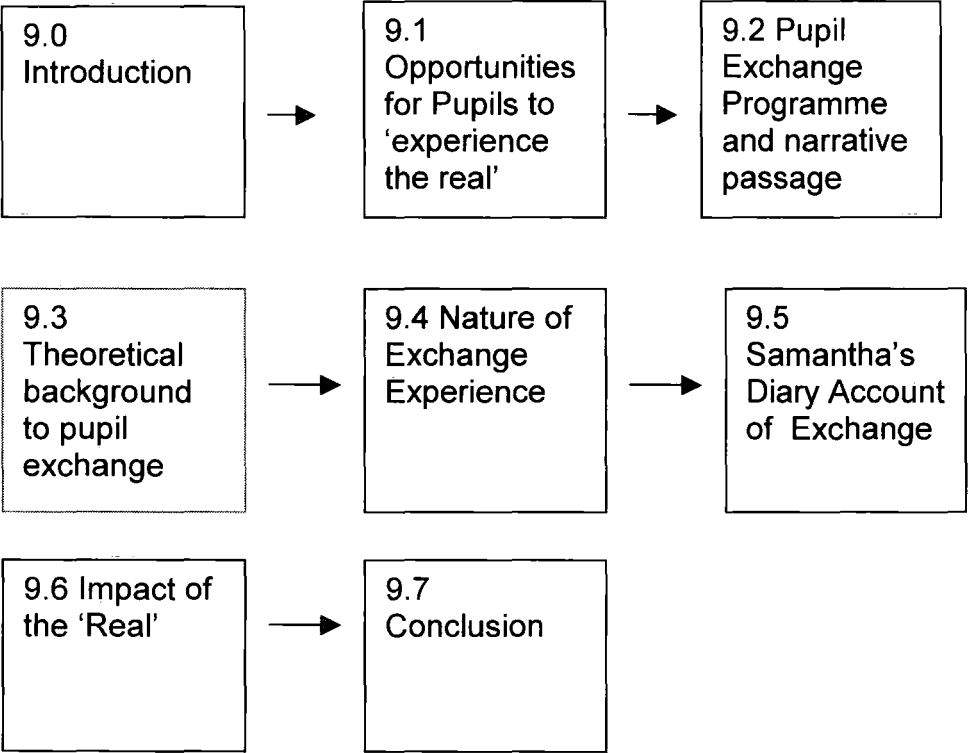
9.1 OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUPILS TO 'EXPERIENCE THE REAL'

The pupil exchange represents the most complete opportunity developed for pupils to 'experience the real'. A number of earlier encounters with the real target language and culture need to be first considered.

9.1.1 Expédition au Pays de Neuchâtel

The first of these took place in 1977 and is described by the headteacher of the time in his termly report to the school governors:

> A group of 13 Coates Children travelled by train with Mrs Harris and Mr Daniels to the Neuchâtel area of Switzerland. The object of the 'expedition' was to explore the region by walking through the Jura Hills from La Chaux-de-Fonds to the town of Neuchâtel on the lake of the same name. The party stayed overnight at hostels and managed to study something of the human and natural environment of the area,' (Headmaster's Report to School Governors, Summer Term 1977).

The visit was labelled from the start an expedition and, as in all expeditions, aimed to carry out a study of the area and to bring back information from the voyage. This came in the form of a booklet with sections in English and French, together with some illustrations and lists of the flora and fauna encountered[126]. There is therefore a cross-curricular approach to the visit.

In terms of 'experiencing the real' the expedition is very definitely therefore, an example of 'pupils going out to examine the autumn leaves rather than the teacher bringing them back into the classroom', (Plowden Report, 1967: 199). The problem however, is that it is not a question of merely leaving the classroom, for a brief out of school excursion, but the need for a much longer journey in order to encounter the target language and culture.

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[126] Pupils contributed their own accounts to this document.

The point also, needs to be made that the discovery process is also, about bringing the 'autumn leaves' back into the classroom to be viewed by others who did not participate in the discovery process. This, as we will see, is a theme of this stage of the research, the need to try and use the experience of a minority of pupils who 'experience the real', to inform the language and culture learning taking place in the middle school and, in the process, making this procedure more 'realistic'.

What we want to retain here from the expedition is the distance separating this activity from classroom learning, as we examine more closely an experience which involved hill walking through pine forests and alpine meadows. The environment was therefore exotic, different from any previous experience the pupils had encountered. My diary entry (written in French) provides us with a flavour of the nature of this experience and how it was seen at the time.

5 ième jour   Mercredi

Départ 10.30 heures direction Vue des Alpes. Le temps est nuageux, assez froid. Chemin des Crêtes beaucoup plus facile à suivre que les chemins de l'autre jour et on a pu aller assez vite pendant une demie heure en file indienne. Regardant derrière moi, cela avait l'air d'une vraie expédition, personne ne parlait et tous, havresac au dos marchaient en silence[127], (D.Ex.PdN, 1977:45)

The impression we get from these extracts is the isolation of a small, rather vulnerable group of pupils, (a long way from home), disappearing into the vastness of the pine forest in this unfamiliar foreign landscape. Also, the fleeting nature and finality of each experience, as the party approaches a particular location and then walks on away from it, never to return. This is the 'real' as a

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[127] 5th Day, Wednesday. Departure at 10.30 a.m. towards Vue des Alpes (Alpine View), The weather is cloudy, quite cold. Chemin des Crêtes (Cliff Path) much easier to follow than those of the previous day and we were able to make good progress for half an hour in single file.
Looking behind me, it looked like a real expedition, nobody spoke and everyone backpack on back, walked in silence.

transitory experience, which constantly vanishes away to the next horizon. This is immersion in new environments, different places.

There is another element evident from this diary passage, an appreciation of the authentic appearance of this 'expédition' as it walks through the pine forest in single file. This takes us back to the comments made in the Grenoble diary about the theatrical element of the observer appreciating his presence in a foreign place where he plays a particular role.

The vulnerability mentioned comes from the presence of rabies in the area we walked through with dramatic red lettered posters in the villages we visited announcing 'La Rage[128]'. On one occasion in the middle of a forest clearing, we heard a terrible howling followed by shots and then silence. I gathered the group around me and we talked through what we should do if a rabid dog or some other wild creature appeared before us. The contrast of this moment with the classroom routine of foreign language learning could not be more complete. This is the real world being encountered with all the complexities and complications this involves.

9.1.1.1 Placing the expédition into the context of the current research

The Expédition au Pays de Neuchâtel was a one off experience not to be repeated. It represents however, an interesting stage in the development of different initiatives associated with 'experiencing the real'.

This is an activity taking place outside the classroom which involves pupils on a long journey, this time by train (a journey so long that when we finally stepped off the train, everything still appeared to be in motion). The cultural and environmental distance separating the familiar world of Northumberland and Newcastle is also a geographic one, a feature of all voyages of this kind. For a school based in the north-east of England there is the whole country to be travelled and a sea crossing to manage before the real France is reached and further, as in this case if Switzerland or Italy are to be the destinations.

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[128] Rabies.

This particular voyage is also interesting because unlike most journeys of this kind it does not include travel by coach. Had we gone by coach, the English coach and driver would have remained with us for the whole trip, a comforting consistent element, in an otherwise unfamiliar environment. To travel by train and then walk, meant that the group was completely independent.

The point needs to be made that like the created language learning initiatives described earlier, this voyage is not a ready made commercial one, but is constructed with the specific aim of providing a language and cultural experience for pupils. The choice of destination, the modes of transport, the packaging of the visit as an 'expedition' are all therefore, the result of choices being made, an informed set of decisions about the way the activity should be conducted.

What impact the voyage made on the small number of pupils who took part is largely unclear. The diary entries contained in the expedition booklet are polite and rather reserved. There was a sense of achievement from an undertaking that turned out to be quite a strenuous activity in beautiful surroundings.

The voyage provides culture experience of the particular place visited and its environment, but there are few opportunities for developing spoken language skills. These are limited to some provision shopping expeditions and interviews with local inhabitants, (such as a farm visit with the chance to interview the farmer and his wife). There are however, no encounters with young people and a visit to a school, had it been possible to arrange, would have provided a beneficial additional element to the experience.

This trip takes its place therefore, with other visits abroad which involve a group travelling by coach or train to stay together a few nights, in order to visit the surrounding area and places of particular interest. Here however, there is no concession to tourist interests, such as a visit to a capital city, which adds parental and pupil support for a school trip abroad. This is probably one of the reasons why this trip was relatively poorly supported and perhaps explains why it was never repeated. It is also, true that organising a trip of this kind is more

complicated and the trip itself, potentially more hazardous, than going on a commercially organised educational voyage.

It is to the account of a commercially organised voyage we turn next.

9.1.2   French Trip: Normandy and Paris

During the period of the 1980s there is a commercially organised trip with pupils to France, staying at Houlgate in Normandy and Paris.

The voyage came as a result of a request from the headteacher and provides an example of the kind of standard school trips to France often undertaken with children of middle school years. It is very different from the Neuchâtel Expedition, in the way it is organised, (by the company running the visit) and the objectives set out for pupils. This is a packaged and processed experience of France, fitting the general needs of pupils learning French. In this way it matches the contrasts between the commercial foreign language learning programmes with their text books and taped cassette recordings and the school created language learning programmes introduced at Coates Middle School.

Pupils travel by English coach to Houlgate, visit a number of places of local interest in Normandy and have the chance to interview members of the general public in Houlgate itself. The party then travels to Paris to see the sights of the capital city, a distinctly tourist element to the visit which will provide the conventional photographs of the Eiffel Tower and other famous monuments, the 'post-card' representation which we have already discussed and which helps situate the pupil as someone who visited Paris at this time.

What made this particular trip memorable however, is what happened on the last evening of the voyage as we visit the local supermarché in the Saint Dénis area of Paris to buy final gifts and souvenirs to take home.

As we leave to walk towards our coach, parked a little way off, I am aware of a number of figures running through the bushes at the side of the street of buildings. On reaching the bus, the first of a series of stones are propelled in

our direction. The queue of children waiting to get onto the coach is being targeted and it's necessary to move them closer to the bus for their protection. Once all have safely boarded we drive hurriedly away from the area.

'Experiencing the real', is not always the utopic situation which might be anticipated and on this occasion, we met with something which is very unusual on visits of this kind, hostility in our interaction with the local population.

The final and more complete encounter with the real target language and culture, the pupil exchange programme, comes some time after these two first experiences. It also, follows and replaces the annual intensive language work taking place in the Lake District.

9.2 PUPIL EXCHANGE PROGRAMME TO SAINT BRIEUC

9.2.1 NARRATIVE PASSAGE

It's a Thursday morning in October, the first morning of the exchange and this is Saint Brieuc in Brittany, France. The children have since their arrival the previous evening, travelled by car with the strangers with whom they are to spend the next few days, been shown over the house in which they will be living and the bedroom where they will be sleeping. They will have met the different members of the family and any family pets. Neighbours or grandparents may also be there and it will have been difficult for a young English person of twelve or thirteen to work out just who these different people are. Before going to bed they will be given something to eat, perhaps pizza which conforms to what French families anticipate English children like and they will try to eat, as they find themselves the centre of attention. Although desperately tired after the journey, they try to respond to the questions they are asked. The questions will probably be in French but there may be someone in the family, an elder son or daughter or perhaps a neighbour, (brought in specially because they know some English), who will act as the go-between in the conversation, translating

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for others what the English person is saying about themselves and their family and the distant Northumberland. After supper the exchange pupil may bravely try to negotiate the shower system in the house, (trying to work out which tap represents the cold and which the hot), before trying to get to sleep in a strange bed, in a strange room which they may well share with their French partner.

This morning they will have been woken early (the French time system is an hour ahead and schools in France start an hour earlier than in England) to get to school. They will have eaten some breakfast, which may present its own challenges and then gone with their partner to the collège, possibly by a bus crowded with French pupils. Once at the college they will be surrounded by the handshaking and kissing of French pupils greeting one another at the start of another school day. They will get themselves with difficulty through this noisy crowd to find the familiar face of another English pupil and together, make their way to the prearranged meeting place, the 'salle de permanence[129].

We meet them at this point, checking off each pupil from our list to make sure all twenty-six are present. We need to talk over with them the business of the day, tell them what is going to happen and make encouraging comments about how well they have managed the journey and their first experiences of staying in a French house. As we wait for the last few stragglers to arrive, pupils are encouraged to write up their exchange diaries, describing the tumultuous last few hours, which is likely to have been a more different experience than anything they have previously encountered. As they do this, we go around the classroom to check out how each person is. How they feel, how things have been and whether they have any worries. With experience we can quickly assess the white, drawn faces, which represent those suffering from homesickness, exhaustion or are genuinely ill. Where particular concerns are raised we can check things out with our French teacher colleagues and if necessary ring the family to explain the situation and to check out on how things have been.

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[129] A classroom set aside for us.

What follows that morning is as gentle as possible. We wander down to the market in the centre of Saint Brieuc, a walk of some fifteen minutes. Wandering around the marché they have the chance to buy their first souvenirs and succumb to the temptation of 'crêpes au chocolat'. Now they are tourists, no different from any other English person wandering around the market and buying something to bring home - trying out their French to get what they want and having trouble using a different money system. It is pleasant to walk around in the autumn sunshine and to take in the sights and smells of a French market, a scene which might well have been lifted from their text books in the classroom back in Northumberland and there is a certain looking at watches and comparing this moment, to what would be happening back at school in England at this time.

9.2.2 Explanation of narrative account

This narrative passage links with the one used in the introductory chapter to this thesis, where we describe the long journey taking the pupil from their middle school in Northumberland to Brittany to take part in the exchange. We wanted to emphasise the actually physical transportation of the exchange pupil from their familiar background and routines to a different culture. Here we pick up this narrative by looking at the nature of the exchange experience pupils encounter on their first evening in France, as they become installed in the French home where they will be living over the next few days.

It is interesting to compare the last stage of this narrative account with the first section of arriving at the French family home. The peaceful morning spent visiting the market at Saint Brieuc is, as we have indicated, a typical activity for tourists visiting France; enabling them to enjoy a French experience. This is the scene pupils photograph, in this way 'turning cultural differences into postcard visions', a strategy for perceiving the 'exotic' (Strain, 2003: viii).

The contrast for us, comes from the fact that while for the conventional school trip to France, (as described above), the experience of going to a French market

is one of the most effective ways for them to encounter French society and 'experience the real'. For exchange pupils this market visit needs to be seen in a different context. It is no longer, a key aspect of the week spent abroad, but one minor element of the experience; more a chance to relax after the challenges to which they have been subject and which they will continue to be subject to during their stay in France. For exchange pupils contact with French culture requires them not just to occasionally interact with chosen aspects of French society but in some measure, to adapt to a new cultural environment as they are immersed within a family situation. However, the tourist element of the exchange experience needs also, to be considered.

What we need to look for is some kind of theoretical framework in which to place the exchange experience and this need to adapt. A way of understanding rather better what an experience of this kind involves for pupils at a deeper level. What does it mean for them to suddenly find that French culture previously kept at a safe distance on the pages of their text books is suddenly a reality around them and that they are themselves placed as actors with a key role to play within this new environment - the English exchange student hosted by a French family?

The need for pupils to adjust to the new situation, is therefore what distinguishes the exchange experience from the school visit to France. There is a necessary process of acculturation required if pupils are going to make the most of this special but difficult opportunity and also, an initial period of culture shock as they encounter a new cultural and linguistic environment. Pupils however, engaged in an exchange match the pupil on a school trip to the extent that both have travelled to the target country and experience the foreign and are immersed within this environment for a limited period of time, before returning to their normal routines. The difference comes from the context in which this 'experience of the real' takes place.

We will want to turn below to pupil diaries to see what evidence is available to us to be able to construct how pupils see the experience of the exchange. It will

also, be necessary to look at providing a theoretical explanation for the exchange process and the impact of the 'real'.

9.3   THEORETICAL BACKGROUND TO THE PUPIL EXCHANGE

By exploring the central elements of an exchange, we can characterise more clearly the nature of this experience. There is first, the contrast with classroom learning.

> In encounters with native speakers students use the foreign language in real-life contexts. In opposition to classroom learning, language fluency is more important than accuracy, (Muller-Hartmann, 2004: 211).

The emphasis here is on language acquisition, and indeed the small amount of research carried out on residence abroad for school age learners is limited to the question of language gain (Evans and Fisher, 2005) but what is of more interest to us is the general learning nature of the experience, this impact of the 'real' language and culture.

> The interpersonal encounter situation involves not only cognitive aspects such as cultural knowledge of the participating cultures but is above all an emotional situation that involves affective and behavioural factors and thus calls for an experiential approach to learning, (ibid, 212).

The language used here is instructive, the talk of 'real-life contexts' which fits in with our description of the exchange as 'experiencing the real'; then the contact with someone from another culture seen as an 'encounter' and the description of this event as an 'emotional situation'.

There is also talk of the need to 'support people in encounter situations and to minimize negative experiences such as 'culture shock', (ibid). The role of the teacher in this process is seen to be of central importance, not only as the

person who organises the exchange but also, and this is the key point, in 'the structuring of an unpredictable learning process,' (ibid).

The unpredictable nature of the exchange is one of the factors, we need to consider next, as we establish the key elements of this experience.

9.4 NATURE OF THE EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE

From personal experience of the exchange process over a number of years, it is possible to identify the key features of this particular 'experience of the real'. We are looking to establish here, the impact of the exchange experience on the pupil staying with a French family. Then, we need to link these elements with those theories, which will help us to understand the processes taking place. For this reason, the theory associated with each characteristic is listed beside it.

9.4.1 Characteristics of the Pupil Exchange

- The distance separating the target language and culture is eliminated following a journey which 'transports' the pupil to a 'real' language and culture situation, as they are immersed in a French family environment.

[performance theory, Schechner, 1988]

- The language and culture experienced by the pupil in the 'real-life' situation is no longer a translated, adapted version which has been selected and made accessible to pupils for classroom learning. The pupil therefore has to contend with different forms of language to those with which she has become familiar[130]. The language experienced therefore, doesn't represent an artificial

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[130] For example instead of the 'Comment t'appelles-tu?' they have known since the first French lessons there may be 'Tu t'appelles comment ?' and also, the use of 'argot', slang phrases.

'staged authenticity[131]' (MacCannell, 1999), but a dynamic, functioning language.

[c.f. theory of translation, writing culture, Clifford and Marcus, 1984; Sturge, 2007; tourist studies, MacCannell, 1999.]

- The culture element of the exchange becomes the key factor with language taking on a supporting role, in a reversal to what happens in the classroom. Pupils in a 'real' language situation find themselves in specific cultural contexts in which they need to communicate. While they will use French words where these are available, they will also need to use English and signs to make themselves understood and for communication to take place. [symbolic competency, Kramsch, 2009].

- The text book illustrations of France and French life, familiar from classroom learning, now materialise as actual features and identities, replacing representations of them. There are real people to communicate with and actual situations and places to encounter: the exchange partner and family, the house, the collège.

[theory of cultural representations, Hall, 1997]

- It is the unpredictable nature of the exchange, which makes the experience most challenging. The controlled environment of the classroom has been replaced by a situation where not only the language but also, the routines and behaviour of the particular environment of the French home need to be understood.

[schema theory, Bartlett, 1932; script theory, Schank and Abelson, 1977; experiential learning, Kolb, 1984]

- The pupil faced with this situation needs to adapt, adjust their behaviour to deal with the circumstances they are now

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[131] We will examine this concept in the next chapter when we examine the tourist element in the exchange.

encountering. However, the effect of this encounter with the 'real' may lead to 'culture shock'. [acculturation theory, Linton, 1960; culture shock, Furnham and Bochner, 1986; Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001

- A defining feature of the exchange experience is its limited duration. After only a few days of 'immersion' in the French family environment, the pupil returns home again, (following a further journey), to familiar environments and routines.

