

**Forbidden Fruit:
Identity, Power and Investment Issues in Learning a Second Language through
Computer Mediated Communication**

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ABSTRACT

In this inquiry, I use ethnographic research methods to uncover the tensions that a selected group of military officers and students from Central and Eastern Europe and Asia experienced learning English in Canada and in Europe. In both settings, I use a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach to the inquiry to critically explore with the participants their experiences using computers for second language learning. We negotiate changes to their current perceptions of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) through the use of computer-mediated communication (CMC). This communication involved writing-based exchanges at the Canadian site and using state-of-the-art audio video transferring technology, in a multi-site videoconferencing setting with Europe. The study took place between 2001 and 2004. During the four phases of the study, I collected data through observations of online interchanges, collaborative dialogic interviews and participants' written texts in the form of journals and e-mails. Other important data sources included videotapes and field notes taken at the Canadian site and during three field trips to the European sites. I draw on Vygotsky's socio-cultural approach to language, Bakhtin's concept of learning as dialogic and Weedon's notion of identity as dynamic, constructed and contested through Discourses. The work of these three theorists helps to frame my understanding of the historical, political, cultural, pedagogical and personal influences on this multicultural group of English language learners as they negotiated their learning in a unique setting. The participants' stories suggest that video-based computer technology not only supported some of their investment in using their second language orally but also enabled them to construct more powerful subjectivities. The identity construction that took place in English online is an important consideration for these individuals from evolving democracies that are struggling for international connection and recognition. I argue that more stories need to be told so that SL researchers can re-examine their understanding and theories of language learning and communicative practices to include computer technology. I suggest that stories such as these also have important implications for learners, educators and policy makers as they consider their teaching and learning practices with computers in their second language learning contexts

RÉSUMÉ

Dans cette étude, je me sers des méthodes ethnographiques pour mettre à jour les tensions éprouvées par un groupe choisi d'officiers militaires de l'Europe Centrale, et de l'Europe de l'Est et de l'Asie qui étudiaient l'anglais au Canada et en Europe. Dans les deux sites, j'emploie la même approche de recherche, participation-action pour l'enquête, afin d'explorer d'une façon critique et de concert avec les participants, leurs expériences dans l'apprentissage de langue seconde au moyen des ordinateurs. Nous avons négocié avec les étudiants des changements dans leurs perceptions de l'apprentissage de langue assisté par ordinateur (CALL) où celui-ci sert en même temps de médium pour communiquer (CMC). Cette communication a impliqué les échanges écrits au site canadien et pour les vidéoconférences avec l'Europe, les échanges oraux et écrits à travers le Web au moyen de la technologie « multi-site ». Pendant les quatre phases de l'étude qui se sont déroulées entre 2001 et 2004, j'ai recueilli des données par le biais d'observations, d'entrevues dialogiques et collaboratives et de textes écrits produits par les participants sous forme d'échanges virtuels, journaux personnels et courriels. D'autres sources de données importantes incluent les bandes vidéo et des notes d'observation produites sur le site canadien et sur les sites en Europe durant trois voyages de recherche. Je me suis servie d'une approche socioculturelle du langage basée sur les théories de Vygotsky, du concept de Bakhtin de l'apprentissage comme « dialogique » ainsi que de Weedon et sa notion d'identité comme dynamique, construite et contestée à travers les Discours. Ces théories ont servi de cadre à ma compréhension des influences historiques, politiques, culturelles, pédagogiques et personnelles sur ce groupe d'apprenants pendant qu'ils négociaient leur apprentissage dans ce contexte particulier. Les récits des participants suggèrent que la communication guidée et médiatisée par la technologie informatique notamment par le vidéo, non seulement a permis aux apprenants d'investir dans l'expression orale de la langue seconde mais aussi de construire des subjectivités plus puissantes. Ceci est une considération importante pour ces individus qui font partie des pays où la démocratie est en voie de développement et où ils luttent pour être reconnus et intégrés dans le contexte

international. L'auteur soutient la position que les histoires présentées ici suggèrent qu'il y a un besoin de recueillir encore plus de récits de ce genre. Ainsi les chercheurs en langue seconde pourraient réexaminer leurs théories pour y inclure l'apprentissage de la langue seconde et la pratique communicative par la technologie informatique. En plus des chercheurs, je soumetts l'idée que ces histoires auront d'importantes implications pour les décideurs, les éducateurs et éducatrices et surtout les apprenants quant à la place qu'ils donnent à l'informatique comme moyen d'apprentissage des langues secondes.

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PROLOGUE

Musings about Words

What lies behind the questions researchers ask? While some may assume that simple intellectual curiosity or an instrumental reward are at the roots of the desire to know, I think the answer to the question about posing research questions is perhaps more complex. Part of understanding the complexity comes with accepting the Bakhtinian notion that meaning making is dialogic and that when we speak in the present, in statements or through questions, we are also responding to dialogues in the past and preparing responses for the future. In the act of pursuing this inquiry and seeking answers to the questions that preoccupy me as a second language teacher to multicultural groups of military students, I find myself looking for explanations in my own past dialogues and the potential ones I envision for the future.

I am one of ten children, five boys and five girls. I grew up in a small working class Anglophone city in the sixties. My mother is English speaking; my father is a Francophone educator who moved to Ontario with his young and growing family to take advantage of the surplus of good teaching jobs just after the war. I recall one of my first memories as a child lying in bed under the eaves of our large old farmhouse. I would lie there in this living space in the early morning and muse about words, asking myself why we had to use a certain word to name a certain object. I remember exactly the first question that would come to my mind in those moments: Why does a table have to be called a table or *une table* and a chair, a chair, *une chaise*? Who decides what things are called, I would wonder? And why does it have to be so? Then the fun part would be to make up new funny sounding words to replace the ones that occurred to me to be so banal and imposed. While a first inclination might be to assume that those early musings were the beginnings of an applied linguist, I realize now in retrospect that the etymology of words was probably not my first concern. From where I stand now, I would say that those first questions reflected that part of my identity that is critically concerned with “why?” or more precisely “why not?”

