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## Cultural Discovery as a Post-Year Abroad Agent of Change for UK Modern Language Students

Cathy M. Hampton Dr

*University of Warwick*, [c.m.hampton@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:c.m.hampton@warwick.ac.uk)

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**Cultural discovery as a post-year abroad agent of change for UK modern language students**  
**Découverte culturelle en tant qu'agent de changement pour les étudiants britanniques de langues modernes, une année après leurs études à l'étranger**

Cathy Hampton, School of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Warwick

**Abstract**

This article discusses a project running at Warwick University from 2013-15, in which 11 undergraduate students of French studying abroad in France and Canada were tasked with sourcing cultural products (*realia*) and transforming them into learning objects in order to enhance language learning in a selection of elementary and secondary schools local to the University. It evaluates chronologically the metacognitive, affective, and intercultural developments that arose through students assuming the role of *cultural experts*, with responsibility for near peer learners, as they navigated a new host culture. The article explores to what extent the duty to act as intermediaries between a foreign culture and their own deepened engagement with the study abroad placement. It also examines current Higher Education pedagogical theory in order to argue that targeted motivational, student-led, public-facing projects stretching beyond traditional academic and disciplinary boundaries engender highly-desirable aptitudes for life-long learning, and contends that study abroad offers huge potential for this kind of engagement.

**Résumé**

Cet article décrit un projet en cours à l'Université de Warwick de 2013-15, dans lequel 11 étudiants de premier cycle en français ayant pris part à des études à l'étranger en France et au Canada, ont été chargés de s'approvisionner en matériels culturels (*realia*) et de les transformer en objets d'apprentissage afin d'améliorer l'apprentissage des langues dans une sélection d'écoles primaires et secondaires, dans le voisinage de l'université. Il évalue chronologiquement les développements métacognitifs, affectifs et interculturels qui surgissaient chez les étudiants assumant le rôle d'experts culturels, avec la responsabilité envers les apprenants quasi pairs, pendant qu'ils se frayaient un chemin dans une nouvelle culture d'accueil. L'article étudie jusqu'à quel point le devoir d'agir en tant qu'intermédiaires entre une culture étrangère et leur propre culture a approfondi l'engagement envers leur stage d'études à l'étranger. De plus, il examine les théories pédagogiques actuelles d'enseignement supérieur afin d'argumenter que les projets publics de motivation, ciblés, menés par les étudiants, s'étendant au-delà des traditionnelles frontières académiques et disciplinaires, engendrent des aptitudes hautement désirables pour l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie, et soutient qu'étudier à l'étranger offre d'énormes possibilités pour ce genre d'engagement.

**Keywords:** Culture, curriculum, Bildung, supercomplexity, learner, intercultural, global citizen, Year Abroad, student-as-producer, situated learning, higher education, secondary education, MFL

**Mots-clés:** culture ; curriculum ; Bildung ; super-complexité ; apprenant ; citoyenneté globale ; année à l'étranger ; étudiant en tant que producteur ; apprentissage localisé/situé ; enseignement supérieur ; éducation secondaire ; MFL

**Introduction**

Higher Education (HE) in the twenty-first century is adapting itself rapidly to “a radically transformed cultural and global landscape”: one “where borders are constantly shifting” (Giroux, interviewed in Guilherme, 2006, p. 169). A landscape that, in Barnett's (2000, 2012) words, requires a “liquid” pedagogy that develops in

students the lifelong dispositions to manage their labile futures. Once the particular province of modern language degrees, study abroad increasingly sits at the centre of UK and European education programs striving to teach global citizenship (Coleman, 2015). And yet, in the UK, modern foreign language (MFL) study is under threat at school and university levels, perceived as being either unnecessary in an Anglo-centric world or too hard to guarantee success in a results-driven culture (Board & Tinsley, 2015). This article will argue that by negotiating these tensions with their students, MFL teachers in schools and universities can engage in a pioneering and situated way with crucial questions of agency and power in this context. Giroux observes that “there is a certain civic virtue and ethical value in extending our exposure to difference and otherness” (qtd in Guilherme, 2006, p. 172). It is this sense of collective responsibility that this article explores.

This article takes an individuated approach to its examination of the year abroad experience (Campbell & Zegwaard, 2015; Coleman, 2015; Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015), focusing on a case study involving 15 British undergraduate students of French (in a cohort of approximately 100 students) spending their third year of university abroad as either language assistants, as international students on the Erasmus program, or on work placements. These students (recruited as volunteers) were invited to identify and collect *realia*, culturally significant artefacts, in their host countries that could be used to enhance language teaching and learning through culture in the secondary school classroom. On their return, the students would discuss their acquisitions and develop them into learning resources. To explore what *culture* might mean for this group of year abroad students, I will draw on current research that recognizes both their situated, embodied, individual experiences (Bengtsen, 2014) and their socio-cultural and economic roles within bigger systems. I will also probe the nature of their *agency* and its means of expression in a project that combined autoethnographic self-construction with communal interaction galvanised through social action (Archer, 2013; Batchelor, 2014; Bengsten, 2014; IEREST, 2015; Miyahara, 2015; Ryan, 2014).

A detailed analysis of the project and its outcomes will follow shortly. First, it is important both to establish the theoretical and epistemic questions that are raised in inviting this kind of cultural engagement among students at this stage in their university careers and to acknowledge the importance of infusing theory with lived experience and individual voices (Bengsten, 2015; Coleman, 2015; Miyahara, 2015).

### **Current higher education discourses and year abroad counter culture**

Getting a higher education degree is increasingly considered to be a private investment rather than a public good. [...] The neo-liberal logic of markets has entered the realm of (higher) education. (Kehm, 2014, p. 91)

Learning a foreign language is a largely humanistic endeavor rather than an elite or strictly methodological task and the force of its importance has to be tied to its relevance as an empowering, emancipatory, and democratic function. (Guilherme, 2006, p. 174)

The neo-liberal logic, which Kehm views as predominant in today’s HE landscape, has engendered an employability rhetoric (Marginson, 2014) that values economic productivity enabled through higher education’s teaching of so-called transferable skills alongside intrinsic subject knowledge. The Confederation of British Industry’s Director for Education and Skills, Susan Anderson, explains that “these skills can be gained not just by coursework, but by a whole host of other methods, such as

participating in societies, volunteering and doing work experience” (CBI, 2011, para. 5). Today’s students are thus highly motivated both by a discourse of measurable results within their specialism and by the drive to demonstrate social and communal engagement as a measurable outcome (CBI, 2011), something that is very difficult to test empirically (Marginson, 2014) and that sits uncomfortably with dynamic, labile processes of exchange across communities and cultures that humanities disciplines seek to explore with their students. Academics have expressed concern about this “‘false choice’ [...] between curricula for employability versus ‘educating the mind’” (Shay, 2014, p. 139; see also Case, 2013). More worryingly, embracing the culture of the market has been viewed as a threat to the moral and ethical vision of the university as a public institution, something that diminishes the well-being of its students and of the society it serves: the universities “have become ethically bankrupt places [...] where only economic values matter. There is little sense of community or of a pastoral mission any more” (Machell, 2015, para. 11).

As Kehm has noted, neo-liberal single-mindedness is “not uncontested” by HE institutions (2014, p. 91), and in twenty-first century evaluations of the purpose of the university we can detect a desire to reconsider both the ontology of the student learner (Barnett, 2000) and the identity of the university as an institution contributing to the public good (Archer & Maccarini, 2013; Case, 2013; Marginson, 2014; Ryan, 2014; Shay, 2014). Instrumental in this re-evaluation of the notion of the university and its graduates has been the idea of global citizenship, made possible, if not necessary, by the confluence of electronic communication, more affordable travel, and the massification of higher education. Case (2013, pp. 21-22) argues that “a good university should expand horizons and allow for an ability to function outside one’s natal context,” and that this very ambition should force consideration of a new kind of ontological approach to learning. If reflexivity is linked to the relational and the real because students inescapably have to be themselves *with others elsewhere*, then the identity goalposts should change. The cognitive dissonance produced by difference should prompt genuinely new ways of thinking, since collaboration and communication become not just desirable skills, but a means of surviving in a new space.

These ambitions resonate powerfully with those of us who work with MFL students because they go to the heart of our discipline. Oral and written communication in a foreign language; exploring its artistic and socio-political expression; translating its idioms: all these things have forced language students to engage very personally with questions of culture and identity for centuries. Giroux challenges specialists in language and culture to wave a banner for an *engaged citizenship* (Guilherme, 2006, p. 169):

As [global] citizenship becomes increasingly privatized and youth are increasingly educated to become consuming subjects rather than critical social subjects, it becomes all the more imperative for educators working within the humanities to rethink the space of the social, and to develop a critical language in which notions of the public good, public issues, and public life become central to overcoming the privatizing and depoliticizing language of the market.

Because study abroad is now more valued institutionally, we in MFL should not rest on our laurels, but ensure that the year abroad is worked out in terms of critical as well as linguistic theory, so that we set creative agendas for this liminal space in the curriculum. This has been the goal of the recent IEREST program, which stresses that “interculturality is [...] a lifelong learning process which entails the recognition and appreciation of one’s own and others’ multiplicities,” and warns that “immersion in a

different environment does not in itself reduce stereotypical perceptions of otherness” (IEREST, 2015, p. 8).