[performance theory, Schechner, 1988]

The theoretical elements set out above for each characteristic element of the exchange, provide a cocktail of theories associated with the processes taking place. Some of these we have already dealt with earlier in this thesis and some are present here, only because they enable us to contrast the 'real' experience of the exchange with classroom learning[132]. We need to focus therefore on those theories which are central to the exchange process.

In the first place we have Schechner's performance theory (1988), with the concept, we have seen in chapter six: 6.2.3, of 'transportation', of being taken for a short time away from a normal routine, in order to experience something different, before returning back at the end of the experience, to previous environments and routines.

Muller-Hartmann's description of the exchange experience quoted above, links the 'emotional situation' associated with 'affective and behavioural factors' with the need for 'an experiential approach to learning'. Experiential learning with its examination of the process of knowledge creation through 'transformation of experience', (Kolb, 1984) will provides us therefore, with a general theory of learning which we can apply to the exchange experience.

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[132] In one case, the cultural rather than linguistic nature of the exchange, doesn't fit readily into any specific theory.

It is however, schema theory (Bartlett, 1932) with its consideration of 'the organisation of background knowledge in long term memory', (Semino, 2004: 525) which provides us with a methodological framework for examining the exchange, in order to try and identifying the impact of this experience.

In addition to these general theories of learning, there are more specific ones linked to the encounter with another language and culture. There is first 'culture shock', the 'psychological and social disorientation caused by the confrontations with new or alien cultures,' (Furnham, 2004:165), which we have considered at a number of points in this thesis. A second theory which has been a constant element in this research is the theory of acculturation, which provides us with a model for the process of adaptation and adjustment required as a person becomes integrated into a new environment, in this case the exchange family.

Table 9.2   Theoretical Background to French Exchange

Category A   General theories of learning

1. Experiential Learning, (Kolb, 1984)
A general theory of learning in which, knowledge is
created through the transformation of experience.
Key words: knowledge, learning, experience, adaptation,
situation, environment, transformation, individual nature of
experience.

2. Schema Theory, (Bartlett, 1932)
Theory of an organisational background to
knowledge in long-term memory, and its use in
comprehension. Schema knowledge structures
contain generic information about aspects of
the world. Script theory is a component of
schema associated with a sequence of events,
(Byram, 1989)
Key words: frame, memory, experience,

Performance Theory (Schechner, 1988)
Theory initially constructed for the theatre but extended to
all forms of culture learning. Situations identified in terms
of being 'real', 'is' situations or those that simulate the
'real', 'as if' situations. A personal journey involves a
period spent away from a familiar environment,
'transportation', with the possibility of 'transformation' from
the experience'.
Key words: is/as if, transportation, transformation

Category B   Specific theories of intercultural learning

4. Cultural Shock: 'the
psychological and social
disorientation caused by
the confrontation with new
or alien cultures,'
(Furnham, 2000 165).

5. Acculturation: 'notion of
distance separating two cultural
groups and the social and
psychological changes
necessary for closer integration
to take place,'
                    Linton (1960).

6. Tertiary Socialisation: 'an extension of the notions of primary
and secondary socialisation – the process of tertiary socialisation in
which young people acquire an intercultural competence: the ability
to establish a community of meanings across cultural boundaries,'
(Byram, 2008:29)
Key words: intercultural competence, community of meanings,
across cultural boundaries.

Finally, as a way of understanding the 'expanded perspective' (Whallley, 2000), which can come from the experience of an exchange there is the theory of 'tertiary socialisation' where 'young people acquire an intercultural competence', (Byram, 2008:29). These theoretical elements together with their key characteristics are set out in Table 9.3 above.

While many of these theories are related, they come together specifically through the concept of 'experiencing the real'. This is the notion that through the 'real' encounter with the target language and culture, the pupil participating in an exchange is subject to the influence of a range of factors, as set out earlier in Table 9.2 These factors are associated with the nature of the exchange experience and contrast with the classroom foreign language and culture learning environment. These are factors which, while being linked to a number of key theories, apply to the specific context of the pupil exchange

What was originally in this thesis a convenient way to handle the different elements of the narrative, (the nature of the learning initiatives), becomes therefore, something more important: a way to 'help us to understand and organise the data of experience[133]', (McLaughlin, 1987:9): the specific experience for pupils of the impact of the 'real' as they encounter the target language and culture and 'experience the real'. This would mean that if we are able to link these theories of experience with the data we have available from the exchanges, we are in a position to propose a model of 'experiencing the real', we would want to contrast with the 'approaching the real', we have associated with classroom and intensive language learning.

While we have already dealt with performance theory, acculturation and culture shock earlier in this thesis, we have here to concentrate on the more general theories of experiential learning and schema theory. This will mean, that if we are able to link these theories of 'experience of the real' with the data we have available from the exchanges, we are in a position to propose a theory of 'experiencing the real' which we can then contrast with 'approaching the real',

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[133] McLaughlin is talking here about theory formation.

associated with classroom and intensive language learning; a way to bring together the different and defining aspects of the research.

9.4.2 Experiential Learning

> Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience, (Kolb, 1984:38).

Kolb extends this definition of experiential learning by emphasising 'several critical aspects of the learning process as viewed from the experiential perspective,' (ibid). In the first place, he is keen to stress the importance of the 'process of adaptation' for learning in contrast to content or outcomes. There is also the fact that the acquisition of knowledge is seen as a dynamic process, 'a transformation (...) being continually created and recreated,' and he contrasts this with the view of knowledge as an independent entity, divorced from the individual, which is to be acquired or transmitted.

The theory then, centres on experience, which through a process of transformation can lead to knowledge. A transformation, which suggests an industrial process where raw material (experience) is turned into a commodity (knowledge), which, unlike the raw material itself, the experience, has applications, can be applied, in the world around us.

From this perspective we can see that the experience of participating in an exchange is not in itself, necessarily a learning experience. It becomes so, only if the experience can be somehow transformed into knowledge and in this way have practical implications.

The key factor therefore, is the 'process of adaptation', which takes place. A pupil can find themselves in a variety of different situations during an exchange and while this may affect the way he or she is able to adapt to the situation, it is

the adaptation[134] itself, which is of central importance, if learning is to take place.

There are important implications here for the nature of learning as an internal process involving the adaptation, interaction of the learner with a situation in which they find themselves.

> The conception of situation and interaction are inseparable from each other. An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment, (Kolb, 1984:34).

The nature of the learning environment is an element, which has been consistently explored throughout this thesis, as a number of different initiatives have been considered. These have been contrasted with the classroom environment categorising the different learning programmes introduced, in terms of their 'approach to the real', a real language and culture environment.

> The casual observer of the traditional educational process would undoubtedly conclude that learning was primarily a personal, internal process requiring only the limited environment of books, teachers, classroom. Indeed the wider 'real world' environment at times seems to be actively rejected by education systems at all levels.
>
> (Kolb, 1984:34).

The use of the term 'real-world environment' contrasted with classroom learning, confirms for us the validity of our current distinctions. Participating in a French exchange is certainly, from this perspective, entering into a particularly rich 'real-world' environment. We need to know however, how the actual process of transformation takes place.

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[134] Adaptation is also, as we have seen closely associated with the theory of acculturation.

The process of experiential learning is seen as a: 'a four stage cycle involving four adaptive learning modes,' (Kolb, 1984:40 and 68). These are, together with a sample word for each (devised as part of a testing procedure), as follows:

- Concrete experience (feeling)
- Reflective observation (watching)
- Abstract conceptualisation (thinking)
- Active experimentation (doing)

We need to apply this concept to the exchange experience. This is set out in the following table. While we are able to represent the first two stages with confidence, it is more difficult to find evidence for 'abstract conceptualisation' and in particular the 'active experimentation' may be something which pupils will not have the opportunity to practice at this stage of their lives, (something in any case, we would not easily be able to detect).

Table 9.3   The Adaptive Learning Modes of a French Exchange (pupil)

Stage	Learning mode	Exchange experience
Stage one	Concrete experience	The experience of staying with a French family.
Stage two	Reflective observation	Writing a diary during the period of the exchange, encourages reflection on the experience as it takes place[135].
Stage three	Abstract conceptualization	Pupil has as a result of participating in an exchange, personal experience of what it is like living in a French house with a French family (see below, 'tertiary socialisation').
Stage four	Active experimentation	Pupil is able to apply this knowledge to any future language and culture experience.

There are a number of points to emphasise here. In the first place, participating in an exchange is a voluntary activity and although parents may persuade their children that this is an activity in which they should participate, the final decision

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[135] This is something we will be able to demonstrate as we consider extracts from pupil diaries below.

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is up to the individual child. This has important implications for experiential learning but more than this, is also associated with how we come to understand reality.

> Through the choice of experience, people program themselves to grasp reality, (Kolb,1984: 64).

Our concern in this thesis to consider the process of school-based language and culture learning in terms of 'approaching and experiencing the real', means that this view of the experience of reality, through experiential learning is particularly potent.

A second point to come from these considerations, concerns the individual nature of the exchange experience for each pupil. There is not one exchange reality, because for each pupil the learning experience will be a different one, as each pupil finds herself, with a different partner, staying with a different French family in a different French house. Kolb quotes Jung to emphasise this point: 'what indeed is reality if it is not a reality in ourselves, an esse in anima,' (Jung, 1923:68).

In the same way, there is not one exchange pupil, a typical person[136], but a number of very different individuals who will bring to the exchange, their own experience, personal individuality and learning skills which for Kolb represent: 'individual patterns (…) learning styles,' (Kolb, 1984:62).

Experiential learning provides us with a general theory, which is applicable to not only the specific area of a French exchange, but also to many of the other learning initiatives described in this thesis. However, if we want to understand the 'impact of the real' as represented by the pupil exchange we need to get closer to the experience. Schema theory provides the theoretical framework for this.

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[136] Characterised below as Chris Cool.

9.4.3 Schema Theory

The starting point for the theory first set out by Bartlett in 1932, is that each person has an internal model of the world, 'built of units' known as 'schemas,' (Ariba, Conklin and Hill, 1987:7):

> Our actions are addressed not only to interacting with the environment but also to updating our 'internal model of the world' (ibid).

We have therefore, a pointer to how schema theory could provide an indication of the impact of the exchange experience through the 'updating' of participants 'internal model of the world.'

> In a new situation we can recognise familiar things in new relationships and use our knowledge of those things and our perception of the relationships to guide our behaviour in that situation, (Arbib, Conklin, Hill, 1987:7).

We need to understand the nature of a schema, in order to be able to apply this theory to the situations which go to make up the exchange experience.

> A schema is a structured bundle of knowledge which consists of a set of slots and a set of relations, (Semino, 2004:525).

The rather abstract concepts associated with an individual's 'internal model' of the world (Arbib et al, 1987) can be given more practical application if we consider script theory, (Byram, 1989), an element of schema theory concerned with a sequence of events. This area has been emphasised through AI (artificial intelligence) work where the steps leading up to a final outcome have particular relevance.

Script theory, (in line with a tendency for concepts in this research to have a theatrical colouring) can be seen not so much as the actual text or script of a play, but rather the stage directions. These are the steps which provide an indication of the movements and behaviour needed, in the enclosed

environment of the stage, for the actor to perform by positioning himself correctly in order to deliver his lines.

So, while for example the following quotations from pupil diaries provide us with an indication of the impact of the 'real' on a pupil's accepted view of how things are in a house or with food, there is then the actual engagement with this situation, the manoeuvring required in order to adjust practically to this new situation; living in the house or eating the food[137].

In the following extract from a pupil's questionnaire we see the schema of 'house/home' which the student had before arriving, being extended:

> It is very big and the roof is very strange. There are no carpets on the
> floor. There are blinds. The bath, shower and toilet are downstairs,
> (Christine, 12, questionnaire answer).

What is important here is that the word 'strange' indicates an implicit comparison with the existing schema. In the next example, the pupil reveals what the normal schema is and that other schemas of 'lunch' have been developed:

> At 1.30 p.m. we had lunch chicken and chips, for pudding I had ice-
> cream. It was just like English food. That was the best meal I had had for
> ages,' (Rebecca, 12).

And in one general remark, the challenge of the 'abnormal' to the 'normal' schemas of life is made very explicit:

> BACK TO A NORMAL LIFE! (Hamish, 12, original capitals).

We will compliment these data with a more complete diary account of the exchange, seen through the eyes of one representative pupil.

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[137] We will see in chapter ten as we consider how pupils can be prepared for a possible exchange experience that a worksheet is produced to provide them with the 'script' for breakfast in France.

9.5 SAMANTHA'S DIARY

Samantha's diary provides us with a nearly complete account[138] of the exchange seen through the eyes of one twelve-year old girl for whom the visit is her first experience of travelling abroad. It has the advantage of being short and yet contains a good deal of valuable data, as we track the impact of this real experience of the foreign language and culture. As a complete account, it extends the isolated diary entries recorded above.

OUTWARD JOURNEY

Diary extract 1   13 October

On the 12th of October we set off from Coates at 11.00 o'clock at night. We drove for what seemed a very long time and we stopped twice at 2 service stations. I had about 3 hours sleep (which I don't think was enough) but it was more than some people got. I haven't felt sick at all so I am quite pleased about that. We finally arrived at the ferry and we are waiting for it to start.

FIRST ENCOUNTER

Diary extract 2   13 October,   Arriving

When we arrived everyone was waiting for us. I got off the bus and kissed Segolène[139] and her dad, I was really tired and I was very nervous even though I knew who I was staying with. They gave me a huge meal and I couldn't eat at all but they didn't mind. I went to bed at 10.00 p.m.

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[138] The extracts provide the major part of the diary but some elements, essentially the description of visits made as a group, have been omitted as providing little relevant data on the impact of the exchange.
[139] Segolène is Samantha's exchange partner.

LIVING IN A FRENCH HOUSE, HOST FAMILY

Diary extract 3   14 October, Tea and the lesson at school

Today I have had crèpes for tea they made loads of them I had 3.

They were really nice. I have been in town and bought a necklace and

a present for my mam. Some of the family came for tea. The people

who came were the nanna, granddad, two cousins one boy one girl,

godmother and the godfather and the mother, father and Segolène.

I had a glass of wine, they all watched me drink it and after they all

clapped. I think I went red.

LE COLLÈGE

At school we walked around and looked at all the buildings. Then at

9.00 a.m. we went into a PE lesson and played half-court tennis. When

we went into the lesson all the people stared at me. We got given

some raquets and ball then we got put into teams of 4 we then played

half-court tennis.

Diary extract 4   (undated) The Dinner at School

The dinner at school is not what I would call a nice dinner. It was

rice and fish (which looked like a pasty) and an apple which was very,

very, very, soft. Nobody there seemed to like it apart from a few

French people.

Diary extract 7 (undated) The Buffet[140]

The meal we had was really, really nice. It was couscous, salami,

crisps and a lot of other things but I didn't get everything. For

pudding it was apple tart and paté. We drank some orange juice out

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[140] This is an evening reception held at the collège for French families and the English exchange pupils.

of a carton and we had a drink of water, but we didn't know you had to clip the glass in. We were pouring it all over and the French people just laughed.

TOWN HALL

Diary extract 9 (undated)   The Town Hall[141]

Before I went to the town hall I went to the train station to pick up Segolène's brother because he goes to college somewhere else. I was one of the first people to get to the town hall and I had to wait for it to start. We were shown around all of the rooms and we had our photo taken for the local paper. We all go to sit in a special room where no-one apart from the council had ever sat. Then everyone got a free pen (...). We all got a drink of orange and had a few crisps then we went home.

LIVING IN FRENCH HOUSE, FRENCH PARTNER

Diary extract 10 Saturday

I had a nice lie in till 10.30 when we got up I had Kellogs corn flakes which they bought for me to eat. Then the dad took us swimming and I met up with Amy. We had to go early because Segolène had a music lesson to go to. She played the accordian and the keyboard and she played in a band. I sat and wrote my postcards with Segolène's two friends Aurelie and Christophe and we went for a walk around the school yard.

For my tea I went to a place called Quick which is just like McDonalds. I stayed up quite late playing on the Sega and playing connect 4 with Sègolene. She won nearly every time.

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[141] There is an official reception in the 'Mairie' for the exchange party and their French partners and families.

Diary extract 11 Sunday

On Sunday I had to get up at 9.00 a.m. I don't know why because we didn't set off for the beach till 12.00 a.m. …….. The last meal at the house was pizza then the mother cooked a chicken to go with it. I walked around the collège and it started to rain so we ran home. I didn't want to go home the next day.

RETURN JOURNEY

Diary extract 12   In the Morning

I got to the school earlier so I could say bye to people but I don't think I had long enough. We had about half an hour to say goodbye then we had to go. I took some photos just in time ….

Diary extract 14   Arriving Home

We were all excited about seeing everyone but we still wanted to be in France. When I got off the bus I wasn't tired, but the next morning all that changed but I still managed to go to school….. I was picked up by my mam. Everyone from school looked really different. Amy and me laughed at some people.

I would like to go back.

THE END

Words I learnt!

Bonbons	= sweets
Bon	= good
Belle-mère	= godmother

Beau-père	= godfather
Fatigate (Fatiguant)	= tired
Poubelle	= bin
Vernis a gongles,	
(Vernis à ongles)	= nail varnish
Doux	= soft
Poussin	= chick
Vite	= fast/quick
Bon voyage	= good journey
Vin	= wine
Crèpes	= pancakes

9.5.1 Culture and Language Elements in Samantha's Diary

While we will consider below, the general elements recorded in Samantha's account with the other diary extracts, we first consider here the language elements.

We have suggested that one of the distinguishing features of the exchange as a 'real' experience is that culture is now the central element and that language in this natural situation, is linked to the cultural context. This is to be expected from a 'real' experience of this kind, in contrast to classroom learning where, although there are topics or themes, the need to teach grammar and structures means that language items are often isolated, disembodied from a specific cultural context[142].

We need to investigate now therefore, whether we can find any specific support for this suggestion in the evidence available to us from Samantha's diary.

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[142] See Kramsch (1993: 177) on the classroom as an: 'artificial and standardized environment' as discussed in Chapter eleven, section 11.5.

One of the hidden elements, (and we will see below that there are others), in the pupil diaries is knowing whether the communication described is taking place in French or English. A factor here, is whether the pupil's partner speaks good English and if any of the host family do. Where the post exchange questionnaire survives, we have information on this area. In Samantha's case her older exchange partner, (Segolène, 15) is listed as someone who spoke English, together with the brother and an uncle, but not the mum or dad. What we are likely to have therefore, is much of the contact between the two partners taking place in English.

Samantha in the same questionnaire[143] feels however, that her French has improved 'quite a lot' and that she spoke most French at the weekend with her partner

It is a question therefore, of managing to communicate successfully. This will mean probably often using English, but for Samantha to draw on her limited French skills to communicate with her partner and others, when this was required. As we turn to the list of words with which Samantha concludes her diary, we are interested to see whether these provide any indication of the cultural context in which the communication takes place. We have placed the words therefore in the exchange phases; phases designed to show the areas where pupils' perspectives are likely to be challenged by the nature of the experience. This provides us with an appropriate method for handling this language data.

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[143] Given shortly after the exchange on return to England.

Table 9.4   Categories of Words Learnt, as recorded in diary extract

Schema Categories	words	comment
Journey	Fatiguant (fatigue ?), Bon voyage.	Perhaps the first and last words retained, referring to feeling tired after the long journey on arrival at the French house and the final words of good will as the exchange pupil heads back home.
Living in a French, house 1, (food and drink).	Bonbons, poussin, vin, crèpes	This reflects the importance of food and meal times for the exchange pupil as they encounter a range of differences.
Living in a French house, 2 (home environment).	bon, doux, vite, poubelle.	Words used in the home acquired through being regularly encountered ?
Host family	belle-mère, beau-père,	These words relate to diary extract 3, the family meal.
French partner	vernis à ongles	An indication perhaps of the good relationship established with exchange partner?