That critical part of my identity was a side that remained quite private in my early years. Being one of ten children, my interactions with my parents were kept to more important survival topics – getting my share of food and clean clothing. Nor was attending schools at that time run under the strict control of religious women, themselves bound to obedience, a “safe place” for my identity as a critical observer of accepted ways of knowing and doing to be expressed. I learned quickly to avoid the repercussions I saw others faced because of their questioning ways and remained silent. But in my inner thoughts or what Vygotsky calls “inner speech”, I continued to mediate my world with my critical questions. First walking by and later sitting in the school bus in front of the local high school of this Southern Ontario city where we would stop to drop off some of my school mates, my eyes would always be drawn to a large group of somber teenagers who stood apart from others who mingled and cavorted at the side entrance door of the school. I remember being puzzled by the reasons for their separatedness. When I later learned that they were local first nation Mohawk students being bussed in from their “own” area outside the city, I remember wondering about that group of students, wondering about their lives and families. But what preoccupied me most was why people divided themselves or were divided into groups? Why could I only go the school I was attending and not another? Why could I along with others in my school “group” not swim at the local YMCA? Or why did my parents not like me to befriend some girls from certain neighborhoods and encourage my friendships with others? What would happen if there were no groups? I would wonder about these questions. I also wondered about issues such as: Who dictated who the groups were? Why were they so important?

While these musings did not lead to social activism in any organized sense, it did lead me to being curious about difference, and in academic terms seeking out aligning myself with “the other”. In a quiet way, my actions reflected my inner thoughts and I unconsciously began to ignore barriers. I was drawn into friendships with the immigrant in our class who had just arrived from Poland who sat apart from the others at lunchtime and the two Dominican Republic girls who were sent alone without family

to attend our school to be far from the problems that surrounded their lives at home. I would walk home with the girl whose single mother had frequent male visitors and would linger around until they left just to keep her company.

Besides questioning borders between groups, the critical part of my identity also explored the reasons for other simple ‘ways of being’ that we take for granted in life. When a few of my children asked me to homeschool, I found no valid reason to refuse. I had spent years serving on the local board of a parent teachers’ organization questioning why with not much success. In that capacity I asked myself: Why is a quiet child a “good” child as I read one day on a classroom blackboard? Why do children have to be divided into groups according to ability and why all the photocopied “busy” work? The homeschooling experience led me in another trajectory, allowed me to adopt new perspectives towards learning and profoundly influenced my role as an educator.

Returning to the classroom after several years at home with my children, I could no longer accept that learning consisted of memorizing facts and dividing knowledge into compartments as I had done and practised as a student and in my early years of teaching French. Nor could I believe that tests determine knowledge or were they the ‘only way’ to open doors to the symbolic resources to which we aspire. The doors my children were able to open, despite the years they learned without school texts, exercises and tests but rather through dialogue and interactions with a diverse range of people, have convinced me that there are parallels in second language learning. After all, what is second language learning but a desire, for whatever reason, to open doors to different realities, different ways of knowing and to experience these differences through “the other”? And behind the desire to open the doors to difference, what else could the goal of all who learn languages be but to dissolve some of the differences in ways of speaking and therefore their ways of being. I see democratic potential in language learning and breaking down the barriers that separate groups. As Habermas (1984) has suggested, I do not see breaking these barriers through ignoring, tolerating or even dismissing the different perspectives of others but through an intense dialogic of the different discourses that frame our lives and our views.

My identities as a woman, mother, wife, and educator all have been influenced by those early critical musings about words. As I stand at the cusp of becoming a critical second language researcher, albeit a little late in life yet encouraged by the presence and wisdom of much older colleagues in the academic world, I bring to my work the multiple identities that I have constructed over the years. These identities mediated through the dialectical process of living are projected on the world I envision for the future. This research inquiry is a formal process of asking “Why?” and “Why not?” with a group of military officers and students trying to dissolve barriers between East and West. My future will be, most probably, in listening and discussing theirs and others’ successes in doing so.

Connecting Past and Present Inquiries

May I come in?

(Vitalii, a Ukrainian military officer standing at my classroom door,
January 1999).

The words that Vitalii uttered the first day of class several years ago became an important theme of my MA thesis study (Charbonneau-Gowdy, 2000). At the time, I felt Vitalii’s words were bestowing on me as his teacher some measure of power that surprised and confused me. I couldn’t understand what I had done to merit such authority, nor did I really want it. As I continue to teach and research in this same educational setting, I still hear Vitalii’s words repeated daily from other students, no longer just from Ukraine but from distant places such as Afghanistan, Kazakhstan and Russia. When I hear other students use these same words, I am reminded of the fact that one can no more separate the past from the present than what happens today from tomorrow. Simon (1984), a critical theorist and educator, argues: “*In order to decide on what to do, we have to figure out why things are the way they are, how they got that way, and what set of conditions are supporting the processes that maintain them*” (p. 380).

And so the story of Vitalii and some of his Ukrainian colleagues have become entangled in the stories of the participants of the present inquiry. These stories are crucial for understanding this inquiry and most certainly an impetus for it. In this prologue, I connect the two stories. The first, which I lay out here, is about the Ukrainians and the tensions they experienced as they struggled to learn English in a North American setting. Four years later, the second story is about a group of multicultural military who experience similar tensions and about how computer technology responds to or compounds these tensions. From a sociohistorical, social constructionist perspective, I situate my discussion of computer mediated learning (CML) in both worlds- the world that existed in the context of the MA study and in the world represented by the words and images that emerge in the present study. To address the tensions of the present requires understanding the tensions of the past. As Reid (1978) points out: *"In answering practical questions, we always have to take some existing state of affairs into account. We are never in a position to make a completely fresh start, free from the legacy of past history and present arrangements"* (p. 42).

To begin this interplay between past history and present situation, I recreate the story of Vitalii and others in a group of Ukrainian military officers as they set about to learn English in a North American setting.

Questioning Motivation

Those words, "May I come in?" are significant words. They speak to me of inclusion, of people struggling, for whatever reason, to engage in the interactions of others. They speak to me of acculturation, of people wanting to understand other worlds in order to make sense of their own. They speak to me of acceptance, of people who yearn to participate in a discourse that they hope will allow them to reconstruct their own lives and gain a voice recognized by others. And they speak to me of people who know well that through language, especially English as a second language, they are included or excluded, acculturated or stigmatized, heard or silenced.

Second language learning, as Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) point out, is never just about acquisition of rules and functions but “a struggle of concrete socially constituted and always situated beings to participate in the symbolically mediated lifeworld of another culture” (p. 155). For over twenty years, researchers in language and motivational issues (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Clement & Krudinier, 1983) had convinced many in SL education that learning a second language is dependent on degrees of either instrumental or integrative motives. When a call came in the early 1990’s to expand the theoretical frameworks in motivational issues (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dornyei, 1994; Oxford & Shearin, 1994), the response was almost on cue. International scholars in SLA, Hall (1997), Lantolf (1996), Maguire (1994, 1997), Norton Peirce (1993, 1995), Rampton (1995) and van Lier (1994), laid the theoretical groundwork for a growing body of research in language and identity issues. Between 1996 and 1997, three leading journals- *Linguistics and Education*, *Language and Education* and *TESOL Quarterly*, devoted issues to sociocultural and identity issues. Not surprisingly, responding to a growing interest in these issues, a new journal, *Language, Identity and Education*, has recently begun publication.

