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**Early-stage French as a Foreign Language in
Taiwan: a case study involving L2 oral proficiency,
motivation and social presence in synchronous
computer mediated communication (CMC)**

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Abstract

This study, adopting a case study approach with a group of beginning-level FFL (French as a foreign language) learners, investigated the possibility that initial level foreign language learners may acquire oral skills through synchronous CMC, and the impacts of synchronous CMC learning on their motivation, as well as their social presence.

The participants were 12 FFL beginners in a Taiwanese university. Divided into three groups, they were required to conduct three tasks in three different learning environments (video/audio, audio and f2f) during an academic semester (18 weeks). The semester constituted cycles of three-week practices on those tasks. The contents of the tasks were inter-connected. Before each oral task, all the participants had to conduct the same task in synchronous text chat.

The data for this study was collected from the participants' performance in three oral tests held at the initial, middle and final phases of the study, their online chat records, interview transcriptions, learning journal, questionnaires completed at the beginning and the end of the study, and the instructor's observation journal.

The results suggest that these three CMC learning modes bring only partial benefits in terms of learners' oral proficiency development. It is factors generated by the three learning environments, rather than the environments themselves, that have the largest impact on the learners' oral proficiency development, learning motivation and attitudes towards the target language. However, the differences in the environments are reflected in particular in the learners' perception of social presence.

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Chao-Jung Ko

Declaration of originality

I declare here that this thesis has been composed by me, that all the work in the thesis is my own, and that the work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Research motivation

This study focuses on learning French as a foreign language (as opposed to second language) in Taiwan. Many researchers have argued that a foreign language is more effectively learnt through a combination of classroom learning and non classroom practice. Turner and Supko (2000) claimed that foreign language learners are “eager to transfer new knowledge to real-world settings” (p.175).

But in Taiwan, due to its geographical position, many foreign language students’ learning experiences are limited to classrooms. Most of them have no opportunities to practise the target language with native speakers or other learners of the target language outside classrooms. Without such opportunities, many of them are not able to transfer their language skills to real world settings. Some, in spite of many years’ learning of the target language with good results on language tests, do not feel confident of their language skills and are reluctant to communicate with others in the target language. Others experience a loss of interest or motivation in learning the target language because they regard the target language as a subject of study rather than a communication tool. This phenomenon is particularly evident in classrooms of languages other than English, the dominant foreign language in Taiwan.

Unlike English, French resources in the Taiwanese context are very limited and difficult to find. As English has been compulsory for students at all levels in recent years, the promotion of learning foreign languages other than English has been emerging in many university settings. Japanese is the second most important foreign language in Taiwan due to its geographical proximity, which facilitates the development of relationships in many aspects between two countries. However, many students are attracted by the French people and culture that they know from the mass media. The ‘romantic and attractive’ images they have of French people and culture arouse many students’ interest in learning French in spite of its lack of obvious instrumental uselessness in the context. Nevertheless, the maintenance of those students’ interests in French learning requires a lot of teachers’ efforts, due to the lack of real contact with this language and its resources in the context.

My study was designed to explore the provision of authentic spoken learning experiences for foreign language learners in Taiwan. The synchronous CMC environments created in this study were aimed to help Taiwanese French learners gain their learning experiences outside classroom settings. The learners in this study were provided with opportunities to meet the other learners of the target language in synchronous CMC environments where they were encouraged to do oral practices in the target language. I hoped that these meaningful learning experiences could help them acquire oral proficiency so that they could increase their self-confidence in speaking the target language and enhance their motivation to learn it.

1.2 Foreign language learning in Taiwan

1.2.1 Background

Nowadays, there are around 159 institutions of higher education in Taiwan, which are divided into university, college and junior college. To obtain a degree from these institutions, students should have a total of 128-140 credits (varying according to institutions) over 4 years, of which 28 or more are common core curricula, comprising of some compulsory courses (e.g. Chinese, English and History) and other optional courses (e.g. French, Spanish).

There are three types of credits determined by

- the university: the credits then are inserted into common core curricula and can be taken by all students in the university
- the college of the university: the credits can be taken by all students of the same college
- the department: the credits can be only taken by all students in the same department

Regarding foreign language curricula, nearly all students of the above institutions have to take a compulsory one-year English course, either in their freshman year or

later. The English course forms 4-6 credits split into two semesters. Each credit represents a one-hour session per week.

1.2.2 French in Taiwan

French was introduced into two Taiwanese universities' curricula in 1963, and nowadays it is offered from the nursery level in Taiwan. French courses are only available in the bilingual private kindergartens organized by the HESS, where English is the main teaching language. During the years 2002-2003, a weekly half-hour of French and Japanese learning had been included in the curriculum of some of the HESS kindergartens on an experimental basis. French was compulsory in some kindergartens and optional in others (60-minute course after the class). In both cases, parents had to pay additional tuition fees. French as a compulsory course was stopped since in June 2003, but French as an optional course is available in many HESS kindergartens.

French was introduced as an optional program on an experimental basis in some secondary schools in Taiwan since 1996, where English is a compulsory. At the initial stage of the experiment, French was offered in only six secondary schools. During the years 2004-2005, French was available in 51 secondary schools, in a total of 106 classes. Of these 51 schools, 25 are in Taipei, the capital, where a total of 57 classes are offered. The rest of schools are spread throughout Taiwan. In one secondary school, French used to be a compulsory course, but it has now become optional. In the other secondary schools, French is one of foreign languages that students can choose to learn as an option.

At the higher education level, only four universities and a college (around 3%) so far offer French major programmes, which are aimed to help students to master French language and literature. French is offered as an optional common core course in many other universities. However, although offered, French courses are not guaranteed; that depends on the numbers of students who choose taking the course.

1.2.3 Specific context description

This study was implemented in Nan University, which is located in the south of Taiwan. It used to be one of the Taiwanese teacher colleges that were responsible for training future primary school teachers. In 2004, the university changed its curriculum direction and became a general university offering programs of diverse disciplines. From then on, foreign languages other than English (Japanese, French, and German) have been put on the optional core course list and been offered to all students, particularly freshmen. All freshmen are required to take one-year English course in the university.

The foreign language courses at Nan University are a two-credit based curriculum. They are held two hours per week. In general, the courses are offered over one academic year, consisting of two semesters (18 weeks each). The course of the first semester is for beginners; and the one of the second semester is for the students who have taken the course of the first semester. The minimum student number in each class is 25. Students who take the course in the first semester can decide whether they want to continue into the second semester.

The materials used in the foreign language courses are published in the original countries. Those textbooks are designed for the use in foreign language classrooms but are all written in the original language. Foreign language instructors at Nan University have freedom to choose course materials for the use in the classroom.

All foreign language instructors should provide their course syllabus on the university website before the start of each semester, which allows students to select their favourite foreign language program(s). Students are usually given two weeks to add/drop a course. During the first two weeks of each semester, they can go to different courses and see if they are really interested in them. The maximum student number for each course varies from teacher to teacher. Within the two-week period, if the number of a course reaches the maximum, students can only take the course on condition that the instructor gives his/her permission. If students drop any selected course after this two-week period, they can only receive the same instruction in another academic year. But they are allowed to drop courses at any time during a semester.

1.2.4 Problems of the specific context

Having taught a one-year French course to students from all disciplines in the university, I found that although a lot of students were attracted by this subject, many of them lost their motivation towards French after the start of the course. Some of them dropped out after some initial sessions because of their loss of interest in French. Others struggled with the course due to the difficulties they encountered during the learning processes. A number of them doubted the value of this learning because they could not have more contact with the language outside the classroom. A few of them, in spite of their interest in French, hoped to learn a language more useful to their future professional career. A small number asked about extensive French courses available outside the university setting and felt disappointed that the environment could only offer few options to them.

As a French language teacher in Taiwan, I believe the promotion of this minority language is necessary. The globalization of English learning threatens but also assists the promotion of other foreign languages in Taiwan. Most students tend to learn English because it has become necessary for their future careers. But since many universities have set English as a compulsory program, some students foresee that learning one other foreign language may increase their competitiveness in the future job market and therefore start paying attention to the learning of other foreign languages. However, unlike the case of Japanese, whose resources are widely available in Taiwan, the limited contact with French language and culture outside school settings makes it hard for French to compete with Japanese, the second most learned foreign language in Taiwan.

1.3 Statement of the research topic

In this study, I propose the use of synchronous CMC as a solution to the demotivation of beginning French language learners in the Taiwanese context, where computer technology has not been ‘normalized’ (Chambers & Bax, 2006) in most language classrooms. Many students came to my French course with an interest in learning French oral skills, but “speaking in a foreign language often does not come easily, especially to beginning and intermediate-level students” (Kern, 1995:462). However, the findings of some studies show that communication implemented in both asynchronous CMC and synchronous CMC settings has

beneficial effects on learners' oral proficiency development (Abrams, 2003; Chun, 1994; Chapman, 1997; Jepson, 2005; Payne & Whitney, 2002; Payne & Ross, 2005). Moreover, Collentine and Collentine (1997) have claimed that CMC is a particularly suitable learning mode for early-stage learners to acquire language knowledge for output.

It has also been suggested that flexibility is one of the advantageous features in CMC learning (Sykes, 2005). Through CMC written chat, students can practise individually what they have learnt from the classroom and undertake more interactive homework outside of the normal class time, which makes it more feasible for the instructor to focus their teaching on pragmatic issues (e.g., grammatical forms and proper routine formulae) in the classroom (Sykes, 2005). Since two-hour weekly learning in my French class is too short for students to acquire many basic daily conversations that may not allow them to enhance their interests in French, this study is also intended to help learners develop their oral abilities outside the classroom.

Learners' interactions in different communication modes (f2f, audio, audio/video) and the effects of these modes on their learning are examined, with a particular focus on three areas: learners' oral proficiency development, motivation and social presence.

The three research questions investigated in this study are:

1. Do foreign language learners at elementary level develop oral proficiency skills in synchronous CMC environments? If so, how?
2. Do different synchronous CMC modes impact on foreign language students' learning motivation? If so, why?
3. How do different synchronous CMC environments affect learners' social presence?

1.4 Structure of the study

This thesis consists of seven chapters. I have already introduced my motivation to conduct this research and have described the general and specific foreign language learning problems in my study context. I have also outlined my chosen area of

research – the use of synchronous CMC to assist learners in developing their French oral proficiency outside the classroom and enhancing their motivation towards this learning.

In Chapter 2, I discuss theory and literature that guided me to conceive the framework of my study. For Holliday (2002), a main function of the conceptual framework “is to position the researcher in relationship to the research. It is also a place where the issue of ideology inherent in qualitative research can be addressed” (p52). The development of the conceptual framework allows me to state my ideological position resulting from my agreement or disagreement with current discussion and issues (Holliday, 2002).

In Chapter 3, I discuss a qualitative research approach and its related data collection instruments. Next I introduce my research topic and questions.

In Chapter 4, I present my research design accompanied by the rationale for the development of the design and my data collection strategy. I also describe my research methodology, in which I discuss the methodological issues relevant to my study and explain the procedures for carrying out the study.

In Chapter 5, I analyze the data collected over the study. Here, I present and interpret my findings with the support of literature. The data was taken from all parts of the corpus and arranged under thematic headings (Holliday, 2002). After being interconnected and articulated, the extracted data provides evidence for my interpretation of the study outcomes.

In Chapter 6, I discuss the implications of the data analysis, using tables to show the frequency of themes generated from the analysis in the previous chapter, in order to communicate my findings as simply and efficiently as possible.

In the final chapter, I sum up the study by commenting on the basic points in my arguments and discussing the limitations of my study. I also make some recommendations to language instructors who intend to teach oral skills through synchronous CMC modes.

Chapter 2. Literature review

In this chapter, I review the literature on language proficiency development, motivation and social presence, in three main sections. Although they have been researched for a certain period, their relationship with CMC is still under examination and for this reason I decided to investigate these three aspects in my study.

2.1 Language proficiency development in CMC

2.1.1 CMC

Computer mediated communication (CMC) was initially introduced in science laboratories in the 1960s. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, it was promoted by the U.S. military, developed in conjunction with main U.S. research universities and then expanded dramatically all over the world via the Internet in the 1990s (Warschauer, 2003).

The term refers to multi-modal Internet-mediated communication (Deusen-Scholl, & Hornberger, 2008). As a type of human communication via computers, it consists of many different forms of interaction. Through these communication forms, people can exchange text, images, audio or video information. The online CMC environment allows “interaction that is text-based, many-to-many, and place-independent” (Warschauer, 1999:5). Both CMC communicative modes, asynchronous (e.g. email, news groups, bulletin boards --- etc.) and synchronous (e.g. Internet Relay Chat, Moo, video conferencing --- etc.), have their pedagogical advantages and disadvantages in different language learning environments.

Asynchronous CMC allows individualized learning. In a text-based asynchronous CMC environment, participants can learn at their own pace at any time and any place (Warschauer, 1997; 1999). It allows learners to communicate with others outside the classroom (Warschauer, 1996b; 1997) and permits them to reflect on their responses and thus better refine their electronic messages (Warschauer, 1996b;

Cummins & Sayers, 1995; Chapelle, 2001). Therefore, this mode is “widely used in collaborative writing, brainstorming, and fostering critical thinking habits of the learners” (Lee, 1999:2). The major disadvantage of this communicative mode is that learners cannot get immediate feedback from others and possibly feel frustrated with this delayed communication.

Through the synchronous CMC mode, learners can communicate with others in a real-time setting where they can apply a speech-like linguistic strategy in their communication (Kern, 1995) and receive responses and feedback immediately. However, as the interaction in this mode is instantaneous, learners may not have sufficient time to think about the structure of their responses in the target language and so their production tends to be linguistically simplified or ungrammatical (Kern, 1995).

“Asynchronous and synchronous CMC have different discourse features which may be exploited for different pedagogical purposes” (Sotillo, 2000:82). Synchronous CMC communicators seem to give more attention to meaning and ignore accuracy, while asynchronous communicators have more time to “plan their answers and monitor spelling and punctuation” (Levy & Kennedy, 2004: 50).

Recently, CMC technologies have been playing an increasingly significant role in the second language classroom (Lafford & Lafford, 2005). In the following section, I discuss how CMC facilitates learners’ second language acquisition.

2.1.2 CMC and second language acquisition

The development of CMC provides “possibilities for new interpersonal contacts and communicative engagement” (Kern, 1995:457), which are beyond the limits of time and place inherent in face-to-face interaction (Blake, 2000, cited in Jepson, 2005). Some researchers (Beauvois, 1992; Chun, 1994; Kelm, 1992; Kern, 1995) discovered that communication through networked computers can facilitate language classroom discussion. Interaction types are more varied in CMC environments than in language classrooms: communication between NNS – NNS of the same or different levels, NS – NNS, and mixed groups (Kitade, 2000:146).

In addition to providing opportunities for L2 learners to interact with native

speakers and other language learners outside the classroom, CMC facilitates collaborative and comprehensible interaction by offering learner-centered interaction occasions (Kitade, 2000; Abrams, 2003), which results in more scaffolding, defined “as the conditions created by a knowledgeable person that may help the less experienced participant extend and improve his/her knowledge of the language system” (Salaberry, 2000:19). Direct interaction between learners also stimulates their interest in one another, encourages peer learning, and decreases learners’ dependence on the instructor (Kern, 1995).

Through CMC, learners can obtain abundant linguistic input (Lee, 1999; Kitade, 2000), and express their thoughts and negotiate meaning by interacting with other non-native and native speakers (Collentine & Collentine, 1997; Lee, 1999; Jepson, 2005). Compared to face-to-face communication, it provides participants with more expression opportunities and therefore leads to more language production (Kern, 1995; Warschauer, 1996a) and more interactive discourse (Chun, 1994; Kern, 1995; Warschauer, 1996a). Since the risk of turn taking competition is reduced in CMC and more time is available for learners to read and formulate utterances, which allows learners’ self-correction of their linguistic output (Kitade, 2000), what they produce is more syntactically sophisticated and varied in expressed discourse function than in oral discussion (Kelm, 1992; Chun, 1994; Kern, 1995; Warschauer, 1996a). Moreover, learners may feel freer to ask for clarification, modification, or confirmation any time during CMC communication (Kitade, 2000).

Dealing with the external needs of learners, CMC provides opportunities to “develop authentic (as opposed to classroom) functional abilities and a healthy repertoire of pragmatic skills” (Collentine & Collentine, 1997:415). Authentic and conversational settings are typical of many online text and voice chat rooms (Jepson, 2005), which are the most practical and accessible ways for people around the world who learn the same language to meet.

Although CMC can be compatible with most cognitive aspects of language learning (Collentine & Collentine, 1997) and seems to enable learners of different levels to co-construct social activities (Jepson, 2005), Collentine and Collentine (1997) argued that it is particularly compatible with beginners’ language acquisition, since most CMC entails input-oriented tasks, which provides the foundation for communicative competences, and allows learners opportunities to

connect with the target language.

In Collentine and Collentine's (1997) Internet-based study, a group of high-school Spanish beginners were exposed to aural and written learning resources either through CD-ROM or the Netscape browser. The learners could also access online Spanish resources and log on to chatroom facilities through the server of EMS (Educational Management Group). Additionally, they were able to interact with a Spanish instructor via the EMG satellite link. Given website navigation activities and content-based instruction, the learners used the target language as a communication tool rather than a learning subject. They were also offered communicative opportunities to acquire pragmatic skills by negotiating meaning in the chatroom and in the activities provided by CD-ROM. Input-oriented activities provided by CMC offered the learners many opportunities to interpret written and aural texts in the target language. The researchers therefore maintained that with appropriate instruction design, CMC environments can provide the language knowledge that elementary-level learners need for later-stage production. However, the strength of that claim was limited by the lack of numerical information to show to what extent these beginning-level learners benefited from the project.

In my previous postgraduate research (2005) conducted with a group of university-level French learners, the participants were required to explore my 'French culture' website, which covered five themes within a five-week period: food, landscape, media, art and cinema. After each week's exploration on the Internet, they had to contribute at least one note either in Chinese or in French on the class bulletin board. They were also paired with an email partner and had to use French to ask and answer simple questions that they had practised during class time. Data was collected from interviews conducted with seven participants and the learners' email exchanges. After the study, most interviewees perceived that the activities were beneficial to the improvement of their French proficiency. Although this progress was not formally evaluated, the participants' words lend support to Collentine and Collentine's (1997) argument that CMC is compatible with beginners' language acquisition.

The application of the synchronous chat room in language learning is becoming more and more popular and important (Jepson, 2005: 81). Two types of synchronous chat are distinguished: text-based CMC and voice-based CMC. They

have different implications for learners' language acquisition. In the following section, I look at how these two CMC modes are beneficial to language learning.

2.1.2.1 Synchronous text-based CMC

Some researchers who have compared the effects of synchronous and asynchronous CMC on students' language development have found that synchronous CMC appeared more beneficial to students' language learning than asynchronous CMC, due to its real-time nature. For example, Abrams (2003) examined the oral performance of 96 intermediate German students who had pre-discussions before classroom oral discussions in three different environments: face-to-face, synchronous, and asynchronous. He found that the participants in the synchronous CMC group outperformed those in the face-to-face group and the participants in the asynchronous CMC group produced significantly less output than those in the other two groups. He argued that this result may have been due to the delays in asynchronous CMC, which interrupt the discursive momentum and therefore reduce participants' motivation (p.164).

Sotillo (2000) examined discourse functions and syntactic complexity in 25 ESL learners' asynchronous and synchronous CMC discussions quantitatively and qualitatively. She found that the types of discourse functions in the synchronous CMC discussions were similar to those of face-to-face interactional modifications (e.g. meaning negotiations), which are considered necessary for L2 acquisition (Long, 1981). Meaning negotiation is considered beneficial for SLA "as learners elicit modified input from one another, are pushed to modify their own linguistic output, and receive important feedback on their target language use, thus potentially focusing their attention on their problematic utterances "(Smith, 2003:39).

Compared to the asynchronous CMC discussions, the synchronous CMC discussions were more varied in the nature of the interaction but less syntactically complex due to the instant nature of the environment. Sotillo suggested that the learners' collaborative creation of meaning in synchronous CMC discussions facilitated their output, which is also essential for their language development (Swain, 1985)

Language learners in synchronous CMC converse with each other by sending text messages through the Internet, which appears on the computer screens of their interlocutors within seconds (Jepson, 2005:81). Synchronous text-based CMC involves two functions of language: interactive communication and meaningful interpretation (Halliday, 1993:95, cited in Warschauer, 1999). People can not only communicate interactively through text-based CMC, but also interpret and reflect at the same time, due to the permanent nature of written texts. As a result, learners produce more language with a richer lexicon than in a face-to-face environment (Beauvois, 1997).

Warschauer (1999) proposed a number of ways that students appear to benefit from text-based CMC. Firstly, computer-based writing allows them to achieve more written fluency, which benefits especially those students who are learning a second language or who are unfamiliar with keyboarding. Also, text communication makes it possible for students to focus on linguistic structures. Above all, it provides additional opportunities for students to express and reflect (Warschauer, 1999; Garrison et al., 2000).

For Salaberry (2000), text-based CMC provides a natural method that links “a focus on meaning with a focus on form” (p.6). Skehan (1998) proposed that L2 instruction should help learners focus attention on form while they focus on meaning. Although the topmost goal of CMC communication is usually a focus on meaning (Chun, 1994; Kelm, 1992; Kern, 1995; Warschauer, 1996a, Salaberry, 2000), pedagogical activities done through text-based CMC mode provide language teachers with additional tools to focus students’ attention on form (Salaberry, 2000), which can “lead learners to reflect on their own language production as they attempt to create meaning” (Swain, 1995:141).

Text-based chat, being visible and saved (Lee, 1999), encourages learners to notice their own errors by scrolling back the written logs on the screen, and allows them to read, re-think and re-formulate their utterances before sending them to other interlocutors, although this reworking of constructed messages is limited due to the synchronous feature of the environment (Kitade 2005). In comparison with face-to-face communication, students can test their continuing learning process in a safer way and have greater opportunities to internalise linguistic inputs under this setting (Lee, 1999). Acting as a built-in external memory aid (Gallupe, Bastianutti, & Cooper, 1991, cited in Ortega, 1997), text form also allows modified input

occurring in interaction to be more easily perceived and may be more memorable (Warschauer, 1999). The availability of time for reflection makes it more likely for text-based CMC to “generate a deep level of cognitive processing” (Salaberry, 2000:7) and increase “meta-linguistic awareness in the L2” (p.9). It may be preferable to oral communication “when the objective is to facilitate thinking about complex issues and deep, meaningful learning” (Garrison et al., 2000:91).

Warschauer (1996a) investigated discussion differences in the language use and interaction style in the CMC and face-to-face modes with 16 English learners in an advanced ESL computer – lab writing class at a community college in Hawaii. He found that the students’ language use was syntactically and lexically more formal and complex in CMC discussion. He also discovered that the text-based CMC mode favoured learners’ equal participation and increased their participation in communication, which echoed with Kelm’s findings in a computer-assisted classroom with 15 Portuguese learners in 1992.

Nevertheless, the application of the text-based CMC in language acquisition is not always promising. Muniandy (2002) pointed out that short forms and contractions are commonly used in text-chat, where time constraints lead learners not to edit their speech and create “a sense of urgency” (p.56). Lee (1999) pointed out that in text-based CMC, meta-linguistic factors such as gesture and facial impression, which “are said to serve as facilitative factors for SLA” (p.11), are lacking. Warschauer (1996a) noted that interactional features such as questioning, recasting, confirmation checks, and paraphrasing, which are frequently found in face-to-face conversations, are less common in electronic discussion. Kern (1995) and Sotillo (2000) found that synchronous CMC mode does not facilitate accuracy. In addition, Kern (1995) indicated that there is lack of coherence and continuity in the learners’ synchronous CMC discussions, which usually take place quickly in real time.

Warschauer (1996a) recommended that as “electronic and face-to-face discussion differ so substantially, they are probably best used with different purposes in mind” (p.22). For him, the complexity and formality of language in synchronous text-based CMC discussions make the environment a suitable medium for pre-writing work that bridges spoken interaction and written composition. Kern (1995) suggested that text-based CMC chat can be used to facilitate face-to-face discussions, rather than replace them. Smith (2003) also claimed that unique features in the CMC environment (e.g. making use of simplified registers, more

overlaps in turn taking and more processing time afforded than face-to-face exchanges) make negotiation in this mode slightly different from negotiation in face-to-face settings. In Warschauer's (1996a) view, combining face-to-face and synchronous text-based discussions in different ways may better highlight the advantages of each environment. Since Warschauer did not point out what advantages the combined use of face-to-face and synchronous text-based discussions had, I hope the findings of my study can provide some answers to this question.

2.1.2.2 Synchronous voice-based CMC

According to Jepson (2005), synchronous voice chat refers to learners' oral communication with each other in real time using microphones, earphones or speakers. Each oral message is transmitted within seconds and is "broadcast with varying degrees of clarity over the interlocutor's headphones or speakers" (p.81). Unlike text chat, voice chat allows learners to "practise face-to-face turn-adjacency conventions or adhere to discourse coherence structures" (p.81).

Speakers in voice chat can decide if they want to include webcam in their communication, allowing learners to see their interlocutors and have access to their gestures or facial expression, which makes voice chat similar to face-to-face communication. However to date, the quantity of published research on second language learning and voice chat without or with images, in particular, is limited.

Jepson (2005) investigated the patterns of repair moves used by English learners in synchronous text-based and voice-based chat rooms, comparing the discourses between repair moves in five text-chat sessions and five voice-chat sessions. His study indicated that repair moves, especially negotiation of meaning, in the voice-chat sessions were more numerous than those in the text-chat sessions. Negotiation of meaning repair moves (clarification requests, confirmation checks, comprehension checks, self-repetition or paraphrase and incorporations in response to a clarification request) were used more often in both chat sessions than those of negative feedback (recasts, explicit correction, questions, incorporations in response to a correction and self-corrections). Clarification requests were used more than any other repair move types.

Based on his findings, Jepson concluded that voice chat seems to be beneficial to learners' language development in terms of repair moves, especially in those of pronunciation and incorporations. He therefore suggested that voice chat may be most suitable for pronunciation work as non-verbal cues were not available in his voice chat environment, which might cause learners' ineffective communication. However, he thought that teachers and learners may wish to use voice chat not only for phonology practice, but also for communication and language development. As a language teacher, I am interested in teaching communicative skills through voice chat but am uncertain about its effects. Since little research was done in terms of this area, I involve it in my study and hope to provide future language teachers who have the same interests as me with some helpful insights.

Volle's study (2005) investigated the speech production of 19 early Spanish learners in an online distance education course. The data of this study was collected from the performance of the learners' pronunciation production in two types of voiced audio emails (read-aloud passages and grammar-drill completions) and the assessment of their two online oral conversations with the instructor through MSN Messenger. The two oral conversations were carried out with the aid of the microphones.

The learners' performance was evaluated from three aspects: proficiency, articulation and accuracy. The concept of proficiency, defined as being capable to carry out certain functions, was adapted from *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* (1983, cited in Volle, 2005: 151). In this study, 'articulation' referred to pronunciation, stress and intonation (p.146). Adapted from Weir's *Communicative Language Testing* (1990, cited in Volle, 2005: 151), the concept of 'accuracy' consists of comprehension of questions posed, appropriate responses, word order, morphology, adequacy of vocabulary for purpose, grammatical accuracy and correct use of grammar. The results of the study showed significant gains only in the scores of oral proficiency, but not in the conversation articulation and accuracy in synchronous online oral communication, where facial visuals were lacking.

After the study, Volle incorporated desktop video conferencing tools into her online courses. Based on her own experiences, she suggested that the availability of facial visuals in synchronous oral communication could bring a change in learners' output as well as their "socio-cultural, visual and audio perception of the input" (p.156).

The lack of visual cues has been shown to produce different effects on students' learning. Kötter et al.'s study (1999) found negative effects of the lack of non-verbal cues in a synchronous CMC voice chat environment. Without visual cues, the participants in French and German conversation were only able to know if they could take turns from the speaker's intonation, which made their conversations "less fluid or more stilted and unnatural than in a face-to-face situation" (p.58). The lack of images also made the participants "remain reserved and did not try to compensate for their insecurity by giving away a higher amount of personal information than they would do in a comparable face-to-face situation" (p.58). Moreover, they worried more about their mistakes in synchronous voice chat. Nevertheless, the authors were not sure if what they observed was directly related to the learning environment or other factors (e.g. learners' preferences or cultural factors). For Wang (2004b), the availability of visual cues is helpful for distance learners to build a learning community, which is "an essential social environment for effective language learning" (p.106).

However, the paucity of non-verbal cues can also have positive effects on students' learning. For example, the participants in the synchronous written chat group in Sykes's (2005) study were found to communicate more explicitly. Sykes examined a group of Spanish learners' pragmatic development (refusals of an invitation) in three types of learning environments (synchronous written chat, synchronous oral chat and traditional face-to-face discussion) and discovered that the written group outperformed the other two groups in relation to complexity and variety of strategies. Consequently, she suggested that written chat should be used as the essential means of online synchronous CMC discussion. In addition, she echoed Jepson's (2005) claim that oral chat is a suitable environment for learners to practise pronunciation and intonation.

For O'Malley et al. (1996), video communication is sometimes 'worse' than audio-only communication. They carried out a series of experiments, where pairs of participants performed tasks collaboratively at a distance in two learning modes - video and audio links, and audio links only - and found that the participants in the former group produced longer and more interrupted dialogues than those in the audio links group. They also argued that the speakers with access to video communication were less cautious about their use of verbal information because they know their interlocutors can see them. Also, the performance of the participants in the video links group was negatively influenced by slow connection

of the Internet, which resulted in transmission delays and caused problems to turn taking management.

The adverse influences of technology problems on students' learning outcomes have also been recognized by other CMC researchers (Hampel & Hauck, 2004; Wang, 2004b; Sykes, 2005; Volle, 2005). In Hampel and Hauck's (2004) audio conferencing programs, the technical problems that the students encountered were to do with audio quality (e.g. poor sound levels, interruption of audio transmission) and Internet disconnection. Being aware that "the technology required a certain degree of technical expertise" (p.69), they urged that audio conferencing instructors should provide adequate support, "including induction and setting up and maintaining comprehensive online help" (p.79).

Wang (2004b) indicated that bandwidth and latency are two critical problems that face Internet-based videoconferencing. He defined communication latency as "the time interval for a message to travel from the source machine to the destination machine" (p.105). Based on the results of his research, he suggested that the choice of a less congested Internet time and one-to-one (rather than many-to-many) videoconferencing are key conditions for successful videoconferencing sessions. However, his suggestions remain to be researched under current conditions, since the speed of Internet bandwidth nowadays has been much improved.

Sykes (2005) expressed the opinion that "when doing any type of technology research one must address the impact of the technology itself on the study" (p.421). She was also concerned that students' typing speed, familiarity with the discussion environment, and understanding of the web page instructions might influence their learning outcome.

Although technology problems have been found in both videoconferencing and audio conferencing studies, I take the view that learners might encounter more technical difficulties in videoconferencing sessions since both images and sound are available during communication. This view is supported by O'Malley et al.'s (1996) findings. Nevertheless, recent advances in technology have greatly improved online communication quality. The difficulties that modern students experience could be different from those in the past. Given the lack of studies comparing video/audio communication and audio-only communication, there is not much advice available in terms of possible problems encountered, which later CMC researchers can follow from previous researchers. Acknowledging the

importance of technology in students' online learning motivation and performance, I will be reporting in later chapters the participants' reaction to technology use in this study.

2.1.2.3 Web 2.0

Recent innovations (e.g. blogs, wikis, podcasts, RSS feeds) also provide both language professionals and learners with powerful opportunities for online collaboration. XML (“extensible markup language”), the underlying technology of these new tools, “separates content from formatting, encourages use of meta-data, and enables machine processing of Internet documents” (Godwin-Jones, 2003:12). These second-generation Web tools, as a consequence of a more fully implemented Web than was available through the first-generation tools (e.g. text-based chat, voiced-based chat) that I described in previous sections, facilitate a more socially connected Web in which everybody can add to and edit the information space as much as they can consume it (Anderson, 2007). A number of these Web-based services and applications have now been adopted for educational purposes.

Among the second-generation Web tools, blogs (or ‘weblog’) have sparked the most intense interest in recent years (Godwin-Jones, 2003). As with an online journal, individuals can continually update their blogs with their own words and thoughts through software. Different from a standard website, blog entries can be easily created and maintained without any knowledge of HTML or FTP (File transfer protocol) (Campbell, 2003). Everyone can make blog entries by typing directly into the browser and publish them instantly on the Internet by clicking a button. In addition, readers can respond to blog entries with the click of a comment button, which is then logged and linked into the original entries. According to Godwin-Jones (2003), the use of blogs to write on-line journals is suitable for language learners, “particularly since they normally enable uploading and linking of files” (p.13), as they provide a venue where learners can reflect, comment, question, review, and communicate with a real-life audience outside the classroom. Their value as a pedagogical tool is in their authentic, interesting and communicative nature (Pinkman, 2005:13).

Although blogs can serve as project-based learning environments, the structure of blogs is confined to their chronological organization. Wikis, organized by content,

are “another collaborative environment which is more naturally suited for collaborative online projects” (Godwin-Jones, 2003:15). A wiki is a webpage or set of webpages that all users can view and edit (Ebersbach et al., 2006). Unlike blogs, their history function allows the examination of previous versions and the rollback function can restore previous versions (Anderson, 2007). Using a simple set of formatting tags (Lamb, 2004), they are intensely collaborative. However, unlike chat forums, their content “is expected to have some degree of seriousness and permanence” (Godwin-Jones, 2003:15). Wikipedia (<http://wikipedia.org>), an open-access encyclopedia, is the most famous example among the various wiki projects on the Web. Some wiki features - ease of use, extreme flexibility and open access - make them useful for group working (Lamb, 2004). For Guth (2007:61), wikis are a social software tool in which “the greater the user base, the greater the potential for real knowledge construction”.

Unlike these two text-based social software tools, podcasts, originally called audio blogs, are audio recordings that can be played either on a desktop computer or on a MP3 device. A podcast can be “made by creating an MP3 format audio file, uploading the file to a host server, and then making the world aware of its existence through the use of RSS” (Anderson, 2007:10), which is a family of formats allowing users to keep track of changes to RSS-enabled websites, blogs or podcasts without the need to visit the site. What distinguishes podcasting from other online delivery audio methods is that its content can be automatically downloaded (Stanley, 2006). Subscription to the RSS feeds can keep podcast listeners informed about new podcasts once they become available. Nowadays, video podcasts (shortened to vidcast or vodcast) are also becoming more common.

Although these various technology facilities have been applied in language learning settings, researchers are still exploring which methods can be used to assist language teaching and learning and the effects they may bring on learners’ language development. Blogs and wikis are generally regarded as useful social writing platforms (Alexander, 2006), whereas podcasts are mostly employed to support listening instruction.

Johnson (2004) suggested that blogs have great potential as a tool in the learning of second language writing. Campbell (2003) also provides some suggestions for ESL teachers to use blogs as a class forum in order that students can express opinions, ideas and exchange interesting information. Wikis are also commonly used to

support writing instruction (Lamb, 2004). The fact that they can store shared knowledge over time (Godwin-Jones, 2003) facilitates writing as a process and promotes their continued use in different contexts (Guth, 2007). As to podcasts, they provide language teachers and learners with a wide range of possibilities for listening to authentic conversations inside and outside of the classroom (Stanley, 2006). Stanley (2006) suggests a number of ways that language teachers can include podcasts in their listening curriculum.

Although the above Web 2.0 social software have achieved widespread use in a very short time (Meijias, 2006), they do not support group members' synchronous conversational exchanges, which are the main communication modes addressed in this study. For that reason, I have selected first-generation technology as the focus of study, to be discussed in the following sections.

The findings of research into this first generation of technological tools provide evidence for the positive impact of CMC on L2 development. Two major types of synchronous CMC research in language are distinguished: one focusing on the chat discourse and interaction; the other examining the impacts of synchronous CMC on language development (Sykes, 2005:400). My own study, investigating the possibilities that learners develop their oral proficiency in synchronous CMC, should be classified under the latter category. In order to create an efficient language learning environment through the use of CMC, it is necessary to understand the L2 development process. In the next section, I turn to a discussion of that process.

2.1.3 Second language acquisition (SLA)

Second language acquisition “refers to the study of the processes through which learners acquire a new language” (Beatty, 2003:78). According to Long (1989), when one wants to design a language teaching program to help learners acquire a new language successfully, one has to consider six major areas: needs (and means), identification, syllabus, materials, methodology, testing and evaluation. Among them, the area argued to be the most important is syllabus design, of which “the central issue is choice of the unit of analysis: word, structure, notion, function, topic, situation or task (p.6).

2.1.3.1 Task-based approach

For Long (1985:89), '*task*' is a meaningful and viable unit of analysis in his four main issues in course design: identifying learners' needs, defining syllabus content, organizing language acquisition, and measuring students' achievement. Defined as "an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective" (Bygate et al., 2001: 11), it is developed because the "teachers concern for meaning-based activities and the researchers' investigation of patterns of interaction" (Skehan, 1996b:20).

Skehan (2003) discussed tasks from four perspectives: a psycholinguistic approach to interaction, a social interactive approach, a cognitive approach and a structure-focused approach. Researchers adopting a psycholinguistic perspective such as Long and Crookes considered language learning as a psycholinguistic process rather than a linguistic one (Long & Crookes, 1989, cited in Long, 1989). They relate task-based instruction with interaction, particularly for negotiation of meaning, which "concerns the way learners encounter communicational difficulties while completing tasks, and how they do something about those difficulties" (Skehan, 2003:3). For Long (1989), comprehension checks, clarification requests, and confirmation checks are experiences that language learners can encounter in tasks facilitating negotiation of meaning.

A recent view of this approach has switched the focus to *recasts*, defined as "repetitions of a learner's incorrect utterance, but with changes made in order to make it correct" (Skehan, 2003:4), which are believed to have an effective impact on learners' language development (Long et al., 1998; Nicolas et al., 2001). Long et al. (1998) conducted two experiments with L2 Japanese and Spanish learners and found that these adult learners were able to learn from implicit negative feedback. In terms of feedback type, they suggested that the students' short-term learning of a previously unknown L2 structure can be more effectively improved by recasts than pre-emptive positive input. Nicolas et al. (2001) reviewed several studies on recasts and suggested that they can be effective when learners have started using a particular linguistic feature and are offered linguistic alternatives to choose. They also proposed that the effectiveness of recasts differs according to the area of language or the specific linguistic feature.

However, task-based instruction with an emphasis on negotiation of meaning or recasts is not supported by all researchers. A similar but more interventionist approach is proposed to suggest that when initiated by the students, preemptive focus on form that “involves the teacher or learner initiating attention to form even though no actual problem in production has arisen” (Ellis et al., 2001: 414), is more likely to be followed by uptake (i.e. feedback is incorporated into learners’ utterances) than recasts.

Lyster and Ranta (1997) examined error types, feedback types, and immediate learner repair in 4 French immersion beginning-level classrooms and found that the teachers overused recasts in spite of their ineffectiveness at eliciting student-generated repair. Lyster (1998) conducted a further examination of the same database and found that although the teachers tended to recast grammatical and phonological errors, most grammatical repairs resulted from negotiation of form that was elicited by four feedback types (elicitation, metalinguistic clues, clarification requests and repetition of errors), rather than from recasts.

Within the social-cultural area, three approaches have been proposed. The first concern highlights the ways in which learners reinterpret tasks and the fact that tasks are created to respond to learners’ individual interests and needs. The second approach is represented by Swain’s work in Canadian immersion education programs where the focus is on structural development, the proposed key to which is the potential of some tasks to make it possible for learners to scaffold language understanding mutually through interaction. The third approach concentrates on the nature of interaction itself. Researchers following this approach investigate how learners interact with each other in various tasks. For example, Nakahama et al. (2001) found that conversational activities can offer considerable learning opportunities at multiple levels of interaction and may be more challenging than the information-gap task featured in the negotiation of meaning literature (Long, 1989), since the non-native participants have to pay attention to the entire discourse in conversational interaction.

Researchers taking a cognitive perspective focus on learners’ psychological processes during task completion. Three main areas are discussed: analyses of how attentional resources are used while doing tasks; the impact of task characteristics on learners’ performance; the influence of different conditions on task completion. There are two contrasting approaches in terms of attentional resources. Skehan

(1998) suggested that learners' attention to one aspect of performance (complexity, fluency, accuracy) may lead to neglect of other dimensions. He also argued that fluency can correlate with either complexity or accuracy, but not both (Skehan & Foster, 1997).

In Skehan's (1996b) definition, accuracy refers to the level of learners' language production concerning the target language's rule system; complexity is about the elaboration or ambition of learners' language production; and fluency refers to learners' ability to produce language in real time without unreasonable pausing or hesitation. With Foster, he suggested task researchers can examine variables that can predispose higher levels of performance in the three areas (Foster & Skehan, 1999:221). On the other hand, Robinson (2001a) proposed that learners can access many and non-competing attentional resources; and complexity and accuracy correlate with one another in one task. However, both Skehan and Robinson tend to agree with the limited capacity view and examine how task characteristics and conditions affect learners' performance.

Skehan (2001) states that five task characteristics can have significant effects on the nature of performance: familiarity of information, dialogic versus monologic, degree of structure, complex outcomes and transformation. He used three sets of measures (complexity, accuracy and fluency) to assess some tasks employed in his previous studies and obtained the following findings: the degree of task structure has greater effects on fluency; dialogic tasks have greater effects on accuracy but lower effects on fluency; and complex outcomes can generate greater effects on complexity.

Regarding task conditions, some researchers have advocated the role of planning and its influence on complexity and fluency (Ortega, 1999; Skehan & Foster, 1997; 1999); others have emphasised on task repetition and have claimed that repetition can improve learners' syntactic structures (Bygate, 1996) and bring learners more confidence in using language (Lynch & McLean, 2001). Others such as Skehan and Foster (1997) have suggested post-task effects on accuracy.

The use of tasks from a structure-focused viewpoint could be criticized by those, who regard tasks as "vehicles for learners themselves to set the agenda during interaction and as a result, obtain feedback at points of inter-language development relevant for them" (Skehan, 2003:7), for the reason that the predisposition to a

particular structure use would sacrifice the interactive purpose for task use of getting feedback. However, several researchers advocated this approach. For example, Loscky and Bley-Vroman (1993, cited in Skehan, 2003) examined the relationship between tasks and some particular language structures and suggested that tasks could be more effectively carried out when a particular structure is employed; and tasks could enable, but not predispose, the use of a particular structure. Ellis (2003) distinguished focused tasks, which aim to “induce learners to process, receptively or productively, some particular linguistic feature” (p.16), into three categories: structure based production tasks, comprehension tasks, and consciousness-raising tasks. He pointed out that tasks of these types have been mostly found to have positive effects on learners’ performance.

2.1.3.2 Cycle of tasks: pre/main/post task activities

In task-based instruction, learners’ success is assessed in relation to their achievement of an outcome, and real-life language use is generally included in tasks. Therefore, it “takes a fairly strong view of communicative language teaching” (Skehan, 1996b:20). The learning process of this approach is viewed as one of learning through doing. The learner’s system is encouraged to develop by mainly engaging in meaning (Skehan, 1996b; Willis, 1996).

For Skehan (1996a), there are some pitfalls in task-based learning. Firstly, by using comprehension and communication strategies, learners tend to focus their attention on meaning rather than on form to achieve communication. Additionally, it is possible “that much communication is lexical in nature” (p.41), since this approach puts a premium on communication strategies. A lexical mode of communication possibly happens when accessibility and time pressure are predominant. However, when exactness or creativity is emphasized, learners can switch to a form-focused model with a concern for syntax and planning (Sinclair, 1991, cited in Skehan, 1996a). For these reasons, Skehan argued for the need to set appropriate goals (e.g. accuracy, complexity, and fluency) for a task-based approach.

To achieve accuracy in language production, learners should have a greater concern “to be correct, to conform to target language norms, and to value them as important” (Skehan, 1996a:47). They can employ “well-integrated aspects of the

inter-language system” (p.47) to achieve this goal. Similarly, learners need to have “an interest in achieving native-like performance” (p.48) in order to develop complexity and restructuring. They also need to be given explicit and implicit input, interactive opportunities, time and support for restructuring processes. To achieve fluency, it is necessary that learners are given “opportunities to create exemplars in context, which can then be retrieved in later communicative encounters” (p.49). That is to say, learners should be provided communicative problems of the right level to solve in order to deal with the effects of recent restructuring and achieve fluency at the same time.

For Bruton (2002), task based instruction (TBI) was introduced for the following reasons: 1) it elicits more interaction from students; 2) it is an alternative to individual work; 3) learners do not assimilate the target language features well in natural oral contexts. TBI was justified because pair work/group work tasks could “stimulate spontaneous, meaningful oral communication in the target language” and “encourage collaborative classroom activity” (p.281). The use of tasks was adopted as “an alternative to linguistic features for sequencing classroom activities” (p.281) and was considered to be a central rather than a final stage in language pedagogy.

Bruton suggested using pre-and post-task activities in addition to main tasks because learners of similar levels, especially those of monolingual groups, will probably not assimilate from each other. He pointed out that this problem of assimilation could be common to all text-based collaborative tasks. Skehan also showed an interest in pre-task preparation and post-task feedback. For him, the lack of assimilation was caused by the absence of more proficient caretakers (Skehan, 1996a). He therefore proposed using pre-task preparation and post-task feedback to resolve this problem.

Van Patten (1996) argued that in conversational activities, learners naturally prefer processing meaning to form. Moreover, most non-native speakers cannot pay enough attention to meaning and content simultaneously while producing output (Levelt, 1988, cited in Morley, 2006). The use of cycles of tasks can bring “a balance between a focus on form and a focus on communication” (Skehan, 1996a:49). A framework of task-based instruction (Skehan, 1996a; Willis, 1996) was introduced to provide ways of balancing attention allocation among accuracy, complexity and fluency. Skehan discussed this framework in terms of syllabus and

methodology. While considering the syllabus, he emphasized the importance of task selection because some tasks “may be more effective than others in terms of targeted pedagogic outcomes” (Foster & Skehan, 1999:217) and “systematic effects are likely to follow from any task selection decision” (Skehan, 2001:182). For him, tasks of appropriate difficulty could give learners opportunities to achieve an effective balance between fluency and accuracy as well as applying previous restructuring. Regarding methodology, he suggested the use of pre-task activities and post-task activities to achieve the goals of restructuring, fluency and accuracy.

To “prepare students to perform the task in ways that will promote acquisition” (Ellis, 2006:2), the pre-task stage gives useful exposure that allows learners “to recall words and phrases and to recognize new ones” (Willis, 1996:56). Activities given during this phase are generally used to increase restructuring chances that favour either incorporation of new elements or re-arrangement of existing elements (Foster & Skehan, 1994, cited in Skehan, 1996a). The L2 studies (e.g. Mehnert, 1998; Yuan & Ellis, 2003) reported that when given planning time, learners’ language performance is syntactically more complex than when performing the same tasks without planning or with less planning time (Long, 1989). Pre-task planning has not only a positive influence on complexity, but also on fluency, although its influence on accuracy is not clear (Foster & Skehan, 1999; Skehan, 2003).

There are two types of pre-task activities: one aims to establish target language; the other is for easing the cognitive processing load (Skehan, 1996a). To establish target language, instructors can either “set up the relevant language for a task” (p.54) or ask learners to do a pre-task to provide them the language required in the real task. To reduce learners’ cognitive load, one of the methods instructors can use is to ask learners to plan cognitively and linguistically at the pre-task phase. By doing this, learners can produce more complex, accurate and fluent language.

Ellis (2006) proposed four ways to tackle procedurally the two types of activities: performing a similar task, providing a model, engaging in non-task preparation activities and doing strategic planning. By performing a similar task, learners can prepare to perform the main task individually. They can also be required to observe a model task and identify/analyze the specific features in the model texts. Moreover, the use of non-task preparation activities (e.g. brainstorming and mind-mapping) can help learners reduce the cognitive or linguistic demands on them. Finally,

doing strategic planning can provide learners with time to plan how they will perform in the main task. For Ellis, the use of these four ways can help learners create conditions that will make tasks work for acquisition (p.5).

According to Skehan (1996b), the purpose of mid-task activities is to manipulate pressure and influence processing balance. The most important decision to make during this phase is to select tasks of appropriate levels (Skehan, 1996a; 1996b). If tasks are too difficult, the pedagogic value of a task-based approach may be reduced because learners rely on ellipsis, context, strategies, and lexicalization to complete tasks. And if tasks are too easy, learners may get bored and not complete them seriously.

He proposed three factors that impact on language production in communication: time pressure, specific language forms focused in the pre-task phase and the number of participants. Learners will be forced to use readily accessed language when time pressure is given in real time. A pre-task focus on specific language forms will also put pressure on them to conform to the use of some structures and to use those structures correctly, which may cause them to perform less fluently. In addition, the number of participants may influence the predominance of fluency as a goal over accuracy and complexity/restructuring. Instructors can manipulate these factors to direct learners' attention while implementing a task-based curriculum.

Skehan (1996b) also suggested some ways of adjusting task difficulty during task completion. For example, the availability of visual aids can ease the processing load and therefore make tasks easier. In contrast, the introduction of surprise elements will make tasks more difficult. The use of these methods for teachers to generate particular effects on learners' performance is also supported by Ellis.

Ellis (2006) distinguished two basic kinds of methodological options that teachers can use in the during-task phase: task-performance options and process options. His task performance options consist of requiring students to perform tasks under time pressure, allowing students access to the input data and introducing surprise elements into tasks. And process options, involving teachers' and students' decisions about the ways to perform tasks, are identified as "the kinds of processes that the participants in a task performance need to strive for" (p.11). Unlike performance options, which can be selected before the actual task performance, process options must be decided during task completion.

Regarding time pressure, the findings of Yuan and Ellis's (2003) study can help teachers decide if they want to allow students to complete tasks in their own time or within a limited time. Yuan and Ellis examined 42 Chinese college students' performance in an oral narrative task. Each participant performed the task in one of the three conditions (no planning, pre-task planning, and on-line planning). The results showed that pressure of time, given in no planning and pre-task planning conditions, seemed to favour fluency whereas unlimited time, given to the students who did on-line planning, advantaged complexity and accuracy.

As to access to input data, Ellis (2006) argued the concept of 'borrowing' based on the findings of Joe's (1998) study that the learners who had access to the text could use the target words more frequently than those who did not have access to the text in a narrative recall task. Prabhu (1987, cited in Ellis, 2006:6) defined 'borrowing' as "taking over an available verbal formulation in order to express some self-initiated meaning content, instead of generating the formulation from one's own competence". Borrowing can be seen as a direct contribution to acquisition from the view of sociocultural theory, in which learning takes place through learners' participation (Ellis, 2006).

Ellis also developed the option of introducing surprise elements into tasks by citing Skehan and Foster's (1997) study, where the participants were required to complete a decision-making task about what punishment should be given to four criminals committing different crimes. Further information of a surprising nature about each criminal was given to the participants at a middle point of task completion. Although the introduction of such a surprise was found to have no effect on the participants' performance in fluency, complexity or accuracy, Ellis argued it may serve as a way to extend the task completion time and increase task amount, as well as to enhance learners' intrinsic interest in tasks, about which I have little doubt. For me, introduced surprise elements may bore or disappoint learners if they are not 'surprising' or 'interesting' enough, especially when they expect to complete the assigned tasks. In addition, it is possible that not all tasks are suitable for use as surprise elements.

The use of post-task activities "may lead learners to switch attention repeatedly between accuracy and restructuring and fluency" (Skehan, 1996b: 27) and direct learners' attention towards goals the instructor sets for them. During interaction,

learners may prioritise meaning while carrying out the main tasks. Careful procedures are therefore needed to bring their focus back to form (Skehan, 1996b; Willis, 1996; Foster & Skehan, 1999; Ellis, 2006). In addition, post-task activities serve to provide learners with opportunities to repeat the tasks and encourage them to reflect on the task performance procedure (Ellis, 2006). Their effects on learners' performance can be exemplified by some researchers' work presented below.

Skehan and Foster (1997) found that a post-task activity in interactive tasks can cause greater accuracy in the learners' performance, which becomes stronger as time goes on. A similar result was found in the study of Lynch and Maclean (2001), who suggested that the post-task activities can help learners monitor their production and produce greater accuracy, although the data collected in this study did not allow the researchers to tell if this effect was long-term or temporary. In addition to accuracy improvement, post-task activities play a vital role in deciding learners' sense of success, achievement and satisfaction, which affects their views about following learning tasks (Dörnyei, 2001b).

Skehan (1996a) proposed two phases of post-task activities. Those in the first phase, which immediately follow the teaching, include public performance, tests, and analysis. The activities of the second phase consist of task repetition, parallel task, and task families.

In public performance, learners are required to repeat the task, or engage in a similar task that they have done privately, in public. Asking students to re-do the same task or a similar task in front of some audience (e.g. the teacher, the rest of the group or a video camera) will direct learners' attention to the goals of accuracy and restructuring (Skehan, 1996a; 1996b), since learners may find it stressful to perform in front of the class and consequently pay more attention to the grammatical features of language (Ellis, 2006). "In this way, concern with syntax and analysis can be infiltrated into the task work without the heavy-handedness of teacher intervention and error correction" (Skehan, 1996a:56).

Among other post-task activities, task repetition has been investigated in several studies (Bygate, 1996; 2001; Lynch & Maclean, 2001) that indicate its beneficial effects on learners' performance. In Bygate's pilot case study (1996), the participant seemed to perform better on the same task provided on a second

occasion in terms of accuracy, repertoire and fluency. His subsequent research (Bygate, 2001) found that learners seemed to elaborate more complex and/or fluent performance of a task encountered 10 weeks earlier. For Lynch and Maclean, task retrieval is favourable to learners' accurate (2000; 2001) and fluent performance (2000).

Task repetition can be carried out under the same or modified conditions (Ellis, 2006). In Bygate's opinion (1996), repeating a similar task with a different partner may be beneficial to students' learning for the reason that different people will carry out tasks differently. Interacting with a variety of partners may allow learners to experience different learning opportunities, which some of my students considered exciting. The findings of Lynch and Maclean's (2001) study supported Bygate's view. In their poster carousel study, the participants were required to report their poster to different partners and therefore improve accuracy through cycles of "text input, task structure and learner interaction" (p.158) without teacher intervention.

Bygate's 2001 research did not find the same increase in participants' accuracy as he had found in 1996. He speculated that under different performance conditions, learners may produce a better performance in accuracy and suggested that task repetition can enable learners to move their focus "from processing the message content to working on formulations of the message" (p.44). They can therefore be encouraged to notice the relations between form and meaning and be provided "with practice at improvising the expression of their meanings" (p.44). Lynch and Maclean's (2001) finding also supported his claim.

2.1.3.3 Feedback

In addition to attention allocation (Skehan, 1998) discussed in the previous section, feedback offers a resource that teachers can employ to have students focus on form (Doughty & Williams, 1998). By receiving corrective feedback from teachers or peers, adult learners can notice differences between their output and the L2, which can raise their awareness about a specific linguistic item of the L2. According to the Noticing Hypothesis of Schmidt (1990), "noticing is the necessary and sufficient condition for converting input to intake" (p.129). Intake, defined by Krashen (1981) as the "subset of linguistic input that helps the acquirer acquire

language” (p.102), is considered as the major function that the second language classroom can provide for acquisition.

Doughty’s (1994) study provided evidence for feedback assisting noticing. She conducted a pilot study in which she observed teacher feedback in a beginning-level class for university students learning French as a foreign language. After analyzing the transcriptions of 6 hours of audio- and videotapes of the interactional activities that mostly focused on “structures, functions, and situationally appropriate language use” (p.101), she found that the learners responded to the teacher’s feedback in ways “that suggest the information the teacher attempts to convey is noticed” (p.107).

Carroll and Swain (1993) also confirmed the positive effect of feedback on learners’ language performance. In their study, participants receiving feedback outperform those not receiving any feedback. They therefore concluded that “indirect as well as direct forms of feedback can help adult language learners learn abstract linguistic generalizations” (p.373).

