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Transatlantic Tutoring: The Pittsburgh - Clermont-Ferrand Collaboration

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► **To cite this version:**

Christopher Jones, Thierry Chanier, Anne-Laure Foucher. Transatlantic Tutoring: The Pittsburgh - Clermont-Ferrand Collaboration. CALICO 2011, 28th Annual conference on Mediated Learning Communities, May 2011, Victoria, BC, Canada. edutice-00597121

HAL Id: edutice-00597121

<https://edutice.hal.science/edutice-00597121>

Submitted on 31 May 2011

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Transatlantic Tutoring

The Pittsburgh - Clermont-Ferrand Experience

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CALICO 2011

Overview

- The premise
 - The participants
 - Students in French Online 1 at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.
 - Students in a Masters program for teachers of French as a foreign language at the Université Blaise Pascal in Clermont-Ferrand, France
 - Sequence
 - Examples
 - Results and conclusions
-

The Premise

- Learners of French (FOL) as a foreign language will benefit from:
 - Exposure to additional native/advanced speakers of the target language
 - Designed and unexpected intercultural experience during conversational exchanges
 - Reflection on the exchanges and personal learning strategies
 - French teacher trainees (MA) will benefit from:
 - Exposure to technology-enhanced/ distance teaching contexts
 - Analyzing on-line instructional courseware
 - Interacting with culturally-situated learners of French and reflecting on that interaction
-

Masters in FLE (MA)

- Profile
 - Group of 13 women between 22 and 32
 - Mostly French as a mother tongue (except for 4: Portuguese, Spanish and Russian)
 - Previous experience of asynchronous online tutoring for half of them ; Uneven personal use / mastery of CMC tools
 - Objectives
 - Pre-service teachers
 - Project is part of a training for synchronous tutoring
 - Situated learning + reflexive approach
 - Specific tools used (Skype, Facebook, Moodle)
-

French Learners(FOL)

- Profile
 - 15 (2 drop out) : 12 women , 3 men between 20 and 27
 - Individuals, not a group
 - Diverse student population: Asian and Asian-heritage students ; Multilingualism common
 - Objectives
 - French as elective course
 - Blended instructional format
 - Weekly class meeting oriented toward communication
 - Weekly conversation meeting with peer tutor [insertion point for new tutoring experience]
 - Media-intensive interactive online courseware
-

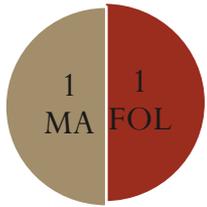
Breaking the ice

23 September
0-1am (Fr) & 6-7pm (Pit)



Video-Conference

- Time difference issues
 - MA: 16
 - FOL : 8
 - 2 by 2 presentations
 - Important for setting up the MA community
-



skype + email 

1: End-Sept. 2: Mid-Oct. 3: 2nd-Nov. 4: End-Nov.