As I began reading through this literature six years ago, I was profoundly struck by the relevance of the issues of language, social identity, investment and power to the tensions I saw in my own teaching practice both past and present. Gardner & Lambert’s research (1972; Gardner, 1985, 1989) which views learners as either instrumentally or integratively motivated did not seem to fit what was happening within my own teaching practices. From their perspectives, learners acquired a SL either in order to fit into the target culture in the integrative paradigm or to fulfill a need for jobs or some financial gain as in the instrumental paradigm. The importance of these motivations to individuals determined their use of the language and presumably their eventual success in learning. These paradigms seemed to offer a convenient and simplistic explanation for why learners participate in language learning. On the other hand, I was discovering that the reasons for whether the students I was teaching used their second language to improve their proficiency were much more complicated than these paradigms or

these researchers claimed. Most students I was teaching at the time were from former Warsaw pact countries arriving with a great deal of motivation to learn the language, that is to integrate and learn about the culture and to benefit from the financial rewards in their jobs from learning English. All were extremely hard working. But, I found a complex set of circumstances prevented many from using the language. For example, rank, socioeconomic differences and the culturally-specific content of the programs were factors that played a role in whether or not the learners in the study used the knowledge they had of the language to interact. If we accept the assumption that to become proficient in second language individuals must use it, then it becomes crucially important to understand under what conditions students choose to use or resist using their SL.

At the time of the MA study, I was working on a military base just outside a major city in Canada teaching English to a group of military officers from Ukraine. These officers, including Vitalii, were part of a NATO-sponsored program to provide language training to former Warsaw pact countries with a view to eventually encouraging full participation of these countries into the NATO military alliance. Within this setting, I was exposed to the lives of a small delegation from Ukraine in the larger group of military officers studying in the program. I found the situation of four researchers' work especially relevant to my own experiences and daily interactions with the group of Ukrainian students. McKay & Wong (1996) researched a group of immigrant adolescents in California as they struggled to adapt to the powerful pedagogical practices in the high school where they were studying. The tensions of the students in the study reflected for me similar problems the Ukrainian officers were having with our own mainstream American-based Canadian Forces Language Training and Testing Program material. Norton's (Norton-Peirce, 1993) doctoral research of a group of immigrant women in Canada and her focus on the way these women were marginalized by the social interactions that occurred in their daily lives, helped me to reflect on the experiences of some of my own students at the time. I saw the Ukrainian officers struggle to learn English within the hierarchal structure of the military,

linguistic and socio-economic realities of their lives at the Canadian military Base. The discursive practices within the formal learning context at the Base, discourses which for example labelled them as disadvantaged and unskilled in English, conspired to limit their opportunities to practise English and to construct more powerful positions in relation to others in the language program.

In South Africa, Thesen (1997) studied first-year black students' experiences of transition from their small rural schools to a large historically white, elite university in Capetown. Some of her participants were able to adopt strong agentive roles in changing the identities of *disadvantaged, second language, and under prepared students* that the largely white male middle-class administration had attributed to them. Similarly, the Ukrainian officers in my study recognized their transitional situation politically after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Within the group of Ukrainian officers who participated in the MA study, some of the younger officers sought to overcome these attributed identities of underprivileged, linguistically and culturally disadvantaged in the language program in Canada. Morgan (1997) focussed on intonation in his study of immigrants learning ESL in a formal language situation. He uncovered elements of social power in the lives of the learners in his classroom. Remarkable to me is how within the limits of a single pronunciation lesson with his adult, mostly Asian women learners, he convincingly showed how there is the potential in language teaching and learning for individuals to be marginalized or to be empowered. Morgan refers to this aspect of language as its "emancipatory potential". Morgan's study very much resembled my MA thesis work. In both studies the participants were adult learners, new to Canada and studying English in a formal learning context. His study helped me to realize that by looking in "small" places of SL learning contexts, I could uncover issues of power and identity that influenced SL learning. Morgan's study was also very influential in my subsequent and current interest into the subtle ways the discourses that support the semiotic tools of language and computers, can be used to enable or constrain opportunities for identity construction and investment in language learning.

Along with these studies, I was further influenced in my MA study by the work of Maguire (1994a). Like Morgan (1997), her research reminded me that looking at language learning involved much more than what appeared on the surface whether inside or outside the classroom. Maguire maintains that as researchers doing ethnographic educational research we need to broaden our vision of context to include not only the physical setting and the people acting within that setting, but to dig deeper to uncover the historical and socio-historical influences that impact on learners' actions and experiences from their perspectives. In my MA thesis, I used Maguire's construct of "nested contexts" to argue that it was only by examining the "nested" influences in the Ukrainian officers' lives both past and present that I could begin to understand under what conditions these officers participated in learning and why their participation changed over time and contexts. The dynamic, constantly shifting nature of language, identity and contexts and their connection to learners' agency (Maguire & Graves 2001) is very important to the present dissertation inquiry and understanding the multicultural group of military students from Central and Eastern Europe as they negotiated their language learning in computer technology-supported formal learning sites. In the next section, I discuss the findings of my MA study (Charbonneau-Gowdy, 2000) in light of the particular complex set of "nested contexts" (Maguire, 1989, 1994) in which the group of Ukrainian officers lived, studied, negotiated their identities and mediated their SL learning.

Mediating Identities and Language Learning in a New World

I begin this discussion with an extract from a conversation I had with Sergei, one of the young Ukrainian officers who was particularly outspoken about his adaptation to the 'new world'. He said to me one day near the end of his time in Canada:

We thought before (we arrived) we are interesting people – foreign people, that some people really want to learn something from us but big difference between our country and Canada. In Canada there are a lot of foreign people. They don't really want to know us –for first time. In Ukraine if I meet someone from America it is very interesting for me and I try to speak first. In Canada – no, opposite, because Canada is immigration country. They don't ask me about

Ukraine. They ask me about (my opinion) about America, NATO, Canada.
(May 23, 2000)

Soon after the Ukrainian students who participated in the MA study arrived in Canada to study English, the magnitude of the challenge that lay before them became obvious. Negotiating the differences between their own country just emerging from years of strict communist rule where for many finding the basics of life were uncertain and North America where everywhere there were signs of prosperity and carefree lives, left many participants in the study feeling as “outsiders”. Feelings of being marginalized were not only reported to me in words, but were also confirmed in their serious faces. Images I have of some of the officers in those early programs attest to the seriousness of their demeanors (See Figure 1).