Lyster and Ranta (1997), as I have mentioned in Section 2.1.3.1, distinguished six types of feedback: explicit correction, recasts, clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation and repetition. For them, *explicit correction* entails providing explicitly the correct form. Learners are clearly told that what they have said is incorrect when they received explicit corrections from teachers. Conversely, *recasts* are usually implicit. Teachers reformulate all or part of students’ utterances, minus errors while recasting. They also requested students to reformulate or repeat what they have said when their utterances are not able to be understood or are ill-formed. Such feedback type is labelled *clarification requests*. As to *metalinguistic feedback*, it involves either comments, information, or questions in relation to students’ utterances without providing them the correct form. Through this feedback type, learners know there are errors in their utterances but need to produce the right form on their own. Teachers sometimes combine metalinguistic comments and *elicitation* to elicit the correct form from students “by strategically pausing to allow students to ‘fill in the blank’”(p.48). Other techniques they use in elicitation contain asking students questions other than yes/no ones and having them reformulate their utterances. *Repetition* is also a technique that teachers sometimes combine with elicitation. It refers to teachers’ repetition of learners’ incorrect utterances.

Among these feedback types, Lyster and Ranta (1997) found that elicitation is the most and recasts are the least successful technique for teachers to elicit uptake from the students. They described *uptake* as “a student’s utterance that immediately follows the teacher’s feedback and that constitutes a reaction in some way to the teacher’s intention to draw attention to some aspect of the student’s initial utterance” (p.49). Uptake they defined include not only the one resulting in ‘repair’ of the students’ errors on which teachers give feedback, but also the one resulting in utterances which still need repair.

They also found that elicitation and metalinguistic feedback were the most powerful ways to engage student-generated repair. In Lyster and Ranta’s student-generated repair category, there are two types of repair: peer- and self-repair. Peer-repair refers to peer-correction given by a student, who is not the one making the initial error, to respond the teacher’s feedback; self-repair refers to self-correction produced by the student making the initial error. This repair category is distinguished from the ‘repetition’ repair category that includes repetition and incorporation. Repetition refers to a student’s repetition of the feedback in which the correct form is provided by the teacher; incorporation refers to a student’s production of a longer utterance in which the correct form provided by the teacher is incorporated. This finding allows Lyster and Ranta to suggest that the selection of feedback technique has an influence on the subsequent repair type.

They additionally reminded teachers to consider their students’ level of L2 proficiency when they decide to use a particular feedback type. One of the four teachers who taught the students with a higher degree of proficiency used recasts much less than the other three teachers and therefore was able to push her students more in their output by providing other types of feedback. It is important to note that in this study, recasts and explicit correction provided the learners with the correct forms and therefore were unable to have them generate repair by themselves. The other four types of feedback could not elicit the students’ repetition since none of them provided the correct form.

Based on the above observation, I speculate that recasts and explicit correction may be more appropriately used in a beginning-level classroom, where learners’ limited language knowledge makes it difficult for them to produce student-generated repair. Evidence for this speculation can be found in Carroll and Swain’s (1993) study, where the low-intermediate ESL participants in the group A, who were told they

were wrong whenever they made a mistake and were given an explicit correction and further explanation, performed better than all the other experimental groups who received other explicit or implicit feedback. More evidence is needed to support this statement, which is worthy of further investigation since “teachers typically favour indirect, implicit correction rather than direct, explicit correction” (Ellis et al., 2001:413).

Dörnyei (2001) discussed feedback from a motivational perspective. According to him, feedback is one of “major motivational influences that are active in the postactional phrase” (p.99). He pointed out that from learners’ views, teachers’ feedback should be the most important ‘attributional cue’ in the classroom setting. He distinguished two types of motivational feedback: informational feedback and controlling feedback. Informational feedback gives information about learners’ progress and competence. Controlling feedback shows learners’ language proficiency levels based on external standards. From a motivational perspective, he considered informational feedback more influential than controlling feedback because it gives students ideas about what they can learn or improve to achieve their learning goals.

The learning environment is one further factor that language teachers need to take into account when they decide to use a particular feedback type. In Heift’s (2004) opinion, “feedback in a CALL environment cannot be identical to feedback in the oral classroom” (p.418) due to the medium difference. He studied the effects of three feedback types (meta-linguistic, meta-linguistic + highlighting, and repetition + highlighting) on 177 university-level German learners in Canada. Among the three types, the combination of meta-linguistic and highlighting, which provides an explanation of the error and highlights the error in the student input, was the most effective feedback type at eliciting learners’ uptake.

Pujolà (2001) explored immediate feedback and delayed two-step feedback to 22 Spanish students who performed English listening and reading tasks in four CALL sessions. The results suggested that feedback with explanations can help learners clarify the points they missed and direct them where their knowledge was limited. In addition, the delayed two-step feedback can allow the learners to develop hypothesis-testing and therefore promote strategies for self-assessment.

What made feedback given in CALL in these two studies different from feedback given in the oral classroom is that learners in CALL cannot get all feedback targeted on their personal mistakes. For Pujolà (2001), “feedback is an area in which learners needed more personalized support” (p.89). Unsure of their own interpretations about feedback given in CALL, the participants in Pujolà’s study still tried to seek “human-tutor support” (p.89), since the feedback explanations provided in CALL based on the teachers’ prediction of the learners’ possible mistakes. When the learners produced non-predicted mistakes, they possibly received feedback explanations that did not match their mistakes and therefore felt confused. This problem does not exist in a face-to-face classroom, where learners can receive feedback in response to their own errors and appropriate explanations; but sometimes they are not given freedom to select the way they would prefer to receive feedback.

Both these CALL studies (Heift and Pujolà) suggested that delayed feedback can stimulate learners to discover correct answers by themselves and therefore allow independent learning. In addition, they suggested that feedback with explanations is helpful to learners’ uptake. However, a similar result has been found in the oral classroom of Carroll and Swain’s face-to-face study. How does feedback given through the computer differ from feedback given in the oral classroom? This question needs to be further examined.

2.1.3.4 Group/Pair work

According to Vygotsky (1978), cognitive development happens as a result of human interaction between two persons, one of whom is more able than the other, such as a parent, teacher or peer, and assists the less able to internalize the learning, which results in a higher level of development.

In Long’s (1983b) Interaction hypothesis, a beginning learner can only acquire a second language through comprehensible input. Unfamiliar linguistic input can become comprehensible by using linguistic, extralinguistic (contextual) information and general knowledge or modifying the interactional structure of the conversation, which leads to the hypothesis of interaction. Comprehensible input can feed acquisition when the less competent speaker negotiates the conversation

by providing verbal or non-verbal feedback and forces the competent speaker to modify their performance until this performance is comprehensible. Such acquisition can be better promoted in two-way than in one-way communication since modification can only be guaranteed in a two-way exchange of information.

This claim was supported by Pica and Doughty's (1985) study, where one-way communication tasks such as the decision-making task employed in the study were found not to facilitate negotiation of meaning in either the teacher-fronted or the group work situation. However, negotiation of meaning was more available in the teacher-fronted context, where conversational adjustments seemed to serve as a form of exposure to all students and thus might not be relevant to individual students' comprehension levels.

In addition, Pica and Doughty found that individual students seemed to be offered more opportunities to use the target language in the group than in the teacher-fronted activities. Those opportunities may allow the learners to develop their linguistic and strategic competence "in giving them practice in hypothesizing about interlanguage structures which were still at variable levels of accuracy, or in enhancing their development of second language fluency" (p.131). Long (1983b) also found that the amount of time for each student to produce the target language orally is increased in the communication tasks carried out in groups.

Long (1989) proposed five major pedagogic advantages of group work (including pair work): increase in individuals' language practice opportunities, improvement of learners' speech quality, possibility of implementing individualized instruction, improvement of the affective climate in the classroom and the intimacy of the small group, and improvement of learners' motivation. He additionally proposed some psycholinguistic benefits. For him, input can be better adjusted to an interlocutor's comprehension abilities in the situation where the interlocutor is an individual, rather than a large group of people.

One other psycholinguistic advantage of group work Long pointed out, which surprised me, is that grammatical accuracy is as common in negotiation work where learners talk in unsupervised small groups as in teacher-fronted work. Although I agreed with the view that group work is beneficial to students' learning, I had taken the view that students could produce more grammatical accuracy in interaction work carried out in a teacher-fronted situation. This grammatical

accuracy advantage was not supported by the findings of Pica and Doughty's (1985) study where the students' productions were equally ungrammatical in both teacher-fronted and group activities. Even so, Pica and Doughty expressed the opinion that group work did provide students with "some opportunities to hear grammatical input and to negotiate message meaning" (p.132) that is believed to be favourable to language acquisition.

Long (1989) also pointed out that the selection of tasks may influence the effectiveness of group work. In addition to the proposition that two-way tasks are considered to be more effective than one-way tasks, Pica and Doughty (1985) suggested that two-way tasks seemed to be most effective in pair work. For them, "pair rather than group work on two-way tasks may ultimately be most conducive to negotiated modification of interaction, and hence to second language acquisition" (p.132).

Storch (1999) found pair collaboration had a positive effect on the learners' overall grammatical accuracy. She required 11 high-intermediate level ESL students to complete three exercises (a cloze exercise, a text reconstruction and a short composition) individually as well as in pairs, and found that the learners were more motivated to focus on grammatical accuracy when they worked in pairs than individually although they spent double the amount of time for this accuracy effort. However, this accuracy effect was only found on the completion of a text, and not on certain grammatical items. This suggested that some grammatical items and structures might not benefit from the same kind of classroom treatment.

In addition to learning content, pair interaction is one other factor that can have an impact on the success of pair collaboration. Simply assigning students to work in groups or pairs may not create necessary conditions conducive to learning (Storch, 2002). The findings of Storch's studies (2001; 2002) provided evidence to support this claim.

Storch (2002) investigated the interaction of three pairs of adult ESL students on a writing task and collected the data from the transcripts of the pair talk, her observation notes and the written texts produced by the pairs. She found that working in pairs did not guarantee that the students worked collaboratively. Some patterns of interaction were more conducive to language learning than others. The results are consistent with the findings of Nelson and Murphy (1993), who studied

whether L2 learners incorporated suggestions given by their peers when revising drafts and also found that the pair interaction patterns influenced the acceptance level of the writers in terms of the suggestions given by their peers.

Based on two indexes (equality and mutuality), Storch (2002) distinguished four distinct patterns of interaction: collaborative, dominant/dominant, dominant/passive, and expert/novice. *Equality* here refers to “an equal degree of control over the direction of a task” and *mutuality* describes “the level of engagement with each other’s contribution” (p.127). In the collaborative pattern, there is moderate to high equality and mutuality. The two learners in a pair work on all parts of the task together and are willing to offer and negotiate their ideas, which leads to resolutions accepted by both participants. In the dominant/dominant pattern, equality tends to be moderate to high, but mutuality tends to be moderate to low. The two learners in this pattern engage little with each other’s contribution although they contribute equally to the task.

Conversely, the expert/novice pattern involves moderate to low equality but moderate to high mutuality. In such a pattern, the participant who seems to control more the task acts as an expert and encourages the other participant’s participation. Finally, the level of equality and mutuality are both moderate to low in dominant/passive model, where the dominant participant is a leading authority on the task while the other participant contributes little and adopts a subservient role.

Storch (2001) suggested that when learners work collaboratively, there is an effect on task performance. Again, a similar result was found in the study of Nelson and Murphy (1993): that the peers’ suggestions were more likely to be used in revising when the writers interacted with their peers cooperatively. In a collaborative pattern, “there is evidence of co-construction, extension of knowledge and provision of scaffolded assistance” (Storch, 2001: 46). Disagreeing with Kowal and Swain’s (1994) suggestion that a large gap between learners’ language proficiency possibly reduced their collaboration level, Storch (2001) argued that the key factors were learners’ attitude to pair work, to the task and their motives and goals.

Storch (2002) further examined the nature of pair interaction with 10 pairs of adult ESL students and found that scaffolding and knowledge transfer is more likely to occur with the learners who interacted either collaboratively or in an expert/novice pattern than in a dominant/dominant or dominant/passive pattern. In both collaborative and expert/novice cases, the two learners negotiated by involving

actively “via requests, explanations, and repetitions of suggestions or repairs made” (p.148) that reflected some essential cognitive processes for successful language acquisition such as noticing, noticing the gap, hypotheses formulation, testing and restructuring, and uptake (p.148). Since interaction patterns were not influenced by time and tasks, Storch (2002) suggested that teachers have to monitor learners’ interaction patterns (e.g. change partners) while noticing dominant/dominant or dominant/passive cases.

2.1.3.5 L1 use

The avoidance of L1 use has been taken for granted by many L2 teachers. Cook (2001) pointed out that in many language classrooms, the students were considered to be native speakers of the target language rather than true L2 users by receiving instructions given completely in L2 for everyday classroom activities. He gave two possible reasons to explain this situation. Firstly, L2 learners would ideally acquire a L2 without reference to another language since they acquire their L1 in this way. Secondly, learners’ L1 and L2 should be kept separate in their mind in order that they can use L2 independently and eventually think in it. However, these reasons have not been justified by SLA research.

Cook argued that if allowing the learners to hear as much L2 as possible is the only reason for avoiding the use of the L1, “it may be effective to resort to the first language in the classroom” (p.157). Some L2 teachers have found the L1 useful in the classroom and used it in the following ways: explaining grammar and tasks to the students, explaining the meaning of the L2, the completion of L2 classroom activities, keeping discipline, administering tests, and so on.

Ellis (1997) listed a number of ways that the influence of the learner’s L1 exerts over the acquisition of an L2: negative transfer (interference), avoidance, overuse and positive transfer. In *negative transfer*, the learner’s L1 is one of the error sources, known as ‘transfer errors’ (p.19), which reflect the learner’s attempts to use their L1 knowledge in their L2 production. Some researchers believed that errors largely result from interference, which means that the L1 habits are supposed to prevent the learner from learning the L2 habits.

In the case of *avoidance*, some L2 learners can use more accurately certain L2 linguistic features than other language learners because in their L1, those linguistic features do not exist. For example, Chinese learners of English have been found to make fewer errors in relative clauses than Arabic learners of English because there is no equivalent structure in their L1 and therefore they use them less. But they tend to use expressions of regret more often than others when they apologize in English, which is in accordance with Chinese norms (Ellis, 1997). This exemplifies the *overuse* case.

However, similarities between the learner's L1 and L2 do not always cause learning difficulties. In some cases, the learner's L1 can sometimes facilitate L2 acquisition, which is known as *positive transfer*. Results of a number of studies can provide evidence for the positive influence of the L1 use on the acquisition of an L2 (e.g. Brooks & Donato, 1994; Swain & Lapkin, 2000; Storch, 2003; Thoms, Liao, & Szustak, 2005).

Brooks and Donato (1994) studied eight pairs of third-year high school learners of Spanish who participated in a two-way problem-solving speaking task. They discovered that during the task completion process, the learners engaged in 'metatalk', "about the task at hand and the discourse that constitutes the task" (p.266) and that occurred mostly in the L1. Such metatalk was found to allow learners to initiate and sustain verbal interaction with each other. In the researchers' opinion, this is a necessary and natural psycholinguistic process beneficial to L2 production.

Storch (2003) investigated the use of L1 by 12 pairs of university ESL students in performing two tasks: a reconstruction task and a short joint composition task. She found that L1 has been mainly used for task management and task clarification in the joint composition tasks and for meaning and vocabulary clarification, and grammatical structures discussion in the reconstruction task. Such advantages have been evidenced by the students' interview accounts as well. The students further reported that the shared L1 allowed them to deepen their discussion and thus complete the composition task more easily. Since the use of the L1 may help the learners gain control of tasks and have a more successful performance in tasks, Storch recommended that L2 teachers need to "acknowledge that the use of the L1 may be a normal psychological process that allows learners to initiate and sustain

verbal interaction” (p.768) and re-evaluate their views on the use of L1 in L2 classroom.

Swain and Lapkin (2000) investigated the use of the L1 in two eighth-grade French immersion classrooms. They found that the learners used L1 for three main purposes. Firstly, it served to have the task managed and moved along. Moreover, it enables the learners to pay attention to the grammar and vocabulary. Finally, it improved the learners’ interpersonal interaction. In this study, around 88% of the L1 use “served important cognitive and social functions” (p.268), which implied that the L1 can be useful to the students’ L2 learning in immersion classrooms. Consequently, Swain and Lapkin suggested that the use of L1 should be neither banned nor encouraged in order to make sure it supports, rather than replaces L2 learning.

Thoms et al. (2005) examined the L1 use of three intermediate language classes in a collaborative jigsaw task. The three groups of students, whose native language was different (Chinese, German, and Spanish), carried out the task in a computer chat environment. Despite the two learning environments being different, the L1 in this study was found to be used in similar ways as those appearing in the Swain and Lapkin’s (2000) study, except the function of focus on form that was only found in the latter study. Moreover, the Chinese learners of English were noted to use more L1 than the other two groups of participants. The researchers therefore presumed that “learners of a non-cognate L2 may more frequently resort to L1 use in a lexically rich task such as the one used in this study” (p.177), which I found true for my FFL students, whose first language is Chinese Mandarin.

Based on the above findings, Thoms et al. suggested that the instructor should allow learners to use their L1 to create task management strategies when it is impossible for them to perform a task completely in L2 or when the L2 performance required in a task is beyond the learners’ linguistic ability. In addition, they considered that “use of L1 may also enable less proficient learners to sustain interaction with or even to access the higher-level knowledge from more experienced learners” (p.177).

In sum, the above studies suggested that the use of the L1 in the language classroom should be considered natural and necessary. In my view, the teachers’

prohibition on this use will possibly stop learners to completing tasks effectively and successfully, especially in a beginner-level language class.

2.1.3.6 Authenticity

Many researchers defined the term ‘authenticity’ in relation to language teaching from different perspectives (e.g., texts, tasks, and classrooms). Breen (1985) defined authentic texts as “any sources of data which will serve as a means to help the learner to develop an authentic interpretation” (p.68). In his view, texts can be considered authentic that assist learners in discovering the communication conventions in the target language and allow them to share the interpretation of meaning within the text or any other texts with other fluent users of the language.

For Morrow (1977), “an authentic text is a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort” (p.13). This definition emphasizes the communicative purpose of the text. The input and context should be ‘real’ and ‘authentic’ in order that interaction can be meaningful. Lee (1995) also considered that an authentic text should not be “written for teaching purposes but for a real-life communicative purpose, where the writer has a certain message to pass on to the reader. As such, an authentic text is one that possesses an intrinsically communicative quality” (p.324).

Another pedagogic consideration is task authenticity. Van Lier (1996) viewed authenticity, associated with the concept of task, as “a goal that teacher and students have to work towards, consciously and constantly [...] authenticity is the result of authentication, by students and their teacher, of the learning process and the language used in it”(p.128). For Mishan (2005), authenticity is a subjective concept. “What is an authentic and absorbing task to one learner may not be for the next” (p.72).

According to Breen (1985), the tasks requiring learners to undertake communication and meta-communication are the most authentic language learning tasks. Mishan (2005) proposed some guidelines for conceiving and designing authentic tasks. In his opinion, an authentic task should 1) reflect the original communicative purpose of the text 2) elicit response to/engagement with the text 3)

activate learners' existing knowledge of the target language and culture 4) involve purposeful communication between learners 5) be appropriate to the text 6) approximate real-life tasks.

One of the other pedagogic proposals concerns classroom authenticity. In order to be authentic, the language classroom should be able to provide the conditions "in which the participants can publicly share the problems, achievements and overall process of learning a language together as a socially motivated and socially sustained activity" (Breen, 1985: 68). Taylor (1994) urged that the classroom itself should be acknowledged as a real place. For him, when the right kind of tasks and materials are presented to participants, they can impose their own authenticity on things happening in the language classroom, which has its own legitimacy, authenticity and reality that both learners and teachers contribute to.

Learners and teachers are also considered to be the factors involved in establishing text and learner authenticity (Breen, 1985; Lee, 1995). Lee (1995) argued that teachers play a key role in learner authenticity. An authoritarian teacher or a teacher who adopts a traditional teaching approach does not provide students with occasions to interact with each other, which stops authenticity occurring. For Widdowson (1980, cited in Lee, 1995), proper interaction between learners and materials will occur when learners respond to the materials appropriately. Lee added learners' positive perceptions of the materials as the other condition for the occurrence of learner authenticity. For him, the five factors mentioned above are interrelated and can contribute to the quality of learner authenticity.

According to Morrison (1989), authentic materials are suitable not only for higher-level students, as many other teachers would agree, but also for students of all the other levels. He provided two lesson outlines (one for beginners, one for more advanced learners) to show how the same news broadcast material can be included in the listening classroom of different levels. For him, "only through exposure from the initial learning stages that the learner can fully integrate the individual listening micro-skills that may be isolated and presented by the teacher" (p.14). Morrison's claim can be supported by the findings of Bacon and Finnemann's (1990), and Peacock's (1997) study.

Peacock (1997) investigated whether the motivation of two Korean beginner-level EFL classes was increased by the alternative use of authentic and artificial

materials. The authentic materials used in this study included two poems; some television listings; an American pop song; some English language magazine advertisements ... etc.. The results showed that the learners increased their learning motivation when they used authentic materials.

Peacock's other finding was that the learners reported that the authentic materials were less interesting than the artificial materials, which is in contrast with the general belief in which "authentic texts are often regarded as more interesting than textbook materials because they can be more up-to-date, and related to everyday issues and activities"(Lee, 1995:324), as well as with the results of my previous research (described in Section 2.1.2), in which some of my beginner participants reported that online French culture resources could enhance their learning motivation. Based on this finding, I agree with Peacock's recommendation that EFL teachers who teach beginning-level students can try the use of appropriate authentic materials in their classroom, since those materials "may increase their learners' levels of on-task behaviour, concentration, and involvement in the target activity more than artificial materials" (p.152). However, they may reduce beginning-level learners' interests as well. Teachers should be careful about the selection of materials in terms of their effect on learners' motivation.

Bacon and Finnemann (1990) conducted a survey-based research project on basic-level Spanish students at two universities to examine the association of self-reported strategies, motives, and attitudes with their anticipated reactions to authentic input. Based on their findings, they gave the following suggestions. Firstly, language teachers should design the curriculum to convince basic-level students "to be willing to deal with authentic input" (p.469). They also have to organize the curriculum meaningfully and check it comprehensively. In addition, authentic input should be an early and essential part of instruction in order that learners can accept it. Finally, learners' evaluation should include authentic input.

2.1.3.7 Assessment

Task-based language teaching challenges all areas of the curriculum, particularly the area of assessment. A key curriculum principle in assessment is "that assessment should reflect what has been taught" (Nunan, 2004:138). However,

teachers in task-based language curriculum might violate it if they want to assess students by using traditional methods.

In task-based language teaching, it is suitable to incorporate test-type activities into the curriculum for formative assessment (Wharton, 1996). This arrangement has several advantages. Firstly, doing tasks allows learners to get exam practice in a private and non-threatening situation. In addition, learners' subsequent reflection on their performance and appropriate feedback received from the teacher and peers can provide them with occasions to compare their current achievement level, and contribute to the planning stage that is a prerequisite to the report stage in Willis's (1996) framework for task-based learning.

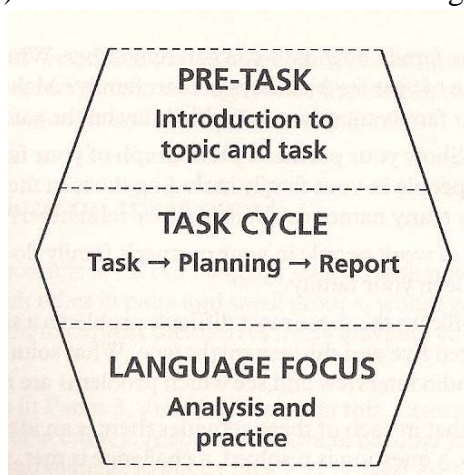


Figure 2.1 Willis's framework for task-based learning.

Note. From Willis (1996:53).

Nunan (2004) made some distinctions in task-based language testing. Learners in direct assessment are required to reproduce, in the testing situation, the kinds of communicative behaviours they will need to carry out in the real world. In indirect tests, as the term implies, the test does not resemble outside-class performance. He also distinguished system-referenced and performance-referenced tests. While a system-referenced test assesses learners' mastery of the target language "without specific reference to any particular use of it" (Baker, 1990:76), a performance-referenced test requires learners to show an ability to employ the target language.

For Norris et al. (1998), a direct and performance-based assessment can measure learners' abilities to respond to real-life language tasks. They pointed out three key characteristics of performance assessment: being based on tasks, being as authentic

as possible, and being rated by qualified judges. Performance tests “can be used to approximate the conditions of a real task in a real-life situation”. They therefore “have value in that their scores can be used to predict students’ abilities in future real-world situations” (p.15), which is considered as one of the essential contributions that performance assessment might make to be an alternative form of language assessment.

Brindley (1989, cited in Nunan, 2004) distinguished the assessment of proficiency from the assessment of achievement. Proficiency means learners’ ability to use the language in everyday, non-specific situations (Ingram, 1984). It is generally assessed by using a proficiency rating scale. Achievement refers to learners’ mastery of specific curricular objectives, which can be assessed by using a wide range of instruments such as teacher-constructed tests, learners’ self-rating scales, learners’ self-reports...etc.. Brindley (1989) argued that if proficiency refers to learners’ ability to use language for particular communicative purposes, it “can be interpreted as the achievement of the particular communicative objectives which the target group is likely to have” (p.11, cited in Nunan, 2004:204). In this case, a test given after the course would seem to serve the same purposes as a general proficiency test.

Since the purposes of assessment “should have an important bearing on how the assessment is carried out, when it is carried out, by whom, and how the results will be reported” (Nunan, 2004:147), language teachers should also decide what and how they will assess in addition to the consideration of test types. According to Skehan (2001), the chosen rating procedures influence a test score most immediately. The use of a rating scale to assess spoken performance is quite typical. The scales may be global or analytic, which rate separately learners’ performance in areas such as range, accuracy and fluency.

Fluency, accuracy and complexity (see their definition in Section 2.1.3.1, Skehan, 1998; Skehan & Foster, 1999) are commonly required to be measured in oral performance. Morley (2006) recommended the best measurements to assess each dimension: “for fluency, production rate and mean length run; for complexity, number of clauses per ‘T-unit’ and number of words per ‘T-unit’/per clause; for accuracy, number of error free ‘T-units’/clauses” (p.83). However, for an interactive speech study, the ‘AS unit’ (the Analysis of Speech Unit) is considered more appropriate as a unit of analysis than ‘T-unit’.

According to Foster et al. (2000), the AS unit consists of “an independent clause, or sub-clausal unit, together with any subordinate clause(s) associated with either” (p.365). It is more appropriate to measure spoken language by the AS unit because it is a syntactic unit. Research of pausing on native-speaker speech proposes that “syntactic units are genuine units of planning” (p.365). Additionally, the definition of the AS unit allows analyzing speech units greater than a single clause. The ability to produce more than one clause is essential to decide a speaker’s level of proficiency.

Among the three dimensions, fluency is the most debated by researchers, some of whom suggested that “any simplified rating scales of fluency are of dubious value” (Cohen, 1980:122) for the reason that natives may perform less poorly than non-natives, who make an effort to speak without obvious hesitation, to use longer utterances ... etc. As Lehtonen (1978, cited in Cohen, 1980) suggested, “to be fluent in the right way, ..., one must speak in a way that is expected by the linguistic community and that represents normal, acceptable and relaxed linguistic behaviour” (p.122).

The rater also plays a key role in learners’ oral performance assessment. Meiron and Schick (2000) found that raters’ background has an important impact on their assessment of test-takers’ performance. Considered as “an integral component of proficiency rating scores” (Chalhoub-Deville, 1995:255), raters judge learners’ oral performance based on rating scales, which have varied origins, characteristics, and purposes (Skehan, 2001). Skehan reminded us that it is possible that “the score assigned to a candidate may not reflect candidate performance only, but may partly be based on biases and limitations arising from raters and scales” (Skehan, 2001:168).

Other factors that may influence the assigned score include the interactive conditions under which performance is elicited, the candidate’s relevant abilities, the chosen task for a test, and the task completion conditions (Skehan, 2001). Among them, the interactive conditions under which performance is elicited have been recognized to pose problems to oral language assessment for many years. In addition, different students may be disadvantaged or advantaged by some particular tasks used in their test, which cause asymmetry to their performance.

Wigglesworth (2001) pointed out that task characteristics (e.g. structure, cognitive load, familiarity of content) and task conditions (e.g. availability of planning time)

are factors that needed to be considered in both classroom and testing situations. Different variables have different impact on different types of tasks. For example, he found that structure has little impact on more negotiated interaction tasks, where questions may be asked and answered by both the interlocutors. However, structure seems to be more influential in the tasks where learners are required to obtain information, since it provides a framework for them to use.

She consequently suggested that close attention should also be paid to the role of the interlocutor in order to ensure that learners receive similar input across similar tasks. For her, the reliability of the assessment can be increased when the following information is clear: specifications for assessment task development, the specifications for the role of the interlocutor, and the expectations of the interlocutor's input.

Ensuring fair and equitable treatment of all learners is a major goal of any assessment procedure. Language assessment is aimed to reduce the most possible all factors external to learners' language performance situations, in order to be certain "that the score the learner obtains is, to the greatest extent possible, a true reflection of his or her ability to use the language for the purposes required in the assessment process" (Wigglesworth, 2001:188). However, I agree with Skehan (2001) that it may be unlikely for teachers to achieve the goal unless they can be assisted by research-based studies that inform test design decisions.

2.1.3.8 Task-based language teaching versus CMC

Having discussed CMC and task-based language learning, I will now argue that a number of features of CMC make it as a suitable environment for carrying out task-based instruction. As Hampel (2006) pointed out:

In line with recent SLA research, the tasks thus show a number of criteria which Chapelle (2000:8) has summarized for CALL and CMC. These are language learning potential through beneficial focus on form; learner fit; meaning focus; authenticity; positive impact on participants; and practicality (that is, the adequacy of resources to support the use of the CALL activity). Yet at the same

time they allow for collaboration with other learners, providing opportunities for active participation and discussion” (p.113).

Task cycles employed in network-based environment through different technologies for diverse pedagogical purposes have been investigated in a number of studies (e.g. von der Emde, Schneider, & Kötter, 2001; Toyoda & Harrison, 2002; Levy & Kennedy, 2004). In most cases, the tasks were used at the post-task stage and designed especially to encourage a focus on form or accuracy.

Synchronous online interactions such as chat or MOO can not only make it possible for learners to create their own material both individually and jointly by using a range of modes including text and images, but also to record easily learners’ language interaction in the form of logs, which can be saved and retrieved for later discussion (Hampel, 2006). Willis (1996) and Skehan (1998) suggested that learners can use these logs for discussion and analysis in post-chat individually, with their peer(s) or teacher. Some studies of task cycles that use the synchronous CMC chat log for post-task analysis to facilitate a focus on accuracy or form are provided in the CALL literature (Levy & Kennedy, 2004:54).

For example, Toyoda and Harrison (2002) used chat logs as learning materials to help the participants to reflect on their interlanguage. For them, chat logs, especially those produced by the learners themselves, can be valuable linguistic material to improve their interlanguage. In von der Emde, Schneider, & Kötter’s (2001) MOO study, the logs provided the participants with the occasions to review their contributions to group discussions and their own learning, and to identify their errors and learn the correct modelling from their native-speaker partners’ logs. Moreover, they allowed the slower learners to “repeat the conversation at a later date to study the vocabulary and syntax that had given them problems the first time around” (p.218).

However, teachers may need to use logs with care in any post-chat analysis or discussion since “the communication in Webchat is disrupted and discontinuous” and therefore “many different topic strands and interactions can be carried out simultaneously” (Negretti, 1999: 81). Post-chat log transcripts may appear in a haphazard and illogical way that confuses students (Toyoda & Harrison, 2002; Levy & Kennedy, 2004). Levy and Kennedy (2004) suggested that when problems

occur, teachers can work one-to-one with students or highlight single sentences or limited sequences from logs to draw learners' attention.

Interaction size is also a problem in CMC language learning. Although CMC fosters interaction, online interaction in a large group was found to disadvantage learners' language acquisition since it is difficult for them to follow normal turn-taking rules (Negretti, 1999). To facilitate language learning, chat in pairs may produce negotiated interaction as observed in SLA research and make task goals clear (Doughty & Long, 2003).

By citing Levey's (1999:84) words that "the hardware and the software development tools that are employed exert a wide-ranging influence on design", Hampel (2006) has reminded us that it is unlikely that face-to-face tasks are easily transposed to a virtual environment. A different online learning mode "fosters a different kind of linguistic competence, and calls for different skills" (Negretti, 1999: 75). Language teachers need to ensure that tasks are appropriately used in the medium they select and consider "the affordances (i.e. the constraints and possibilities for making meaning) of the modes available" (Hampel, 2006:111) while developing tasks.

To ensure successful implementation of tasks in network-based environments, teachers' understanding of "how specific pedagogical objectives (i.e., communication purposes) are achieved by means of the manipulation of specific characteristics of the technological tools (i.e., technical constraints)" (Salaberry, 2000:36) may be helpful. The 10 methodological principles of Task-Based Language teaching for CALL proposed by Doughty and Long (2003) can also provide teachers with information about psycholinguistic environments created by diverse technological options, which I consider helpful for them to select an appropriate technological mode for the delivery of instruction.

For Shetzer and Warschauer (2000), knowing how to use technology in order to teach language is not sufficient. To implement an electronic literacy approach that encompasses "how to read and write in a new medium" (p.173) in network-based language classrooms, teachers also have to consider the ways of teaching language in order that learners can make effective use of information technology. They developed a framework (Shetzer & Warschauer, 2000:176), expanded in three areas – communication, construction and research, for teachers to use as a tool to

plan tasks and projects in a language classroom where computers and the Internet are used as instruction delivery tools (p.176).

In addition, teachers have to help learners to develop the ability to cope with “the decentered, multimedia character of new electronic media [which] facilitates reading and writing processes that are more democratic, learner-centered, holistic, and natural than the processes involved in working with precomputer, linear texts” (Warschauer, 1999:11). Hampel (2006) also suggested that tasks selected should reflect the democratic features of online environments and students need to be helped and encouraged to “make the most of the democratic and learner-centered features that are inherent in many online environments” (P. 112). In my view, both Hampel’s suggestions can contribute to effectiveness of online task-based language teaching, since it is a learner-centred approach (Jennings & Doyle, 1996).

Table 2.1 Language Teaching Methodological Principles for CALL

	Principles (adapted from Long, in press a)	L2 Implementation	CALL Implementation
ACTIVITIES			
MP1	Use tasks, not texts, as the unit of analysis.	task-based language teaching (TBLT; target tasks, pedagogical tasks, task sequencing)	simulations; tutorials; worldware
MP2	Promote learning by doing.		
INPUT			
MP3	Elaborate input (do not simplify; do not rely solely on "authentic" texts).	negotiation of meaning; interactional modification; elaboration	computer-mediated communication / discussion; authoring
MP4	Provide rich (not impoverished) input.	exposure to varied input sources	corpora; concordancing
LEARNING PROCESSES			
MP5	Encourage inductive ("chunk") learning.	implicit instruction	design and coding features
MP6	Focus on form.	attention; form-function mapping	design and coding features
MP7	Provide negative feedback.	feedback on error (e.g., recasts); error "correction"	response feedback
MP8	Respect "learner syllabuses"/develop-mental processes.	timing of pedagogical intervention to developmental readiness	adaptivity
MP9	Promote cooperative/ collaborative learning.	negotiation of meaning; interactional modification	problem-solving; computer-mediated communication / discussion
LEARNERS			
MP10	Individualize instruction (according to communicative needs, and psycholinguistically).	needs analysis; consideration of individual differences (e.g., memory and aptitude) and learning strategies	branching; adaptivity; autonomous learning

Note: From Doughty and Long (2003)

2.2 Affective variables in SLA

After examining the issue of language proficiency development, I now turn to two of the most widely discussed affective factors in second language acquisition – motivation and attitude.

2.2.1 Motivation

For Dörnyei and Ottó (1998), *motivation* means:

“the dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritised, operationalised and (successful or unsuccessfully) acted out” (p.65).

Motivation in the language learning context “refers to the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes towards learning the language” (Gardner, 1985:10). For Gardner, a motivated organism can only be formed in the presence of the above three components.

Dörnyei (2001) distinguished Gardner’s motivation theory into four areas: the construct of the integrative motive, a socio-educational model, the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) and an extended L2 motivation construct developed with Tremblay (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). The *integrative motive* refers to a motivation to learn a second language because of positive feelings towards the community where the language is spoken (Gardner, 1985). It is made up of three components: integrativeness, attitudes towards the learning situation and motivation.

For Dörnyei and Clément (2000), integrativeness is “the most powerful general component of the participants’ generalized language – related affective disposition” (cited in Dörnyei, 2001:51). It determines learners’ language choice and the effort they intend to invest in the learning process. Clément et al. (1994) examined the motivation of a group of Hungarian language learners who studied English as a foreign language. The analysis of their data also confirmed the importance of

integrativeness in learners' motivation construct. One component revealed in their findings but rarely discussed in earlier research is the appraisal of the classroom environment. This component corresponded to attitudes towards the learning situation effect in Gardner's (1985) integrative motive construct.

Viewing SLA "as an important social phenomenon" (Gardner, 1985:176), Gardner focused his *socio-educational model* on the social-psychological process taking place in learning a L2 (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). The model comprises four stages: antecedent factors, individual differences variables, language acquisition contexts, and learning outcomes. Antecedent factors can be biological or experiential, such as gender, age, or previous language training. The second stage, 'individual differences' involves the following variables: intelligence, language aptitude, strategies, language attitudes, motivation and language anxiety. As to the contexts where learners acquire language, a distinction is made between formal and informal. Although all the individual difference variables influence the formal learning context, only motivation has a direct role in the informal context. There are two final outcomes suggested in the four stage model. One is the linguistic outcome such as fluency, vocabulary and pronunciation. The other is the non-linguistic outcome such as attitudes, self-concept, cultural values and beliefs. For Gardner (1985), this model "contains many elements which must be considered in future developments" (p.166) and therefore should not be considered as a final one.

The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (Gardner, 1985) is a multi-component 130-item motivation test. It "operationalises the main constituents of Gardner's theory" (Dörnyei, 2001: 52) and includes other components such as language anxiety, parental encouragement and instrumental orientation. Adapted and used in many L2 learning settings all over the world, the test has kept Gardner's model in use in spite of its lack of development over time (Dörnyei, 2005). For Dörnyei (2005), the test, assessing both motivation and motivated behaviour, increases the instrument's predictive validity in terms of learning outcomes, since it covers the combined effects of the first two elements in the motivation → behaviour → outcome chain. But the disadvantage of the test is "that from a theoretical point of view it is not easy to decide the exact nature of the underlying learner trait that the instrument targets" (p.73).

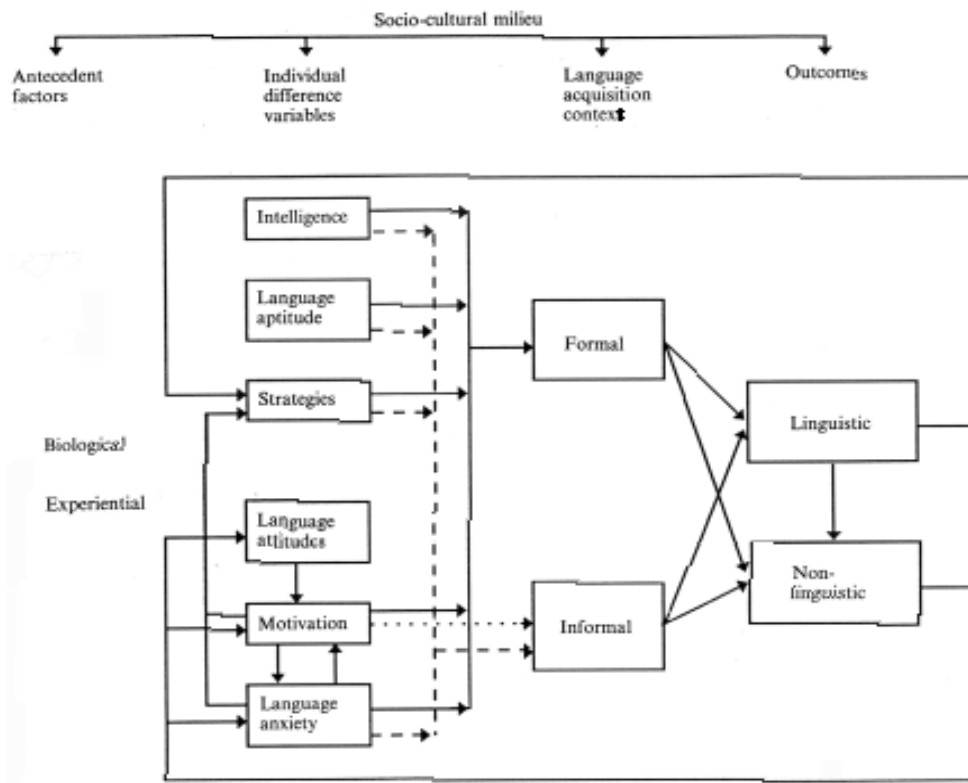


Figure 2.2 Gardner's socio-educational model of second language acquisition.

Note: From Gardner & McIntyre (1993:8)

Tremblay and Gardner's *extended L2 motivation construct* (1995) was developed based on Gardner's socio-educational model into which new elements were incorporated: goal salience, valence and self-efficacy. *Goal salience* is defined as "the specificity of the learner's goals and the frequency of goal-setting strategies used" (Dörnyei, 2001:53). *Valence* in the motivation literature refers to "the subjective value that an individual associates with a particular outcome" (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995:508). It can be measured by using the traditional scales 'desire to learn the L2' and 'attitudes towards learning the L2' (Dörnyei, 2001). *Self-efficacy* "refers to an individual's beliefs that he or she has the capability to reach a certain level of performance or achievement" (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995: 507). It is similar to the 'self-confidence' construct that was considered to be "the most important determinant of motivation to learn and use the second language" in a multi-cultural context (Clément & Kruidenier, 1985:24).

Tremblay and Gardner (1995) conducted a study in which they tested the new model with 75 students in a francophone secondary school in Canada. The results

suggested that motivational behaviour is increased by specific goals and frequent reference to these goals, and valued learning. Motivational behaviour also influences self-efficacy. The above findings demonstrated that the incorporation of the new elements into Gardner's socio-educational model of L2 learning did not damage its integrity (Dörnyei, 2001)

Ellis (1997) distinguished four kinds of motivation: instrumental, integrative, resultative, and intrinsic. *Instrumental* motivation refers to efforts learners may make to learn an L2 for some functional reasons, for example, receiving a better job or getting a better salary. Gardner (1985) considered instrumentality as a type of orientation (i.e. a reason/goal for learning an L2) rather than motivation. In his extended model of L2 motivation (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995), instrumental orientation was subsumed under the component labeled 'Language Attitudes'. *Integrative* motivation means that learners' interests in the people and culture of an L2 group inspire their learning of the target language.

Learners' motivation is *resultative* when they experience success in learning an L2 that makes them become more motivated to learn the target language. In some other learning situations, learners may come to an L2 classroom without particular attitudes towards the target language. This may be the case of many foreign language learners, such as most of my FFL students in Taiwan. Their motivation may be encouraged by some learning tasks they are engaged in. Such motivation is called *intrinsic* motivation. The above four types of motivation "should be seen as complementary rather than as distinct and oppositional (Ellis, 1997:76). Motivation, dynamic in nature, may be a result or a cause of learning.

Assuming that the findings of studies of L2 motivation obtained from second language acquisition contexts cannot be directly applicable to foreign language learning contexts (i.e. learning an L2 as a school subject without regularly interacting with the L2 community), Dörnyei (1990) investigated the components of motivation in a foreign language learning context by inviting 134 learners of English in Hungary to complete a motivational questionnaire, which consists of an instrumental motivational subsystem, an integrative motivational subsystem, need for achievement and attributions about past failures. The results suggested that learners who have a high level of instrumental motivation and need for achievement are more likely to achieve intermediate proficiency level in the L2. But to get beyond this level, learners need to be integratively motivated.

Dörnyei's (1994) later developed a motivational model that includes three levels: the language level, the learner level and the learning situation level. The general motives in the language level determine learners' language choice and their learning goals. Learners' need for achievement and self-confidence underlie the motivational process of the learner level. The learning situation level consists of intrinsic and extrinsic motives and three areas of the motivational conditions: course-specific motivational components (namely, the syllabus, the teaching materials, the teaching method, and the learning tasks), teacher-specific motivational components (namely, the teacher's personality, teaching style, feedback, and relationship with the students) and group-specific motivational components (e.g. the dynamics of the learning group).

In Dörnyei's (1994) view, the motives belonging to the language and learner levels cannot be easily manipulated or modified. Once students make their decision to learn a foreign language, their attitude/motivation towards the language is affected mainly by the learning situation factors. Among Dörnyei's three components at the learning situation level, it was found that teachers' effect is the most connected with L2 learners' demotivation in learning a foreign language (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998; Dörnyei, 1998; Chambers, 1999).

According to Dörnyei (2001), *demotivation* concerns "specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioural intention or an ongoing action" (p.143). The findings of Ushioda's (1998) study revealed that almost all demotives relate to "negative aspects of the institutionalised learning framework" (p.86). In Dörnyei's (1998) investigation of 50 Hungarian demotivated secondary-school pupils studying either English or German as a foreign language, it was found that the teacher and classroom events controlled by the teacher were the two most demotivating factors. Other factors such as inadequate school facilities and negative attitudes towards the learning language can also play a significant role in demotivating students' learning.

In some foreign language learning situations as mine, learners come to the language classroom with only a vague idea about the target language. Their "closer contact with the L2, then, results in strong evaluative feelings (both positive and negative), which in turn affect subsequent commitment to learning the language" (Dörnyei, 2001: 153). Ludwig's (1983) study of American college students learning French, German and Spanish also confirmed this change in learners' perceptions of

different languages. Demotivating factors discussed by Ludwig included the obligatory learning of the target language, the interference of another foreign language, the negative attitude to the L2 community, the perception of other group members' attitudes and the course materials used in the language class.

In fact, the influence of the first two factors mentioned in Ludwig's findings can also be found in my own foreign language classes. For Dörnyei (2001), the negative effect produced by the compulsory nature of the learning language is an obvious indication that learners lack autonomy in the learning situation. As to the interference of a third language, Dörnyei suggested that when students learn two foreign languages at the same time, it is possible that the need to study the other language can threaten learners' successful mastery of their preferred language.

2.2.2 Attitudes

According to Allport (1954), "an *attitude* is a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related" (p.45). For Baker (1992), attitudes include cognitive, affective and 'readiness for action' components. Thoughts and beliefs are concerns of the cognitive part of attitudes. Feelings towards an attitude object are the concern of the affective part. These two components of attitudes may not always be in harmony. The action component is about a readiness for action that is a "behavioural intention or plan of action under defined contexts and circumstances" (p.13).

In Gardner's (1985) view, attitudes affect motivation, which in turn affect second language acquisition. The impact of attitudes on SLA is not direct. He suggested that "attitude variables are important in that they serve to maintain levels of motivation and that they are not implicated directly in achievement" (p.158). Attitude can be divided into attitudes towards an L2, attitudes to the native speakers of an L2, to the culture of an L2 and so on (Mishan, 2005). Among these, learners' attitudes to the native speakers of an L2 have been most extensively researched (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991)

Although both attitudes - towards an L2 and to the native speakers of the target language - were thought to be related to proficiency in the language, the

relationship that involve attitudes towards an L2 were found to be more consistent (Gardner, 1985). Being independent of intelligence and language aptitude, both attitudes have been demonstrated their connection to factors in the environment or personal characteristics (e.g. age or sex).

For example, most of the Canadian studies have shown that learners' positive attitudes towards an L2 relate to their success in the L2 acquisition in the bilingual Canadian context (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). However, two studies (Chihara & Oller, 1978; Cooper & Fishman, 1977) cited by Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) were conducted in foreign language contexts, and found weak correlations between positive attitudes and the target language learning. Gardner (1980) therefore explained these contradictory results by saying that different social contexts may influence the outcomes.

Attitudes, directed towards a target (Ajzen, 1988), are possible predictors of future behaviour. They can also be an outcome of achievement in L2 learning (Baker, 1992). Being "evaluative of objects or people" (Baker, 1992:15), attitudes are thought to be open to change. Katz (1960) suggested that an individual's attitudes have four functions, which can have significant impact on attitude change. The four functions include the utilitarian, adjustive or instrumental function, the ego-defensive function, the value-expressive function, and the knowledge function.

The *adjustive* function recognizes the fact that one changes his/her attitude while receiving rewards. The acquisition of a positive attitude towards an L2 depends on gaining rewards and avoiding penalties. Consistency of rewards and penalties can contribute to "the clarity of the instrumental object for goal attainment" (p.171). Thus, the formation of a positive attitude to a minority language or the use of that language needs to be encouraged and reinforced not only in school, but also outside, where minority television, pop music, concerts and so on are possible means of encouragement and reinforcement (Baker, 1992).

The mechanisms of *ego defence* refers to "the mechanisms by which the individual protects his ego from his own unacceptable impulses and from the knowledge of threatening forces from without, and the methods by which he reduces his anxieties created by such problems" (p.172). When one perceives a feeling of insecurity, his/her defence mechanisms activate. Learners who speak a minority language in a majority environment may have such anxious feelings. People of majority languages sometimes defend their egos by holding negative attitudes towards

minority languages to intensify their self-worth and distinctiveness. Therefore, the strategies used to change attitude have to “ensure ego defense mechanisms are either enhanced or are not threatened nor attacked” (Baker, 1992:100).

The *value-expressive* attitudes not only give clarity to one’s self-image but also mould that self-image closer to the heart’s desire of the person. The clarity and stability of the self-image is important for both children and adults. When an adult is not comfortable with the new ‘me’, it is difficult for one to change one’s attitudes. Thus, group support for such personality change is almost a necessity (Katz, 1960:174). In addition, one’s deep rooted personality characteristics need to be taken into account in order to enhance one’s attitudes towards a minority language (Baker, 1992).

The *knowledge* function can change one’s attitudes when one feels “inadequacies of the existing attitudes to deal with new and changing situations” (Katz, 1960:190). One may proceed to modify one’s beliefs or accept some new formula introduced by others when any ambiguous situation occurs. New information or experience of minority or majority culture, politics and education, social organization and so on may produce attitude change.

For me, Katz’s functionalist theory of attitudes can be useful in explaining the attitude change of my FFL students, as his theory was presented with many examples, one of which featured learners speaking a minority language in a majority environment. In my context, French is a foreign language learned by a minority and it has to compete with the other two most commonly learned foreign languages: English and Japanese. The knowledge of four functions is helpful for language teachers like me to understand the change in their students’ learning attitude.

Baker (1992) pointed out, “attitude changes both as a function of individual needs and motives and as a function of social situation” (p. 105). Individual needs (e.g. the need for success and reward) and social situations (e.g. the effect of enjoyable contexts and environments) can affect the change of attitudes. Although attitude change is a cognitive activity, it’s formulated through social activities in relation to parents, peer groups, institutions --- etc..

Many different types of institution may affect the change of attitudes. Of all the institutions, the school is viewed as the most influential effect on the change in

one's attitudes. For Baker (1992), learners' attitudes to a language may change "through the status given to a language and through the teaching of a language" (p.110). Teachers can use "self-directed and purposefully planned activities" (p.105) to change students' attitudes.

In Dörnyei (2001)'s process-oriented framework of motivational strategies used to motivate students' foreign language learning, he urged that teachers can contribute actively to generating students' positive attitudes towards the language being learned. To achieve this, one of the strategies he recommended is to enhance learners' language-related values and attitudes by making the L2 "real" to students (p.124). The introduction of L2 culture and the promotion of the contact with native speakers of the L2 can enhance students' attitudes/motivation towards a foreign language. However, I find it difficult to follow Dörnyei's second suggestion because in some foreign language learning contexts like mine, there are very few native speakers of the target language. For me, the use of technology may provide a solution to this problem.

Both attitudes and motivation are thought to be important factors in the entire process of learning a foreign language since they determine how active the students will be during that process (Naiman et al., 1978; Gardner, 1985). The findings of Muller and Harris's study (1966) also stressed the impact of learners' attitudes and motivation on students' decision to drop out of a foreign language course. The fact that students are satisfied with and confident of their foreign language proficiency can hold them in this learning.

2.2.3 Motivation / Attitudes versus CMC

The fact that CMC can enhance learners' motivation and attitudes, which I argue in this section, was reflected in many studies (Underwood, 1987; Chun, 1994; Kern, 1995; Warschauer, 1996b; Beauvois, 1997; 1998; Abrams, 2003; Lafford & Lafford, 2005; Ushida, 2005). The features of CMC that are advantageous to improving learners' motivation and attitudes include learners' less reliance on the instructor and more reliance on peer support (Kern, 1995), the implementation of task-based activities (Lafford & Lafford, 2005), the association with goal-oriented language use (Salaberry, 2000), the articulation of learners' ideas with greater ease (Abrams, 2003), and learners' empowerment in their learning (Warschauer, 1996b), and so

on.

One key unit in Dörnyei's (2001) model of motivational strategies is the maintenance and protection of motivation. He suggested five areas of strategies that teachers can apply in their foreign language classroom: setting 'proximal subgoals', improving the quality of the learning experience, increasing the learner's self-confidence, creating learner autonomy and promoting self-motivating learner strategies.

For Benson (2001), the use of technology can provide learners' independent interaction with educational technologies and therefore enhance their autonomy. Self-determination theory suggested that fostering L2 learners' autonomy can increase their motivation (Dörnyei, 2001). *Autonomy* was defined by Holec (1981) as the ability "to take charge of one's own learning" (p.3). For Dam (1995),

"Learner autonomy is characterized by a readiness to take charge of one's own learning in the service of one's needs and purposes. This entails a capacity and willingness to act independently and in co-operation with others, as a socially responsible person" (p.1).

Schwienhorst (2003) argued that CMC is favourable to the creation of learners' autonomy based on three approaches: an individual-cognitive, a social-interactive, and an experimental-participatory approach. For him, a written medium such as CMC is more likely than oral communication to encourage reflection and awareness, which are the focuses of learner autonomy from an individual-cognitive perspective.

Additionally, the social interactive approach emphasises that interaction can increase learners' consciousness, or conscious awareness through 'scaffolding' or 'corrective feedback' (p.429). Offering a variety of communication patterns (teacher-learner, peer-to-peer, and learners to native speaker), CMC is a suitable environment to provide learners with rich input and with opportunities to produce output.

Finally, the experimental participatory view on learner autonomy highlighted learners' involvement "in co-creating learning environments and experiment with 'cognitive tools'" (p.433), which can be achieved by providing easy-to-use authoring tools or introducing a stress-reduced learning environment. CMC was

evidenced to allow learners to reduce communication anxiety and therefore motivate them to participate in discussion (Kelm, 1992; Kern, 1995).

However, Schwienhorst (2003) pointed out the importance of the teacher's role in this new learning environment, where to develop reflective, social-interactive, and experimental-participatory learner behaviour, the teacher needs to manipulate appropriately the learning environment. Singh and Embi (2007) echoed this view, investigating learner autonomy through an online distance-learning programme by employing a descriptive research methodology.

The results showed that although CMC has shifted learning responsibility from the teacher to the learner, most of the first year university students in Singh and Embi's study did not consider themselves to be independent learners who were capable of managing their own learning. They suggested that learners may participate effectively in CMC learning if the instructor can "systematically guide and provide learners the skills and knowledge through learner training programs on how they can learn to take responsibility for their own learning" (p.110).

Ushida (2005) similarly suggested that the teacher played an important role in the effectiveness of online L2 learning when they investigated L2 learners' motivation and attitudes in three online language courses. The findings reinforced the significant impact of learners' motivation and attitudes on L2 learning and showed that the teacher's role is critical to this influence. Based on his findings that the participants' anxiety was high at the start of the online courses, he indicated that the teacher was the main person to reduce their anxiety. He also reported that some of the participants were not able to direct their own learning processes.

In sum, teachers are right to assume that they can enhance and maintain L2 learners' motivation and attitudes by including technology in language curriculum. Nevertheless in my view, they need to be aware that the key factor in the improvement of learners' motivation and attitudes is their involvement in and manipulation of the online learning environment, rather than technology per se. Without the teacher's intervention, technology may well have negative effects on L2 learners' motivation and attitudes.