While the number of words recorded is limited, they do suggest a certain level of integration into French family life, as this particular exchange pupil adjusts to her new circumstances. Taken together with the daily diary extracts, they help us to get a picture of what is happening and indicate the context in which the words may have been acquired.

One word retained by Samantha is 'vin' and this is linked to a particularly interesting cultural context which we need to examine in more detail. Wine is closely associated with France and what we have here, is the exchange pupil performing in a rather formal setting - sitting around the table at a meal with an audience of extended members of the family (assorted grandparents, godparents, cousins; nine people in all). The act for the exchange pupil of drinking a glass of wine in these circumstances represents therefore, something special and rather unusual. Perhaps the French family here is consciously making a point of the cultural implications of this act, and in this way, it could be seen as almost a right of passage into the French way of doing things, (or in another reading perhaps how things are done in this
particular family). What we have here then is an example of 'tertiary socialisation' as the family introduces the pupil to new norms of behaviour.

There is however, another element here; by having the glass of wine Samantha is doing something she might not be allowed to do at home. Drinking the wine she is showing a willingness to participate and it is significant that everyone then, applauds. This shows that this is a public act watched by everyone there, and who by applauding, recognise the successful completion of this act. It is not surprising in these circumstances that Samantha goes red with embarrassment.

While Samantha adjusts her behaviour to comply with what is expected of her in this situation, does this mean that her schema for wine and wine drinking is changed by this moment[144]? Does this incident mean that Samantha will adjust her schema and its connotations? Instead of perhaps considering wine as a forbidden element, will she now associate the act of drinking wine with an acceptable part of French family life?

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[144] There may be other 'wine incidents' during her time in France.

If for this particular pupil, the exchange experience is a very positive one, which Samantha would want to repeat, there are other children for whom the culture shock of traveling to France and staying with a French family is a much more difficult and traumatic experience. In such situations the initial concerns, insecurity and culture shock do not go away. Such pupils are likely to find adjusting to French family life very difficult; they will speak very little if any French, spend long periods talking to home on the telephone and often refuse to eat any food because it seems different. For example, it is clear from the following extract that the pupil was resisting adjustment:

> For tea we had soup, then Claudine put a steaming pot on the table and inside it, it had rice with lobsters on the top! I didn't have any but I still had to watch everyone eat them, (Nichola, 11).

On the other hand this pupil is willing to extend the schema of what is 'normal' lunch and even finds a new term for the new schema, even though there is still resistance to the experience.

> My lunch (which I did not like) was sort of fish-pie with rice (it was Russian). I called it 'pain au poisson', (Kathryn, 11).

We examine later, how a concern to address problems associated with an exchange programme, with which we were keen to continue, led to the production of a leaflet to help pupils with the experience.

We need to return now, to one final theoretical element to help us evaluate whether there are likely to be any lasting effects from the 'experience of the real' which the exchange represents.

9.6 IMPACT OF THE REAL

What can we establish from this data? While no two situations are the same, we are beginning through the comparison of our data to the theoretical elements we have identified, to be able to bring the exchange into focus as a learning experience.

The exchange experience for pupils is an encounter with a different environment and people. Just how different this environment is, is not always clear. Nichola for example considers this matter:

> On the way back on the bus, I was thinking of some of the differences between France and England but there are not that many. All that I could think of is their cars are left-hand driven. They drive on the other side of the road and they have two sinks in the kitchen and bathroom, one for washing and one for rinsing, (Nichola, 11).

However, this identification of differences is limited and misses many key elements likely to impact on the participant in an exchange[145]. There are certainly many differences but also difficulties and more positive points of interaction, which may not surface in the diary entries. What we seem to have therefore, is the hint that more substantial elements may be hidden. There is for example the question of 'culture shock'. We would anticipate in a short period abroad of this kind, this would represent a significant factor, probably appearing as homesickness, but it is one which as we have indicated, rarely appears in the diaries[146].

A further primary source which we can draw on to help us bring to the surface some of these underlying elements in an exchange, comes from an interview

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[145] This is the same Nichola who was faced with a dish of lobsters and rice

[146] We have to remember here that pupils know the diaries are going to be read by teachers and perhaps feel for this reason that they don't want to concentrate on too many negative elements in the experience. One girl apologised to me some time after the exchange for not liking the experience, (which she hadn't made clear at the time), put it down to all that cheese they ate in the French house.

conducted with one pupil Nikki, (12), shortly after the exchange[147]. This was an undated recorded interview, only one of its kind. Nikki is a pupil who in common with a number each year, went on the exchange two years' running. She is able therefore to reflect on these two experiences and compare them, also, to compare the situation in the French house with her particular situation at home in Northumberland.

Nikki talks first about how the second exchange compared with the first and provides us with an indication of the difficulties of the experience for someone who had hardly been away from home before.

> Well, this time I was more like prepared because I um knew what was coming and so I wasn't that homesick and I, I took more things to occupy me as well. And um all my sort of (...) I knew what was coming and could help other people and um I was just like more prepared this time than what I was last time, (Nikki, interview post exchange).

Looking more closely at this text, the theme of homesickness is how the 'culture shock' manifests itself with the emphasis on the problem of dealing with the unknown, of not being able to anticipate what things were going to be like. This links to 'culture shock': 'psychological and social disorientation caused by confrontation with a new or alien culture,' (Furnham, 2004:165).

The phrase, 'I wasn't that homesick', point to the fact that she was homesick but less so than previously and suggests that this is likely to be a common but largely unacknowledged feature of the exchange experience. This is also clear, from the remark she makes about being able to help others with this problem.

It is the difference from familiar routines, 'lack of familiarity with both the physical setting', the layout of the house they are living in, as well as 'the social environment (etiquette, ritual),' (Furnham, 2004:165), which have an impact

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[147] See Appendix A9.3 for the full text of this interview.

Asked what was most different about the house she was staying in from what she was used to, Nikki reveals a further area, which is important for us:

> And like they always had meals together, whereas we never make our meals at home and um like they always do things together and they don't sort of people ... that just go up to their room and read. They always like do things together and watch tv. (Nikki, interview post exchange).

Although it is the food which surfaces as a difference remarked on by pupils and challenging their schemas of the 'normal', as we saw above, what we have here, is something even more different. If for some children there is not the regular experience of eating as a family, then sitting down at a French table and being served a number of courses is going to be a major difference and something, which will have a particular impact on the exchange pupil. Again this is an indication of a challenge to the normal schema of 'mealtime'.

We have uncovered therefore two areas which are important for our understanding of the exchange but which are not apparent from either the diaries or the questionnaire answers. This means that while the diaries provide an important primary source for our understanding of the exchange, we have to be aware of other key elements that characterise this experience.

9.6.1 Profile of the French Exchange Experience
We are now in a position to provide a profile of the exchange and assess the impact of this 'experience of the real' on the pupils who participate, linking the different activities to the theoretical elements we have established.

Pupils going to France feel a sense of excitement but are also nervous as they embark on the journey. The report of conversations about France taking place on the coach travelling through the night, point to the sense of anticipation they have of the experience in which they are engaged. Sarah's account of trying to get to sleep clutching her 'floppy duck' from home, (as the coach takes her further and further from this familiar world), is particularly evocative of the separation taking place.

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As soon as the bus started I knew I couldn't sleep. There were people talking and 'Game Geers' with their music on. I hugged my floppy duck tightly and eventually I fell asleep. I repeated this a number of times, (Sarah, 11).

The journey itself, with the departure from school at night already makes this a different experience to anything they have done before. This is the process of 'transportation' as described in performance theory, taking a person away from their familiar surroundings and routines in order to provide them with a different experience:

We set off at 11.00 p.m. today from Ponteland, I was very excited because it would be the first time I would go out of this country, (Sarah, 11).

The coach journey through England by night is followed by the long ferry crossing, (often in rough seas), before France is reached:

The ferry was swaying to and fro and you couldn't stand still. After a long journey we arrived in France, (Nichola, 11).

The outward journey is not an insignificant part of the exchange experience. It marks the necessary transition from one familiar environment to the new, unfamiliar one. The distance both physical and psychological which has to be crossed before the new environment is reached.

Tired after the long journey they are met by their host families and partner and travel by car to the French house where they will be staying for the next few days. Although not a feature of the diary accounts, we have evidence to suggest that pupils are likely to feel homesick in the conventional sense of missing their home and family, but this will be compounded by the strangeness of their new surroundings, the language and culture in which they are now

immersed. The 'psychological and social disorientation caused by this confrontation with a new culture,' (Furnham, 2004:165) means that although, this is clearly not a term pupils would use, participants in an exchange particularly in the first stages (and for some right through the experience) will feel 'culture shock'.

The differences the pupils encounter are associated first, with the nature of the house they are living in – shutters, no carpets, perhaps a different general design to the house[148]. More important however, are the routines or scripts (Schank and Abelson, 1977) of the family with whom they are staying, things taken for granted in the French house may be very different to what pupils are used to in Northumberland. The meal time routines are one area we have uncovered, where the importance of food for the French and the time spent over a meal may be very different, particularly for the pupil who at home is not used to eating with other members of her family. While there is familiar food, some of which is just like in England, there are also dishes, particularly fish ones which are very different. Nichola's graphic description already quoted ('Claudine put a steaming pot on the table ...', see page 338) of the large dish being placed on the table and the lid being removed to reveal rice with lobsters, is a good example of the sense of horror with which some of the more strange elements of French food are greeted; again we see resistance to the experience but a challenge to the schema of 'tea'.

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[148] We need to be careful not to confuse here, those differences which are not associated with the French culture pupils now find themselves immersed in, such as the size of the house compared with where they live at home.

The process of acculturation, of adapting to the new environment of the French house is probably best represented as the need to adjust their behaviour to conform to the new circumstances. The opportunity to learn from the new experience will be associated with the pupils' ability to engage with the new environment and Bennett's notion of 'resistance' (Bennett, M. and Hammer(1998) see section 8.73).

Pupils' success in engaging, acculturating with the new environment is likely to depend on the relationship they establish with the host family and in particular their partner. Reading Samantha's diary is to find an account where there appears to be a particularly good relationship[149], Samantha is able to adjust to the new situation and slip easily into the new routines, as she spends time with her partner and her partner's friends. Nichola too, shows an engagement with her partner as she teaches her a dance and Hamish in a similar way, brings some of his experience into the French home by teaching his partner's younger sister some English words. Hamish also provides a further example of someone who adjusts well to the new circumstances, as he spends an evening with his partner:

> I taught Audrey the dance to Barbie Girl and Spice Up Your Life (which took some doing!), (Nichola, 11).

> Jeremy's sister Adline is 7 year's old and I am teaching her basic English. I have taught pen and pencil in English already, (Hamish, 12).

As we try to construct the nature of the exchange and establish the theoretical basis for this experience, it becomes evident that we are dependant on isolating a number of incidents from the diary accounts which point to the differences pupils encounter and the adjustments which take place. From the experiential learning perspective we have underlined the importance of the nature of the engagement and acculturation taking place, as in the examples recorded above

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[149] Samantha in the post exchange questionnaire describes getting on with her partner 'very well'.

where pupils are able to adjust their behaviour to fit in with different routines and ways of doing things.

We have also shown the value of schema theory as a way of understanding the exchange process. Examples so far have shown how pupils' schemas are challenged but the following example also, shows how pupils may fail, at least temporarily, to modify their schema. This is Sarah's account of the first morning as she goes down for breakfast. It provides an example of how the availability of a script, the stage directions, of how to handle the particular experience of breakfast in a French house would have been useful to her.

> As I went downstairs, I wondered what the school would be like. I ate my breakfast. I said that I would not like some cereal, so I was given a bowl of milk without the cereal! I tried to drink it with a spoon, but it took too long and we had to catch the bus, (Sarah, 11).

What she has failed to realise, is that the bowl in France has a dual purpose, it can be used for cereal as in England but also, in the absence of cups, serves as a drinking vessel in its own right. It is probable that later her schema of breakfast would extend to include a new concept of 'bowl' to include its role as a cup in this different culture.

This I think, is an example of the kind of process which will take place during an exchange. The 'bowl' incident may represent one rather minor element of confusion but when it is taken with other differences in the routine and environment in which pupils are immersed, the force of these experiences come together to form a script, for pupils to follow as they adjust to the French way of doing things. It is the combination of the different elements we have identified in our theory of the exchange, which results in the impact of the experience.

The question then is, as they travel the long journey back home to a familiar environment and routines, what lasting impact will the experience have? Performance theory talks about 'transportation' associated with a limited experience and 'transformation' when this experience is more prolonged. In its

turn experiential learning uses the term 'transformation' to represent the point where experience is turned into knowledge. In this instance, while we would anticipate and have evidence for learning taking place[150], the period of the exchange is too short for any wider 'transformation' to take place. However, through schema and script theory the particular interaction with the French environment and the whole world of differences, which this has involved, could be reasonably expected to lead pupils to update their 'internal model of the world,' (Arbib, Conklin, Hill, 1987:7).

What the experience of the French exchange does therefore, is something only partially covered by the theories which address learning through doing or the organisation of background knowledge in long term memory. The theory which perhaps best sums up the process taking place is 'tertiary socialisation' (Byram, 2008), where young people acquire an intercultural competence. However, what differentiates this theory as with the others we have considered, is the way in which the 'experience of the real' which the exchange represents, brings pupils into direct contact with the foreign language and culture, instead of as a 'translated' element in classroom learning.

The argument is that it is the impact of this 'real experience' with all that it involves in terms of 'culture shock' and the need to adjust, which is likely to lead to a change in perspective for pupils, ('perspective transformation' , Whalley, 1997). Indeed the presence of 'culture shock' is an indication of the power of this experience and the implication it has for the differences the pupils encounter. We come back to the impact of a particular environment and the point made by Plowden that 'the great majority of primary children can only learn efficiently from concrete situations as *lived* or described,' with learning taking place through a continuous process of interaction between the learner and his environment,' (Plowden, 1967:192, the emphasis is mine).

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[150] One concrete example of learning comes from the interview with Nikki, where she explains how from the experience of the first exchange she had learnt the importance of being ready for what was to take place and to bring with her the second year, activities she could do to help her deal with the problem of feeling homesick, (culture shock).

As a student in Florence in 1968, considering the purposes behind the process of foreign language teaching, I saw an 'appreciation of differences' as a key objective. Taking pupils out of the classroom to experience for themselves a different language and culture is certainly, of all the initiatives described in this thesis, the one which most closely achieves this objective.

Illustration 9.1 Dynamics of Pupil Exchange, the 'Experience of the Real'.

At the end of the exchange, the pupil returns back to a familiar environment and routines.

my house

Pupil 'temporarily leaves the niche of home life with its narrow view of the world', (Strain, 2003:27).

Journey, 'transporation', (Schechner, 1967), to a new language and cultural environment.

Exchange pupil 'experiences the real' foreign language and culture during the period of immersion staying with a French family.

They need to adapt to this new environment as the pupil is 'taken beyond a focus on their own society,' (Byram, 2008:29); learning through 'perspective transformation', (Whalley, 1997:111).

ma maison

9.7 CONCLUSION

Our investigation into the pupil exchange programme has provided us with an indication of the nature of this experience for the individual pupil and how the process of immersion into a French family can be understood in theoretical terms. We have suggested that the concept of 'experiencing the real' represents an implicit theory, which allows us to focus on the impact of the process of immersion in a foreign culture and language during the exchange.

This will enable us in the final concluding chapter to compare 'approaching the real' represented by classroom and intensive language work with the notion of 'experiencing the real' we have discussed in this chapter.

The pupil exchange programme, which ran for a period of ten years, represents the most complete opportunity for Coates Middle School pupils to 'experience of the real'. The question next is how the experience of a small number of participating pupils can be used to inform those who do not have this opportunity in order to drive forward a programme of intercultural learning in the school.

We need first however, to look at the general situation of language and culture teaching at Coates Middle School during the period of the 1990s and into 2001. The impact of the French exchange on Coates Middle School and how the experience of the exchange influenced the introduction of a number of new learning initiatives.

Approaching the Real

STAGE FOUR   'EXPERIENCING THE REAL'

CHAPTER TEN   FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE LEARNING AT
COATES MIDDLE SCHOOL 1991 - 2001

10.0   INTRODUCTION

The 'experience of the real' represented by the French exchange is not only about the journey made by a relatively small group of pupils each year to France. It is also, about trying to extend the impact of this experience throughout the school as a whole. This direct experience of France provides the opportunity for using the exchange as a learning resource for developing particularly, the cultural aspect[151] of foreign language learning. Instead of having to rely on the second-hand, text-book representation of France and the French we have the experience of pupils who stayed with a French family to draw on. The exchange importantly also, provides a focus for French learning at Coates Middle School, as we will see, a tangible target for learning, associated with the demands of this particular experience. This chapter looks at the impact of the exchange on the school as a whole and how it proved possible to introduce an element of culture learning directly related to the experience of pupils staying with a French family.

In addition, the drive to make foreign language learning a more practical exercise continued with the introduction over this period of a number of new language learning initiatives, a leaflet produced at Coates Middle School, dated 2000-2001 and entitled *'Foreign Language and Culture Learning'*, provides a useful indication of the range of different language and culture learning initiatives in place and how they were seen at the time. The introduction to this leaflet, circulated to parents, is set out below:

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[151] We have been able to make clear in the previous chapter on the exchange how the cultural element became the key element of this 'experience of the real', with language as a subsidiary element. It would be important therefore to acknowledge this factor by focusing on the cultural elements in the exchange as a way to best prepare pupils for the experience.

Foreign Language and Culture Learning

Over the last few years, new resources for language teaching have been developed with a view to improving spoken and written language skills. In addition, a programme of cultural learning has been introduced to help pupils to understand better and appreciate those cultural differences, 'rich points', which help distinguish one culture from another. For the past seven years pupils have been able to participate in a French exchange programme with Collège Jean-Macé in Saint Brieuc in Brittany. Recently, our contacts with European schools have been strengthened with our participation in the Comenius project and the establishment of links with schools in Italy, Portugal, Germany and Romania. This represents a very exciting initiative which we feel will provide our pupils with the opportunity to extend their horizons and experience[152],'

(Daniels, Foreign Language and Culture Learning, 2000-2001:1)

The same document sets out a list of the objectives for language and culture learning at Coates Middle School'. These are to: 'build up a knowledge of active vocabulary and structures; feel confident of communicating in French; be able to understand basic French as spoken by a native speaker; develop an understanding and appreciation of other cultures, valuing the differences as 'rich points'. Finally, and emphasised through the use of a larger text size: 'be able to communicate readily and integrate fully with a French family during an exchange trip to France', (Daniels, Foreign Language and Culture Learning, 2000-2001:3).

It becomes clear therefore, that the French Exchange is being used as the criteria by which foreign language skills and also, culture skills are to be assessed. What we have therefore is a 'task-based' approach (Page, 2004)[153],

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[152] The Comenius work is represented essentially by an annual exchange to San Benedetto del Tronto in Italy which replaced the Brittany exchange from 2001. For the purposes of this research it has been decided to concentrate on the earlier French exchange in this research.
[153] Covered in chapter three.

focused on the specific 'experience of the real' which annually involves a group of Coates Middle School pupils participating in the exchange programme.

> The solution to the specific problem of how to incorporate the exchange into classroom learning and make this experience relevant to every pupil is to use the skills needed by exchange pupils as a target for the language and culture development of all pupils during the middle school period. While foreign language learning is an accepted element in middle school learning, the same cannot be said of culture learning, ('No Snails for Breakfast', 2000:6[154]).