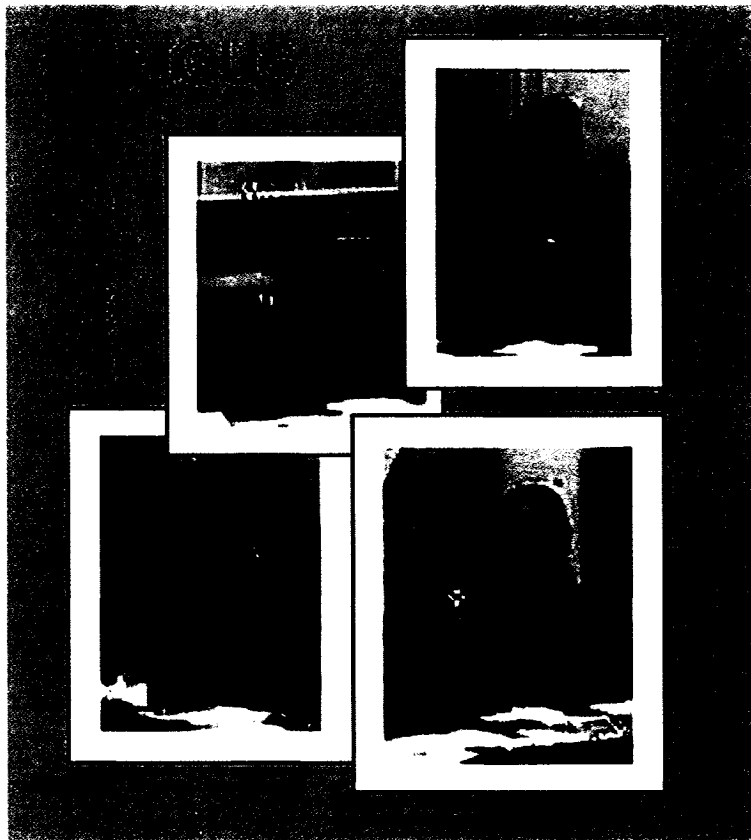


Figure 1. Classroom Group

The faces of these and other groups of students in the many pictures I have under my desk pad confirm Sergei's comment: "*After seventy years of communist rule*

we are all very serious. You know, you see it in our faces” (Personal Communication, March 7, 2000). The majority of the Ukrainian students initially kept to themselves and thus separated themselves from students of other delegations. More troublesome was that frequently many chose not to take advantage of opportunities to use and practise their second language both inside and outside the classroom. For example, in their own classroom where nationality was not a factor, many of the younger Ukrainian officers deferred to their more senior colleagues in remaining silent. On the other hand, the older Ukrainian officers whose senior rank had allowed them free reign to speak in the classroom were marginalized by their lack of socio-economic and linguistic status outside the classroom. In many cases, these older officers refused to engage in interactions and to speak English. For both the younger and older Ukrainian officers, conditions beyond their control, such as the “western” influenced nature of the teaching and testing materials, further fueled their feelings of being marginal in the North American setting, and conspired to silence them. For example, I recall one student in a desperate state after a listening test, exclaim to me: *“I had a panic when I realized how little time, 1 second = 1 word. It was like a machine gun to my head. What is the reason to test me like a robot. This is not listening but testing our physical activities”* (Vadim, March 13, 2000). With these powerful words, Vadim compared the constraints of time in the computer-based listening test to a “machine gun to [his] head”. Other comments like this one indicated that some of the students felt a lack of ownership in their learning and powerless with regard to their progress. That progress that was largely determined by the entrenched testing process.

In the context of the immersion program, many of the Ukrainians were forced to adopt *marginalized, linguistically inferior and socio-economically deprived* identities. In this context, their symbolic and cultural resources, such as the extensive skills they had in their fields, their highly educated backgrounds and their military experience, seemed to have little value and prevented many students from investing in using their second language with officers from other delegations or English speakers. Sergei commented to me one day: *“I want to speak. I need to speak. In my country all*

the time I speak but here I cannot speak” (Personal Communication, February, 2000).

The senior officers in particular, who in their own country were highly-respected members of their communities, would avoid contact with English speakers for fear of feeling “*stupid*”, as they frequently commented. Confronted by the powerful discourses that controlled their learning and opportunities, or right to speak, many chose to be silent. As one student remarked when I asked why he had not explained some of his frustrations with the program on the final evaluation sheet, he responded: “*What will change if I have an opinion- nothing absolutely*” (Vadim, April 3, 2000). As a way of explanation for their inability to draw from their more powerful resources, one student wrote on the same evaluation form: “*If somebody has difficult life it’s now difficult to change their view in the world. Canadian life is difficult for some students to understand, exactly understand, not just skin deep*” (Course Critique, May 17, 2000).

The years of living under the former regime where many decisions were made for them, left the senior officers in the group especially vulnerable to submitting to their position in the program as “outsiders” and powerless in their efforts to enter the discourses of the North American context. Most avoided social interactions and in the end left the program feeling very disappointed with their progress in learning English. In other words, their lack of agency and lack of power had a detrimental effect on their social investment in learning and their control in changing the situation and their identities to their benefit.

On the other hand, some of the younger Ukrainian officers in the study were able to adapt their identities to the new cultural and learning context. Initially, when they arrived, some of the younger officers reacted with anger, apathy, shyness and lack of confidence when they were restricted and silenced by their socio-economic status and personal and cultural identities. However, with determination and struggle some of these younger officers were eventually able to gain access to Anglophone social networks. Anatoli and Vitalii developed friendships with Canadian girls, Alex became quite friendly with the Senior teacher and would join him for cigarettes at break time, Sergei went on numerous outings to the large city near the Base to be with English speakers,

including with my own family. The change to the identities of these officers was visible in the more westernized behaviour they assumed or displayed, for example in their more relaxed dress, their chewing gum and laughing loudly. These behaviours are frowned upon in their own culture and country. Some became more proactive in speaking out about weaknesses in the course or teaching practices that marginalized them. Through perseverance, some of these younger students had their personal symbolic resources recognized by English speakers and members of other delegations. For example, one gained recognition as an expert pool player; another was highly respected and recognized by Canadians and other foreign military for his skills on the basketball court. These valuable symbolic resources allowed them entry into powerful discourses. With entry into these discourses, their agency and intentionality increased their opportunities to use their second language. Eventually, using their second language led to more changes to their identities and more opportunities to speak and be listened to. Lantolf and Pavlenko (2000) observe:

More than anything else late or adult bilingualism requires agency and intentionality (similar to crossing class lines): it is through intentional social interactions with members of the other culture, through continuous attempts to construct new meanings, through new discourses, that one becomes an equal participant in new discursive spaces, but apparently not without a cost. (p. 174)

Indeed, the changes I observed in some of the younger officers' behaviours and words over the length of the program were not limited to their stay in Canada. According to their families, changes in identities were even transferred once some of these officers returned to their homes in Ukraine and no doubt impacted on their lives at home. These changes speak of the dynamic nature of identities. For example, Vlad's wife noted that her husband on his return was much more outspoken about his feelings to his commander when he felt overworked and being denied time with his family. Another student explained that he found himself refusing to be intimidated by his military boss and no longer drank to escape the difficulties in his life, but spent much more time working on improving his abilities. Another talked with new hope for his future and less fear of the problems that in the past he had felt controlled his life. Sergei

left the military shortly after his return to Ukraine. I commented at the time of writing the MA thesis that I believed that for some of these officers, the struggles for a voice in their second language in Canada gave them the courage to demand their voice in their own country, where historically that voice had been denied.