For MFL teachers concerned with learning on the year abroad, Coleman’s signaling of the danger of pinning study abroad down to a series of measurable *linguistic* outcomes is also salient (2015, p. 39). Coleman draws attention to possible research bias toward those aspects of the year abroad that are more easily measurable (vocabulary, grammar, etc.), something that might cause us to neglect to recognize that language learning is but a sub-field in the epistemic possibilities offered by the year abroad. It is exciting to see the confluence of some current strands of research within the disciplines of social science, pedagogy, and language learning, which are seeking to theorize anew our situated engagement with the material aspects of culture and society and the transcendent properties conferred by that engagement. Under the microscope here is the individuated complexity of the twenty-first century learner whose identity is simultaneously singular and networked, real and imagined, sensual and cerebral, in an array of new dimensions (IEREST, 2015, pp. 46-47). How to be effective in an environment where “culture is neither homogeneous, stable, nor bounded” (Eriksen, 2014, p. 56) is a key question that has prompted new and diverse metaphors of the education process: on the one hand, what Bengtsen (2014, pp. 176-177) calls an “existential Bildung,” which uses images of fluidity and flux to teach readiness for change; on the other, a “categorical Bildung,” which links personal engagement in particular socio-cultural situations with the consolidation of core cultural values. This *combination* of imagined projection toward an ever-shifting future and reflection on the tangible properties of the present requires emotion and cognition to be openly negotiated by the alert learner. Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) and Pellegrino Aveni (2005) have stressed that language learning is not “socioculturally neutral” (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015, p. 74), but “a dynamically evolving relationship between learner and context” (p. 85) that demands the learner’s awareness of a shifting self. Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014) have shown how envisioning a future (or even past) self engaged in an event stimulates similar neurological pathways to those stimulated during a live experience of that event; and thus that past, present, and future selves constantly reinvigorate each other with an abundance of sensual messages. Current educational theory would like to grasp this abundance and harness it in a language that carries with it “in tone and style the ‘creative force’ of the world itself” (Bengtsen, p. 182), and given that the year abroad generates a particularly intensive set of socio-cultural experiences, we should think about ways to encourage our students abroad to do the same.

One way to do this is to prompt metacognitive awareness through tasks that promote students’ understanding of the interaction between agency (their individual power) and structure (the influence of their social context(s)). Maccarini (2013, p. 3) argues that, despite the need for students to recognize their own partial and socially-constructed view of the world they find themselves in (something that programs on intercultural awareness and critical theory will teach them), it is important to avoid “the reduction of social dynamics to language games, or to whatever relativist intellectual frameworks invoke” because paradoxically these can fall back onto “self-referential observations of the world” (see also Prandini, 2013; Vande Berg, Paige, & Lou, 2012). Recent intercultural teaching initiatives such as the IEREST program are alert to these dangers and seek to mitigate them, with IEREST (2015, p. 8; emphasis added) stating its aim to “stimulat[e] students to go beyond national diversities and enjoy their own and others’ multiplicity as *individuals*.” Maccarini (p. 3) argues, with a somewhat different emphasis, that conceiving of being-in-the-world as, first and

foremost, a *communal* enterprise should prompt educators to stimulate *collective* action in their students: “engagement involves both a situation and an action, namely the deliberative decision to ‘get involved’, investing ourselves in certain specific problems, goals, forms of individual and social life.” This takes proper account of the fact that an “I” is not an entity with clearly circumscribed boundaries, but something whose existence is predicated upon the existence of a “you” and a “we” (Prandini, pp. 55-56). It asserts that consideration of the self is necessarily dialectical (Case, 2013) and that “we-ness” lies at the root of our relationship with and perception of reality (Prandini, p. 70).

In an ever-shifting landscape of global identities, we have to be open to the epistemic possibilities of thinking communally and plurally in new ways. The project I outline has sought to explore the (meta)cognitive advantages of stimulating social engagement and conferring social responsibility outside of the normal curriculum requirements of the year abroad. Did the student participants position themselves differently as global citizens as a result?

### **The project: Scope and timeline**

The idea for the project emerged from my work on the use of virtual learning environments during the compulsory third year abroad, which explored the possibilities these offered for building student-led communities of practice in a number of different areas (Hampton, 2015). Challenging students with a series of scaffolded, open-ended tasks revealed their willingness to embrace their agency during this liminal year and to re-evaluate it. As learners and active social participants they began to be able to pinpoint more precisely their ability to effect change while in the host country.

The majority of French Studies students at Warwick University find themselves working in an educational context during their year abroad, with around 70% undertaking the role of English language assistant in elementary and secondary schools, 20-25% taking up university places through the Erasmus exchange scheme, and a very small minority undertaking paid work placements. To initiate a project that would appeal to the majority’s year abroad contexts, I sent out a challenge inviting all second-year students to consider acting as resource creators and curriculum enhancers for local UK secondary schools while in the host country the following year. I appealed to students’ own recent experience as secondary-school language learners and drew their attention to the steady decline in language study at secondary level, the effects of which have been felt in many higher education MFL departments for a number of years (see University Council of Modern Languages, 2016). Working with an MFL specialist in the Institute for Education, we identified areas currently considered problematic in secondary MFL: a rather stagnant, uninspiring curriculum (Wiggins, 2016); a “lack of awareness of the value of languages,” and a fear of engaging with a subject perceived as disproportionately “difficult” (Board & Tinsley, 2015, p. 138). Could Warwick students find some inspiring solutions for this lethargy among secondary pupils during their year abroad and with the tools of electronic communication at their disposal? And could MFL teachers also reconfigure teaching for intercultural awareness after incorporating this extra activity?

The intention in posing these questions was to charge students to consider a live issue within the MFL field to which they were uniquely placed to respond. They could be considered “near peer learners” (Murphey, 1998), close enough in age to discern what might appeal to adolescent learners; and they were (unlike classroom teachers) situated practitioners in the host country, able to respond immediately to live

socio-cultural issues. The project was thus predicated upon a number of the pedagogical aspirations articulated above: it had an ethical drive (the well-being of secondary pupils and the future of the MFL sector); it was a communal undertaking (though in diverse locations, fulfilling diverse roles, the students clearly identified themselves as a group with a mission); and it was a real-world undertaking that allowed students to consider themselves change-makers. Dörnyei, Ibrahim, and Muir (2014, p. 12) call this kind of project a “direct motivational current”: “a relatively short-term, highly intense burst of motivational energy along a specific pathway towards a clearly defined goal: it is *over and on top of* the steady motivation any student will exhibit throughout the year.” It requires vision of its participants. “includ[ing] a strong *sensory element*: it involves tangible images related to achieving the goal” (p. 13), and it asks for a high level of personal and affective commitment. With its pedagogical drive, the project aimed to “introduce students to the complicated and far from obvious—but significant—relationship between social location, experience, and knowledge” (Moya, 2009, p. 58); and in presenting students with the challenge to select tangible objects that would both embody the linguistic and cultural values of their host countries *and* tell the story of *why* it is good to learn languages, I hoped that a heightened meta-reflexivity would inhere in their engagement with cultural artefacts.

## Methods

### *Participants*

Eleven students initially volunteered to take part in the project following an online call for expressions of interest in January 2013, sent by me to all second-year outgoing students. The students who volunteered were alerted to a “student as producer” fund for staff-student collaborative projects offered by Warwick’s Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning (IATL), and we encouraged the group to bid for funds. In early February 2013 they submitted a successful bid to fund staff input and the purchasing and distribution of resources during and after the year abroad (See appendix 1). News of the project spread, and three more students subsequently joined the group. Table 1 below sets out the names of participants who engaged significantly with the project, their degree, the type of residence abroad placement they were engaged in, its location, and its duration.<sup>1</sup> The nationality and ethnicity of all study participants were British and white. All assumed the role of resource gathering and creating, with one (Jack) named as student project leader responsible for the participation of other students.

**Table 1: Overview of Participants**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Degree studied</b>	<b>Year abroad placement type</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Participation in current study</b>
Amy	French Studies	Language assistant, secondary	Toulouse, France	January 2013 – November 2015
Anna	French Studies	Language assistant, secondary	Angoulême, France	January 2013 – June 2015
Ben	French and History	Work placement	Hautes études commerciales de Paris (HEC), Paris, France	January 2013 – June 2015

<sup>1</sup> The students listed have given their consent for their names to be used in this article.

Elizabeth	French Studies	Language assistant, secondary	Amiens, France	January 2013 – June 2015
Fiona	French with Theatre Studies	Language assistant, secondary	Lanaudière, Québec, Canada	January 2013 – June 2015
Gwendoline	French with Film Studies	Language assistant, secondary	Beauce, Québec, Canada	January 2013 – June 2015
Heather	French and History	Language assistant, elementary	Nancy, France	January 2013 – January 2015
Jack	French and History	Erasmus study placement	Sorbonne, Paris, France	January 2013 – June 2015
Julia	French and History	Erasmus study placement	Paris, France	January 2013 – June 2015
Lauren	French and History	Language assistant, elementary	Toulouse, France	January 2013 – June 2015
Molly-May	English and French	Language assistant, secondary	Paris, France	March 2013- June 2015

The project included myself as lead academic and four other staff members: two supporting academics (Ariane, Joanna) and two MFL teachers (Emma, Jessica).