2.3 Social presence

The other aspect of my research involves social presence. In this section, I discuss the concept of social presence, its connection with CMC and its influence in education.

2.3.1 The concept of social presence

Social presence theory was developed by Short, Williams, and Christie (1976) at a time when computer mediated communication had not yet been conceptualized. They defined *social presence* as the “degree of salience of the other person in the interaction and the consequent salience of the interpersonal relationships” (Short et al., 1976: 65). With its main focus on telephony and telephone conferencing, social presence theory was developed to explain the impacts of a communication medium on the way people communicate and interact.

According to Short et al. (1976), social presence was regarded as an attribute of a communication medium. They speculated that communication media differ in their degree of social presence, which is determined by its “capacity to transmit information about facial expression, direction of looking, posture, dress and nonverbal cues” (Short et al., 1976:65). For them, some communication media are perceived by communicators as having a higher degree of social presence (e.g., video) than others.

The origin of social presence lies in two social psychology concepts: intimacy (Argyle & Dean, 1965) and immediacy (Wiener & Mehrabian, 1968). *Intimacy* is “a joint function of eye-contact, physical proximity, intimacy of topic, smiling, etc.” (Argyle & Dean, 1965: 293). According to Argyle and Dean’s (1965) *intimacy equilibrium theory*, changes in one dimension, e.g. increasing physical proximity, will result in compensatory changes in the other dimensions. For example, “reducing eye-contact makes greater proximity possible, and that greater proximity reduces eye-contact” (Argyle & Dean, 1965:304).

Immediacy refers to “the relationship between the speaker and the objects he communicates about, the addressee of his communication, or the communication itself” (Wiener & Mehrabian, 1968:3). It is generated by both verbal and nonverbal

behaviours (Gunawardena, 1995). Two forms of immediacy are distinguished: technological immediacy and social immediacy (Tu, 2001). Technological immediacy can be achieved by transmission of the maximum amount of information; social immediacy can be conveyed by speech with its associated verbal and non verbal cues.

Short et al., (1976) hypothesized that language may replace or even overcompensate for missing nonverbal information. In their teleconference research, they noticed that reduction of cues caused participants to change their behaviour. This principle of cue substitutability, supported by Argyle and Dean's equilibrium theory, suggests that other symbol systems can be adopted by communicators in order to express affective messages in contexts where nonverbal cues are unavailable (Gunawardena, 1995), such as text-based CMC.

2.3.2. Social presence and CMC

Communication researchers started applying social presence theory to CMC in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Lowenthal, 2009). The theory has had a considerable effect on CMC research over the years, and social presence is a key concept in determining the level of interaction and the effectiveness of learning in an online environment (Garrison et al., 2000; Lobry de Bruyn, 2004).

The concept has been redefined by some CMC researchers. For Gunawardena (1995), social presence is "the degree to which a person is perceived as a 'real person' in mediated communication" (p.151). Garrison et al. (2000) defined social presence as "the ability of participants in a community of inquiry to project themselves socially and emotionally, as 'real' people (i.e., their full personality), through the media of communication being used" (p.94). For Picciano (2002), social presence in an online course "refers to a student's sense of being in and belonging in a course and the ability to interact with other students and an instructor although physical contact is not available" (p.22). Tu and McIsaac (2002) defined social presence as "the degree of feeling, perception, and reaction of being connected by CMC to another intellectual entity through a text-base encounter" (p.140).

The original social presence theory assumed that contact is in direct proportion to

presence: more contact will increase social presence. According to the theory, the degree of social presence is equal to the degree of awareness of the other communicator in an interaction, which can be appreciably influenced by factors such as facial expression, direction of gaze, posture, dress, nonverbal and vocal cues (Tu, 2001). Communication is considered effective when communication media have the appropriate social presence necessary for the level of interpersonal involvement that a task requires. According to the theory, face-to-face communication creates the most social presence and text-based CMC creates the least.

Visual cues are critical to the establishment of social presence in face-to-face contexts (Garrison et al., 2000). The result of Burgoon et al.'s (1984) nonverbal behaviour experiment with 150 participants found that high eye contact, close proximity, forward body lean, and smiling can convey greater intimacy, attraction, and trust, while low eye contact, a distal position, backward body lean, and the absence of smiling and touch communicate greater detachment. In face-to-face communication, interaction can be enhanced by nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions, voice tones, gestures, dress and physical appearance. (Ubon & Kimble, 2003).

Walther and Burgoon (1992) stated that “the fewer the channels or codes available within a medium, the less the attention paid by the user to the presence of other social participants” (p.52). In comparison to face-to-face communication, text-based CMC is said to be extremely low in social presence due to its lack of nonverbal cues and feedback (Walther & Burgoon, 1992). Messages are probably more impersonal when social presence is lower. Nonverbal cues generally carry relational information. Their loss can result in unemotional or undersocial communication (Walther & Burgoon, 1992). Hiltz (1994, cited in Gunawardena, 1995) also noted that the lack of nonverbal cues in written CMC may limit information that serves to enhance other communicators' perception, to regulate social interaction, and to provide a social context for communication. Social presence is especially important in text-based settings, where nonverbal cues that help to establish and maintain social presence through recognition are not available (Garrison et al., 2000:100)

For Garrison et al. (2000), the expression of emotion, feeling and mood is one category of social presence indicator. The capacity to express emotions such as

closeness, warmth, and attraction is correspondingly decreased or eliminated in communication through texts or from a distance. Nevertheless, Walther (1992, cited in Gunawardena, 1995) noticed that communicators in a text-based CMC environment try to achieve desired levels of immediacy by manipulating verbal immediacy. In spite of this lack of nonverbal cues, text-based CMC users develop an ability to express emotion in written form (Gunawardena, 1995). They are found to use paralanguage or emoticons to substitute for missing nonverbal cues (Kuehn, 1993; Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997; Tu, 2001; Ubon & Kimble, 2003; Wheeler, 2005), and to give affective information and show informality.

Since perception of social presence varies among users (Gunawardena, 1995; Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997; Picciano, 2002), social presence should be seen as a subjective quality that depends on the objective quality of the medium (Walther, 1992, cited in Tu & McIsaac, 2002), rather than an attribute of the medium (Short et al., 1976). Tu and McIsaac (2002) suggested four dimensions and a number of variables for researchers to examine CMC learning from a social presence perspective. The dimensions they proposed consist of social context, online communication, interactivity and privacy.

According to Tu (2000), “social context contributes to the degree of social presence” (p29). CMC learners’ characteristics and their perception of the CMC environments construct social context (Tu & McIsaac, 2002). Although Tu and McIsaac (2002) did not explain the term ‘user’s characteristics’ in their table, it is clear from their discussion that it refers to learners’ personal features that make them different from others.

Tu and McIsaac (2002) examined social presence in an online learning environment, where the participants were 51 graduate level students. The findings of their qualitative data showed that social contexts, such as familiarity with recipients, informal relationships, better trust relationships, personally informative relationships, positive psychological attitude towards technology and more private locations, positively influence learners’ perception of social presence.

Online communication “refers to the attributes, application, and perception of the language used online” (Tu & McIsaac, 2002:143). Text-based CMC users communicate with each other through typing, reading and writing. Therefore, they need to possess a certain level of computer communication skills. Those who are not able, or who believe they are not able, to type, read or write well may

experience communication anxiety (Gunawardena, 1991, cited in Tu, 2000). Tu and McIsaac's (2002) qualitative data revealed that keyboarding skills, expressiveness, characteristics of discussion, and language skills support online communication.

Table 2.2 Dimensions of Social Presence

Dimensions					
Variables	Social Context	Online Communication	Interactivity	Privacy	
1	Familiarity with recipients	Keyboarding and accuracy skills	Timely response	Formats of CMC	
2	Assertive/acquiescent	Use of emoticons and paralanguage	Communication styles	Access and location	
3	Informal/formal relationship	Characteristics of real-time discussion	Length of messages	Patterns of CMC	
4	Trust relationships	Characteristics of discussion boards	Formal/Informal		
5	Social relationships (love and information)	Language skills (reading, and writing)	Type of tasks (planning, creativity, social tasks)		
6	Psychological attitude toward technology		Size of groups		
7	Access and location		Communication strategies		
8	User's characteristics				

Note. From Tu & McIsaac (2002:140)

Interactivity includes collaborative activities and communication styles used by CMC users (Tu, 2000; 2001). The possibilities for receiving feedback from another person can contribute to one's degree of salience in the interaction (Tu, 2001). Immediate responses also enhance interactivity and increase the level of social presence. For Gunawardena (1995), social presence can be created when one notices interactivity in a CMC environment. Tu and McIsaac (2002) suggested that timely response to CMC messages, use of stylistic communication styles (e.g. attentive, relaxed, friendly, open, personal and so on), casual conversations, appropriate message length, particular task types (planning, creativity, intellectual, decision-making, and social tasks), and suitable group sizes can have a positive effect on one's feeling of interactivity.

Privacy also influences the degree of social presence (Tu, 2001). The level of privacy is influenced by CMC users' perception in addition to the actual quality of security of CMC systems (Tu, 2002b). When users perceive less privacy in a setting where they access CMC, their perception of social presence decreases. (Tu, 2001). In Tu and McIsaac's (2002) study, the participants ranked e-mail as the most private system and bulletin board as the least private. One-to-one real time discussion is considered more private than many-to-many real time discussion. CMC users who have a better knowledge of computer systems will perceive low privacy because of insecurity of the systems (Tu, 2002b).

2.3.3. Social presence and education

Social presence is a key factor in improving the effectiveness of instruction (Gunawardena, 1995; Ubon & Kimble, 2003), "as it helps increase social interaction, encourage learning satisfaction, initiate in-depth discussions and promote collaborative learning" (Ubon & Kimble, 2003:2). Social presence can "support the cognitive and affective objectives of learning" (p.3). When learners perceive a higher degree of social presence, they are more likely to engage in higher order critical thinking (Garrison et al., 2000; Rourke et al., 1999) and to be more satisfied with their learning experience (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997). A paucity of social presence can cause more frustration and less affective learning (Ubon & Kimble, 2003:2).

Garrison et al. (2000) generated a conceptual framework and model of a

community of inquiry based on a review of communications and distance education literature that focused on issues of text-based communication. Three core elements were included in the model for an educational experience: cognitive presence, social presence and teaching presence. They analyzed each element and described their sub-elements or categories, which generated indicators. The elements, categories, and indicators constitute a template, developed “to analyze transcripts and code messages in terms of cognitive, social and teaching presence” (p.103). The initial findings were that “computer conferencing appears to have considerable potential for creating an educational community of inquiry and mediating critical reflection and discourse (i.e., critical inquiry)” (p.103).

Table 2.3 Community of Inquiry Coding Template

Elements	Categories	Indicators
		(examples only)
Cognitive Presence	Triggering Event	Sense of puzzlement
	Exploration	Information exchange
	Integration	Connecting ideas
	Resolution	Apply new ideas
Social Presence	Emotional Expression	Emotions
	Open Communication	Risk-free expression
	Group Cohesion	Encouraging collaboration
Teaching Presence	Instructional management	Defining and initiating discussion topics
	Building understanding	Sharing personal meaning
	Direct Instruction	Focusing discussion

Note. From Garrison et al., 2000:89.

At around the same time, Rourke and Garrison et al. (1999) developed a template to assess social presence in computer conferencing through content analysis of conferencing transcripts. They conducted a pilot study to test the efficacy and reliability of the template by examining selected transcripts from two online graduate-level courses. The first transcripts were postings of 14 people, including the instructor, two student moderators and 11 other students. The second transcripts were postings of 17 people, including the instructor, two student moderators and 14 other students. The main difference in these two groups was the role of the instructor. In the first course, the discussion was led by the two student moderators, rather than the instructor, who passively monitored the discussion. In the second course, the instructor actively involved himself in the discussion by alternately playing the role of participant and instructor.

The findings suggested that “the template is able to expose and quantify important differences in social presence” (p.15) and transcripts of Course 2 had higher social presence density ratings in 9 of 12 indicators. The authors also postulated that the development of deep and meaningful learning is supported by fairly high levels of social presence. However, they expected that there is an optimal level of social presence, and too much social presence may be damaging to learning.

Visual cues are an essential aspect of establishing social presence in face-to-face learning settings. Providing multiple nonverbal or paralinguistic cues, oral communication in a face-to-face environment is a rich medium (Garrison et al., 2000). Social climates created by CMC are different from those in a traditional face-to-face classroom. Even two-way interactive video and audio media, which can transmit facial expressions, gestures, and tone of voice, create interaction patterns that are different from face-to-face communication patterns (Gunawardena, 1995).

Bruce (1996) considered that image quality, resolution and synchrony may influence the use of facial information in video communication. He argued that temporal information possibly conveys “subtleties in the timing of expressions and gaze which could be important for their interpretation” (p.174). When the video frame rate is low and/or the audio channel is slow in compensating for delays caused by video compression, interpersonal perception may suffer.

Table 2.4 Model and Template for Assessment of Social Presence

<i>Category</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Example</i>
<i>Affective</i>	Expression of emotions	Conventional expressions of emotion, or unconventional expressions of emotion, includes repetitious punctuation, conspicuous capitalization, emoticons.	"I just can't stand it when ...!!!!" "ANYBODY OUT THERE!"
	Use of humor	Teasing, cajoling, irony, understatements, sarcasm.	The banana crop in Edmonton is looking good this year)
	Self-disclosure	Presents details of life outside of class, or expresses vulnerability.	"Where I work, this is what we do ..." "I just don't understand this question"
<i>Interactive</i>	Continuing a thread	Using reply feature of software, rather than starting a new thread.	Software dependent, e.g., "Subject: Re" or "Branch from"
	Quoting from others' messages	Using software features to quote others entire message or cutting and pasting selections of others' messages.	Software dependent, e.g., "Martha writes:" or text prefaced by less-than symbol <.
	Referring explicitly to others' messages	Direct references to contents of others' posts.	"In your message, you talked about Moore's distinction between ..."
	Asking questions	Students ask questions of other students or the moderator.	"Anyone else had experience with WEBCT?"
	Complimenting, expressing appreciation Expressing agreement	Complimenting others or contents of others' messages. Expressing agreement with others or content of others' messages.	"I really like your interpretation of the reading" "I was thinking the same thing. You really hit the nail on the head."
<i>Cohesive</i>	Vocatives	Addressing or referring to participants by name.	"I think John made a good point." "John, what do you think?"
	Addresses or refers to the group using inclusive pronouns	Addresses the group as <i>we</i> , <i>us</i> , <i>our</i> , <i>group</i> .	"Our textbook refers to ..." "I think we veered off track ..."
	Phatics, salutations	Communication that serves a purely social function; greetings, closures.	"Hi all" "That's it for now" "We're having the most beautiful weather here"

Note. From Rourke et al. (1999: 12)

O'Malley et al. (1996) also found evidence for Bruce's view. They examined performance on a map task with learners participating in three experiments: video-mediated versus audio-only interaction, effects of size of video image and effects of delay. Findings of the first two experiments showed that the learners in

video-mediated interaction had to say more to achieve the same level of task performance than those in audio-only interaction. The results of the third experiment showed that the 'delay' factor in both video and audio interactions produced interruptions that create problems in turn-taking management and the learners in video communication group gazed far more than their face-to-face peers. The authors therefore suggested that remote communication, no matter whether visual cues are available or not, makes learners more cautious.

When a medium is used for an educational purpose, teachers have to question if the chosen communication channels are beneficial to students' quality of learning. The application of text-based CMC in education in terms of the establishment of social presence may be more questionable than audio and video CMC, since nonverbal cues are lacking in this environment. When cues are fewer, social presence is lower, and when social presence decreases, so does sense of community (Rovai, 2002).

According to Picciano (2002), community, in relation to presence, "refers to a group of individuals who belong to a social unit such as students in a class" (p.22). Students who perceive a higher degree of social presence in a community will be more willing to participate actively in group and community activities. He suggested that there is a strong correlation between learners' perception of interaction in a course, a crucial element of the development of a sense of community (Rovai, 2002) in a course, and their perceptions of their learning quality and quantity.

Social presence is vital to the establishment of a critical community of learners (Fabro & Garrison, 1998, cited in Garrison et al., 2000:95). Community can be formed once participants feel a sense of social presence (Garrison & Anderson, 2003). The results of Gunawardena's (1995) study indicated that despite the fact that written CMC had been described as a medium low in non-verbal cues and social context cues, conference students create social presence by projecting their identities and building online communities (p.163).

Gunawardena and Zittle's (1997) study examined the effectiveness of social presence as a predictor of learner satisfaction in a text-based CMC conference. The results of a questionnaire completed by 50 students suggested that social presence is a strong predictor of satisfaction. The participants who felt a higher sense of social presence used emoticons to convey missing nonverbal cues in this computer conference. Garrison et al. (2000) claimed that text-based CMC may be an

appropriate technology for facilitating higher education, since it can support collaborative communities of inquiry by using means such as emoticons to help establish social presence (p.95).

Social presence may be cultivated by teleconference leaders or be encouraged at initial learning sessions (Johansen et al., 1988, cited in Tu, 2001). Gunawardena (1995) noted that social presence can ‘be cultured’ among the participants in her teleconference study. Her findings indicated that text-based CMC learners can be trained to create social presence and build a sense of community by the instructors/moderators. She therefore suggested that the CMC instructors have to “learn to adapt to telecommunications media by developing interaction skills that create a sense of social presence” (p165).

Tu (2002b) pointed out that “many online users apply face-to-face communication skills to an online environment” (p.21). It is essential that online learners are trained some techniques in interacting with each other in ways that foster their learning (Stein & Wanstreet, 2003) and in working together enthusiastically and willingly (Ubon & Kimble, 2003; Mykota & Duncan, 2007). Gunawardena (1995) suggested that CMC teachers can start the learning with introductions and social exchanges to help learners build social cohesiveness. They can also teach learners to use paralinguistic and emoticons appropriately, by introducing some commonly used paralinguistic (e.g. acronym, symbol, font and colour choices) and emoticons at the start of a course (Tu, 2001). In addition, instructional design strategies such as collaborative work (Tu, 2001) can be included in the online curriculum.

Aragon (2003) proposed further strategies to establish and maintain social presence within online environments. Unlike other researchers, who placed the main responsibility of creating social presence on instructors, he divided the responsibility of establishing and maintaining social presence in an online course between three roles: course designers, instructors and participants.

In sum, online language teachers need to be aware of the impact of social presence on different learning situations before selecting a communication medium for a course. Without this knowledge, they will not be able to have their learners and themselves pay attention to the use of strategies to establish and maintain social presence. In my view, this can result in ineffective implementation of an online course.

Table 2.5 Aragon's (2003) strategies to establish and maintain social presence

Course Design	Instructors	Participants
Develop welcome messages	Contribute to discussion boards	Contribute to discussion boards
Include student profiles	Promptly answer e-mail	Promptly answer e-mail
Incorporate audio	Provide frequent feedback	Strike up a conversation
Limit class size	Strike up a conversation	Share personal stories and experiences
Structure collaborative learning activities	Share personal stories and experiences	Use humor
	Use humor	Use emoticons
	Use emoticons	Use appropriate titles
	Address students by name	
	Allow students options for addressing the instructor	

Chapter 3 Research methodology

This chapter is about the description of the theoretical framework and approach I adopted to carry out this study. I also present the research questions that I chose to answer.

3.1 Qualitative approach

In Seliger and Shohamy's (1989) view, "qualitative research is a useful approach wherever an investigator is concerned with discovering or describing second language acquisition in its natural state or context and where there are no assumptions about what that activity consists of or what its role is in acquisition" (p124).

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) defined five features of qualitative research. For them, the first characteristic is that it has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the main 'instrument'. In addition, it is descriptive: qualitative data is gathered in the form of texts or images rather than numbers. Furthermore, qualitative researchers focus on process rather than outcomes or products of a study. Also, they often analyze their data inductively. Before starting a study, they do not try to find data or evidence to prove or disprove their hypothesis. The theory is developed based on the data collected for the study. Finally, they are concerned with research participants' views.

In qualitative research, the literature "does not provide major direction for the research questions" (Creswell, 2002: 53) and plays a minor role at the beginning of the study. According to Creswell (2002), qualitative research questions, exploring and seeking to know the participants' experiences, emerge from processes of a study based on information provided by the participants, whose views are more important than the literature because little is known in the literature about the study phenomenon under study. Therefore, it is not necessary to formulate the research questions in detail until the design purposes and context are clarified. Questions should remain "sensitive and adaptable to the implications of other parts of the design" (Maxwell, 1996:49). General and broad questions are asked, to enable

qualitative researchers to learn from participants.

The strengths of qualitative research lie in “its inductive approach, its focus on specific situations or people, and its emphasis on words rather than numbers” (Maxwell, 1996:17). The data collection is shaped by protocols developed during the study, collecting text or image data and gathering information from small-sized individuals or sites. Triangulation is a major principle of qualitative data collection methods: it “refers to the use of more than one method of data collection within a single study” (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989: 104). The use of triangulation allows qualitative researchers to reduce the risks that their conclusions will reflect systematic biases or limitations caused by the use of a specific method, and helps them “to gain a better assessment of the validity and generality of the explanations” that they develop (Maxwell, 1996:75).

Data analysis is the aspect that most clearly distinguishes qualitative from quantitative research. In the former, the information is described and themes are developed in data analysis, which consists of text analysis. The researcher interprets data by situating “the findings within the larger, more abstract meanings” (Creswell, 2002: 55) and “drawing on personal reflections and past research” (p.58). The qualitative report is flexibly structured and shows the researcher’s biases and thought processes.

3.1.1 Case study

A *case study* is “an exploration of a ‘bounded system’ or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (Creswell, 1998:61). For Nisbet and Watt (1984), a case study is “a systematic investigation of a specific instance” (p.74). It supplies “a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories or principles” (Cohen et al., 2003). Its purpose is “to describe the case in its context” (Johnson, 1992:76). Guided by research questions, the researcher “studies the case and those aspects of the environment that pertain to that case and that shed light on” (p.76) the research questions.

The case study is generally the preferred strategy when the researcher investigates

“how” and “why” questions (Yin, 1994), since those questions “deal with operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence” (p6). One fundamental characteristic of a case study is that researchers do not “start out with a priori theoretical notions” (Gillham, 2000:2) because they will only know what theories work best or make the most sense once they get hold of their data and understand the context.

Yin (1984, cited in Cohen et al., 2003) identified three types of case study in relation to their outcomes: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. An exploratory case study is used as a pilot to other studies or research questions. A descriptive case study provides narrative accounts. And an explanatory case study can test theories. Yin’s classification accords with Merriam’s (1988) three types of case studies: descriptive, interpretative and evaluative. The data collection in case studies is extensive, drawing on multiple sources of evidence that are gathered systematically, in a ‘scientific’ way (Nisbet & Watt, 1984). It is concerned basically with the interaction between factors and events.

A variety of techniques, such as observation, interviews, examining documents or records, can be used to gather evidence for a case study. Yin (1994) recommended six sources: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artefacts. He reminded researchers that no single source is better than the others. For him, “the various sources are highly complementary, and a good case study will therefore want to use as many sources as possible” (p.80). To establish the construct validity and reliability of a case study, he proposed three principles of data collection: use multiple sources of evidence, create a case study database and maintain a chain of evidence.

For Yin, data analysis in case studies included examining, categorizing, tabulating, and recombining evidences to address study questions. He proposed two types of analytic strategies: general strategy and specific strategy. The general strategy, aimed to “help an investigator to choose among different techniques and to complete the analytic phase of the research successfully” (p.103), consists of the strategy based on theoretical propositions and the strategy with a basic descriptive framework. Investigators are advised to ‘play with the data’ to develop “a systematic sense of what is worth analyzing and how it should be analyzed” (p125) if they lack general strategies. Then they can use specific strategies to analyze data after the general strategy step. Four specific strategies are recommended:

pattern-matching, explanation-building, time-series analysis, and program logic models.

According to Nisbet and Watt (1984), a case study has a number of strengths. The first is that its results are more easily understood by a broad readership from different research backgrounds. It also provides intelligent interpretation of other similar cases with suggestions. A particular significant advantage is the possibility of “identifying a pattern of influences that is too infrequent to be discernible by the more traditional statistical analyses” (p.76).

It also has a number of weaknesses, though. Firstly, it is not easy to generalize from the results of a case study. In addition, it is not easily open to checks, and risks being selective, biased, and subjective. And since it is flexible, it can change to take a new insight into account, but it is unlikely to tell how the researcher’s perception has influenced the conclusions reached.

3.1.2 Data collection instruments

Several instruments can be used to collect data for a case study. In the following section, I discuss four selected for my research: questionnaires, interviews, participants’ learning journals and instructor’s observation journals. The choice of these four instruments was motivated by my belief that questionnaires and interviews can allow access to those data that researchers cannot observe; and that journals can provide insights into personal teaching and learning experiences over the course of the study. They can therefore help me to carefully examine the research process in a reflexive way. According to Willig (2001), “reflexivity requires an awareness of the researcher’s contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process, and an acknowledgement of the impossibility of remaining ‘outside or’ one’s subject matter while conducting research” (p.10). Possibly biased by my subjectivity, I believe that these four data collection instruments should be able to facilitate my objective comprehension of the whole research situation (Ratner, 2002).

3.1.2.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are “printed forms for data collection, which include questions or statements to which the subject is expected to respond, often anonymously” (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989). Classified as a sort of archival record in a case study (Yin, 1994), it produces quantitative information, which is used in conjunction with other sources of evidence since it “may not be flexible enough to enable the participants’ true feelings or attitudes to come through” (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989:25). The main function of questionnaires is measurement. From the questionnaire specification, we can know what the questionnaire measures (Oppenheim, 1992). Second language acquisition researchers often use questionnaires to collect data on phenomena that cannot be easily observed, such as attitudes, motivation, and self-concepts, as well as on processes involved in using language and on obtaining the research subjects’ background information such as age, previous language learning experiences (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989).

Seliger and Shohamy (1989) argued that questionnaires have four advantages. Firstly, they can be distributed to a large group of subjects at the same time since they are self-administered, and are therefore less expensive to administer than other instruments such as interviews. Secondly, it is easier for subjects to share information of a sensitive nature because of anonymity. In addition, the data are more accurate because all the research subjects usually receive questionnaires at exactly the same time. Finally, since subjects usually receive the same questionnaire, the data are more uniform and standard. However, one of questionnaires’ weaknesses is that it is difficult to know if subjects properly understand the questions asked.

Oppenheim (1992) distinguished two types of questions: open and closed. Closed questions are ones “in which the respondents are offered a choice of alternative replies” (p.112). No choice is offered in open or free-response questions, the responses to which should be fully recorded. Compared to closed questions, open questions give freedom to the respondent. They are often easier to ask, but more difficult to answer, and more difficult to analyze (Oppenheim, 1966). Requiring no writing, more closed questions can be asked within a given length of time, but the lack of spontaneity and expressiveness often makes closed questions cruder and less subtle.

Attitude scaling is commonly used in questionnaires to measure attitudes and there

are four classical variants: Bogardus, Thurstone, Likert, and Guttman (Oppenheim, 1992). Likert scales, the most accepted scaling procedure, are the ones used in Gardner's (2004) International Attitude/ Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), which I adapt in the questionnaire of my study. The main concern of Likert scales is to be certain that "all the items would measure the same thing" (Oppenheim, 1992:195). In Likert scales, subjects are asked to answer a series of statements by indicating if they 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'are undecided', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with each statement (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989). The five positions in Likert scales are given the weights 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1, with higher scores given to favourable positions.

3.1.2.2 Interviews

The *interview* is one of the essential sources of data in a case study, due to the reason that most case studies are about human affairs (Yin, 1994). Its main purpose "is to obtain a special kind of information" (Merriam, 1990:72). When people's behaviour, feelings, or how they interpret the world around them cannot be observed, interviewing is necessary. Interviewing is also required when we are interested in past events, which are unlikely to be replicated. Its strength "is the richness of the communication that is possible" (Gillham, 2000). Interviewing is used when it "is the preferred tactic of data collection when ... it will get better data or more data or data at less cost than other tactics!" (Dexter, 1970, cited in Merriam, 1990:72). For a skilled interviewer, the key advantage of interviewing is its flexibility (Oppenheim, 1966). The researcher can make sure that the interviewee understands all his/her questions and the interview purpose. However, the interview situation is full of possibilities of bias; the interviewer may influence unwittingly the respondent's answers during the interview.

In addition to questionnaires, interviews are usually used in second language acquisition research to gather data on hidden variables such as attitudes and motivation towards second language learning (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989). Recently, second language researchers also used interviews to obtain information about strategies that learners use during the process of producing and acquiring the target language in different contexts. Interviews can also be used as tests to know about learners' language proficiency.

Yin (1994) distinguished three forms of interviews: interviews of an open-ended nature, a focused interview and interviews entailing more structured questions, along with a formal survey. Open-ended interviews, most commonly, allow interviewers to “ask key respondents for the facts of a matter as well as for the respondents’ opinions about events” (Yin, 1994:84). In some situations, the respondents can be asked to provide their insights into some occurrences. Their suggestions may be used as the bases for advanced inquiries. In focused interviews, respondents are interviewed for a short period of time. Interviews may be conducted in a conversational manner and remain open-ended. However, it is more likely that interviewers ask a certain set of questions developed from the protocol of case study. In Yin’s third form of interviews, the survey involves the sampling procedures and the instruments used in regular surveys. The result of the survey is analyzed in a similar manner as well. However, the “difference would be the survey’s role in relation to other sources of evidence” (Yin, 1994:85). The answers from the interview and the survey can be compared for consistency.

Merriam’s (1990) three types of interviews are determined by the amount of structure desired: highly structured questionnaire-driven interview, semi-structured interview and open-ended, conversational formats. Questions and their order being asked are decided ahead of time in highly structured interviews that are usually used to collect common socio-demographic data from interviewees. Unstructured interviews are used in situations where “the researcher does not know enough about a phenomenon to ask relevant questions” (p74). One of the aims of unstructured interviews is to understand a situation in order to develop questions for consequent interviews. Semi-structured interviews “are guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, but neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time” (p74). Both flexible and standardized (Gillham, 2000), the semi-structured interview is the most important form of interview in case study research.

3.1.2.3 Journals

Journals are the subjects’ or the researchers’ written records of “different aspects of a process or a phenomenon” (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989:161). In second language acquisition research, they are used in particular to gather data on subjects’ experiences as learners or as instructors of a second language. They are one form of

archival record, which are “the things that go back in time but may provide a useful longitudinal fix on the present situation” (Gillham, 2000: 21). There are many types of journals, which serve different purposes and can be presented in different forms (Moon, 2006). In this study, two kinds of journals are used: students’ learning journals and the instructor’s journal.

A learning journal is “an accumulation of material that is mainly based on the writer’s processes of reflection” (Moon, 2006:2). By writing journals, learners can show their learning pace, increase the sense of ownership of learning, acknowledge their emotion in learning, deal with ill-structured material of learning, learn about their own learning process, and enhance learning through the process of writing (Moon, 2006). The use of students’ learning journals can help researchers gain access to activities which they do not witness during the study, provide first-hand and ‘insider’ accounts of situations, and “provide further sampling of informants, of activities and of time which may complement the observations” made by the researcher (Burgess, 1984:203).

The teacher’s journal records teaching experiences and problems with students (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). It can also record observations made and hunches/insights developed during a study (Burgess, 1984) when teachers are researchers, such as in action research or ethnography. Its value is both emotional and analytical. It not only allows teachers “to let off steam, to complain, or to moan” (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989: 69), but also provides the opportunity for them “to reflect on the research, to step back and look again at the scenes in order to generate new ideas and theoretical directions” (p69).

Both learning journals and instructor’s journal are personal documents, which reveal a person’s view of experience (Allport, 1942, cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 1982:97). Their purpose is to record experiences, which “may be akin to the development of a log in its objectivity” (Moon, 2006:44). They are used in a study as means of recording field notes, providing the students’ accounts of situations, generating further data to complement other evidence of data in the study, and comparing data collected by the researcher and the participants (Burgess, 1984:204).

3.1.3 Quantification

It is argued that “quantification of qualitative data is not only possible and desirable but necessary in order to make generalizable claims to and about other contexts” (Lazaraton, 1995: 462). Henning (1986) held a strong position on quantification: “without some recourse to quantitative methods, some marriage of words and numbers, it is inconceivable that the investigation of language acquisition will ever be said to belong to the realm of scientific inquiry” (p.702).

In qualitative research, quantification of data takes place “only after data of a general nature have been collected and perhaps categorized” (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989:117). The data is first analyzed qualitatively and then quantitatively in relation to frequency orders and the mean length of utterances. Quantitative data in qualitative approach gives attention to understanding how counting actually happens, not on how it should happen (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). It allows the researcher to test and support inherently quantitative claims and makes it possible to assess the amount of evidence in the data that relates to a special conclusion or ‘threat’ (Maxwell, 1996:95).

3.2 Statement of research questions

Few researchers have examined the effects of synchronous CMC on the oral skill development of foreign language learners at elementary levels. Some researchers (e.g. Jepson, 2005; Volle, 2005; Sykes, 2005) reported how different communication environments affected their learners’ language performances and suggested that the differences in communication media impacted on learners’ production. Communication in an audio environment could be ineffective as visual cues are lacking (Jepson, 2005). But even though visual cues are available in both f2f and audio/video environments, communication should be different for the learners, since technology problems may occur in the latter mode that would affect their language performance to some degree. And the level of influence may be greater for early-stage learners than those at other levels because their limited language knowledge could cause a lack of confidence in speaking.

Therefore, I anticipate that the beginner-level participants of this study may make frequent use of their first language (Mandarin Chinese) to assist them in

completing tasks more effectively due to their limited language knowledge. Those in the audio and audio/video groups may have more frequent use of it in order to solve technology problems happening during tasks completion process. However, the participants' very limited language knowledge will cause great similarities in their oral production no matter which learning setting they are placed in.

Although the impact of diverse communication media on communicators' language use has been a concern of some CMC research, I wouldn't discuss this issue in this study. Postmes, Spears and Lea (2000) argued that the general norms of the sub-cultural milieu, the specific local norms and practices of the communication group can all contextually determine and influence the content for communication within CMC. They suggested that content and form of messaging are subject to emergent norms, defining "how group member should think, feel, or behave" (P.343), and interaction of group members may convey the emergence of group norms. Although my participants were divided into the three CMC interaction groups, the only person they interacted with during the study was their task partner. They were not offered opportunities to observe interaction behaviour of other group members, which is a basic condition for group norms emerging (Reicher, 1994). Without group communication, their behaviour in CMC should not be influenced or attracted by the group (Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 1998), and therefore no norms should be emerged in this study.

Given the limited information available on this important area, the first research question I investigate in this study is:

1. Do foreign language learners at elementary level develop oral proficiency skills in synchronous CMC environments? If so, how?

The provision of opportunities for learners to interact independently with educational technologies can promote their autonomy development (Benson, 2001), which can therefore increase their learning motivation (Dickinson, 1995). However, some CMC researchers found that (e.g. O'Malley, Langton, Anderson, Doherty-Sneddon, & Bruce, 1996; Wang, 2004b) technology problems could have adverse effects on the students' performance, which may consequently decrease their learning motivation. Since the audio and audio/video modes allow the participants to practise at any time and any place that provides them with a novel learning experience, I anticipate that the motivation of those in voice-chat groups may be better enhanced by the intervention program than those in the f2f mode.

So my second research question is:

2. *Do different synchronous CMC modes impact on foreign language students' learning motivation? If so, why?*

Social presence is essential to the success of online learning (Gunawardena, 1995; Garrison et al., 2000; Ubon & Kimble, 2003; Lobry de Bruyn, 2004). When learners perceive a higher degree of social presence, they interact better with each other (Stein & Wanstreet, 2003) and feel more satisfied with their learning experience (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997).

However, Short et al. (1976) suggested that people perceive a higher degree of social presence in some communication media than in others. Since the participants in this study interact in three different synchronous CMC learning environments, it is important to look into which learning situations may better promote the participants' perception of social presence. Based on my belief that contact can enhance social presence (Tu, 2001), I presume that learners' social presence may be the highest in the f2f context where more contact is available than the other two modes (audio, audio/video). My third research question is therefore:

3. *How do different synchronous CMC environments affect learners' social presence?*

Chapter 4 Research Design

Yin (1994) suggested that “a research design is the logic that links the data to be collected to the initial questions of a study” (1994:18). In this chapter, I present the reasons that motivated me to conduct this research and describe the research strategy that I used to study my research questions. I also explain the procedures adopted to collect data to investigate those questions and describe the research methods I employed. Then, I made a justification for those chosen approach and methods.

4.1 Rationale

Based on the findings of my previous graduate work, which I have discussed in Section 2.1.2, I suggested that the use of an asynchronous CMC could enhance beginner foreign language learners’ motivation and increase their interests in learning the target language. It could encourage them to overcome language difficulties and inspire their desire to discover more and more authentic online resources in spite of their restricted knowledge of/about the target language. In addition, by freeing people from time and space constraints (Hiltz, 1998), it allowed students to learn at their own pace at low cost. They were able to learn the target language by exploring authentic resources that were adapted to their needs and interests.

The research also revealed that an asynchronous CMC helped these beginner students increase their language proficiency. By providing visual aid and available online language tools, the asynchronous CMC facilitated learners to develop literacy skills, but did not seem to help learners’ development of oral skills. Although in the asynchronous CMC environment I created, students could have direct contact with authentic sounds (i.e. live TV, live radio, live music---etc.), most of them were not able to keep up with native speakers’ speed and some therefore felt discouraged by this online learning.

In addition, the asynchronous CMC did not provide these learners with opportunities to see native speakers. They were not able to have real

communication with native speakers or other learners of the target language and did not feel they were having an authentic learning experience.

In my foreign language classroom, most of students expressed their intention to acquire oral skills rather than literacy skills from the course. An asynchronous CMC environment did not seem to be able to satisfy their needs. One participant indicated that she had oral communication with a native speaker through the Internet telephone network. Although her anxiety hindered her further conversation with the native speaker in the target language, her experience inspired me to have the idea that foreign language learners probably can develop oral skills through the use of a synchronous CMC.

4.2 Data collection strategy

I conducted a qualitative case study with 12 beginning-level French learners in a Taiwanese university setting. The research instruments selected consisted of questionnaires, interviews, participants' learning journals, and the instructor's journal. Other data collected included the 12 learners' performances in three oral tests, and their written and oral interaction carried out in different learning environments.

Potential participants were those students who had taken my basic French course in the first semester (September 2007 - January 2008) of the 2007-2008 academic year. A total of 36 of students took a more advanced French course given in the second semester (February 2008 - June 2008) of the same academic year. I gave a short presentation to all the 36 students in the first session of the second semester, with the aim of recruiting participants for my research. It was open to the students whether they would take part in the study and which learning situations they would like to engage in. The study was a part of the curriculum. A total of 12 participants were recruited; those who decided not to participate still carried out the same tasks in the learning mode as the participants in the face-to-face group.

The fact that I am the researcher as well as the teacher may influence readers' views on the objectivity of the study, as they may suspect that students could try to please me by giving unreal replies in questionnaires, interview or their personal journals. However, my experience of piloting the study with four students, who

were recruited by online postings, led me to conclude that it would be not be feasible to obtain cooperation from students for a long-term study if I were not their teacher. As it was not possible to arrange a time and place for my pilot participants to get together and build a relationship with their task partner and me, they made no effort to communicate with each other, which made the arrangement of online meetings for task practices difficult and therefore no useful data was collected.

T: I did not hear anything from the first group. I therefore sent an email to both participants of the first group and gave them the deadline for the completion of the first task.

T: I received an email from Ya (one participant of the first group). She told me she did not have contact with Chun (the other participant of the first group). She was not able to finish the first task on time.

Data extract: Teacher's journal for the pilot study

I finally decided to recruit participants from among my students and the communication problems among us (two participants and me) were lessened. Based on my pilot experience, I learnt the lesson that building relationship with participants is necessary. The better our relationship, the more openly participants would talk to me about their problems. Without trust in me on their part, it would be difficult to get their cooperation over the course of the study.

T: I asked Ya and Chun to return me the technology tools today.

T: I recruited two other participants from one of my classes to replace Ya and Chun.

Data extract: Teacher's journal for the pilot study

As soon as the participants had agreed to take part in the study, I asked them to complete the first questionnaire. Over the course of the semester, the participants wrote the personal learning journals and emailed their entries to me after each task. They also saved their written and oral output from practice activities and sent them to me by email after each session. Near the end of the semester, I conducted six interviews (each with two participants) separately with the 12 participants in a seminar room in the university library. Each interview, recorded on an MP3 player and a tape recorder, lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. The participants were asked to complete the second questionnaire before their interview. The language used in the participants' data and for communication during the study was Mandarin Chinese, which eliminated the misunderstanding problems of the participants.

I then transcribed the interview data and translated participants' interview transcripts and learning journals from Chinese into English. The fact that the participants used some slang expressions in their interviews and learning journals increased the difficulty of the translation work, since the direct translation of those expressions sounds unnatural in English. For example, Participant J said “沒有看到她的表情, 我覺得怪怪的. 會沒有聊天的感覺.” I originally translated that as “I feel strange without seeing my interlocutor's face while talking. I don't feel I am chatting”. I later rephrased this as “Without getting my partner's facial expressions, I felt strange. I didn't feel as if I was having a chat”. When coming across similar problems, I tried to interpret their words from the speaker's perspective. The translation and interpretation process was in fact facilitated by the fact that I was the teacher and the researcher of this study. As their teacher, my familiarity with each participant eased my understanding of their words, and being the interviewer of this study allowed me to ask for immediate clarification when they gave an ambiguous answer as I interviewed them.

After the translation, I noted patterns of participants' experiences in the interview transcripts and the participants' learning journals. Then I classified these patterns and compiled all the data in groups related to specific patterns. These related patterns were then combined and catalogued into sub-themes. I calculated the frequency of themes that emerged in his way and displayed them in tabular form. The data of the participants' interview transcripts and learning journals was then analyzed based on the themes and their frequency, rather than on the participants' wording, which reduced the possible effects that my translation and interpretation of those data had on the claims made after the study.

After receiving the participants' written and oral practice files by email, I saved the files in my computer disc, which were classified under pair. Their three oral tests are graded on paper based on a rating scale (Table 4.4) of my own design. The scores they received for seven criteria of the rating scale were keyed in and saved in Excel files. The total score for each of the participants' performance was then calculated by the Excel program.

The Likert Scale questionnaire used in this study consists of two parts. There are six sections in the first part and seven statements in the second part. Six statements, each of which has seven ordered response levels, in the second part form the six section headings in the first part. 'For' and 'Against' statements are provided in the

sections one, two and five. All questions in the first part provide six – point Likert items (Strongly Disagree / Moderately Disagree/ Slightly Disagree/ Slightly Agree/ Moderately Agree/ Strongly Agree). The participants were required to evaluate their level of agreement or disagreement for each statement. After their responses to the questionnaire, their points (levels) of agreement or disagreement were keyed in to the computer. The mean points for six sections in Part One and the ones for the seven statements in Part Two were calculated and presented in tables. The questionnaire data analysis was based on comparison of these mean scores and interpretation of differences between these mean scores.

4.3 Research Methods

4.3.1 Participants

Table 4.1 Participant's academic background

	Student	Gender	Grade	Major
G 1	A	F	1	Computer Science
	B	F	1	Counselling
	C	F	1	Chinese
	D	F	1	English
G 2	E	F	1	Education
	F	F	1	Chinese
	G	F	1	Chinese
	H	F	1	English
G 3	I	F	4	Biological Sciences and Technology
	J	F	4	Biological Sciences and Technology
	K	M	1	Culture and natural resources
	L	M	1	Art

The 12 beginning-level FFL students were from diverse disciplines at Nan University, which is located in the south of Taiwan. They met for a two-hour basic

French course every week. Ten of the participants were female and two (K and L) were male. All of them were living in the university dormitory, and Participants E, F and H were sharing the same dormitory room.

Before this study, they received only one semester of basic French instruction from me as their instructor. Participants A and B knew each other at a cram school before starting their university studies. Some of them (Participants C/F/G; Participants D/H; and Participants I/J) were majoring in the same program, which allowed them to meet each other on other occasions. Only Participants K and L had met each other during our previous French course. Because I decided to examine familiarity as a factor in this study, I assigned Participants C and G, D and H as task partners. Therefore, they were the only participants who were not familiar with their task partner before the start of the study.

Since English was a compulsory subject for all freshmen, most of the participants (apart from I and J) were learning English during the study, when Participant C was also taking a German course. Most had average or good English ability, except Participant L. Participant H was not able to provide her entrance English score before the study because her acceptance by the English department had been assessed on the basis of her application documents. (In Taiwan, students can enter a university either by taking entrance exams or sending application documents to their potential universities. Passing an English oral interview is usually required in the latter entrance mode for studying in an English program.)

Table 4.2 Participants' English score of the university entrance test

P	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
S	45.89	66	42	69.78	46	37	50	N/A	40	60	75	20

Most of the participants were in the habit of daily surfing the Internet before the study, and all but Participant B considered their computer skills were good.

Table 4.3 Frequency of Internet surfing

Participants	Day
A	Every day
B	Every day
C	Every day

D	Every day
E	Every day
F	Every day
G	Every day
H	4~5days
I	2~3days
J	Every day
K	Every day
L	2~3days

Table 4.4 Assessment of personal computer skills

Participant	Not good	Good	Very good
A		V	
B	V		
C		V	
D		V	
E		V	
F		V	
G		V	
H		V	
I		V	
J		V	
K		V	
L		V	

4.3.2 Technology tools

This research was conducted with the use of webcams and microphones in a synchronous CMC environment. The software used in this study was MSN Messenger, which was available online. According to Cziko and Park (2003), the audio capability of MSN Messenger is excellent because “it is capable of high-quality, full-duplex voice communication with short latencies” (p.20). Conversations carried out through MSN Messenger are much like conversations held by telephone. Thus the choice of MSN Messenger was considered suitable for the synchronous CMC spoken interactions of this study.

The participants were required to download a free version of this software from a particular website. I distributed to each of them an identical set of microphone and webcam. The participants needed to be familiar with the use of webcams and microphones as well as the software before the start of the study.

4.3.3 Procedure

My research adopted a case study approach. The 12 voluntary participants were divided into three groups (Group 1, 2, 3). Four of them were paired with a partner they were not familiar with before the study.

At the beginning of week 4, all the participants were required to do the first task with their assigned partner through instant exchanging in an online text-based CMC environment. Then, they saved their MSN 'written' exchanges by copying and pasting them to a word processing program and sent me the file at the end of the week 4. I corrected and marked their written exchanges and sent them back individually by email. I also provided the learners with explicit feedback with explanations of the errors they made in written records in a later face-to-face session.

After receiving feedback, students in Group 1 and 2 carried out the first task orally with their partner in voice-based CMC environments (Group 1 with the use of microphones and webcams; Group 2 with the use of microphones only); students in Group 3 carried out the same oral activities in a face-to-face environment in week 6.

All the participants had to record their spoken performances. Participants in the two synchronous groups recorded their online spoken practice using the Audacity program, which was free for downloading and provided on the class website. They were required to familiarize themselves before the study with the program by following the user instructions given on the website. Participants in Group 3 were asked to record their face-to-face spoken practice by using an MP3 player. All the participants needed to submit their sound files to me by email. And then they were invited to repeat their spoken activities publicly in the subsequent face-to-face sessions.

After listening to the files of each pair, I gave each pair their marks and feedback by email, pointing out each learner's pronunciation and grammar errors. I also asked the learners to practise those common pronunciation errors that appeared in their sound files in the following face-to-face sessions after pointing out the errors most of them made and providing them with correct sounds for those errors.

All the participants had to receive instruction in regular face-to-face sessions and then practised given tasks at an appointed time after the classes. Dörnyei (2001a) claims that "making the teaching materials relevant for the learners" (p.29) is one strategy classroom teachers can use to generate students' initial motivation. He suggested that teachers can discover the topics students want to learn and build them into the curriculum as far as possible (Dörnyei, 2001b). Following his suggestion, I provided a number of topics to participants and had them select their favourite topics at the first session of the course. Then I created the teaching materials of this course based on the learners' topic selection.

Some French learning websites were also chosen to be teaching content of the course and presented to learners in the classroom. The use of these authentic materials was intended to make French 'real' to the participants and therefore enhance their language-related values and attitudes (Dörnyei, 2001b)

The semester constituted cycles of three-week practice on three tasks. The task practice procedures and task content were posted on the class website in order that learners could follow the design of the study and complete the tasks appropriately. Additionally, they were invited to post questions or share information on the classroom bulletin board, where I provided course-related information for those students who were absent from the classes or who learned slowly during the classes to catch up with the course outside the classroom.

Some online French cultural resources were also provided on the bulletin board in order that learners could explore them at their own pace outside the classroom. The provision of those resources was intended to respond to the learners' questions concerning French cultures raised in the classroom/after the classes. The exploration of these website resources was not a compulsory part of the course but allowed the students to discover information they were interested in by themselves.

It was an additional means that I used to “familiarise learners with the target language cultures” (Dörnyei, 2001b) in order to motivate their learning.

Table 4.5 Cycles of three-week practice

	Pre-task activity (text-based CMC)	Feedback (F2F)	Main task activity (F2F/voice-based CMC)	Post-task activity (F2F)
Task 1	W4	W5	W6	W6
Task 2	W8	W9	W10	W10
Task 3	W13	W14	W15	W15

Also, after finding out the learners’ individual pronunciation difficulties, I uploaded some sound files on the classroom bulletin board for them to download and listen to in their own time.

The contents of the three tasks were inter-connected. The learners started by introducing themselves and one of their best friends to their partner. In the second task, they had to describe their daily lives to each other based on their timetable. The third task was an invitation to go on a trip. Working from their personal timetable, they planned a trip to Nice. They had to work out together the details for this trip (e.g. the departure and return dates, the trains they would take) by exploring the website of the French national railway company (<http://www.voyages-sncf.com/>).

In the first two tasks, the participants were placed in real scenarios and they could exchange information as themselves. However, the scenario of the third task was in France where they have never been so far. Participants needed to simulate authenticity with the support of online authentic input.

In terms of pronunciation training, I gave the sound input models to the learners at the start of each new lesson in the face-to-face sessions. The students were paired up to do pronunciation practice after the model introduction. During their practice, they were required to read aloud together and compare their partner’s pronunciations with their own, in order to discover the differences between their pronunciations. They had to underline each pronunciation difference on their conversation transcripts.

Task nature

- Pre-task activity – all the participants were invited to practise the tasks with their assigned partner in the text-based CMC environment. The partners in each pair had to arrange the time to meet online. Their text exchanges were saved and sent to me by email at the end of the week.
- Written feedback – (1) I corrected participants’ errors that appeared in their text records and sent the records back to them individually by email. (2) I noted down the errors that appeared in their text records and gave explicit feedback with explanations of their errors in the next face-to-face session.
- Main task – In this stage, the learning environment for three groups was different. Group 1 and 2 practised the main tasks in a voice-based (VB) environment (Group 1 with the use of microphones and webcams; Group 2 with the use of microphones only); meanwhile, Group 3 practised the same tasks in a face-to-face environment outside the classroom. The content of the pre-task activity was repeated in the main task stage. Participants in Groups 1 and 2 had to complete the tasks during one-week period. All of them had to record their spoken interactions with their partner in sound files and sent them to me by email.

Participants in Group 3 carried out the same tasks in a face-to-face environment. They also had to record their oral practices done with their partner.

- Oral feedback – (1) I listened to learners’ spoken files and pointed out their individual pronunciation and grammar errors by email. (2) I also pointed out participants’ common pronunciation errors in the following face-to-face sessions and asked them to practise those sounds

Practice between participants

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Pre-task activity	Text-based CMC	Text-based CMC	Text-based CMC
Main task	VB CMC with the use of the microphones and webcams	VB CMC with the use of the microphones only	Face-to-face practice

- Post-task activity – Participants in the three groups were randomly selected to do a public performance in the classroom.

Then they listened to native speakers' sound models and tried to find out the correct sound for each difference. Next they repeated this pronunciation practice with a different partner. After the practice, they were required to do a public performance. I provided recast feedback which I have discussed in Section 2.1.3.3, with regard to their personal pronunciation errors at this stage. For example, when a learner said "Je peux parler un peu française", I replied "Moi aussi. Je peux parler français aussi" to draw the learner's attention to his/her error.

Table 4.6 Timetable

Week	Activity
W1	course adding-dropping period
W2	national holiday; become familiar with technology tools (webcams + microphones) and the software
W3	become familiar with each other online questionnaires: participants' motivation/attitudes towards French
W4	text-based CMC (task 1)
W5	written feedback (task 1)
W6	voice-based CMC /face-to-face (task 1) + public performance (task 1)
W7	national holiday ; oral feedback (task 1)
W8	text-based CMC (task 2)
W9	written feedback (task 2)
W10	voice-based CMC/face-to-face (task 2)+ public performance (task 2)
W11	oral feedback (task 2); oral exam + paper assessment
W12	instruction only
W13	text-based CMC (task 3)
W14	written feedback(task 3)
W15	voice-based CMC/face-to-face (task 3)+ public performance (task 3)
W16	oral feedback ; instruction only
W17	instruction only + interviews questionnaires: participants' motivation/attitudes towards French
W18	oral exam + paper assessment ; submission of the learning journal

4.3.4 Data collection

The data for this study were collected from students' performances on three oral tests (baseline test, mid-term test and post-test), written records made in the text-based CMC, sound recordings made in the voice-based CMC and face-to-face sessions, questionnaires completed at the beginning and the end of the study, individual interviews carried out at the end of the semester, students' learning journals and the instructor's observation journal.

Each participant was required to write a personal learning journal that was submitted to me at the end of the semester. I also conducted semi-structured group interviews with them near the end of the semester. These interviews were audio-taped and transcribed.

The participants' performance in three oral tests was assessed based on my rating scale. Their scores in these three oral tests were compared to see if they had developed their oral proficiency skills in the synchronous CMC environment. In addition, their written/sound records, interview transcriptions, learning journals and the instructor's observation journal provided further information about the development of their actual and perceived oral abilities in the three learning environments.

The questionnaires completed at the beginning and the end of the semester, participants' learning journals and transcripts of interviews, as well as the instructor's observation journal were the main sources that allowed me to see if different synchronous CMC modes affected students' learning motivation/attitudes and if there were any differences between the learning motivation/attitudes of the students after they have engaged in speaking tasks in f2f and the voiced based CMC environments. Reasons for any differences were also explored and discussed.

Finally, the participants' learning journals and transcripts of interviews with them provided insights into whether/how different synchronous CMC modes, particularly with the use of webcam, impacted on learners' perception of social presence.

Table 4.7 Data collection

Data 1	Three oral tests	a. Baseline test: participants' final oral scores of the first semester
		b. Mid-way test: mid-term oral scores of the second semester
		c. Post test: final oral scores of the second semester
Data 2	Written records made in the text-based CMC	
Data 3	Sound recordings made in the voice-based CMC and f2f sessions	
Data 4	Questionnaires completed at the beginning and the end of the semester	
Data 5	Interviews carried out at the end of the semester	
Data 6	Students' learning journal	
Data 7	Instructor's observation journal	

4.3.4.1 The task content of the three oral tests

In this study, each student had to take a baseline test, a mid-term test and a final test that was held at the end of the first semester (near the end of January 2007), the mid-term of the second semester (in mid-April 2008) and the end of the second semester (near the end of June 2008). In the baseline test, each testee was randomly distributed a role card on which a new identity was created for them. They imagined themselves as the person on the role card and presented their new identity to their partner. In the mid-term oral test, the learners needed to show a photo of one of their best friends and introduce him/her to their partner. The task content of the third oral test was a combination of the three tasks. The learners were put in a simulated scenario where they were studying French in a language school in Nice. They were supposed to meet their partner in the restaurant of the language school. They had to introduce themselves and describe their course program to their partner. They also had to plan a weekend trip to Avignon together by working on the given train timetable. The test partner for each testee was randomly selected by me before the tests.

Weir (1995) suggested that “the essential task for the test designer is to establish clearly what operations the candidate is expected to perform and the conditions under which these tasks are to be carried out” (p.40). Once that was established, the expected operations and the conditions of the tasks were communicated to the

students before the tests. Since the tasks of the first two tests were semi-structured, some model sentences for these two tests were given to the students in the classroom. For the task of the third test, the students were able to download the two versions of the language programs and the train timetables from the classroom bulletin board a week before the test. During this week, they had time to prepare the test in detail individually. Before the test, I selected randomly one version of the course program and the train timetable for each pair of testees and allowed them ten minutes to discuss the development of their conversations.