Implications of the MA Study to the Present Study

Believing with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of a law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. (Clifford Geertz, 1973, p. 5)

In searching for meaning in the experiences of this small group of Ukrainian officers during their stay in Canada, I have come to certain realizations. These realizations have important impact on my research into computer-mediated communication in the present inquiry. I have realized, first of all, the importance of social interaction to higher-order thinking, that is learning a second language, as explained by Vygotskian theory. His theory helps to explain how the younger officers' ways of looking at the world were mediated and broadened as they engaged more in their second language. There is no doubt that there is validity in the current arguments about the hegemonic spread of English (Macedo, Denedrinos, Gouanari, 2003; Pennycook, 1989; Phillipson, 1997; Skutnab-Kangas; 2000a). However, some of the younger officers' experiences as they became self-regulated learners, in which they developed agency in their learning and their identity construction, reveal that second language learning can offer a "third space", or what human geographer Lefebvre (1991) calls *espace veçu*, a space lived through social practice where learners can resist dominant discourses as well.

Second, I realize that as a researcher and educator I am an integral part of the findings and of the experiences that lie within them. I cannot divorce myself from the fact that for many of my students, their initial experiences in the program involved a feeling of marginalization. My descriptions of this evidence cannot be reduced to objectivity according to the "doctrine of immaculate perception" (Wolcott, 1990, p. 40).

I am integrally intertwined and implicated, as a teacher, as a Canadian, and as a human being in the social identities of the officers in my past and present study, as well as those who will follow them and, inevitably, also in their language learning. Calls for self-directed, transformative and collaborative learning in education and in my classrooms start with my own reflective practices on the ideological principles that inform my teaching.

In reflecting on the practices in my teaching and in the program within which I work, I cannot divorce myself from the critical part of my identity that I began constructing as I lay in my bedroom under the eaves years ago. In adopting a critical stance in my teaching, I have uncovered certain tensions that I have attempted to explain here in this summary of my Masters' thesis. Although this is unusual in a dissertation, I felt that this knowledge is essential for the reader not only to understand the background to the present study but also some of the tensions that my students and I as a second language educator face in the context of learning and teaching English. However, while uncovering these tensions, I have also been forced to re-examine the ideological principles that support my role as an educator and researcher. By ideological, I refer to those principles that prioritize certain bodies of knowledge while discouraging discourses linked to others (Freire, 1998). It is in these spaces that I have become "suspended in webs of significance". In other words, in the act of researching I aim to spin a web of the complex practices and issues that influence language learning for the military officers who come to our programs. At the same time, I have entrapped myself in this web through my own role as a North American, educator and SL researcher. For example, as a North American I ask, am I implicated in the silencing and marginalizing that the Ukrainian officers experienced at the beginning of the course? As a teacher of English, I question whether I am contributing to a movement of "linguistic imperialism" (Phillipson, 1997; Skutnabb-Kanga, 2000a). As a researcher, I wrestle with the dilemma of whether it is enough to only observe and report on what I see as opposing the pedagogical principles about which I feel most strongly? Or, as a teacher whose interest lies in helping students to develop their potentials both in their

second language and as human beings, am I not bound to do more than merely observe and take note?

Pondering these questions, led me to a third realization. I could not be content with just looking, commenting and walking away from my responsibility in what I viewed as constraints to learning. To be true to myself and to what I see as my professional role as an educator, that is to enable change, I would have to act. From the original findings in my MA study I found a route that had the potential to lead to change. I noted for example, that when the junior officers sought out opportunities to use their second language outside the classroom, this practice not only helped to improve their language skills but influenced their identity construction. They reacted more assertively in resisting being marginalized and more proactively in seeking opportunities to speak English. I also noted that when the senior officers experienced a loss of agency and lack of power, especially when the learning was product-based, there was clearly a detrimental affect on their social investment in learning. Working from a broader theoretical basis especially through my readings of Bakhtin (1986), I began to recognize the importance of language from his perspective. I see language not only as a “marker of social conflict” but as “the model for the means by which such conflicts are broached and resolved” (Gramisci, 1989, p. 91). In other words, in the context of my research setting, language was not only the place where the identities of the Ukrainian officers were constituted as poor, marginalized, second language learners. Language, or more specifically improving their second language, was also the semiotic means that the younger officers used to resist this marginalizing and (re)construct their identities. On another level, through the process of a thesis, language served for me, as a researcher, as a means of calling attention to the tensions I saw in the lives of the Ukrainians as newcomers to Canada and SL learners in an immersion program. Language could also enable me to help find resolutions to some of these tensions.

Fourth, I have realized that the heuristic process of working towards resolutions on the micro level may lead to insights on the macro level. The community of the classroom is becoming increasingly multicultural and globalized. The concept of

community is being viewed on a much wider scale. Engaging the social and socio-historical identities of a group of adult military students within the context of a second language program in a way that will help them to claim their right to speak outside the classroom, could perhaps have political implications and possibilities. Indeed, some of the students I teach have high-ranking positions in their own militaries and aspire to others in NATO. The changes to their identity construction that occur in the classroom, could have an important influence on the increasingly international communities in which these officers live and work.