### ***Project stages***

The project can be divided into three distinct stages: pre-sojourn, in-sojourn, and post-sojourn, the content of which is set out below:

- Pre-sojourn: this comprises the student-led funding application process; attendance at a training session on secondary language learning delivered by a Warwick Institute of Education specialist (May, 2013); visits to one of three local secondary MFL departments with connections to the Institute (June, 2013); student-led establishment of a group online space, initially populated with reports and discussions on their schools visits.
- In-sojourn: student-led negotiation of project principles, gathering of materials (both physical and digital), and discussion of their merits (October, 2013, to June, 2014); establishment of new online spaces for sharing findings; stimulation of online discussion and reflection where necessary by academic staff and a secondary MFL teacher.
- Post-sojourn: collaborative work between academic staff, two MFL teachers and students to transform a selection of materials into learning objects (October, 2014, to June, 2015); recruitment of new students for the next iteration of the project by original student participants and staff.

### ***Data collection and analysis***

The following data was collected across each of the three stages of the project and will be analyzed in turn:

- Pre-sojourn: online group discussions relating to the application for funds and the schools visits, as well as the IATL application submitted.
- In-sojourn: online discussions between group members, some initiated by academics and teachers, others initiated by the students; interim questionnaire completed by 5 students.
- Post-sojourn: online discussions between group members; conversations at two face-to-face workshops involving academic and teaching staff and students,



offering guidance in the selection and building of resources; a filmed group interview of 42 minutes involving two members of academic staff, one MFL teacher, and 7 students, calling for a reflective review of the project outcomes. The data selected for analysis are illustrative of a number of factors. Of prime interest to me as lead academic are questions concerning the level of student metacognitive engagement in evidence at each stage in the process: Where are the high and low points? Does this kind of volunteer engagement add value to, or, indeed, challenge pedagogical initiatives set to facilitate student learning during residence abroad? Also of interest are indicators of organizational and conceptual strengths and weaknesses that could be instrumental in shaping further iterations of the project.

### **Pre-sojourn engagement**

The esprit de corps that initially characterized the volunteer group could be described as one of crusading zeal: these near peer learners were still young enough to recall their own experiences of the secondary MFL curriculum, to identify with this age group, and to aspire to offer them something more engaging. The language of the project outline was a broad, ambitious narrative, as one might expect in a bid:

We are seeking to help develop a curriculum which motivates and engages pupils by heightening awareness of contemporary French culture through greater exposure to authentic French materials and experiences.

Our findings will look to bring our experience directly to school pupils much more effectively than a textbook ever could.

Discussion on the group's Facebook page reveals consciousness of uneven access to global learning opportunities among school pupils, about which one student, Julia, expresses a desire to mitigate:

Thanks jack [sic], that looks great. Could maybe add in a bit about how for those who aren't able to visit the countries themselves whilst at school, first-hand cultural materials will really help bring languages to life. Importantly, they can help bring enjoyment to language studies by taking the language [sic] out of the text book.

Seven students contributed to discussions about content, wording and budget-setting; 9 offered affirmative comments about the bid. Responsibility to engage with the host culture had been fostered: these students had begun to conceive of themselves as emissaries for that culture even before their arrival. They had employed the kind of imagination and vision that Dörnyei, Ibrahim and Muir (2014) pinpoint as conducive to sustaining motivation and promoting agency. In visiting local schools, the students also engaged in a rudimentary analysis of pedagogy, focusing particularly on materials available to pupils. A tension between text and experience was observed, even as students acknowledged teachers' efforts to bring what was current into the classroom. First, the textbooks were now used in a limited capacity in the secondary language classrooms they visited. Limitations of this learning tool were noted, for example by Liz: "Pupils liked that the use of textbooks was rare—the textbooks they had used still described Germany as East and West Germany!" Second, PowerPoints and worksheets were noted to "include[] textbook style activities such as matching pictures to words" (Fiona and Molly-May), replacing to a large degree the course book. Students noted teachers' efforts to engage with contemporary culture using these and other electronic resources. One student, Liz, conducted an interview with pupils in which they expressed a dislike for "PowerPoints that are the basis/last for the whole lesson—can get disinterested when sitting there." As we will see, this

tension between electronic and material resources was to be interrogated in more detail once the resource collection began.

### **In-sojourn engagement**

The students began to engage with the project about a month after arriving in their host countries, using their own Facebook page and a dedicated area on the French department's Moodle. The interest in pedagogy evident in the schools reports of the summer was revived in November, 2013, when Jack offered an open invitation to the group to attend a conference in Paris on the use of technology in schools, colleges, and universities. Amie, Ben, Jack, and Julia attended and shared their findings with the group. The conference had clearly opened their eyes to the interplay between the aspirational, the theoretical and the practical, as Julia's post indicates:

The questions raised about how to adapt learning to the modern world, and also whether to engage with capitalist markets in a state education system, certainly made me think about the nouveaux problématiques [sic] we are faced with today. I then went to a talk and demonstration with school kids of the use of personal blogs in a French class. The teacher, from Nantes, was the first to use this system of setting up personal blogs for all of her students, which she could monitor but otherwise remained private spaces for the students unless they invited others to look at their blogs. All of the students, who were quite young, were really excited by their blogs, and had written book reviews or made short videos, which their friends could comment on too ('moi je l'ai lu aussi, trop cool!'). The teacher only corrected spelling and languages if the blog entry was selected (with permission from the student) for a public blog, which parents also could view. It reminded me of the e-portfolio system at Warwick, and I don't know if school children use this kind of forum for languages in England? It could definitely be a good secure resource which might encourage [sic] older kids with a bit more advanced languages to watch french [sic] films or read more outside of the class, especially if it can be personalised a bit and remain private. However I do remember as I got older finding those kind of methods of learning less exciting so maybe in terms of engagement it works better with younger children. What do you think? One main benefit was the sense of autonomy of learning it gave the children, which they really appreciated, and seemed to really help encourage reading.

This discussion, which examines politics and pedagogy, indicates the ability of socially-engaged students to "become critical agents actively questioning and negotiating the relationship between theory and practice, critical analysis and common sense, and learning and social change" (Guilherme, 2006).

In the early months of the project this tangible engagement with pedagogy sat alongside more personal journeys of discovery as students wrestled with the more abstract targets they had set themselves: to reflect the host culture through *objects*. Endeavours to select cultural objects initially demonstrated a fascination with daily life in a new culture: a sensory bombardment was felt as familiar rituals took on a foreign twist. Taste and sight featured particularly in discussion forums: those placed in schools homed in on canteen menus; others were drawn to visual imagery and linguistic features evident in advertising, tourism, and public services. As the year went on, artefacts that expressed an affinity with a local or regional identity, or those that represented transformational personal and/or professional encounters were more likely to be prioritized (see the students' personal fact files in Appendix 2). I have selected for discussion below examples from 9 students for whom there is a clearly discernable pathway from in-sojourn to post-sojourn reflection and where this reflection has material consequences for learning object creation.

Ben's priority in selecting resources, as he explained in a post-year-abroad group feedback meeting, was to capture the everydayness of Parisian life:

A lot of the stuff I picked up I would have picked up anyway: it was kind of maps and guides and tickets that I picked up by virtue of living in Paris [...] so it was kind of the practical day to day life: it wasn't really a conscious effort all the time, and in some ways I feel that made it a little bit more authentic, because it's a genuine lived experience.

Ben became an avid collector and classifier of travel tickets because of a troubling first encounter on the Paris metro:

I [...] had absolutely no idea where to go, what to do, what ticket to buy [...]. After a conversation with an SNCF representative, and a fight with the touch screen ticket machine, I had my ticket and was on my way, only to find that the ticket was in fact the wrong one, leading to a confrontation between myself, several large suitcases and a turnstile barrier before having to purchase a second ticket.

For Molly-May it was the culture shock of arriving at the lycée where she taught to find pupils on strike that prompted her to collect her pupils' written responses to the incident:

There were student protests outside my school and across Paris within about two weeks of me beginning teaching there about the deportation of a Roma girl and so I got students to write a short account of their involvement in the protest or lack of involvement in the protest, which I then used in the lesson plan.

Julia collected resources on the French prison system because she became involved in prison visiting in Paris:

On my year abroad I taught English in an adult male prison through the organisation *Genepi*. I met other people involved in charities and organisations linked to prison reform or prison abolition, including a member of the 'association' *L'Envolée*. I went to listen to their live radio show and regularly read the journal.

Several students were fascinated with the *bande dessinée* ("comic") genre because its cultural value was so prized: Ben spoke of it as "that which represents 'true' France"; it was the subject of a national festival in Angoulême (which Anna, as a local resident, attended); it was ubiquitous in diverse and unexpected locations—read on the metro as well as in the playground, by adults and by children; and this was the case both in France and in Canada. Lauren reflects on the intercultural dialogue that ensues when she explored the project and the *bande dessinée* as artefact with her host family: "The children of the family I live with (year 7 and 8 equivalent) have lots of these books and when I asked them about this project and their ideas, *BD* [*bandes dessinées*] was the resource that they thought would work best with people their age in England."