The period from 1991 until 2001 can be seen as the time for the introduction of a whole range of new learning programmes and initiatives at Coates Middle School. A combination of factors led to this development. In the first place, as we have seen, the work on intensive language learning and the study of language acquisition, as part of my MA thesis, led to the theory of 'vocabulary dormancy' and a concern to try to introduce into the school 'practical active language work'. Then, there was the extension of the intensive language work into a 'real' language environment, with the introduction of the French exchange programme with Saint Brieuc in Brittany, beginning with experience of working as an exchange teacher in France in 1992. The exchange programme itself emphasised not only the importance of developing practical language skills but also, of providing some kind of programme of culture learning as part of the foreign language learning package provided by the school.

What we can do as we plot this process, is to identify two strands to the developments. First, there are those developments linked to the intensive language work at High Borrans and the 'approach to the real', which this represents. Into this category come the 'Bonbons Magiques' readers. Then there are developments more closely associated with pupils 'experience of the real' and the French exchange programme, such as the **Speak-Kit!** material: 'practical French Skills – language and culture kit for surviving in France'. The development which, fits less easily into this categorisation, is the 'Lusaka,

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[154] See the following page for an explantion of this document.

invented language work', but this can be seen as a way to make language learning more 'real' by involving pupils in the construction process of a language, albeit an invented one, and providing them in this way with an awareness of how language functions.

The paper, 'No Snails for Breakfast', given to the International Association for Language and Intercultural Communication (IALIC) Conference in December 2000, (written up but never published) demonstrates how the different learning programmes fitted into the concern to develop practical language skills and culture learning, themselves directly associated both with the theory of 'vocabulary dormancy' and experience of the exchange. In particular, the paper addresses the problem of how the practical experience of language and culture learning coming from 'experiencing the real', during the French exchange programme, could be introduced into classroom learning back in Northumberland.

This document together with the Coates Middle School Foreign Language and Culture Learning leaflet quoted above, provide the primary sources for the reconstruction of this period of the narrative.

Table 10.1 provides an overview of the different learning initiatives introduced at Coates Middle School during the ten-year period from 1991 – 2001 and places them within the context of the personal developments taking place over this time.

This programme of learning initiatives ends abruptly in September 2001, as I took on new responsibilities at Coates Middle School as headteacher. This meant that while there was still involvement in language teaching, the time available for developing new programmes of learning was severely curtailed.

Table 10.1   Contents of chapter Ten

| 10.0 Introduction | → | 10.1 Narrative Passage and explanation | → | 10.2 Impact of the Exchange on Coates Middle School | → |

| 10.3 **Speak-Kit!** | → | 10.4 'Chris Cool', the perfect exchange pupil. | → | 10.5 'Bonbons Magiques' | → |

| 10. 6 'Lusaka', invented language work | → | 10.7 Conclusion |
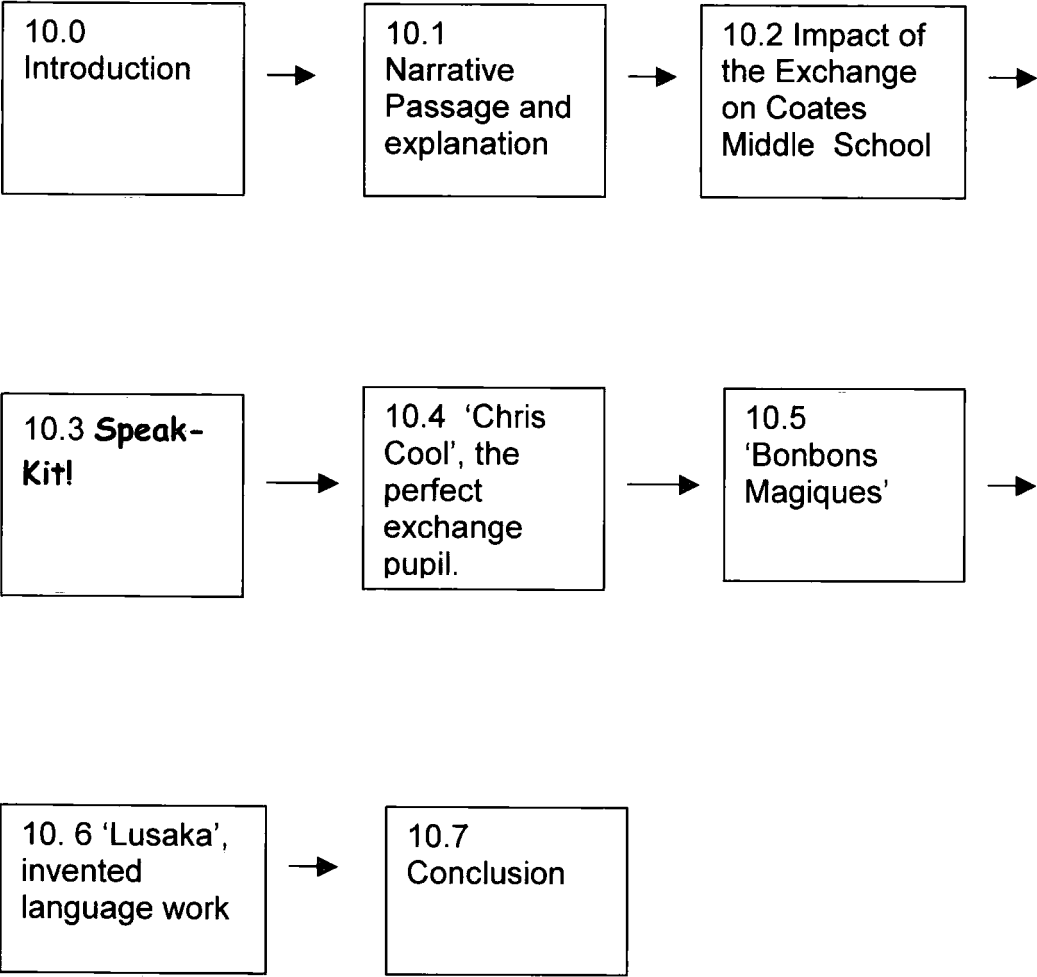
Table 10.2 Language and Culture Learning Initiatives at Coates Middle School and Personal Development 1991-2001.

MA research 1989-1992 on language acquisition during intensive language work leads to theory of 'vocabulary dormancy'.

'**Mission Secrète**, intensive language work, High Borrans, 1987-1991

Teacher Exchange of 1992/3, **Pupil Exchanges** from 1992 with collège at Saint Brieuc, Brittany, France.

Experience of exchange identifies:

- Importance of practical active language skills
- Importance of culture element in foreign language learning.

'**Allez faire un échange!**' pupil booklet for exchange participants

Introduction of new language and culture learning initiatives at Coates Middle School 1991-2001

- **Lusaka,** invented language work for pupils in Years 5,6.

- **Bonbons Magiques** Readers with associated drama and intensive language work for pupils in Years 5,6 (9,10 year olds).

- **Speak Kit!** Practical French Skills, language and culture skills for surviving in France

- **Comment Parler Francais!,** Instructions for Speaking .. and writing French, grammar booklets based on illustrations from readers.

10.1 NARRATIVE PASSAGE

The daily school assembly is a chance for the whole of Coates Middle School to gather together in the school hall each day. This March morning, as happens once every year, the occasion is shared by pupils from Collège Jean-Macé in Saint Brieuc , staying for the week with local families as they visit Northumberland for the exchange.

The familiar routine of the assembly is maintained, a few words of greeting, a hymn (in which pupils need encouragement to engage), a short address from whoever is taking the assembly, prayers and then finally, the day's notices.

The presence of the French party massed to one side of the hall is the focus for a good deal of attention, an unusual presence in this familiar school environment. And the French teachers keen to capture this strange daily ritual film the assembly to show later to pupils back in Saint Brieuc.

After assembly the French pupils accompany their partners to lessons and there is the chance for Coates pupils to come into contact with a French person. Perhaps, to get to know one of them during the later break-time, as surrounded by a group of interested English pupils, they are the centre of attention.

10.1.1 Narrative Passage Explanation

We are looking in this chapter at the influence of the French exchange and the need to try and extend the impact of this 'experience of the real' to the majority of pupils who do not have the opportunity to participate in the voyage to France. It is important not to overlook however, the visit of the French pupils to Northumberland and to point to the fact that for most pupils this is the first occasion they come into contact with a French person of their own age.

The nature of the visit for the French party is very similar to what happens to the English group in France and so, it is only for one day that there is time spent in

school. The rest of the week, (in a matching process to what happens to English pupils in France), will involve trips to places of local interest, the tourist sites, such as Durham Cathedral and the Roman wall (Hadrian's Wall).

The narrative passage points to this impact of the French group as they spend a day in school. In the first place, the French students appear different, they have no uniforms and therefore contrast with the English pupils in their traditional school uniforms. It is impossible to ignore them, a different element in the daily routine of the school where the appearance of a group of pupils from another school (and another country), sharing the day's activities, is uniquely associated with the French exchange. The French student becomes an object of curiosity and it is for this reason that they are the centre of interest wherever they go throughout the day, just as their English partners have been on their previous visit to France.

The fact that the French teachers are keen to film the assembly, to record this event, points to the fact that there is no equivalent activity in France. It draws attention to the differences in the organisation of the school day in each country and is an experience likely to feature in the exchange diary of a French student.

We turn next, to examine the pupil exchange from the perspective of a tourist experience, to enable us to place the activity within the context of the school curriculum at Coates Middle School.

10.2 IMPACT OF EXCHANGE ON COATES MIDDLE SCHOOL

We have looked at tourist studies with their consideration of the person travelling abroad and experiencing the differences around him in chapter eight. Looking at the tourist element in an exchange is a different way to look at this experience and an appropriate way to begin our discussion of the impact of the exchange on Coates Middle School.

Over a period of more than ten years there is an annual exchange taking place with Collège Jean-Macé in Saint Brieuc, Brittany. The process for this activity follows a pattern which we have been able to reveal through pupil diary entries.

What makes the exchange experience different from the tourist experience, is the very fact that by staying in the French home, the participant has a privileged view of the 'back room', (MacCannell, 1967:92), the routine of everyday life in a French family. The point being made by MacCannell is the authentic back regions, where the routine of everyday life is being conducted are not readily available for tourist scrutiny. The tourist is presented with the 'staged authenticity', (ibid), of the front areas where often there is a specially constructed version of reality, a performance, put together especially for the tourist.

If we combine the nature of the visit and with the fact that this is an annual excursion, then we can begin to view the exchange as a kind of 'pilgrimage'. MacCannell talks about 'sight (sic) sacralization' where there are different stages to the process. Essentially, this means the identification of a particular location, from among many possibilities, as the place to be visited; the organisation of the visit to this place based on its position and the journey necessary to get there, (coach and ferry journey) and how the visit can be promoted in terms of encouraging pupils to participate. In terms of this final element the video made each year of the exchange and shown to the whole school, is a particularly important factor in showing pupils what the visit involves and encouraging others to participate.

MacConnell talks about 'the mechanical reproduction phase of sacralisation' (by which he means the promotion of the site as a place to be visited through its representation on photographs and videos), 'that is most responsible for setting the tourist in motion on his journey to find the true object. And he is not disappointed. Alongside the copies of it, it has to be The Real Thing,' (MacConnell, 1976:45).

The argument we are making here, is that through the repeated annual exchange visits, Saint Brieuc as a place and the Collège Jean-Macé within the town, become established as the representation of the 'real' France for Coates Middle School. This is not only for the exchange pupil who actually experiences this 'real' French place, but also, in a necessarily diluted form, for the school as a whole. In particular, the annual video's illustration of Coates Middle School pupils immersed in the 'real experience' of the French exchange encourages pupils to participate in this experience. Also, and more importantly it provides the link between a particular place in France and the school. Seeing someone, they know, a fellow pupil, in Saint Brieuc helps reduce the distant France, makes France materialise as a 'real' place in a way that text-book illustrations are unable to do. This is a process reinforced and confirmed by the annual arrival of a large party of French pupils from Saint Brieuc to stay with Coates Middle School pupils every March.

10.3   SPEAK-KIT!
Practical French skills, language and culture kit for surviving in France.

As Coates pupils visited Saint Brieuc, it became important to try to use the data and information provided from their stay in France, to improve the experience for pupils participating in future exchanges. The aim was to try and prepare pupils for the experience, by providing them with an indication of what to expect from their time spent staying with a French family.

The production of a pupil guide, **'Allez faire un échange!'**[155] is directly concerned with the preparation of pupils prior to the exchange as the introduction makes clear:

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[155] see appendix, A9.1.

This booklet is intended to help you prepare for the French exchange by providing you with the information on the kind of experiences you can expect and with some of the language material you will find necessary.

('Allez faire un échange!', p.2)

The booklet is 'set out in headings according to the situations you are likely to find yourself in,' (ibid) and these headings cover: the arrival, at home, eating, and trips and visits. For each of these sections there is a list of key elements of vocabulary and essential phrases, together with useful tips and appropriate, cartoon illustrations.

The final paragraph of the introduction section sets out why staying with a French family is considered a special experience:

Staying with a French family provides a very special opportunity to see what things are like in another country and is something you will never experience as a tourist however many times you visited France[156], (ibid).

I had already been able to identify from our examination of pupil diaries that food and eating are key areas when staying with a French family and one associated, with differences to how things are likely to be done in England. The booklet therefore, covers this area in some detail. Under a drawing of a plate containing a live snail and a few lettuce leaves, there is the following advice:

A great deal of importance is attached to meal times in France and the French usually spend longer sitting down for meals than we do in England. It is also true that what is eaten in France may be different from what you are used to. However, do not panic you will not be expected to eat snails. French food is very good and often now you will find that your exchange partner will tend to like the same kind of food that you do: burgers and chips.

('Allez faire un échange!', p.2)

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[156] Unlikely would have been a better word than 'never' here.

There is also a concern to highlight more specifically how things may be different:

> You will find though that meals at home will be different for example there may not always be potatoes and there may be several courses with cheese before a pudding at the end of the meal, (ibid).

This is followed by the important advice: 'Try different things, have a go!' which together with the regular instruction to keep smiling, is a mantra for the exchange experience as a whole. The willingness to have a go and participate, we have already identified above, as being the way to make the most of the experience of an exchange; the way to benefit from this 'crossing of boundaries' afforded by this type of school visit.

While the guide to pupils participating in the exchange represents a response to a need to prepare pupils for this specific experience, there is a concern to extend this language and cultural 'experience of the real' into the learning taking place in the classroom. The annual exchange involved usually only some twenty-five pupils. The question was how could we extend the language and culture experiences of a few pupils to the school as a whole?

10.3.1 Language and Culture Kit for Surviving in France

The sub-title for the **Speak-Kit!** booklet[157], is 'language and culture kit for surviving in France', and makes clear the purpose of this resource. Experience from the French exchange is being used directly to provide information on how things are done differently in France and for preparing pupils for an experience, which, while only a minority of them will actually encounter, can be made a focus for learning about cultural differences. In this way it comes closer to the 'real' than a text book exercise on the same topic. This is particularly because the **Speak-Kit!** booklet contains information collected by Coates Middle School

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[157] See appendix, A10.2

pupils participating in an exchange, including a photo taken by a pupil to show how it was in the house in which they were living.

Only one, from a projected series of booklets, was produced[158] and covers the key area of challenge for exchange pupils we have identified above: French food and eating habits. The topic covered is seen as a situation, in this case Situation 1 is breakfast in France, chosen particularly because this was probably the easiest French meal to cover and one for which we had direct evidence for the possibility of confusion, associated with the French use of bowls instead of cups to drink from. For the English pupil however, bowls are associated with cereal as Sarah's diary extract from a first morning in France made clear (see above section 9.8.1)[159].

Information on the cover of the booklet describes the aim for this learning resource:

Situation[160] 1: Le petit-déjeuner

This booklet will give you the words and phrases you need to cope with eating breakfast in a French house and will prepare you for the 'rich points', what differences to expect from the way le petit-déjeuner happens in France.

Considering differences encountered in another culture as 'rich points' comes from the work of Agar (1994), and is a useful way of looking at an unexpected situation not as a problem but as something of interest. This was a method adopted for the French exchange and which is a feature of the **Speak-Kit!**

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[158] This is part of the process of needing to abandon projected French language developments on becoming headteacher in September 2001.
[159] 'I said that I would not like some cereal, so I was given a bowl of milk without the cereal ! I tried to drink it with a spoon but it took too long and we had to catch the bus,' (Sarah, 11).

[160] A situation of this kind represents a 'script' for carrying out a particular operation as we have identified above.

booklet where a system of rating different culture experiences is established as set out below:

> In this guide we will identify if something is the same as it would be in England and if it is different, a 'rich point' by symbols. You will be able to tell by the number of stars how different a particular way of doing things would be. So, two stars would be very different and three stars would be something you wouldn't find in England.

This system is then applied to breakfast in France as Table 10.3 demonstrates.

Table 10.3   Similarities and Differences, French Breakfast

Le Petit-Déjeuner

What to expect from breakfast in France

Similarities and differences

You will be given a breakfast   ✓

There will be something to eat

and something to drink

BUT, 'rich points':   ☆

The food may be different

The way it is eaten may not be   ☆ ☆

  the same

The names for the different   ☆ ☆ ☆

items will be in French

(page 3, **Speak-Kit!, Le Petit-Déjeuner**)

Looking at this material now, the distinctions seem to be rather arbitrary but the booklet does represent an attempt to address cultural differences in a positive manner, seeing them as positive elements.

This **Speak-Kit!** booklet was used with Year 7 pupils and was followed up with a questionnaire to 'see what you have learnt'. A single completed copy of this has survived, filled in by a pupil who participated in the French exchange which took place the previous month.

Two star rating (very different) is given by him for hot chocolate in bowls and the three star rating (unknown in England) reserved for 'eating off mats not plates'. (pupil questionnaire, 3.11.00). Drawing attention in the **Speak-Kit!** booklet has probably made him aware of the differences which he observes and is then able to record later.

10.4   'CHRIS COOL'

The final element to consider in this section is **'Chris Cool'**, this is a cartoon character developed to represent the perfect exchange pupil and to give us a model to which we could work towards. His characteristics are set out in a further OHP given as part of the paper presented at Leeds.

- integrates well with the host family and his partner
- communicates fluently and is able to understand and to make himself understood
- **outcome:** achieves a higher level of language skills and a better understanding of French culture and an appreciation of differences seen as 'rich points' (Agar, 1994).
- The exchange is a very positive experience which he is keen to further.

(OHP, 12: December 2000).

Given this definition, we can then, through a process of reverse engineering, try to establish the skills required to achieve this level of perfection. We can quote from a further slide from 'No Snails for Breakfast'.

Table 10.4   Skills Identified as Necessary for a French Exchange[161]

LANGUAGE	CULTURE
Prepared to have a go and speak the language	Being prepared for and accepting cultural differences
Able to achieve a certain level of fluency with the limited language at his disposal	Observing how things are done and copying
Learning new words and phrases from the context of the situation	Appreciating there are different ways of doing familiar tasks

(OHP, 13: December 2000)

It is interesting to notice how well Samantha, whose diary entries we followed, would score on the basis of these criteria. This suggests that the Chris Cool model is attainable by at least some pupils participating in an exchange. It is the experience of the exchange over a number of years, which enabled me to establish this model for the successful exchange student.

We need to turn next to the other language and culture developments introduced at Coates Middle School during this period, clarify the nature of the work and establish the significance of the specific initiatives for the language and culture developments taking place in school.

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[161] Our theoretising of this area in the previous chapter would mean that we would see these elements as examples of a pupils adjusting to a new language and cultural experience; the process of 'experiential learning' and 'schema theory'.