Recent calls from within the Second Language Literature for more studies into understanding the social and contextual factors of language learning were all I needed to give impetus to the route I was beginning to formulate towards responding to the findings in the MA study and towards change and more transformative pedagogies. These calls for more context-centred research are based on sociocultural theory (Wertsch, 1991, 1998) and remind me of the importance of conceptualizing language learning as an open-ended developmental process mediated by semiotic resources, both cultural resources such as language and material resources such as computers. From Nunan (2003), for example, comes the call to re-examine our communicative practices in classrooms in light of the sociocultural realities of our learning sites. From, Singh & Doherty (2004) comes the invitation to recognize and engage second language learners as “active reflective agents in the ongoing construction of a social reality”(p. 37) and in creating opportunities in international issues. Maguire & Graves (2001) provide insight for the empowering possibilities I envisage through “ a discorsal construction of identity” (p. 560), which they see could allow for the voices of learners to be expressed, heard and recognized. Critical applied linguists such as Fairclough (1999) invite me to consider the ways of “erasing of the boundary between language learning and language using” (p. 116) and Pennycook (2004) to look and always consider the greater context of what we are doing and creating the possibilities for our learners in international settings to “be more” (p. 17). Warschauer (2002, 2004) steers me in the direction of using the combination of language learning and computer-mediated communication as a

means of creating possibilities for social inclusion. This direction is especially important to consider given the historical and present political status of the countries represented by the learners in the immersion program where I am presently working.

With this theoretical support and direction, moving forward has some risks. For example, there is a risk to one's status as an employee involved in questioning the discourses that dictate what, when, where, why and how software can be used for language learning. There is a risk of being unethical in offering only short term solutions to the needs of second language learners. For example, in the context of the present study a colleague in the Czech Republic, collapsed from exhaustion due in part I was sure to the efforts she was expending in trying to set up computer-mediated communication from her end along with her 'regular' teaching duties. There was no doubt how important this action research was to her. English after all was in many ways a 'forbidden fruit' for the participants in the study and still is in many respects. By tempting students (and educators) from countries where resources for education are generally limited, with a means to interact in English via the Internet, was I luring them into a scenario that would put more demands on their financial and time resources than was justly necessary? Could their resources be put to better use? Did the interactive discussions justify the cost, both in human, temporal and financial terms? Indeed, whose interests **are** at stake here, I asked myself? Any change involves risks. But with risks come opportunities (Cameron & Block, 2002). In the next chapters, I expose the risks and opportunities, which from a constructivist perspective, have created more possibilities for change.

Summary

In this prologue, I have begun to reveal the reflective dialogic process that was the inspiration for me to conduct the previous and present inquiry. I have examined highlights from my previous inquiry with a group of Ukrainian officers studying English in a NATO immersion program in Canada. Based on traditional perspectives of motivation in relation to language learning these highly motivated, hard working

officers should have been very successful in developing in English while in Canada. In fact, many of the senior officers left the program disappointed with their progress. I have claimed that to understand this phenomenon, it is necessary to consider a wider socioculturally-based perspective of the language learning experiences of these officers to include the various “nested contexts” that had an influence on their language learning. Power relations that were played out inside and outside the classrooms denied them access to discourses that could have helped them regulate their own learning. On the other hand, some of the younger officers were successful in challenging the disempowered identities that were constructed for them in the program. By taking advantage of the symbolic resources available to them, these younger officers engaged in language learning opportunities. Importantly, this investment in learning not only led to progressing in their second language, but also was reflected in new ways of thinking and seeing themselves in relation to others. This new way of thinking and seeing themselves resulted in a sense of empowerment that they carried beyond the language learning context into their personal and working lives in their own home country.

From this story of a group of Ukrainian officers learning English in Canada, I have concluded that as researcher and teacher my responsibility lies beyond the simple ethnographic reporting of a phenomenological situation that might interest others in the field of second language learning. Indeed, adding to the body of research that is beginning to question our so-called “communicative” practices in our SL classrooms is important but, in my mind, secondary to working with the SL learners I teach to find practical solutions that are economical and easily accessible, to the tensions they face in learning English. This dissertation is a story about using computer technology as a possible solution to breaking down barriers between groups. It is about initiating computer-mediated communication to address the tensions that a unique group of SL military officers and students in Canada and Europe faced in their struggle to learn English.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

A large part of social suffering stems from the poverty of people's relationship to the educational system, which not only shapes social destinies but also the image they have of their destinies.

(Bourdieu, 1998, p. 43)

The test could not check my work here. It may test my knowledge but not my work. We are very different and maybe you can't understand me...But I will receive a rating and when I return home and my commander will see my score, if it is zero, they will say during four months I did not go to class. I did not study. They will think I went to the restaurants, to the nightclubs, only had a holiday. This is a big problem. Nobody can argue that I did not work in this course. But nobody is interested what I did, only in my results... I can imagine what my commander will think!

(Sergiy, a Ukrainian participant in Canada, Interview, May 19, 2004)

I felt pretty scared especially about my speaking. I was afraid not to make grammar mistakes and I was rather silent and [me] being a talkative one.

(Vali, a Romanian participant in the online discussions, Interview, November 24, 2004)

Bourdieu's observation that education profoundly influences learners is reflected in the comments of two students who took part in this study. Their words allude strongly to the fact that what they did in their language classrooms permeated their ways of being not only inside but also outside the four walls of those spaces and influenced their views of themselves and their possibilities for their futures.

For the last six years, through my involvement with military officers from Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries who study English in Canada I have seen evidence on a daily basis of the passionate drive of students from these countries

to learn English, “the new global language”. The global spread of English worldwide has been a much talked-about phenomenon in academic literature and in the media

and popular culture for the last three decades (Burns & Coffin, 2001; Hoffman, 1989; Nunan, 2003; Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1999b; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000a; Warschauer, 2000). The debate about whether the incredible thrust for English language learning is a blessing or a postmodern form of colonialism is now abating in some sense. The connection of English to information and computer technology (Warschauer, 2003) and to policy decisions (Nunan, 2003; Ricento, 2000) apparently has taken its place. Still, the hegemonic power of English is a phenomenon that touches me profoundly and at the same time weighs heavily on my spirit as an educator. For example, I ask myself, by teaching English as a second language am I participating in promoting the Western capitalist quest for more markets or in supporting Western militaries agendas? What is my role in determining the future cultural practices and indeed the lives of my students by my indirect or direct practices inside and outside the classroom? What are the identities being constructed in my language classroom and how do my practices influence that construction? I also wonder about the nature of the “social destinies” of the students I encounter and how these social destinies are being created in the learning contexts in which I teach? When I see human and technological forces such as transmission teaching practices and computerized standardized testing, and the Discourses of Western ideologies they support, constraining my students’ enthusiasm to learn, I feel deep regret and responsibility.

Luke argues that “[T]eaching remains about, within, and for the nation, tacitly about the protection and production of its (emphasis added) Culture (and by implication, its preferred ethnicities and races, languages, and codes) and committed to the production of its sovereign subjects” (p. 24). Much of my interest in motivational issues as a Second Language (SL) educator is rooted in these feelings. While some SL researchers have conceptualized motivation as some static, personality trait of learners, I see the dynamic interplay of identity and social contexts as integral to learning. The dichotomous struggle between the desire to learn and the hurdles that stand in the way

of learning, especially with regard to learning a second language, have preoccupied my thoughts for quite some time. I have come to realize more recently that I can no longer ignore how computer technology fits into this struggle.