Finally, regional differences, particularly the contrast between life in the capital and life in *la France profonde*, pushed students Amy and Liz to seek out resources that testified to diversity by appealing to sensory experience (See Appendix 2).

### **From artefact to learning tool**

The responsibility to transform as well as to collect was impressed upon students in a post by one of the secondary MFL teachers (Jessica) who joined the project as a staff member:

I feel strongly that you need to make sure the resources you provide are not just items you have collected, but a ready to use resource that a teacher can slot into their lessons easily. For example, there is no point just giving me a map of the town you live in—I can just get that from the Internet—but I would love to receive a map of your town complete with activities that allow students to learn places in the town or directions.

The transformation from artefact to learning resource was, however, a significant challenge. Students soon recognized that the careful selection of appropriate materials was the easy part. Giving them a vitality that would be felt in the classroom would be a much more difficult undertaking! At length, the group became conscious that in order for their resources to have an incisive impact, they needed to be different from material available to pupils at the click of a mouse. As Heather summarizes:

When we went on our [school] visits the issue that so many things are readily available online came up, and so I keep talking myself out of getting possible things because they could be found online... Or else I've been finding nice authentic things, but can't really work out how they could be worked into a lesson.

Thus the group experienced a conflict between the affective dimensions of the project (expressed as delight in material objects discovered—a delight that they wanted to communicate) and its pedagogical ambitions, as Heather and Anna remark:

I particularly liked some of the story books I saw, and bought one as a resource—while I'm having trouble making it into a coherent resource, I think it's interesting seeing what French kids would see. The book I bought encompasses local culture, recipes and interesting grammar points, so I think such written texts are a wealth of material!

I thought it would be easier to find materials and think of ideas straight away. However I struggled to know what to look for, and how to make an interesting activity out of the hundred of leaflets I collected! I liked collecting the maps of the towns/cities I visited, and think that they could be useful for a lesson on directions(?)

Thus some members of the group experienced what Ryan (2014, p. 5) calls “contextual incongruity”: the simple goals of the original project—to find enticing artefacts—revealed themselves to be more complex than anticipated and required a process of reorientation. For some, this produced a stronger “sense of agency”; for others, it was one factor that made continued engagement with the project in the post-sojourn phase too much of a challenge.

### **Post-sojourn**

Over the summer of 2014, the students listed the resources they wanted to make use of and on their return to university in October, 2014, they attended a workshop (given by Jessica) at which they showcased their artefacts and ideas. They then arranged themselves into topic teams (travel and tourism; prison and protest; children's literature; food) and met at regular intervals in 2014 and 2015 to plan. The planning workshops proved difficult to arrange because the demands of final-year studies frequently left the students short of time, causing three students to drop out at this stage. Remaining group members, in consultation with Jessica and me, decided to produce hard copy resources that could be handled by pupils, so that artefacts could retain their impact as *material* cultural products. Further, it was established at this workshop that the artefacts should tell a story that reached back to the student, so that pupils would get as close as they could to experiencing the object in a social and

affective context. We thus engaged to produce multiple resource packs for each activity (allowing 6 packs for a class of 30 pupils), each containing a fact file that narrated the story of the object and its collector (See Appendix 2).

### **From cognitive skills-building to metacognitive awareness and change**

In the following section, I will analyze the fruits of a practical workshop held to complete the aforementioned course packs and a group discussion held on the same day in June, 2014, between 7 group members, two academic members of staff, and one MFL secondary teacher. Analysis of these events will consider how a range of skills and deeper metacognitive awareness developed through the students' personal and communal engagement with the project's aims in the context of (a) their allegiance to UK schools and pupils, (b) their ambition to fulfil HE learning objectives, and (c) their commitment to bring alive host culture experiences for a target audience.

At this late stage in the project, the students reiterated a desire to inspire MFL school pupils and to replace sterile classroom experiences with authentic live ones as paramount reasons for their continued participation. The lexes of relevance ("necessary," "important," "interesting," "what pupils might actually use if they were going to France"), and usefulness ("opportunity," "seeing differences in practice") were much used. Imagining herself in the position of the student encountering her resources, Lauren declares:

I think it's quite exciting to be able [...] to, like, have a sense of achievement that you've understood something which is actually French and is actually a part of the French culture instead of reading something in a text book which you might understand but you know that it's been put there for your understanding whereas if you can go out there and be able to understand something which you know French culture uses all the time, I think that's quite exciting.

Students were, however, able to pinpoint problems of professional competency within the group acting as barriers to the realization of their objectives, as Amy clarifies:

I think [...] some of us maybe felt a little bit constrained by the fact that we're not teachers and don't actually know, you know, how best to use a resource [...]. We have a resource and we like the resource but it's ..., yeah. Sometimes it was a bit frustrating to work out somehow how to fit it in.

Lauren and Anna spoke of similar confusion about lesson planning and differentiation:

Trying how to use the resources to make lesson plans; how to convert them into, like, teachable lessons, yes, was quite a challenge, but [...] and how to adapt them to different levels as well, like what you can use for year 7s to year 9s and what you can use for sixth form.

Ricci and Pritscher (2015) call this recognition of personal and group limitations "productive perplexity" and deems it essential to quality learning: where students are pushed to formulate their own questions about cognitive needs, the learning process is more complete. Together staff and students decided to convene a hands-on workshop to address the cognitive, linguistic, and pedagogic challenges encountered by students. Armed with their resources, they built their learning activities in the presence of expert advisors (a secondary school teacher, a native speaker). The following skills were fostered by this process:

- Differentiation of learning levels in activity creation (see Appendix 3, i & iv)

- Analysis of morphological and syntactic features (see Appendix 3, iv)
- Specialized vocabulary building; formation of set structures (imperative used to give precise questions) (see Appendix 3, iii)
- Intercultural translation (see Appendix 3, ii)

The creation of an end product gave all participants a sense of achievement, but deeper discoveries about identity, agency, and enriched metacognition were still to be made in conversation: I wanted to know if participation in the project had engendered change in or new ways of looking at intercultural encounters, and whether students believed this change had made a difference to their futures. Clearly they continued to identify with their role as potential change-makers in the secondary MFL classroom *because* they had successfully made the transition from tourist to inhabitant in a host culture and therefore felt they had something to say/offer from a position of knowledge. When analyzing their statements, however, it seems that this perceived position of expertise was generated not simply by an increased intercultural awareness that comes with long-term residence, but by active effort to fulfil project values. This accords with the emotional and cognitive gains identified by Murray (2015) in his study of a peer learning support program in the USA. Murray argues that the “addressing [of] an identifiable need” is key in “facilitat[ing] the students’ own heightened consciousness concerning their own-most potentialities as a student, scholar and life-long learner” (p. 68). Higher-level cognition is effectively “switched on” through the sense of agency and belonging that such communal projects confer. In our group discussion, we find evidence of focused self- and group-direction emerging from this shared enterprise that takes a number of different forms. Jack, the project leader, reflects on the *organizational skills* required to bring the group’s diverse thoughts and aspirations together across time and space:

One of the things I found was the challenges of working with a project that has so many people so distributed in so many different places, from Canada, you know, to different regions of France; trying to liaise with all of those people at the same time, and then bring deadlines together, that’s quite a useful experience and set of skills to bring further, to bring into a kind of professional life, you know, even things you don’t think about like time zone differences, having to co-ordinate that.

Amy is one of four students who use the verb “tailor” to characterize the interplay between the collection of cultural artefacts (where project responsibilities met personal intercultural reflection) and the formation of a coherent communal project plan with the end user in mind (a further step in the process of meta-reflection):

Either way, when you spend time in that country [...] you learn that sometimes in practice things are quite different [...] so I think that helped us all understand what we think pupils really need to learn [...] so that helped tailor what we think students ought to put into this project.

Taking a slightly different tack, Liz ties affective experiences of immersion and emotional affinity with the host culture with the process of resource seeking, and infers that the responsibility to look productively *makes for* deep emotional integration:

I think it’s kind of an emotional integration thing as well, so when you just go for a... go to Paris for the weekend you’re not experiencing it as if you’re living there, so if we’re looking at real resources and authentic materials then you’re feeling more integrated as you would be if you were working there.

In a similar vein, the responsibility placed upon Jack to co-ordinate the team's diverse ideas leads him to reflect on the organic mutability of culture that defies mapping:

You understand that in some regions there are different languages, different words, different cultural practices: things I hadn't really thought about. You can have so many differences within one country and within one [...] culture, it kind of made you aware of just how many cultural differences there could be within a continent. [...] It makes you appreciate the sheer scale of it.

A high level of meta-reflection has clearly taken place here, with these participants engaging in "internal conversations that critically evaluate previous internal dialogues and are critical about reflective action in society" (Ryan, 2014, p. 5). For Ryan, this kind of mature conversation is key to the promotion of good lifelong learning habits.