10.5 BONBONS MAGIQUES READERS,

a series of six French readers for pupils in Years 5 and 6.

'Les Bonbons Magiques' [162] are a series of six readers for younger learners beginning French in primary school or at home. The readers take as a theme the story of a boy, Sébastien, who buys a packet of magic sweets. These sweets have the power to turn whoever eats them into a different kind of animal depending on the colour of the sweet. The effect only lasts five minutes but provides plenty of scope for amusing and exciting incidents, (publicity for Bonbons Magiques readers, 1999).

The possibility of exporting the Bonbons Magiques readers to other schools led to the production of publicity material to explain the nature and purpose of the readers (two further schools did use the material as a learning resource). This publicity material is useful, as we examine the nature of these readers as it explains the basis on which the language was selected and also, establishes the benefits of using material of this kind in the primary classroom.

The stories were introduced into Years 5, 6 at Coates Middle School to supplement the rather meagre resources[163] available for pupils beginning French lessons at nine, (the age pupils begin at the middle school). The vast majority of resources were targeted on pupils beginning foreign language learning at the secondary school age of eleven.

> The readers are based on the language pupils will encounter in their first sessions of French covering such areas as animals, colours and the family. Much of the same vocabulary and structures are repeated as in each episode a 'bonbon magique' is eaten and the person changes to an animal within a set linguistic format. In this way vocabulary will become familiar to pupils and part of their active language[164]. (ibid).

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[162] Appendix: A10.3.1, A10.3.2, A10.3.3, A10.3.4

[163] The *'Pilote' French Beginner's Course*, by Mary Glasgow formed the basic course material used with pupils in Years 5,6 but by the 1990's this material was beginning to be outdated.

[164] 'The class teacher and I think this work is an excellent way to revise and reinforce the work children have covered in the Pilote scheme on colour and animals as well as introducing new

The format for the readers is set out in a further leaflet and consists of:

- simple text and pictures
- vocabulary section for key words
- play scripts for acting out stories
- grammar booklet for key structures (publicity leaflet, 2000).

And finally, the following key point is made:

'Les Bonbons Magiques' enable pupils to learn language in an enjoyable manner by following a story, (ibid).

10.5.1 Language and culture content of 'Bonbons Magiques'

The stories provide the young French learner with the opportunity to see the language in action, the different elements of vocabulary they have encountered as isolated, disembodied, items, are now embedded in a story. They have a function to provide a narrative, as Sébastien and his friends are involved in a series of adventures.

In this respect the 'Bonbons Magiques' readers resemble those of *Nuffield En Avant* readers, also, based around the activities of a group of French friends of the same age as the learner in the classroom. The intention with both is clear, for pupils to identify with the hero of the adventures; in this case, Sébastien.

The only French environment introduced is the 'school' and the experience of teaching in a French primary school for part of the time spent as an exchange teacher, enabled a reasonably authentic representation of 'l'école primaire'. So, on the cover of épisode trois, 'La Maîtresse est un lapin'[165], the illustration of the building shows a typical looking school establishment with the French flag flying outside the main entrance and pupils walking to school carrying the large school

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vocabulary in written format. We feel it is necessary for children to see the language written down like this as it most definitely helps them to retain vocabulary more easily,' (Written comment from classroom assistant in a primary school using the Bonbons Magiques readers, 4.11.99).
[165] The teacher is a rabbit.

bags, typical of French children at this age. The classroom illustrations also, demonstrate an authentic representation, with desks facing the 'tableau noir' and teacher's desk and none of the grouping of tables, which might characterise an English primary classroom[166].

10.5.2   Theoretical perspective to Bonbons Magiques readers

The key point to retain from the literature on foreign language reading is the view of reading being an active and not a passive activity and one to which the reader brings their own knowledge and experience. This is associated with the schema theory with which we are familiar from the previous chapter (section 9.4.2). This theory remains influential in reading comprehension in foreign language teaching where it provides a 'framework within which to study the interaction between texts and readers,' (Semino, 2004:527). Readers are seen to 'predict a certain development of a story, for example with their prior knowledge of stories, and look for confirmation of their predictions, (Ushiro, 2004:504).

From the perspective of the 'Bonbons Magiques' readers, the repetition of the central story line and language elements in each of the six readers, means there is, 'a predictability built into the narrative through a kind of lock-step progression in which one incident seems to inevitably lead to the next, (Cameron, 2001: 162). The intention here is to make the readers more easily accessible to learners: 'children's understanding of lexis is very strongly supported by the repetitive story frame, in which each episode has the same format, by the use of very familiar easy words (...) and by vivid pictures,' (Cameron, 2001: 160).

A second element of the readers designed to help comprehension is the illustrations. This element, 'the quality and quantity of illustrations,' is considered together with the understanding of word and phrase meaning and such elements as 'personal reference to the texts' and 'idea density' are considered

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[166] We have to be careful here, as this 'real' while reflecting my own experience of these educational establishments, may not correspond to all French schools.

important factors in text comprehension, (Ushiro, 2000:505). For beginner learners of French, the illustrations can be seen as playing a crucial role in providing a visual support for the text.

The question to finally ask on the Bonbons Magiques material is how does it help pupils with the process of 'tertiary socialisation', 'taking learners beyond a focus on their own society'? (Byram, 2008). The answer probably comes from the extent to which individual pupils are able to engage with the readers and identify with the adventures of Sébastien.

This process of the reader identifying with the protagonist of a story is emphasised by Ushiro:

> ..(readers) imagine what the characters in a story are thinking and also imagine how they would act if they were those characters, (Ushiro, 2004:505).

10.5.3 'Bonbons Magiques' as practical active language work

The 'Bonbons Magiques' readers represent an 'approach to the real', another example of decisions being made about how to 'translate' the language and culture into a format which will make it accessible to pupils; in this case for pupils who are at the first stages of their foreign language learning.

In addition to their prime use as readers, the 'Bonbons Magiques' material had the potential for development as intensive language work; the kind of active language learning techniques, used successfully with older pupils.[167].

A teachers' booklet on 'Les Bonbons Magiques, Travail Intensif',[168] sets out the background, ('Mission Secrète') and objectives for intensive work and ties it in with other initiatives which represent 'approaching the real'.

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[167] It also proved possible to use the illustrations and the text that accompanied them to produce a grammar booklet, **Comment Parler Francais!**, Instructions for Speaking .. and writing French.

[168] Appendix: A10.3.4

Previous work has pointed to the advantages both in terms of motivation and language development of a period of intensive language work. It provides pupils with the chance to use the foreign language in a situation where they have a greater need to communicate and more opportunity to do so. By situating the experience outside the classroom, pupils can be involved in more practical activities and indeed, the intensive language work can be seen as the practical side of language learning, when skills learnt in the classroom can be applied to real situations, ('Bonbons Magiques', Travail Intensif, 1999:2)

Pupils involved in the intensive work, have only one French lesson a week and need this opportunity to develop their 'understanding and spoken language skills':

One specific aim of the intensive work is to try and develop their fluency and get them beyond the naming stage, to put words together in order to make themselves understood. Verbs are seen as being of particular importance in this respect and only by acquiring a range of key verbs will any level of fluent language use occur[169], (ibid).

The Bonbons Magiques intensive work involves a class of Year 6 pupils spending an afternoon, participating in a range of activities conducted entirely in French. Pupils working in groups are involved in sweet making, (producing their version of the 'bonbons magiques' in an assortment of colours); making a poster for their 'bonbon' and acting out one of the episodes of the Sébastien stories, using a range of different props.

At the end of the session, (and this is an important way to bring the activity to a conclusion), each group acts out their play in front of the others and is given a certificate to mark their participation in this activity, the sweets they have made are taken home, (if they have survived) as a souvenir of the afternoon's activities.

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[169] This is a point we will return to below as we look at Lusaka, invented language work.

10.6 'LUSAKA', INVENTED LANGUAGE WORK[170]

The invented language work originated in May 1991, as part of a whole school expressive arts' week. Different curriculum areas in the school were asked to make a contribution to the week and as head of the French department, I was keen to become involved in a cross-curricular initiative and rashly stated that we would invent a language for the rain forest tribe

A document written immediately following the invented language sessions provides a key primary source for reconstructing this activity[171]. This paper was prepared for a talk given to PGCE foreign language students at Durham University. As with previous documents in this research, it helps us understand how the activity was viewed immediately following the experience.

The Lusaka[172] document makes clear that the setting of the rain-forest provided a focus and framework for this invented language, the need to 'create a language susceptible of being used by Indians in the rain forest,' providing 'interesting possibilities,' The language would be based on the perceived needs which the forest environment would impose on its inhabitants. (Language of the Rain Forest, 1991:1). So for example, there was an awareness that the language of a rain-forest tribe would need to include: 'specific words of the forest to cover the animals and birds with which they would come into contact and which they could certainly be expected to know by name,' (ibid).

It should be emphasised that the work was very much experimental and there was no clear picture of where, by the end of the expressive arts' week, the work would have gone or what it would have achieved.

> There was the feeling that an activity of this kind might give pupils an interesting insight into the structure of language. However, over and above any intrinsic considerations of cross-curricular objectives, was

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[170] Appendix: A10.4.1

[171] 'Lusaka –Invented Language of the Rain Forest', dated 25 May 1991.

[172] The name Lusaka was chosen by pupils who were not aware that the name already exists as a place in Zambia.

speculation as to whether it would be possible to create a language which pupils would be actually able to use for communicative purposes and if this was so, to what extent.

(Language of the Rain Forest, 1991:1).

From this perspective then, the invented language work comes into the category of language awareness[173]: However, the fact that this is language awareness from the inside as it were, through the creation of a language rather than using existing languages to provide understanding, makes this a different kind of language awareness exercise. This brings it into the category of the 'experiential learning', (Kolb, 1987), we have examined above. The links with other consistent themes of this research become evident; this is discovery of language through becoming involved in making a language and so we return to Plowden, (1967) and learning through doing with the 'sense of personal discovery' influencing 'the intensity of a child's experience', (Plowden, 1967: 201).

The process of creating a language was made more complicated by the conditions under which it took place. There was not one group of pupils to work with throughout the week but two different groups each day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, therefore: 'each group would generally have only half a day in which to master previous words and create new material which could then be passed on to subsequent groups,' (Language of the Rain Forest, 1991:1).

10.6.1 Narrative of creating a language

There is an immediate problem, of how to create a language?

First Session, Monday Morning

A group of some fourteen pupils whose ages ranged from 9-13 years began the task of making up the language. To create a suitable

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[173] 'explicit knowledge about language and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use,' (ALA, Association for Language Awareness, constitution, quoted by Garrett, P & James, C. 2004:330).

atmosphere for the proceedings the curtains were drawn in the room and a tape of rain forest sounds played, so the activity took place in a room which as the day progressed became increasingly oppressive and stuffy, requests to open a window were turned down! Pupils were also persuaded to sit and work on the tiled floor of the classroom which although somewhat less practical was more realistic.

Split up into groups of two or three pupils they set about trying to find words for sun, water, and the other basic words. After some ten minutes the group reformed and sitting around the drawings, (made in chalk on the floor in the centre of the classroom), decided which sounds they felt were most suitable. This was done democratically and usually one sound would tend to seem particularly appropriate, (Language of the Rain Forest, 1991:2).

The words chosen are set out below, why a particular sound is considered appropriate is not clear; perhaps, because it sounded suitably exotic and foreign?

Table 10.5   Lusaka words, session 1, 20.5.91

English word   invented word, Lusaka

Sun	Heeli
Water	Uno
Hut	Umwego
Man	Sag
Woman	Unsag[174]
Animal	Yshmool
Sky	Hiidon
Night	Niay
Tree	Mife
Food	Fupe

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[174] The similarity of these words came from looking at English for man and woman and suggesting that this kind of correspondence should be transferred to the Lusaka language.

10.6.2 Comment on invented language process

This account of the first Lusaka session provides an indication of how the invented language was created as: 'much of the pattern of language learning and creation was established in this first session,' (Language of the Rain Forest, 1991:2).

What is of particular interest in the Lusaka account is the insight it provides on the process of foreign language learning. By isolating the different stages needed in order to create a language, we are able to understand better the critical points of progression which lead to fluency. There are two critical points we can identify.

The first critical point comes in the first session described above with the naming of objects, provding a sound to represent key elements in the rain forest environment.

The problem associated with this stage is how to retain the different sounds, fix them so that they become available for communication. From a foreign language perspective this means remembering items of vocabulary from one lesson to the next, the 'gardening in a gale' (Hawkins, 1987) and the problem of the surrounding English curriculum makes this process more complex.

In keeping with the direction of this thesis and 'approaching the real' the first session includes an out of classroom experience with an encounter with the 'real' world, (already being transformed into a 'rain forest' through appropriate decorations).

> Once this initial stage of learning had been completed the group *left the classroom to come into contact with the actual object in the real world outside.* A brief excursion around the school and playground ensued when 'mife, umwego, yhsmool, sag, unsag were encountered.(...) Much effect was made of meeting teachers who could be described as sag or unsag as the case may be, (Language of the Rain Forest, 1991:2).

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The difference of Lusaka from standard foreign language learning is that strategies can be introduced to make the problem of learning vocabulary more straightforward. So, for example anything, which simplified the language and avoided the need to create a completely new word, each time one was required, was favoured. One solution was to ' use compound words, so (...) 'heelihiidon' – 'sun sky' for day and 'unohiidon' – 'water sky', for rain. There was also, the use of a cassette recording at the end of each session to fix the newly created words in the format of a 'teach yourself Lusaka' tape.

The second critical point for the invented language work, as for all language learning, is being able to progress from the naming of objects to the combination of words. For Aitchison in her exploration of the development and evolution of language the importance of this stage is emphasised:

> The naming insight stimulated a huge number of names for objects, true language began when words were combined, (Aitchison, 1996:112).

She indicates that grammar emgerges 'when noun-type words were reliably combined with verb-type words,' (ibid).

The next step in the language creation process would therefore be to invent a series of 'verb-type' words. The need for words which could be easily remembered, due to the restrictive framework in which the invented language work was operating, (frequent change-over of groups), meant that the solution to the problem of creating verbs was simply to transform a noun into a verb-type by adding an extra syllable 'ne' to the end of the word.

What is interesting here is how this process matches the Tok Pisin, pidgin language spoken in New Guinea. Aitchison in her examination of the way verbs developed saw two possibilities a 'build-up route assumes that a large number of single words accumulated, but some of different types, some involving things

and some actions,' (Aitchison, 1996: 112). An alternative possibility and the one which interests us here, is what is termed a re-analysis route which 'assumes that words were already being combined, but that sometimes more than one interpretation was possible. Aitchison draws on Tok Pisin to demonstrate this system taking the word singsing:

A singsing is primarily any festival which involves dancing and singing. The words mi singsing (me song and dance) meaning I went to the song and dance festival could easily be reinterpreted as I sang and danced,' (ibid). She then provides a list of similar words in Tok Pisin:

Mi danis	me - dance	⟶	I danced
Mi wok	me-work	⟹	I worked
Mi brum	me-broom	⟶	I swept

When we compare this with the Lusaka method we can see that something similar is happening with nouns being transformed into verbs through the addition of 'ne'.

Noun		**meaning**	**verb**		**meaning**
Fupe	-	food	fupne (fooding)	⟶	eat
Uno	-	water	unone (watering)	⟶	drink
Yshmool	-	animal	yshmoolne (animaling)[175]	⟶	hunt

Lusaka is if anything, more complex than Tok Pisin with a change to the noun instead of just indicating the verb status through the presence of the pronoun.

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[175] 'As before it will be evident that the Indians make a good deal of use of compound words placing two words together to make the sense they require, an example of this is 'yshmoolne' for hunting where the word for animal 'yshmool' is made into a verb by adding 'ne'. Although the English translation 'animaling' might suggest to us farming, it must be remembered that these people are hunter/gatherers and do no farming as such,' (Lusaka, Invented Language of the Rain Forest, 1991:2).

The point to be made however, is that while in English we can take a noun and use it as a verb (dance, fight, work) there are plenty of occasions where the verb is entirely different (decorate, write, speak). This is not a luxury we can afford in Lusaka[176], or we would never remember enough words to reach any kind of fluency. It becomes however, perfectly acceptable (in terms of understanding), to create verbs in this way.

Once some verb-types has been established it becomes possible as Aitchison indicates to combine words and allow true language use to begin. The task set to demonstrate this process and at the same time the validity of the new created language was to be able to tell a simple story from a series of pictures. This was the imaginary legend of Sagmife[177]–Treeman- supposed founder of his tribe.

> Sagmife sets out on a journey where he comes into contact with different features of the world around him and to these features he gives a name. In this way he names the sun, water, forest and animal. He hunts and kills the animal before eating it. The story ends with the sun going down and night descending.

> Pupils had to try to put language to the story by using the elements which they had already acquired. This was managed in groups without too much difficulty. The most interesting part of the exercise was trying to find ways to describe the sun going down and night falling. It was apparent that sundown could be described as 'heelisomblane' – 'sun sleep' while night fall became 'niay plodne – 'night walks'.

> (Language of the Rain Forest, 1991:5).

There is something clearly creative occurring here and this is evident from the narrative of the week: 'such poetic phrases had an authentic whiff of native language. Pupils were given the opportunity of being creative because the only

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[176] There were two verbs which didn't follow this pattern and had separate words: somblane (sleep) and soliak (to be unwell, injured).
[177] This follows the creation story of the aboriginal language as recorded by Chatwin in Songlines (1986).

means they had of describing the events was to use the limited material at their disposal', (Language of the Rain Forest, 1991:6).

However exciting the whole process of inventing a language was beginning to be, the created language was limited in its powers of communication. Once a system was in place for creating the language, the later sessions in the week proved easier and provided the possibility of making more complex language structures.

At the end of the Language of the Rain Forest account, there is a comment about the outcome of the invented language experience:

> It would appear that it did prove possible to create a language, albeit very simple. Pupils were able to represent objects and activities by words and use these words to form sentences to tell a story such as the 'Sagmife Legend' which they were able to extend themselves.
>
> (Language of the Rain Forest, 1991:9).

There was also the feeling that this activity had led to language awareness: 'pupils would, by the nature of the programme, come to some understanding of how language works,' (Language of the Rain Forest, 1991:9).

10.6.3 Incorporating invented language work into classroom learning

The success of the single week of invented language work led to the development of this material as a language awareness resource for pupils in Year five, at the start of their foreign language learning. A number of changes needed to be made to the original material in order for the Lusaka work to be suitable for the classroom with younger learners.

A story line was developed centred on an explorer, Bill Bosworth who seeks out the unknown Lusaka tribe and then once he encounters them, sets out to learn their language and customs as he lives among them.

From a purely language awareness perspective, it was possible to incorporate into Bill Bosworth's account explanations about how language functioned with the aim of making children understand better what learning a foreign language would involve.

The Lusaka Language Adventure work was introduced in September 2000 with Year 5 pupils, as an introduction to foreign language learning. The activity is described as 'an exercise in invented language,'[178]. The cover page announces that the booklet is:

> The diary and account of Bill Bosworth's expedition to Lusaka Land and the discovery and description of the lost Lusaka Tribe, their language and customs.
>
> (Lusaka, Language Adventure, 2000: 1).

There is an illustration of Lusakan tribesmen armed with spears at the bottom of the page to highlight the exotic nature of this particular learning adventure. The second page of the booklet then sets out how to invent a language using the experience from the expressive arts' week:

> It is first necessary to learn the nouns, the names for the objects which surround them in the rain forest. We have to start therefore and decide on how we are going to name the sun and water, hut and tree, man and woman, animal and food. This is a question of fixing an agreed sound and deciding how it is written. A real tribe in the rain forest would not have written language, but we need to be able to remember the words and need to write the sounds down to do this.
>
> (Lusaka, Language Adventure, 2000: 2).