Tandem

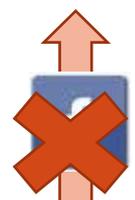
FOL



Pittsburgh CMU
Teacher

Face to face w1

Face to face w2



Group on cultures

...Face to face w10

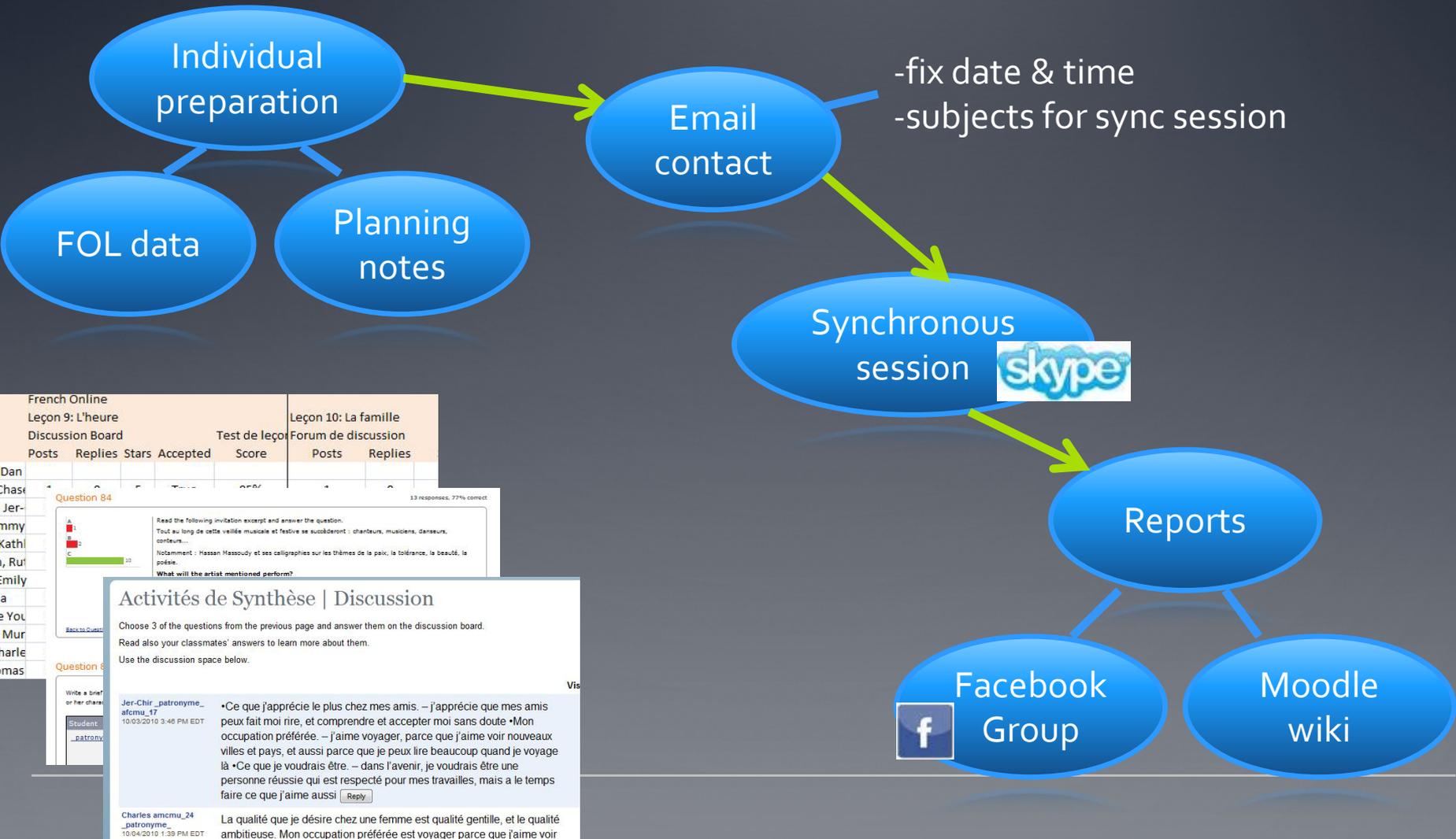
MA



Clermont UBP
Teacher



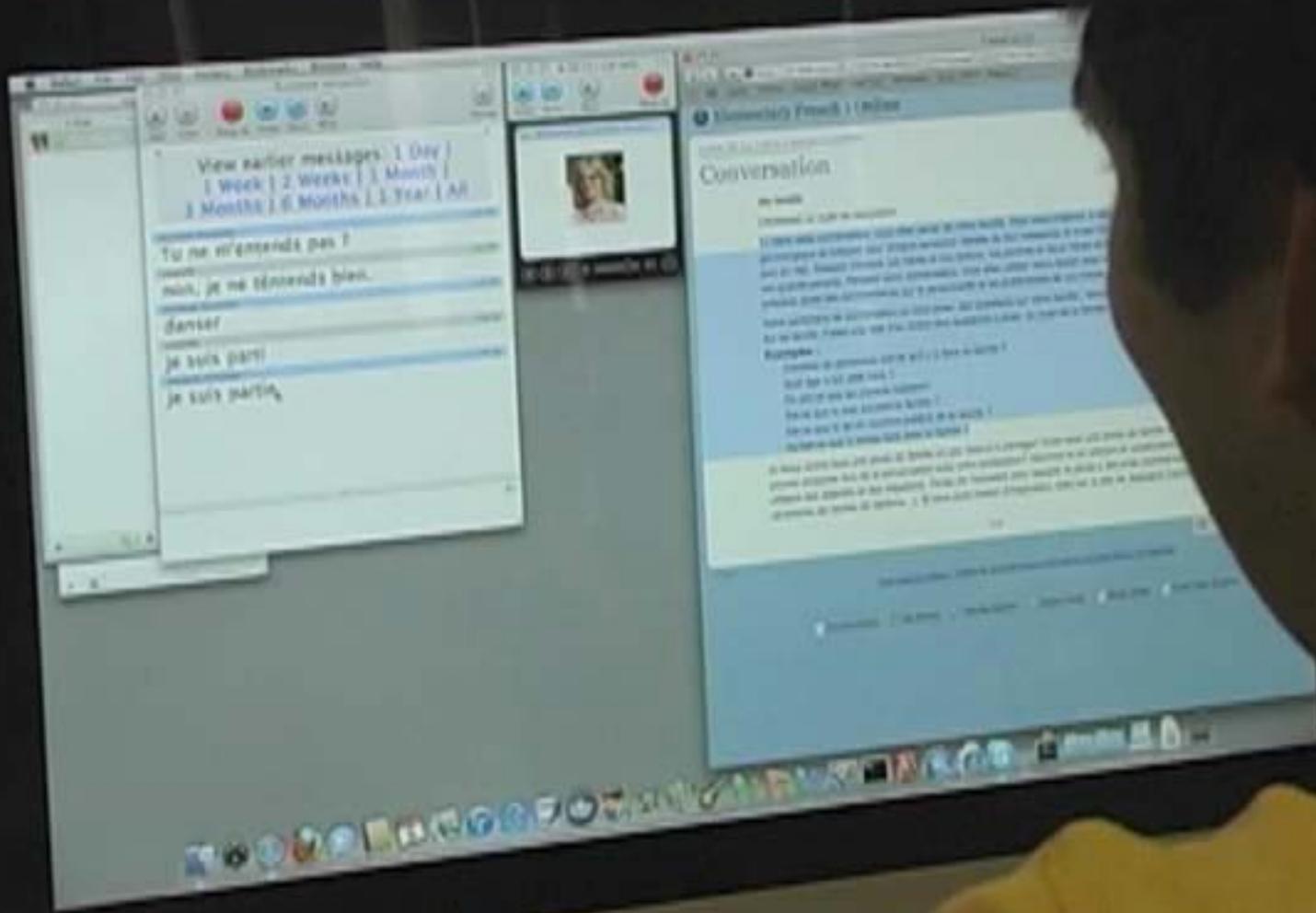
Synchronous activity (MA side)



(Usual ?) tandem difficulties

- Rare exact correspondence between the number of learners on each side (manage drop out)
 - Important time zone difference (6 hours)
 - Different schedules in each curriculum
 - FOL started and finished their semester before MA