### **Metacognition and the pursuit of HE learning aims**

Many of those students who undertook the role of language assistant saw participation in the project as a means to gain further expertise in pedagogy that would allow them to excel in that role. Molly-May asserted that project work enabled her to "tailor activities to suit [French] pupils"; others pinpointed what worked in the French classroom (noting the interest generated by discussion of regional differences and accents, the benefits of using personalized artefacts such as photos) in order to discern what might work in the English classroom. Lauren, who went on to postgraduate teacher training, joked that the project "got her a job." If that is not entirely accurate, it certainly gave her a mandate to talk to French teachers and her host family about pedagogy in a focused and purposeful way. Ben also found in the project a licence to ask questions and be enterprising: "it was a good conversation starter with colleagues and locals [...]. It also led Jack and I to become involved in a project for the French ministry of education [sic] concerning the experience of international students in the French education system." Jack explains this project's scope:

On Monday 23rd June, we (a group of four international students: two from the University of Warwick, one from UTS in Sydney, and one from Leiden University in the Netherlands) attended a meeting with four directors at the French Ministry of Higher Education and research in order to discuss the future of student life in French universities and institutions, as well as the role of international students within it.

The group produced a 14-page report and gave a PowerPoint presentation at the Ministry. Thinking strategically and methodologically, Jack anticipated that outcomes from this pedagogic enterprise might feed into our project: "a survey we conducted included responses on [the use of resources in institutions abroad] which could be useful for our project on the redevelopment of French resources." Ben's interest in this subject took him one stage further: as a French and History student he undertook to write a final-year thesis entitled "International student migration and the globalisation of higher education: Towards the creation of a global identity?" This sustained interest in the question of global identity made for a virtuous circle of academic and personal growth for Ben: he was able to engage in subject-specific discussion with his history tutors and with me about critical responses to globalization, which in turn led to a refined contribution in the final group discussion that demonstrated deep understanding of questions of identity in this context: "In [...] an increasingly globalised society people are encouraged to think globally, but at the same time it's put [...] a lot of emphasis on kind of remembering where you're from initially: your home." Overall, Ben was clear that engagement with the project played a significant role in honing *graduate* qualities: it increased maturity, encouraged

independence and resourcefulness beyond the usual demands of the curriculum, and “provided useful examples for competency questions in job interviews.”

### **Metacognition and intercultural identity**

Finding language, culture and identity to be labile entities, acknowledging the self-other dialogue to be open and precarious, and investing experientially in encounters that permit these discoveries, are staging posts that teachers of intercultural intelligence hope their students will reach during the year abroad (IEREST, 2015). In terms of deep learning, one particularly crucial metacognitive leap was made in this project, as students recognized intercultural and linguistic complexity by dint of having to make their chosen objects speak *for someone else* as they struggled to address pupil needs. As Amy notes:

I think when you're dealing with some of the subjects that we have, so things that are distinctly French [...] like we're doing our regional food and the traditions of French eating culture and things that don't quite correspond to English how to make that understood among English students, it's quite difficult just to work out how to make them interested in something that they don't understand [...], but that's also part of why it's interesting.

Jack, in turn, observes that

It's quite interesting, when you see on social narrative, on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook [...] people putting photos, and they're doing the same thing in the same place [...] and then you look out the window to the left of you and you've got, like, the Eiffel Tower in the background [...] something you're used to seeing only in pictures through your whole life, and then suddenly for the first time it's not a picture any more, eh, there's not really a way that you can get that exact realization in printed words.

In the aporia between their lived experience and its representation in language, students began to recognize the difficulties of *narrating* lived cultural and intercultural encounters. Telling the story of their encounter with their chosen object via their personal fact files was, we realised, the nearest they could get to helping pupils walk in their shoes as experiential learners. Simple though it was, producing the fact file narration alongside their learning activity required creative and imaginative thought processes that were extremely precious to the student learning process. With their emphasis on dialogue and on the changing self in its environment, students seemed through this activity to apprehend identity as “a to and fro movement from the inner self: a sort of sentient sounding board of memories and desires, to the outward form of language” (Crawshaw, Callen, & Tusting, 2001, p. 103), fulfilling Passerelli and Kolb's definition of deep learning as “experiential, developmental, holistic, and dialectic” (Vande Berg et al., 2012, p. 12; see also Passerelli & Kolb, 2012). In a straightforward way, these fact files sought to enable school pupils to experience that to-ing and fro-ing, too.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The IEREST (2015, p. 46) resource pack notes that

narratives are dynamic in that an essential condition for any narrative is the subjective unpacking or telling of a certain experience; they require that one actively take up a standpoint on an experience, by symbolically framing it in one fashion or another. Narratives are also open-ended in that they are never completed. [...] Narratives are not just shared in the sense that every narrative requires a (passive) listener. Rather, they are participatory in the sense that every active unpacking of telling of an experience through narrative correlates with an equally active unpacking of the narrative on the part of the listener, thereby creating a new version of the speaker's narrative if not a whole new narrative in its own right.



## **Developments and conclusion**

### ***Planning for future iterations of the project***

With a view to taking the project forward, the students participating in the group discussion were asked to imagine what they would do differently in another iteration of the project. In terms of strategic organization, several students articulated a desire for firmer guidance in the domain of pedagogy. Anna, for instance, noted that, “[i]t would have been a good idea to go out there with a sort of idea of what sort of topic you wanted to do, cos I came back with so many leaflets and kind of magazines and stuff.”

Amy would have liked a more dynamic relationship between student research-seeker and schools, believing that her artefacts could be better transformed into learning activities by a skilled practitioner: “If we could in some way get resources and just hand them over that would have been great. [...] You know, if we could give some kind of guidance and then give the resources cos it’s hard for us to tailor it.”

Asked what they would advise future project participants, students placed an emphasis on personal agency and risk-taking in order to capture “real people talking about real things, real beliefs” (Amy): something students felt reticent to do, unsure of how to broach the subject of recording live interactions. Amy advised “coming out of your comfort zone”; Jack recommended “be fearless, basically. Don’t have too many inhibitions. Ask. You’ll regret the people you didn’t ask.” With hindsight, he noted that

You’ve got lots of people who want to talk about themselves ... a lot; who want to talk about their view and things. [...] If I could go back that’s one thing I would do, I’d get those people—I’d just use my phone or something, or a camera - and record them for about 10 minutes talking about the strike that’s going on, or their opinions on a lot of issues that are in the curriculum.

Working with a core group of highly motivated, enthusiastic students had made manifest the benefits of self-directed, experiential learning oriented around the values of community service that responded to “an identifiable need” (Murray, 2015, p. 64) in a year abroad context. The speculative nature of the project, predicated on the principle of cognitive uncertainty (Barnett, 2000, 2012) had pushed the students to be creative thinkers, but this rewarding process was time-heavy at the post-sojourn stage and would be difficult to sustain in the long term. Ben, for instance, identified as paramount challenges “fitting resource creation amongst other parts of university life; trying to get everyone together at the same moment.” As the students had recognized, the in-sojourn phase of future projects would benefit from a higher degree of pedagogical scaffolding: in other words, more direction from participating teachers, leading to blending of the purposeful quest for *realia* with a more immediate creation of learning objects.

### ***Working with new stakeholders***

At the post-sojourn phase of the project, I made contact with the managers of an “Adopt a Class” scheme run by *Routes into Languages* (2016), a UK government-funded body for the promotion of language learning. This project invited students on a study year abroad in certain UK HE institutions to communicate electronically with a named MFL class within a partner secondary school, which the student would visit at the pre-sojourn stage.<sup>3</sup> Students were asked to send regular blogs to the class describing their year abroad experiences, and pupils were able to pose questions to the

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<sup>3</sup> For an example, see <http://hannahinternational.co.uk/2014/07/09/routes-into-languages-adopt-a-class-scheme/>

student.<sup>4</sup> I established contact with the scheme leader in the West Midlands, and we developed a new version of the scheme that brought together aspects of each of our initiatives. The “Adopt a Class” project leader liked the student-as-producer ethos of our project, with its emphasis on creating new avenues of intellectual exploration for school children based on the live encounters of year abroad students, and its avowedly collaborative nature. This, she felt, would motivate her student participants, whose interest in blogging often waned midway through the year when school teachers had less time to respond to them.

MFL colleagues at Warwick’s recently formed *Centre for Professional Education* (CPE), providers of training for students undertaking the Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE), also expressed interest in the project following an institutional Teaching and Learning Showcase at which its outcomes were presented. They worked with teaching mentors in numerous local schools and felt that these highly-motivated teachers would happily make good use of students abroad to invigorate their own class teaching.

### ***The Warwick “Adopt a Class” project 2015-16***

Our previous project participants were enthusiastic ambassadors for the new project, and with their help we recruited 20 students due to begin their year abroad in September, 2015. Of these, eight are primary school assistants (including two working in Martinique), seven secondary school assistants, and five university students on the Erasmus program). We also made firm connections with 20 local schools. Students were then matched with schools and contact was established with class teachers. A training workshop was provided by the CPE and trainee MFL teachers on current trends in MFL school teaching, during which students tried their hand at transforming *realia* into learning objects. In response to requests for greater structure and clarity of objectives by the previous project participants, we created project planning documents and a project contract requiring students and teachers to fix regular points of contact during the year abroad, and to establish a set of open-ended learning objectives, as are set out in the learning agreement made with Shannon, a student placed as a primary school assistant in Versailles (see Image 1).