4.3.4.2 The rating scale

Weir (1995) also suggested that

... the third element that needs to be considered in test task design is how we are to measure the quality of the output which results from the spoken language tasks we adopt. ... (p.40).

Following his suggestion, I created a rating scale to measure the students' performance in the three oral tests. I decided to create a rating scale of my own rather than using an existing one because of my participants' very low proficiency levels. Since their language knowledge was very limited, those existing rating scales such as CEFR (the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) provided by the Council of Europe did not allow sufficient discrimination of their differences in spoken proficiency.

Underhill (1987) defined a rating scale as

a series of short descriptions of different levels of language ability. Its purpose is to describe briefly what the typical learners at each level can do, so that it is easier for the assessor to decide what level or score to give each learner in a test. The rating scale therefore offers the assessor a series of prepared descriptions, and she then picks the one which best fits each learner. (p.98)

The rating scale I created consisted of seven mark criteria, each of which included three levels. Each criterion represented a language ability the students performed in the oral tests.

Table 4.8 The rating scales employed to assess the participants' oral performance

<i>Language of interaction</i>			
Criteria	Scale		Comment
	A.	B.	
Flow of speech	1__ 2__ 3__	1__ 2__ 3__	
Pronunciation	1__ 2__ 3__	1__ 2__ 3__	
Vocabulary	1__ 2__ 3__	1__ 2__ 3__	
Grammar	1__ 2__ 3__	1__ 2__ 3__	
Range of vocabulary	1__ 2__ 3__	1__ 2__ 3__	
Range of grammar	1__ 2__ 3__	1__ 2__ 3__	
Communicative effort	1__ 2__ 3__	1__ 2__ 3__	
Scale definition			
Flow of speech	1. Speech is halting and fragmentary; Utterances are incoherent 2. Speech is sometimes hesitant, or utterances are sometimes incoherent 3. Speech is fluent/unbroken; Utterances are coherent		
Pronunciation	1. Unable to produce some sounds; Strong interference from L1/L2 in rhythm, intonation and pronunciation; Understanding is difficult but can be achieved after frequent repetition 2. Some sounds are not well pronounced, but little misunderstanding is caused or repetition is required. 3. Able to pronounce well almost all sounds; no misunderstanding is caused or repetition is required.		
Appropriacy of vocabulary	1. Unable to use some vocabulary, which causes the interruption of communication; May resort to LI or may cause their partner to resort to L1 to achieve/maintain communication. 2. Some inadequate or inaccurate vocabulary used which causes misunderstanding. 3. No inadequate or inaccurate vocabulary used during the		

		communication.
Appropriacy of grammar	of	1. Almost all grammatical patterns inaccurate 2. Some grammatical inaccuracies 3. Almost no grammatical inaccuracies
Range of vocabulary	of	1. Limited vocabulary; usage less than what has been frequently practised in the classroom 2. Moderate vocabulary; usage about what has been frequently practised in the classroom 3. Extensive vocabulary; usage more than what has been frequently practised in the classroom
Range of grammar		1. Limited range of verb tenses / sentence patterns used 2. Reasonable range of verb tenses / sentence patterns used 3. Wild range of verb tenses / sentence patterns used
Communicative effort		1. Unable to initiate the conversation; Communication totally reliant on the interlocutor. No strategies for maintaining communication. 2. Sometimes able to initiate the conversation; Able to take turns to continue the communication. Can sometimes cope with not understanding and/or not being understood. 3. Able to initiate the conversation; Able to help the interlocutor continue the communication. Effective strategies for maintaining communication.

The descriptions of performance for each ability criterion at each level were provided on the scale in order to help the assessors to place each learner correctly (Luoma, 2007). The levels that the assessors decided for each learner equalled to the scores the students received. The seven level scores were added to gain an overall speaking score, which expressed how well each student spoke the language being tested (Luoma, 2007).

In terms of assessment, Weir (1995) proposed that test designers “first need to establish criteria of assessment” (p.41) to measure the quality of learners’ spoken performance. For Bartz (1979), the test criteria should be selected “based on the student’s ability to produce or comprehend a message in the foreign language” (p.12). Weir (1995) also indicated the criteria should be able to “reflect the features of spoken language interaction the test task is designed to generate” (P.40). The seven criteria I selected for my rating scale included flow of speech, pronunciation,

appropriacy of vocabulary, appropriacy of grammar, range of vocabulary, range of grammar and communicative effort.

According to Cohen (1994),

the scales for grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation would still be of prime importance for beginning learners, since these speakers would be in the process of sorting out basic features of the language and would not yet be tackling more complex aspects (p.287).

Therefore, the three elements – appropriacy of grammar, appropriacy of vocabulary and pronunciation - were selected to assess my beginning level students.

In addition to assessing these three basic linguistic features, some communicative features were categorized in my rating scale. Weir proposed that “tasks cannot be considered separately from the criteria that might be applied to the performances they result in” (p.40). Since the nature of my three test tasks was communicative, I added four further criteria.

The scale of *flow of speech* was selected and developed based on House’s (1996) concept of pragmatic fluency, which she defined “as dialogic phenomenon that combines both pragmatic appropriateness of utterances and smooth continuity in ongoing talk” (p.228, cited in Luoma, 2007:91). She especially focused her concept “on smoothness of speaker transitions and the way that speakers made their talk cohere with what had been said before” (Luoma, 2007:91).

Moreover, the criteria of *range of vocabulary* and *range of grammar* were selected since I was interested in finding out the participants’ “linguistic competence at the utterance level” (Weir, 1995: 42). The scale of range of vocabulary was used to measure the learners’ ability to employ adequacy and variety of the words they have learnt from the classroom. And the scale of range of grammar was used to distinguish the learners’ ability to use adequacy and variety of the grammar taught in the classroom

The other criterion I chose was *communicative effort*, which was defined as “the student’s willingness to express himself and to get his message across” (Bartz, 1979:20). The scale was selected based on the belief that the speaker has to take the

listener's reactions into account by adjusting vocabulary and message in a spoken interactive exchange (Weir, 1995). All the participants involved in a conversation need to share their responsibility to make their communication work. This means that the participants "must be involved in the interaction to a greater extent than that of merely answering questions" (p.36).

In addition to the selection of criteria, the number of levels for each criterion also plays a decisive factor in the successful design of a rating scale. Weir (1995) recommended that "the number of levels within each criterion would have to represent real distinctions in the performance of actual candidates" (p.45). Underhill (1987) also suggested that the level number is in inverse proportion to the ease of use and the reliability of a rating scale. For him, a rating scale can work successfully only under the condition that assessors can hold it in their mind and do not need to look at it all the time while measuring learners' spoken proficiency. The above suggestions helped me decide to use three levels for each criterion in my rating scale.

4.3.4.3 The AMTB questionnaire

The International Attitude/ Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) was originally designed by Gardner in 2004 for use with secondary school students who study English as a foreign language. This AMTB version has been widely used in studies conducted in many countries of the world.

I adapted the original version (Appendix 3) for use in the context of my study, where Taiwanese first-year university students learned French as a foreign language. Only some scales of the original version were chosen because the purpose of this attitude/motivation test was to establish learners' attitude/motivation towards French, not only at the end of the study as the original version was intended, but also at the beginning of the study. The two questionnaires each learner completed were compared to see the effect of the intervention program on their attitude/motivation towards French.

Those selected questions were translated in Chinese and randomly presented to the students before and after the intervention program. The interval between the two questionnaire completion times was about four months.

4.4 Justification

4.4.1 The selection of a qualitative approach

I chose a qualitative approach to design my research and used it as a framework to plan, conduct, and evaluate my project (Creswell, 2002).

Lazaraton, Riggensbach, and Ediger (1987) conducted a survey of 121 applied linguistics, which revealed that “qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis are clearly important for the types of questions asked in applied linguistics research” (p.264, cited in Lazaraton, 1995:456). In general, a qualitative researcher examines research problems where he/she “explores and seeks to understand a central phenomenon” (Creswell, 2002:52). A phenomenon needs to be explored because little is known about it in the literature. In order to understand, the researcher has to gain knowledge of the complex phenomenon by approaching participants.

Although the use of CMC in language learning has been investigated by many researchers (e.g. Collentine & Collentine, 1997; Kitade, 2000 ; Salaberry, 2002; Paynes & Whitney, 2002; Abrams, 2003; Payne & Ross, 2005; Sykes, 2005; Volle, 2005; Jepson, 2005), very few of them (Sykes, 2005; Volle, 2005, Jepson, 2005) studied directly oral skills development in synchronous CMC. Since I am interested in exploring and understanding the effects of synchronous CMC on foreign language learners’ oral skills development, and little existing studies exist on this topic, a qualitative approach was considered ideal for my study.

4.4.2 The selection of the case study approach

Yin (1994) suggested that the case study is used when the researcher “has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (p.1). In the second language field, the case study approach is adopted when the researcher seeks to describe “some aspects of the second language performance or development of one or more subjects as individuals,

because it is believed that individual performance will be more revealing than studying large groups of subjects” (Seligner & Shohamy, 1989:125).

I chose to use a case study approach for my study because the use of synchronous CMC in my foreign language classroom is innovative and exploratory. In addition, I am interested to learn the effects of synchronous CMC on the students’ oral skills development and their interaction during the task completion processes. I am also concerned with the influence of synchronous CMC over the students’ motivation/attitudes toward French learning as well as their social presence. Studying a small number of learners can allow me to collect in-depth data that is beneficial to the understanding of the cause-effect relationships in my context.

One distinguishing characteristic in a case study context is that the cause-effect relationship is observable (Cohen, Lawrence, & Keith, 2003). A case study investigates and reports “the complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance” (p.181). It can also “penetrate situations in ways that are not always susceptible to numerical analysis” (P.181). For all these reasons I considered a case study the best approach for my research.

4.4.3 The use of the microphones with/ without the webcams in the voice – based CMC environment

The availability of facial visuals in online synchronous oral communication can change learners’ output as well as their perception of input (Volle, 2005, discussed in Section 2.1.2.2). Payne and Whitney (2002) indicated that “in a classroom environment, second language learners can resort to a wide range of paralinguistic compensation strategies for getting their points across” (p.18). Izumi (2003) also stated that the situational variables such as facial expressions or gestures can be used as strategies to support learners’ achievement in their communication goals without focusing on syntactical forms.

For me, the above two studies tended to suggest that the provision of facial visuals is not in favour of focusing language learners’ attention on forms. When social context cues are not provided, learners probably cannot avoid problematic lexical

and grammatical structures and have to pay attention to their interlocutors' language forms in order to communicate successfully.

In addition, some unforeseen technology problems occurred during the practice of the two online oral conversations in Volle's study in which only microphones were used. Those problems led me to anticipate that the simultaneous use of microphones and webcams in my synchronous oral learning environments might bring more technology problems and distract the participants' attention from language learning.

Since the provision of facial visuals seems to bring different effects on learners' language development, I decided to have the participants of the synchronous CMC groups practise the oral tasks in two different modes (one include the use of the webcams in the task practices; while the other does not). I compared the participants' interaction in these two learning modes and examined the effects of facial visuals on the participants' motivation and participation in their online learning.

4.4.4 The discussion in the text-based CMC as the main pre-task activity

According to Bygate (1987), learners need to develop two broad types of skill in speaking: motor-perceptive skills and interaction skills. Motor-perceptive skills "involve perceiving, recalling, and articulating in the correct order sounds and structures of the language" (p.5). Interaction skills refer to skills that use "knowledge and basic motor-perception skills to achieve communication" (p.6). Such skills require learners' capacity for using language to satisfy two demands in speaking: processing conditions and reciprocity conditions.

A speaker's speech fluency depends on his/her ability to master the processing conditions. This ability "covers the basic communicative skills of producing speech at a normal speed under pressure of time" (p.8). Because of limited time given, speakers cannot produce sentences as long or as complex as in writing and often make syntactic mistakes.

Reciprocity conditions are the other constraint that causes problems in speaking. They refer to interaction between the speaker and the listener. To make sure that

communication takes place, speakers have to pay attention to their listeners and adjust their messages according to their listeners' reaction. This doesn't exist in most types of writing.

Given these conditions, I assume that if learners are given enough time to plan their speech, they may achieve more fluent, complex or accurate (Robinson, 2001b) oral performance. The availability of planning time can allow learners to formulate, or reformulate their speech syntax that results in better performance in accuracy or complexity. Through output practice, they can internalize target patterns of speech and then produce those patterns more fluently.

But how can learners get more time before their speech production without losing authenticity of communication? In my opinion, the pre-communicative activities proposed by Littlewood (1981) offer an ideal solution. Pre-communicative activities refer to preparatory activities that can prime learners for the second type of communication task, in which learners can combine knowledge and skills acquired at the pre-communicative stage with communicative activities.

The findings of some previous studies showed that synchronous text-based chat can facilitate learners' pre-task planning before speech production. For example, Kern's (1995) research, being pointed out in Section 2.1.2., indicated that the use of the networked computer was beneficial to classroom discussion. He stated

“if students are given the chance to express and respond to a large number of idea in writing, they will be able to engage more effectively in subsequent oral discussions because their ideas have already been at least partially developed and articulated.” (p.462)

Payne and Whitney (2002) also suggested that in the chatroom, learners' pace of exchange is reduced, which provides them with opportunities to do pre-task planning. Learners' planning before an oral production can bring more fluent and syntactically complex performance and more attention on form (Ortega, 1999).

The above suggestions supported my use of the synchronous text-based chat as a pre-task activity in my study.

4.4.5 Semi structured tasks as the main task type

From a goal-oriented perspective, speaking tasks are activities “that involve speakers in using language for the purpose of achieving a particular goal or objective in a particular speaking situation” (Luoma, 2004:31). Two types of speaking tasks are distinguished: open-ended tasks and structured tasks.

The open-ended tasks are intended to get speakers to use the target language as an indication of their skills (Luoma, 2004:48). These tasks give freedom to speakers to meet task requirements in diverse ways. In contrast, structured tasks indicate clearly what speakers should say. They are usually used to assess linguistic features such as pronunciation or grammar. Between these two task types, semi-structured tasks require speakers’ “reacting in situations” (p.49). Speakers in semi-structured tasks are put in situations where they should respond with ‘formulaic language’ (p.49). But they should be able to adapt their expressions to situations.

According to Wray (2002), a formulaic sequence is:

a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar (p.9).

Weinert (1995) referred to the functions of formulaic language “as communicative, production, and learning strategy (strategy here in a general, theory-neutral sense)” (p.183). In my study, the use of formulaic language was focused on the communicative function, the view of which suggested that “formulas allow L2 learners entry into minimal communication” (p.183) because learners lack competence in the rules of the target language (Krashen 1981, Bohn 1986, cited in Weinert, 1995)

According to Bruton (2002), open-ended communication tasks include task types such as problem-solving, decision-making, spontaneous role-playing or information/opinion gap resolution. These tasks promote meaningful oral interaction because they “emphasize working through language rather than on language” (p.284). He argued that the application of these tasks skips initial

listening-only stages, so it does not suit learners at beginning levels, unless the use of L1 can be accepted.

Since learners perceive that meaningful input relevant to their needs can inspire intrinsic motivation and promote their learning (Dörnyei, 1998), the use of open-ended communication tasks seems a good choice to motivate the participants' learning in my study. However, due to their low proficiency level, my participants may not have enough language knowledge to support their communication in tasks. Therefore, I considered semi-structured tasks should be more suitable for my initial-level participants than open-ended tasks.

4.4.6 The selection of feedback types

In this study, I selected explicit feedback with error explanation as the feedback type for written errors and recast as the key pronunciation feedback type.

4.4.6.1 Explicit feedback with error explanation

The 'interaction hypothesis' (Long, 1983b) suggested that during interaction, feedback given to learners' production can facilitate their language acquisition. Swain's output hypothesis also suggested that feedback from interlocutors or teachers can help learners recognize their linguistic problems in interaction and make them look for alternatives from their existing knowledge or relevant input to achieve communicative purposes (Izumi, 2003).

The study of Carroll and Swain (1993, discussed in 2.1.3.3) investigated the effects of diverse feedback types on the low-intermediate ESL adult learners' acquisition of the English dative alternation. The findings of this study revealed that among those experimental groups, the group getting explicit feedback with error explanation outperformed the other groups. Results of other studies (Heift, 2004; Pujolà, 2001) also suggested that feedback with explanation is helpful to learners' uptake.

Therefore, I decide to use explicit feedback with error explanation as the main feedback type for the participants' written errors in my study.

4.4.6.2 Recast

Feedback is one of the key factors that affect learners' L2 pronunciation learning. Due to "unconscious interference phenomena from the L1 built in phonological representations" (Neri, Cucchiarini, Strik & Boves, 2002:447), L2 learners may not perceive their pronunciation errors and therefore need teachers to bring them to "focus on specific individual problems and (indirectly) stimulate them to attempt self-improvement" (p.447).

Lyster (1998) studied 4 French immersion classrooms at the Grade 4/5 level and found that the 4 teachers tended to recast phonological errors that resulted in most phonological repairs (62%) of the students. He suggested that learners required correct models to imitate since some pronunciation errors entailing special features of the French sound system and "were perhaps not amenable to negotiation" (p.206). Indeed, the teachers' recast of phonological errors tended to be noticed and repeated by the students. Lightbown (2001, cited in Neri, Cucchiarini, Strik, & Boves, 2002) also indicated that recast is a good feedback form for beginners because they are not proficient enough to correct their own errors. Based on those suggestions, I decided to choose recast as the main feedback type for learners' pronunciation errors in my study, as my students were beginning-level adult learners of French.

4.4.7 Public performance as the main post –task activity

For Skehan and Foster (1997, 2002, cited in Skehan, 2003), a post-task activity (such as public performance) in interactive tasks can lead learners to significantly greater accuracy. With public performance, learners are required to re-do a task in public after they have done the task 'privately' (Skehan, 2003).

I chose public performance as the main post – task activity for diverse reasons. Firstly, I considered having the students perform publicly could provide them with opportunities to practise the same tasks with different partners. Additionally, to

achieve communication, they had to produce their speech spontaneously and speak according to their interlocutor's replies rather than simply memorize what they had spoken in the tasks. Moreover, they could learn different conversation models for the same tasks while listening to other students' public performance. Finally, knowing that they would be invited to do public performance in the classroom could make them be more serious about their private tasks since most of them hoped not to lose face in front of their peers.

The above reasons supported my decision to select public performance as the principle post-task activity in my study.

Chapter 5. Findings

In this chapter, I present my findings based on the analysis of participants' data collected during the study process.

Table 5.1 Participants and their group distribution in the study

Group	1 (webcam+ microphone)				2 (microphone)				3 (f2f)			
Pair	1		2		3		4		5		6	
Participant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L

5.1 Oral proficiency development

Table 5.2 Participants' performance in three oral tests
(Baseline, Mid-term and Final tests).

	Student	Baseline	Proportion	Mid-term	Proportion	Final	Proportion
G1	A	15	0.918	14.5	1.002	14.7	0.992
	B	18	1.102	15.2	1.051	18	1.215
	C	17	1.041	12.8	0.885	15	1.012
	D	17	1.041	15.7	1.085	14.7	0.992
G2	E	16	0.980	13.3	0.919	13.7	0.925
	F	16	0.980	13.7	0.947	14	0.945
	G	16	0.980	13.5	0.933	15.7	1.060
	H	17	1.041	16.2	1.120	14	0.945
G3	I	17	1.041	17.2	1.189	14.7	0.992
	J	17	1.041	18.2	1.258	15.7	1.060
	K	17	1.041	13	0.899	14.3	0.965
	L	13	0.796	10.3	0.712	13.3	0.898
Mean		16.33		14.47		14.82	

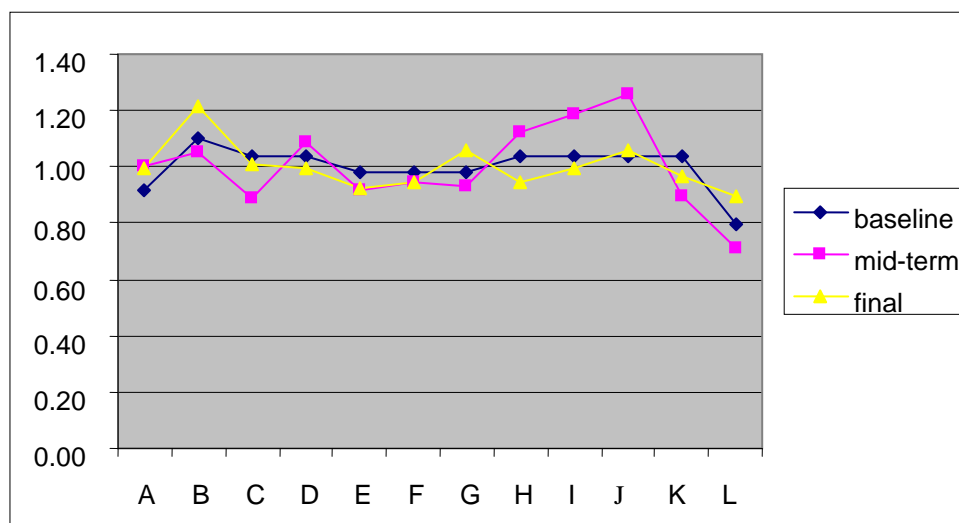


Figure 5.1 Proportion of participants' scores to mean scores

Potential development of participants' oral proficiency was measured by their performances in three (baseline, midterm and final) oral tests. (See Table 5.2) The content of the three oral tests were different. The content of the later tests was built on the one of the earlier tests. The method I employ in this study to measure learners' spoken performances in different tests is to calculate the proportion of participants' scores to mean scores in order to see if they had made progress over the period under study.

For example, Participant A's baseline score is 15 and the mean score of the baseline test is 16.33. The proportion of Participant A's baseline score to this mean score is 0.918 (91.8%), which is lower than the average proportion 1 (100%). This means that Participant A' baseline score, relative to all participants' baseline scores, is - 0.082 (- 8.2%). However, Participant A's mid-term score (14.5) is +0.002 (+ 0.2%) higher than the average mid-term score (14.47). But her final score (14.7) is -0.012 (-1.2%) lower than the average final score (14.82). Since all the three proportions (- 0.082, + 0.002, -0.012) are very close to 1, we can say that she might not make progress over the study in relation to other participants and the intervention program did not seem to have significant influence on her oral proficiency development.

I use the above measurement method, based on the rationale that all the participants receive the same instruction and take the same three tests during the study. If one participant's oral scores decrease from time 1 to time 2 while all the other participants' scores increase, I assume that this participant's oral proficiency has not improved.

All the participants' performances were judged based on the same rating scale, which consists of seven criteria, in each of which there are three levels. The participants' performance in each test was aggregated with their scores on seven criteria.

In addition to the researcher/the instructor, two other French teachers were invited to be assessors in this study. Both of them were teaching French language at the university level in Taiwan. Participants' scores in Table 5.2 are average scores computed across three raters.

Since "for the most part, with subjective scoring and multiple raters, we are interested in the degree of agreement between the individual raters" (Lynch, 2003:82), inter-rater reliability was calculated to see how much the three raters agreed on their ratings of individual test takers.

In this study, the inter-rater reliability for participants' midterm performances was found to be 0.78, and the one for their final performances 0.71. In the research literature, estimates ranging from 0.60 to 0.90 are described as 'acceptable' (Lynch, 2003:88). Within this range, the estimates of reliability (0.78 and 0.71) in this study can be therefore considered acceptable.

Table 5.3 Inter- rater reliability for participants' midterm performances

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.783	.881	3

Table 5.4 Inter- rater reliability for participants' final performances

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.712	.730	3

The scores in Table 5.2 tended to suggest that the program had positive effects on the oral proficiency development of participants A, B, G and L. The effects on participants B, G and L are especially obvious. Although participants D, H, I, J seem to have benefited from the program at the beginning, the positive effects did not last until the end of the program. Conversely, the program appears to have had negative effects on the oral skills development of participants C and K at the beginning. However, both of them made progress after continual practices. In the case of participants E and F, the intervention program does not seem to have had any effect on them. Their mid-term and final scores were slightly inferior to their baseline scores.

The participants' performances on the three oral tests show that the three different learning environments seem to favour only some participants' oral proficiency development.

In the webcam and microphone group, both participants in Pair 1 benefited from the synchronous CMC practices, although participant A stated that she preferred the face-to-face learning type. Participant B made the most significant progress among 12 participants. Her scores in Table 5.2 show that she continued making progress during intervention program.

Doing the spoken tasks with the use of the webcam and microphone brought about different effects on the two partners of Pair 2. These different effects of the intervention program also occurred in the case of the two partners of Pair 4 in the microphone group. Since these four students are the only participants who were not familiar with each other at the beginning of the study, it's worth looking into how the familiarity factor affects the interaction of these two pairs during the task practices, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

As to the four participants in the face-to-face group, both participants in Pair 5 made the most significant progress in the mid-term test. But their progress didn't last till the end of the program. Participants K and L did not seem to have benefited from the intervention program at the beginning. Although participant K seemed to better adapt to the learning environment at the end of the program, his progress was small. The intervention program did not seem to have had positive effects on his oral skills development.

Among the twelve participants, participant L had the weakest language abilities. Although he had the poorest performance in three oral tests, his progress is obviously seen after the intervention program.

The participants' scores in the three oral tests suggested that only some benefited from the intervention program and the positive effects for some participants were greater than others. Storch (2001) examined three pairs of adult ESL students' performance on a writing task and found that students "working in pairs may not necessarily work in a collaborative manner" (p.29). She also suggested that pairs that collaborate or interact in an expert/novice relationship are more likely to acquire language skills. (Storch, 2002)

In the following section, I discuss how the participants in this study learned French oral skills individually and in pairs in the three learning environments. The data is structured and presented by pair since in this study the participants' interaction in their learning environment is mainly affected by their task partner.

5.1.1 Participants A & B

Participants A and B use the Internet frequently. They had chatted online with each other using webcam and microphone before the study.

26. A: *I use MSN everyday.*

27. B: *Me too.*

Data extract: Interview A&B

Both participants consider the MSN written tasks are helpful to online spoken practices.

103. A: *We could know first each other thoughts. Then we could develop our conversations in the direction we both wanted. We could think how to speak first.*

Data extract: Interview A&B

In order to conduct the MSN written tasks, they revised course content separately,

B: *I had to revise the course content and be familiar with sentences. I tried to avoid replying slowly in the MSN written tasks.*

Data extract: Learning Journal B

and then had pre-discussions together.

93. B: *We usually met online on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. On Tuesdays, we usually had a pre-discussion.*

...

332. B: *... We always had a pre-discussion before doing the tasks....*

Data extract: Interview A&B

B: *This afternoon, we discussed the task content first...*

Data extract: Learning Journal B

They used Chinese or English to facilitate their discussion process. Chinese was mainly employed to assist the construction of their conversations.

A: *Because I was not familiar with the new content and didn't know how to use sentences, my partner and I decided to think of our conversations in Chinese first, and then translate them in French.*

Data extract: Learning Journal A

B: *We thought of our conversations in Chinese and then translated them in French.*

Data extract: Learning Journal B

For Participant A, the use of Chinese helped her solve French structure problems.

118. A: *If we had problems about sentences, we discussed in Chinese. After solving problems, we continued talking in French.*

Data extract: Interview A&B

Instead of using Chinese, Participant B preferred to use English to help the discussion. Like some participants in the study of Storch and Wigglesworth (2003), who were reluctant to use their shared L1, she considered using the L1 could slow down the task process because “it would necessitate an additional translation stage” (p.766).

113. B: Using Chinese required translation. Using English was easier.

Data extract: Interview A&B

After establishing relevant language in the MSN pre-task activities (Skehan, 1996a), they did several spoken practices and oral recordings.

94. A: And we needed to do recordings many times.

95. B: Yes. Usually many times.

Data extract: Interview A&B

A: We forgot how to ask. Our conversations were pretty short. So we recorded three times.

Data extract: Learning Journal A

B: We practised two or three times before recording.

Data extract: Learning Journal B

Since they were the only pair who did not look at written records during oral practices, a lot of pauses occurred in their oral recordings.

A: We spent time on thinking of conversations and replying, which caused a lot of pauses appearing in our recordings.

Data extract: Learning Journal A

B: This assignment ... we had recorded it last Tuesday ... but there were a lot of pauses ...

Data extract: Learning Journal B

For Participant A, doing tasks provided her with opportunities to reflect on French language features.

A: It's difficult to address questions starting with "il/elle". I need to think how to use before producing them.

Data extract: Learning Journal A

She sometimes felt it difficult to apply new learning content to the tasks.

A: I feel what we are learning now is difficult. ... I don't know how to ask and answer questions.

Data extract: Learning Journal A

She also considered the task of the final test challenging. She was not sure how to initiate a conversation.

319. Interviewer: Ok. ... how do you think of this final test?

320. B: (laughs) quite hard ...

321. A: (laughs) the oral part ...

322. Interviewer: difficult?

323. A: Yes.

324. Interviewer: What are your problems?

325. A: I do not know how to start the conversation.

Data extract: Interview A&B

Although her major is computer science, she encountered insoluble technology problems caused by the quality of the Internet connection, which affected her online practices.

62. A: Yes. And also sometimes there were lags occurring, you just heard sentences repeated.

63. B: Yes. Her sentences repeated. Sometimes it's a waste of time.

Data extract: Interview A&B

However, she felt a sense of accomplishment from doing the recording although the fear of making errors sometimes made her nervous during task practice process.

A: I felt happy after the recording. The process was interesting.

Data extract: Learning Journal A

A: I felt nervous for the first recording. I was afraid of making mistakes and had to redo the recording.

Data extract: Learning Journal A

Besides, her computer background helped her benefit the most from the instructor's (written and pronunciation) feedback. For most other students, the instructor's pronunciation feedback was not helpful because pointing out their pronunciation errors did not allow them to pronounce those errors correctly. But since Participant A found a website where French pronunciation is available, having pronunciation errors pointed out was sufficient to improve her pronunciation.

200. Interviewer: How about the pronunciation feedback?

201. A: I could know where my pronunciation problems were.

202. Interviewer: Did it help?

203. A: It helped me to pay attention to my mistakes.

...

223. A: I found one website. When I needed the sound for one word, I just typed the word, and then I could get its sound.

Data extract: Interview A&B

The other method she adopted to improve her pronunciation was listening to sound files provided on the classroom bulletin board.

216. A: Mm. I had more problems with tones. I listened to those sound files whenever I wanted.

Data extract: Interview A&B

Despite her familiarity with computers, Participant A expressed her preference for the face-to-face learning mode. For her, problems solving in a face-to-face environment is more efficient.

59. A: I prefer f2f mode. If I have questions, I can ask my partner and have them solved immediately.

Data extract: Interview A&B

She described a number of other problems occurring in the synchronous CMC learning environment. Firstly, online written chat could not allow her to catch her partner's tone of voice.

85. A: *When you chat through MSN, you cannot hear the speaking tone of your partner.*

Data extract: Interview A&B

In addition, unforeseen technology problems sometimes delayed their online task practices.

62. A: *Yes. And also sometimes there were lags occurring, you just heard sentences repeated.*

...

66. A: *... the Internet connection in the dormitory is strange.*

...

75. A: *I could not use the Internet in the dormitory recently.*

76. B: *really?*

77. A: *My computer crashed.*

Data extract: Interview A&B

And since she was sharing the room with three other students, she needed to take them into consideration while doing the spoken practices.

A: *I need to cope with my roommates' situations to do recordings. I am afraid to interrupt their sleeping.*

Data extract: Learning Journal A

Also, the arrangement of an online meeting was not always easy for her.

A: *I felt guilty. I had less free time so B should cope with my schedule.*

Data extract: Learning Journal A

A: *The period of the final tests was coming. I had many assignments to do. We could not find a time to do the spoken task. Both of us were busy. ...*

Data extract: Learning Journal A

In terms of the task partner, she stated she preferred having a partner she was familiar with.

264. B: It will be strange if I need to discuss with someone I am not familiar with.

...

283. B: I don't know how to talk with someone unfamiliar.

Data extract: Interview A&B

During the experiment, I found that unless I specifically directed Participant A, she hardly had interaction with other students in the classroom. When paired with other students in oral tests, she spoke in a quiet voice. Her shyness was sometimes negatively perceived by the two other raters and affected her scores received from them.

Unlike Participant A, Participant B was communicative and active in the learning process. In addition to the course reviewing, she spent time practising typing before MSN tasks.

B: I had to practise typing sentences. I sometimes confused typing French and English. Haha.

Data extract: Learning Journal B

Sometimes she was not clear about how to speak sentences with appropriate intonation.

B: I was not sure how to pronounce the tones of some question sentences. I felt unnatural while I was speaking, a little bit strange

Data extract: Learning Journal B

But she found help from my pronunciation feedback. After knowing her errors, she tried to find the correct sounds by listening to the sound files provided on the class bulletin board, asking for pronunciation support from peers and me after the class.

214. B: --- we could listen to your sound files many times if we had pronunciation problems. ---

Data extract: Interview A&B

219. Interviewer: *When I pointed out your mistakes, you knew only where your pronunciation mistakes were but did not know how to pronounce them correctly ...*

220. B: *We could ask other students in the classroom.*

Data extract: Interview A&B

233. B: *If they (other peers) could not help me, we discussed together. Recently, I continued discussing pronunciation problems with one of the classmates. If both of us could not pronounce one word, we asked you.*

Data extract: Interview A&B

Among the twelve participants, Participant B was the only one who continued to ask me questions by email after the classes. I felt encouraged by her questions and eagerness to learn new French knowledge.

T: After my encouragement, Participant B starts asking me questions through email.

Data extract: Teacher's journal

T: B continues asking me questions. It's quite good. She paid a lot of attention to linguistic features.

Data extract: Teacher's journal

Participant B seems to open herself to people. For her, knowing more people is advantageous to her language learning, and the learning attitude of a partner is more important to the successful completion of a task than familiarity.

279. Interviewer: *... do you prefer practising with someone familiar or unfamiliar?*

...

281. B: *There's no difference for me. I think it's better for me to know more people if I want to learn well a foreign language. But at the beginning of the tasks, it might be difficult to start the conversation.*

...

287. B: *Some students are busy and don't revise the course content. When you meet online and talk in French, he/she cannot understand what you say. I don't like that kind of students who are not serious about the tasks. I don't like that kind of silly partners. I expect he/she at least does his/her best to do the tasks.*

Data extract: Interview A&B

As to learning modes, she considered doing recording in a face-to-face environment as quicker and easier.

B: There are advantages to do recordings f2f. For example, when I want to ask some words to A, I can simply press “pause” bottom. If there are long pauses appearing, I can delete them quickly.

Data extract: Learning Journal B

Additionally, face-to-face practices allowed her physical contact with her partner.

84. B: I get used to having physical contact with Brigitte when we talk. Doing this makes me feel closer to her.

Data extract: Interview A&B

Like Participant A, she sometimes felt annoyed by the technology problems while doing the oral tasks.

B: I intended to do more recordings during the vacation. But my partner’s microphone did not work properly first and then her computer crashed.

Data extract: Learning Journal B

61. B: ... in the microphone and webcam mode, sometimes your computer crashed, you could not hear your partner’s questions. ...

62. A: Yes. And also sometimes there were lags occurring, you just heard sentences repeated.

63. B: Yes. Her sentences repeated. Sometimes it’s a waste of time.

Data extract: Interview A&B

She also perceived a lack of privacy to speak through the microphone because of the presence of her roommates, which sometimes hampered her oral practices.

87. B: When I chatted with the microphone, there were other people around me. They could hear my talk. I do not want others hear my chat content.

Data extract: Interview A&B

B: My roommates came into the room. Their conversations were recorded in my oral practice file.

Data extract: Learning Journal B

The above two problems negatively affected her perceptions of the online learning. However, doing tasks online allowed her to enjoy the role-playing and to become more involved in the tasks.

B: (I just know my partner ...I am quite involved in my role, Haha...) And since we are in a chat room ... so when my partner asks me questions, I should not pause too long ... so I should be familiar with sentences to make our online chat more real ~ Haha)

Data extract: Learning Journal B

Moreover, both Participant A and B consider that doing tasks in the synchronous CMC environment allowed them to do the tasks at any time and any space (Warschauer, 1997; Warschauer, 1999).

312. Interviewer: ... do you think these technology tools are helpful to your learning?

313. B: They do help. There is a distance between our rooms. Using these tools allow me to save my moving time.

314. A: Don't need to move that far.

315. B: Don't need to move far. ... Sometimes we did the tasks quite late, we could just stay in our room and do those practices.

316. Interviewer: So they are convenient for you to do the tasks.

317. A: Mm. they are also convenient if we do the tasks at home ...

Data extract: Interview A&B

In addition to the technology involvement, the task-based design of the course appeared to push both participants to study French regularly.

293. B: I revised them (the course content) regularly. If I didn't do so, it would be more difficult to remember what you have said in the course.

294. Interviewer: Right ...

295. B: Doing so made the revising work go quicker.

296. A: Yes. Me too. I revised a little bit every day.

297. Interviewer: Is this habit of regular revising formed by the tasks or you have revised the course content regularly last semester?

298. B: No. I did not do so last semester.

299. A: Me either.

Data extract: Interview A&B

Although Participant A felt overwhelmed by the quantity of the learning content given in this course,

335. Interviewer: *What do you think of our course?*

336. A: *We have learnt a lot this semester.*

337. Interviewer: *Did you feel our course went quickly?*

338. A: *We needed to revise and practise all the time.*

339. Interviewer: *spend a lot of time on practising?*

340. A: *Yes.*

Data extract: Interview A&B

both of them seemed to gain benefit from doing the tasks in cycle.

A: This time we finished the task quickly. We spent much more time to do the previous two tasks.

A: This time our practice went more smoothly. We spoke more fluently. Maybe we have made the progress.

Data extract: Learning Journal A

B: I felt I spoke more fluently (that's my perception ~ I could speak with a quicker speed.)

Data extract: Learning Journal B

In sum, Participants A and B appeared to benefit from the intervention program. They followed my instructions well and participated actively in task practices. While encountering difficulties, they were able/willing to devise a number of strategies to complete each task. They also made good use of all the feedback and support I offered to facilitate their learning. Consequently, in spite of Participant A's dislike of her learning mode, both of them achieved better oral performance after the study, particularly Participant B, who adapted herself well to the intervention program.

5.1.2 Participants C & D

Before the study, both Participants C and D got used to chatting through MSN Messenger with webcam and microphone. Participant C used it to communicate with friends living far away. Participant D used it to talk with her classmates and families.

As to the tasks, both of them considered MSN pre-tasks were helpful to their production in the oral tasks. Before starting the tasks, they revised the course content individually, and then they had pre-discussions through MSN chat.

C: I studied the textbook, and sorted sentences into my notebook to facilitate doing online tasks later.

Data extract: Learning Journal C

147. C: With my partner, we usually discussed first what we would say.

Data extract: Interview C&G

D: During this 🌸🌸 spring holiday 🌸🌸, I spent some time to review 📖 what teacher taught before because I'm afraid that the memories of French words will fade away from my brain.

Data extract: Learning Journal D

224. D: I did preparation before our online meetings and thoughts of what I was going to say. And in our online meetings, we discussed together what we would say later. After that, we started talking in French.

Data extract: Interview D&H

In spite of the above preparation, Participant C relied on the textbook to help her complete the tasks during the tasks because of her unfamiliarity with new learning content of the course.

155. C: ... And during the practices, I put the textbook aside and looked for some words I needed ...

...

157. C: There were some words I knew how to pronounce but did not know how to spell, or I knew how to spell, but spelt them wrongly ...

Data extract: Interview C&G

At this stage, they planned what they were going to say in the main tasks. In their case, the pre-task planning eased the processing load that they would encounter in the later tasks (cf. Skehan, 1996a:54).

111. C: Through typing, I was able to formulate my thoughts that facilitated speaking.

Data extract: Interview C&G

197. D: I could know what I would speak later.

Data extract: Interview D&H

In addition, Participant C stated that doing the MSN pre-tasks drew her attention to specific French linguistic features, which seems to confirm the suggestion of Warschauer (1997) that CMC increases learners' attention to linguistic form.

C: I need to pay a lot of attention to verb conjugation and gender while describing my best friend....

Data extract: Learning Journal C

Between the pre-tasks and the main spoken tasks, they did several oral practices, which were mainly focused on pronunciation. They usually had to do the recording several times during the main tasks in order to get a satisfactory version to submit to me.

189. C: We did more practices before recording because we thought the recording might make us feel nervous. After many practices, we started recording. If the first recording was ok, we submitted it to you. If it was not good, we repeated recording. We spent more time practising.

Data extract: Interview C&G

268. D: ... We usually practised 4 ~ 5 times before recordings. And if the recordings did not sound well, we repeated recording again and again.

Data extract: Interview D&H

C: *We practised many times before and after the recording. After listening to our recording, I found our voices were unemotional, so we decided to record again.*

Data extract: Learning Journal C

D: *In the process, we had recorded it more than three times to see which versions of dialogs will be the best one.*

Data extract: Learning Journal D

During the study, they used diverse means to help them complete the tasks. Firstly, they used the dormitory telephone to solve software problems since they were unable to convey their thoughts to each other through MSN at the beginning stage.

D: *This is the first time that I talked to my partner on MSN. 😊 However, sometimes I felt that she seems cannot understand what I really mean. 💧 In this way, I think it's not an efficient way to express my ideas so clearly. Therefore, I would like to communicate with her by telephone 📞 more than MSN 💻.*

Data extract: Learning Journal D

397. Interviewer: *... (to D) you mentioned in your journal you used to communicate with your partner through the telephone. Did you think it's easier to communicate through the telephone?*

398. D: *Right. More convenient ... it's efficient.*

399. Interviewer: *For example?*

400. D: *When we discussed how to use the software, she continued talking, we did not understand what each other said ...*

Data extract: Interview D&H

Also in the MSN written tasks, they turned on the webcam in order to become better engaged in the practices.

228. D: *... we wanted to make the situations more real, so we used it (the webcam) ...*

Data extract: Interview D&H

Moreover, they used Chinese to assist them in completing the tasks - to structure their MSN conversations, provide vocabulary help and revise their texts during the task processes.

151. C: Yes, in Chinese. We “pictured” the conversation context and then started chatting.

...

176. C: ..., we started speaking Chinese to revise the sentences we had just typed. Or we pointed out each other’s mistakes ...

177. Interviewer: Mm.

178. C: Through discussion, we corrected our sentences and thoughts of alternative sentences to replace the original ones.

Data extract: Interview C&G

244. D: Yes. ... Sometimes my partner asked me how to spell some words during the practices, I told her how to spell in Chinese.

Data extract: Interview D&H

In the spoken CMC practices, they relied on the MSN written records to move on their practices. The reason Participant D looked at the written records during the spoken practices was her lack of confidence in her performance. For Participant C, dependence on the written records resulted from her desire to be more native-like. Reading what she had written in the MSN tasks gave her a false impression that she spoke fluently.

201. Interviewer: Did you usually speak according to your written records?

...

203. D: Sometimes I did; sometimes I did not.

204. Interviewer: Sometimes you did not...did you feel difficult to speak if you did not?

205. D: ... Yes, because I was not sure if I spoke correctly. (laughs)

206. Interviewer: So at that time, you wanted to look at the written records.

207. D: Yes. Otherwise I paused for a long time at that moment. (laughs)

Data extract: Interview D&H

119. C: I wanted to make the tones natural. I also wanted to put myself in the conversation context.

...

121. C: I hope my pronunciation sounded correct.

...

123. C: *I hope my interlocutor could understand every word I said. ... Although he/she might not be a native speaker, he/she could understand my words.*

Data extract: Interview C&G

C: *My conversations with D are fluent (with the written records). If I was required to speak spontaneously, I probably had to think for a while.*

Data extract: Learning Journal C

They also asked for help from each other or consulted paper dictionaries while encountering pronunciation problems. However, the phonetic symbols provided in their dictionary were not that helpful for them since they were not sure how to pronounce them.

C: *... We are forced to stop our practice and discuss with each other how to pronounce.*

Data extract: Learning Journal C

304. D: *... looking at the phonetic symbols did not allow us to pronounce properly ...*

Data extract: Interview D&H

At the beginning of the study, Participant C felt very motivated to try this new language learning experience after the introduction of the software. She also said she had fun doing the tasks that provided her with opportunities to speak the target language.

C: *The instructor sent us the Audacity website address by email. I downloaded the program and played with it. It was great fun.*

Data extract: Learning Journal C

C: *For me, the purpose of learning foreign languages is to speak (although other skills are important too). In addition to the fun, I hope this learning is helpful to future job hunting. (Learning French and German are more interesting than learning English. It seemed to me that we learnt English for passing exams in the junior and senior high schools. My motivation was not strong and the learning effects were limited.)*

Data extract: Learning Journal C

But she encountered some discouraging problems/difficulties while practising the tasks. Firstly, she sometimes felt it difficult to produce what she intended to say because of her limited language knowledge.

C: Because I haven't learnt a lot, sometimes I cannot express completely my thoughts. I almost use English.

Data extract: Learning Journal C

She also experienced technology problems caused by simultaneous use of multi-functions of MSN and poor Internet connection quality.

53. C: But sometimes when I used the webcam, the transmission speed was not quick enough, sometimes there were lags occurring, ... sometimes MSN disconnected or when someone logged on MSN, you could hear the logging alarm ... or sometimes I could not hear what my partner said, I had to guess what she said or repeated my questions ... there were some problems with the connection quality ...

Data extract: Interview C&G

In addition, it emerged that among the 12 participants, she was the most frustrated by the need to type specific French symbols in the MSN exchanges. She sometimes skipped typing them in order to speed up the communication process.

388. C: My ... typing is not good. I sometimes typed wrongly or spent time finding appropriate letter keys.

...

399. C: But typing those specific symbols did slow down the communication process.

Data extract: Interview C&G

C: There are some specific symbols (â á â ã ä å) in French. I should pay attention while typing. Sometimes I am lazy or forget to copy/paste those symbols ---.

Data extract: Learning Journal C

Actually, Participant C seemed to get nervous easily. The fact that she typed slowly was only one of the reasons that made her nervous.

C: Because I am going to start the MSN practice soon, I feel very nervous.

Data extract: Learning Journal C

C: I am waiting for my partner to start doing the MSN task. I feel so nervous that I practise typing while looking at sentences on my textbook and notebook.

Data extract: Learning Journal C

Her nervousness resulted in her inattention to language accuracy, in both the written or spoken tasks. Her example seemed to contradict what had been suggested in Chun's (1994) study - that a computer networking environment provides a less stressful learning environment.

213. C: But while speaking, I got nervous easily. So I still pronounced those sounds wrongly.

...

382. C: I was too hurried ...

383. G: (laughs)

384. C: For me, typing is different from writing.

Data extract: Interview C&G

Being quick to give responses but unfamiliar with the new learning content, she typed words and sentences mechanically by looking at her textbook and notebook without internalising those words and sentences.

C: Because I have not been familiar with sentences yet. I cannot stop looking up them in the textbook. It takes me a long time to do the task. --- I finally finish it painfully.

Data extract: Learning Journal C

367. Interviewer: C, you wrote in your diary that you could pronounce some sounds but was not able to spell them.

368. C: Mm. Or sometimes I did not combine words and their meanings...

369. Interviewer: Mm.

370. C: I knew how to pronounce words, but did not know their meanings.

...

378. C: ... I was hurried to send back my replies. I did not memorize those words immediately. I did not want to have my partner wait for me for a long time. I might feel sorry for that.

Data extract: Interview C&G

The lack of internalisation caused her poor performance in the mid-term paper exam. Feeling discouraged, she considered that regular quizzes were more beneficial to her performance in the exam and hoped I could give quizzes to help her to internalise the learning content, despite the fact that she thought the MSN tasks made the target language ‘real’ to her.

C: For me, it's good to do these tasks. I could apply my learning to daily conversations ... Studying sentences in the textbook is really different from applying them in the tasks. I don't understand why some people like doing tests

Data extract: Learning Journal C

C: The teacher used the MSN tasks to replace the small tests we had in the last semester. I did like this idea. But in this mid-term test, I found I was not able to spell out words that I could pronounce. ... I could read some sentences but forgot their meanings. So I did not know how to answer some questions.

Data extract: Learning Journal C

C: I did very badly in the mid-term test. I deserted it. I did not memorize vocabulary while typing --- I wonder if the teacher can give small tests ...

Data extract: Learning Journal C

She also had difficulties in pronouncing sounds correctly by herself. She learnt pronunciation by memorizing the sounds she heard from me in the classroom. That made it difficult for her to correct her pronunciation errors, since she forgot the sounds of some words after leaving the classroom.

230. C: Yes. I had this problem. Because I practised pronunciation at home first, sometimes I felt that your sounds and mine were slightly different....

231. Interviewer: Mm.

232. C: But it's difficult to remember yours. Because I remembered my original sounds.

233. Interviewer: I see.

234. C: It's not easy to correct sounds.

Data extract: Interview C&G

Therefore, she suggested I should use a textbook with accompanying compact discs in my future French classroom, as was the case in her current German course.

239. C: *We were required to buy CD in our German class. I thought CD was really helpful.*

....

241. C: *You can listen to CD whenever you want.*

Data extract: Interview C&G

In terms of feedback, she considered that the written feedback received from the instructor by email and the explicit feedback with explanations for written records in the classroom were helpful to her noticing of errors.

200. C: *I did need you to point out our mistakes in order to make improvement. If I repeated the same mistakes, I tried to find out reasons why I repeated them.*

Data extract: Interview C&G

C: *... I have never paid attention to some errors pointed out by the teacher in the classroom ...*

Data extract: Learning Journal C

As to pronunciation help, she indicated that the sound files provided on the bulletin board and classroom pronunciation practices led by me were more advantageous to her learning.

209. C: *..., I'd like that you lead our pronunciation practices. I usually listened very carefully to your sounds when we did the practices in the class.*

...

215. C: *For me, your leading pronunciation practices were helpful. ...*

Data extract: Interview C&G

Her learning motivation was also inspired by the presentation of some French websites in the classroom.

349. C: *You used to present us one interactive website. I like it. The one about learning colours. I visited that website and had fun from it.*

Data extract: Interview C&G

However, in addition to the technology problems, some other inconveniences (e.g. time arrangement, environment concern) occurred during her practice processes.

C: We plan to do the task today. But my partner has to work on her report, so we postpone our practice to tomorrow.

Data extract: Learning Journal C

433. C: My roommates usually are quiet. They might consider I bothered them. They were quiet when I spoke online.

Data extract: Interview C&G

C: After knowing how to save and transfer files, the light in the dormitory is about to be turned off. We therefore decide to continue our work tomorrow.

Data extract: Learning Journal C

In spite of these problems, she still stated a preference for her learning mode in this study.

70. Interviewer: ... In our experiment, there are three learning modes. Which learning mode do you prefer?

71. C: I prefer using the webcam.

Data extract: Interview C&G

Although she considered the tasks and the final test difficult,

89. Interviewer: How do you consider tasks?

90. C/G: Difficult.

Data extract: Interview C&G

C: I panic after hearing the teacher's announcement about the spoken final test. Very creative and practical. But I doubt about my ability. I wonder if I can do it well. I sometimes could not speak fluently while looking at the textbook, how can I interact with others spontaneously? (...), it might take me a long time to prepare this test.

Data extract: Learning Journal C

she got the sense of accomplishment from doing the synchronous CMC tasks. She benefited from the cycle of practices in this study, which made her familiar with the task processes and helped her to gain the courage to speak the target language.

364. C: *For me, after each task, I felt improved.*

Data extract: Interview C&G

C: *We start our third spoken task. Since we have already done the tasks twice, I feel more familiar with the process this time.*

Data extract: Learning Journal C

C: *After these spoken practices, I am more courageous to speak. It seems that I speak to the person face-o-face through the microphone and the webcam (in spite of the transfer delay problem). It might be very interesting to talk with French native speakers online.*

Data extract: Learning Journal C

She also enjoyed doing the tasks with Participant D, whom she had not known at the beginning of the study. She considered doing tasks with someone unfamiliar could allow her to make a new friend and provide her with more learning opportunities.

326. Interviewer: *So do you prefer pairing with someone familiar or unfamiliar? Or there are no differences for you?*

327. G: *I think separation is better.*

328. C: *Yes.*

329. Interviewer: *What does your separation refer to?*

330. C: *To know new friends ...*

...

334. C: *Pairing with unfamiliar partners can allow you learn more. ...*

...

336. C: *At the beginning, I did not like this idea. But I found I learnt more at a later time.*

Data extract: Interview C&G

Participant D was also of the opinion that practising with someone unfamiliar is better for pair work. In this study, the participants were supposed to meet their partner for the first time in the scenario of the first task. Therefore for her, the fact of unfamiliarity with her partner increased task authenticity, in spite of her initial worry and embarrassment.

D: I'm not so familiar with the new partner. (🙈;embarrassing) I don't know whether we can work together very well.

D: I was still a little embarrassed when we recorded the dialog initially.

Data extract: Learning Journal D

350. D: To start the tasks with someone you are not familiar with and have students get familiar with their partner gradually.

...

356. D: If you are too familiar with your partner, there's a lack of authenticity. ... It's just like doing assignments. If you do the tasks with someone you are not familiar with, you will feel different.

Data extract: Interview D&H

One other feeling she had during the task processes was anxiety, since she had to speak the target language and record her spoken practices. It's difficult to tell whether her anxiety was caused by her unfamiliarity with her partner or by doing the tasks.

D: Today, I informed her (her partner) that we need to begin our second assignment which is about sound recording. This made me more nervous and anxious. I'm shy to speak in French, especially when I need to record it.

Data extract: Learning Journal D

Like Participant C, she encountered some discouraging problems during the task processes. Initially, the participants in Group 1 and 2 were required to be familiar with the recording program 'Audacity'. Although all participants in these two groups had problems with the program at first, she was the only person who could not use it properly till the end of the study. The size of the sound files I received from her was twice that of the others' files.

D: We started to do our homework!!! But...🤔 the thing is not smooth going after all because we can't use the program of Audacity very well. 🤖 We had already tried several times; however, we just can't figure out how to operate it. Oh~ my goodness!!!! 🤖 Our progress was delayed. I want to finish it tonight. Alright~ we decided to do it tomorrow.



Data extract: Learning Journal D

158. Interviewer: (to D) Did you re-install the Audacity program?

159. D: No.

160. Interviewer: That's why your files looked different from others.

Data extract: Interview D&H

Moreover, she experienced the problem of image transfer delay while doing the tasks with the webcam as her partner did.

228. D: ... But if we typed and used the webcam at the same time, sometimes there were lags occurring.

Data extract: Interview D&H

Also while doing the tasks, she had difficulties in producing what she had learnt from the course, although she said she comprehended the input. She was not able to apply her learning to the tasks.

D: 🙄 I feel it's more difficult than before. It doesn't mean that I cannot understand what the teacher taught us. I just feel confused 🤔 about how to apply all the things to our homework. For instance, we had some difficulties during our conversation about the homework which we need to invite a friend to go on a trip together and check the schedule of each other. 🤔 Sometimes we didn't know how to ask in a proper way. There're really a lot of things that we need to learn

Data extract: Learning Journal D

183. D: I don't know how to start asking questions. For me, asking questions is difficult.

Data extract: Interview D&H

However, she thought that my written feedback via email and the explicit feedback with explanations for written records presented in the classroom were helpful to the improvement of her writing skill. As to pronunciation, she considered the pronunciation practices done in the classroom and – especially – the sound files provided on the classroom bulletin board were useful to her improvement. She did not benefit from other support (e.g. pronunciation feedback given by me, paper dictionaries and peer help).

277. Interviewer: Did you think your partner could help you pronounce better?

278. D: No.

...

294. D: *I could memorize words by myself, but not pronounce ...*

295. Interviewer: *So you think pronunciation feedback I gave you was not enough?*

296. D/H: *Mm.*

297. Interviewer: *What kind of feedback did you expect in regards to pronunciation?*

298. D: *Sound files ...*

...

300. Interviewer: *Like the sound files I put on our classroom bulletin board?*

301. D: *Right.*

...