 - MA had not enough time for the initial Skype training
 - Unbalanced situation
 - FOL followed their own curriculum ; French as an elective
 - MA had to adapt to this situation where they were not the primary teacher and where they expected cultural exchanges
-





View earlier messages: 1 Day | 1 Week | 2 Weeks | 1 Month | 1 Month | 6 Months | 1 Year | All

Tu ne comprends pas ?

non, je ne comprends bien.

danser

je suis parti

je suis partie

Conversation

My name

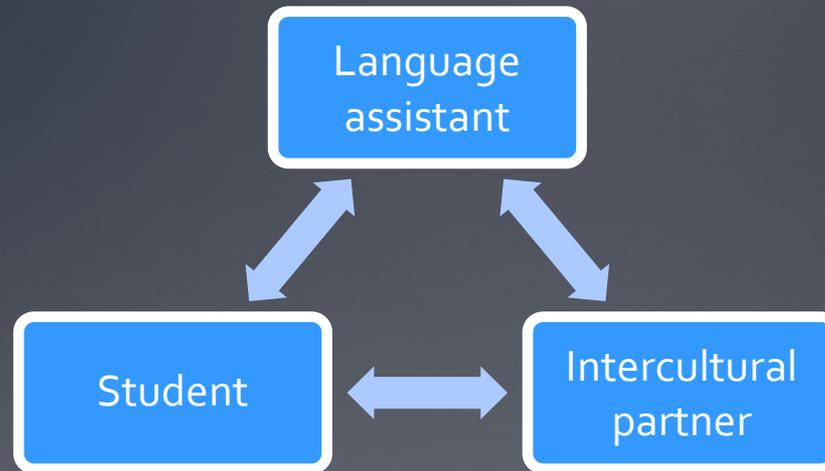
Il y a une autre conversation... (text is blurry)

Exemple :