### **Image 1: Sample Project Plan Agreement**

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<sup>4</sup> This model of engagement is now also promoted by the private company, Thirdyearabroad.com. See: <http://www.thirdyearabroad.com/when-youre-back/inspire-a-class.html>

Adopt a Class Strand: (please tick one or more) .

X A - Year Abroad blog

X B - Virtual school exchange

☐ C - Authentic Teaching Resources

Blog language: X English or ☐ Target language: \_\_\_\_\_

Chosen format: (please tick one or more)

X Email ☐ PowerPoint X Blog / forum: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Letters X Postcards X Video ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Schedule - Year: 2015 - 2016

Month	Curriculum point covered in class	Topic for Student Ambassador	Amount of portfolio pieces / correspondence
September	<b>Greetings:</b> -Name -Age -How are you? -Brothers and sisters	General greetings	*Fortnightly blog update
October			*Voice recording of greetings *Post card/letter from children/Shannon introducing themselves
November	<b>School:</b> -School subjects -Likes and dislikes -Telling the time	School subjects, likes and dislikes	*Fortnightly blog update
December			*Post card/letter from children *Photos of the school/sample timetable
January	<b>Food:</b> *Ask for sandwiches and ice creams *Likes and dislikes *Healthy and unhealthy	Food	*Fortnightly blog update
February			*Post card/letter from children - favourite food *Menu/receipts from shopping *Cultural differences-mealtimes, food



A project virtual learning environment for use by teachers, trainee teachers, students, and academic staff has also been created, where audio, video, and other resources can be shared. By working with diverse stakeholders and diverse media we hope to imagine new ways of reflecting upon intercultural encounters that speak to and are shared among plural audiences. Not only will this encourage students to move beyond a superficial processing of their year abroad experience as generally transformative—a risk highlighted by Vande Berg et al. (2012, p. 24)—but it will encourage them to see their global citizenship as a phenomenon that can speak to multiple communities in different ways. This complex understanding of the power of narrative and the need to speak differently in different contexts has been identified as a paramount skill for the lifelong learner.

To conclude, in addition to furnishing students with the opportunity for intercultural learning, a productive year abroad should invest its students with a lasting sense of agency. This capacity for agency should equate to more than self-confidence about one's place in the world bolstered by an increased knowledge of its surfaces. As Giroux (qtd in Guilherme, 2006, p. 172) asserts, "the question of intercultural competencies has to be understood within a broader notion of literacy linked to both the acquisition of agency and the ability to recognize that matters of difference are inextricably tied to issues of respect, tolerance, dialogue, and our responsibility to others." As the works of Bengtsen (2014), Case (2013), Maccarini

(2013), Murray (2015), and Vande Berg et al. (2012) have shown, responsibility does not just happen, even when students are exposed to the challenge of operating in a new culture. It is prompted when students are set the challenge of taking collective action on behalf of others. When that challenge is creative, requires affective and cognitive engagement with cultural and linguistic difference, and demands that these differences be actively explained, there is scope for heightened meta-reflection to occur. Many students on the assistantship program are in fact tacitly endowed with this kind of responsibility and could be encouraged to embrace it more consciously.<sup>5</sup> I hope this article has shown that students on study placements may also be amenable to this kind of challenge. If intercultural education programs could incorporate the challenge of real social action in addition to their rich sets of scenario tasks, they will be all the richer for it. And while we as educators may recognize that “students learn and develop effectively and appropriately when educators intervene more intentionally through well-designed training programs [...] throughout the study abroad experience” (Vande Berg et al., p. 21), we should balance this inclination to intervene with the acknowledgment that “a focus on ‘learner needs’ can link to [...] a shutting down of potential for the enlargement of student agency” (Case, 2013). Haggis (2006, p. 9) stresses

The idea of responding to need suggests that the institution has a responsibility to find out either “what’s wrong” with students, or “what it is that they want,” and to try to provide an appropriate response to this. Challenge, on the other hand, suggests that the institution has something worthwhile to offer; something which may intrinsically, and perhaps even deliberately, incorporate difficulty and struggle.

Asking MFL educators and students in different sectors to imagine and then to enact the sharing of situated cultural encounters in real social projects has the potential to create microcosmic moments of shared citizenship stretching from the local to the international and to promote polysemic dialogue. And then it is possible that mighty oaks may from small acorns grow.

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<sup>5</sup> The role of language assistant / teacher has been accorded less attention in study abroad literature up to the present moment and this kind of pedagogical engagement by students would benefit from critical attention.

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**Cathy Hampton** is a teaching fellow in the French Studies section of the School of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Warwick, UK. She co-ordinates and teaches core first-year French-language modules and also teaches early modern French literature and culture. She currently researches new pedagogical modes emerging in the digital era that privilege collaboration among and beyond Higher Education stakeholders and is running a project engaging modern foreign language students with intercultural and language learning in local elementary and secondary schools.

## Appendix 1: Student as Producer Application Form



### Student as Producer Fund Application Form

***Please complete this form and return a signed hardcopy via internal mail to***

The Academic Manager, IATL, Senate House

An additional electronic copy should be sent to [iatl@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:iatl@warwick.ac.uk)

<b>Name of applicant:</b>	<b>Student ID number:</b>
Jack Mercer	1114069
<b>Department and course: French (French and History)</b>	<b>Are you:</b>
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> An undergraduate student <input type="checkbox"/> A taught postgraduate student <input type="checkbox"/> A research postgraduate student (performance grants only)
<b>Email address:</b>	<b>Telephone number:</b>
<a href="mailto:J.mercer@warwick.ac.uk">J.mercer@warwick.ac.uk</a>	07854 117207
<b>Names of others involved (if applicable)</b>	
Name Amie Stilliard Amy Cardwell Anna Silcocks Chloe Edwards Elizabeth Cawthorn Emily Cox Fiona Greig Heather Ashford Julia Dobson Lauren Coates	Department French French French French French French French French French French
<b>Name, department and email address of Academic Sponsor</b>	
Dr Cathy Hampton Department of French <a href="mailto:c.m.hampton@warwick.ac.uk">c.m.hampton@warwick.ac.uk</a>	

**Joanna Thomas**

Institute of Education

[joanna.thomas@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:joanna.thomas@warwick.ac.uk)

Are you applying for: ☐ Research grant

or: ☐ Performance grant

or: ☒ Collaboration grant

**Title of your project:**

**Finding a French education programme fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century British school children**

**Total amount requested: £2000**

**IATL aims to foster teaching and learning that is committed to innovation, interdisciplinarity, inclusiveness and internationalisation, and to promote student leadership through research and evaluation.**

**How does your project address these aims?**

Innovation: making use of interactivity possible with new Year Abroad VLE. Students on Year Abroad taking lead role as producers of resources as well as consumers of intercultural experiences. Linking the language learning experience in a University system with the language learning in the school system.

Interdisciplinarity: working with French MFL specialist in school of education; working within different Year Abroad environments (teaching assistantships, studying as Erasmus students); perhaps working with MFL PGCE students. Variety of modes of resources, e.g. literature, music, politics, sports etc.

Inclusiveness: Recognising need to promote language learning within the school system and particularly to reach pupils who feel that languages are not for them. Using our experience as young language learners as a basis for building well-targeted resources that motivate other young learners. Students acting as language-learning ambassadors in widening participation context

Internationalisation: Hope to develop communication channels between British and French / francophone language learners; working with French school teachers / international students

Research and evaluation: each of us on the project will, in collaboration with the academic staff involved, build resources based on their individual experience of living abroad. Resulting resources will be current, diverse, imaginatively constructed, and tested by MFL students (i.e. us!).



<b>Amount requested</b>	
Please state the total amount of funding for which you are applying, up to a maximum of: £1000 for research grants £200 for performance grants £2000 for collaboration grants	£2000
Please give a <b>detailed breakdown</b> of the costs associated with the project	
<p>Placement organisation and workshop training: £200</p> <p>Staff hours x 30 @ £20 per hour: £600</p> <p>Purchase of resources: £600 (music, games, magazines, maps etc)</p> <p>Publication and dissemination of resources: £600 (reproduction costs)</p>	

<b>Outline of Project (500 words max)</b>	
<b>Timetable for project – with significant milestones</b>	
Estimated Start date:	May 2013
Milestones and Targets throughout the duration of the project:	
<p>May 2013:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visits to local primary and secondary schools to observe teaching of French and how resources are currently used in conjunction with the curriculum</li> <li>• Workshop with Joanna Thomas from Department of Education. Critique of current schools resources</li> </ul> <p>October - November 2013</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forum contact with Joanna Thomas, Cathy Hampton and Ariane Ahearne. Review of individual students' situation in France and first examination of how resources might be gathered.</li> </ul> <p>December 2013</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submission of first draft of criteria for selection of resources</li> </ul> <p>Jan – April 2014</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collection of resources; first planning for how they are intended to be used</li> </ul> <p>May – June 2014</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting with Warwick staff to assess and build resources (perhaps virtual meeting)</li> </ul> <p>September 2014</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assembling resources and some dissemination to schools for trial</li> </ul>	