303. Interviewer: *Why did you need sound files?*

304. D: *Because looking at the phonic alphabets did not allow us to pronounce properly ...*

305. Interviewer: *Have you thought to ask other classmates?*

306. D/H: *Mm.*

307. D: *But they were not sure ...*

...

315. Interviewer: *How about the corrections I gave in the classroom? Did you think they were helpful?*

316. D/H: *Yes.*


317. Interviewer: *Which part? Written or spoken?*

318. H: *The spoken ones.*

319. Interviewer: *Mm.*

320. D: *The written ones as well. My sentences became more natural ... as to the pronunciation ones, yes, because we repeated after you. That also allowed us to compare our sounds with others'.*

Data extract: Interview D&H

D: Before I recorded the homework#3, I listened to the sound recording  carefully which recorded by teacher. It helps me a lot. I listened to it for more than five times in order to learn how to pronounce every French word well and fluently.

Data extract: Learning Journal D

Despite the above problems, she had fun while doing the spoken tasks. She pretended to be a French person by playing the roles assigned in the tasks.

D: While we recorded it for the first time, we thought it was not good enough and also unnatural; therefore, we tried to speak in French in a tone of emotion. This made me feel so interesting and funny. I do love the final one which is more natural and it seems that we're really people from France. 🇫🇷 🍷 Ha-ha~ I just imagine... 🤖

Data extract: Learning Journal D

In addition to this role-playing fun, she used a lot of emoticons in her written communication, as did her partner. For her, they could better represent her feelings to her partner than use of the webcam. There were a lot of emoticons in the learning journal she submitted to me.

250. Interviewer: Did you use emoticons of MSN?

251. D/H: Yes.

252. Interviewer: Did you use them often?

253. H: Mm. (laughs)

254. D: Very often. (laughs) ... a few sentences came with a lot of emoticons (laughs)

255. H: Mm. (laughs)... I sent her (Participant G) a crying face emoticon when I felt the task was too difficult and I felt like crying.

256. Interviewer: Did you want to use the webcam at this moment?

357. D: You mean to replace the emoticons with our real face?

258. Interviewer: Yes.

259. H: No.

260. D: No.

261. H: Emoticons were enough.

262. D: Mm.

Data extract: Interview D&H

Contrary to Participant D's opinion, Participant C considered the webcam could better reveal her feelings to her partner during the text communication. However, she thought emoticons could attract her partner's attention and engage her interest in communication.

245. Interviewer: Why did you use the emoticons?

246. C: To make my partner feel more interesting and arouse her interests.

247. G: (laughs)

248. C: *We sent strange emoticons to each other ... I thought that could make my partner pay more attention ... in different situations, we sent different emoticons to show our feelings.*

249. Interviewer: *In this case, did you still feel the need to use the emoticon functions when you used the webcam?*

250. C: *I felt less needed when I used the webcam.*

251. Interviewer: *You just wanted to let your partner know how you really felt.*

252. C: *Yes. It's a kind of assistance...*

Data extract: Interview C&G

To sum up, the intervention program did not seem to have positive impacts on the oral skills development of Participants C and D. Although they benefited from some of the support I provided for their learning and were able to find strategies to help them overcome the difficulties they had during the study, only some of their strategies assisted them to learn effectively. In addition, their unfamiliarity before the study generated their need to make more effort to communicate with each other in order to achieve task completion; and made them pay more attention to their performance, in spite of their satisfaction with each other. Although both of them said that their learning mode was their favourite in this study, some difficulties they encountered during task practices seemed to discourage them and therefore affected negatively their learning and their oral performance.

5.1.3 Participants E & F

Participants E and F were sharing the same room in the university dormitory. To participate in this study, one of them had to conduct synchronous CMC tasks in her friend's room by using her own laptop.

Both of them had had MSN chat experience with the use of webcam and microphone before the study. Participant E replaced telephone with MSN chat via microphone to save money. Participant F used microphone to chat with her old classmates, some of whom were living overseas.

They considered that MSN pre-written tasks were beneficial to their later oral production in spoken tasks. Doing the MSN pre-tasks allowed them to define

conversational situations and formulate sentences they were going to say in the spoken activities.

192. Interviewer: *Do you think the written tasks are helpful to the spoken tasks?*

193. E/F: *Yes.*

194. Interviewer: *Yes ...*

195. F: *The recording process became quick ...*

196. E: *We knew what we would talk ...*

197. F: *Right. It took us a long time to do the written tasks ...*

198. E: *In the written tasks, we were less familiar with the learning content, it took us time thinking ...*

199. F: *... to create the situation*

200. E: *But after the written tasks, I knew what I would say, it saved time in the spoken tasks.*

201. F: *Mm.*

Data extract: Interview E&F

311. F: *I think this mode is good, ... writing before speaking ..., I think it's good.*

...

328. F: *For me, writing before speaking is a good learning method.*

Data extract: Interview E&F

For Participant F, the MSN pre-tasks also provided her with opportunities to reflect on the use of the target language.

F: But for me, this practice allows me to consider how to use words and sentences.

Data extract: Learning Journal F

Before doing the MSN written tasks, they discussed with each other in Chinese to find the vocabulary and sentences they needed in those situations.

215. F: *We thought first what we were going to ask and then found sentences and words we needed ...*

216. Interviewer: *So you used the Chinese to discuss first and then did the translation in French, right?*

217. E: *We thought first what we would speak, found sentences we needed and then wrote down our conversations ...*

218. *F: Right.*

Data extract: Interview E&F

For a spoken task, they usually had to practise two or three times to find out how to pronounce sounds correctly before task completion. The spoken tasks were more like pronunciation practices in their case.

207. *Interviewer: How many times did you usually practise before completing one task?*

208. *F: might be 2~3 times ...*

209. *E: Mm.*

210. *F: ... to complete one task.*

211. *Interviewer: For which tasks? Written or spoken?*

212. *F: ... In the spoken tasks, sometimes we could not pronounce words we understood. We knew words, but we were not able to pronounce them. In this case, we might need to pause and think how to pronounce ...*

Data extract: Interview E&F

They often encountered Internet disconnection problems during the task completion processes.

355. *E: It happened to us that the Internet disconnected ...*

356. *F: Yes.*

357. *E: We almost finished the task, and the power...*

358. *F: ... was gone. What we had done disappeared. ... (laughs) ... and we restarted again. ...*

Data extract: Interview E&F

Moreover, they had difficulties in applying their input to the tasks. Since Participant E missed some classes during the semester, she was sometimes unable to catch up with the others and the rhythm of the course. Her occasional absences increased their difficulties in doing the tasks, which made both of them feel frustrated.

177. *E: And when you taught that part in the classroom, I didn't present ...*

178. *Interviewer: So you could not catch up with your classmates.*

179. *E: Right.*

...

181. E: *I didn't understand what others were talking about... I spent a lot of time catching up with the course ...*

Data extract: Interview E&F

E: *There are many things I cannot remember well and don't know how to apply them.*

E: *This task is so difficult. I feel very frustrated to do it.*

Data extract: Learning Journal E

F: *This task is really difficult. My partner and I do it painfully. There are many words and sentences we are not familiar with. It takes us a lot of time to think of conversation situations.*

Data extract: Learning Journal F

187. F: *I didn't know how to ask questions ... especially how to book tickets ...*

188. Interviewer: *What were your problems? You did not know how to start the conversation?*

189. E: *We wanted to ask some questions, but couldn't ...*

Data extract: Interview E&F

For Participant F, having to type specific French symbols also complicated their communication processes.

212. F: *In the written tasks, we spent time copying and pasting specific symbols.*

Data extract: Interview E&F

F: *I need to copy some specific symbols from the Word program, which complicated the communication.*

Data extract: Learning Journal F

In addition to language application problems, she seemed to have difficulties in simulating task situations. Although related cultural information had been introduced to them during the classes, she still had cultural gaps to bridge in order to put herself into the context of the third task.

190. F: *Right. We didn't know how to speak ... also the contexts are different ... in Taiwan, buying a ticket is very simple ... but in France, it seems complicated ...I asked one of my*

friends through the phone, she told me the process is complicated ... so if I travel in France, I might encounter more problems than I imagine now.

Data extract: Interview E&F

She also had the perception that her learning was not sufficient for her to create her ideal conversation situations.

F: During the practices, we need to use some sentences we have not learnt yet. If we avoid using them, there might be problems to create appropriate conversation situations.

F: The unit about booking tickets is interesting. But I find I don't learn enough when I need to use some vocabulary, especially some spoken expressions.

Data extract: Learning Journal F

However, this synchronous learning French experience appeared special and interesting to them. They stated that this learning experience provided opportunities for them to speak the target language outside the classroom and apply their learning in task situations.

82. *F: For me, it's interesting.*

83. *E: We played with the programs when we had the time.*

...

292. *F: For me, it's a special experience.*

293. *E: Mm.*

294. *F: We have never learnt English in this way.*

295. *Interviewer: Mm.*

296. *F: So it's a special experience for me. ... I learnt a lot from this experience.*

297. *Interviewer: Mm.*

298. *F: We finally knew the functions of the specific symbols ...*

299. *E: ... and where to find them.*

300. *F: Right. (laughs) ...*

301. *E: It's the first time we could have practice occasions after the classroom.*

302. *Interviewer: Mm.*

303. *E: Before this, after the classes, we didn't have occasions to practise the learning language...*

304. *F: We might just memorize vocabulary ...*

305. *E: ... memorize vocabulary ...*

306. *F: we didn't have occasions to practise speaking.*

Data extract: Interview E&F

E: This is the first time I chat with someone in French online. It's a fresh experience.

Data extract: Learning Journal E

On the other hand, this novel experience also caused nervousness and stress to them, especially to Participant E.

205. E: I felt more nervous while doing the written tasks. ...

206. F: Right.

Data extract: Interview E&F

E: This is the first time I have chatted with someone in French online. It's a fresh experience. But I feel very nervous about finding specific symbols or taking turns continuing conversations.

E: I feel very nervous about doing the assignment. It's stressful.

Data extract: Learning Journal E

With regard to feedback, both of them were satisfied with the written feedback they received from me, but not pronunciation feedback. In their written feedback, I sometimes gave comments on personal competence or progress in addition to error corrections. They were eager to receive such 'informational feedback' (Brophy & Good, 1986, cited in Dörnyei, 2001b: 133). Dörnyei (2001b) suggested that such feedback can motivate language learners (p.140). Moreover, their occasional small personal words of encouragement are sufficient to increase learners' self-confidence.

221. Interviewer: Ok. ... Do you think feedback given by me was helpful?

222. E/F: Yes.

223. F: I desired to read your feedback. (laughs)

224. E: I'd like to see what feedback you gave us ...

225. F: your comments ...

226. E: Right.

227. F: I checked my email often after sending you the files ...(laughs)... to see what comments you gave.

228. Interviewer: How did the feedback help you?

229. F: Your corrections ... I could find my problems ... your encouragement ...

230. E: *Mm.*

...

231. Interviewer: *What other feedback do you hope to get?*

232. E: *I think the feedback we get now is good enough.*

233. Interviewer: *It's enough?*

234. E: *Mm.*

Data extract: Interview E&F

For them, the pronunciation feedback they received from me was not enough. Simply having their pronunciation errors pointed out did not allow them to pronounce sounds correctly by themselves.

236. F: *... As to the written feedback, I think that's enough. But as to the spoken feedback, we did not know with whom we could ask our problems*

Data extract: Interview E&F

E: I am not sure how to pronounce some words.

Data extract: Learning Journal E

Although Participant F stated that recording her own spoken practices allowed her to compare her sounds with other sound input and improve her pronunciation errors,

F: What I find the most interesting is I could record my practices and listened to them later. After listening, I usually could find my pronunciation problems and know where I could improve.

Data extract: Learning Journal F

both Participant E and F found it difficult to identify pronunciation differences between their erroneous sounds and model sounds. They also said that they were sometimes unable to pronounce sounds correctly, even when they knew they pronounced them wrongly. As some French sounds are not found in Chinese, they tended to pronounce those French sounds in an English way.

236. F: *... As to the written feedback, I think that's enough. But as to the spoken feedback, we did not know with whom we could ask our problems ... there were some sounds, we could tell their differences ... and for you, they were ...*

237. E: *different ...*
238. F: *... very different.*
- ...
241. F: *For me, there were no big differences between our original pronunciation and the pronunciation you provided.*
242. Interviewer: *very interesting ...*
243. F: *(laughs)*
244. Interviewer: *I thought you knew the differences ...*
245. E: *I heard one sound, but pronounced another sound ...*
246. F: *Right. (laughs)*
247. E: *very strange*
248. F: *I knew our pronunciation was wrong... after the recording, I knew it was wrong, but I still pronounced the wrong sound.*
249. E: *still wrong ...*
250. F: *Right. (laughs) ... I could not correct my wrong sounds ...*
251. Interviewer: *... How about after the classroom pronunciation repetition? ... Could you tell the differences if we did the pronunciation practices in the classroom?*
252. F: *Yes. I could tell the differences after hearing your sounds.*
253. Interviewer: *You could tell the pronunciation differences in the classroom ...*
254. E: *But I pronounced in a different way ...*
255. F: *We pronounced wrongly ...*
256. E: *Right.*
257. Interviewer: *... Why did this problem occur? Interesting ...*
258. F: *I don't know. Maybe the way we pronounced was wrong.*
259. E: *When I saw some words, I intended to pronounce them in English sounds ...*
260. F: *Right. ... Some sounds don't exist in Chinese, it's difficult to pronounce them ...*
- Data extract: Interview E&F*

After listening to their sound files, I found that Participant E sometimes shifted her correct sounds towards Participant F's incorrect pronunciation.

T: Participant E's correct pronunciation was affected by Participant F's wrong pronunciation. .

Data extract: Teacher's journal

E: Quelles langues vous parlez / parlez/?
(What languages do you speak?)

F: Je parle /pel/ chinois, anglais, et taiwanaise. Et vous?

(I speak Chinese, English and Taiwanese. How about you?)

E: Je parle /pel/ chinois, anglais, et taiwanais.

(I speak Chinese, English and Taiwanese.)

Data extract: The first oral practice of Participant E and F

F: Tu te réveilles à quelle heure vendredi matin /matin/ ?

(What time do you wake up Friday mornings?)

E: Je me réveille à 7 heures vendredi matin /matin/.

(I wake up at seven Friday mornings.)

F: Tu te lèves à quelle heure samedi matin /matin/ ?

(What time do you get up Saturday mornings?)

F: Je me lève à 10 heures samedi matin /matin/.

(I get up at ten Saturday mornings.)

F: Tu fais ta toilette à quelle heure?

(What time do you usually have a wash?)

E: Je me lave à 5 heures dans l'après-midi.

(I usually have a wash at 5:00pm.)

F: Tu travailles à quelle heure samedi matin /matin/?

(What time do you start working Saturday mornings?)

F: Je travaille à 10 heures samedi matin /matin/.

(I start working at ten Saturday mornings.)

Data extract: The second oral practice of Participant E and F.

In fact, Participant F made many pronunciation errors in their second oral practice. I asked them by email to stay after the next face-to-face session in order to help their pronunciation, but they did not do as I had asked. After I told all the learners that they could download some model sound files from the bulletin board to listen after the classes, Participant E came to ask me to help her join the members of our class bulletin board, which I had asked them to do at the beginning of the course.

T: I uploaded some sound files on our classroom forum to help students' pronunciation. I hope the sound files are helpful for them to learn pronunciation.

Data extract: Teacher's journal

T: E told me she was not able to access our class bulletin board. I wish she could mention this to me earlier. They did not do well their pair work this time.

Data extract: Teacher's journal

However, I found that their pronunciation in the third oral practices had improved, suggesting that the sound files had been beneficial to their pronunciation learning, though neither Participant E nor F said so during the interview. They said doing pronunciation practices in the classroom would be more helpful for them to improve their pronunciation.

261. Interviewer: ..., do you think it's more helpful if we do pronunciation practices in the classroom?

262. E: Yes.

263. F: I will be more familiar with those sounds ...

Data extract: Interview E&F

They also benefited from the cycle of practices, which helped them become familiar with the task processes and more courageous to speak the target language.

E: After our last oral practice, I am less afraid to speak French.

Data extract: Learning Journal E

F: After the last oral practice, our recording went quite quickly this time, which saved a lot of time.

Data extract: Learning Journal F

F: This time, our practice (the third oral task) went more smoothly than the last practice. This made me excited.

Data extract: Learning Journal F

When asked about their preferred learning mode, both stated that they preferred being able to use webcam in their synchronous CMC communication.

139. Interviewer: ... so if you can choose, which learning mode will you prefer?

140. F: With the use of webcam.

141. E: Using webcam.

Data extract: Interview E&F

For them, there were advantages in doing the tasks face-to-face. The first was that they would not encounter the technology problems they had had in the synchronous CMC environment. Secondly, they considered problem-solving in a face-to-face environment is more efficient, because the availability of some nonverbal information (e.g. eye contact) allows them to know better their partner's situation and to speed up the task completion processes.

124. F: It's quicker to finish one task in an f2f situation. ... and if you have problems, you can have them solved immediately. ... Through the Internet, if we have problems, we need to stop the Audacity programs first in order to discuss with each other ...

125. E: Right.

126. F: They are slightly different.

127. Interviewer: What are those differences? In an f2f situation, if you want to discuss with your partner, you still have to stop recording, right?

128. F: It's quicker...

129. E: It's direct

130. F: In an f2f situation, if my partner cannot pronounce one word, I can give her hints immediately ... through the Internet, I have to stop recording and discuss with her how to pronounce the word, I cannot give her hints through eye contacts.

...

352. F: In the same room, we could discuss many things directly. We reached a compromise easily. But if we are in a different room,...

353. E: it takes time ...

354. F: ... to discuss, because we don't know each other's situation.

Data extract: Interview E&F

Also, they can get privacy and do not need to worry that their practices bother their roommates.

108. E/F: There is no privacy when we talk.

109. E: We are living in the dormitory. There are six students in one room.

110. F: We might disturb others as well.

111. E: Right.

...

146. E: ... When we talked through the Internet, I encountered some problems that did not exist in an f2f situation.

147. F: *And if we do the tasks in an f2f situation, we find one quiet place ... through the Internet, we might hear roommates' chatting ... there are more factors involved ...*

Data extract: Interview E&F

In spite of the above advantages, they preferred synchronous CMC learning with the use of webcam. For them, the face-to-face learning mode does not allow them to experience real conversation situations.

144. E: *You cannot know what the real conversation situations are ...*

145. F: *Right.*

146. E: *... When we talked through the Internet, I encountered some problems that did not exist in an f2f situation.*

147. F: *And if we do the tasks in an f2f situation, we find one quiet place ... through the Internet, we might hear roommates' chatting ... there are more factors involved ...*

148. Interviewer: *So for you, the f2f learning mode is ideal but not real ...*

149. F: *Right. Unreal.*

150. Interviewer: *It's like a learning ...*

151. E: *Mm. It's unlikely you talk with others and people around you are quiet.*

152. F: *... are quiet.*

...

358. F: *... staying in different rooms made me feel more real. We might encounter more long distance situations.*

359. E: *For me, an f2f situation is too ideal.*

Data extract: Interview E&F

Participant E stated that face-to-face communication does not confer any distance advantage; she could not communicate with people at a distance face-to-face.

143. F: *The f2f learning mode doesn't allow me to chat with my friends far away ...*

Data extract: Interview E&F

She also considered talking face-to-face makes her feel more nervous than talking in a synchronous CMC environment with webcam. Participant E shared her view.

153. Interviewer: *Ok. ... Do you think you will be nervous if you have to talk though webcam with a foreigner?*

154. F: *I think talking f2f will make me more nervous ...*

155. E: Right.

156. Interviewer: Talking f2f makes you feel more nervous ...

157. F: Right. Through the Internet, you can avoid a lot of things that you cannot avoid in an f2f situation ...

158. E: However, the Internet world is simulating ...I might feel embarrassed if the conversation is held in an f2f situation ...

Data extract: Interview E&F

For them, the synchronous CMC communication through the microphone allows them to know their interlocutor's feeling during their interaction.

116. Interviewer: ... If there is nobody except you in the room, which learning type do you prefer?

117. E/F: Talking with the microphone.

118. E: Through typing, you cannot feel ...

119. F: ... your partner's emotions.

Data extract: Interview E&F

Nevertheless, they still perceive their synchronous CMC talk via the microphone was not real, due to the lack of images. They regarded the synchronous CMC tasks as formal assignments and hesitated to use emoticons in their MSN written communication.

159. Interviewer: Mm ... you still think it's better to talk with someone through the webcam even you are not familiar with him/her?

160. E/F: Mm.

161. Interviewer: How about with the microphone only?

162. F: You feel unreal ...

163. E: You don't know with whom you are talking

164. F: Right. ... it might be more frightening ...

Data extract: Interview E&F

268. Interviewer: Do you use the emoticons during the written practices?

269. F: Yes.

270. E: Do you mean the moment when we chatted with friends or when we did the tasks?

271. Interviewer: Do you use them when you chatted with friends?

272. F: A lot. But since we did the assignments, we tried to keep the records clean ...

273. E: *It's more formal.*

274. F: *... not put something strange on them (the records).*

Data extract: Interview E&F

In terms of task partners, both of them preferred to work with someone they already knew because they considered familiarity might make it easier to arrange meeting times.

167. Interviewer: *Do you think it's better to conduct the tasks with someone familiar?*

168. F: *Yes. It's might be better ... It's easier to arrange the meeting time ... With someone unfamiliar, ... it might be more difficult to arrange the time ...*

169. Interviewer: *Ok. So for you, that will complicate your learning processes ...*

170. E: *Mm. ...*

Data extract: Interview E&F

As to the tasks, they recognised cohesion among the tasks, which facilitated their learning and the creation of the task situations.

333. F: *I think the design is good because tasks were interconnected. ... New content were added gradually ...*

334. Interviewer: *So you think it's better that tasks are interconnected?*

335. E/F: *Right.*

336. Interviewer: *It's more helpful to your learning ...*

337. F: *Right.*

338. E: *And it's easier to develop the conversation in the following tasks ...*

339. F: *Some content we have been already familiar with, some content are new ...*

Data extract: Interview E&F

But too much learning content at a time made them feel overwhelmed, since they still had a lot of work to do for their other courses. They sometimes did their tasks without absorbing the learning from the course.

9. F: *For me, it's quite intensive. ... sometimes, I was not able to finish revising before doing the tasks.*

11. E: *... a lot of learning content ...*

12. Interviewer: *... a lot of ...*

13. E: *Even more than our major courses ...*

14. F: Right. (laughs)

Data extract: Interview E&F

This might explain why they did not perform well in some tasks.

T: E told me she was not able to access our class bulletin board. I wish she could mention this to me earlier. They did not do well their pair work this time.

Data extract: Teacher's journal

When asked them for suggestions for the course, they said that I could make clearly my expectations for each task in advance, in order that they could produce what I really expected them to produce.

314. F: I think things could be clearer ... your expectations ...

315. Interviewer: Uh huh.

316. F: ... what points you want us to cover in our records.

317. Interviewer: in each task?

318. F: Yes. The goals you want us to achieve in each task. ... Sometimes, we didn't know what we needed to cover, what we didn't need to cover ...

319. E: We didn't practise what you wanted us to practise, but practised those you didn't want ...

320. F: Right. (laughs)

321. E: We didn't practise what you wanted us to practise, but said something we were familiar with ...

322. F: We practised those we were familiar with, but not those we were not familiar with ...

323. E: ... when we felt stuck with those unfamiliar content ...

324. F: ... we skipped them.

Data extract: Interview E&F

To summarise, the oral proficiency development of Participants E and F did not appear to be enhanced by the intervention program. Although some of my task design and support benefited their learning, Participant E's occasional absences caused her learning difficulties that further influenced Participant F's cooperation with her. They were also found to have limited strategies to assist them in dealing with those difficulties generated during task practices and did not take the initiative in overcoming some of their learning problems. However, discovering the

advantages of their learning mode provided them with a novel learning experience, in spite of their preference for the inclusion of webcam in their communication.

5.1.4 Participants G & H

Before the study, Participants G and H had become used to chatting through MSN with their friends or families by text exchanges and microphone.

They considered the MSN written tasks were beneficial for their production in the oral tasks. For them, the written tasks allowed them to formulate their sentence structures, which facilitated oral production later. Participant G also stated that the MSN written tasks helped her focus attention on language features.

108. G: A lot of help. Without the written tasks, I might know how to speak, but not how to write.

...

110. G: And while typing, I know how to write words and can speak them later...

...

287. G: For me, writing before speaking is good....

Data extract: Interview C&G

111. C: Through typing, I could formulate my thoughts that facilitated speaking.

112. G: Right.

Data extract: Interview C&G

194. Interviewer: Did you think the written tasks were helpful to the spoken tasks?

195. D: For me, yes.

196. H: Yes.

197. D: I could know what I would speak later.

198. H: Right.

Data extract: Interview D&H

Before meeting online for the written tasks, both of them revised course content individually.

216. H: With G, We did individual revising before meeting ...

Data extract: Interview D&H

Unlike other pairs, they skipped the pre-discussion step and did the written tasks directly after their content revising. They discussed the task situations while doing the tasks. Since Participant G prepared the task situations first before meeting online, she was able to lead discussions during the task processes and have Participant H follow her plan to produce the conversations she had in mind.

161. G: I usually looked for some words before my online meeting. I thought of the conversation situations first. Sometimes my partner did not do preparation before our meeting, I told her how we could develop conversations. Doing so allowed me to speak sentences I have had in mind.

162. Interviewer: Mm.

163. G: If we both did not know something, we discussed together.

Data extract: Interview C&G

214. H: We usually looked up words/sentences in the textbook we needed while doing practices. The practice time lasted about one hour or maybe longer.

215. Interviewer: And before the online meetings ...

216. H: With G, We did individual revising before meeting ...

217. Interviewer: Mm.

218. H: And then we discussed while doing the practices.

Data extract: Interview D&H

During the task completion processes, they employed Chinese to solve problems and formulate sentences in order to move the tasks along.

166. Interviewer: Were there some Chinese appearing in your original written records?

167. G: Of course. (laughs)

168. Interviewer: Ok.

169. G: When we were not able to continue our conversation, we spoke Chinese.

Data extract: Interview C&G

245. H: We discussed in Chinese to think of how to speak sentences.

Data extract: Interview D&H

G: We used Chinese to help formulate our sentences and develop conversations.

Data extract: Learning Journal G

After completing each written task, they revised sentences and picked the best version for submission to me.

170. Interviewer: (to G) in this method, could you complete the tasks at one meeting?

171. G: No, we needed to modify the same sentence many times, then we chose the most correct one... by using the copying/pasting function

172. Interviewer: you copied the most correct sentence to the file ...

173. G: Yes.

174. Interviewer: So the files I received were edited.

175. G: Right.

Data extract: Interview C&G

For the spoken tasks, they usually had to practise several times before recording their practices. They also made further recording until they got a best version for submission.

180. G: For the spoken tasks, we practised pronunciation twice before recording. Then we started recording. If we were not satisfied with our recording, we redid it until we were satisfied.

Data extract: Interview C&G

G: I felt nervous when we did recording. I made many mistakes. So we repeated recording many times.

Data extract: Learning Journal G

267. Interviewer: Ok. ... How about the spoken tasks? How many times did you practise before starting the tasks?

268. D: 4 ~ 5 times. We usually practise 4 ~ 5 times before recordings. And if the recordings did not sound well, we repeated recording again and again.

269. H: So did I.

Data extract: Interview D&H

They employed dictionaries to help them complete the tasks. In the written tasks, they used both paper and online dictionaries in their practice processes. The online

dictionary Participant G used was French-English version, which provided her with opportunities to learn both languages simultaneously.

428. G: *I relied a lot on the online French dictionary. ...*

Data extract: Interview C&G

G: *This time I use online French-English dictionary. I learn French with assistance of my English knowledge, which allows me to get Chinese out of my head. I can learn French and English at the same time. It's a very fresh experience.*

Data extract: Learning Journal G

285. H: *If both of us did not know something, we looked up in the dictionary.*

Data extract: Interview D&H

In the spoken tasks, they relied on the MSN written records to facilitate communication. For Participant G, speaking according to the MSN written records allowed her interlocutor to follow up her conversations. She internalised the sentences after several practices. Participant H did not try to speak spontaneously while doing the oral practices.

125. G: *I spoke according to the written records because I was afraid that my partner did not know what I said. The written records were a kind of assistance.*

126. Interviewer: *Mm. ... Did you speak completely according to the written records?*

127. G: *In fact, after several practices, I could speak spontaneously without looking at the written records.*

128. Interviewer: *I see.*

129. G: *I think looking at written records was helpful.*

130. Interviewer: *So after several practices, you could memorize those sentences?*

131. G: *Not all sentences ...*

132. C: *You know the next sentences you were going to say*

133. G: *... the next sentences I could reply.*

Data extract: Interview C&G

209. H: *I usually speak according to my written records. ... I only corrected the parts I made mistakes.*

Data extract: Interview D&H

When encountering pronunciation problems in the spoken practices, they tried to help each other resolve the problems first, before turning to dictionaries.

G: We ask help from each other if we don't know how to pronounce some words.

Data extract: Learning Journal G

277. Interviewer: Did you think your partner could help you pronounce better?

...

279. H: What did you mean "help" here?

280. D: ...listen to her pronunciation and then ...

281. Interviewer: Right. For example, you could not pronounce one word, you asked for help from her.

282. H: Oh. Yes.

283. Interviewer: When you did not know something, did you ask your partner?

284. D/H: Yes.

285. H: If both of us did not know something, we looked up in the dictionary.

Data extract: Interview D&H

In Participant G's view, doing the MSN written tasks offered her opportunities to learn new sentence models, which I had provided in the classroom/on the class bulletin board to help students structure their conversations coherently.

G: Through doing tasks, I learn many new sentences.

Data extract: Learning Journal G

In addition, she internalized learning input while producing output in the written tasks.

110. G: And while typing, I know how to write words and can speak them later...

...

379. G: For me, there were some sentences I used frequently. After typing them several times, I memorized them.

Data extract: Interview C&G

She experienced difficulties while doing the tasks. Firstly, she struggled with some technology problems during the task processes.

G: --- I encountered some problems with the technology tools during the process ---

G: After the recording I found that I had the difficulty saving the file and sent it out.

Data extract: Learning Journal G

Secondly, when doing the MSN written tasks, she felt her learning was not sufficient for her to express all her ideas.

G: There are many sentences I cannot express, ---. For example: Je me réveille à 7 heure. I want to say I wake up at 7:00am from Monday to Friday. But I don't know how to express 'from Monday to Friday'.

Data extract: Learning Journal G

In addition, she perceived that the tasks were getting harder as the course progressed. She found it difficult to apply new learning to the task situations.

89. *Interviewer: How do you consider tasks?*

90. *C/G: Difficult.*

...

92. *G: The difficulties increased ...*

93. *Interviewer: Right. Because you learn more and more ...do you feel very difficult?*

...

94. *G: Difficult*

Data extract: Interview C&G

G: The new task is difficult to both of us. It's even more difficult to do the task with new learning sentence patterns.

G: The tasks become harder and harder.

Data extract: Learning Journal G

Typing specific French symbols caused an additional problem for her interaction with H in the MSN written tasks.

392. *G: I am ok, except typing those specific symbols ...*

...

394. *G: Without those symbols, my typing is ok*

Data extract: Interview C&G

Moreover, she encountered some pronunciation difficulties while doing the spoken tasks. She could not find appropriate ways to assist her pronunciation learning.

G: I open my last MSN written records and find I cannot pronounce many words ... The online French dictionary I use does not provide phonic alphabets. H and I, we pronounce whatever we think right.

Data extract: Learning Journal G

Although she received sound input in the classroom, she was sometimes unable to produce sounds she heard from me or change her erroneous sounds.

216. Interviewer: Could you tell the differences between your pronunciation and mine?

217. G: Sometimes, I confused.

218. Interviewer: Mm.

219. G: I heard this sound, but pronounced one other sound...

...

226. Interviewer: ... did it happen to you that you did not know which sounds were correct after a certain time?

227. G: Yes.

Data extract: Interview C&G

Finally, the noises from her roommates could interfere with her performance in the spoken practices.

432. G: ... It's me who had to ask them (her roommates) to quieten down in order that I could do the French practices.

Data extract: Interview C&G

In terms of the tasks, she considered that doing the spoken tasks was not challenging enough, since she relied on the MSN written records to produce the oral conversations.

287. G: For me, writing before speaking is good. But the spoken tasks are boring because you have written records there, and when you do the spoken tasks, you read those written records. That makes your spoken content is similar to your written content...

Data extract: Interview C&G

Nevertheless, having to record the oral interactions made the spoken tasks challenging for her. She felt nervous but interested to record her spoken practices.

G: But I really think recording this spoken task is very interesting.

Data extract: Learning Journal G

G: When we do recordings, I feel very nervous and make a lot of mistakes.

Data extract: Learning Journal G

She was also of the opinion that the task of the final test was difficult because she was unable to simulate the task situation.

303. G: For me, the final spoken test is so different from the three tasks we have done.

...

310. G: But I have difficulties putting myself into the conversation context.

311. Interviewer: You feel difficult to imagine the context. You don't like role playing ...

312. G: Yes. (laughs)

Data extract: Interview C&G

She regretted relying on the written records while doing the spoken tasks, which stopped her speaking spontaneously.

293. C: If at the beginning, we did not look at the written records while doing the spoken tasks, the final oral test would become easier.

294. G: Mm.

...

316. G: ... I should not look at the written records all the time while speaking.

Data extract: Interview C&G

Overall, she got the sense of accomplishment from doing the tasks.

G: Our recording went smoothly this time after the last experience. Although we still encountered some technology problems, we did it successfully.

Data extract: Learning Journal G

359. G: For me, each task was like a mountain. Once I finished one task, I felt like

I have climbed over one mountain. When I looked back, I felt happy to get through each step.

Data extract: Interview C&G

As to task feedback, she thought that my written feedback was helpful to her noticing of errors.

191. G: Yes. Yes. Your feedback allowed me to know where my mistakes were. I usually compared your correction versions with my original ones. Doing so allowed me to find my problems.

192. Interviewer: (to G) Were you able to realize where your problems were? Or you needed help to realize them?

193. G: No. I could realize those problems myself.

...

195. G: ... When I looked at the textbook, I figured out the problems myself.

Data extract: Interview C&G

Nevertheless, she did not benefit from my pronunciation feedback. For her, only the provision of correct sounds was helpful to the correction of her erroneous sounds. She indicated that the sound models I uploaded on the class bulletin board were beneficial to her pronunciation learning.

204. Interviewer: Ok. ... how about the pronunciation feedback?

205. G: For me, knowing pronunciation mistakes through words could not really help. I needed to hear correct sounds.

206. Interviewer: So you feel you need more help.

207. G: Yes.

...

236. G: I thought it was good that we could download the sound models you uploaded on our class bulletin board. We could hear those models at home at any time.

237. Interviewer: So you hope the sound models are available to you.

238. G: Yes. They are really helpful.

Data extract: Interview C&G

When asked about her preferred learning mode, Participant G said she had a preference for synchronous CMC environment with the use of microphone and webcam, because texts, images and voice are all available.

55. G: For me, one of the advantages of using MSN is if you cannot talk to your partner, you can type. You can see words, you can also see the person and hear his/her voice.

56. Interviewer: So, you consider the availability of words is an advantage.

57. G: Yes.

...

78. G: I prefer the webcam too. It overcomes the distance problem. Sometimes, it's not easy to meet the person who lives far away from you. Using the webcam can not only overcome the distance problem but also make you feel real just like you talk in an f2f situation.

...

79. Interviewer: Ok. But how about talking through microphone?

80. G: I prefer using webcam. It can provide words.

81. Interviewer: Do you mean you can have images and words at the same time?

82. G: Yes.

...

268. G: You can also have students talk to each other through Skype. ... It's even better to use MSN because it provides words.

Data extract: Interview C&G

The advantage of text forms that G pointed out echoes the findings of Gallupe, Bastianutti and Cooper (1991): that it is faster and easier for learners to deal with visual information than aural information because they can retrieve visual information repeatedly, which works as an external memory aid (p.142).

She also used emoticons to tell her partner her situations, since images were not available in the MSN written tasks.

242. Interviewer: ... my next question is if you use emoticons while doing the online tasks?

243. C/G: Yes.

244. G: I just deleted them in the files I sent you.

...

253. G: to let your partner know your situations.

Data extract: Interview C&G

With regard to task partners, she seemed happy to be paired with H, whom she had not known before the study. She stated that being paired with someone unfamiliar

is advantageous to learning. For her, doing tasks with someone unfamiliar allowed her to make a new friend, learn more different sentence models, and improve pronunciation. She suggested that I could have one student paired with at least two different partners in my future foreign language classroom.

319. Interviewer: *Also I want to know in our experiment, you were paired with someone you were not familiar with, how do you feel about this pair arrangement?*

...

325. G: *I felt quite ok. ...*

326. Interviewer: *So do you prefer pairing with someone familiar or unfamiliar? Or there are no differences for you?*

327. G: *I think separation is better.*

...

329. Interviewer: *What does your separation refer to?*

...

331. G: *Making new friends ... if this mode is implemented in one new classroom, it's better to separate close friends.*

...

333. G: *At least, one student can be paired with two unfamiliar partners.*

334. C: *Pairing with unfamiliar partners can allow you learn more. ...*

335. G: *Right.*

...

337. G: *... conversation content could be changed. (laughs)*

338. Interviewer: *So after the practices, you thought it was ok for you to work with someone unfamiliar.*

339. G: *Right.*

...

341. G: *... With someone familiar, your conversation type would not change. With someone unfamiliar, you could be sure that your pronunciation was ok or not.*

Data extract: Interview C&G

She also expected that more sound files and website resources would be available on the class bulletin board.

237. Interviewer: *So you hope more sound models are available to you.*

238. G: *Yes. They are really helpful.*

Data extract: Interview C&G

346. *Interviewer: As to the bulletin board, you also hope to get more pronunciation assistance from there.*

...

348. *G: Yes. Sound files. Also you can provide us some website resources.*

Data extract: Interview C&G

Participant H was also of the opinion that the availability of the sound files on the class bulletin board was helpful to her pronunciation learning. Although she got pronunciation help from her task partner and other classmates, she considered such help was not effective.

297. *Interviewer: What kind of feedback did you expect in regards to pronunciation?*

298. *D: Sound files ...*

299. *H: Right.*

300. *Interviewer: Like the sound files I put on our classroom bulletin board?*

...

302. *H: Mm.*

303. *Interviewer: Why did you need sound files?*

304. *D: Because looking at the phonic alphabets did not allow us to pronounce properly ...*

305. *Interviewer: Have you thought to ask other classmates?*

306. *D/H: Mm.*

...

308. *H: Everybody was not sure of his/her pronunciation ...*

Data extract: Interview D&H

She stated that her French learning was quite strongly influenced by her English major.

323. *Interviewer: Ok. Some students could not find the differences. ... Then the pronunciation corrections were not helpful to them. ... Did you think your English learning help your French learning?*

324. *D/H: Yes.*

325. *D: But learning French affect English learning as well.*

326. *H: Right. ...They share some similarities....*

Data extract: Interview D&H

This English effect was mostly on her French pronunciation, especially in terms of intonation and stress. Participant G's pronunciation was impacted by English, too. In fact, both of them often pronounced French words in an English way. It is difficult to tell whether Participant H had any impact on Participant G's pronunciation, since peer help was their first choice when they encountered pronunciation problems. However, I had noticed that Participant G sometimes shifted her correct sounds towards Participant H's wrong pronunciation.

G: *Nous allons ensemble /ãsɛmbl/ à la bibliothèque à 10 heures? → /ãsãbl/ (O)*

Let's go together to the library at ten.

H: *Oui! Nous allons à la bibliothèque à 10 heures.*

Ok. We go together to the library at ten.

Data extract: The second oral practice of Participant G and H.

H: *Je voudrais aller à Nice. Vous venez avec moi?*

I want to go to Nice. Do you come with me?

G: *Oui. Pour quelle date /det/? → /dat/ (O)*

Yes, when?

H: *Je veux partir /parti/ le 15 Mai. → /partir/ (O)*

I want to leave on May 15th.

G: *Je suis désolée. Je dois travailler le 15 mai.*

I am sorry. I have to work on May 15th.

H: *Vous voulez partir /parti/ quand? → /partir/ (O)*

When do you want to go?

G: *Je suis libre samedi 17 et dimanche 18 mai .*

I am free on Saturday 17th and Sunday 18th.

G: *Je voudrais partir samedi après-midi parce que je me réveille tard /tard/. On part /part/ samedi, ça va? → /tar/ (O); /par/ (O)*

I want to leave Saturday afternoon because I wake up late. We leave on Saturday, is it ok?

H: *Oui, je suis libre samedi 17.*

Yes, I am free on Saturday 17th.

G: *Très bien. Nous allons à Nice en avion, en train?*

Very good. We go to Nice by plane or by train?

H: *Je préfère le train. Et en /ən/ première ou en /ən/ seconde classe /khlãs/?*

→ /ã/ (O); /ã/ (O); /klas/ (O)

I prefer the train. And the first class or the second class?

G: *Pourquoi en seconde classe /klas/?*

Why the second class?

H: *En /ən/ seconde classe /khlas/. C'est moins cher. → /ã/ (O); /klas/ (O)*

The second class is less expensive.

G: *D'accord, nous allons à Nice en seconde classe /khlas/.*

→ /klas/ (O); G shifted /klas/ towards /khlas/ here.

Ok, we go to Nice in the second class.

H: *Il y a des trains dans l'après-midi du samedi 17?*

Is there any train leaving in the afternoon of Saturday 17th ?

G: *Oui, nous avons un train Paris-Nice à 12 heures.*

Yes, we can take the train Paris-Nice at 12:00pm.

H: *D'accord /dakɔrd/. Et je voudrais rentrer /rãte/ dans l'après-midi du 12 Mai.*

→ /dakɔr/ (O); /rãtre/ (O)

Ok. And I want to come back in the afternoon of May 12th.

Data extract: The third oral practice of Participant G and H.

In addition to these pronunciation difficulties, Participant H was unable to record her oral practices by using the Audacity program at the beginning of the study.

H: Although the teacher asked us to do recordings by using the Audacity program, we can only record our own voice. It's not convenient. So we do recordings by using an MP3 player and then transfer the recording file by using the Audacity program.

Data extract: Learning Journal H

Her problem was resolved by inviting all the participants in Groups 1 and 2 to see my demonstration of the program after the class.

H: This time we record our oral practice by using the Audacity program. Although my partner's voice is not clear, I feel ok to use it.

Data extract: Learning Journal H

More difficulties emerged while she was doing the MSN written tasks. At first, she had problems to create conversation situations. Since she had not had any pre-discussions with her partner before starting the MSN tasks, it was difficult for her to put herself into task contexts.

174. Interviewer: --- Also how do you consider of our tasks?

175. H: *Getting more and more difficult.*

...

178. D: *It became difficult to do them. (laughs)*

179. H: *Right. (laughs)*

...

182. Interviewer: *Why do you think so?*

183. D: *I don't know how to start asking questions. For me, asking questions is difficult.*

184. H: *Right.*

...

187. Interviewer: *Did you mean it's difficult to create the conversation context?*

188. H: *Mm.*

Data extract: Interview D&H

With her partner, they discussed how to structure the task situations while doing the MSN tasks, which meant they took them a long time to complete each task

H: We are not familiar with the topic of this task (the second task). It takes us a lot of time to discuss and do the task. I think this might be caused by the speedy rhythm of the course in this semester. We need to spend more time on absorbing and thinking, which takes us more time to do the tasks.

H: This task (the third task) is very challenging. ... We spent a lot of time on thinking.

Data extract: Learning Journal H

She also perceived that her learning was not inadequate for her to express all her thoughts.

190. H: *And sometimes I did not know how to use French to express some thoughts. I needed to think for a long time.*

Data extract: Interview D&H

It was very difficult for her to do the task of the final test.

210. Interviewer: *Mm. ... How do you think of our final oral exam?*

211. H: *I feel very difficult. I want to cry.*

Data extract: Interview D&H

Additionally, she was not familiar with typing in French. Having to type specific French symbols slowed down her MSN communication.

H: Since it's the first time I chat through MSN in French, my typing is a little slow, not like speaking; copying/pasting French specific symbols makes my typing even slower.

Data extract: Learning Journal H

With regard to feedback, she considered my written feedback beneficial to her learning, but not the pronunciation feedback.

287. Interviewer: ... My following question is if you think the written feedback is helpful?

288. D/H: Yes.

...

295. Interviewer: So you think pronunciation feedback I gave you was not enough?

296. D/H: Mm.

Data extract: Interview D&H

In addition to the sound files I provided on the class bulletin board, she stated she benefited from the correct sound models for the students' common pronunciation errors I gave in the classroom.

315. Interviewer: How about the corrections I gave in the classroom? Did you think they were helpful?

316. D/H: Yes.

317. Interviewer: Which part? the written ones or the spoken ones?

318. H: The spoken ones.

Data extract: Interview D&H

She also said the use of the class bulletin board was helpful, since she could get course related information from there.

419. Interviewer: Ok. ... Did you think it (the class bulletin board) is helpful?

420. D/H: Yes.

421. H: We could get extra resources.

422. Interviewer: Extra resources?

423. H: For example ...

424. D: The feedback you offered in the classroom ...

425. H: Right. Corrected sentences you presented in the classroom or information about France ...

Data extract: Interview D&H

Unlike the other participants in Group 2, she was satisfied with her learning environment, in which only the microphone was employed in the spoken tasks.

369. H: Both of modes are ok for me. (She refers to the modes 1 and 2). ... It's ok for me to conduct tasks without the webcam.

Data extract: Interview D&H

However, she sometimes felt like using webcam to see her partner's image during the task interaction.

139. Interviewer: Right. ... So if you can choose, which mode do you prefer?

...

144. H: I had the intention to use the webcam.

145. Interviewer: You desired to use it.

146. D: (laughs) ... to see how your interlocutor looks like ...

147. H: But because I know G now, my desire was not that strong ...

Data extract: Interview D&H

She included emoticons in her MSN written task. For her, the use of emoticons in the MSN chat was sufficient to express her feelings to her partner.

250. Interviewer: Did you use emoticons of MSN?

251. D/H: Yes.

252. Interviewer: Did you use them often?

253. H: Mm. (laughs)

...

255. H: Mm. (laughs)... I sent her (Participant G) a crying face emoticon when I felt the task was too difficult and I felt like crying.

256. Interviewer: Did you want to use the webcam at this moment?

357. D: You mean to replace the emoticons with our real face?

258. Interviewer: Yes.

259. H: No.

260. D: No.

261. H: *Emoticons were enough.*

...

263. Interviewer: *Because you would not cry through the webcam ...*

264. D/H: *Yes. (laugh)*

265. H: *Emoticons showed our inner world ...*

Data extract: Interview D&H

As to task partners, she stated she would have liked to have someone unfamiliar but easy to get along with as her partner, since she had had a good experience with Participant G.

372. Interviewer: *As to the familiarity, ..., do you prefer doing tasks with someone unfamiliar?*

...

374. H: *Yes. ...*

375. Interviewer: *Even their learning habits are very different from yours?*

376. H: *Maybe. ... G is easy to get along with. But if I have someone strange as my partner ...*

377. D: *(laughs)*

378. H: *I might have problems with such a person ...*

379. D: *Right.*

Data extract: Interview D&H

To summarize, the intervention program seemed to have positive impacts on the oral skills development of Participant G, but not on that of Participant H. They were happy with each other although they did not know each other before the study. However, Participant G's active learning attitudes enabled her to discover the advantages of her learning mode and strategies for overcoming her learning difficulties. She therefore played a leading role in task completion, as Participant H seemed to not well adapt herself to her learning environment, of which she was not aware. In addition, her French learning was negatively affected by her proficiency in English.

5.1.5 Participants I & J

Participant I and J had been familiar with the MSN program before the study. But neither of them liked online chatting.

215. Interviewer: *Do you use often MSN?*

216. J: *Yes.*

217. I: *It's just ok for me. ... I don't like chatting.*

218. J: *I log on MSN, but it's possible that I am not in my place.*

...

220. J: *I sometimes use it for chatting. ... I think it's slow to chat through MSN*

221. I: *For me, it's not interesting.*

222. J: *She prefers using the telephone.*

223. I: *I prefer having direct contact with people.*

224. J: *It's quicker to talk through the telephone.*

Data extract: Interview I&J

They revised the course content and had online pre-discussions before the MSN written tasks. They used Chinese to help them construct the task situations in their pre-discussions.

75. I: *Usually before the tasks, we revised the course content ...*

76. J: *We did self-preparation ...*

...

89. Interviewer: *How did you do your pre-discussions, f2f or through the Internet?*

90. J: *We did it through the Internet ...*

...

95. I: *... we had pre-discussions about how to develop our conversations...*

96. Interviewer: *Were the pre-discussions done in French?*

97. I/J: *No, in Chinese.*

...

99. I: *We did pre-discussions first through the Internet before the MSN written tasks. ... and we typed sometimes Chinese during the MSN written practices, we deleted them later...*

Data extract: Interview I&J

I: I practise how to ask and answer sentences in advance.

Data extract: Learning Journal I

They also did several practices before recording their online spoken conversations.

117. J: For each task, we practised many times ...

...

119. J: We needed to record many times ...

Data extract: Interview I&J

I: It took us more time to do oral practices than doing the MSN written tasks. Because we needed to repeat recording when we were not familiar with pronunciation, paused, laughed and made mistakes.

Data extract: Learning Journal I

Like most participants, they used the MSN written records to help them do the oral tasks.

110. I: I thought this is due to my looking at the written records while doing the spoken tasks ...

Data extract: Interview I&J

Unlike other participants, Participant I made modifications to their MSN written records before going on to do the spoken practices.

I: At beginning, we wanted to do recordings according to our MSN written records. But in the MSN written environment, I can ask several questions to my partner at one time, and reply to my partner's questions at different time. ... So we made some modifications to our MSN written records to make them sound like normal conversations. ...

Data extract: Learning Journal I

39. I: We knew we had to change slightly our conversation. In the MSN environment, we could pose many questions at the same time ...

Data extract: Interview I&J

T: from the students' oral recordings, I found that they read sentences. Some sentences they spoke didn't seem natural because the learning environments were different. Only I and J knew they had to modify sentences.

Data extract: Teacher's Journal

She felt she could chat with more freedom in the MSN text environment since she could ask her partner many questions at the same time, which was not possible in a conventional face-to-face conversation. She was the only participant who pointed out there are differences in discourse between the MSN written texts and the oral communication – a point made by CMC researchers such as Yates (1996).

102. I: Sometimes, I talked everything in our MSN communication ...

103. J: That confused me ...

104. I: I felt very free to talk ...

Data extract: Interview I&J

I: The advantage to chat through MSN is that I have more freedom. I can ask many questions at the same time and let my partner answer those questions one by one. This freedom does not exist in a face-to-face situation.

Data extract: Learning Journal I

Apart from the written records, she also asked for pronunciation help from websites to complete the spoken tasks.

156. I: ... when I could not catch well the sounds you pronounced in the classroom, I listened to sound models provided by the websites you introduced us...

Data extract: Interview I&J

In her opinion, the MSN written tasks were not beneficial to her output in the spoken tasks.

62. Interviewer: ... do you think the written tasks are helpful to the spoken tasks?

63. I: For me, so so.

...

181. I: ...for me, the MSN written tasks were effective, but the f2f spoken tasks were just ok.

Data extract: Interview I&J

Since she used the textbook to help her communicate in the MSN written tasks, she felt that producing the written texts was straightforward.

42. I: In the written tasks, I might look at the textbook and type what I'd like to say.

...

65. I: Mm. In the written tasks, I thought I could write easily ...

...

71. I: In the written tasks, I used the model sentences provided by the textbook ...

Data extract: Interview I&J

Although she said she did not benefit from doing the MSN written tasks, I found she in fact paid attention to linguistic features and reflect on the language use over the MSN written practice processes.

I: I find I don't have a clear notion about how to tell time. For example, I don't know if I have to add a definite article when I want to say 'Wednesday afternoon'.

Data extract: Learning Journal I

I: I find I am not familiar with verb conjugations. ... I often have to look up them in the textbook.

Data extract: Learning Journal I

She also relied on her modified version of the written records to help her complete the spoken tasks. For her, speaking with the help of the written records could speed up the task practice processes and allow her to produce a better oral performance. Moreover, looking at the written texts reduced her cognitive load, which allowed her to pay more attention to pronunciation accuracy during the spoken practices

114. I: But if we did the spoken tasks without looking at the written records, I feel ...

115. J: It might take a lot of time ...

116. I: Right. And we probably forgot ... we might not do the tasks perfectly ...

117. J: For each task, we practised many times ...

...

119. J: We needed to record many times ...

120. I: There might be errors in our pronunciation. If we did not look at the written records and speak directly ...

...

126. I: ... I paid more attention to pronunciation later ...but was not able to react immediately during the spoken interaction...

Data extract: Interview I&J

There were some problems occurring in her task practice processes. Firstly, being unfamiliar with vocabulary and having to type specific French symbols made typing a problem for her.

I: It took us a lot of time to do the MSN chat because we typed slowly and sometimes we were not sure of vocabulary spelling. Also when we typed specific French symbols, we were not sure which symbols should be used.

Data extract: Learning Journal I

She also found she did not have enough lexis to express all her ideas.

I: I find I don't know a lot of words. ...

Data extract: Learning Journal I

She sometimes had doubts about her pronunciation accuracy.

I: I am not familiar with pronunciation. I don't pronounce well those new words.

I: I feel strange to pronounce some vocabulary.

Data extract: Learning Journal I

172. I: I sometimes was not sure of my pronunciation ...

Data extract: Interview I&J

The biggest problem she encountered during this study was not being able to produce sentences spontaneously as she had done in the previous semester.

65. I: Mm. In the written tasks, I thought I could write easily ... but my difficulty is I could not speak, could not produce ... although I knew what were correct ...

...

142. I: For me, pronunciation was not a problem, I just could not use sentences easily ... in the last semester, I could produce what I have learnt easily ...

Data extract: Interview I&J

Since she relied on the written records to produce the oral conversations, she skipped the internalization process, which made it difficult for her to speak spontaneously in a context where no visual aids were available.

45. I: I found there were so many things I knew but I did not know how to use them

...

49. I: ... this problem occurred more often to me when I did the spoken practices ...

...

53. I: I thought I did not practise well in the written tasks.

...

69. I: It seems to me there were so many sentences to use ...or maybe it's because I did not have a lot of occasions to speak directly ...

Data extract: Interview I&J

She therefore considered that doing the final oral test was difficult.

84. I: ...I still don't know how to speak (in the final oral test) , how to make my conversation interesting, ... I am afraid that my test partner cannot understand what I speak....

Data extract: Interview I&J

29. I: I felt afraid of doing the final oral test.

Data extract: Interview I&J

Upon reflection, she found that looking at the written records hampered her ability to speak spontaneously.

107. Interviewer: ... you thought the written tasks were not helpful to the spoken tasks

108. I: I said I could not speak easily ...

...

110. I: I thought this is due to my looking at the written records while doing the spoken tasks ...

Data extract: Interview I&J

Thus she suggested that I should forbid students to look at MSN written records in my future foreign language classroom.

179. I: *Maybe it's better to force students not to look at the written records.*

Data extract: Interview I&J

She also recommended that I give quizzes in class to help her be aware of importance of some vocabulary over others'.

58. I: *I think quizzes allowed us to know some words are more important than others.*

59. J: *... and forced us to memorize ...*

60. I: *... to know some words are more useful than others ...*

Data extract: Interview I&J

Regarding feedback, she thought both the written and pronunciation feedback she received from me via email were helpful. My written feedback provided her with the correct models for her erroneous sentences. And my pronunciation feedback allowed her to know where she pronounced wrongly. She was able to pay attention to the correct sounds for her erroneous pronunciation during the class time.

162. I: *Corrections were helpful.*

163. Interviewer: *The written ones or the spoken ones?*

164. I: *Both.*

...

166. I: *Your corrections allowed me to know how to write correctly. As to pronunciation, after you told me how to pronounce correctly, I would memorize those correct sounds. ... But I sometimes forgot some sounds ...*

Data extract: Interview I&J

For her, the sentence models and the feedback for the students' written errors I provided in the classroom were helpful, too.