It is clear from this passage that the language adventure would be an exercise in language awareness, a way of understanding how words come about and the

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[178] See appendix 10.42.

different nature of these words[179]. The following extract from the booklet provides a flavour of the content of the story and how this narrative element leads to the invention of the Lusaka language.

Monday   I start to learn Lusaka, day 6

To begin with I needed to be able to talk to them if I was going to live here. Clearly no-one spoke any English so it was up to me to start and try to learn their language, Lusaka. I got Sag to name things for me and he began with a list of 8 objects which he drew in the earth to show me what they were. He then slowly said the word so I could repeat and try to write it down in my diary so I would remember how to say it. (Lusaka, Language Adventure, 2000: 8).

This invented language work became the introduction to foreign language learning for pupils at Coates Middle School. There are certain advantages in doing this, mainly because children coming to Coates Middle School have been exposed to differing amounts of foreign language learning prior to their arrival. By starting all children on arrival at the middle school with something new to all of them, they are all starting at the same point.

A further practical factor in introducing Lusaka work was that each class would necessarily invent their own language. This provided the chance to put in place, as a final element of the learning programme, a 'gathering of the tribes'. Here one class would introduce their version of Lusaka to another who would then reciprocate, incorporating into the process the customs, such as ways of greeting each other, which had also been developed.

This 'gathering of the tribes' provided a suitable way to bring the work to a conclusion in a dramatic and performance led manner with pupils dressed up with specially made costumes.

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[179] This links the activity to Literacy lessons in English which are also in this time of SATs (Standard Attainment Targets) require pupils to know about the structure of language.

10.6.4 Significance of Invented Language Work

There is no need with invented language work to translate elements of that language and culture into a form, which will make them accessible to pupils working in the classroom, in the process of representing an absent target language and culture or to have access to all the complexities of the vocabulary and structures of an existing language[180]

What we have with an invented language is a process of creating an 'imagined reality' (Verriour, 1993), not just the situation in which drama is improvised but the actual terms, the language, in which this drama is expressed. By deciding for themselves, which sound matches a particular object, pupils are empowered with a creative and central role in the process of inventing a language[181]. Pupils make the decision about which sound to represent the different key objects which are central to the life of the in rain-forest tribe and there is a constant discussion on how to proceed. There is a contrast therefore in this engagement and identification with an invented language and the process of learning an existing foreign language.

The value of analysing this exercise for the research as a whole, comes from the focus it places on the process of foreign language learning in general and specifically the initiatives described in these pages. A preoccupation with the 'real' seems to be affecting language-focused work as well as the cultural dimension of language teaching.

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[180] A language which through the accidents of linguistic history will have retained all manner of curious forms and devices, irregularities which like many of the past participle forms of English verbs (which I had to teach to French pupils), pose problems for the foreign language learner.
[181] The problem we saw earlier of how to incorporate into improvised drama work in foreign language learning of the key element of 'negotiation of meaning' (Heathcote, 1967), is in this way addressed.

10.7 CONCLUSION

The range of different initiatives, which provide the narrative for this chapter can be seen in terms of a particular period of language and culture learning taking place at Coates Middle School. This is a time of major development in new language learning initiatives with the ending of the intensive language work and the beginning of the exchange programme, starting with the personal experience of a year's teacher exchange in 1992/93 and ending with becoming headteacher in 2001. A period we have characterised as 'experiencing the real' in recognition of the key part played by the exchange programme in the development of learning initiatives in school which seek to 'approach the real' often based on or influenced by this experience.

Nationally the period would be characterised for foreign language learning, as for all curriculum areas, as the time of the introduction of the National Curriculum (1999) and a much more structured approach to the learning of foreign languages associated with the demands of assessment processes. The 'No Snails for Breakfast' document considers the culture element in the National Curriculum document[182] and makes the following comment:

> There are hardly here, any proposals likely to lead to changes in the attitude of pupils to the differences encountered through the study of another culture and language. We are however, looking for a dramatic change in perceptions as pupils learn to appreciate the similarities and differences in the culture they are studying and of which the language forms an integral part. Pupil perspectives need to be challenged and even young learners provided with the occasion to examine their own culture as it appears to people in another country. (No Snails for Breakfast, 2000:2)

The descriptions of learning initiatives in this chapter show how at Coates Middle School there was an attempt to challenge pupil perspectives.

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[182] 'Pupils need to consider: their own culture and comparing it with the cultures and communities where the target language is spoken; the experiences and perspectives of people in these countries and communities, (National Curriculum, 1999:17).

STAGE FIVE: TOWARDS A MODEL FOR 'APPROACHING THE REAL'

Link with previous stage: Stage Four examined the impact of the real. First through the experience as an exchange teacher, then for pupils engaged in an exchange. This chapter extends the examiniation of the 'real' in foreign language and culture learning by comparing the different aspects of this experience and proposing a model for 'approaching the real' in school foreign language learning.

Stage Contents:

Chapter eleven: covers this final, concluding stage of the thesis with a description of a proposal to create a language and culture centre and the theory of 'approaching the real'.

Appendix: A11.1, A11.2, A11.3.

APPROACHING THE REAL

STAGE 5 TOWARDS A MODEL FOR APPROACHING THE REAL

CHAPTER ELEVEN

11.0 INTRODUCTION

The final and concluding stage and chapter of this narrative of personal development and middle school language and culture teaching and learning, brings together the different elements of the thesis and looks for the implications and significance of the research as a whole.

We need to return to the research questions to consider the three central elements of this thesis: an understanding of the influences and experiences that led to the introduction of the series of language learning initiatives; the validity of considering these measures in relationship to a 'real' target language and culture and the significance this account might have for the wider practice of foreign language and culture learning.

This autobiographical narrative of foreign language and culture learning that has brought us from the 1960s up to the present time does not simply come to an end. I subscribe with Rorty, to the view of: 'narratives which connect the present with the past, on the one hand, and with utopian futures on the other', (Rorty, 1989: xvi).

This is why this final chapter begins with the account of a proposal to set up a language and culture centre. This ambitious project differs from the other initiatives described in these pages not just because it failed to materialise (in anything but a very reduced form), but because it was an attempt to put in place a different concept for language and culture learning.

11.1 POSITION

I have been immersed over a thirty-five year period in the culture of foreign language learning in Northumberland, involved in the daily routine of language teaching but also, the endless series of conferences and conversations with advisers, the attention of inspectors and subject to government policies and guidelines. I have witnessed a particular period of foreign language and culture learning and the value of this thesis must come in part, from this 'real' experience, (the insider's view), of one small aspect of the foreign language and culture learning scene and my personal response to the challenges of teaching middle school pupils another language.

Throughout this time, the philosophy for teaching foreign languages, the methods employed – audio-visual learning, communicative competence, task-based learning – have all sought to make language learning (as we have seen) more practical and more real. And so, equipped with the learning programmes which embody these systems with their bright packaging and rousing titles, 'en avant', avantage, allez', we have moved smartly forward towards the far horizon of language competence, the goal for our endeavours, the target language and culture with which we seek to engage.

After the initial first enthusiasm of the early stages of the learning process, (where everything seems possible), we are subject to the first doubts. The drive forward falters, as we become aware of the terrain which has to be covered, the endless parade of vocabulary and structures to be acquired. Then, there are the constraints associated with the classroom environment in which learning takes place and the obstacles of the curriculum in which the
foreign language operates. The demands of a curriculum divides the day into hour long chunks for which each subject area has to compete for space and which relies on accountability to ensure goals are reached and performances achieved. There is the heavy reliance on assessment which, in a foreign teaching context, leads to a concentration on those elements most easily
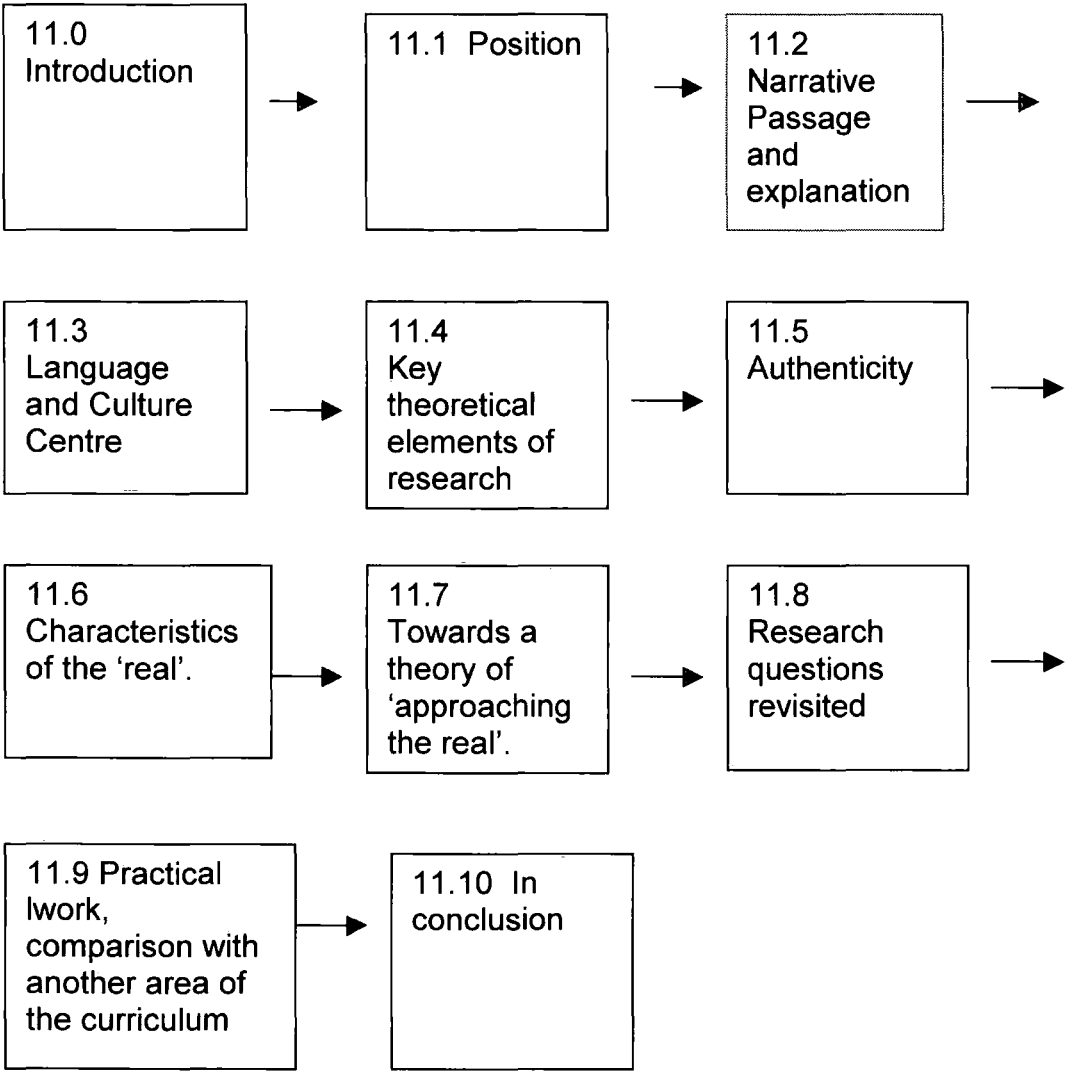
measured: the reading and writing skills and listening comprehension and a weighting in language lessons towards these areas.

The foreign language has to fit into this school curriculum, be acculturated into the school environment, packaged and adapted and translated into a format which conforms to curriculum demands, becoming transformed in this way into something different, 'a classroom foreign language'.

And of all those who bravely moved forward as young enthusiastic learners, what becomes of them? By the first ridge, the target for the initial assault, only half of those who started out on the journey of language learning are still there to take the prize of a GCSE, and fewer still will move on to heady stages of real language competence at 'A' level, university studies and beyond. And what happens to the rest? They are left wandering in no-man's land, abandoned in their language learning, cut off before in most cases there is any real sense of what it means to be able to use a foreign language and communicate with someone from another culture.

These words say of course, much about the person writing them and the particular view of foreign language learning they contain. It is however, in this educational climate and from this personal position that the initiatives described in this thesis originate. This narrative is characterised by a determination to try and break out of the pattern of classroom and school-based foreign language learning, to take pupils out to discover for themselves the functioning foreign language and culture. So that, on returning back to the classroom, the routine of language learning would have more purpose and reason. This is the transportation (Schechner, 1988), the performance to accompany the rehearsal of routine lessons, (Hawkins, 1987) with which this thesis has so closely been involved on both a personal and professional level. It is on the basis of 'approaching the real' that we seek in this chapter to try and establish a theoretical basis for this research.

Table 11.1   Contents of Chapter 11: 'Language and Culture Centre'

11.0 Introduction	→ 11.1 Position	→ 11.2 Narrative Passage and explanation →
11.3 Language and Culture Centre	→ 11.4 Key theoretical elements of research	→ 11.5 Authenticity →
11.6 Characteristics of the 'real'.	→ 11.7 Towards a theory of 'approaching the real'.	→ 11.8 Research questions revisited →
11.9 Practical lwork, comparison with another area of the curriculum	→ 11.10 In conclusion	

11.2 NARRATIVE PASSAGE

Chris Cool comes to the Language and Culture Centre and pushes through the glass doors to enter an exciting and very different learning space. A screen greets each new arrival and provides continuous information about what is currently happening in the world at this moment from the BBC 24 hour news service. The building is appropriately globe-shaped, there is a central workshop, classroom area with a large interactive board at the front and around the perimeter of the area, a series of computers are grouped according to the different continents. Each continent is clearly labelled and there is a clock giving the time in each place, a reminder of the different time zones around the world. There are a range of books, artifacts and photographs from different countries in each continent, selected with the help of the countries concerned. A current exhibition on the 'Chinese World', is displayed to one side of the centre and contains artwork from China with the possibility of listening to examples of the Cantonese language through the headsets provided. A notice informs visitors that the display has been provided by members of the Chinese community in Newcastle and there are details of the special lectures and events, which will be taking place as part of a 'Chinese World Week'. The exhibition is keen to promote not just the language and culture of a distant China but also the way of life of members of the local Chinese community and links this exotic world to the experience of all those who visit the centre, by providing a section on Chinese food and restaurants. Sponsorship for the exhibition has apparently come from one of the local restaurants who will be providing a demonstration of how to prepare and cook Cantonese food.

As Chris enters, a group of younger children in the workshop area are drawing dragons as part of their lesson on Chinese culture and learning to write the word for dragon in Chinese characters with the help of a number of assistants, parents and friends from the Chinese community. These adults go around among the children to encourage them, showing how to form the characters with the special pens provided. Chinese music is playing as a background to

this work and to support the general theme. Language is also part of the activity and by the end of the morning all children will be able to greet someone in Cantonese and will take home with them a picture of a dragon with the characters in Chinese written beside it.

Chris has come to the Language and Culture Centre for his geography homework, which requires him to use the centre's special facilities to write his assignment on global warning. He needs to find out how different countries are addressing this problem and will need to go to each continent area to collect his data. He sits down first at the South America area where there is currently a space available (a number of other pupils have left their classroom to collect information). Chris uses his password to sign in and is provided with the outline of South America on screen, by clicking onto a particular country he is provided with a menu with the information available. While standard information is accessible for each country (provided by BBC World), more detailed and complete information is provided for one representative country. In this case the country is Brazil and Chris manages to find by scrolling down the Brazil menu, a section on 'Brazil Today' where there is a recent speech by the country's president on the measures being used to address pollution and global warming and a video clip on how clearance of the rainforest has been halted. Chris saves the relevant information for downloading later at home. He also goes to the link with the Brazilian school, a partner school with Coates Middle School and using the blog available to him, types in a request for help on his homework project from a contact of his own age with whom he sometimes corresponds. As this is night-time in Brazil, he knows he will have to wait until tomorrow to collect this information.

As he has been given half an hour to carry out his investigation before returning to the classroom, Chris leaves research on global warming in other areas for another time, he will try and call in at the end of the school day or perhaps first thing tomorrow morning, before lessons. Now, he just has time to look at his e-mails and finds he has a message from his French friend, Sébastien with whom he stayed recently on an exchange. He quickly types out a reply to him partly in English and partly French, the established way to communicate.

As Chris leaves the Language and Culture Centre a French language group is arriving for the start of the next lesson. They will be working with the French assistant to write their own versions of the Bonbons Magiques stories using the special website provided, where they can copy or draw their own pictures and provide the French captions to tell the story.

11.2.1 Explanation of Narrative Passage

The first point to make about the passage is that, unlike previous narrative passages in the thesis, it represents a fictional account. A reconstruction of how the language and culture centre might appear and function by imagining one pupil, Chris Cool, as he goes about seeking information for a geography homework.

For all that this account is fictional, it is based on the proposals made for a language and culture centre for Coates Middle School in 2003, as part of a series of measures designed to improve school facilities which we will consider below.

As Chris Cool enters the language and culture centre, he describes what he sees around him. The description makes it clear that this is not a traditional classroom area but a learning space, which has the flexibility to allow both individual and group learning.

The multi-disciplinary nature of the activities taking place and of the centre as a whole, is of particular importance and reflects the global dimension of the proposal. While some curriculum areas such as geography, foreign language and also language learning and citizenship might be seen to have particular importance in achieving this objective, other areas such as music, art and religious education will also have prominent roles to play.

What is of interest in this description is the virtual nature of the learning materials and resources where the target language and culture are represented for the pupil using new technological resources provided by ICT. This technology enables Chris, as an individual, to 'approach the real', in a different manner to those experiences we have already discussed. This is no longer a representation of France and French culture through cassette recordings or text-books illustrations in the classroom, or an experience of the 'real' by physically crossing borders to visit the country and encounter the culture. Here, information on the language and culture of a particular country can be accessed on the click of a mouse and there is the possibility of interacting with someone of the same age from another country and to explore their views on different situations.

This fits in with current developments in the United States where: 'SLA research has been less interested in studying the cultural benefits of study abroad than in exploring the uses of computer-mediated communication to learn about foreign cultures without going abroad,' (Kramsch, 2006:21).

The prototype for this website was beginning to take form just prior to the author's retirement, as a project 'Learning to Live Together' involving a number of pupils and the support of Northumberland Education Authority and Durham University.

11.3 LANGUAGE AND CULTURE CENTRE

The narrative passage has provided us with an indication of how the language and culture centre[183] would operate. We need now to trace the origins of a proposal which received the active support of Northumberland Education Authority and was submitted for funding to the Department of Education and Science in October 2003 and 2004.

The bid for funding was 'a central element in the project to address the challenges of the 21st Century education, transform an outdated school building and create a centre of excellence':

> The unique and innovative world centre which will form a strategic and flexible link with the proposals to develop a first school on the site. The new world centre will impact on the whole school environment. It will provide a focal point for the school development as an inclusive community with an understanding and appreciation of others.' (Northumberland LEA, 23.11.03).

This passage provides an indication of the context in which the idea for a language and culture centre originated - the proposed development of a first school on the Coates Middle School site and faced with this proposal, the need to 'transform' the outdated Coates Middle School buildings.

The proposal is associated with the change in circumstances which led to my becoming headteacher from September 2001 and the possibility this provided for using the new responsibilities and authority of this position, to try and put in place, (as part of a general school building programme), a new centre to promote language and culture learning.

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[183] 'The Language and Culture Centre' document from 2003 are set out in A11.1 of the appendix.

While both bids were ultimately unsuccessful due to the excessive cost of the proposed learning resource, (estimated as one million pounds), the report from the DfES recognised the innovation of this proposal (Feedback on Target Capital Funding Bid, DfES: 18.4.04).