In this chapter, I draw on observations and my previous research into the relationship between identity and language learning to provide a background and rationale for the present inquiry of two groups of military officers from Central and Eastern Europe learning English as a second language in Canada and in Europe through the medium of computer technology. I draw from some of the conclusions from my MA study of a group of Ukrainian students to illustrate how the constructs of identity, power and investment relate to the new realities of learning a second language in a technological setting. I focus on the use of two technologies, an internal network software and multi stream videoconferencing software for Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). I examine how this communication influences the identities and SL learning of two groups of military officers learning English in a five-month immersion program in Canada and for four weeks online from Europe. After exploring the identities of a group of officers taking part in the English immersion program in Canada and uncovering the tensions that exist there in the use of computer technology, I look for ways to respond to these tensions using CMC both in Canada and in Europe. Using Participatory Action Research (PAR), I collaborate with a small group of individuals to launch a project to conduct CMC between Canada and Europe. PAR is a research approach in which researchers work collaboratively within practical, social contexts such as educational settings to transform practices.

To support the inquiry, I draw from the relevant research that is connected to the experiences of these learners and to their use of computers for language learning or CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning). While CALL is an all-encompassing term for computers being used for language learning, Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) suggests the use of computers specifically as an interface for communication among learners and teachers in a virtual setting. This research serves to frame the story of the experiences of the participants in the traditional and virtual

classrooms using CALL and CMC. By engaging in this reflexive-dialectical process my aim is to provide the impetus for a new SLA theory of SL learning. I believe this new SLA theory is needed to replace existing theories that have failed as yet to include the use of computer technology, despite its growing prominence everywhere including in SL learning sites.

In some ways, the story of this inquiry is an amazing one, which speaks of the challenges of the multiple-layered, nuanced and nested contexts (Maguire, 1999a) in which it took place and the power of CMC to connect communities of learning. On the other hand, some may judge that the story of these particular groups of learners using computer technology as quite ordinary, the context as somewhat typical of many second language-learning sites and the results as expected. Therein, lies the power of qualitative research to be context specific and at the same time applicable for possibly constructing new knowledge in other contexts. Therein, I also hope, lies the power of this story to suggest change in the ways we as educators understand language learning and the use of computers in SL classrooms.

Background and Rationale

A critique does not consist in saying that things aren't good the way they are. It consists in seeing on what type of assumptions, of familiar notions, of established, unexamined ways of thinking the accepted practices are based. (Foucault, 2000, p. 456)

Six years ago when I began in the context of my teaching to research a group of Ukrainian military officers who had come to North America to learn English, I brought to that research some philosophical and professional “baggage” that I had been carrying around for quite some time. I use the term “baggage” not in a cynical sense, but to depict the constraints that I, and I believe others in the front lines of SL education contend with in our practices. These constraints are based in feelings that SL research claims fail to match the realities of what is happening in actual classrooms.

Most of these concerns stemmed from years of working with learners from

a wide variety of contexts, with children as well as adults. At the time, I initially began to actively research the group of Ukrainian military, I was reflecting back to the experiences of my own children that I had homeschooled a few years earlier, to the observations I had made in teaching second languages and to students' learning in general. These concerns came in the form of questions I asked myself in relation to my experiences and observations. Why did my own children and their classmates in the first couple of years of an immersion program at school seem so enthusiastic about speaking and learning a language, or anything for that matter but by the third grade were bored and reluctant to participate and use the language? Why did my homeschooling children and other homeschoolers I met of all ages and at all levels seem to have a burning desire to learn? Why did many of the students of the same age in the formal classrooms I encountered appear bored and lacking in inquisitiveness and intellectual curiosity? Why did the high school students whom I taught display a strong lack of interest in learning a language, while most of the adult second language learners I taught would sacrifice time and expense to attend evening classes despite their physical fatigue after a long working day? Why did the federal civil servants I sometimes taught, who were being paid regular and substantial salaries to be absent from their work to study French as a Second Language, generally display low levels of enthusiasm for participating in learning the language and continually choose to use their first language in the learning environment? Why did the class of provincial civil servants I taught on a regular basis, who were giving of their free time to learn French, seek every opportunity to use their second language both inside and outside the classroom?

At the military base where I was working, I asked myself similar questions. Why at one end of the school were English Canadian military students who were studying French in an immersion program having to be ordered by the Commanding Officer to use their second language in areas outside the classroom, while at the other end of the same building, European military officers in Canada learning English were clamouring for opportunities to speak English outside the classroom? Yet, when they would meet with English Canadians, why did some of these very same European officers choose

not to speak? Why was it that one gentleman in my group of Ukrainian students was very loud and talkative when he was in the classroom with other Ukrainians but quiet and unassuming when he was in a group of students from other countries like the Czech Republic? Why did the lieutenant in my group of Ukrainians do very little talking in the classroom where there were senior officers, but become quite verbose in his second language with me? Why before the testing period did some students appear confident and at ease in using their second language and after the test period become sullen and revert to using their first language? Why, after years of studying in their own countries, were many of the officers who came to our programs not able to speak English? And finally, why did Vitalii, one of my Ukrainian students stand at my door each morning and ask me: “May I come in?”

Vitalii’s question “May I come in?” suggests some of the issues that have preoccupied me in my second language teaching for quite some time. These issues are not only related to questions I have about learning, but also the deep professional concerns that accompanied those questions. I have felt such frustration and anxiety at witnessing in some instances a few learners being successful at learning, and more specifically at language learning, while many other learners were not. I have felt deep concern at realizing that many young people in our public schools have spent up to twelve years learning a second language, some of them in immersion programs, and have difficulty uttering a phrase in front of a native speaker of that language. A young colleague who has just returned to work after spending a year in local high schools teaching English was overwhelmed by the number of students who were in their final years of schooling and could not engage in a basic discussion of their name and age (Personal Communication, May, 2005). In my own teaching context, I have trouble accepting the fact that the European officers I teach sacrifice months away from family and country and working hard to learn English only to be told that they have not learned enough to earn any change on the “official standard” proficiency level scale.