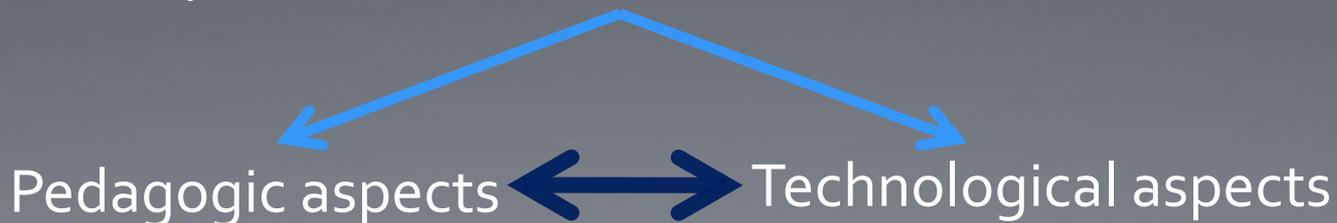
- Quel est ton nom ?
- Je suis...
- ...

Roles, positioning and representations– MA students

Roles



Aspects of difficulties for MA students

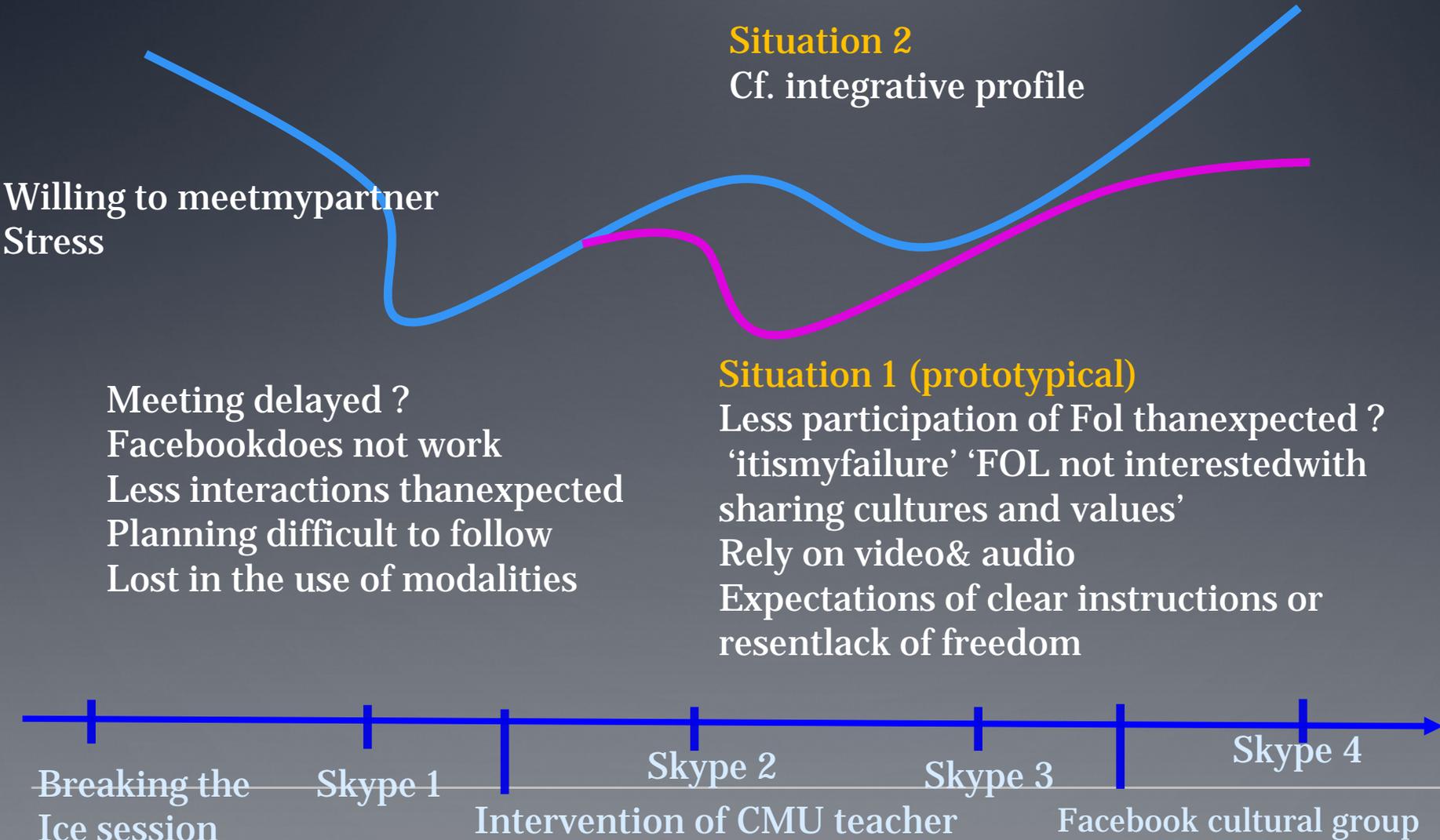


Pre-representation about being a teacher or a student

- Stereotypes of pre-service teachers in the French system
 - Teacher has got freedom in her/his preparation
 - Language assistant in secondary school: devalued
 - Clear expectations about what to do
 - If I am a teacher, I cannot be evaluated
- No experience in distance teaching as a Teaching Assistant

*"Il me paraît nécessaire d'être clair dès le départ sur les rôles et les attentes envers les participants. A savoir si un groupe adopte une **position d'enseigner** " La position que l'on occupait, en tant que « teaching assistant » était assez mesurée ou difficile à délimiter, dans la mesure où nous n'avions ni le rôle ni le statut du professeur, mais que nous devions quand même les faire travailler leur [Marie, re français » [Annabelle, reflex. Report]*

Evolution of perceptions / events



Situation 2
Cf. integrative profile

Willing to meet my partner
Stress

Meeting delayed ?
Facebook does not work
Less interactions than expected
Planning difficult to follow
Lost in the use of modalities

Situation 1 (prototypical)
Less participation of Fol than expected ?
'it is my failure' 'FOL not interested with sharing cultures and values'
Rely on video & audio
Expectations of clear instructions or resent lack of freedom

Breaking the Ice session | Skype 1 | Intervention of CMU teacher | Skype 2 | Skype 3 | Facebook cultural group | Skype 4

Integrative MA profile

- Control expectations, accept uncertainty / fuzziness during the first steps
 - Rely on preparation (negotiated)
 - Develop flexibility: seize every occasion for informal exchanges or linguistic ones
 - Understand different roles of modalities
 - **Video**: not essential for verbal constraint, once social confidence established and if FOL feel confident enough
 - **Oral**: accept silences, check with other modalities their reasons ; control my speed , linguistic difficulties
 - **Textchat**: support (vocabulary, recast), correction without oral interruptions, check (tiredness, comprehension, etc.)
 - Try to discover and understand reasons for lack of participation (exam, work overload, ...)