A full account of the philosophy behind this initiative can be found in the document produced at the time *'Language and Culture Centre'*[184]. The centre is described here as representing a 'different learning concept by providing a school focus for world studies,' (L&C.C. 2003:3).

> The starting point for the creation of a language and culture centre is the consideration that one of the most important aspects of education for today's children is the development of global awareness, an appreciation that in addition to their own nationality they are also members of the world community with a shared concern and responsibility for the future of our planet in the 21st Century,
>
> (L&C.C. 2003:3).

The cross-curricular focus of the centre is emphasised:

> While different parts of the national curriculum cover a range of areas dealing with world matters, this effect is diluted through being restricted to their own subject boundaries. However, by bringing together the different elements of language and culture in such areas as the humanities, modern foreign languages, music, art and citizenship, we would be able to make more of an impact and give the topic the prominence it deserves. We could achieve this kind of recognition through the provision of a special designated resource, the language and culture centre. This would be backed up by a specific programme of study designed to cover the first and middle school years,[185] (ibid).

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[184] See A11.1 in the appendix.
[185] 'A programme of study which organised the culture learning opportunity for pupils from the start of their schooling. The process would be divided into a number of stages relating to the age of pupils (…) for younger pupils access to the language and culture centre might be limited to whole class sessions on particular topics, older pupils would be involved in more developed aspects of individual learning using the technology provided,' (L&C.C, 2003:7)

Having in place the appropriate technology is a key concern and this area is covered under the heading, 'technological implications':

> The technology is now in place to enable the realisation of a centre of he kind envisaged. It would be possible to provide through software systems the necessary information about different languages and cultures and to deliver the required level of interaction which would make the study process come alive for the learner, (L&C.C. 2003:6).

There is finally, the argument for creating a facility of this kind:

> A strong argument could be made for providing a facility to encourage in pupils a greater awareness of the world in which they live. Children themselves would easily recognise that one of the causes of conflict in today's world is associated with a misunderstanding and suspicion of other cultures, (ibid).

The language and culture centre never materialised due, as we have seen, to the inability to attract the necessary funding. It did prove possible however, to adapt some of the ideas with the creation of a new school library. This was necessarily a much less ambitious project but one which contained nonetheless a designated 'world' area, as one of three learning stations[186] in the new library. This was an area where the intention was to create similar access to information on different countries and where the first work was done with a small group of selected pupils to create a special website, drawn up by the pupils themselves.

It will be important to consider the implications of the language and culture centre proposal, within the context of the research as a whole and establish its relationship to the other initiatives described in this thesis.

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[186] The other learning stations were 'home' and 'science and technology'.

11. 4   KEY THEORETICAL ELEMENTS OF THE RESEARCH

We need to set down now, those key theoretical concepts of the research which are consistent elements in this thesis and have provided a sense of direction to the flow of the narrative. By bringing them together and trying to analyse them as a single element, the aim is to establish more clearly the significance and implications of this autobiographical narrative and the theoretical implications of 'approaching the real'.

In the first place there is the definition of a central problem around which the research is articulated, associated with Elton's approach to historical narrative (Elton, 1967:155). This problem we have defined as 'the relationship established through the different learning initiatives and teaching methods with the 'real' target language and culture,' (chapter 2 section 4.3).

We have been able to extend this concept of the 'real' by establishing two distinct categories associated with the nature of the language learning described in these pages. These are 'approaching the real' associated with classroom foreign language learning but including language programmes, such as intensive work, where there is no direct contact with the target language and culture. Where there is direct contact, we have described as: 'experiencing the real'.

Each of these categories contain however, their own implicit problem, as we have discussed. Foreign language learning which 'approaches the real', has the need to represent something that is absent[187]: the target language and culture. There is here, the question of translation, of needing to adapt the language and culture to make them accessible for classroom learning, something we will consider below in more detail.

When it's a question of an 'experience of the real', the problem is associated with finding a suitable way for the foreign language and culture to be encountered; one, which provides the opportunity for pupils to engage with the

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[187] 'La représentation présente d'une chose absente' , (Ricoeur, 2000:8).

culture, as on an exchange. Next, there is the need for a journey to reach this new environment and then, the problems associated with the impact of a different language and culture, problems associated with 'culture shock' and the need to adapt to this new learning situation. There is also, here, the question whether this experience leads to any change in perspective for those who take part, a process associated with the 'transportation' which has taken place, (Schechner, 1967).

As we apply these concepts to the language learning initiatives we have discussed, what have we discovered? The first chapters detailing my personal experiences show a process of acculturation to the very different learning environments of Grenoble, the international student community at Champréveyres and Northumberland College. There is also the year spent teaching in France and the need to adapt to the experience of being a 'professeur d'anglais'. Evidence for change can be tracked here through the diary entries[188] but also, there is evidence for 'transformation' as the influence of the period spent as a student abroad, leads to a change in direction and to becoming a language teacher.

From the pupil perspective, the exchanges provide some indication of the impact of the experience of staying with a French family. The nature of the immersion into this new environment we have emphasised through the narrative passage descriptions of the long journey and then, the encounter with the host family and the introduction into a French home. Even though this experience is of limited duration, the contact with differences (in language and behaviour), mean there is a need to adapt to this new situation. Whether pupils are changed, [189] by this experience is more difficult to assess. Given the short period of the immersion and the return afterwards, back to a familiar environment and routines, this is unlikely. What is more probable is that the experience will have 'expanded perspectives' (Whalley, 2000). The experience

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[188] The description of the new English arrivals at Grenoble provides a way of identifying a changing identity.
[189] On one occasion, a girl who had been particularly helpful supporting an exchange pupil who was having difficulty adapting and had to negotiate with her own French family and the other family involved, was described by her mother as having come back a changed person, more adult and responsible.

of living abroad for a week makes pupils appreciate differences when they get back home. So, Samantha on returning to school remarks in her diary: 'everyone from school looked really different,' (Samantha diary extract 14).

Turning to 'approaching the real' the success of the intensive work points to the value of drama in providing the 'shared context' in which the activities can be placed and the way in which they become 'authentic' through the engagement of participants (van Lier, 1995). Drama in this way does provide the mechanism for reducing the distance from the target language, not just with intensive work but also, as we have seen, through improvised drama work in the classroom. The role of drama in the foreign language classroom for younger learners is not something however, that is apparent in the more recent literature, where to take three examples there is either no mention or a very restricted role given to either simulation, role-play or drama work, (Cameron, 2001; Raya, Gewehr, Peck, 2001; Doyé, 1999).

The importance of drama-in-education to this thesis is also evident, in the two other initiatives which 'approach the real', the 'Lusaka' invented language work and 'Bonbons Magiques'. For Lusaka, the 'imagined reality' (Verriour, 1993), of inventing a language for a fictitious rain forest tribe is made more 'real' when there is a meeting of the tribes which involves teaching others the language you have invented. 'Bonbons Magiques' work involves drama as the stories are acted out, a way to make them come to life.

Before considering further the concepts of the real in order to try and establish a theory to cover this area, we need next to extend our examination of authenticity as it applies to classroom foreign language learning. This will enable us to position the concept of the 'real' we are proposing more easily into existing theories of classroom foreign language learning

11.5 AUTHENTICITY

Authenticity is clearly associated with the 'real' and is the closest we come in the literature to the perspective we are promoting of the relationship between foreign language learning and the 'real' target language and culture. It is not surprising therefore, that authenticity features prominently in this thesis in terms of authenticity in foreign language learning associated with the use of appropriate texts and van Lier's view of authenticity as a measure of engagement. The problem, we have seen, comes from the restricted use to which authenticity is applied, with the emphasis on the quality of the language data being studied (Rixon, 2004).

The position we are taking, (based on the learning initiatives described in these pages), is that classroom foreign language learning needs to try and 'approach the real', through the use of drama and an 'imagined reality' (Verriour, 1993). An 'imagined reality, which we have seen, can involve acting out the French Revolution or carrying out 'secret agent' training. However, authentic classroom foreign language learning can have a very different approach, which contrasts strongly with this position.

Breen (1985) in his article on authenticity, which has been given some authority[190], compares two observed lessons. In the first, a group of language students from different nationalities at a university in the USA are involved in role-play. Working in pairs one student 'describes the classroom as if it were a luxury apartment. The other student (...), punctuates the 'estate agents' remarks with critical comments about the state of the curtains, the noise from the plumbing and the special constraints of the kitchen,' (Breen, 1985:67).

The point Breen makes in his comment on this activity is: 'the lesson requires that the learners take on a persona other than themselves – for whatever motive but nevertheless inauthentic to their everyday experience,' (ibid).

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[190] For Rixon (2004) he is one of the applied linguists who promoted the use of authentic materials for language teaching during the late 1970s.

It may be over critical to suggest that such lessons are rather like the person who put picture postcards on the outside of his goldfish bowl to give the fish the impression that they were going places. However, the central issue is: given the actual social potential of a classroom, the contrivance of 'other worlds' within it may not only be inauthentic but also quite unnecessary,' (Breen, 1985:67).

Role-play and drama of this kind is seen in this respect as being inauthentic and out of place in the language classroom. Breen compares unfavourably this example with a second, also involving university students, (this time from the Institute of English from his own university, Lancaster). Here the activity while also involving practical work, ('the classroom resembles at first glance the main office of a busy national newspaper just prior to a printing deadline,'), have been asked to work (initially in pairs), to 'assess the usefulness and appropriateness of the teacher's comments on two pieces of hand-written homework from the work of a previous year's group,' (ibid). Next the students work in groups to agree on their answers to two questions written up on the blackboard concerning the nature of these comments and which would be most effective from their own perspective.

For Breen what distinguishes this second example is that it recognises the 'authentic social potential of the classroom', (Breen, 1985: 68): 'The authenticity wherein people share a primary communicative purpose: learning,' (ibid).

The day to day procedures, the learning tasks, types of data and materials to be selected and worked on, the actual needs, interests and preferred ways of working of all the people gathered in the classroom certainly provide sufficient authentic potential for communication, (ibid).

We need to first accept, before commenting on this text, that the examples on which these comments are based, concern university students learning English as a second language, (and therefore there is more scope in this diversity for interaction and communication to take place) also, that the environment outside

the classroom is an English one, the 'real' therefore, is not a distant reality. However, the article is on authenticity and does not limit itself to a stated second language rather than foreign language learning position and seems to be claiming validity for all forms of language classroom. The point to make is that this position is clearly diametrically opposed to the one we are proposing in this thesis and therefore needs to be given consideration.

What we have in Breen's example is the enclosed world of the classroom, as a self-sufficient entity with the shutters drawn and the outside world excluded. There are to be no far horizons here, (the sneering comments about postcards on goldfish bowls is eloquent in this respect, with the comment of 'giving an impression that they were going places' (Breen, 1985: 67)). The imaginative, creative world is actively discouraged as being an unnecessary intrusion into an environment in which the emphasis is on learning to communicate.

The reason for Breen's position comes however, from the nature of the foreign language teaching he is describing, (English as a foreign language for university students). This means that there is an inherent social potential in the classroom which can be exploited through the interaction of students from different countries and backgrounds. This however, is a very different situation from the one we have been describing in this thesis, where we are concerned with foreign language learning with middle school learners who have neither, the language skills or confidence, to enable the kind of interaction Breen promotes. The problem is the influence a paper of this kind can have on foreign language learning practice, where as we have argued, there is a central need to look beyond the limiting routines of classroom procedures and learning.

Kramsch's position is more complex, while supporting Breen's view of the social potential of the classroom, she is also, quite clear about the problems associated with the nature of this environment. For Kramsch the classroom provides an 'artificial and standardized environment,' (1993:177) and she rails against the 'prefabricated, artificial language of text books and instructional dialogues', (ibid, p.184). This view of the 'artificial' nature of the classroom environment comes close to our own arguments and her remarks about the

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resources available for foreign language learning, emphasise the point we are making about the contrast between the 'real' target language and the adapted version available in the classroom. Kramsch also matches the position of this thesis with her argument about the 'uncritical acceptance of the dominant educational culture' (ibid: 183) which we will incorporate below, as one of the elements responsible for the 'translated' nature of classroom foreign language learning..

We have made our position clear on the constraints of classroom foreign language learning and criticised an approach which sees authentic foreign language learning as being classroom based with an inability to consider the possibility of other learning environments, as we have already seen, (c.f. 'Will curriculum always equal classroom?', Capel-Davies, 1988:143).

In the 'Languages Review' produced by the DfES in March 2007[191], a document concerned with the sharp fall in the number of pupils taking languages at GCSE[192] (down to 51% in 2006), a section covers 'Languages beyond the classroom':

> It is also important that pupils see that languages exist beyond the classroom, (DfES, March 2007).

And beyond this bald statement and a limited number of examples of schools becoming involved in links with schools abroad there is nothing further said on this topic. Closing the classroom door may be a way to contain the foreign language from the surrounding English environment and the gale of English (Hawkins, 1987: 97) but it can also represent shutting out the 'real' world. There can be an almost claustrophobic feel to classrooms where there is a focus on texts, characterised by attention to detail and the introspection this involves.

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[191] Disappointingly while the document promotes the links established by schools with partners abroad there is no mention of pupil exchanges.

[192] General Certificate of Secondary Education.

The vast majority of foreign language learning in schools necessarily takes place in the classroom, as part of the accepted pattern of learning established by the curriculum. Authentic classroom foreign language learning would therefore comply with all the methods and procedures which we have discussed as an 'approach to the real' is made: the routine of listening and reading comprehension and written exercises but also, the spoken language work and the use of improvised drama.

However, to use the term 'authentic classroom foreign language learning' does not enable us to include any activities such as visits to France, exchanges or intensive language work, taking place outside the classroom. If we broaden the term by taking out 'classroom', we arrive at 'authentic foreign language learning'. This gives a different perspective to the process, which might be seen in terms of learning taking place in a more realistic situation. This would enable us to include visits and exchanges and also intensive language work, while retaining the central element of classroom learning; visits characterised by a journey which, instead of being peripheral elements in the curriculum, are made where possible a central element.

For the purpose of this thesis therefore, the range of different measures introduced at Coates Middle School over a thirty-five year period, can be described in terms of a search for authentic foreign language learning: 'authentic', not in terms of the texts being used, but from the fact that the experience of foreign language and culture learning provided for pupils, tried to address the problems associated with an absent language and culture by using drama and improvisation work to 'approach the real'. Also, importantly, the foreign language learning programme includes the opportunity for pupils to 'experience the real' through participation in exchanges[193].

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[193] This brings us back to Hawkins and the notion of rehearsal and performance in language learning, (1987:x).

11.6 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE 'REAL' IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE LEARNING

We have suggested earlier that the concepts of 'approaching' and 'experiencing the real' represent a particular way of looking at foreign language and culture learning. This is a perspective on foreign language learning which it seems is not evident in the literature, where the word 'real' in this context rarely appears[194]. In order to be able to consider 'approaching the real' in terms of a theory of foreign language learning, we need to be able to contrast the characteristics of the 'real experience' of the target culture as associated with an exchange which we have established in chapter nine with classroom foreign language learning.

Instead therefore of analysing classroom foreign language learning in terms of the content of lessons or the style of teaching, we are looking at how the classroom experience differs from a 'real' language learning situation[195], a 'real' situation defined by pupils' experience of an exchange. Table 11. 2 sets out this material.

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[194] Task based learning which we have discussed in chapter three does talk about 'real-world' situations as the needs on which the tasks are based ('the replication of 'real-world conditions for assessment' (Page, 2004:601), but there is no development of this theme and concept. Cameron, also talks about adopting tasks 'that would try to bring the classroom and 'real' life closer together, (Cameron, 2001:29) but again this is an isolated reference which is not pursued.

[195] We have seen in our examination of the methodology of foreign language teaching that throughout the period covered by this narrative, there has been a concern to make foreign language learning more 'real'. The audio-visual language, communicative competence and task-based learning can all be seen as attempts to get closer to the real experience of the target language but above all in order to allow the processes of L1 acquisition to be brought into play in FL acquisition.

Table 11.2 Classroom foreign language learning (approaching the real) and exchange 'experience of the real'

Classroom language experience	Exchange experience
There is a distance separating classroom foreign language learning from the 'real' target language and culture, which is not naturally present either in the classroom or the surrounding environment.	The distance separating the target language and culture is eliminated following a journey which 'transports' the pupil to a 'real' language and culture environment, as they are immersed in a French family situation. [performance theory, Schechner, 1988]
The absent foreign language and culture needs to be represented in the classroom. In order to do this, the language has to be 'translated' to fit the demands of school and classroom learning, adapting the language and culture in order for it to be accessible to pupils for classroom learning. However in the process of adapting, 'translating' and packaging the language for school use, it becomes transformed into something different from the natural language: 'classroom foreign language' There are however various strategies for making classroom foreign language learning 'approach the real'	The language and culture experienced by the pupil in the 'real-life' situation is no longer a translated, adapted version which has been selected and made accessible to pupils for classroom learning. The pupil therefore has to contend with different forms of language to those with which she has become familiar. The language experienced therefore, doesn't represent an artificial 'staged authencity' (MacCannell, 1999), but a dynamic, functioning language. [c.f. theory of translation, writing culture, Clifford, Marcus, 1984; Sturge, 2007; tourist studies, MacCannell, 1999.]

target language. One of these is the use of drama as a mechanism for reducing the distance from the target language and culture. Here 'real' situations can be represented by creating an 'imagined reality', (Verriour, 1993: 49).	
The language element is the central concern in classroom foreign language learning. Culture elements, while present, tend to represent background information and 'incidental learning' (Byram, 1989:50).	The culture element of the exchange becomes the key factor with language taking on a supporting role, in a reversal to what happens in the classroom. Pupils in a 'real' language situation find themselves in specific cultural contexts in which they need to communicate. While they will use French words where these are available, they will also need to use English and signs to make themselves understood and for communication to take place. [symbolic competence, Kramsch, 2009: 1]
The text book provides a central element in foreign language learning in the classroom with the target language and culture represented by photographs and illustrations and elements of the language being selected for presentation to pupils in suitable chunks, often around a specific topic.	The text book illustrations of France and French life, familiar from classroom learning, now materialise as actual features and identities, replacing representations of them. There are real people to communicate with and actual situations and places to encounter: the exchange partner and family, the

Flash card illustrations and the central role of the cassette recorder as a means of presenting dialogue are further key elements of classroom foreign language learning.	house, the collège. [theory of cultural representations, Hall, 1997]
The classroom foreign language environment presents language in an organised, predictable form. The language is carefully controlled in order to facilitate learning. There is little emphasis on the 'negotiation of meaning' and the kind of 'symbolic competence' (Kramsch, 2009) and intercultural competence, (Byram, 1989) which characterise the exchange experience. Only through language improvisation work, particularly in drama, is the pupil placed in a situation which approximates more closely a 'real' language context.	It is the unpredictable nature of the exchange, which makes the experience most challenging. The controlled environment of the classroom has been replaced by a situation where not only the language but also, the routines and behaviour of the particular environment of the French home need to be understood. [schema theory, Bartlett, 1932; experiential learning, Kolb, 1984]
While the foreign language classroom may make some demands on the pupil (for example where there is exclusive use of the target language), generally these are no different from other areas of the curriculum. The classroom provides a familiar and often unchallenging environment with predictable routines.	The pupil faced with the impact of the 'real' needs to adapt, adjust their behaviour to deal with the circumstances they are now encountering. However, the effect of this encounter with the 'real' may lead to 'culture shock'. [acculturation theory, Linton, 1960; culture shock, Furnham, 1986]

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The foreign language lesson is a regular part of the weekly curriculum for pupils and lasts throughout the period of compulsory foreign language learning, with the option for the pupil to then extend the experience until the end of their time at school and possibly through their time at university.	A defining feature of the exchange experience is its limited duration. After only a few days of 'immersion' in the French family environment, the pupil returns home again, (following a further journey), to familiar environments and routines. [performance theory, Schechner, 1988]

The contrast between these two environments can be summed up in terms of the consequences of these differences for school foreign language learning. The culture element which is often 'incidental' (Byram, 1989) in classroom learning becomes central to the 'real experience' with the context of the situation taking on special importance for understanding. This means that in comparison with the organised and predictable nature of classroom learning, (where a unit of study will follow a particular theme and there is an incremental and controlled development of vocabulary and structures), the 'real experience' as represented by the exchange, is unpredictable and disorganised.