I: *We used many words and sentences provided by the teacher in the classroom. The use of them made our conversations become more coherent.*

Data extract: Learning Journal I

With regards to pronunciation feedback, she perceived less benefit from my classroom pronunciation feedback. She preferred classroom oral practices, which

provided her with opportunities to discuss pronunciation problems with other peers face-to-face and to have those problems addressed immediately.

153. I: There were problems with the pronunciation one... through the microphone, your sounds did not seem clear to me. And when everybody pronounced, I could not tell my sounds were correct or not. For me, the one by one practice with our classmates allowed me to know better how to pronounce ...

...

176. I: Before, you asked us to do practices with other classmates in the classroom, I think that's helpful.

...

183. I: And for me, interactions between classmates as what we did in the last semester are effective.

...

187. I: ... if we practised outside the classroom, our pronunciation could not be corrected immediately, and we probably pronounced wrongly ... sometimes if I had questions, I asked you directly.

Data extract: Interview I&J

She suggested I could offer more oral practice opportunities in the classroom.

188. Interviewer: so you think it's better to have some practices in the classroom?

189. I: Mm, occasionally ...

Data extract: Interview I&J

When asked about her favourite learning mode, she said the face-to-face learning mode was her least favourite. She did not feel engaged in real communication while doing the tasks face-to-face. In her opinion, the other two synchronous CMC modes might have made the tasks more real for her.

230. I: I thought I could accept the use of microphone ... and the use of webcam as well.

...

243. I: ... I think I probably like least f2f mode.

244. J: Which mode will you choose?

245. I: The use of microphone or webcam.

246. Interviewer: Why?

247. I: ... I think the other two modes will ...make me feel more real...

...

250. I: ... I just think if I use the other two modes, I might ... have the feeling that I really communicate with others.

Data extract: Interview I&J

However, her learning mode allowed her to have more freedom to select places for doing the tasks than the participants in the other two groups.

238. I: ...it's better to do the tasks in a quiet environment ...

...

241. I: ... and if I want to focus my attention on the tasks ... I probably will be disturbed ...

242. J: Yes, we might be disturbed by our roommates ...

Data extract: Interview I&J

I: Because we did the recording in my room, we bothered other roommates who were studying. We should be careful with the selection of practice time and place next time.

Data extract: Learning Journal I

In terms of task partners, she cared about their attitudes rather than her familiarity with them. She especially hoped to be paired with open-minded and collaborative partners.

197. Interviewer: What do you think if you have to do the tasks with someone non-familiar?

198. I: It's ok for me.

...

203. I: Or he/she might be open-minded ...

206. I: Or sometimes it takes time to do well a task. If I want to do the tasks better, I probably have to ask my partner to collaborate ...

Data extract: Interview I&J

Like Participant I, Participant J thought partners' attitudes were important. In addition to the qualities of collaboration and open-mindedness, she hoped her partners could be serious.

197. Interviewer: What do you think if you have to do the tasks with someone non-familiar?

...

199. J: *It's ok. But my partner should be serious. ... If my partner is too lazy, I probably don't know how to tell him/her ...*

...

204. J: *... He/she should be able to accept others' opinions ...*

...

206. I: *Or sometimes it takes time to do well a task. If I want to do the tasks better, I probably have to ask my partner to collaborate ...*

207. J: *Right. ...*

Data extract: Interview I&J

During the study she used the dormitory telephone to clarify what she had not understood in the MSN written communication.

J: Sometimes during the MSN written practices, I felt confused about what she said, and then I called her to clarify what I did not understand ...

Data extract: Learning Journal J

In the spoken practices, she employed the MSN written records to help her speak fluently.

52. J: *...But in the spoken practices, you have to produce directly ... if you cannot see the written records, you have to speak directly ... you must do well in the written practices in order to speak fluently ...*

Data extract: Interview I&J

Without the written records, she sometimes paused to think what she was going to say. That took her more time to complete a spoken task.

J: We sometimes paused because we did not know what we should ask.

J: Sometimes we thought for a long time, which caused a long pause in our conversation ...

Data extract: Learning Journal J

114. I: *But if we did the spoken tasks without looking at the written records, I feel ...*

115. J: *It might take a lot of time ...*

Data extract: Interview I&J

When she encountered pronunciation problems, she asked for help from me, peers or the paper dictionaries to solve them.

170. J: Even you pointed out my pronunciation errors, I did not know how to pronounce correctly ... I still had to ask others, for example: you or other peers, to know how to pronounce those error sounds....

...

173. J: Mm... When you pointed out our pronunciation errors, but did not provide sound models, we looked phonetic symbols of those errors up in the dictionary ... sometimes I was not sure of my pronunciation.

...

175. J: It's ok for me, because I usually asked you my pronunciation problems after the class....

Data extract: Interview I&J

It appears that she had great difficulties in pronunciation.

121. J: Right. I sometimes made the same pronunciation errors many times ...

...

133. J: But it seems to me that my pronunciation was not that correct ... it's difficult ...

135. J: ... pronunciation is difficult ... the tones ...

...

173. J: ...sometimes I was not sure of my pronunciation.

Data extract: Interview I&J

J: I am not clear about how to pronounce some words, how to speak sentences in appropriate tones...

Data extract: Learning Journal J

J: For this ticket booking task, we needed to be able to read numbers and time. I found I was not familiar with numbers. I felt shocked because I pronounced 9 while looking at 8. ... I was not sure of pronunciation of many words. I felt quite confused. Also I was not familiar with sentence tones.

Data extract: Learning Journal J

She said she could pronounce better with the assistance of the written texts, since she could focus her attention on pronunciation accuracy without worrying whether her partner misunderstood her while conducting the oral practices.

135. J: ...for me, looking at the written records could allow me to pronounce well ...

...

137. J: For me, the advantage of looking at the written records was that it helped me to pronounce correctly. ...my partner could know what I was going to say ... and when I spoke wrongly, she could point out my errors ...

...

147. J: ... for me, the advantage of looking at the written records is that I paid more attention to pronunciation ... it's easier for me to pronounce well while looking at the written records.

Data extract: Interview I&J

Typing was the other problem she experienced while doing the tasks.

J: We encountered a lot of problems while typing.

Data extract: Learning Journal J

However, doing the MSN written tasks allowed her to pay attention to linguistic features and to reflect on the application of the target language in the task contexts.

J: I paid more attention to noun gender.

J: We were not sure if we had to put prepositions before week days while doing the MSN tasks; we found we were not clear about the application of some prepositions in sentences.

Data extract: Learning Journal J

For her, the written practices were beneficial to her vocabulary accuracy and writing skill improvement.

J: I paid more attention to vocabulary accuracy.

J: Doing the written tasks could improve my writing ability.

Data extract: Learning Journal J

In terms of feedback, she considered that my explicit feedback for the students' written errors in the classroom was helpful for her to reformulate her sentences.

J: The sentence models provided by the teacher in the classroom allowed me to know better how to structure my sentences.

Data extract: Learning Journal J

She also stated that my pronunciation feedback given in the classroom and the sound models uploaded on the class bulletin board assisted her pronunciation learning.

157. Interviewer: Ok ... do you think the pronunciation feedback was helpful to your pronunciation?

158. J: Yes. ... it's helpful for me to pronounce tones properly.

159. Interviewer: Mm.

160. J: From the classroom, I have already learnt how to pronounce. But after listening to sound models, I could pronounce better. ... I could even listen to them whenever I wanted if I forgot how to pronounce.

...

168. J: ... I need sound models

...

170. J: Although you pointed out my pronunciation errors, I did not know how to pronounce correctly ... I still had to ask others, for example: you or other peers, to know how to pronounce those erroneous sounds....

Data extract: Interview I&J

Although she had not experienced the other two learning modes, she said she would have preferred doing the spoken tasks in the synchronous CMC environment.

227. J: I might prefer using the microphone...

...

231. J: Using the webcam is ok for me too because I can get the facial expressions of my partner, it might help ...

Data extract: Interview I&J

Nevertheless, she had fun while doing the oral practices face-to-face.

J: Sometimes I could not stop laughing while speaking. It's so interesting. I felt funny. If I can overcome the tiredness caused by repeated practices, I will make a great progress in French from doing the tasks.

Data extract: Learning Journal J

From her reactions to Participant I's words in the interview, I formed the impression that she was not able to imagine the other two groups' oral practice situations. For me, she was just curious about the other two learning experiences, since she had never had them.

243. I: ... I think I probably like least f2f mode.

244. J: Which mode will you choose?

245. I: The use of the microphone or the webcam.

246. Interviewer: Why?

247. I: ... I think the other two modes will ...make me feel more real...

248. J: Um?

...

250. I: ... I just think if I use the other two modes, I might ... have the feeling that I really communicate with others.

251. J: Um?

...

253. J: ... for me, using the microphone only might make me feel more distant from my partner ...

...

254. Interviewer: Have you tried to speak with others through the microphone?

255. I: Very few.

256. J: We can try when we go back ...

Data extract: Interview I&J

In spite of her inexperience with the other two modes, she was well aware of the problem that the participants in the other two groups had experienced – being disturbed by the roommates during the task practice processes.

239. J: My roommates are quite noisy, my partner probably will hear their noise if I practise through the microphone ...

...

241. I: ... and if I want to focus my attention on the tasks ... I probably will be disturbed ...

242. J: *Yes, we might be disturbed by our roommates ...*

Data extract: Interview I&J

Like participant I, she favoured doing oral practices in the classroom. She also suggested that I paired them up with different partners to enliven their classroom learning.

183. I: *And for me, interactions between classmates as what we did in the last semester are effective.*

184. J: *Right. Maybe this could be added to the program if time is available ...*

...

190. J: *Mm. You can just spare a little time to do those practices ...*

191. Interviewer: *...better to have some practices ...*

192. J: *Mm.*

193. Interviewer: *...and with different classmates ...*

194. J: *Yes... that might be more interesting.*

Data extract: Interview I&J

In addition, she had expected me to give quizzes during the class time. She thought quizzes can help her internalize the learning content and help her produce more effectively. In her views, quizzes can also push those students who only study for exams to revise the learning content.

54. J: *Yesterday I had a discussion with some classmates. We talked about what you said in the classroom – most of us read our written records while doing the spoken tasks. We skipped the step to make the content become a part of ours.*

55. Interviewer: *Right.*

56. J: *For me, this situation might be caused by the fact that we did not have quizzes. ... I think quizzes could help us make the learning content become a part of ours ...*

...

58. I: *I think quizzes allowed us to know some words are more important than others.*

59. J: *... and forced us to memorize ...*

60. I: *... to know some words are more useful than others ...*

61. J: *... and how to use them. ... If there were quizzes before the MSN written tasks, there might be less errors appearing in our written records. And then we could do the spoken tasks ... Most Taiwanese students study only when they need to pass the exams ...*

77. Interviewer: *One of my intentions to have you do the practices is that I want you to do the course review ...*

78. I/J: *Yes. ... but maybe few students did that.*

79. Interviewer: *Probably. ...*

80. J: *So that's why I consider quizzes are important.*

Data extract: Interview I&J

Overall, she was of the opinion that carrying out the tasks was difficult.

J: I feel hard to do the MSN tasks.

J: For me, doing the spoken tasks and recording them is much more difficult than oral classroom practices of the last semester.

J: Compared to practices of the last semester, this task design is much more difficult.

Data extract: Learning Journal J

However, I found that both Participants I and J benefited from doing the tasks in cycle.

I: This time, our recording process went more smoothly than the last time. Maybe it's because our conversation was shorter and we practised how to ask and answer sentences in advance.

Data extract: Learning Journal I

J: In this task, I needed to ask my partner about her daily schedules. I felt it easier to do this task. Maybe it's because we had already had one experience, I could adapt better to this learning mode.

J: The recording quality of this oral conversation was clearer. I felt less stressed to do this oral practice. It's more relaxing.

Data extract: Learning Journal J

In sum, the oral proficiency development of Participants I and J did not appear to benefit from the intervention program. Although both were active in their learning, which allowed them to discover strategies to overcome some of the difficulties they encountered and gained the benefits from my task design and support, their face-to-face oral experiences did not satisfy them. However, it is difficult to tell if the two other learning modes would be beneficial to their learning, as both of them

appeared to favour some face-to-face classroom activities we had in the previous traditional curriculum.

5.1.6 Participants K & L

Participants K and L are the only two male participants in this study. Although both of them had been familiar with the MSN program before the intervention program, Participant K favoured face-to-face communication over online chatting.

23. *K: I don't like MSN. ... but I have to keep contact with my classmates. I log on MSN but don't use it. ... For me, it's less real. I prefer f2f chatting.*

24. *Interviewer: Really? Have you chatted with others through MSN with webcam and microphone?*

25. *K: No.*

26. *Interviewer: You don't like it?*

27. *K: No.*

Data extract: Interview K&L

Different from him, Participant L often used MSN to communicate with his friends and families.

16. *Interviewer: Do you usually use it (MSN) with your classmates?*

17. *L: Mm.*

...

29. *L: Also with my families. ... My brother is living in this city too. We use different telephony networks. The telephone cost is expensive. ...*

Data extract: Interview K&L

Both of them considered that the MSN written tasks were helpful to their oral production. But in Participant K's view, it was better to be able to speak spontaneously without dependence on the MSN written records.

59. *L: Yes. If you asked us to speak directly, I might don't know what to do ... we practised first in the MSN tasks and you corrected our errors, we could avoid making the same mistakes in the spoken tasks ...*

...

61. K: *I agree with L. ... But for me, a better learning mode is to speak directly, we won't rely on the written records...*

62. Interviewer: *Do you think it's possible for you?*

63. K: *I have never tried. I think it's difficult.*

Data extract: Interview K&L

Before doing the MSN tasks, they revised the learning content and did self-preparation

67. K: *We started with the textbook revising and then typed.*

68. L: *We did self-preparation first, and found words/sentences we needed ...*

Data extract: Interview K&L

K: *I thought of the conversations I had learnt and waited for online meeting.*

Data extract: Learning Journal K

L: *I spent more time on preparing this time. So I was more familiar with my dialogues.*

Data extract: Learning Journal L

Like Pair 4, they did not engage in any pre-discussion before starting the MSN written tasks. It seems to me that they did not realize they could have done so in the MSN text environment.

37. L: *I might prefer the f2f mode... for me, I can have problems solved directly in an f2f environment.*

38. Interviewer: *Ok ...*

39. K: *and we could have a pre-discussion ...*

Data extract: Interview K&L

During the task completion processes, they used Chinese and English to facilitate their task discussion and solve linguistic problems.

79. Interviewer: *Did you discuss in Chinese?*

80. K/L: *Right.*

...

184. L: ... I sometimes felt nervous and asked him directly in Chinese “what does the question mean?”

Data extract: Interview K&L

T: K and L used Chinese and English to help their communication.

Data extract: Teacher’s journal

For the spoken tasks, they repeated practices several times before submitting the files they were satisfied with to me. Their oral practices were mainly focused on pronunciation.

86. Interviewer: How many times of spoken practices did you usually have before sending me the files?

87. K/L: 2~3 times.

...

91. L: We started with pronunciation practices, ...

92. K: Right.

93. L: ...found out those words we could not pronounce and then did recording ...

94. K: Mm.

...

96. K: We looked at our MSN records first...

97. L: Mm.

98. K: ... and then pronounced them.

...

100. K: So our spoken tasks were done with the written records.

Data extract: Interview K&L

K: We did practices in advance, so the recording process went smoothly.

Data extract: Learning Journal K

L: I practised with K before recording.

L: This is the second time we did recording. The effect of our first recording was not good because we could not pronounce many words. So we did it again this time.

Data extract: Learning Journal L

Participant K stated that doing the MSN pre-tasks helped him revise the course content, although he felt bothered by having to type specific French symbols.

194. K: *The MSN written tasks allowed me to revise the learning content.*

Data extract: Interview K&L

K: *--- specific French symbols often bothered us ---*

Data extract: Learning Journal K

At the beginning of the study, he felt it interesting to do the tasks in the target language through MSN, since he had never learnt a foreign language in that way.

K: *This is the first time I practise French through MSN. For me, it's fresh and interesting.*

Data extract: Learning Journal K

As the course progressed, more learning content were introduced in the classroom, which made him feel stressed.

K: *The vocabulary we learnt from the course was getting more and more. I felt stressed.*

Data extract: Learning Journal K

323. Interviewer: *... Did you feel happy about our learning in this semester?*

324. K: *Yes.*

325. Interviewer: *But stressful?*

326. K: *Yes. Stressful...*

Data extract: Interview K&L

He felt overwhelmed by the speedy rhythm of the course and the immediate output he had to produce in the MSN written tasks.

216. K: *I felt speedy, a little bit tired ... but not bad ...*

217. Interviewer: *Mm.*

218. K: *We produced immediately after the learning ...*

219. Interviewer: *the course is quite speedy?*

220: K: *Yes... 2 hours per week only*

Data extract: Interview K&L

Although he said such learning speed was efficient, he seemed to have difficulties in producing the written work within the allotted time.

223. Interviewer: *It's speedy since you needed to produce immediately after the learning ...*

224. K: *Right ... but it's efficient as well ...*

Data extract: Interview K&L

K: For me, the practices became harder and harder. It took me a lot of time doing them.

Data extract: Learning Journal K

He sometimes felt frustrated by unforeseen technology problems.

K: We intended to do practices yesterday, but my partner's computer did not work properly. After having waited for him for one hour, I felt frustrated. It's not easy for us to find free time to meet together.

Data extract: Learning Journal K

Although the recording process made him nervous, he perceived it less challenging to do the spoken tasks because of his dependence on the MSN written records.

100. K: *So our spoken tasks were done with the written records.*

101. Interviewer: *So do you think the spoken tasks were difficult?*

102. K: *No.*

103. Interviewer: *Very easy?*

104. K: *Easy.*

...

107. Interviewer: *But if there's no written records ...*

108. L: *It might be very difficult.*

109. K: *Right.*

Data extract: Interview K&L

K: The recording process went smoothly, but both of us were nervous.

Data extract: Learning Journal K

194. K: *The MSN written tasks allowed me to revise the learning content.*

...

196. K: *...I absorbed and produced ...*

197. Interviewer: *... how about the spoken tasks?*

198. K: yes ...

199. Interviewer: ... but you benefited less ...

200. K: Right.

Data extract: Interview K&L

His feeling of nervousness was reduced once he had become familiar with the task procedures.

K: I was less nervous after the last experience. The recording process went smoothly.

Data extract: Learning Journal K

But the task of the final test was difficult for him since he had to speak spontaneously.

61. K: ... But for me, a better learning mode is to speak directly, we won't rely on the written records...

62. Interviewer: Do you think it's possible for you?

63. K: I have never tried. I think it's difficult.

...

110. Interviewer: So the final task is very difficult for you?

...

112. K: Right.

...

114. L: It's difficult to speak directly...

115. K: We need practising.

Data extract: Interview K&L

However, he thought the tasks were useful, because the content of which was related to his daily life.

53. K: ... the first one is the easiest one. These three tasks are related to daily life.

Data extract: Interview K&L

With regard to feedback, he perceived that he benefited from the written feedback, but not from the pronunciation feedback.

116. Interviewer: ... Do you think feedback was helpful?

117. K/L: Yes.

...

119. K: *After your corrections, I knew my errors and should avoid making them.*

Data extract: Interview K&L

130. Interviewer: *How about the feedback for the spoken tasks?*

131. K: *I knew my errors ...*

132. Interviewer: *You knew the errors ...*

133. K: *... but I did not know how to pronounce them correctly.*

Data extract: Interview K&L

He learnt less from my written and pronunciation feedback given in the classroom because he felt it difficult to absorb so much content at a time.

142. Interviewer: *In the classroom, I pointed out the common errors appeared in your written and spoken practices, was this helpful to you?*

143. K/L: Yes.

144. Interviewer: *Yes? But maybe the help was not that direct because those might not be your errors?*

145. K/L: Mm.

146. K: *And the common errors were a lot, it's difficult for me to absorb that many at a time.*

...

154. Interviewer: *Too many?*

155. K: *Mm. We could not remember that much content.*

Data extract: Interview K&L

In his view, the sound models provided on the class bulletin board were beneficial to his pronunciation learning. He could have access to those sound models at any time.

137. K: *For me, the sound files were helpful.*

...

140. K: *Yes, because I heard the correct sounds.*

Data extract: Interview K&L

K: Thanks to the sound files, I could learn correct sounds when I did pronunciation practices alone.

Data extract: Learning Journal K

Thus, he hoped that I could continue supporting his pronunciation learning by providing the sound files.

248. K: The sound files can help ...

...

250. K: I did not work a lot on pronunciation ...

...

252. K: ... but if I can get help from you, it might be better ...

Data extract: Interview K&L

The additional pronunciation help he expected from me was classroom pronunciation practices.

253. Interviewer: What kind of pronunciation support might be helpful? Pronunciation practices in the classroom or ...

254. K: Right.

Data extract: Interview K&L

When asked about the use of emoticons, he said he did not intend to use them while doing the tasks since he regarded the tasks as formal assignments.

162. Interviewer: Did you use emoticons while chatting through MSN?

163. K: I did. But I did not use them while doing the tasks.

164. Interviewer: Why?

165. K/L: not for the assignments ...

Data extract: Interview K&L

In his opinion, text communication through MSN was not real. He favoured the face-to-face learning mode over the other two environments.

23. K: I don't like MSN. ... For me, it's less real. I prefer f2f chatting.

Data extract: Interview K&L

Although he told me he was happy with the study,

323. Interviewer: ... *Did you feel happy about our learning in this semester?*

324. K: *Yes.*

Data extract: Interview K&L

he actually preferred the inclusion of some activities done in the previous semester in the curriculum. Firstly, he would like to have had quizzes in the classroom to help him revise the learning content seriously.

225. Interviewer: *Do you think it will be better to have some quizzes?*

226. K: *For me, the quizzes can help me know how much I really understand and make me revise the learning content ...*

227. Interviewer: *But didn't you revise if there were no quizzes?*

228. K: *I did, but probably I didn't revise so seriously.*

229. Interviewer: *Not that seriously? ...*

...

231. Interviewer: *Did you have to revise the learning content before doing the tasks?*

232. K: *Yes, I did. ... but I prefer having the quizzes because I get used to writing.*

233. Interviewer: *Ok. ... because the quizzes are more direct?*

234. K: *Right. More traditional. ...*

Data extract: Interview K&L

He also enjoyed my French song teaching. His liking for French songs provided an evidence for Nimmannit's (2009) suggestion that the introduction of music or songs into the class can relax students and help them overcome nervousness.

315. K: *You also taught us some French songs in the last semester.*

316. Interviewer: *I did not do this during this semester ...*

317. L: *You did not ...*

318. Interviewer: *(laugh) we had so many things to do during this semester ... so you missed that part ...*

320. K: *Yes. That made me feel happy ...*

321. Interviewer: *Mm.*

322. K: *For me, learning interestingly is important.*

Data extract: Interview K&L

In addition, he echoed Participant L's opinion that my presentation of French culture in the classroom was interesting.

306. L: *For me, what was interesting in our course of this semester is that you told us your life in France.*

307. K: *Right. It's interesting.*

Data extract: Interview K&L

In fact, participant K favoured the learning mode in the previous semester over the one he experienced in this semester.

236. K: *The course of this semester provided more opportunities for the training of the listening and speaking skills ...*

237. Interviewer: *Mm.*

238. K: *The course of the previous semester focused more on the practices of the writing skills ...*

...

284. K: *I like reading the textbook and learn grammars from it.*

285. Interviewer: *Mm ... so you did not like doing the spoken tasks, right?*

286. K: *Right. (laughs) My previous learning did not focus on the practices of the spoken skills. ...*

Data extract: Interview K&L

However, he said he got used to the new learning mode after the study although he felt it difficult to produce in the spoken tasks.

287. Interviewer: *Did you get more used to our tasks later?*

288. K: *Yes. I did.*

289. Interviewer: *We did not really have a textbook this semester. Did you feel ok?*

290. K: *Yes.*

291. Interviewer: *You felt ok. But you felt more difficult to do the oral tasks?*

292. K: *Yes.*

Data extract: Interview K&L

He also stated that it was good to have a class bulletin board, from which he could seek my guidance about how to do the tasks and how to prepare the tests.

305. K: *I thought it's good to have a class bulletin board. It provided me the directions how to do the practices, how to prepare the exams ...*

Data extract: Interview K&L

Unlike Participant K, Participant L quite often used MSN to communicate with others in his daily life before the study.

28. Interviewer: *Ok. ... (to Joseph) you usually use MSN with your classmates only?*

29. L: *Also with my families. ... My brother is living in this city too. We use different telephony networks. The telephone cost is expensive.*

Data extract: Interview K&L

Among all the participants, he had the lowest language abilities at the start of the study. He experienced many difficulties while carrying out the tasks. First of all, he was not able to absorb all the learning content from the classes.

191. Interviewer: *... did you feel the absorbing-production process was too speedy?*

192. L: *I could not absorb all. ... I memorized parts of the learning content.*

...

280. L: *We learnt a lot of content related to daily life. I did not have enough time to revise the content. We learnt a lot and I forgot a lot ... I was only familiar with the content applied into the tasks. I forgot a lot ...*

Data extract: Interview K&L

Secondly, he felt it difficult to apply his learning to the task situations.

L: *With my partner, we felt so hard to do this task because we had no idea how to apply sentences to the task situations.*

L: *For me, there was more vocabulary for this task. I felt less familiar with conversation content of this task.*

Data extract: Learning Journal L

Moreover, he had difficulties in simulating the task contexts.

44. L: *For me, the conversation situations ... in the classroom, you described us about the conversation situations ... but after the classroom, I still had difficulties in imaging it ...*

Data extract: Interview K&L

In addition, his limited language knowledge resulted in an inability to create his ideal task situations.

L: There are many words I want to say but don't know how to express. I can only use my limited vocabulary and sentences. I feel I cannot create the conversation situations I want.

Data extract: Learning Journal L

He also encountered many pronunciation problems. It seems that he had to make a lot of effort to pronounce well in the spoken tasks.

L: --- I knew many words but I could not pronounce them. Before the recording I practised with my partner, so I felt I could control better the practice. But I still forgot how to pronounce some words while doing the recording.

L: We did not do well in the first recording because we did not know how to pronounce many words. So we redid the same task this time. Our practice went more smoothly. But I got nervous very easily, so I often forgot how to pronounce my dialogues. I hope I could overcome this problem quickly.

L: It seems that I did not pronounce properly. I have to work more on pronunciation.

Data extract: Learning Journal L

His learning difficulties often made him nervous in his interaction with his partner, which negatively affected his performance during the task processes.

184. L: ... I sometimes felt nervous and asked him directly in Chinese "what does the question mean?"

Data extract: Interview K&L

L: This is the first time I chatted with others in French through MSN. I felt fresh but nervous.

L: This was the first time we did the task. I was nervous and typed slowly. I was so nervous that I could not understand my partner's questions.

L: This was the second time I did the task. I was still very nervous because it's an oral task. ... I was worried I could not catch up with others' progress. I felt quite pressured but did not know where my problem was.

L: I got nervous very easily so I forgot often how to pronounce my dialogues.

Data extract: Learning Journal L

In spite of the above difficulties over the course of the study, this novel experience aroused his interest in the use of the target language.

55. Interviewer: Did you feel painful to do them (the tasks)?

56. L: ... No. Actually I felt interesting... I felt familiar with MSN, and I could communicate in French, although I had to study a lot, I felt interesting ...

Data extract: Interview K&L

L: This is the first time I chatted with others in French through MSN. I felt fresh but nervous.

Data extract: Learning Journal L

He felt a sense of accomplishment after completing each task.

187. Interviewer: Did you feel doing the tasks was stressful?

188. L: Mm... but after finishing each task, I had a sense of accomplishment.

Data extract: Interview K&L

Concerning feedback, he gained limited benefit from my written feedback by email because his learning from the class was not complete, which caused him problems in identifying his errors.

116. Interviewer: ... Do you think feedback was helpful?

...

123. L: I feel just ok.

124. Interviewer: ... did you wonder why your errors were corrected?

125. L: Sometimes. (laughs)

126. Interviewer: very confused?

127. L: Mm ... and then I told myself it was ok I could memorize your corrections first.

128. Interviewer: Ok... you forced yourself to memorize ...

129. L: ... I memorized those corrected parts directly. Mm.

Data extract: Interview K&L

For him, my pronunciation feedback was not helpful, although the sound files provided on the class bulletin board were, since they allow him to do self pronunciation learning.

130. Interviewer: *How about the feedback for the spoken tasks?*

...

135. L: *I still did not know the correct sounds of those errors you pointed out.*

136. Interviewer: *Are there any methods you can think of to help your pronunciation?*

137. K: *For me, the sound files were helpful.*

138. L: *Right.*

...

159. Interviewer: *You could listen to those files at home ...*

160. K/L: *Right.*

...

212. L: *... the sound files helped a lot. ... we can practise at home and listen to files again and again.*

Data extract: Interview K&L

His benefit from my feedback offered in the classroom was also restricted. He was unable to catch up with the speed of my explanations and felt overwhelmed by the quantity of my feedback.

142. Interviewer: *In the classroom, I pointed out the common errors appeared in your written and spoken practices, was this helpful to you?*

143. K/L: *Yes.*

...

148. L: *Sometimes the explanation process went quickly, the corrections were unclear to me ...*

149. Interviewer: *Which part do you refer to? The written one or the spoken one?*

150. K: *Both.*

151. Interviewer: *The process went too quickly?*

152. K: *No, too many.*

153. L: *Too many at a time.*

154. Interviewer: *Too many?*

155. K: *Mm. We could not remember that much content.*

156. L: *Right.*

Data extract: Interview K&L

Like most other participants, he thought the task of the final test was hard, since he had to produce spontaneously without any visual aid.

107. Interviewer: *But if there's no written records ...*

108. L: *It might be very difficult.*

...

110. Interviewer: *So the final task is very difficult for you?*

111. L: *Mm.*

...

114. L: *It's difficult to speak directly...*

Data extract: Interview K&L

However, he was of the opinion that doing the tasks in cycle was to his advantage because he was able to become familiar with the task processes, which reduced his tension while doing the tasks.

L: This is the third time we did the oral practice. I was not sure if it's due to our two previous experiences, but I felt less nervous and our conversations seemed more natural this time.

Data extract: Learning Journal L

201. Interviewer: *What suggestions or opinions will you give if your learning mode is implemented in a new classroom?*

202. L: *For me, the tasks were in cycle ...*

203. Interviewer: *Mm... what does your 'cycle' refer to?*

204. L: *We did the tasks step by step and then got the works done ... the processes repeated ... the directions were provided, I felt ok ...*

Data extract: Interview K&L

Like his partner, he avoided using emoticons in his text communication for this study. He also viewed the tasks as formal assignments.

162. Interviewer: *Did you use emoticons while chatting through MSN?*

...

165. K/L: *not for the assignments ...*

...

167. L: *... I hardly use the emoticons.*

Data extract: Interview K&L

The face-to-face mode he experienced in this task was his favorite one. For him, it was effective in resolving problems in a face-to-face environment.

37. L: *I might prefer the f2f mode... for me, I can have problems solved directly in an f2f environment.*

Data extract: Interview K&L

When questioned about familiarity with task partners, he said initially that it did not make any difference to him. But later he admitted he was afraid of being paired with someone unfamiliar. He had the concern that unfamiliar partners might be impatient with his slow responses to their questions.

264. Interviewer: *For you, is it important to be familiar with each other before the experiments?*

265. K: *For me, it did not matter that much.*

266. L: *It's just ok for me.*

267. Interviewer: *It doesn't affect your collaboration?*

268. K: *No.*

269. L: *At the beginning of the study, we were not that familiar with each other. But after the study, we became more familiar ...*

...

293 Interviewer: *Did you feel difficult to do the tasks with other students?*

294. K: *No.*

295. L: *I did. I had difficulties in doing the tasks with someone I was not familiar. I had the fear ...*

296. Interviewer: *You felt afraid ...*

297. L: *In our class, some girls were more open-minded, ... but I felt that others might think my reaction was too slow*

298. Interviewer: *You were afraid that others were not happy with your slow reaction ...*

299. L: *Others might have this thought in their mind but did not tell ...*

Data extract: Interview K&L

In sum, it seems that the intervention program promoted the oral skills development of only Participant L. Both of them seem to have been slower to adjust to this new learning mode and were not able to devise strategies to overcome their learning difficulties they encountered, even though they made a determined effort to complete each task. However, Participant L appeared to derive

considerable benefit from this learning mode, as he was able to receive substantial help from his task partner and me.

In conclusion, the intervention program seemed to positively affect the oral proficiency development of only a few of the participants. The differences between the three modes were only one source of impact on their learning. Generally, the participants who appeared to benefit from the intervention program were those who involved themselves actively in the task practices and found effective strategies for overcoming difficulties in the practice process. They were also able to make good use of my support and feedback. In contrast, those participants who did not seem to benefit from the program were less active and unable to find effective strategies, or did not adapt to the new learning mode.

5.2 Motivation/Attitude

Table 5.5 Participants' motivation/attitude survey results before the study

Participant	S1 (for)	S1 (again -st)	S2 (for)	S2 (again -st)	S3	S4	S5 (for)	S5 (again -st)	S6	S7
A	5.6	1.6	5.4	1.3	4.5	4.5	4.6	2	3.8	4.9
B	5	2	5	2	4.6	5	4.8	2	4.3	5.7
C	5.2	2.2	5	1.5	4.3	4.8	5	1.5	4.5	5.7
D	5.6	1.4	5.6	1	5	5.8	5.6	1	4.8	6
E	5.6	2.2	5.8	1.8	4.8	5.8	5.6	2	4.8	6.3
F	5.2	1.8	5.4	1.5	4.1	4.8	4.2	2.5	4	5.7
G	4.4	2.4	4.4	2.8	4	4.5	4	3	3.5	5
H	6	1	6	1	5.6	6	5.8	1	5.8	6.9
I	4.6	2.2	5	2.5	3.6	4.3	4.4	2	4.5	4.7
J	5.4	1.8	5.8	1.8	4.6	6	5.6	1.5	3.8	7
K	5.4	1.6	6	1.3	4.4	5.5	5.6	2	4	6.1
L	5	3	4.4	2.5	4.5	4.8	4.4	3.5	4	5
Mean	5.3	1.9	5.3	1.8	4.5	5.2	5.0	2.0	4.3	5.8

Table 5.6 Participants' motivation/attitude survey results after the study

Participant	S1 (for)	S1 (against)	S2 (for)	S2 (against)	S3	S4	S5 (for)	S5 (against)	S6	S7
A	5	2.2	4.8	2.3	4.4	5	4.4	2	4.3	5.3
B	5	2	5	2	5	5	5.6	2	4.3	6.4
C	5	1.6	5	1	4.4	4.8	4.8	2.5	4.5	5.7
D	4.8	1.8	5.2	1.3	4.3	5	4.8	1.5	4.5	4.9
E	5.4	2	5.6	1.8	4.9	6	5	1	5	6.1
F	5.6	1.4	5.4	1.8	4.9	5.8	5.6	4.5	5.5	6.3
G	4.6	2.2	5	2	4.3	5.8	4.8	3	4.3	5
H	5.8	1.4	5.6	2	3.8	5	4.8	2.5	5.3	5.9
I	5.4	1.2	5.6	1	5.1	6	5.6	1.5	5.8	6.9
J	5.6	2.2	5.6	2	4.4	5.5	5.2	1.5	4.3	6.7
K	5	2.2	5.4	1.8	4.8	5.3	5.8	2	4.5	6
L	6	1.8	5.4	2	5.3	5.8	5.4	3	5	5.4
Mean	5.3	1.8	5.3	1.8	4.6	5.4	5.2	2.3	4.8	5.9

Tables 5.5 and 5.6 show the section mean scores of each participant's replies to the items in the Motivation/Attitude questionnaires (see Appendix 3) conducted before and after the intervention program. In some sections (Section 1, Section 2 and Section 5), both 'For' and 'Against' questions are included. The mean scores for the 'For' and 'Against' questions are separately calculated and presented in the tables. Their section mean scores before and after the study are compared in order to see if their motivation/attitude was enhanced by the intervention program.

For some sections comprising both 'For' and 'Against' questions, the mean scores of both types of questions are compared to check the consistency in the participants' replies. For example, Participant A's mean score for those 'For' questions of Section 1 before the study is 5.6. In comparison with her mean score on the same items after the study, we can see a decrease in her interest in foreign languages. In addition, her mean score for those 'Against' questions increases from 1.6 to 2.2 after the intervention program, which shows a consistency in her replies

to those questions in Section 1. In the following section, each participant's responses in the questionnaires are analyzed and discussed by pair.

5.2.1 Participants A & B

From the above tables, it is clear that the synchronous CMC learning mode did not greatly change Participant A's attitudes and motivation towards French learning. After the study, her mean scores for the statements in the integrative and instrumental orientation sections went up slightly, while those for the statements in other sections went down slightly. And her mean score for the general statements in the Part Two went up slightly after the intervention program. Since six statements in the Part Two summarized all statements in the Part One, the slight change of her mean scores in the Part Two could confirm the finding that the intervention program had no big effect on Participant A's French learning.

Participant A chose to learn French because of Participant B's influence. For her, the master of a foreign language can bring "instrumental benefits" (Dörnyei, 2001b: 91) that can help her reach other goals through the knowledge of it (Dörnyei, 2001b: 124), for example: being competitive in the future job market.

6. A: Nowadays, the foreign language ability is a basic requirement for job hunting. At the beginning of the semester, I faced the choice of learning French or Japanese. Then, I discussed with B. She said she wanted to learn French.

Data extract: Interview A&B

As Gardner said, "the goal is not viewed as the goal of learning French, but rather the reasons for learning French" (Gardner, 1985:51). Therefore, the maintenance and protection of learners' motivation is important. One strategy Dörnyei (2001b) suggested is to improve the quality of students' learning experiences (p.126). He highlighted one of basic issues is to increase "the intrinsic enjoyment of participating in learning tasks" (126). For him, many learners might simply consider the word 'motivating' as 'interesting'. And this appears to be the case with Participant A.

A: I feel happy after the recording. The process is interesting.

Data extract: Learning Journal A

As to Participant B, her questionnaire responses show that her attitude/motivation for French learning was consistent during the experimental process and became higher after the intervention program, which seemed especially to enhance her desire to learn French.

For her, learning French is “a reaction to past experiences” (Dörnyei, 2001b:91), which is included in Gardner’s ‘integrativeness’ concept. And according to Dörnyei and Clément (2000), integrativeness is the strongest component affecting learners’ language choice and their effort to invest in learning process.

2. B: For me, the foreign language is a tool to communicate with foreigners. So, I think English is important. And French is the language I hope to learn since my childhood.

3. Interviewer: Why do you want to learn French since your childhood?

4. B: I used to read the series of novels “Arsene Lupin” during my childhood. In novels, France is much presented because Arsene Lupin is French.

Data extract: Interview A&B

Compared to other participants, Participant B’s enthusiasm for French learning was remarkable during the experimental process.

214. B: ... I even forced my roommates to listen to those sound files. (laughs)

Data extract: Interview A&B

343. A: It seems to me she studied French every day. (laughs)

344. Interviewer: (To B) Are you very interested in French learning?

345. B: I love it very much.

Data extract: Interview A&B

T: After my encouragement, Participant B starts asking me questions through email.

Data extract: Teacher’s journal

After the intervention course, she even considered transferring her major to the English department, where more French courses are offered.

355. B: *Mm. Yes. ... our course lasts only one year. I just mentioned to A I intend to change my major.*

Data extract: Interview A&B

For her, the use of the webcam and the microphone made the learning situations more real. This authenticity allowed her to involve herself more seriously in spoken tasks.

B: In the face-to-face situation, I can redo tasks many times because my partner is beside me. That makes me feel less real. I feel more involved while doing spoken tasks with the use of the webcam and the microphone. ... since I saw A through the webcam, I paid more attention to what she said. For me, it's not polite to ask someone unfamiliar to repeat their sentences.

Data extract: Learning Journal B

5.2.2 Participants C & D

It can be seen from Table 5.5 and 5.6 that the intervention program appeared to have no effect on Participant C's attitudes and motivation towards French learning. After the study, her mean scores in each section were very similar to those before the study.

The reason that Participant C chose to learn French was her personal good impression of the French language. In fact, she had a good impression not only of French, but also of other two foreign languages (German and Japanese), offered by the university.

17. C: For me, French is high-class. (laughs)

...

19. C: very high-class, German and Japanese are high-class as well. (laughs). ... I hope I could be a translating machine. For me, it's cool to know a lot of foreign languages. (laughs)

Data extract: Interview C&G

During the study period, she was taking courses in these three foreign languages simultaneously.

9. C: ... Now, I am learning also German and Japanese during this semester. I feel tired sometimes.

Data extract: Interview C&G

For her, knowledge of foreign languages can allow her to communicate independently with native speakers of those languages and have direct contact with cultural resources of those languages.

7. C: I think nowadays, many people trade with foreign people via translators. If the translators do not translate well, we possibly cannot understand well what our partners want to say. I hope I can understand their conversations by myself rather than via translators.

8. Interviewer: You hope to communicate directly with foreign people?

9. C: Yes. ...

...

21. C: Yes. Yes. And like what I just said, I hope to understand foreign resources directly, not indirectly.

Data extract: Interview C&G

During the study, she felt frustrated by her bad performance in the mid-term tests.

C: We had taken the mid-term oral test today. I spoke in a quiet voice, which affected my partner's performance. I guessed I would receive a low score....I felt frustrated. I should be able to perform better.

C: We had the paper test done today. I could not answer most of questions.

C: I was not satisfied with the score of my paper mid-term test.

Data extract: Learning Journal C

However, her interest in French was maintained by this synchronous CMC learning with the webcam and the microphone. She expressed her intention to continue learning French.

C: For me, learning foreign language can enlarge my international perspectives and know better the countries I am interested in. ... I think I will continue this learning.

Data extract: Learning Journal C

Unlike Participant C, Participant D's attitudes and motivation towards French learning were negatively affected by her synchronous CMC experience with the webcam and the microphone. Her mean scores in each section of the AMTB questionnaire went down after the study, especially that in the Part Two.

She had great interest in foreign language learning at the start of the study. She stated that she chose studying English in the university because she likes learning foreign languages.

2. *D/H: Yes. We are very interested in foreign language learning.*

...

6. *D: We study English because we like foreign language learning.*

...

52. *D: I love English very much as well.*

Data extract: Interview D&H

Like Participant C, she had a good impression of the French language.

44. *D: For me, French is a beautiful language.*

Data extract: Interview D&H

She also considered learning French could be useful to her future career.

337. *Interviewer: Do you think learning French is helpful to your future job hunting?*

...

339. *D: It must be.*

....

341. *D: Because I have one more language skill.*

Data extract: Interview D&H

In terms of the learning mode, she expressed her satisfaction with doing tasks in the synchronous CMC environment with the webcam and the microphone.

366. *Interviewer: (to D) do you think it's better to conduct tasks through the Internet with the webcam or in an f2f situation?*

367. *D: My mode is good for me.*

Data extract: Interview D&H

For her, the synchronous CMC learning mode she experienced had distance advantage.

139. Interviewer: Right. ... So if you can choose, which mode do you prefer?

140. D: With the webcam. It's more convenient. ... I don't need to run around.

141. Interviewer: You talk about the distance.

142. D: Mm.

Data extract: Interview D&H

D: Furthermore, it'll not be limited by the distance so that we can use it with foreigners through the Internet.

Data extract: Learning Journal D

Although she was the only participant who could not use the Audacity recording program properly along the study, she enjoyed the edit function of the software.

D: 🧑 We used the program of Audacity today!! Oh~ Ya... we recorded our sound successfully!! The quality is also good enough, and the sound is very clear. It's really a good way to record our voice for learning!!

Data extract: Learning Journal D

D: With Audacity, you can modify some part of the trail that you don't like and change it a little bit. Therefore, even you make some mistakes when you record it, you still can adjust it after that. And that's the reason why I like to use the Audacity now. Ha-ha~ 👉👉 Tell you a little secret is that I even use it when I'm singing. 🎤 It's just for amusement. (Sh~ it's a secret!!! 🤫)

Data extract: Learning Journal D

I also found that she enjoyed practising with Participant C, despite her shyness at the beginning of the study due to unfamiliarity with her partner. Over the course of the study, they encouraged each other and had fun from this collaborative learning.

D: I'm shy to speak in French, especially when I need to record it. Hehe..., but after I told my partner about my feeling, I found that she had the same feeling as me. 🤫 So, we encouraged to each other in order to smooth our mood. In this way, I felt better than before.

Data extract: Learning Journal D

D: ..., we tried to speak in French in a tone of emotion. This made me feel so interesting and funny.

Data extract: Learning Journal D

She suggested that pairing students with partners they are not familiar with is better for them to practise the sort of collaborative tasks she had done in this study.

350. D: To start the tasks with someone you are not familiar with and have students get familiar with their partner gradually.

351. Interviewer: As your case...

352. D: Right.

353. Interviewer: You think it's better.

354. D: Yes.

355. Interviewer: Why?

356. D: If you are too familiar with your partner, there's a lack of authenticity. ... It's just like doing assignments. If you do the tasks with someone you are not familiar with, you will feel different.

Data extract: Interview D&H

But it seems that her English knowledge was not of great benefit for her French learning. In fact, the similarities between the two languages seemed to confuse her sometimes.

323. Interviewer: ... Did you think your English learning help your French learning?

324. D/H: Yes.

325. D: But learning French affects English learning as well.

326. H: Right. ...They share some similarities....

327. D: Mm...

328. Interviewer: Similarities can help your English learning.

329. D/H: Right.

330. Interviewer: --- Did you want to learn other languages after our French learning?

331. D: No.

332. H: I want to learn French well first.

333. D: Right. Learning too many languages will confuse me.

Data extract: Interview D&H

D: *Qu'est-ce qu'elle détestez?*

(*What does she dislike?*)

S: *Elle détestez la violence. Et Ève?*

(*She dislikes violence. How about Ève?*)

D: *Elle détestez l'hypocrisie et violence /'viəlɑ̃s/.*

(*She dislikes hypocrisy and violence.*)

Data extract: D's performance in the mid-term oral test.

Z: *Je faire le voyage à Avignon, tu viens avec moi?*

(*I take a trip to Avignon, you come with me?*)

D: *Quelle ... Vous voulez partir quand?*

(*Which ... when will you leave?*)

Z: *Je voudrais partir à 12 heures vendredi.*

(*I want to leave at 12 o'clock on Friday.*)

D: *Oh, je suis désolée. Je suis ... je ne suis pas libre vendredi. Je suis libre samedi and dimanche.*

(*Oh, I am sorry. I am ... I am not free on Friday. I am free on Saturday and Sunday*)

Data extract: D's performance in the final oral test

In addition, she seems to be overwhelmed by doing the tasks, which took her a lot of time to prepare and discuss in order to achieve task completion.

D: *Also, I want to have more time 🕒 to discuss our assignment, but my workload of other classes is heavy, too. 🙄💧 (worry~)*

Data extract: Learning Journal D

Unable to contribute the time needed to task preparation, she was unfamiliar with learning content and felt it difficult to produce output in the tasks. In particular, she had difficulty in asking questions.

177. Interviewer: *... could you deal with them (new content)?*

178. D: *It became difficult to face them. (laughs)*

...

180. Interviewer: *Getting difficult to face them...*

181. D/H: *Mm.*

182. Interviewer: *Why do you think so?*

183. D: *I don't know how to start asking questions. For me, asking questions is difficult.*

...

185. D: *I did not know how to ask many questions.*

...

187. Interviewer: *Did you mean it's difficult to create the conversation context?*

...

189. D: *Mm.*

190. H: *And sometimes I did not know how to use French to express some thoughts. I needed to think for a long time.*

191. D: *Mm.*

Data extract: Interview D&H

In her mid-term oral performance, she gave fluent answers to the questions given by her test partner, but did not often take turns to ask her partner questions. This had a negative effect on her score on the mid-term oral test, which possibly decreased her learning motivation towards French, since she did not feel the sense of accomplishment as she had in English learning.

55. D: *I got the sense of accomplishment while studying English ...*

Data extract: Interview D&H

For Dörnyei (2001b), “learning is a goal-oriented activity” (p.97). Students’ constant evaluation of their progress during learning processes affects their motivation. A feeling of success generated from their perception of approaching their desired outcome can provide further motivation. In Participant D’s case, she did not experience this feeling of success during the learning processes, which might have decreased her motivation towards target language learning.

5.2.3 Participants E & F

Tables 5.5 and 5.6 show that this synchronous CMC learning experience did not greatly affect Participant E’s attitudes and motivation towards French learning. Her mean scores in all sections before and after the study were very similar.

Participant E said she likes learning a variety of languages.

56. *E: I like learning different languages.*

Data extract: Interview E&F

The reason she chose learning French was because she used to hear French spoken by some of her classmates and had therefore formed a good impression of it.

64. *E: Some of my classmates used to learn French. I think it's beautiful.*

65. *Interviewer: Beautiful? Have you had any occasions to have contact with it?*

66. *E: They sometimes talked between them in French ... I thought it's beautiful ...*

Data extract: Interview E&F

She also considered learning French would be useful to her future career, although she could not identify a specific usefulness of this language at this moment.

67. *Interviewer: Do you think learning French is useful to your future job hunting?*

...

69. *E: It's useful ... nowadays it's better to learn foreign languages as many as possible ...*

...

75 *E: I think I can learn it first ... it might be helpful in the future ... my father encouraged me learning as many foreign languages as possible.*

Data extract: Interview E&F

The intervention program offered her a new learning experience.

E: This is the first time I chat with someone in French online. It's a fresh experience.

Data extract: Learning Journal E

In the interview, she expressed her intention to take a higher-level French course.

430. *E: I expected to take a French course from the English department ...*

we just discussed happily ...

...

433. *E: ... we wanted to take more French courses ...*

Data extract: Interview E&F

It seems that her interest in French was maintained by this synchronous CMC learning with the microphone, although she said she preferred involving webcam in her spoken communication.

As to Participant F, it's found that after the study, her mean scores for the statements in nearly all the sections (except section 2) went up. The synchronous CMC learning with the microphone seemed to have positive effect on her attitudes and motivation towards French learning.

However, her mean scores against the statements in the section 5 went up as well. After the intervention program, her score for the statement – 'knowing French isn't really an important goal in my life' – changed from 3 (Slightly Disagree) to 5 (Moderately Agree). It seems that doing the tasks in this French course occupied a lot of her time, which influenced negatively her learning in the other compulsory courses.

9. *F: For me, it's quite intensive. ... sometimes, I was not able to finish revising before doing the tasks.*

10. *Interviewer: You were not able to finish ...*

11. *E: ... a lot of learning content ...*

...

13. *E: Even more than content of our major program ...*

14. *F: Right. (laughs)*

Data extract: Interview E&F

In terms of the other statement – 'I haven't any great wish to learn more than the basic of French', her score changed from 2 (Moderately Disagree) to 4 (Slightly Agree) after the intervention program. This seems to conflict with her statement in the interview that she wishes to take a higher-level French course.

430. *E: I expected to take French course from the English department ... we just discussed happily ...*

431. *F: Right.*

...

433. *E: ... we wanted to take more French courses ...*

434. *F: Right.*

Data extract: Interview E&F

In fact, from my interaction with Participant E and F, I perceived that they were not active in this form of French learning. It seems to me that they did not make the effort to solve the problems they encountered during the study. Their accounts in the interview suggested that the learning strategies they employed to complete the tasks were quite limited in comparison to those of Pairs 1 and 2.

T: I asked some pairs of students (including Participants E and F) to stay after the class to help their pronunciation by email. But none of them stayed.

Data extract: Teacher's journal

As the course progressed, they were invited several times to stay after the classes to talk to me about their problems/questions they had in doing the tasks. They always said there were no problems/questions, because they thought their problems/questions were personal and other students might not have had their problems/questions. They behaved in just the way that Nimmannit (1998) described as typical of Asian students, tending to “seek anonymity within the group rather than risk ridicule by speaking out on one’s own” (p.1).

377. F: Sometimes, we thought that's our problems.

378. E: We thought that's our problems. Other students did not have the similar problems.

379. F: I thought that's me who didn't absorb well the course content ... and I thought I might be able to understand better if I studied harder...

Data extract: Interview E&F

In addition, their past learning experiences makes them consider the teacher an authority figure and not to ask questions, even when they find what the teacher say is wrong. Their fear of the teacher also stopped them raising their problems /questions with me.

381. E: Eastern students don't get used to question their teachers ...

...

383. E: If we have problems ...

384. F: ... we won't question teachers ...

385. E: ... we won't ask.

386. F: ... even we find problems in your corrections, we won't tell you. Because we will doubt what we have done is right.

387. E: *Mm.*
388. F: *Our first thought is that we are wrong ...*
389. E: *I think this situation is caused by Taiwanese students' learning habits*
390. F: *Right. Learning habits ...*
391. Interviewer: *Ok....*
392. E: *We always receive passive education ... we get used to accepting what the teachers say.*
- ...
396. F: *(laughs) we are afraid of the teacher ...*
397. E: *Right.*
- ...
400. E: *... from our past learning experiences, if we raised our problems to the teacher, some of them would tell you how to solve problems, but some of them would scold you ...*
- Data extract: Interview E&F*

In Littlewood's (2000) study, he questioned the view that Asian students really want to listen and obey in classrooms, which is a common preconception about Asian students and their learning attitudes. From the participants' responses to his questionnaire, he discovered that no matter how their actual behaviour was in classrooms, Asian students would not like to be 'obedient listeners' in classrooms. He suggested Asian students' passive learning attitudes, if adopted in classrooms, probably were caused by "the educational contexts that have been or are now provided for them, than of any inherent dispositions of the students themselves" (p.33). Gan (2009) also found that Asian students' attitudes towards strategies they use and motivation for learning the target language are determined by social environments and institutional contexts, rather than cultural traditions.

The findings of the above two studies allow me to infer that the passive learning attitudes of Participant E and F in this study were only a result of their past learning experiences – and might potentially be changed by a new learning experience.

The adoption of CMC mode in this study changed my interaction with the students. Through email and MSN, I was able to provide more personal feedback and support for them outside the classroom. In Participant E and F's case, I commented on their progress by email after finding their pronunciation improvement in the third oral task. They expressed their desire to receive such feedback during the interview.

221. Interviewer: ... Do you think feedback given by me was helpful?

222. E/F: Yes.

223. F: I desired to read your feedback. (laughs)

224. E: I'd like to see what feedback you gave us ...

225. F: your comments ...

226. E: Right.

227. F: I checked my email often after sending you the files ...(laughs)... to see what comments you gave.

228. Interviewer: How did the feedback help you?

229. F: Your corrections ... I could find my problems ... your encouragement ...

230. E: Mm.

Data extract: Interview E&F

The intervention program allowed me to establish a new relationship with the students. The openness of Participant E and F inclined me to think that their fear of the teacher was reduced after this study. Their new relationship with me might be a reason for the positive impact on Participant F's attitudes and motivation towards French learning.

5.2.4 Participants G & H

A comparison of Table 5.5 and 5.6 reveals that the intervention program had a positive effect on Participant G's attitudes/motivation towards French learning.

For her, knowledge of foreign languages provides the instrumental function that can give her a competitive edge in the future job market.

4. G: In today's society, we import many things from other countries. We could have contact with many foreign people or we trade with them. I think learning foreign languages should be important to my future job hunting.

Data extract: Interview C&G

But her choice of learning French was for an affective reason – to better understand opera sung in French.

15. G: *I like the opera. Many of them are in French. I think learning French can help me understand better the opera. I don't want to rely all the time on Chinese subtitles.*

Data extract: Interview C&G

Over the course of the study, Participant G seemed to adapt well to synchronous CMC learning. She seemed to me to be an active learner, who took the most advantages from the learning environment. She found her own strategies to resolve the problems she encountered during the learning processes and to complete the tasks.

55. G: *For me, one of the advantages of using MSN is if you cannot talk to your partner, you can type. You can see words, you can also see the person and hear his/her voice.*

Data extract: Interview C&G

In the applied linguistics literature, a person who has a capacity for active, independent learning can be regarded as an autonomous learner (Dickinson, 1995:167). Dickinson (1995) suggested a learner's active and independent involvement in his/her own learning (autonomy) "increases motivation to learn and consequently increases learning effectiveness" (p.165). This could be reflected in the way Participant G's attitudes/motivation towards French learning was enhanced by the intervention program. She tried to get information from me about opportunities to take further French courses after the study.