Estimated Completion date:	Oct / Nov 2014
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<p><b>Dissemination plan</b></p> <p>Please state how the outcomes of your project will be disseminated within your department and the University.</p> <p>Compiled resources and findings will be distributed throughout the Institute of Education to PGCE students who will be able to put them to use during and after they finish their course, as well as to students of the French department who express an interest in the teaching profession.</p> <p>In addition, copies of the resources will be made available online (where available) so that students can access them on the department's website.</p> <p>Where appropriate, resources and findings will also be shared with the Department's Widening Participation team for possible use on Widening Participation workshops</p> <p>We also plan to make use of the University's year-round Showcase event on teaching at the Teaching Grid, presenting our findings in the Autumn term of 2014.</p>
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<p><b>Statement of ethics</b></p> <p>By signing below, you are confirming that your project conforms to the University's Guidelines on Ethical Practice, which are available to view at <a href="http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/apply_funding/ethics_governance/statement/guidance">http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/apply_funding/ethics_governance/statement/guidance</a></p> <p>Please tick to show that you understand that this is the case ✓</p>
<p><b>Confirmation</b></p> <p>By signing below, you are confirming that this project <b>does not contain any material which will later be submitted for assessment</b> (e.g. essay, dissertation or special project).</p> <p>Please tick to show that you understand that this is the case ✓</p>
<p><b>Address</b></p> <p>If you are awarded a Student as Producer grant, we will notify you <b>in hard copy</b> (as the letter has to be signed). Please give the address to which you wish the letter to be sent – this might be an internal departmental address (preferred), or an external postal address. Whichever you give, please ensure that it is one where you <b>check your mail regularly</b>.</p> <p>Address to which notification should be sent:</p>

Jack Mercer  
Department of French Studies  
University of Warwick  
Coventry CV4 7AL

**Signature of applicant**

Signature:

Name (please print):

Date:

***Declaration of support by Academic Sponsor***

Comments:

This project seeks to make very productive use of the Year Abroad to enhance student learning and productivity in a number of ways. As I have argued elsewhere, I see the Year Abroad as an open space learning environment offering huge possibilities for experimentation and constructive risk taking. The Year Abroad does not 'count' in assessment terms towards the students' final degree (it is purely formative in its nature), and it is for this reason that the project is devised to run across two academic years. Completion in the summer of 2014 is a necessary consequence of the field work that needs to be undertaken by these students during their third year. The French Department's Year Abroad VLE has gone live this year, and current students abroad have already shown a lively interest in sharing their very diverse experiences with a view to stimulating peer learning. This project endeavours to benefit from the time and freedom students have during the Year Abroad to create their own learning opportunities, and will allow them to think beyond the university to a new peer learning community within schools that can certainly benefit from their energy and be enthused by the immediacy of their encounters. I am very happy to support it.

Signature:

Name (please print): Dr Cathy Hampton

Date: 30<sup>th</sup> January 2013

## Appendix 2: Sample Personal Fact Files

### Ben Lang – Travel, Tourism & Regionalism – “Getting around Paris”

(Year abroad spent interning at HEC Paris.)

My name is Ben and I am a final year student studying French & History at the University of Warwick.

The relevance of this project for me came about, as even having studied French from the beginning of secondary school, I got off the Eurostar at *Gare du nord* to begin my year abroad, and had absolutely no idea where to go, what to do, what ticket to buy or any of the like to get from one side of Paris to the other. After a conversation with an SNCF representative, and a fight with the touch screen ticket machine, I had my ticket and was on my way, only to find that the ticket was in fact the wrong one, leading to a confrontation between myself, several large suitcases, and a turnstile barrier before having to purchase a second ticket to get me to where I needed to be.

This situation could easily have been avoided, and the first few weeks in Paris been made much more fluid with a little more preparation, which is why I propose the orientation exercises above, comparing Paris’ public transport with London.



### Lauren Coates – “Reading cartoons in France”

I spent my year abroad in the small town of Foix in the French Pyrenees. Foix was a rural mountain town, a long way from anywhere, so I was really immersed in French culture. I taught English in all the primary schools in my town, an experience I loved. When I wasn’t teaching, I spent a lot of time travelling round France, visiting Toulouse and skiing on the mountains, just above my house!



For my topic, I chose to look at Bande Dessinée – BD, as it is known in France. These are French comic books and are really popular amongst all ages, so much so that there is even a national festival for them. Unlike in England, there are entire sections of bookshops dedicated to BD, and every household I visited had at least a couple of BD books. A lot of my students spent their lunchtimes reading them, and I found them a great way to learn more about French culture and to study French colloquial language and slang.



## Liz Cawthorn and Amy Cardwell – “Eating and drinking in France: French cuisine”



Hello! My name is Liz and I am a French student at the University of Warwick. Last year, I lived in Beauvais where I worked as an English language teaching assistant in a *lycée* (secondary school for 15-18 year-olds). Beauvais is to the north of Paris and the town is famous for its gothic cathedral and the destruction it suffered during the Second World War.

Hi! I'm Amy, a friend of Liz's. I worked in two *lycées professionnels* (technical colleges) in Tarbes, which is situated in the far southwest of France, near the Pyrenees Mountains and not far from Spain! Obviously the weather was much nicer in Tarbes than in Beauvais!

Living at opposite ends of France (over an 8-hour drive between us!), we experienced different traditions, weather, accents, and food. We enjoyed the variety of regional specialities that we tasted during our time in France, but realised that before our year abroad we knew little about this diverse food culture. This is why we focused on French cuisine for your lesson – the French don't just eat snails and frogs' legs! We hope that you have a good lesson using our activities!



## Appendix 3: Sample Work Activities

### (i) Julia: lesson plan for 16 – 18 year olds

Lesson: **La ‘peine à vie’**

Aim: Introduce a debate on long prison sentences to the topic of Crime and Punishment at A Level & expand on the debate on the death penalty by introducing the topic of life imprisonment. This lesson will draw on a letter written by a prisoner in France who has been sentenced to a total of 81 years in prison.

Age group: year 12/13

#### 1 : Introduction - les prisons en France

##### **Introductory debate on prisons in France:**

Short BBC news clip on Fresnes prison: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-24601167>. Questions on the clip:

- What are some of the issues in French prisons? / *Quels sont les problèmes principaux au sein du **système pénitentiaire** en France?*
- How many prisoners are there in France, and with how many places? / *Combien de prisonniers y-a-t-il en France actuellement et pour combien de places disponibles?*
- Why does the psychotherapist say that the convicted rapist took another man hostage? / *Selon le psychologue, pourquoi le violeur condamné a-t-il pris un homme en otage en prison?*
- What percentage of prisoners are reconvicted within five years? / *Quel est le taux de **récidive** après cinq ans en France?*
- Do you think the prison described in the clip (Fresnes) is effective? / *Pensez – vous que la prison dans la vidéo (Fresnes) soit efficace ?*
- What are solutions to prison overcrowding? Do you think more prisons should be built? / *Quelles sont les solutions à la **surpopulation** en prison ? Pensez-vous qu’on doive construire de nouvelles prisons ?*
- Can you think of any alternatives to prison? *Existe-t-il des alternatives à la prison ?*

##### **General Prison Debate**

- La prison, est-elle là pour punir ou réformer les gens?
- Est-ce que certains prisonniers devraient rester en prison pour toute leur vie? Ou est-ce qu’on devrait donner une *deuxième chance* à tout le monde?
  - Quels sont les arguments pour? Quels sont les arguments contre?

#### 2 : Le texte et la compréhension – La peine à vie

##### **Explication du texte ‘Je ne vous mets pas au pied du mur’**

This letter was written by Christophe Khider, who was originally sentenced to 30 years in jail in France. He then received a series of additional sentences for trying to escape from prison. The current total of his sentences means that he will only be

released in 2052, at the age of 81. This letter was published in the journal of the radical organisation *L'Envolée*, who support prison abolition. According to a recent campaign of the organisation, the '**peine de mort**' in France has been replaced by the '**peine à vie**'.

- What do you the '**peine à vie**' means, considering the case of Christophe Khider ?

In France, 'life imprisonment' means a minimum 18-22 year prison sentence. According to the law, 30-year prison sentences can be given in very rare cases, such as terrorism resulting in death or child murder. After the end of their minimum sentence, the prisoner can apply for parole, meaning that they can appeal for their release. Prisoners should normally be released if they are judged to no longer be a threat to the public. However, this law does not apply if the prisoner tries to escape during their sentence. [Code pénal : « *Il n'y a pas de confusion de peines possibles pour les tentatives et les évasions* »]

Therefore, prisoners such as Christophe Khider, who received additional sentences for trying to escape, cannot appeal for their release.

In this letter, Christophe Khider is writing to Mme Taubira, the Minister of Justice, to defend his right to appeal for release after 30 years. He states at the end that if this is not granted, he will consider his sentences to be '**comme une peine de mort**'.

### Comprehension Questions – to respond to in English or French

#### Paragraph 3 – le crime

- Pourquoi a-t-il été inculpé ? (condamné)
- Quelle est la différence entre 'homicide volontaire' et la phrase 'j'ai tué *involontairement* un homme ?'
- Pensez-vous qu'il s'agit d'un homme violent ? Pourquoi ?