We need now to try and formulate a model of 'approaching the real'.

11.7 TOWARDS A MODEL OF 'APPROACHING THE REAL'

The first question to ask is what a model of 'approaching the real' would look like. We need to provide a definition of what this metaphor[196] involves and establish its potential for clarifying the process of classroom foreign language learning in the middle school, in contrast to the direct experience of the real target language and culture, provided by a pupil exchange.

A model of 'approaching the real' can be seen in terms of three elements or stages in a process of building up a particular position and argument. In the first place the distinction needs to be made between the 'translated' classroom language learning and the 'real' target language and culture. We would then need to make the case for the importance of language learning 'looking beyond the classroom' (DfES, 2007) and trying to 'approach the real'. This doesn't need to be based on anything more complex than the objective for foreign language learning as expressed for example in the 1984 Northumberland curriculum document we have considered: 'achieve a measure of practical communicative competence in French,' to which we would want to add, 'and the ability to apply this skill within a French context'. The final step, in this process, would then be to establish what kind of measures could be introduced into school foreign language learning to make this activity conform more closely with the 'real experience' of the target language and culture.

The stages and process described above not only provide us with what we need for writing out a model of 'approaching the real' but it will be seen also, to match the progress of the narrative of this thesis.

11.7.1 'Approaching the real', as a model of school-based foreign language learning.

As we try and bring together at this point the different elements of the research in order to formulate what this material represents, we have a final problem. This is how we are to describe the outcome of the research. Talking in terms of

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[196] For Kramsch: 'we have to commit ourselves to a set of metaphors but we have to remain aware that these metaphors are the very culture we live by and that in other educational cultures people might live by other metaphors,' (Kramsch, 1993:184).

a theory of school-based foreign language learning seems unjustified, given the fact that the processes we are describing can not be seen in terms cause and effect which might be expected from a genuine theory. Also, as an autobiographical account we are drawing on personal experience rather than presenting a generalised view, supported by numerous examples. We are on safer ground therefore to talk about a model rather than a theory, a model, which provides a model for authentic foreign language learning for pupils of middle school age.

'Approaching the real' seeks to define a different perspective on school foreign language and culture learning. It takes the position that the foreign language practiced in schools represents a 'translated', adapted form of the target language, as a result of the need to conform to the constraints of the classroom and the demands of the school curriculum.

Acceptance of this position comes with the need to address this problem by compensating for this domesticated, scolarised version of the language by looking beyond the immediate classroom environment to approach more closely the real target language and culture. This would be reflected in a commitment to engage in activities, which often through the use of drama, develop in pupils those skills which privilege creative language use and match the unpredictable nature of authentic communication.

In addition, the model of 'approaching the 'real' while designating all activities which get closer to the target language and culture, also places special importance on providing pupils with the opportunity to 'experience the real' ideally, through a pupil exchange where the act of transportation to another country and culture, challenges existing perspectives and can lead to a better understanding and appreciation of others. Finally the model of 'approaching the real' would look towards recent technological developments to create the opportunity for all pupils to have contact with someone from another culture.

11.8 RESEARCH QUESTIONS REVISITED

We will take each research question in turn in order to discover how the research has provided answers.

1. What significance does the analysis of this autobiographical account of personal development and a professional life over thirty-five years, as a middle school French teacher have for the practice of foreign language culture teaching and learning ?

This autobiographical narrative provides an insider's view of the developments which took place over this period and my personal response to the challenges of teaching a foreign language to middle school pupils. There is also the account of personal development and transformation associated with the acculturation to different cultural environments and the need to adapt to these.

The particular value of the account can be seen to come however, from a concern in this research to address a problem in foreign language and culture learning. This is the absence of the 'real' language and culture and the need to represent the language in a format suitable for classroom learning. The historical narrative provides the account of the responses to this problem in terms of the introduction of a series of measures which we have categorised as 'approaching' and 'experiencing the real'. The development of drama as a mechanism for reducing the distance separating pupils from the target language, follows a sequence from improvised drama work in the classroom to the eventual creation of a programme of intensive language work: 'Mission Secrète' taking place in the Lake District.

'Experiencing the real' addresses the problem of the absent foreign language by providing pupils with the opportunity to encounter and experience the foreign culture. This develops from an initial 'expedition' through the tourist- like visit with pupils, until finally, a French exchange programme is established which continues over a period of more than ten years.

Finally, as headteacher there is the chance to propose the building of a language and culture centre which would provide a 'virtual experience' for pupils and provide an educational focus on global studies. Although this is not achieved, the proposals for this resource continue to address the concern to make foreign language learning more 'real' this time by calling on recent technological developments. It proved possible to achieve a more modest format for the language and culture centre by establishing a 'world section' in the new school library.

The analysis of these developments is supported by the diary comments, school documents, pupil questionnaires and published articles which have enabled us to reconstruct the period.

2. To what extent can the different measures introduced to develop foreign language and culture learning at Coates Middle School, recorded in this narrative, be seen in relation to 'approaching the real' or 'experiencing the real' as represented by the target language and culture of French and France ?

We have dealt with this issue throughout the research and in this chapter have finally been able to bring together the different experiences of 'approaching' and 'experiencing the real'. Through discussing these concepts in relation to existing approaches to foreign language and culture learning we have been able to set down a model of 'approaching the real'.

3. What is the genesis for the different learning initiatives described in this narrative, what specific influences and experiences led to the introduction of these measures for extending foreign language and culture learning?

There has been a concern throughout this thesis to establish the genesis for the different learning initiatives using historical method and autoethnography. We can establish here however, the general trends and influences. It is certain that

the period spent living abroad and the lack of success as a pupil in foreign languages are likely to have encouraged a view that it was important to experiment with different learning environments and programmes. There is also the importance of drama as we have made clear, both in terms of personal experience but also the time spent with pupils at Backworth drama centre and the chance to appreciate the potential for drama to extend the learning environment through the creation of an 'imagined reality'.

The Maison de Champréveyres had a particular role to play in the pursuit of intercultural learning and understanding. It took a long time to move towards trying to create something, which might just begin to place language and culture learning as a central, rather than peripheral element in the school curriculum. Even so, despite our best efforts, the language and culture centre failed to materialise and the dream of bringing together those elements of the curriculum associated with world matters into one common approach failed.

11.9 PRACTICAL WORK, a comparison with another area of the curriculum.

One year as a middle school teacher my personal timetable contained a lesson of technology. Once a week therefore with a group of ten year olds I taught this practical subject. The start of the lesson was the opportunity to explain what was to take place, establish the vocabulary and talk through the structure we would be making. At this point the class was gathered at the front of the workshop sitting taking notes at the tables placed there. Then once the 'grammar' had been explained the group set about the task of making whatever item was the objective for the lesson. They would then move off to the work-benches and handling a number of fearsome looking tools would construct their object. As technology teacher for the lesson I would wander round the group checking how things were going and offering advice when I thought this was useful. A brief summing up period at the end of the lesson and the chance to write up notes about what they had done, brought the lesson to a conclusion. By the end of this time the object would either have been made or would be on the way to being finished. The point to make is that at the end of the hour, pupils had something tangible to show for their efforts. Something they would on completion take home to their parents, who would look at and admire this creation that their child had made.

In between trying to pretend I was a competent technology teacher, I watched the activities around me as a French specialist with considerable interest. The comparisons with what I would be doing in the next lesson were evident. It might be that the lesson was also with ten year olds and elements in the French lesson would match what had taken place in technology. There would be work on vocabulary and the writing down of key phrases. But there would not then be that defining moment when children got up from their desks and moved to the work-benches to make something. In the French lesson, there would be the further routine of listening and reading comprehension work, possibly a song and some games but what they would have to show for the end of the lesson

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would be restricted to the notes in their exercise books and perhaps a number of drawings to go with the vocabulary.

What is most striking about this comparison is not just the evidence from one lesson but the build up of the whole series of lessons taking place in the year and the years which follow. The regular introduction of new topics with new helpings of vocabulary and grammar and the problem for pupils of trying to digest this material without having the opportunity to fully develop the practical activities which would make these elements part of their active vocabulary. The 2007 Languages Review provides evidence for the familiar trend of pupils dropping out of foreign language learning. For almost the majority of pupils foreign language learning is an incomplete process, one that does not come to any appropriate conclusion.

French too is a practical subject and this thesis has provided a narrative of the development of a series of initiatives designed to make language learning more 'real'. To provide pupils with the opportunity to show that even with the first rudiments of language they are able to function in the foreign language and get a sense of achievement from their endeavours. Activities which took pupils from the enclosed environment of the classroom out into as diverse locations as the pine forests of Switzerland, the Lake District moorland and perhaps the most exotic of all, the family sitting-room in Saint Brieuc.

The comment from one pupil at the end of the first intensive language session on the French Revolution is significant in this respect: 'I think it was good because it was a different way to learn French, instead of just doing verbs and exercises from books,' (Daniels, 1984:142).

11.10 IN CONCLUSION

To bring this thesis to a final conclusion, we need to set out the key elements of the research as a series of statements, situating them within the personal perspective appropriate for an autobiographical and historical narrative of this kind.

1. In this thesis I have provided the historical and autobiographical narrative of a professional life as a foreign language teacher in a middle school. It has proved possible to trace the developments in foreign language learning over a thirty-five year period from audio-visual language learning through to communicative competence and task-based learning. This provides the context in which the range of different language learning initiatives introduced at Coates Middle School and described in this thesis can be viewed. Due attention is also given to the key educational trends of the period, in particular the Plowden Report of 1967 with its emphasis on discovery methods and learning through doing, which strongly influenced teacher training during the period I spent at Northumberland College of Education. Finally, there is the importance attached, during the early part of this period, to drama as a method of enabling pupils to engage more closely with a particular topic area.

2. The direction of these different learning developments was towards making language learning and indeed, all school learning, come closer to natural learning which approximated real-life language situations (Guberina, 1964, Littlewood, 1964). There is an appreciation, therefore, of the distance separating real-life situations from what is taking place in the language classroom.

   The person who decided to become a foreign language teacher, following a five year period living abroad, expressed clear views on French teaching prior to beginning his career and identified the problem

of the 'divorce between the learning of grammar parrot fashion in the classroom and the French as spoken in France,' (D.F. 22.1.68).

3. The development of the concept of the 'real' in foreign language learning which is such a prominent feature of this thesis and provides the central problem around which the research is articulated, comes partly from the literature on foreign language learning (see particularly Guberina) but also, from the historical aspect of this research which made clear the links between the construction process of history and foreign language learning. In both cases this involves representing something that is absent, (Ricoeur, 2003). We can't return to the past any more than we can actually have the language and culture in the classroom. This is because the target language and culture are not naturally present in the classroom and have to be introduced there, as an adapted, packaged and translated version of the 'real' to make it accessible to pupils learning French, (this process of 'translation' matching the anthropological position of needing to transform observations to written text). This means that school foreign language learning necessarily takes place in the artificial environment of the classroom.

    As a practising foreign language teacher in a middle school over a thirty-five year period, a consistent element in the range of different initiatives introduced by me, address this problem of the artificial nature of classroom foreign language learning. The terminology adopted in this thesis matches this position. Different learning initiatives are categorised according to their relationship with the target language and culture. While most language learning represents 'approaching the real', the opportunity is also provided for pupils to 'experience the real' where there is direct contact with the language and culture through a visit or exchange.

4. The notion of 'approaching the real', the title of this thesis should be seen in terms of a theoretical position, an identified approach which enables a conceptualisation of the research as a whole, a way to understand the design of a range of different learning programmes for application in

middle school foreign language learning (Richard and Rodgers,1983). Identifying the process of school foreign language learning in terms of 'approaching the real' has proved particularly valuable in this research by providing a different perspective on the processes involved in learning another language. The relevance of considering foreign language learning as a representational practice has however, wider implications and has validity for all foreign language learning with the need to ensure that from the earliest stages of the process, there is a concern to look up from the boundaries of the classroom and the constraints of the curriculum to the 'real' target language and culture beyond. We have defined this position as focusing on authentic foreign language learning in contrast to authentic classroom foreign language learning. A distinction which would allow the incorporation of those practical activities such as intensive work or an experience of the 'real' language and culture through an exchange, as central elements of the foreign language learning experience and not, as they are currently, peripheral and sometimes absent features of school-based foreign language learning.

It is importantly, the perspective and perceptions of a practitioner: a foreign language teacher over an extended period, which led to the development of this view and the model of the process of school-based foreign language learning which it incorporates.

5. The learning initiatives described in this thesis provide evidence for this process of adaptation and emphasise the importance of the use of drama as a mechanism for reducing the distance from the target language and culture through role-play and simulation work. The intensive language programme at an outdoor centre in the Lake District providing the most extended and complete version of 'approaching the real' where the practical need to use the foreign language in order to function, matches some of the characteristics of a 'real experience'.

6. The French exchange programme provides pupils with a 'real experience' through the opportunity of living for a week with a French

family; an exercise in experiential learning as pupils directly encounter another language and culture and have to adapt to this new and challenging situation which can lead, as we have seen, to a change in perspective. The exchange programme also, has the advantage of providing a concrete representation of the 'real' French language and culture, the town of Saint Brieuc and the college of Jean-Macé. The target language and culture is given in this way a particular definition, a focus, relevant to pupils' experience and one which can form the basis for both language and culture work within school, involving all pupils and not just those who participate in an exchange.

7. A key element in the thesis is the change and development, taking place over the period covered by the narrative. We have seen that for Bruner (2001), narrative needs to involve a theory of change and transformation and the personal development recorded in these pages demonstrates this process. It is also possible, however, to trace a progression and development in the nature of the different language learning initiatives introduced. The search for more authentic learning environments leading to the measures introduced to approach more closely the target language and culture. In this respect the final version of the intensive language work, 'Mission Secrète', should be seen as the culmination of a series of similar initiatives designed to focus on language learning as an active, practical activity, where the language and culture are represented often through the use of drama (an 'imagined reality', Verriour, 1993). The intensive language work is however, for all its potential for developing language skills, an artificial construct in which the cultural aspects of language learning are only marginal. This is why the intensive language work is replaced by the French exchange programme which, in contrast, provides a 'real experience' of the language and culture, ('there are real people to communicate with and actual situations and places to encounter,' p.318). Transported to a different environment, pupils encounter the foreign language in context and it is the cultural element, which predominates as the language becomes unpredictable, the pupil needing to adopt strategies in order to communicate. The proposal for a

language and culture centre also, needs to be seen within the category of developments designed to address the central problem of the relationship of the 'real' language and culture to the language learning taking place in school.

8. The current development of foreign language learning in primary schools throughout England, gives this narrative of middle school development (where primary age children make up half the school population), a particular relevance. The point is made that it is this early start to foreign language learning aged nine, which makes not just the introduction of, for example intensive language work or pupil exchanges feasible for younger children, but it could be argued, essential. It doesn't matter at what point a foreign language is introduced into the school curriculum, pupils will show an initial enthusiasm and engagement with this new and exciting activity. There is the problem however, of how this positive attitude can be sustained.

The points made by Hawkins about too much language learning involving rehearsal with few opportunities for performance, (Hawkins, 1981) is generally applied to later stages of school foreign language learning. It is equally relevant however, to the early stages and we have made clear our position: that the endless diet of new vocabulary and structures can lead, as we were able to show in earlier research on the intensive language work, (Daniels, 2000) to 'vocabulary dormancy'. Macaro[197] provides a useful analysis of this position: 'Daniels concluded that there may well be such a construct as *vocabulary dormancy* where a number of words become fixed in a classroom learning situation, at an intermediate stage on the vocabulary knowledge continuum,' (Macaro, 2003:70). It is the practical, active language experience of intensive work or participation in an exchange which we argue can act as a catalyst to classroom foreign language learning by enabling words only partially known from this environment to become fully acquired as productive, as opposed to receptive, elements of language; 'there were

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[197] Macaro, E. (2003), *Teaching and learning a second language.* London: Continuum.

clear benefits to vocabulary growth in intensive exposure and active involvement in L2 interaction,' (Macaro, 2003:72). This points to the likelihood that the exchange experience has a similar impact on language development, although we do not have the data in place to be able to demonstrate this.

This is not however, just about language and culture development, but also the affirmation for pupils that after three years of foreign language learning, they can actually do something with their language skills, surprising themselves by finding, they are able to function, (at however basic a level), within a French speaking environment.

9. Looking back at my eighteen year old self with which this narrative began, I wonder how he would have seen the developments described in this thesis? The person who viewed French culture from the safe distance of the balcony and watched the 'French women with their full shopping baskets and long loaves of bread' (G.D. 24.2.64) went through his own process of language and culture development with the need to acculturate to a range of different environments. This personal experience is not forgotten and translates into a determination as a language teacher to try and make school foreign language learning a more authentic and real experience for pupils. I think he would feel that the particular journey that he has undertaken and the measures introduced, do show a consistent approach to the problem of the absent foreign language and culture, a concern to reduce the distance of the classroom from the 'real experience' of the target language and culture.

He might also, however, feel frustrated that foreign language learning is so often an exclusively classroom based activity in which the 'real' target language and culture can be seen as a distraction from the purpose of preparing pupils for examinations which are based on those skills most easily developed through classroom learning. Skills, which we have seen, may not always match the unpredictable nature of 'real' language

use where the cultural context in which the conversation takes place becomes of central importance.

10. Finally, I hope that this personal account of one language teacher's response to the challenges of teaching a foreign language and culture will encourage other teachers to experiment with intensive language work and provide for pupils the opportunity to participate in an exchange and through such activities, allow them to discover the particular demands and satisfaction of communicating in another language and engaging with another culture.

AFTERWORD

Photo A.1   Ella Daniels outside her new school, New Orleans.

And finally, because this is an autobiographical account we need to bring this narrative full circle and so end as we began, with a photograph. The photograph of me with my grandfather at the beginning of the narrative is replaced, here at the end of the narrative with the photograph of a small girl, Ella Salome Daniels, my granddaughter, outside her new school on the first day. There is a French flag and a sign, 'école maternelle' but this is not France but New Orleans, Louisana, USA.

It seems appropriate to end this narrative by looking forward (as Rorty advises), considering what happens afterwards, once the account is ended and as author and actor, I withdraw from the scene. Whatever distance we travel and journeys we make, there are curious and often unexpected legacies, repeating patterns of lives and experiences. Ella cannot possibly imagine what is to happen to her as she goes through that door and finds something that even an adult would

have trouble anticipating. It's not just about starting school for the first time and all that involves but the fact that she will also be leaving behind a familiar English speaking world; all communication will be in French, in a French run school with French teachers. Whether this is 'approaching' or 'experiencing the real' is arguable but this 'real' will certainly have an impact, with all those familiar elements of culture shock and the need to adjust to new circumstances. But, and here's the point: these are the enriching experiences which give colour to our lives and a sense of understanding of the wide world in which we live and our place within it: 'the great globe itself, yea all which it inherit' (Shakespeare:Tempest, iv: 1).

It is suitable to end with a quotation from the Tempest which sees its protagonists wrecked on a tropical island and transported in this way, from their familiar environment and routines before finally, with the ending of the play, returning back again to their previous existences, but through this 'experience of the real' they 'suffer a sea-change into something rich and strange', (ibid).

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