In contrast, the intervention program has a negative effect on Participant H's learning attitudes/motivation. Her mean scores in each section went down after the study, particularly in section 3, which investigated the participants' attitudes toward French-speaking people.

Participant H expressed her strong motivation to learn English. She had been brought up in America, and after her return to Taiwan at the age of six, she continued receiving English education in an American school in Taiwan during each summer vacation. Her exposure to English was therefore much more frequent than most Taiwanese students'.

10. H: *No. I love English very much. That's why I chose it.*

...

17. H: *I was born in America and stayed there till I was six.*

...

19. H: ... then I went to the Morrison American school....

...

21. H: ... I went there during the summer vacations. I did my studies in the normal schools.

Data extract: Interview D&H

She chose taking this French course was because it is difficult to learn French outside university settings.

43. Interviewer: I'd like to know why you are interested in French learning?

...

45. H: ... few people learn it (French). Most people learn Japanese. ... And it's not easy to learn French outside school settings. So since the university offered us this course, I chose learning it.

46. Interviewer: Why did you choose studying the English program?

47. H: Because I love English very much. This is my personal interest.

48. D: There are not a lot of universities offering the French program.

49. H: Right. Very limited.

Data extract: Interview D&H

The other reason for her to learn French was that she recognized it would be helpful in her future job hunting.

337. Interviewer: Do you think learning French is helpful to your future job hunting?

338. D/H: Mm.

339. D: It must be.

340. H: Right.

341. D: Because I have one more language skill.

342. Interviewer: One more language skill?

343. D/H: Mm.

344. Interviewer: Have you had an idea what you are going to do in the future?

...

346. H: I hope to do something related to foreign affairs.

347. Interviewer: Something related to foreign business?

348. H: I am not quite sure. ... Something related to foreign business, yes. I think I am right to learn French because there are a lot of companies recruiting staffs who can have French abilities. ...

Data extract: Interview D&H

After the intervention program, she expressed her satisfaction with her learning mode and task partner. She also said she did not encounter many technology problems.

155. Interviewer: Did you encounter any technology problems during the experiment?

156. H: No. Except the problem with the Audacity program.

Data extract: Interview D&H

But like Participant D, Participant H did not gain great benefit from her English knowledge in this learning. In fact, her long exposure to English seemed to have an adverse effect on her French pronunciation learning, as well as on her partner's (as we saw in Section 5.1.4).

323. Interviewer: ... Did you think your English learning help your French learning?

324. D/H: Yes.

325. D: But learning French affects English learning as well.

326. H: Right. ...They share some similarities....

Data extract: Interview D&H

In addition, she thought that the pace of the course was too fast. She sometimes had to start doing the tasks without being familiar with the task content. That caused her difficulties in carrying out the tasks.

H: We are not familiar with the content of this task. It takes us a lot of time to discuss. I think this might be caused by the speedy rhythm of the course in this semester. We need to spend more time on absorbing and thinking, which takes us more time to do the tasks.

Data extract: Learning Journal H

Participant H did not appear to be active in this form of learning. She was the only participant who did not apply for membership of the class bulletin board over the study, which restricted the functions she could have access to on the class bulletin board (e.g. downloading files).

411. Interviewer: Mm. ... In our experiment, we also used the classroom bulletin board. Do you think it's helpful?

412. D: Yes.

413. H: I have not joined as a member ...

Data extract: Interview D&H

The lack of pre-discussions and her unfamiliarity with the task content resulted in her being dominated by Participant G, who had imagined the conversation situations alone before starting the MSN written tasks.

161. G: I usually looked for some words before my online meeting. I thought of the conversation situations first. Sometimes my partner did not do preparation before our meeting, I told her how we could develop conversations. Doing so allowed me to speak sentences I have had in mind.

162. Interviewer: Mm.

163. G: If we both did not know something, we discussed together.

Data extract: Interview C&G

Her interaction with Participant G fell into the dominant/passive interaction pattern described in Storch's (2002) model of dyadic interaction. In such a pattern, the dominant participant "takes an authoritarian stance and seems to appropriate the task" (p.129), while "the other participant seems to adopt a more passive, subservient role" (p.129) in pair work. Very little negotiation occurs during the dominant/passive pair interaction. The dominant participant makes most of the decisions in regards to language choices, while the passive participant offers little input. Therefore, knowledge transfer in this interactive pattern is very limited, since the passive participant contributes little and provides few challenges to enhance the collaborative aspect of the learning task.

Participant H's passivity may have been due to her low ability to explore strategies in order to adapt to a new learning environment, which she was not aware of. This new learning experience did not give her the sense of accomplishment that she got from learning English. This might have impacted negatively her attitudes/motivation towards the target language learning.

55. D: ...got the sense of accomplishment while studying English ...

56. H: Yes. The sense of accomplishment.

Data extract: Interview D&H

5.2.5 Participants I & J

From Tables 5.5 and 5.6, it can be seen that the combination of the mixed learning modes impacts positively on Participant I's attitudes/motivation towards French learning. Her mean scores in all sections went up after the study. In particular, her mean score in the Part 2 changed from 4.7 to 6.9. The score increase in the section 4 (Integrative orientation) is also noticeable.

Before the study, Participant I had had affection for foreign language learning. When asked for reasons of this affection, she was not able to provide any particular reason. She felt happy when she was involved in language learning.

2. I: I like learning languages.

...

19. I: I want to learn many languages. ...

20. J: She loves learning languages.

...

23. Interviewer: Why do you want to learn many languages? ...

24. I: I love languages and music. I just like to learn them. There are no particular reasons.

...

26. I: I feel happy while learning them.

Data extract: Interview I&J

She used to have a short contact with the French language before her university studies. But she did not express any particular preference for French over other foreign languages. The reason she came to this course was that the class times suited her personal schedule.

22. I: ... I used to have contact with French at the first year in my senior high school. The teacher showed some movies of Jean Renoir to us. He was Swedish. He could only speak English and French. I went to his course when I was free. It was not a compulsory course.

Data extract: Interview I&J

Participant I came across as a reflective learner who tended to take responsibility for her learning. She was not only able to point out different discourse types between the MSN text environment and the spoken communication, but also discovered for herself that her inability to produce spontaneously stemmed from her dependence on the MSN written records while doing the spoken tasks. The positive impact of the intervention program on her attitudes/motivation recalls Dickinson's (1995) argument that a learner's motivation can be increased when he/she takes responsibility for his/her own learning.

As to Participant J, her attitudes/motivation towards the target language learning remained stable through the intervention program. Although she was not satisfied with her learning mode, her mean scores in Tables 5.5 and 5.6 were quite similar. After the study, she expressed her intention to continue learning French

151. J: ... however I'd like to continue French learning ...

Data extract: Interview I&J

She was interested in foreign language learning because she wanted to have contact with as many languages as possible. She had come to my French course with an instrumental purpose: to be able to master the target language in order to travel in France in future.

4. J: I hope to learn as many languages as possible.

5. Interviewer: ... are you interested in English learning?

6. J: So so. There are not a lot of things I am really interested in. But I want to have more contact ...

...

12. J: I have intended to go to France since my junior high school.

...

14. J: Yes. The first foreign country I'd like to visit is France.

...

16. J: I don't know. I just want. ... from other people's accounts, from books, I got the impression that France is a good place. I have to visit there once. ...

...

18. J: Mm. If I can make enough money, I would go there. And if I visit there, I should be able to speak their language. Speaking English there might be strange. ...

Data extract: Interview I&J

In this form of learning, she actively sought and found solutions to her problems. She communicated with Participant I through the dormitory telephone when she did not fully understand what she had written in the MSN communication. She also asked for help from me, peers and the Internet to help her overcome the difficulties she encountered while doing the tasks. She was willing to find her own strategies to help her learn successfully. It seems that her autonomy was promoted by this learning.

However, Participant J had a high opinion of quizzes. On the one hand, she regarded them as informational events that provide her with “useful information for further decision making” (Dickinson, 1995) rather than a menace to her self-determination. On the other hand, she valued high grades as rewards for achievement. For Dweck (1986, cited in Dickinson, 1995), motivation tends to be less enhanced in learners who focus on performance outcomes rather than learning outcomes. This could explain why the intervention program did not enhance Participant J’s attitudes/motivation towards French learning after the study.

56. J: ... I think quizzes could help us make the learning content become a part of ours ...

...

58. I: I think quizzes allowed us to know some words are more important than others.

59. J: ... and forced us to memorize ...

60. I: ... to know some words are more useful than others ...

61. J: ... and how to use them. ... Most Taiwanese students study only when they need to pass the exams ...

Data extract: Interview I&J

5.2.6 Participants K & L

Tables 5.5 and 5.6 show that the mixed learning modes had little effect on Participant K’s attitudes/motivation towards French learning. His mean score in each section was quite similar after the study.

Participant hoped to acquire many language skills in order to be competitive in the future job market.

4. K: ... For me, more languages I learn, more competitive I am. So I hope to learn more languages.

Data extract: Interview K&L

His choice of learning French was due to his good impression of the language.

9. K: The University is offering German, French and Japanese courses. I wanted to learn them all, but it would be too tiring. And I heard that French is a beautiful language. That's why I chose it.

Data extract: Interview K&L

Although he had volunteered to participate in this study, he actually preferred the traditional teacher-centred learning mode to this task-oriented curriculum, which required that the students employed more self-directed learning strategies to complete the tasks and consequently resulted in a more learner-centred learning style. As a matter of fact, he seemed to be happily attached to his previous foreign language learning experiences.

Gan (2009) gave a vivid description of the traditional Asian teacher-centred foreign language classroom, where a student rarely has opportunities to involve himself/herself in the target language learning process. Such a classroom is "generally characterised by large-class book-based instruction and mastery of linguistic knowledge" (p.47) such as grammar and vocabulary. Teachers in those classrooms often remind their students "that individual effort is essential for a satisfactory grade in exams at the end of each semester" (p.47).

46. K: I prefer learning grammars.

47. Interviewer: You prefer learning grammars?

48. K: Yes. ... My previous foreign learning experiences focused more on the teaching of reading and writing skills, less on the teaching of listening and speaking skills. I get used to that teaching mode.

49. Interviewer: Our MSN tasks are a kind of writing exercises, do you like them?

50. K: ...I still prefer writing out.

...

236. K: The course of this semester provided more opportunities for the training of the listening and speaking skills ...

237. Interviewer: Mm.

238. K: *The course of the previous semester focused more on the practices of the writing skills ...*

...

284. K: *I like reading the textbook and learn grammars from it.*

285. Interviewer: *Mm ... so you did not like doing the spoken tasks, right?*

286. K: *Right. (laughs) My previous learning did not focus on the practices of the spoken skills. ...*

Data extract: Interview K&L

Participant K seemed to fit the stereotype of Asian students, who are believed to have a preference for rote learning (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). His example was contradictory to Hong Kong students in Littlewood's (2000) study, who "want to explore knowledge themselves and find their own answers" during the learning. He actually liked the passive role he had adopted in the previous foreign language classroom. Nevertheless, his attitudes/motivation towards the target language learning did not decrease after his experience of the intervention program.

As to Participant L, it could be seen from Tables 5.5 and 5.6 that his attitudes/motivation towards French learning was enhanced by the mixed learning mode. His mean score in each section went up after the study.

He had the desire to communicate in foreign languages with the native speakers of those languages.

2. L: *For me, it's cool. I hope to use languages to communicate with foreigners.*

Data extract: Interview K&L

His learning French was inspired by his family, who formed his good impression of the country.

6. L: *My mom suggested me to go to France or Japan after my graduation because I am learning the art. And my aunt's major is French. She made me feel that France is a good place. So I want to learn French.*

Data extract: Interview K&L

In spite of his struggle with the tasks, he enjoyed chatting with others in the target language. Since he was encouraged by his family to do further studies in France, he asked me a lot of related questions after the interview.

56. L: ... No. Actually I felt interesting... I felt familiar with MSN, and I could communicate in French, although I had to study a lot, I felt interesting ...

Data extract: Interview K&L

L: This is the first time I chatted with others in French through MSN. I felt fresh but nervous.

Data extract: Learning Journal L

From my observation, I discovered that the way in which Participant K and L interacted followed Storch's (2002) expert/novice pattern, which I discussed in Section 2.1.3.4. Participant K seemed very patient with Participant L's slow reactions.

T: K and L helped each other's pronunciation. It seems the pair activities are beneficial to students who have low language abilities.

Data extract: Teacher's journal

172. Interviewer: With L, could you usually get his replies immediately?

173. K: Sometimes there were pauses ...

174. Interviewer: Mm ...

175. Interviewer: What strategies did you use to get him back?

176. K: I was waiting for him...

177. Interviewer: waiting? (laugh)

178. K/L: (laugh)

179. L: ... sometimes he asked me questions, but I did not understand those questions, I looked up them in the textbook, it took me time to find answers ...

180. Interviewer: ... (to K) and you waited for him in this situation?

181. K: Yes. I waited for him.

Data extract: Interview K&L

Storch (2002) suggested that learners can scaffold their partner's performance when they work in pairs; and interactions in collaborative and expert/novice

patterns favour such scaffolding. The case of Participants K and L provided good evidence for Storch's statement.

T: I found thanks to these tasks, L got a lot of help from K. In the previous course, he was not offered such opportunities to get support. He did progress in the mid-term test.

Data extract: Teacher's journal

What is worthy of note is that the expert/novice interaction is beneficial not only to Participant L, but also to Participant K, whose teaching and explaining to Participant L may help him articulate his own understanding of the language knowledge he learnt from the class (Allwright, 1984).

In sum, the differences in learning modes were found to play a minor role in enhancing the participants' motivation, which was actually affected by diverse factors over the course of the study. The intervention program had positive impacts on the motivation of Participants B, F, G, I and L, and maintained that of Participants A, C, E, J and K, but influenced negatively the motivation of Participants D and H.

The learning experiences offered by the intervention program appeared to be able to change the participants' motivation, no matter what their initial attitudes towards the target language were. Most of the participants whose motivation was improved or maintained by the intervention program appeared to be more actively involved in their learning and more willing to resolve the learning problems arising during the task completion process. Other factors such as their satisfaction with this learning experience and interaction with me or their task partner could also favour their motivation improvement.

The factors that seemed to decrease the participants' motivation included dislike of their learning mode, dissatisfaction with their learning outcomes, the heavy load of the course, and a lack of appropriate strategies to deal with their learning problems and English interference.

5.3 Webcam and/or Microphone use versus Task performance

5.3.1 Participants A & B

A and B participated voluntarily in the group in which the webcam and the microphone were supposed to be used in the spoken tasks. The use of the webcam does not seem to have had any beneficial effects on Participant A. For her, the only advantage of these technology tools is that she could do tasks whenever and wherever she wanted.

In contrast, Participant B expressed the view that the use of the webcam affected her participation in doing the synchronous CMC tasks. In fact, she used webcam to chat with her parents and Participant A for their daily conversations. The reason she used webcam was that she wanted to know her interlocutors' situations while they were talking to each other.

36. Interviewer: *Do you use microphone or webcam when you chat through MSN?*

37. B: *Yes. With A and my parents.*

38. A: *I use them to talk to B. My parents cannot use the computer.*

39. Interviewer: *Why do you use both?*

40. B: *Through the webcam, I can know what she is doing when we chat.*

41. A: *She often grimaces through the webcam.*

Data extract: Interview A&B

For her, the availability of the image benefited the interaction of two learners who are unfamiliar with or/ distant from each other.

302. Interviewer: *Do you think it's better to not use the webcam or there is no difference for you?*

303. B: *I know A very well. So I think the use of the webcam does not matter a lot. But if I collaborate with someone unfamiliar or someone in the far distance, I think using the webcam matters. I might wonder what facial expressions my partner has when he/she is speaking one sentence. That might affect my following replies.*

Data extract: Interview A&B

Her views confirmed the finding of Wang's (2004b) study that images provided by the video have been greatly appreciated by the distance participants (p.107). Some researchers (Hampel & Hauck, 2004; Lake, 1999; Stacey, 1999) have also suggested that the provision of the image is "perceived as being even more crucial in reducing the impact of the distance" (Wang, 2004b:93) for distance learners.

Also, the webcam involved her better in the spoken tasks as she played roles assigned in the tasks.

B: 1. I feel more involved while doing spoken tasks with the use of the webcam and the microphone. I even asked A to pretend we met each other in a chat room. Haha=v=...

Data extract: Learning Journal B

5.3.2 Participants C & D

Participants C and D were the other pair who were supposed to use the webcam and the microphone in their oral interactions in this study. The use of the webcam had different effects on their learning.

For Participant C, the webcam provided the facial expressions of her partner, which facilitated their oral communication and generated her interest in doing the spoken tasks.

73. C: Through the webcam, I can know my partner's facial expression. It's more interesting. That can arouse my interests. It's not only a speaking task that I should record. Sometimes we need to see others' facial expression in order to know what they want to express, hearing their voices is not enough. ...

Data extract: Interview C&G

She also indicated that it's more relaxing to talk through the webcam than in a face-to-face environment because the fact of being far away from her interlocutor reduced her tension in spite of the existence of the webcam.

75. C: *Using the webcam makes me feel less nervous.... I will be more nervous in an f2f situation. Talking through the webcam creates the distance that is invisible.*

76. Interviewer: *Mm. Do you feel less nervous to talk through the webcam?*

77. C: *Yes. Less nervous than in an f2f situation.*

Data extract: Interview C&G

These advantages conferred by the synchronous CMC environment she experienced inspired her intention to communicate with French native speakers in the target language.

C: After these spoken practices, I am more courageous to speak. It seems that I speak to the person face-o-face when I speak with her through the microphone and the webcam (in spite of the transfer delay problem). It might be very interesting to talk with French native speakers online.

Data extract: Learning Journal C

C: And if I talk to French native speakers, I won't feel stressed since I don't see them face-to-face (although I can see them through webcam).

Data extract: Learning Journal C

However, she suggested that it would be better for me to help learners become familiar with webcam if that learning mode is implemented in a future foreign language classroom.

260. C: *Because I used webcam before, so I get used to it. But maybe you can help students to get familiar with webcam ...*

261. Interviewer: *Mm.*

262. C: *To make them not feel panicked when they are required to use webcam. It's important to have them be familiar with the tool.*

Data extract: Interview C&G

Participant D shared a similar view on webcam use with her partner. She also considered speaking through the webcam was less stressful than in a face-to-face situation where continuous eye contact in oral interaction puts her in tension.

122. Interviewer: *You did not see your partner's face. Did this affect your learning?*

...

124. D: *I think it did.*

...

128. D: *For me, ... I felt more nervous when I saw my partner's face (laughs)*

129. Interviewer: *Do you refer to the f2f situation?*

130. D: *Yes. Yes.*

131. Interviewer: *But through the webcam, you saw your partner's face as well, right?*

132. D: *Right. But I did not stare at her all the time. (laughs) I felt better because I did not stare at the screen all the time.*

133. Interviewer: *Oh, I see.*

134. D: *Mm.*

135. Interviewer: *So you think you are forced to see your interlocutor in an f2f situation ...*

136. D/H: *(laugh)*

137. Interviewer: *But you can choose to not look at your interlocutor ...*

138. D: *(laughs) But she is so close, I might feel more nervous. ... but you may be right. After a period, I talked more to my partner, I felt better. ... I felt nervous at the beginning ...*

Data extract: Interview D&H

Additionally, she used the webcam in the MSN written tasks, where the webcam was not supposed to be included. This was because she intended to increase the authenticity of the tasks. Nevertheless, this use of the webcam stopped her sending texts, which forced her to give up using it.

225. Interviewer: *So you did not use the webcam in the written tasks, right?*

226. D: *Right.*

227. Interviewer: *But did you have the intention to use it?*

228. D: *No. But later, we wanted to make the situations more real, so we used it. ... But if we typed and used the webcam at the same time, sometimes there were lags occurring ...*

229. Interviewer: *There were lags ...*

230. D: *Mm It seemed to not be able to send our messages.*

231. Interviewer: *Mm.*

232. D: *So we switched it off.*

233. Interviewer: *Why did you want to use the webcam at that time?*

234. D: *That made us feel more like in the real situations where we both did not know each other and we did practices together...*

Data extract: Interview D&H

5.3.3 Participants E & F

Participants E and F were assigned to the Group 2, which was supposed not to use webcam in their synchronous CMC oral practices. In their opinion, webcam use can better facilitate their communication.

342. Interviewer: No. Do you consider it's better for you to use webcam while doing the tasks?

343. E/F: Mm.

344. F: It might be better to have webcam.

345. E: Mm.

346. Interviewer: It's better to have webcam?

347. E/F: Mm.

Data extract: Interview E&F

Without using webcam in their spoken tasks, they did not feel they were engaged in real communication due to the lack of facial expressions.

162. F: You feel unreal ...

163. E: You don't know with whom you are talking

Data extract: Interview E&F

136. F: Through webcam, I can get her facial expressions. I know her feelings when she speaks some sentences.

137. E: Without getting my partner's facial expressions, I felt strange. I didn't feel as if I was having a chat.

138. F: Right.

Data extract: Interview E&F

For them, the availability of facial expressions is advantageous to synchronous CMC communication because facial expressions can reveal what their interlocutor thinks and feels. They can therefore know better their interlocutor's situations, as what Wang (2004b) stated "paralinguistic cues such as head nods and facial expressions reduce ambiguity in speech and improve understanding" (p.92).

348. Interviewer: *And both of you are living in the same room. For you, it's better to stay in a same room or in a different room?*

349. E: *In a different room.*

350. F: *For me, they are two different situations.*

351. E: *Mm.*

352. F: *In the same room, we could discuss many things directly. We reached to a compromise easily. But if we are in a different room, ...*

353. E: *it takes time ...*

354. F: *... to discuss. Because we don't know each other's situation.*

...

364. E: *... when you talk with your partner through the Internet, you might have the intention to see his/her facial expressions.*

365. F: *You might guess what he/she is doing ...*

366. E: *what he/she is thinking ...*

367. F: *Yes. He/she might encounter problems, but he/she doesn't mention to you. ... but his/her facial expressions can tell you.*

Data extract: Interview E&F

5.3.4 Participants G & H

Participants G and H were the other pair who were supposed to use only the microphone in their spoken practices. In fact, they used the webcam as well.

For Participant G, the webcam allowed her to speak with an interlocutor at any distance but gave her the feeling that she was talking with him/her face-to-face. Her statement confirmed what had been found in Yamada and Akahori's (2006) study, which suggested that a combination of image and voice in synchronous CMC environment can raise learners' consciousness of presence as they are in face-to-face communication.

39. G: *I did not use it before the experiment. Recently, I used it when I needed to discuss with others about assignments or problems. Sometimes, I use the microphone too. Most of the time, I type.*

40. Interviewer: *When you say assignments, do you refer to our French assignments?*

41. G: *Not always. --- I used it while doing our assignments as well as other assignments.*

42. Interviewer: *(to G) For you, which is better, using the webcam or not?*

43. G: *It's better to use the webcam. I feel like talking to H f2f.*

...

78. G: *I prefer the webcam too. It overcomes the distance problem. Sometimes, it's not easy to meet the person who lives far away from you. Using the webcam can not only overcome the distance problem but also make you feel real just like you talk in an f2f situation.*

Data extract: Interview C&G

She also said that the webcam facilitated better communication because she could see her interlocutor's facial expression and gestures, which made her aware of his/her situations and understand better what he/she wanted to express.

44. Interviewer: *For you, what are the differences between communicating with and without the webcam?*

45. G: *With the webcam, I can see my partner's facial expression and gestures. I can know better what he/ she wants to say.*

46. Interviewer: *Mm. Did you sometimes feel embarrassed to talk through the webcam?*

47. G: *At the beginning, I felt embarrassed. But after getting used to using it with close friends, I did not feel embarrassed anymore.*

48. Interviewer: *Did you use it while communicating with H?*

49. G: *Yes.*

50. Interviewer: *Did you think you communicated better with the use of the webcam?*

51. G: *Yes.*

Data extract: Interview C&G

180. G: *For the spoken tasks, we practised pronunciation twice before recording. Then we started recording. If we were not satisfied with our recording, we redid it until we were satisfied.*

181. Interviewer: *Mm ... in this occasion, you might want to use the webcam, right?*

182. G: *Yes.*

183. Interviewer: *Because you repeated speaking sentences all the time ... did you have intention to see how your partner pronounced through the webcam?*

184. G: *No. I have never had this thought in my mind.*

185. C: *... to see the facial expression ... to see what your partner was doing ...*

186. Interviewer: *to see what she was doing ... (laughs)*

187. G: *Right.*

Data extract: Interview C&G

Unlike Participant G, Participant H was the only person in Group 2 who expressed satisfaction at not having the webcam in the spoken tasks. The only reason she wanted to have the webcam in the task interactions was to see her interlocutor's face. Other than that, she did not feel any differences to speak with or without the webcam.

143. Interviewer: (to H) how about you?

144. H: I had the intention to use the webcam.

145. Interviewer: You desired to use it.

146. D: (laughs) ... to see how your interlocutor looks like ...

147. H: But because I know G, my desire was not that strong ...

Data extract: Interview D&H

To sum up, the inclusion of the webcam in online communication had an important effect on the oral task practices of most of the participants in Group 1 and 2 (except A and H). Webcam use allowed them to have better communication as the availability of facial expressions revealed what their partner thought and felt, which facilitated their understanding of each other. It also inspired some participants' (B, C, D) interests in the conduct of the spoken tasks and involved them better in online communication. Without access to facial expressions, Participant E and F did not feel they were engaged in real communication. In addition, Participant C and D considered that online oral communication with the use of the webcam was less stressful than face-to-face communication.

Chapter 6. Discussions

In this chapter, I interpret the findings of my data analysis and discuss their implications by exploring their interconnections and examining how they are related to the research questions in this study. I also connect my findings to those of previous studies and explain why I support or disagree with what was found in those studies.

The implications of the key results are discussed according to Tables 6.1 and 6.2, which are quantified summaries of participants' learning journals and interviews. The frequency of their words is calculated, which gives a general idea of how often they conducted an activity or how strong their feelings about an activity were.

For example, the term 'pre-discussion' appeared four times in the participants' learning journal (see Table 6.1) and twelve times in their interview transcripts (see Table 6.2.4). But it did not appear in either form of the data for Participants G, H, K, and L. On that basis I conclude that most participants (apart from Participants G, H, K, and L) engaged in pre-discussion before starting practicing a task and Pair 1 had more pre-discussions than other pairs, as the term 'pre-discussion' appeared most often in their data.

In the following sections, I offer the answers to the three research questions by interpreting my findings and discussing their implications.

Table 6.1 Theme frequency in the participant's learning journal

Category/Theme	Group 1				Group 2				Group 3				Sum
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	
<i>1. Learning process: What participants experienced during the practice process</i>													
Review/self-preparation		1	2	1					1		1	1	7
Pre-discussion	1	2	1										4
Practice repetition	2	1	3	1			2		1		1	2	13
Chinese use	1	1					1						3
Pauses occurring during the process	1	1								2			4
Effect on conversation of different learning									1				1

environment													
<i>2. Aids used during the process</i>													
Peer help			1				1						2
Telephone use				1									1
Online help							1						1
MSN Written records help			1										1
<i>3. Benefits of doing the tasks</i>													
Reflection on language use	1		1			1			2	3			8
Vocabulary accuracy/ Writing improvement										2			2
Learning of new sentences							1						1
<i>4. Difficulties/Problems encountered during the process</i>													
Feeling of insufficient learning			1			2	1		1			1	6
Typing		1	3			1		1	1	1	1	1	10
Spelling			1										1
Pronunciation		1	1	1	1		1		3	2		3	13
Output	1		1	1	2	1	2	2		3	1	2	16
Technology	1	2	3	1	1		2	1					11
<i>5. Participants' feelings generated during task practices</i>													
Interesting/funny	1	1	2	1	1	1	1			1	1	1	11
Nervous/ stressful	2		3	1	2		1	1			2	3	14
Frustrating											1		1
Embarrassing				2									2
Useful			2										2
Sense of accomplishment	2	1											3
<i>6. Participants' opinions about task practices</i>													
Cycle of practices: helpful	2	1	2		1	2	1		1	2	1	1	14
Role playing: funny		1		1									2
Task of the final exam: difficult			1										1
Expectation of quizzes			1										1
<i>7. Participants' opinions about the usefulness of the feedback/help</i>													
Conversation sound files provided on the bulletin board				1							1		2
Explicit feedback with			1						1	1			3

explanations for written records (provided in the classroom)																	
<i>8. Participants' views about the advantages of three learning environments</i>																	
<i>F2F</i>																	
Learning location	1	1	1											1			4
Meeting time arrangement	2		1						1								4
Quick recording process		1															1
<i>Microphone</i>																	
Freedom of expression														1			1
<i>Microphone+Webcam</i>																	
Time & Distance advantage				1													1
Tension reduced			1														1
More involved in tasks		1															1
<i>9. Motivation</i>																	
Continue French learning			1														1

6.1 Do foreign language learners develop oral proficiency skills in synchronous CMC environments? If so, how?

In the previous chapter, I have described in detail the participants' oral performances over the course of the study, which showed that three learning modes brought only partial benefits for the participants' oral proficiency development.

Before the study, all the participants stated that they possessed basic computer knowledge. They were all familiar with the Microsoft products for doing school assignments and had used the MSN to keep in contact with their friends and families. All the participants in Groups 1 and 2 had had chat experiences with the use of microphone or webcam.

Table 6.2 Theme frequency of the participants' interview

Table 6.2.1 Participants' habits of using the MSN before the study

	Group 1				Group 2				Group 3			
Participant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Frequently used	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v		v		v
Sometimes used									v		v	
Familiar with microphone before the study	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v				
Familiar with webcam before the study	v	v	v	v	v	v		v				

All the participants, except Participant I, considered the MSN pre-tasks were useful for their oral production at a later stage. At the MSN pre-task stage, they structured their conversation contexts, formulated their thoughts, and reflected on French linguistic features (see Tables 6.1 and 6.2.3). For them, the synchronous CMC text communication, claimed “to be effective as a preliminary step” (Abrams 2003:158) toward later oral communication, provided “the chance to express and respond to a large number of ideas in writing” (Kern, 1995:462). Their engagement in these pre-tasks allowed them to think of the language they needed to use or the meanings they wanted to express (Skeham, 1996a:54) in the main tasks.

Table 6.2.2 Participants' perception of the usefulness of the MSN written tasks

	Group 1				Group 2				Group 3			
Participant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Yes	1	1	3	1	3	4	3	1		1	2	1
No									4			

Table 6.2.3 Advantages of doing the MSN written tasks

	Group1				Group2				Group3			
Participant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
<i>Pros of doing the MSN written tasks</i>												
Having communication privacy					1	1						
Thought formulating/	2		1	1	3	3	1	1				

Reflection on language use												
Regular revising	2	2									1	
Improvement of vocabulary spelling abilities and the writing skill							2					
Facilitate the memorization of vocabulary and sentences							1					
Availability of texts							3					
<i>Cons of doing the MSN written tasks</i>												
Lack of facial expression					1	1					1	

In order to carry out the tasks, they needed to revise the course content individually and have pre-discussions together, in which they built up the scaffolding for the conversations, before starting the MSN written practices. The participants who skipped the pre-discussion step were found to have difficulties in putting themselves into the task situations (see Table 6.2.8).

They either used Chinese or English (their first foreign language) to facilitate their discussions before and during the MSN written practices. The use of these two languages in their practice processes fulfilled several purposes, allowing them to: construct the task situations (Brooks & Donato, 1994; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003), provide linguistic support (Swain & Lapkin, 2000; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003), clarify semantic problems (Swain & Lapkin, 2000; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003), facilitate discussions (Brooks & Donato, 1994), and revise the texts (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003).

T: They use English to help their expressions, even those expressions have been taught in French. There are some Chinese appearing in their written exchanges, too.

Data extract: Teacher's journal

For the spoken tasks, they usually did several practices before recording their oral conversations. They also did recordings several times in order to achieve a satisfactory version for submission. Their oral practices were mainly focused on pronunciation, since most of them (except participants A and B) spoke with the aid of the MSN written records.

Participants I and J modified their MSN written records to adapt them to the oral situations before the spoken tasks. For Participant I, she found a sense of freedom in the synchronous text environment because she did not need to respect the turn-taking rules of conventional oral interaction.

Table 6.2.4 Task practice procedure

Participant	Group1				Group2				Group3			
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Course revising before the meeting	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1
Pre-discussion before starting the tasks	1	2	1	2	1	2			2	1		
Several practices for the spoken tasks	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1
Conversation modification due to different learning environment									1	1		

Table 6.2.5 Functions of Chinese/English

Participant	Group1				Group2				Group3			
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Chinese use	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	2
English use		1					1				1	1
<i>Functions</i>												
Construct the task situations	v	v	v	v	v	v			v	v		
Provide linguistic support	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v			v	v
Clarify semantic problems							v	v			v	v
Facilitate discussions	v	v							v	v	v	v
Revise the texts			v	v								

During the task practice processes, they used various means to help them complete the tasks: telephone, written records, webcam, dictionaries, websites, their peers and the teacher.

They resorted to the telephone when they were not able to convey their thoughts to each other through the MSN texts. Two pairs (Pair 2 and 4) included the webcam

in their communication in the situations where the webcam was not allowed to use in their discussions. In the spoken tasks, they asked for help from dictionaries, websites, other classmates, and the teacher to support their learning, particularly in pronunciation.

Table 6.2.6 Aids used during the task practice processes

Participant	Group1				Group2				Group3			
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Telephone aid during the MSN written tasks				2						1		
Written records aid during the spoken tasks			1	1	2	2	3	2	3	1	3	1
Webcam use during the MSN written tasks				1								
Webcam use during the spoken tasks							4					
Dictionary			1	1			2	1		1		
Website	1		1				1		1			
Peers (other than their partner)		2		1				2	1	1		1
The teacher		1							1	2		

Most participants (except Participant A and B) spoke according to their MSN written records. For them, the use of the written records reduced their cognitive load, which allowed them to pay more attention to pronunciation. They could therefore speak more fluently and confidently. Their cases evidenced something that Skehan (1996a) suggested, that learners' engagement in pre-task planning can help them "devote more attention to how they are going to carry out the task, and can thereby produce more accurate, complex, and fluent language" (Skehan, 1996a:54).

However, since they spoke by reading aloud the written records, some produced their spoken output mechanically without thinking of what they were speaking, which made them perceive the spoken tasks as lacking challenge.

300. C: *With the written records, I practised pronunciation. Without the written records, I might need to think for a long time before speaking sentences.*

Data extract: Interview C&G

T: From the students' oral recordings, I found that they read sentences. Some of their sentences didn't seem natural because the learning environments were different. Only I and J knew they had to modify sentences.

T: Some students did not look at my corrections. They repeated their errors appearing in their original written records. And they did "read", they did not speak naturally.

Data extract: Teacher's journal

Table 6.2.7 Pros and cons of having the written records

	Group1				Group2				Group3			
Participant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
<i>Pros</i>												
Facilitate the oral communication process	1		1	2	2	2	3	1	3	1	3	2
Helpful to pronunciation			2				1		1	5	1	1
<i>Cons</i>												
Lack of reflection during the spoken practices			2				2	1	4	1	1	1
Spoken practices: boring							2					

They also encountered many difficulties while doing the tasks. For them, the main problem in the MSN text communication was to produce the output. They had difficulties in applying their learning to the task situations. Their experiences evidenced Swain's (1985) claim that 'comprehensible input' is not sufficient for learners' language acquisition. Learners need to be provided with output opportunities to find out what they can and cannot do (Swain, 1995).

Typing was another problem they had in the MSN text communication. Some of them typed French slowly. Having to type specific French symbols increased their typing difficulties and complicated the communication process. Moreover, many of them felt that their language knowledge was not sufficient for them to express all their thoughts and create their favourite conversation contexts.

In addition, some technology problems appeared during their task practices. Firstly, the bad quality of the Internet connection in the university dormitory delayed the transmission of the images or sound, which impacted negatively on their practice processes. Bandwidth and latency are regarded by Wang (2004b:93) as two major problems in Internet-based videoconferencing communication. Students' performance could be affected by low bandwidth, causing transmission delays (O'Malley et al., 1996:177). Additionally, their communication was sometimes disrupted by sudden crashes of the computers. "More than one crash during a videoconferencing session will deter students from using it" (Wang, 2004a: 383). Also, their tools occasionally did not work properly.

Another technology problem they encountered was to do with the Audacity program in the oral recordings. Although all the participants in Groups 1 and 2 (except E and F) said that they knew how to use Audacity in the interviews, they were in fact unable to record their partner's sound in their first oral practice. However, they did not inform me and simply did the recordings face-to-face by using an MP3 player. Participant E and F explained that they did not mention the problem to me because they were afraid to.

T: From their files and journals, I found the participants didn't record their oral practices by using the Audacity program. I invited them to stay after the class to talk about the problems they encountered. They told me they could not record the sound of their partner. They could only record their own sound. They did not mention this problem to me before this meeting. Although they were collaborative, they adopted the behaviour ascribed to Asian students – they never ask questions.

Data extract: Teacher's journal

393. *Interviewer: I was very surprised that none of you told me your problem with the Audacity program.*

394. *F: Because we thought we did not use it correctly ... we were so frightened ... we didn't know what we could do because it's near the deadline ...*

395. *Interviewer: Ok. ... (laugh) I don't know what to say ...*

396. *F: (laughs) we are afraid of the teacher ...*

397. *E: Right.*

398. *F: the deadline was near, and we didn't know what to do ...*

399. *Interviewer: I was so surprised that nobody told me the problem ...*

400. E: ... from our past learning experiences, if we raised our problems to the teacher, some of them would tell you how to solve problems, but some of them would scold you ...

401. F: Right. ... and because we told you first we haven't had problems to use the Audacity program...

402. E: We were afraid that you scolded us when we really encountered the using problems...

403. F: ... so we thought we could solve our problems perfectly ...

404. E: Right. We thought we could solve the problems...

Data extract: Interview E&F

Moreover, almost all the participants (except Participants A) had difficulties in pronunciation while doing the spoken tasks. When they spoke, they were not confident of their pronunciation accuracy but could not find appropriate means to support their pronunciation learning.

From their spoken files, I discovered that their pronunciation errors were mutually affected. They learnt erroneous sound from their partner, rather than the correct one. This problem of 'contamination' may be explained by the concept of 'convergence' in accommodation theory, which refers to "the processes whereby individuals shift their speech styles to become more like that of those with whom they are interacting" (Giles & Smith, 1979:46). Such adaptation has been more obviously seen to occur in pronunciation, speech rates, and message content (P.54). Giles and Smith suggested that increasing similarity between people may increase attraction, "convergence perhaps reflects a speaker's desire for his listener's social approval" (P.47).

T: They learn pronunciation errors from each other. But when one pronounces correctly, the other one doesn't learn correct sound from his/her partner. They learn only mistakes.

T: I find that it's rare that the students learn correct sentences from their partner. But they learn easily mistakes from their partner. The first person who made mistakes has impacts on their partner.

T: They learn each other's mistakes.

Data extract: Teacher's journal

Table 6.2.8 Difficulties/Problems encountered during the task practice processes

Participant	Group1				Group2				Group3			
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Difficulties of putting himself/herself into the task situations							1	1				1
Output difficulties				1				1	5			
Typing difficulties			3			1	2					
Perception of insufficient learning			1	1	1	2		1				1
Technology problems	3	1	2	2	1	1		1				
Pronunciation difficulties			2	3	6	6	1	1	1	4	1	1

The feedback the participants received during this study could be divided into two categories: inside and outside the classroom. The feedback outside the classroom included the comments made on their written files, their spoken files and the conversation sound files. They were given either by email or via the class bulletin board.

All of them considered the written feedback was useful to their learning of the target language. In particular, Participant E and F felt inspired by my comments in relation to their performance progress. Nevertheless, few of them benefited from the pronunciation feedback. The students who thought pronunciation feedback was helpful were able to find additional means (e.g. websites, the teacher) to improve their pronunciation. In fact, the students' view on pronunciation feedback did not surprise me. After receiving the students' first oral files, I encountered difficulty in searching for appropriate ways to give them pronunciation feedback, since it was the first time I had tried to support pronunciation learning in CMC environments.

T: I feel it difficult to provide pronunciation feedback to the students in CMC modes. I wonder which kind of pronunciation feedback is better for them.

Data extract: Teacher's journal

In the face-to-face sessions, I provided them with explicit feedback with explanations for their common errors appearing in their written records and sound models for their common pronunciation errors. Most participants expressed the opinion that the sound models were advantageous to their pronunciation

improvement, which I had discovered from their reactions in the classroom. I therefore decided to support their pronunciation learning by providing conversation sound files on the class bulletin board for all participants. It is therefore not surprising that many of them considered those conversation sound files as helpful.

Table 6.2.9 Participants' perception of usefulness of the feedback

	Group1				Group2				Group3			
Participant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
<i>Outside the classroom</i>												
Written feedback (by email)	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Pronunciation feedback (by email)	2	1							1			
Conversation sound files (by the class bulletin board)	1	1		1			2	1		2	3	4
Written feedback for their common errors (by the class bulletin board)				1					1			
<i>In the classroom</i>												
Explicit feedback with explanations for written records				1					1		1	1
Sound models for pronunciation errors	1		1	1				1	1	1	1	1

In terms of task partners, four participants (A, E, F, and L) stated they preferred doing the tasks with someone they know. Participant E and F's preference for someone familiar was because it would be easier to arrange meeting time. Participant A favoured someone familiar because she was shy to talk with someone unfamiliar. For Participant L, his main worry was that unfamiliar partners might be impatient with his slow reactions to give responses.

Participant C, D, G, and H said they preferred having someone non-familiar as their task partners, although some of them initially felt shy or embarrassed. Interesting, these four participants are the only ones who had known their partner before the study. For me, their statements implied that they were satisfied with their task partner in this study.

For Participant C and G, being paired with someone non-familiar offered them the opportunities to make new friends and to get more linguistic and phonological help, since they usually turned to their familiar classmates when encountering learning difficulties. In Participant D's opinion, a non-familiar partner can increase task authenticity, which can make her more interested in doing the tasks. Participant H was more willing to collaborate with a non-familiar partner because she got along well with her current task partner.

The rest of the participants (B, I, J, and K) cared more about their partners' learning attitudes. They said that whether or not they were familiar with their partners made no difference to their task practices. In general, the participants expected that their partners would be open-minded, serious, easy going or collaborative.

Table 6.2.10 Participants' preference for familiar or non-familiar partners

	Group1				Group2				Group3			
Participant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Someone familiar	v				v	v						v
Someone non-familiar			v	v			v	v				
No difference		v							v	v	v	

Table 6.2.11 Reasons of their preference

	Group1				Group2				Group3			
Participant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
<i>Preference for someone familiar</i>												
Difficult to talk with someone unfamiliar	2											
Easy to arrange meeting time					1	1						
Fear of complaint												2
<i>Preference for someone unfamiliar</i>												
Know new people		1	1				1					
Allow to learn more			2				3					
Feel more authentic				1								

Good experience with the current task partner									1				
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Table 6.2.12 Preference for the partner's attitude

Participant	Group1				Group2				Group3			
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Open-minded									1	1		
Serious	1	1		1				1		1		
Easy going				1				1				
Collaborative									1	1		

English, their first foreign language, had some effects on the participants' learning of a second foreign language. The participants mostly affected were those two participants whose major is English. They benefited from some similarities shared by these two language systems, especially in the lexical aspect. The negative impacts of English were mainly on their pronunciation. When they did not know how to pronounce some French words, they pronounced them in an English way.

Table 6.2.13 English effect on French learning

Participant	Group1				Group2				Group3			
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Pros				1				1				
Cons				1	1	1		1				

For some participants, this learning experience was new and interesting, since they had not had the chance to practise the target language outside the classroom in their previous foreign language learning. Although many of them were in the habit of using MSN, they had never chatted online with other people in the target language.

In addition, the task-based curriculum offered them the opportunities to apply their learning of the target language to the simulated situations, which made some of them consider this type of learning useful. And since they had to put themselves in the simulated contexts, Participant B and D had fun while playing the roles assigned in the tasks.

Moreover, the design of doing the tasks in a cycle helped most of the participants be familiar with the task processes. Many of them felt nervous /stressed when they had to text-chat with their partner in the target language because they were not familiar with French typing or when they had to speak the target language and record their oral conversations. The cyclical design allowed them to get used to the new communication means and focused their efforts on task performance. Some of them therefore gained more courage to speak the target language. They also had a sense of accomplishment as they noticed their better performance in the tasks. The above findings recall Skehan's (1996a) statement that the organization of cycles of activity can help learners be "more able to bring to bear the effects of recent restructuring, but at the same time achieve a level of fluency" (1996:49) As a result, learners can give a balance of attention to form and to communication (VanPatten 1990).

However, some of them were of the opinion that the oral tasks were not sufficiently challenging, since they produced the oral conversations relying on the MSN written records. They therefore felt it easy or boring to do the oral tasks. The fact that they 'read' the MSN written records also resulted in their lack of internalising the learning content, which made them consider it difficult to produce spontaneously in the final oral test.

291. Interviewer: *But doing so makes you feel the final oral test difficult.*

292. C/G: *Mm.*

293. C: *If at the beginning, we did not look at the written records while doing the spoken tasks, the final oral test would become easier.*

...

316. G: *Ok. ... I should not look at the written records all the time while speaking.*

317. C: *Now it's difficult to take such a big step forwards.*

Data extract: Interview C&G

T: The students complained the task of the final test was difficult.

Data extract: Teacher's journal

Participant C's problem was even greater than the others' because of her haste to reply in the MSN written tasks, which did not occur in the case of the other participants. Her quick responses did not allow her to pay attention to the form of

the target language. Thus she thought that the written tasks were not beneficial to vocabulary accuracy.

Consequently, some participants preferred having quizzes held during the class time to help them memorize the learning content and pay attention to the form of the target language. In addition to quizzes, some of them expressed their preference for classroom pronunciation practices led by the teacher and classroom peer oral practices to support their pronunciation learning. Although both activities were carried out during the course, the time allotted to them was much less in this semester than in the previous semester. Participant K even pointed out his preference for the learning mode of the previous semester, which did not include any asynchronous or synchronous activities.

Table 6.2.14 Participants' opinions about the task practices

	Group1				Group2				Group3			
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Participant												
Learning experience: fresh					3	2						
Role playing: enjoyable		2		1								
Task design: good					3	3					1	1
The teacher's comments: encouraging					3	4						
No/less output while doing the oral tasks							2		1		1	
(The written tasks) Not beneficial to vocabulary accuracy			1									
Task of the final test: difficult	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	2
Preference for quizzes									2	4	4	
More pronunciation help needed				1			1	1	1	1	2	1
Preference for classroom peer oral practices									4	2		
Preference for classroom pronunciation practices (provided by the teacher)			2	1	1	1		1			1	

Preference for a traditional learning mode												7	
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	---	--

Table 6.2.15 Participants' feelings generated during the task practice processes

Participant	Group1				Group2				Group3			
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Nervous/Stressful			2		1	1					1	2
Boring							1					
Shy			1									
Sense of accomplishment			1				1					1

Table 6.2.16 Participants' perception of the tasks

Participant	Group1				Group2				Group3			
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Interesting					1	1					1	1
Useful											1	1
Easy										1	1	
Difficult			2	2			3	2			1	
Free									1			
Effective									1		1	

Some participants were of the opinion that the course of this semester was demanding because they needed to spend a lot of time on revising the learning content and doing the tasks. Also, since they were required to produce the output immediately after their face-to-face sessions, some of them thought that the course was effective but too rapid. Immediate output was more difficult for those participants who occasionally skipped the classes. Although Participant L was present at all sessions, he encountered the most difficulties in learning because of his initial low language abilities. He was not able to absorb a lot of the course content and follow the feedback explanation given in the classroom.

Table 6.2.17 Participants' perception of the course

Participant	Group1				Group2				Group3			
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Demanding	3	1			1	1				2		2
Intensive/speedy						1					3	1

Difficult to absorb the course content												3
Too much content at a time											3	2
Difficult to catch course speed					1							1

When asked for suggestions for future foreign language classes, they offered a range of ideas.

In terms of oral skills development, Participant I and J thought I should not allow students to use MSN written records in spoken tasks in order that they can internalise what they produce while speaking. Regarding pronunciation learning, some of them suggested that I continue providing opportunities for peer oral practices and pronunciation repetition practices in class. In addition to these two classroom activities, many of them considered that the sound files provided on the class bulletin board were beneficial to pronunciation improvement and suggested that they should be available to my future students.

Besides the sound files, Participant G took the view that I should offer students more French website resources in order for them to explore those sites outside the classroom. Some of them also indicated their preference for a class bulletin board on which I can provide task or test instructions, or my expectations of the task performance for students.

Five participants in the synchronous CMC groups supported the simultaneous use of webcam and microphone in my future teaching. But Participant C thought it would be necessary for me to help learners familiarise themselves with the technology, especially webcam, before their task practices.

For Participant K and L, learning interestingly is important. They hoped that cultural and musical presentations of the target language would form part of my future curriculum. Although the activity of French song singing had been done in the previous semester, it was removed from the curriculum of this semester due to the limited classroom time.

With regard to task partners, Participant B had particular concern for students' learning attitudes. She wanted serious partners who were willing to perform well in the tasks. Although her observation of the other pairs' interaction gave me a better

understanding of the students' learning situations, I consider it unlikely that we can control students' qualities and their willingness to do well tasks in a new foreign language classroom. From a practical point view it is more feasible to pair each student with someone they do not know or with at least two different partners in my future classes. This latter suggestion, from Participant G and J, was also proposed by Storch (2002) who considered that "the teacher need to monitor the pattern of dyadic and group interaction" (p.149) by allowing or encouraging learners to change partners when some negative interaction patters occur.

289. B: *A few of them (other students) seemed busy. ... With A, if we thought we did not do well our tasks, we redid them. ... Some of them were busy in their life, even they did not do well their tasks, they could not find other time to meet online and redo them. ... Maybe I am too exigent.*

Data extract: Interview A&B

Table 6.2.18 Participants' suggestions for a future foreign language class

Participant	Group1				Group2				Group3			
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
No permission for the use of written records during spoken practices									1	1		
Opportunities of doing peer oral practices in the classroom									2	2		
Opportunities of doing pronunciation repetition practices			1									
Provision of sound files			1	2			2	2	1	1	1	1
Use of the class bulletin board				2			1	2			1	
More website resources given							1					
Clear task expectations given before task practices					3	4					1	
Use of the technology tools (microphone + webcam)	2	4	1		1	1						

Technology teaching before starting tasks			2									
Song singing											2	
Culture presentation											1	2
Serious partner		1										
Paired with at least two different partners						1				1		
Paired with students non-familiar				2								

In summary, the intervention program was beneficial to some of the participants' oral skills development. And the learning mode was only one of the factors that influenced the participants' learning. Many other factors generated during the task completion process had different effects on their learning.

The participants' ability to discover strategies and employ a variety of forms of support to assist their learning and overcome difficulties during the study influenced their outcomes to a great degree. The inclusion of particular tasks, such as the MSN written pre-tasks and task recycling, also created favourable conditions for their learning. In addition, most of the participants had a good opinion of some types of support (the written feedback, the explicit feedback with explanations, the sound models) that I offered to help their oral skills improvement.

Nevertheless, a number of activities that the participants considered helpful to their learning and wished to see included in our future curriculum had been used in our previous face-to-face course. This suggests that exclusively online communication could not satisfy these participants' learning needs.

6.2 Do different synchronous CMC modes impact on foreign language

students' learning motivation? If so, why?

From Table 5.5 and 5.6, we can find that the three synchronous CMC modes differently affected the participants' motivation towards French learning. The intervention program had a positive effect on the learning motivation of

Participants B, F, G, I and L, but a negative effect on that of Participants D and H. It had little impact on the learning motivation of Participants A, C, E, J and K.

Table 5.5 indicates that the initial motivation of Participants D, E, H, J and K was higher than of the other participants. Their mean scores in almost all sections were higher than the average mean scores. The participants' initial motivation for this French learning (see Table 6.2.20) involved affective (personal interest, desire for this foreign language learning, and good impression of France/French), instrumental (being competitive in future), goal-related (direct contact with French resources), sociocontext-related (hard to learn French outside the university) and others-related dimensions (influence of friends/relatives).

Table 6.2.19 Reasons for foreign language learning

	Group1				Group2				Group3			
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Participant												
Personal Interest				3	1			3	1	1		
Being cool			1									1
Direct communication with foreigners		1	2									1
Direct contact with resources of the target language						1						
Being competitive in future job markets	1						1				1	

Table 6.2.20 Reasons for French learning

	Group1				Group2				Group3			
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Participant												
Personal interest		1										
Desire to learn many foreign languages			3						2			
Good impression of France/French		1		1	1					1	1	1
Direct contact with French resources							1					
Hard to learn French								1				

outside the university												
Competitive in the future job market					1	1						
Influence of friends/relatives	1				1	1						1

After the intervention program, the learning motivation of Participants E, J, and K did not greatly change, and most of their mean scores were still higher than the average mean scores. We can see that their learning motivation toward French seemed to be successfully maintained by the intervention program. One point worthy of mention is that Participants E and J claimed that they did not favour the learning mode they had in this study. However, the learning motivation of Participant E was sustained by her interaction with the teacher, whereas Participant J seemed to become more autonomous in this learning that promoted her learning motivation. As for Participant K, although he claimed that doing the oral tasks face-to-face was his favourite learning mode, he actually preferred the curriculum of the previous semester, in which all activities were carried out in the classroom. The factor that maintained his motivation seemed to be his collaboration with a task partner of lower abilities, which made him become more involved in this learning by teaching and explaining his language knowledge to his partner.

Table 6.2.21 Participants' perception of their preferred learning environment after the study

	Group1				Group2				Group3			
Participant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Face-to-face	v										v	v
Instant messaging with the microphone								v	v	v		
Instant messaging with the microphone + the webcam		v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v		

The other two participants whose learning motivation remained unchanging were Participants A and C. Their section mean scores stayed below the average mean scores before and after the study. This suggested that the intervention program did not improve their learning motivation toward French. While both participated in the webcam and microphone group, Participant A preferred doing the oral practices face-to-face whereas Participant C was fond of the webcam and the microphone.

Interestingly, Participant A seemed to feel bothered by the technology problems over the study, in spite of her major in computer science. Conversely, despite the technology problems Participant C encountered, she enjoyed the effects that the electronic tools produced on her interaction with her task partner.

The positive impact of the intervention program on the learning motivation of Participants F, I and L seemed higher. After the intervention program, their section mean scores had increased and were higher than the average mean scores. Among them, only Participant L was satisfied with his learning mode in this study. Although he encountered more difficulties than the other participants during the study, it seems that the mixed learning mode provided him with a lot of support, especially peer support. In a traditional face-to-face classroom, it is unlikely that he could receive so much help.

Participants F and I claimed they preferred including webcam (Participant F) or webcam and microphone (Participant I) in their oral practices. In spite of their dissatisfaction with their learning mode, Participant F's learning motivation was improved by the teacher's feedback and comments on her personal performance while Participant I's learning motivation was enhanced by her autonomous learning attitudes.

The other two participants whose learning motivation was increased by the intervention program were Participants B and G. Nevertheless, most of their section mean scores were below the average mean scores after the study. Participant B was the only one whose motivation was enhanced by the synchronous CMC learning mode with the webcam and the microphone. She derived pleasure from doing the tasks in the simulated situations. The use of the webcam allowed her to be better involved in simulation. As to Participant G, she was found to be quite active in discovering her own learning strategies in this learning. Like Participant I, her active attitudes mainly contributed to the improvement of her learning motivation toward French. Warschauer et al.'s (1996c) suggested that the use of CMC in language classrooms can shift authority from the teacher to students, which therefore promotes students' autonomy. The autonomous attitudes of Participants G and I in this learning may be developed by their interactions in CMC environments.

Participants D and H were the only two whose learning motivation toward French was diminished by the intervention program. Most of their section mean scores decreased and were lower than the average mean scores. Both of them were majoring in English. Participant D favoured the learning mode she experienced in this study whereas Participant H preferred including the webcam in her online oral practices. However, she and her task partner used the webcam while doing the oral tasks, which was not supposed to happen according to the study design. Both of them enjoyed collaborating with their partner despite not knowing each other at the beginning of the study.