#### Paragraph 5 – tentative d'évasion

- Pourquoi a-t-il tenté de s'évader ?

#### Paragraph 6 – la justice

- Pensez à la question des longues peines et des tentatives d'évasion [see : explication du texte]. Qu'est-ce que Christophe Khider veut dire quand il dit '*pourquoi **le droit** ne s'applique pas pour moi ? Pourquoi le total de mes peines n'est pas ramené à **trente ans** (the highest sentence possible before appeals for release) ?*

#### Paragraph 7/8 'je refuse d'être condamné à mort'

- Quel est le ton de ce dernier paragraphe ?
- Qu'est-ce que Christophe Khider veut dire à la fin lorsqu'il dit qu'il '[je] *deviendrai ce que vous avez fait de moi, ce que je n'ai jamais été jusque-là : un être violent*'.

## (ii) Ben : public transport in Paris

### Se familiariser avec les transports en commun

(Employez les billets dans votre dossier)



#### Exercice :

[http://www.ratp.fr/fr/ratp/c\\_20585/titres-tarifs/](http://www.ratp.fr/fr/ratp/c_20585/titres-tarifs/)

En comparant vos tickets avec ceux sur le site ci-dessus, répondez aux questions suivantes :

→ Quel serait le meilleur billet, et combien faudrait-il payer, pour

- Faire un aller simple en bus
- Faire un seul trajet en métro  
(par exemple de CDG Etoile à Châtelet, de Montparnasse à la Place Monge)
- Venir de la banlieue au centre de Paris
- Passer une journée touristique à Paris. Vous ferez plusieurs voyages
- Visiter Paris un jour férié, ou le week-end si vous êtes un jeune de 20 a
- Visiter Paris pour trois jours
- Aller à l'aéroport CDG
- Quel est l'équivalent de l'« Oyster Card » de Londres?
- Combien de « zones » y a-t-il à Paris?
- Qu'est-ce que c'est que le RER? Combien de lignes y-a-t-il ?
- Quelles sont les heures d'ouverture du métro ?

*Pour aller plus loin :*

- Choisissez un point de départ et un point d'arrivée dans la ville, et trouvez le voyage le plus efficace entre A + B
- Planifiez une journée autour des sites touristiques de Paris. Vous prendrez le métro.
- Quels sites / quelles applications pourriez vous consulter?
- **Exercice de traduction** – comment traduire et expliquer les noms de ces stations de métro?

<http://www.janol-apin.com/photos/metropolisson>



### 1. Activity 3 : Using the Paris metro

**Aim :** reading a métro map and a basic Paris map ; knowledge of principal Parisian landmarks ; knowledge of ticketing systems at French métro stations

**Level :** year 10 / 11

**Length of lesson :** 1 hour

**Linguistic objectives :** directions ; use of imperative

**Cultural objectives :** understanding the transport system in Paris in detail : tarifs, travel documents

**Resources used :** Metro maps ; tickets from the Paris metro ; internet (for research on ticket types)

**Activities :**

#### Trouvez les sites touristiques

1. Sur le plan de métro, trouvez les stations de métro / RER indiquées dans la grille ci-dessous (table)
2. Votre ami ne connaît pas Paris. Vous l'aidez à trouver des sites touristiques.
  - a. Vous choisissez une station de départ et une destination
  - b. Vous lui expliquez quelles lignes il faut prendre pour y aller
  - c. Vous lui expliquez où il faut changer de ligne.

Par exemple

- Visite du Musée d'Orsay à L'Arc de Triomphe
- Vous êtes à la station Solférino (ligne 12)
- Vous prenez la ligne 12 jusqu'à la station Concorde
- Vous changez de ligne
- Vous prenez la ligne 1 jusqu'à la station Charles de Gaulle Etoile.

SITE TOURISTIQUE	METRO / RER	SITE TOURISTIQUE	METRO / RER
Le Louvre	Palais Royal	La Villette et la Géode	Porte de la Villette
Le Musée d'Orsay	Musée d'Orsay Solférino	Le cimetière Père Lachaise	Père Lachaise
Le Sacré Cœur	Abbesses	La Tour Montparnasse	Montparnasse Bienvenue
Notre Dame	St Michel Notre Dame	Le Champs Elysée	Champs Elysée Clémenceau
Le Parc des Princes	Port de St Cloud	L'Assemblée Nationale	Assemblée Nationale
La Tour Eiffel	Champs de Mars Tour Eiffel	Les Jardins de Luxembourg	Odéon
La Bastille	Bastille	Le Panthéon	Cardinal Lemoine
L'aéroport de Rosny (CDG)	RER C	La Grande Arche de La Défense	La Défense
L'Arc de Triomphe	Charles de Gaulle Etoile		

**(iii) Anna: tourism and travel in Poitiers**

2. Activity 2: Using local maps

**LESSON PLAN**

1/ **Aim:** To be able to use map to provide directions to different places in a town

2/ **Level:** Year 9/10

3/ **Linguistic objectives:** Imperatives, giving directions

4/ **Cultural objectives:** Learning about what types of municipal buildings exist in France

5/ **Other objectives:** Map reading skills

6/ **Length of lesson:** 20 mins

7/ **Resources:** a collection of local town and city maps

8/ **Type of activities:** Worksheet about directions (e.g. you are lost, find \_\_\_\_\_ using a map; guide somebody from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_)

**TASK**

e.g. Vous allez rencontrer un ami à l'Hôtel de ville à Poitiers. Guidez-le de la gare à l'Hôtel de ville

**RESOURCES**

Maps of:

- Poitiers
- Angoulême
- Angers
- Limoges
- Toulouse

### **Poitiers map : Starter Activity**

Look at the map of Poitiers and respond to the following questions.

*Example: **Où se trouve** le Jardin des Plantes ?*

*Answer : **Il se trouve** dans la boîte E2.*

1) Où se trouve l'Espace Mendès-France ?

**Il se trouve** \_\_\_\_\_

2) Où se trouve la gare TGV ?

**Elle se trouve** \_\_\_\_\_

3) Où se trouve le Palais de Justice ?

\_\_\_\_\_

4) Où se trouve la Cathédrale St-Pierre ?

\_\_\_\_\_

5) Où se trouve l'Hôtel Fumé ?

\_\_\_\_\_

6) Où se trouve la Tour du Cordier ?

\_\_\_\_\_

7) Où se trouve le Moulin de Chasseigne ?

\_\_\_\_\_

8) Où se trouve la Notre-Dame-des-Dunes ?

\_\_\_\_\_

9) Où se trouve le Parc de Blossac ?

\_\_\_\_\_

10) Où se trouve le Théâtre Auditorium de Poitiers ?

\_\_\_\_\_

# JE SUIS PERDU!

**Exercise 1 : Guide your partner from where they are to where they would like to be.**

Use the following instructions to guide your partner :

- Continuez tout droit
- Tournez à gauche
- Tournez à droite
- Prenez la 1<sup>ère</sup>/2<sup>ème</sup>/3<sup>ème</sup> rue à gauche/à droite
- Prenez la rue Jean Jaurès

Je suis au Palais de Justice et je cherche l'Hôtel de Ville.

**Example :** Allez tout droit, prenez la 3<sup>ème</sup> gauche, et tournez à droite.

-----

Je suis au Jardin des Plantes et je cherche l'Hôtel de Rochefort.

Je suis à la Cathédrale St-Pierre et je cherche le Théâtre de verdure.

Je suis au Palais de Justice et je cherche le Musée Ste-Croix.

Je suis au Parc de Blossac et je cherche la Préfecture.

**Exercise 2 : Your partner is lost, direct them to you.**

A : Je suis perdu ! Je suis à la gare TGV. Où es-tu ?

B : Je suis à l'Eglise St-Hilaire.

A : Je suis perdu ! Je suis à la Tour du Cordier. Où es-tu ?

B : Je suis au Musée Ste Croix.

A : Je suis perdu ! Je suis au Parc de Blossac. Où es-tu ?

B : Je suis au Square de la République.

A : Je suis perdu ! Je suis au Moulin de Chasseigne. Où es-tu ?

B : Je suis au Théâtre de verdure.

#### **(iv) Molly-May: protest amongst school children in France**

##### **A. Leonarda Protest**

###### **Lesson 1**

- Show lower level pupils this short video in English about the Leonarda Affair in October 2013 if facilities allow, or read a summary of the article together  
· <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-24569585>
- Encourage higher level pupils to research the 'Affaire Leonarda' (e.g. using France24 for concise and fairly easy to understand articles) to gain an understanding of the context of the protests, using this video as a starting point, perhaps writing a short summary of events  
· [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYpg4\\_6aAGU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYpg4_6aAGU)
- Hand out sample student responses to protests and discuss the differences between French and English handwriting if pupils have not been exposed to handwritten French before, using the 'Modèles d'écriture' sheet
  - Identify errors in French
  - Categorise testimonies into those in support/opposition to the protest, different kinds of motivations

Je n'ai pas fait de manifesta-  
tions et je pense que la  
plupart des jeunes ne  
savaient pas pourquoi  
ils manifestaient.

Je n'ai pas protesté mais  
Leonida n'aurait pas  
du être interpellée alors  
qu'elle était à l'école  
à mon avis.