-

Overall opinion on the project - MA students

- 100 % of the students ready to repeat the experience
- Training: positive change of the opinion on CMC tools via the project (82 %)
- Language learning: importance of the communicative goals for 11 students out of 13
- Cultural aspects: contribution of the project seen as insignificant or inexistant (77%)

(Collected in the post-questionnaires)

In-process FOL comments 1/2

- “I wish we could have made better progress and that the time difference wasn't so inconvenient.”
 - “It's been fun talking to Céline. We've talked about her life and my life. We used the conversation page in the lesson as a guide to start off the conversations and then we keep talking and she helps me say things in a better way. Our conversation lasted about an hour this time.”
 - “Again, it would have been nice to know what we were going to talk about ahead of time. Also, I preferred when the conversation was more informal, with general questions about topics we'd recently covered. I've felt like the last few conversations were more like interviews, with the pre-planned list of questions.”
-

In-process FOL comments 2/2

- “Although I liked the experience, I felt that I liked working with Prof Jones and Cate better... I think Skype was just too remote of a forum and the personal meetings with them during the week are more helpful, especially when so much of the work is done online.”
 - “My conversation with Marie (my French partner) was great! We talked about movies and our families and cooking. She's so nice and I really enjoyed getting to talk to her. I'm beginning to understand her a lot better also when she talks faster..”
 - “This week our discussion focused on our families. Our discussion was very interesting and by sticking to the lesson plan, we were able to have a more productive discussion.”
 - “I will miss these meetings now even though at times it was a stress to prepare for meetings. Overall, it was a great program.”
-

Overall opinion on the project - FOL students

- Generally positive response after MA students emphasized oral communication
 - Some question whether additional technical challenges are worth the effort
 - Most wanted alignment with lesson goals as point of departure
 - Many found the interpersonal component enriching
-

Questions?