Nevertheless, it seems that they were overwhelmed by the tasks. They were unable to contribute the quantity of time that completion of the tasks required and sometimes performed the tasks without familiarizing themselves fully with the learning content. The output difficulties were greater for Participant H, since she was unaware of her lack of appropriate strategies to do the tasks, which resulted in her being dominated by her task partner.

In addition, their better knowledge of English seemed to interfere with their French learning. Both of them were greatly fond of English learning at the time they came to this French course. They felt a strong sense of accomplishment from learning English that they did not have from this intervention program. Their demotivation toward French learning seemed to be caused by their preference for English learning. Dörnyei (1998, cited in Dörnyei, 2001b) defined the interference of another foreign language being studied as one of demotivating factors. He posited that when learners are learning two foreign languages at the same time, they may perceive that the learning of the other language threatens the successful mastery of their preferred language, which seemed to be the case of Participants D and H.

The fact that the learning motivation of Participants B, F, G, I and L was improved by the intervention program suggested that the difference in the three CMC learning modes was only one of the reasons that impacted on the enhancement of their motivation. The preceding discussion has shown that the factors generated by CMC learning, rather than the communication medium, mostly affected the change of the participants' learning motivation toward French. This finding is consistent with Dörnyei's (1994) suggestion that learning situation factors mainly affect learners' motivation toward a language after they have decided to learn it.

Table 6.2.22 Impact of potential factors on the participants' learning motivation

	Group1				Group2				Group3			
Participant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Positive factor												
Comments/feedback from the teacher					v	v						
Autonomy in the learning							v		v	v		
Collaboration											v	v
The use of the webcam		v	v									
Negative factor												
Technology problems	v											
Interference of the other foreign language learning				v				v				
Dissatisfaction with their grades in the tests			v	v				v				

Many of them expressed their intention to continue learning French after the study. Those who wished to do so are not necessary those who preferred their learning modes in this study. Again, this suggests that the different CMC learning modes were not the main influence on the modification of the participants' learning motivation toward French.

Table 6.2.23 Participants' intention to continue learning French after the study

	Group1				Group2				Group3			
Participant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
		v	v		v	v	v			v		v

Some findings from this study appear to be inconsistent with the findings of the previous studies. Naiman et al.'s study (1978, cited in Gardner, 1985) suggested that attitudes are important because they determine an individual's active level during language learning. In this study, Table 5.5 shows that Participants D, E, H, J (see S2 and S3 in Table 5.5) initially had better attitudes towards learning French and French-speaking people. However among that group, only Participant J was found to be active along the study.

The literature review also suggested that attitudes toward learning a second language and attitudes toward the community of the second language both “tended to be correlated with proficiency in the language” (Gardner, 1985:60), but the relations which involve attitudes toward learning the language were generally more consistent. Nevertheless, it was found that after the intervention program, although Participants E, F, I, K and L had better attitudes toward French and its community, only Participant L developed better oral skills after the intervention program.

However, Baker (1992) postulated that “the measurement of an individual’s attitudes is unlikely to reveal their attitudes perfectly” (p.18). Learners’ responses to an attitude test may provide a better image of themselves than their real one, or may be affected by the researcher and their perceived purpose of the research. Bearing his advice in mind, it could be that these inconsistencies between the findings were caused by the participants’ unreal responses to the questionnaires.

To sum up, the intervention program had only partial positive impacts on the enhancement of some participants’ motivation. The factor of the learning mode did not correlate closely with change in motivation, which was actually influenced by diverse factors generated during the learning process.

6.3 How do different synchronous CMC environments affect learners’ social presence?

In this study, all the participants had to carry out the pre-tasks in the text-based CMC environment, where nonverbal cues are not available. They then performed the main oral tasks in three different learning situations: face-to-face, synchronous CMC with microphone, and synchronous CMC with webcam and microphone. Among the three situations, nonverbal cues are lacking in the synchronous CMC with microphone learning mode. And even though visual cues are available in the two other environments, the participants’ interaction patterns created by them may be different. In the following sections, I discuss how these different learning environments affected the participants’ social presence.

The eight participants in Groups 1 and 2 said that they used emoticons in synchronous CMC text communication. But Participants C, D, G and H used

emoticons more often than the others. Intriguing, these four participants did not know their partner before the study; it seems that the level of familiarity influenced the participants' use of emoticons.

All the four participants considered the use of emoticons in their text-discussion could allow their partner know their feelings. For Participant C, the use of emoticons could also attract her partner's interest and attention. The function of emoticons in this study was to convey the participants' feelings and emotions, as noted in other text-based CMC studies (Rourke et al., 1999; Tu & McIsaac, 2002).

Table 6.2.24 The use of emoticons in the MSN written communication

	Group1				Group2				Group3			
Participant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Emoticon use in this learning	1	1	3	2	1	1	2	3				
Emoticon use in other occasions	2	2			1	1					1	

Table 6.2.25 Reasons for using emoticons

	Group1				Group2				Group3			
Participant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Arouse the partner's interest			1									
Express their own feelings			2	1			1	2				
Have the partner pay more attention			1									

Although Participants A, B, E, and F also used emoticons in their MSN text communication, they actually used them less here than in other daily situations. Participants E, F, K and L said that they did not use or avoid using emoticons because they considered the tasks to be formal assignments. For them, the use of emoticons would have increased the informality of the tasks.

Interestingly, Participant B thought the use of emoticons could make her less native speaker like, and she therefore avoided using them. However, she used emoticons while chatting with Participant A. It seems to me that she regarded this text-based communication as oral communication; she did not put boundaries between writing and speaking.

235. Interviewer: *Did you use emoticons in the written tasks to express your feelings?*
236. A/B: *No.*
237. A: *Only when we chat. (laughs)*
238. B: *Right.*
239. Interviewer: *You did not use emoticons while doing tasks.*
240. B: *Very few.*
241. A: *Mm.*
242. Interviewer: *What did you do if you wanted to express your feelings while doing tasks?*
243. B: *Emoticons did not appear in the files we sent you.*
244. Interviewer: *Did they appear in your original written records?*
245. A: *No.*
246. B: *Yes.*
247. A: *Very few.*
248. B: *Yes.*
249. A: *We used them in the chat after finishing the tasks.*
250. Interviewer: *Only in the chat?*
251. A: *Mm.*
252. Interviewer: *Why did you avoid using emoticons while doing the tasks?*
253. B: *Because we had to delete them later. That's more complicated. (laughs)*
254. A: *(laughs)*
255. Interviewer: *Did you feel natural without using emoticons in your communication?*
256. B: *I always pretended I was a French native speaker. (laughs)*
257. Interviewer: *In the written tasks or in the spoken tasks?*
258. B: *In both. (laughs) When I learned English, I pretended I was an English native speaker. My classmates used to laugh at me. ... I imaged the way they talked, their tones, ---etc. I just wanted to pretend. (laughs).*
259. A: *(laughs)*
260. Interviewer: *Doing this made you not want to use emoticons, right?*
261. B: *Mm. Just like daily conversations.*

Data extract: Interview A&B

Table 6.2.26 Reasons for not using emoticons

	Group1				Group2				Group3			
Participant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Complicate the		1										

communication												
Consider the tasks as daily conversations		1										
Consider the tasks as formal assignments					1	1					1	1

Participants E, F, and K pointed to the lack of visual cues as one disadvantage of the text-based communication, which can make the medium less personal (Walther & Burgoon, 1992). For Participant K, this paucity of visual cues might have had a bigger impact on his perception of social presence because he did not usually get immediate responses from his task partner. For Gunawardena (1995), as we noted earlier, immediacy enhances social presence.

118. E: *Through typing, you cannot feel ...*

119. F: *... your partner's emotions.*

Data extract: Interview E&F

168. Interviewer: *Do you consider it's a problem that you could not see your partner while doing the MSN tasks? ...*

169. K: *Yes ...*

170. Interviewer: *What do you think of this situation?*

171. K: *... sometimes through the MSN, I talk with a friend but don't get his/her immediate replies or he/she disappears suddenly ...*

172. Interviewer: *With L, could you usually get his replies immediately?*

173. K: *Sometimes there were pauses ...*

Data extract: Interview K&L

Two participants (Participant C and D) used the webcam in their MSN text communication, because they wanted to see each other's image. For Participant C, emoticons and the webcam had the same function – to convey feelings. When nonverbal cues are available through the webcam, her reason for using emoticons was reduced.

249. Interviewer: *In this case, did you still feel the need to use emoticons when you used the webcam?*

250. C: *I felt less need when I used the webcam.*

251. Interviewer: *You just wanted to let your partner know how you really felt.*

252. C: *Yes. It's a kind of assistance...*

...

254. C: *If I have to choose between the webcam and emoticons, I prefer the webcam ...*

255: *Interviewer: You prefer the webcam.*

256. C: *Yes. I would use less emoticons if I could use the webcam, since I could see my partner.*

Data extract: Interview C&G

In addition to text-based communication, the participants of this study carried out the oral tasks in three different situations, which created different interaction patterns between them.

According to the participants, the level of immediacy was higher in face-to-face learning environments. Without technology problems, they considered problem solving was quicker, sound recording was more efficient, and meeting time arrangement was easier. In addition, physical contact and speech tones are available in face-to-face communication. And since they could perform the oral tasks wherever they want, their perception of privacy in the face-to-face learning mode was higher in comparison to the other two synchronous CMC modes.

Nevertheless, some participants thought face-to-face oral communication would make them feel more nervous and less real. In addition, the advantage of distance was lacking in face-to-face situations.

As to the synchronous CMC with the use of microphone learning mode, only Participant I was of the opinion that it could possibly provide her with more authenticity than face to face. However, Participants E and F, who had experienced this learning mode, perceived a lack of authenticity in this environment because images were not available.

Synchronous CMC with the use of webcam and microphone was the favourite learning mode of most participants (See Table 6.2.21). Many took the view that the use of webcam allowed them to see mutual facial expressions and express each other's emotions that made them feel more real. For Participants B and D, the webcam promoted the simulation of the tasks, which better involved Participant B in doing the oral tasks.

The other advantages of the learning environment suggested by the participants included the reduction of tension and the flexibility of time and distance. Participant G gave the opinion that synchronous CMC with the use of webcam and microphone is a rich learning medium because of the simultaneous availability of images, texts and voice. With her partner, they sometimes turned on the webcam, which was not included in their learning mode, to get each other's nonverbal cues in the spoken practices.

45. G: *With the webcam, I can see my partner's facial expression and gestures. I can know better what he/ she wants to say.*

Data extract: Interview C&G

Table 6.2.27 Participants' views about the advantages of three learning environments

Participant	Group1				Group2				Group3			
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
<i>F2F</i>												
- Avoid technology problems	3	3	2		1	1						
- Learning location		1			1	2			2	2		
- Immediate problem solving	1				1	1						1
- Physical contacts		1										
-Partner's speech tones available	1											
-Meeting time arrangement: easier					1	1						
-Task completion process: quicker	1				3	3						
<i>Microphone</i>												
- Authentic communication									2			
<i>Microphone + Webcam</i>												
-Authentic communication					3	3	2		2			
-Facial expressions/images available		1	2		3	4	2	1		1		
-Expressions of self feelings						1						

- Know the partner's feelings					1	2						
-Tension reduction			2	2	1	1						
-Time & Distance advantage	2	4		1		1	1					
- Feel more involved			1									
- Facilitate role playing		2		1								
- Text assistance							2					

Table 6.2.28 Participants views about the disadvantages of three learning environments

	Group1				Group2				Group3			
Participant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
<i>F2F</i>												
Feel nervous			1	2	1	1						
Not authentic					3	4						
No distance advantage						1						
<i>Microphone</i>												
No privacy					1	1						
No images of the partner					2	2						
Not authentic					1	2						
<i>Microphone+webcam</i>												
No privacy		1										
Bother/bothered roommates			1		1	1	1					

The above discussion has suggested that the participants perceived the highest level of social presence in the synchronous CMC environment using webcam and microphone, and the lowest in the synchronous CMC environment with the microphone. This finding can be supported by Bruce's suggestion (1996) that facial expressions are more reliable than voices or gait as cues in identifying others' emotional states. Communication may suffer when visual cues are lacking. In a context where nonverbal cues are unavailable, the only way for one to determine if an interlocutor has finished a turn is from their intonation (Kötter, M., Shield, L. & Stevens, A., 1999).

The main factors that impacted on the participants' perception of social presence in these three learning modes were the availability of nonverbal cues, peers' immediacy, and the feeling of being 'real'. The other factors were familiarity with their partners, the location in which they performed the oral tasks and their perception of distance between each other (intimacy).

Although visual cues are available in both synchronous CMC with webcam and microphone and also face-to-face, the participants favoured the former, where they perceived themselves to be more real persons. Doing the oral tasks in the face-to-face context gave Participants I and J a feeling that they were doing assignments.

The participants' perception of mutual distance was the other factor that influenced their preference for the synchronous CMC using webcam and microphone. Participants E and F stated that they would have been more nervous if they had carried out the oral tasks with someone unfamiliar in a face-to-face situation, which was confirmed by the evidence from Participants C and D. Unknown to each other before the study, they said they felt less nervous to speak through the webcam than face-to-face. For these four participants, the level of intimacy in face-to-face communication was higher, which generated more discomfort between the two unfamiliar communicators. This finding provides negative evidence against the assumption of the original research into social presence, namely that contact enhances social presence; it suggests rather than *an appropriate* level of contact can better enhance the learners' social presence.

In the text-based CMC environment, the participants' social presence was mostly enhanced by emoticons. The use of emoticons is one of ways that learners express their affect (Rourke et al., 1999). Emotional expressions are crucial to communication because they can contribute to social presence development among individuals (Garrison et al., 2000).

In addition, as found in Rourke et al.'s study (1999), some participants (e.g. Participants C and D) conveyed their feelings by self-disclosure, which enhanced their social presence. For Garrison et al. (2000), self-disclosure is "a sharing of feelings, attitudes, experiences, and interests" (p100). Through self-disclosure, communicators are encouraged "to more forth-coming and to reciprocate, with the outcome being increased trust, support, and sense of belonging" (p100).

D: I'm shy to speak in French, especially when I need to record it. Hehe..., but after I told my partner about my feeling, I found that she had the same feeling as me. So, we encouraged to each other in order to smooth our mood. In this way, I felt better than before.

Data extract: Learning Journal D

In addition to the unintended use of the webcam by four participants (C, D, G and H), the other surprising situation was two participants' (J and D) use of the dormitory telephone in MSN text communication, since they considered problem solving was more efficient (immediate) through telephone than through texts. Tu and McIsaac (2002) pointed out that misunderstanding is a major concern for many text-based CMC students because they may have more difficulties in expressing intended meaning. The telephone use here can be considered as a strategy that the two learners employed to increase the quality of their communication, which in turn enhanced their feeling of social presence.

For Participant D, the use of telephone also helped to increase the familiarity with her partner, which was important in text-based CMC communication (Tu & McIsaac, 2002).

410. D: ... We used the telephone only at the beginning of the experiment; after knowing better each other, we didn't use the telephone anymore.

Data extract: Interview D&H

Although Participants C, D, G, and H stated that they preferred having someone unfamiliar as their partner, unfamiliarity seems to have had a negative impact on the interaction between Participants C and D at the initial stage of the study. Participant D admitted feeling embarrassed, while Participant C was found to get nervous easily. It seems therefore reasonable to recommend that teachers can allot time for students to get to know each other at the start of learning.

378. C: No. I was hurried to send back my replies. I did not memorize those words immediately. I did not want to have my partner wait for me for a long time. I might feel sorry for that.

Data extract: Interview C&G

D. I'm not so familiar with the new partner. (embarrassing) I don't know whether we can work together very well.

Data extract: Learning Journal D

Keyboarding skills were found to be the other factor that was detrimental to the participants' perception of social presence in this study. Most participants were not familiar with alphabet keyboarding before the study (see Table 6.1, Table 6.2.8). Since they had to type in order to communicate with each other in the text-based CMC environment, they were 'handicapped' in their online communication (Tu, 2001) because of their slow typing, which generated anxiety of the sort described by Gunawardena (1991, cited in Tu, 2001). The need to type French specific symbols worsened this communication problem. Nevertheless, omitting typing these symbols would diminish the learners' attention to word forms and decrease their lexical accuracy.

Perse et al. (1992, cited in Tu, 2001) found that the better the students perceived their own computer expertise to be, the higher their social presence was. Therefore, I suggest that language teacher allows students familiarise themselves with keyboarding skills required for their learning before the course.

To sum up, the factor of the learning mode had major effects on the participants' perception of social presence. The level of social presence that they perceived was the highest in the CMC using webcam and microphone and the lowest in the CMC using microphone. The availability of facial expressions played a vital role in improving the participants' social presence in CMC. Lack of familiarity and keyboarding skills were two factors that affected negatively the participants' social presence.

In conclusion, the factors generated in the three different learning situations, rather than the situations themselves, mostly impacted the participants' oral proficiency development and their learning motivation towards the target language. However, the difference in the learning situations was the main reason that affected the participants' perception of social presence.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

7.1 Summary of the study

The evidence discussed in Chapters 5 to 6 suggests that the learners' oral proficiency development and motivation did not strongly correlate with the three different learning environments, although these did greatly affected the learners' perception of social presence. Factors involved in the learning processes explored in this study seem quite varied and complex, and influenced the participants' spoken learning outcomes and their motivation to different degrees.

Most of the factors that had greater impacts on the learners' oral proficiency development were in terms of task design and the learners' strategy use. Most participants reported that they benefited from task practice in cycle that increased their familiarity with the learning environment and encouraged them to speak without fear. The results also showed that the selection of the text-based CMC interaction as the pre-task activity was successful. Almost all the participants reported its effective use as a preliminary activity that mainly focused on thought formulation and reflection on language use. Additionally, the great number of similarities found between their text-based chat interaction and oral production provides evidence to support Chun's (1994) contention that competence gained from using CMC can be transferred to oral discourse competency.

Nevertheless, the study does not support Chun's other claim that electronic interactions are essentially written versions of oral conversation. My perception that the learners' direct application of chat discussions in oral performance was unnatural tends to suggest that learners cannot transfer directly their chat discussions to spoken conversation, either in synchronous CMC or face-to-face contexts. They need to be made aware that discourse in different learning environments may be different, so that they are prepared to adapt their discourse to different situations.

In addition, the participants' reliance on the chat written records in spoken tasks seemed to be unavoidable but had significant effects on the participants' following

oral production. Although the use of the chat written records allowed the learners to focus their attention on pronunciation and facilitated their communication in the main oral tasks, they could not speak spontaneously in the oral tests and therefore most of them found the final oral test was difficult (see Table 6.2.14). However, if they had spoken without looking at the chat written records, their communication might have been hampered by pronunciation error (Abrams, 2003) that would have frustrated them. Thus, I suggest that teachers of beginner-level online classes should clearly set task goals, based on which they decide whether or not they will allow their learners to use the chat written records as an aid in the main oral production tasks. I expect the higher learners' language level is, the less their reliance on the chat transcripts will be.

A number of difficulties that the participants encountered over the study also influenced their learning outcomes. Those mentioned most frequently by the participants included output, pronunciation, technology, and typing. Among these, technology (Wang, 2004b; Hampel, 2006) and typing problems (Ortega, 1997; Tu, 2001) had been reported by previous CMC researchers. As far as the learners' output difficulties were concerned, they might have been caused by unfamiliarity with a task-based curriculum, since this was the first time they had learnt a foreign language through this method. In their previous learning experiences, the only opportunities for them to produce output were in tests, which they got used to, and some of them recommended that I should adopt such tests in my future language courses. Pronunciation also caused great problems to their learning, since for most of them I was the only source of pronunciation input. However, the solution I devised – the provision of the sound models on the classroom bulletin board – was welcomed by many participants, who recommended their inclusion in future.

The participants were found to use a number of strategies to overcome the problems they encountered in order to complete the tasks. The strategies they employed consisted of task practice repetition, the use of their L1 (particularly for constructing the task situations and providing linguistic support), the use of chat written records, peer help and so on. Among the four participants (A, B, G and L) whose oral proficiency improved after the program, it was noticeable that Participants A, B, and G actively sought and used a variety of learning strategies to help them overcome the problems in order to complete the tasks.

The fact that Participant L benefited from the program tends to suggest that his learning mode in this study (text-based CMC + f2f) may be beneficial to low-ability students' oral skill development, since he was able to receive a great deal of support (particularly peer support), which would not be available in a traditional Taiwanese language classroom. Although peer collaboration was also available in the two other CMC learning modes, it is difficult to tell whether Participant L could have received the same learning outcomes if he had conducted the tasks in the two other learning environments. Further investigation is needed into which factors are beneficial to low-ability students' language learning in CMC contexts.

The collaboration between Participant K and L provides counter-evidence to Kowal and Swain's (1994) suggestion that large differences between learners' proficiency level may reduce the extent of collaboration degree and tends to support Storch's (2002) assumption that collaboration may be influenced by other factors, such as their attitude to pair work and to the tasks, and their motives and goals.

In terms of motivation, it is difficult to identify a primary influence on the 12 participants' learning motivation in this study. In fact, each individual's motivation seemed to be affected by different variables. A factor that enhanced one person's motivation could be the reason that decreased another's. For example, Participant A's learning in this study seemed to be disturbed by technology; on the other hand, technology produced some effects that motivated Participant C's learning. Generally speaking, the positive factors that enhanced and maintained the participants' motivation included interaction with the teacher, autonomous learning, collaboration with peers and webcam use. The negative factors that decreased the participants' motivation were of the technology problems and English interference with the target language learning.

Those participants (Participant A, B, G and L) who achieved better oral performance after the intervention program were not necessarily those whose learning motivation was increased by the study (Participant B, F, G, I, and L) or those who expressed a desire to continue learning French after the study (Participant B, C, E, F, G, J and L). For instance, Participant I's motivation was improved by the intervention program, though her oral performance did not

improve. Participant A had better oral performance after the intervention program, which did not enhance her learning motivation.

The cases of Participant A and I did not support Ellis's (1997) claim that motivation may result from success in second language acquisition. Although the intervention program was found to have positive impacts on Participants B, G and L's oral proficiency development and learning motivation, it is hard to tell whether the enhancement of their motivation was in fact the cause or the effect of their improvement in the oral performance. It seemed that their higher motivation and better performance influence each other over the course of the study and both resulted from the intervention program. As Ellis (1997) suggested, motivation is something that can vary from one moment to the next, depending on the learning context or task.

As to social presence, the results showed that the three CMC environments had different impacts on how it was perceived by the participants'. The learners' perception of social presence was highest in the CMC with webcam and microphone, and lowest in the CMC with microphone. And they perceived the highest immediacy in the face-to-face environment. The factors that increased their level of social presence were the availability of nonverbal cues, peers' immediacy and their feeling of being 'real'. In the text-based CMC communication, the use of emoticons was the main factor that enhanced their social presence.

The use of the webcam seemed to be vital to the enhancement of the participants' social presence in CMC, because most of them favoured CMC with webcam and microphone mode, where the advantage most commonly reported was the availability of their partner's facial expressions. Although nonverbal cues were also available in the f2f setting, that environment did not allow them to feel 'real'. Their feeling of being 'real' is possibly related to the design of the tasks, in which they were supposed to meet their partner the first time at a chat forum. According to the task situations, the webcam-plus-microphone mode seemed to provide a more 'authentic' environment than the f2f environment. However, this task effect on learners' social presence in CMC needs to be further explored in future research.

In addition, some of the learners stated they felt less nervous about communicating with their partner in CMC than in the f2f setting. For them, the level of intimacy is higher in the f2f than in the CMC environment and therefore they feel less

comfortable in communication. This finding is in line with Rouke et al.'s (1999) claim that "there is an optimal level above which too much social presence may be detrimental to learning" (p.16).

Lack of familiarity and keyboarding skills were found to be two factors that seem to influence negatively the participants' social presence. The fact that the four participants who were unknown to their partner at the beginning of the study used more often the webcam and the emoticons than their peers in the same groups pointed to greater anxiety about being misunderstood in CMC. Using the webcam and the emoticons that allowed them to convey their feelings and know the emotional states of their partner helped reduce their communication anxiety. As Garrison et al. (2000) indicated, the lack of visual cues may present particular challenges to the establishment of social presence when participants in CMC have never met. Therefore, I suggest that language teachers should include the webcam in CMC communication activities or encourage their students to use emoticons in text-based CMC interactions when they pair their students with someone with whom they are not familiar.

In sum, all the three CMC environments created in this study seem to possess potentialities to help different types of students to develop their oral skills. Sykes (2005) argued that written chat provides opportunities for learners to "individually practice what they learn and process the pragmatic issues as well as the other L2 forms being acquired" (p. 422). Oral chat allows learners to practise pronunciation and intonation, and the simultaneous use of oral and written chat enables them to practise both speaking and writing at the same time. The results of this study provide further evidence for the arguments put forward by Sykes in favour of CMC communication.

The oral chat in this study allowed the learners to speak French with their peers outside of the normal class time, which encouraged them to practise their speaking. They were also able to improve their pronunciation and intonation by repeating practices with their peers and hearing the correct sounds from other audio input (e.g. their peers, online pronunciation website, the online sound files provided by the teacher). Nevertheless, the evidence I have discussed that the learners learnt more incorrect than correct sounds from their partner suggests that CMC learning cannot replace face-to-face learning altogether. As what Tu and McIsaac (2002) pointed out, CMC applications should be viewed as an opportunity to select

communication channels that optimize learners' self-image and enhance their interaction, rather than a replacement for f2f communication in the learning environment.

7.2 Pedagogical implications

To make online L2 learning effective, it is important that teachers select a suitable CMC medium for their students by considering the students' characteristics. In addition, they can set up pre-course activities to acquaint their learners with technology tools (Tu, 2000; 2001) and course software, and raise their awareness of interaction structures in online communication, to help them understand their role and responsibilities in this new learning environment (Mykota & Duncan, 2007). Teachers can also allot students time to develop their keyboarding skills and to get to know their task partner at the start of a new language course. Doing so can reduce learners' communication anxiety and their feelings of social isolation (Shamp, 1991, cited in Garrison et al., 2000).

During an online learning course, the teacher may need to teach students learning strategies to cope with the various problems they encounter. Otherwise, it will be difficult for the teacher to create a sense of learning community (Lobry de Bruyn, 2004) in the class. Tinto (1975:107, cited in Rovai, 2002) noted that "social interaction via friendship support is directly related to persistence in college". Failing to perceive a sense of community, learners may not seek peer support once they encounter difficulties during the learning process and therefore gradually lose their motivation.

Teachers' feedback is also critical to the success of online learning. Tu (2000) pointed out immediate feedback can contribute to interactivity and thus increase learners' social presence, because that social presence can be promoted by noticing interactivity in a CMC environment (Gunawardena, 1995). Feedback can also enhance learners' motivation, as evidenced by two cases (Participants E and F) in this study. Those participants' motivation was found to be maintained by their interaction with the teacher and her feedback. This finding is additionally consistent with Shield et al.'s (2001) suggestion that, while willingly engaging in

language learning with a significant degree of autonomy, learners still need to know that there is someone ‘in charge’ that makes them feel secure.

The teacher’s abilities to select appropriate tasks before a course and to manage task development during the course may also influence learners’ participation in an online program. Tasks that are too easy for students or of no interest to them will fail to inspire their learning motivation. Thus, the instructor should survey students as to which topics interest them and develop tasks based on the results, if possible.

In sum, learning a language online is a complex activity. A language teacher needs to be sensitive to the development of an online course and learners’ reactions all the time in order to maximise the chances that they will carry out the required tasks appropriately and to provide them with the assistance they need during their learning.

7.3. Limitations

As many other studies, this study has its limitations, which can be separated into pedagogic and research.

7.3.1 Pedagogic limitations

This study, conducted within one-semester (18 weeks) period, required a lot of work from the teacher as well as the participants. Since the participants had attended only one semester of French before the study, their knowledge of the target language was quite limited. Most of the language knowledge they needed in order to complete the tasks was delivered during the study, which meant they were receiving input and producing output almost simultaneously, which presented a considerable challenge to many of them. In order to complete the tasks to a satisfactory level, they often had to repeat practising a task many times. Some complained that the time they spent on this course distracted them from their other academic courses.

I also found the high pace of the course very demanding. Since we met for only two hours a week and had to cover all the language topics in class time, it was difficult to allow time for the students to conduct some of their favourite activities (songs, culture presentation, individual oral practices with different partners) or to have some free talk with them in the classroom; this increased the pressure of the course. In addition, the participants' passive attitudes to communication created some unexpected problems, which took me a lot of time to figure out and resolve.

7.3.2 Research limitations

A number of problems that occurred during the study were beyond my control and constrained its progress and validity.

Firstly, some actions that the participants took in order to solve the problems they encountered had not been foreseen in my study design and consequently reduced the discreteness of the three communication modes that I set out to study. Although the participants in Groups 1 and 2 had been given training in use of the recording software employed in this study, they did not do as I asked, namely to try out the software immediately after my teaching. So they did not in fact experience it until they did the first oral practice. After finding they were unable to record their partner's speech, they did not report this problem to me and tried to resolve it privately, by recording their first oral performance in face-to-face settings. Although I took steps to ensure they did not take the same action again, their initial decision had, in a sense, modified the design of my study unintentionally and reduced the level of differences among the three groups

The second unforeseen action by some participants was their overuse of the webcam. Participants C and D used the webcam in their text-based communication and Participants G and H used it in their online oral interaction. Again, they did not tell me of this departure from what was intended in my study design, and I discovered it only at the point where I conducted the private interviews with them. This time, the effect was to increase the level of group differences.

It is worth remembering that these actions by participants occurred in the Confucian educational context, where the teacher is considered a symbol of

authority and where students generally learn a subject (in this case, a language) passively, and without posing any questions in a classroom. It may well be easier for teachers/researchers to control the learning situations if my study is replicated in an educational setting where learners are used to expressing their opinions and communicating their problems openly with the teacher, as is the case in many western countries.

A third factor that influenced the validity of my study was the keyboarding problem. All the participants were used to a Chinese/English keyboard, although they were not good at English typing. But since the target language was French, the fact that they had to type out French specific symbols complicated the physical process of typing and therefore communication. The availability of French keyboards might well improve the quality of learners' communication, which in turn could influence their learning motivation, as well as their social presence, to some extent.

In addition, the place where the participants carried out their online tasks also had a significant effect on their perception of social presence. In this study, all the participants did those tasks in the university dormitory, where many of them were concerned that their roommates might hear their conversation; privacy was therefore lacking in their online communication. We might recall that some of them stated that privacy was one of the advantages of face-to-face communication. As Tu and McIsaac (2002) pointed out the location where learners access CMC has major impacts on their feelings of privacy: the learner perceives less privacy in a more public location, such as a computer laboratory. Thus, a higher perception of social presence can be expected if participants conduct their online tasks in a more private setting, for example an individual room, as opposed to a dormitory.

Lastly, the measurement of the participants' oral proficiency development according to means was a comparative method, which not all readers may find persuasive. However, the language assessment literature so far offers no consensus as to an optimal method to measure a learner's oral skills development over a period. I therefore hope that the learner data reported in this study will have provided insights into my participants' oral skills learning situations, if not unambiguous evidence of their oral proficiency development.

7.4 Recommendations

Nevertheless, despite the fact that this semester's course demanded much more effort from the learners than the previous semester, none of them withdrew from the course or the study. This suggests that the intervention program was able to maintain and enhance most learners' motivation and that they favoured being challenged rather than being bored in the classroom. Nevertheless, the course seemed very demanding for a class that was held only two hours per week. Therefore, I would like to provide some suggestions here for future teachers who wish to apply any of the three learning modes in this study in their language classroom.

Firstly, in addition to the pre-course instructional activities proposed in the previous sections, instructors who teach oral skills to beginning-level learners should reduce task numbers and allot students more time to do classroom activities. Doing so can help them get to know their peers and foster their sense of a learning community, which is particularly important for students who are from different departments and meet each other only in the language classroom. Moreover, beginning learners are not confident of their pronunciation and oral skills. Feedback from the teacher and peers can enhance their confidence. Although peers' audio feedback is not difficult to obtain in CMC, I consider it is a serious challenge for the teacher to give individual audio feedback in this learning environment. This limitation has been pointed out by Bax (2000), who stated that

in "the case of pronunciation, resources based on CD-ROM or the WWW can help to model the target sound or phrase for imitation, but ICT is generally not reliable enough to replace the teacher in the role of evaluating and then modifying the input to take learners on to the next stage of their pronunciation development" (p.214).

Until we devise a better approach, I think face-to-face feedback should be provided in elementary-level oral skill development.

The teacher can also extend the time of a task and have students experience cycles of tasks over the long term. Learners who are novices in CMC learning need time to adapt to the new learning environment. Some participants in this study told me

they had not got used to the new learning environment until the end of the study. Since the adaptation time for each student may vary, a longer period may allow learners to become familiar with the new learning mode at their own pace. Once students are used to that new mode, they will develop new learning habits that may reduce their anxiety and increase their confidence in learning the target language.

Finally, teachers can create a classroom bulletin board, which would be better activated at the start of the course. They can post any course related information on the board and encourage students to make use of the board as a communication medium. Email is another good tool for learners to build up a relationship with their peers as well as with the teacher. Teacher-student or student-student private talk through email can help to create students' sense of community and increase their level of social presence.

7.5 Future investigations

Given the results of my study, I propose three directions that I consider worthy of further investigation. Firstly, Participant L, who had the lowest language abilities before the study, was found to benefit substantially from his learning mode for oral skill development. Some factors (e.g. peer support) beneficial to his learning were also available in the other two learning modes and therefore I could not tell if he would have achieved the same outcomes if he had been placed in the other two groups. Since some advantages of his learning mode did not exist in the two other learning modes (e.g. immediate problem-solving), I therefore recommend that future researchers investigate which factors can be beneficial to low-ability students' language learning in different CMC contexts (see also p. 287).

In addition, as I have discussed in the section 7.1, the task design of this study seemed to promote the authenticity of the webcam-plus-microphone mode, which enhanced the participants' social presence. I wonder whether different tasks could bring the same advantageous effects, and I suggest that future researchers should look into task effects on learners' social presence in CMC environments.

Finally, although the findings of this study allowed me to identify some factors that were advantageous to the participants' motivation, it was not possible to tell which of the three learning modes benefits their motivation the most at this stage. As a

result, I am considering creating a motivation assessment scale and using those factors as assessment criteria in a future study to measure learners' motivation in the three learning modes, in order to find which mode can bring more benefits in terms of the enhancement of learners' motivation

7.6 Contributions

In addition to the provision of some directions for future research, my study has made three major contributions to the literature on computer assisted language learning and teaching, since research in these three areas is relatively new and the related literature is still limited.

Firstly, my participants were early-stage learners developing their oral skills in CMC. Among the four skills, speaking has been considered the most difficult to acquire for language learners, especially for those at beginner-level. My study should contribute to the understanding of the development process of beginner-level learners' oral skills in CMC environments.

Secondly, the target language of this study was French, research into the learning of which is limited in comparison to that involving English. Although some Canadian researchers have conducted studies in relation to French (e.g. Swain & Lapkin, 2005; Lapkin & Swain, 2004; Lapkin, Swain & Smith, 2002), they have been in the Canadian immersion context where French is learnt as a second language, rather than a foreign language in this study. As a result, the findings of my study should enhance our knowledge of the learning process of FFL learners, particularly those whose first language is non-alphabetic.

Finally, my investigation of the concept of social presence increased the originality of my study. Although its application to CMC started in the late 1980s (Lowenthal 2009), the concept and its impact on learners' acquisition of language skills remain unfamiliar to many teachers who include synchronous CMC in their curriculum. Therefore, I hope that the findings of my study could attract other language teachers' attention to this concept.

7.7 Conclusion

Given the intentionally small scale of my study, its results are not easily generalizable. However, the thick description I have provided of each individual case has allowed some insight into the participants' learning situation, which may help the replication of this study in other language learning contexts.

Until now, research into beginner learners' spoken language development in CMC environments has been very limited. I hope the findings of this study can make a modest empirical contribution to the area of modern technology application in early-stage foreign language classrooms. Many teachers, especially those who find it difficult to obtain rich teaching resources in the target language, feel discouraged by that constraint, which can in turn lead to learners' demotivation for language learning. I hope that the use of modern technology that I have investigated in this study will encourage foreign language teachers to create a favourable learning environment for their students to develop their oral skills through CMC.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. The role cards used in the baseline oral test

Card 1

Nom: Paul
Prénom: Jean
Ville: Rome
Téléphone: 03 24 41 18
Mél: jean@hotmail.com
Âge: 35 ans
Situation de famille: divorcé
Langues parlées: anglais et japonais
Profession: médecin
Goût: les livres

Card 2

Nom: Don
Prénom: Luc
Ville: Lyon
Téléphone: 05 57 31 19
Mél: luc@aol.com
Âge: 26 ans
Situation de famille: célibataire
Langues parlées: allemand et italien
Profession: musicien
Goût: la musique

Card 3

Nom: Bal
Prénom: Marc
Ville: Tokyo
Téléphone: 07 14 33 62
Mél: marc@hotmail.com
Âge: 29ans
Situation de famille: marié
Langues parlées: chinois et espagnol
Profession: ingénieur
Goût: les livres

Card 4

Nom: Vacher
Prénom: Marie
Ville: Nice
Téléphone: 05 44 21 17
Mél: marie@hotmail.com
Âge: 33 ans
Situation de famille: divorcée
Langues parlées: anglais et allemand
Profession: directrice
Goût: la musique

Card 5

Nom: Berger
Prénom: Anna
Ville: Toronto
Téléphone: 13 47 51 19
Mél: anna@aol.com
Âge: 28 ans
Situation de famille: célibataire
Langues parlées: italien et chinois
Profession: musicienne
Goût: les livres

Card 6

Nom: Larche
Prénom: Lisa
Ville: Taipei
Téléphone: 05 41 33 62
Mél: lisa@hotmail.com
Âge: 27ans
Situation de famille: mariée
Langues parlées: japonais et anglais
Profession: architecte
Goût: les livres

Card 7

Nom: Baton

Prénom: Louise

Ville: Melbourne

Téléphone: 11 45 31 54

Mél: baton@hotmail.com

Âge: 23ans

Situation de famille: célibataire

Langues parlées: français et anglais

Profession: médecin

Goût: la musique

Appendix 2. The task content of the final oral test

L'examen final

期末口試

(Version A)

Vous rencontrez un/une ami(e) dans le restaurant d'une école française à Nice. Vous faites la connaissance et **parlez de vos cours**. Après, vous parlez de voyager ensemble à Avignon pour deux jours. Vous partez le matin du 28 Juin (Samedi), et rentrez le soir du 29 Juin (Dimanche). Vous décidez ensemble l'heure du train, le confort de billet --- etc..

你在尼斯(Nice)的法語學校的餐廳認識一位朋友。你們聊天認識對方並談論彼此的課程。然後你們討論一起到亞威農(Avignon)旅遊兩天。你們打算 6 月 28 日(星期六)早上離開, 6 月 29 日(星期日)晚上回來。你們在談話中決定火車時刻, 票種---etc..

Emploi du temps A. (課程表 A)

Cours du français :6/23 – 6/27

Prix par semaine: simple 470€ (Prix incluant les cours standards et l'hébergement)

Horaire des leçons

(20 leçons par semaine + activités supplémentaires)

	Dimanche	Lundi (6/23)	Mardi (6/24)	Mercredi (6/25)	Jeudi (6/26)	Vendredi (6/27)	Samedi
8:25 – 12:00	Libre	Cours	Cours	Cours	Cours	Cours	Libre
12:00 – 13:00	Déjeuner						
13:10 – 16:05	Libre	Atelier: Vin	Atelier: Cuisine	Voyage à Cannes	Parfum: "Grasse"	Visite à la Musée de Chagall	Libre

Horaire des trains

	Départ (6/28)	Arrivée(6/28)	Durée
Train	Nice	Avignon	
TGV	9h39	12h35	2h56
TGV	10h32	13h36	3h04
	Départ (6/29)	Arrivée(6/29)	
Train	Avignon	Nice	
TGV	14h40	17h50	3h10
TGV	16h47	20h06	3h19

Emploi du temps B. (課程表 B)

Cours du français :6/23 – 7/4

Prix par semaine: simple **415€** (Prix incluant les cours intensifs et l'hébergement)

Horaire des leçons

(30 leçons par semaine)

	Dimanche	Lundi (6/23)	Mardi (6/24)	Mercredi (6/25)	Jeudi (6/26)	Vendredi (6/27)	Samedi
8:25 – 12:00	Libre	Cours	Cours	Cours	Cours	Cours	Libre
12:00 – 13:00	Déjeuner						
13:10 – 16:05	Libre	Cours	Cours	Libre	Cours	Cours	Libre

Horaire des trains

	Départ (6/28)	Arrivée(6/28)	Durée
Train	Nice	Avignon	
TGV	9h39	12h35	2h56
TGV	10h32	13h36	3h04
	Départ (6/29)	Arrivée(6/29)	

Train	Avignon	Nice	
TGV	14h40	17h50	3h10
TGV	16h47	20h06	3h19

L'examen final

期末口試

(Version B)

Vous rencontrez un/une ami(e) dans le restaurant d'une école française à Nice. Vous faites la connaissance et **parlez de vos cours**. Après, vous parlez de voyager ensemble à Avignon pour deux jours. Vous partez le matin du 5 Juillet (Samedi), et rentrez le soir du 6 Juillet (Dimanche). Vous décidez ensemble l'heure du train, le confort de billet --- etc..

你在尼斯(Nice)的法語學校的餐廳認識一位朋友.你們聊天認識對方並談論彼此的課程.然後你們討論一起到亞威農(Avignon)旅遊兩天.你們打算7月5日(星期六)早上離開,7月6日(星期日)晚上回來.你們在談話中決定火車時刻,票種---etc..

Emploi du temps A. (課程表 A)

Cours du français :6/30 – 7/4

Prix par semaine: simple **480€** (prix incluant les cours standards et l'hébergement)

Horaire des leçons

(20 leçons par semaine + activités supplémentaires)

	Dimanche	Lundi (6/30)	Mardi (7/1)	Mercredi (7/2)	Jeudi (7/3)	Vendredi (7/4)	Samedi
8:40 – 12:00	Libre	Cours	Cours	Cours	Cours	Cours	Libre
12:00 – 13:00	Déjeuner						
13:05 – 16:00	Libre	Atelier: Vin	Atelier: Cuisine	Voyage à Cannes	Parfum: "Grasse"	Visite à la Musée de Chagall	Libre

Horaire des trains

	Départ (7/5)	Arrivée(7/5)	Durée
Train	Nice	Avignon	
TGV	9h29	12h42	3h13
TGV	9h39	12h35	2h56
TGV	10h32	13h36	3h04
TGV	10h42	13h29	2h47
	Départ (7/6)	Arrivée(7/6)	
Train	Avignon	Nice	
TGV	14h40	17h50	3h10
TGV	16h26	19h14	2h48
TGV	16h47	20h06	3h19

Emploi du temps B. (課程表 B)

Cours du français :6/30 – 7/11

Prix par semaine: simple **400€** (prix incluant les cours intensifs et l'hébergement)

Horaire des leçons

(30 leçons par semaine)

	Dimanche	Lundi (6/30)	Mardi (7/1)	Mercredi (7/2)	Jeudi (7/3)	Vendredi (7/4)	Samedi
8:40 – 12:00	Libre	Cours	Cours	Cours	Cours	Cours	Libre
12:00 – 13:00	Déjeuner						
13:45 – 15:40	Libre	Cours	Cours	Libre	Cours	Cours	Libre

Horaire des trains

	Départ (7/5)	Arrivée(7/5)	Durée
Train	Nice	Avignon	
TGV	9h29	12h42	3h13
TGV	9h39	12h35	2h56
TGV	10h32	13h36	3h04
TGV	10h42	13h29	2h47
	Départ (7/6)	Arrivée(7/6)	
Train	Avignon	Nice	
TGV	14h40	17h50	3h10
TGV	16h26	19h14	2h48
TGV	16h47	20h06	3h19

每組同學只有 5 分鐘時間 (口試時間超過 6 分鐘的小組將會被扣分)

請將討論重點放在:

1. 最基本的打招呼用語
2. (你在 Nice 停留的)時間日期的敘述
 你要在 Nice 待多久?
 你何時抵達/離開? ---
3. (你的語言)課程生活作息的敘述
 幾點開始上課?幾點下課? ---
4. 去 Avignon 旅程的決定 (如何邀約和接受邀約?那一天去?待多久---)
5. 決定詳細的車票資訊 (那一班火車?那一天?那種類型車票?---)

Appendix 3. Motivation/Attitudes Questionnaire

Survey (English version)

The measurement of learners' attitude/motivation towards learning French as a foreign language in Taiwan (Adapted from the International Attitude/Motivation Test Battery Items for Croatian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese and Romanian Questionnaires.)

Instructions:

Following are a number of statements with which some people agree and others disagree. There are no right or wrong answers since many people have different opinions. We would like you to indicate your opinion about each statement by circling the alternative below in which best indicates the extent to which you disagree or agree with that statement.

Please give your immediate reactions to each of the following items. Don't waste time thinking about each statement. Give your immediate feeling after reading each statement.

Part One:

Six-point Likert scales are given for each of the following questions:

Strongly Disagree / Moderately Disagree/ Slightly Disagree/ Slightly Agree/
Moderately Agree/ Strongly Agree

S1. Interest in foreign languages

1. I wish I could speak many foreign languages perfectly.
2. I wish I could read newspapers and magazines in many foreign languages
3. I would really like to learn many foreign languages.
4. If I planned to stay in another country, I would try to learn their language.
5. I enjoy meeting people who speak foreign languages.
6. Studying foreign languages is not enjoyable.
7. I really have no interest in foreign languages.
8. It is not important for us to learn foreign languages.
9. Most foreign languages sound crude and harsh.

10. I would rather see a TV program dubbed into our language than in its own language with subtitles.

S2. Attitudes toward learning French

1. Being able to learn French is really great.
2. I will enjoy learning French.
3. French is a very important part of the school programme.
4. I plan to learn as much French as possible.
5. I love learning French.
6. I will rather spend my time on subjects other than French.
7. Learning French could be a waste of time.
8. I think that learning French is dull.
9. When I leave school, I will give up the study of French because I am not interested in it.

S3. Attitudes toward French – speaking people

1. If Taiwan had no contact with French – speaking countries, it would be a great loss.
2. Most native French speakers are so friendly and easy to get along with, we are fortunate to have them as friends.
3. I wish I could have many native French speaking friends.
4. Native French speakers are very sociable and kind.
5. Native French speakers have much to be proud about because they have given the world much of value.
6. I would like to know more native French speakers.
7. The more I get to know native French speakers, the more I like them.
8. I can always trust native French speakers.

S4. Integrative orientation

1. Studying French is important because it will allow me to be more at ease with people who speak French.
2. Studying French is important because it will allow me to meet and converse with more and varied people.
3. Studying French is important because it will enable me to better understand and appreciate the French ways of life.
4. Studying French is important because I will be able to interact more easily with speakers of French.

S5. Desire to learn French

1. I have a strong desire to know all aspects of French.
2. If it were up to me, I would spend all of my time learning French.
3. I want to learn French so well that it will become natural to me.
4. I would like to learn as much French as possible.
5. I wish I were fluent in French.
6. Knowing French isn't really an important goal in my life.
7. I haven't any great wish to learn more than the basics of French.

S6. Instrumental orientation

1. Studying French is important because I will need it for my career.
2. Studying French is important because it will make me more educated.
3. Studying French is important because it will be useful in getting a good job.
4. Studying French is important because other people will respect me more if I know French.

Part Two

The purpose of the second part of the questionnaire is to determine your feelings about a number of things. Please rate each of the following items in terms of how you feel about it. Each item is followed by a scale that has a label on the left and another on the right, and the numbers 1 to 7 between the two ends. For each item, please circle any one of the numbers from 1 to 7 that best describes you.

1. My motivation to learn French in order to communicate with French speaking people is:
Weak ___ 1: ___ 2: ___ 3: ___ 4: ___ 5: ___ 6: ___ 7 Strong
2. My attitude towards French speaking people is:
Unfavourable ___ 1: ___ 2: ___ 3: ___ 4: ___ 5: ___ 6: ___ 7
Favourable
3. My interest in foreign language is:
Very low ___ 1: ___ 2: ___ 3: ___ 4: ___ 5: ___ 6: ___ 7 Very high
4. My desire to learn French is:
Weak ___ 1: ___ 2: ___ 3: ___ 4: ___ 5: ___ 6: ___ 7 Strong
5. My attitude towards learning French is:

Unfavourable ___ 1: ___ 2: ___ 3: ___ 4: ___ 5: ___ 6: ___ 7

Favourable

6. My motivation to learn French for practical purpose (e.g., to get a good job) is:

Weak ___ 1: ___ 2: ___ 3: ___ 4: ___ 5: ___ 6: ___ 7 Strong

7. My motivation to learn French is:

Very low ___ 1: ___ 2: ___ 3: ___ 4: ___ 5: ___ 6: ___ 7 Very high

Survey (Chinese version)

你/妳的姓名 _____

你/妳學法文學習多久? _____

你/妳最後一次接觸法文是什麼時候? _____

你/妳多久上網一次? 每天 每 2~3 天 每 4~5 天 每 6~7 天

你/妳自認電腦技巧如何? 不太懂電腦 尚可, 會操作簡單的軟體 挺好

你/妳有用過即時通和視訊與人交談嗎?

兩者皆無 用過視訊 用過即時通 兩者皆用過

哪一套軟體? _____

台灣法語學習者的學習態度/動機評量

介紹

對於以下的敘述有些人會同意或不同意. 由於每個人意見不同, 所以答案沒有對錯. 希望你/妳藉著圈選以下提供的選項告訴我們你/妳對每項敘述的同意或不同意. 請在閱讀完每個陳述之後, 就你/妳的直覺反應圈選出答案. 請勿花費時間思考每個選項的答案.

第一部份

每個問題我們提供 6 個選項: 1. 強烈不同意 / 2. 適度地不同意 / 3. 輕微地不同意 / 4. 輕微地同意 / 5. 適度地同意 / 6. 強烈同意.

對外語的興趣						
	1. 強烈 不同意	2. 適度 地不 同意	3. 輕微 地不 同意	4. 輕微 地同 意	5. 適度 地同 意	6. 強烈 同意
1. 我希望我能說好多種外語.						
2. 學習外語對我們來說並不重要.						
3. 我喜歡認識能說外語的人.						
4. 比起看一部有原文字幕的外語片, 我寧可看一部用中文配音的外語片.						
5. 如果我打算待在其他國家, 我將會嘗試學習他們的語言.						
6. 學習外語不是一件愉悅的事.						
7. 我真的對外語沒有興趣.						
8. 我希望我能閱讀多種外文報紙和雜誌.						
9. 我真的喜歡學習許多外語.						
10. 大部分的外語聽起來生硬刺耳.						
學習法語的態度						
	1. 強烈 不同意	2. 適度 地不 同意	3. 輕微 地不 同意	4. 輕微 地同 意	5. 適度 地同 意	6. 強烈 同意
1. 能學習法文真是太棒了.						
2. 我打算盡可能地學習法文.						
3. 我認為學習法文是枯燥的事.						
4. 當我離開學校我將放棄學習法文因為我對它不感興趣.						
5. 我將樂於學習法文.						
6. 對我來說, 學習法文是浪費時間的事.						

7. 法文是學校課程非常重要的一部分.						
8. 我寧可花時間在學習其他科目上, 而不是法文.						
9. 我喜愛學習法文.						
對說法語的人的態度						
	1. 強烈 不同 意	2. 適 度 地 不 同 意	3. 輕 微 地 不 同 意	4. 輕 微 地 同 意	5. 適 度 地 同 意	6. 強 烈 同 意
1. 以法語為母語的人是友善和氣的.						
2. 我總是可以信任以法語為母語的人.						
3. 我想要認識更多以法語為母語的人.						
4. 我愈認識以法語為母語的人, 我愈喜歡他們.						
5. 大部分以法語為母語的人是友善且易相處的, 我們很幸運能與他們為友.						
6. 我希望我能有許多以法語為母語的朋友.						
7. 因為以法語為母語的人帶給世界許多價值, 他們有很多事情值得驕傲.						
8. 如果台灣與法語國家沒有交流, 這會是一大遺憾.						
綜合趨向						
	1. 強 烈 不 同 意	2. 適 度 地 不 同 意	3. 輕 微 地 不 同 意	4. 輕 微 地 同 意	5. 適 度 地 同 意	6. 強 烈 同 意
1. 學習法文是重要的因為它可以讓我更了解且欣賞法國人的生活方式.						
2. 學習法文是重要的因為它可以讓我認						

識更多不同的人且與他們交談.						
3. 學習法文是重要的因為我將能夠更容易與說法語的人互動.						
4. 學習法文是重要的因為它可以讓我與說法語的人更自在的相處.						
學習法文的渴望						
	1. 強烈 不同 意	2. 適 度 地 不 同 意	3. 輕 微 地 不 同 意	4. 輕 微 地 同 意	5. 適 度 地 同 意	6. 強 烈 同 意
1. 我想學好法語讓它變得像我天生的一部分.						
2. 我希望我的法語流利.						
3. 我只想學基礎法語. 沒想要學更多.						
4. 認識法語不是我生活中一重要目標.						
5. 我有強烈的渴望認識法國人的所有層面.						
6. 我想盡可能地學習更多法語.						
7. 如果我可以決定,我會花所有時間學習法文.						
工具趨向						
	1. 強 烈 不 同 意	2. 適 度 地 不 同 意	3. 輕 微 地 不 同 意	4. 輕 微 地 同 意	5. 適 度 地 同 意	6. 強 烈 同 意
1. 學習法文是重要的因為它將使我更有學識.						
2. 學習法文是重要的因為它有助於我將來找到好工作.						
3. 學習法文是重要的因為我未來的工作						

將會需要使用它.						
4. 學習法文是重要的因為如果我知道更多法文其他人會更敬重我.						

第二部分

問卷調查的第二部分主要是要確定你/妳對一些事情的感覺. 請評估你/妳對以下陳述的看法.

1. 我學習法文爲了要與說法語的人溝通的動機

弱 ____ 1: ____ 2: ____ 3: ____ 4: ____ 5: ____ 6: ____ 7 強

2. 我對說法語的人的態度

不友善 ____ 1: ____ 2: ____ 3: ____ 4: ____ 5: ____ 6: ____ 7 友善

3. 我學外語的興趣

很低 ____ 1: ____ 2: ____ 3: ____ 4: ____ 5: ____ 6: ____ 7 很高

4. 我學外語的渴望

弱 ____ 1: ____ 2: ____ 3: ____ 4: ____ 5: ____ 6: ____ 7 強

5. 我學法語的態度

不積極 ____ 1: ____ 2: ____ 3: ____ 4: ____ 5: ____ 6: ____ 7 積極

6. 我爲了實用目的(例如: 找一份好工作) 而學習法語的動機

弱 ____ 1: ____ 2: ____ 3: ____ 4: ____ 5: ____ 6: ____ 7 強

7. 我學法語的動機

很低 ____ 1: ____ 2: ____ 3: ____ 4: ____ 5: ____ 6: ____ 7 很高

Appendix 4. Interview Guided Questions
(translated from Chinese by the researcher)

Part A. About the participants

1. What's your major?
2. Why are you interested in foreign language learning?
3. Why are you interested in French learning?
4. How do you evaluate your computer skills?
5. What's your habit of using the Internet? How often? With whom?
6. Were you familiar with the programs MSN and Audacity before the study?
Microphone? Webcam?

Part B. About the study

1. Do you think that my instructions before the study were clear?
2. Have you encountered any problems with software use during the study?
3. About the tasks:
 - Do you think the written tasks were helpful to the oral tasks?
 - Please describe your task practice process. (How many times did you practice before submission? How did you help each other's learning? Etc.)
4. About the feedback:
 - Do you think that my written, pronunciation and classroom feedback were helpful to your learning?
 - If yes, how did they help your learning?
 - Which feedback did you consider the most helpful?
5. About the technology:
 - what do you think of the use of the webcam?
 - what do you think if the webcam was not available for the oral tasks?
 - did you use emoticons to facilitate your communication? How often?
6. Do you think that being familiar with your task partner before the study was important for you to conduct the tasks? Why?
7. What are your opinions or suggestions if your learning mode in this study is implemented in one of your future foreign language classrooms?

8. Among the three learning modes of this study, which did you prefer? Why?