Who are we as educators allowing “in”? I find it very difficult to contemplate why one of the participants’ in my former study, who was hard working and very

motivated to learn English, left the language program disappointed and devastated at having to report back to his military supervisor that, according to the tests he had taken, he had not reached the language levels that were expected of him. He is now deceased from, what his colleagues suspiciously question, a presumed “fall” from a balcony. Who can assume that the impact of his “failure” to progress on his job and his untimely death are connected? To connect outcomes of learning to such tragedies is indeed not the stuff of academic discussions. Some academics would prefer to talk about evaluation of programs and tests in terms of scores and levels, not in terms of the impact these scores or the programs that precede them have on learners’ identities. Nevertheless, discussions of identities and their relation to what we do in second language programs beg serious reflection about our assumptions of learners and language learning. Within the realities of a global community of learners who are becoming more and more culturally diverse, and in language learning contexts involving increasingly more sophisticated technological tools, the need for such discussions becomes critical.

Over the last three decades, I have experienced first hand two paradigms based on certain assumptions that have influenced the various language programs in which I have taught. In the first paradigm, the positivist paradigm based on an acquisition metaphor, it is assumed that learning languages is a linear passive process of accumulating facts and transmitting predetermined knowledge. In programs based on this paradigm, I have been asked to have students translate endless texts, repeat phrases without understanding their meanings and grasp the grammatical intricacies of a language through decontextualized exercises. In the second paradigm, a neopositivist paradigm based on an interaction metaphor, it is assumed that developing competence in a second language requires not a question of input or practice but rather creating the conditions in which learners engage in an attempt to communicate in their second language. Within this paradigm, learners are seen to be static beings possessing or not the characteristics to learn a language. In programs based on this paradigm, I have been expected to recreate the outside world and its myriad authentic interactions within the four walls of my classrooms. I have also been led to believe that learners have various

degrees of competency for learning that determine their success in progressing in the second language. Both of these paradigms are reflected in the methodologies that have been and continue to be used in second language education. In the next section, I give a brief historical overview of how these paradigms have evolved and influence current SL practices.

An Overview of SLA Research

Historical accounts of second language methodologies (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991) describe early 'translation' methods in which students were required to translate countless texts, and later audio-lingual methods in which students were asked to repeat scripted dialogue verbatim. The fact that these methods had questionable results initially led to a wide variety of speculation. Everything from age, aptitude, personality, cognitive style or hemisphere preference, and learning strategies were seen as factors in learners' deficiencies for improving in the SL. Others (Ellis, 1984a; Long, 1980b) believed that the methods themselves were to blame.

Despite the contribution of this research to an understanding of how individuals learn languages, it has two major weaknesses. First, the research takes for granted that learners are static, unrelated entities who remain unchanged over time and space. Second, it separates the language learner from language learning contexts. Both these issues are crucial to my understanding of the students I teach and research. This narrow linear view of learning does not respond to the realities of the military officers learning English in the context of an immersion program in Canada and in a virtual context from Europe online.

Researchers, educators and others working in second language education, although certainly not all, would be quick to respond that earlier methods, heavily researcher-privileged and fact-dependant are passé. These individuals would argue that the methods supported by earlier paradigms have now been replaced for the better by a more purportedly functional communicative methodology, although, not

without some controversy (Krashen, 1994; Lightbown & Spada, 1994; Klapper, 2003). However, observations of language classes in the computer room at the language site where I work and perhaps more shockingly at the local university where this research is based, attest to the fact that so-called earlier “transmission” methods are alive and active. In the former context, I found evidence of students required to repeat model answers to typical questions and filling in blanks in exercises aimed at helping learners to memorize scripted responses. In the latter context, a software program called CAN8 offers students similar drill and practice exercises for language learning. It allows only the teacher to monitor student work and offers no opportunity for inter-student communication.

In the institutions where I have taught, support for the well-acclaimed communicative methods in theory by those “from above” has very little to do with what is done in practice in the classroom by those “from below”, that is the teachers who interact with students. For example, Nunan (2003) has noted that in Asia where he researches SL learning contexts “although the government rhetoric stresses the development of practical communication skills, this is rarely reflected at the classroom level” (p. 600). Despite recognizing that each context is unique, I find disturbing similarities between Nunan’s Asian context and my own North American second language context. Lining-up at the photocopier each morning and seeing the preponderance of verb tense exercises and other acquisition-based material is no indication to me that formal structural-based second language teaching is still a reality in the immersion program in which I teach. Also, the fact that the major testing done by federal government-supported language programs is heavily grammar and translation-based is another indication of the low level of commitment supporting communicative approaches. These approaches emphasize learner interaction in purposeful conversation and the use of authentic materials. Many of the latest software technologies, which are just beginning to complement or replace language instruction in classrooms, are heavily influenced by fact-based earlier translation and audio-lingual methodologies. Transmission oriented approaches to teaching and

learning a second language inherent to this software threatens to suppress twenty years of research into the connection between language learning and the use of a SL in real communicative events (Barnes, 2003).

A second paradigm operating in SL research supported by a neopositivist perception of the individual has also distracted our vision from what constitutes learning a SL. In this paradigm, one of the assumptions is that language learners are “entities...independent of social context, possessed by attitudes [and] motivations conducive or non conducive to language learning” (Norton, 2000, p. xviii). Within this paradigm, theorists (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Clement & Krudinier, 1983), perhaps influenced by an emphasis on the individual at that time in other educational research, conceptualized “the learner” as a unique being, possessing or not a fixed instrumental or integrative motivation to learn and a variety of attitudinal characteristics, which affected that learning. Individuals considered to display instrumental motivation want to learn a language for their job or some financial gain whereas individuals who have integrative motives are interested in the language in order to participate in the culture of the target language. Some research (Lukmani, 1972; Oller et al., 1977; Strong, 1984), however, revealed contradictory results and questioned this conception of a learner by showing that either the results of learner’s motivation varied in different contexts (Lukmani, 1972) or that there was no connection at all between motivation and learning (Oller et al., 1978; Strong, 1984). More recently others (Fine et al, 2000; Tarone & Swain, 1995, Thesen, 1997) have challenged the ability or explanatory power of this kind of research to reveal the richness of learners’ experiences and perspectives rather than research based on more descriptive, interpretive inquiries (Maguire, 2005).

Reacting from a call to open up the agenda of individual motivational issues (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dornyei, 1994; Oxford & Shearin, 1994), some second language researchers (McKay & Wong, 1996, Dornyei, 1995; Oxford, 1990) developed taxonomies of learners’ strategies. One might wonder if taxonomies of individual strategies are ever exhaustive or realistic. Furthermore, is it possible to generalize that one strategy is preferable over another, especially amongst a multiculturally

diverse group of learners? Others working in this the neopositivist paradigm (Krashen, 1981, 1982, Wong Fillmore, 1982) differentiated between the *individual* learner and the language-learning *context*. While Krashen, for example, explained learning a second language in terms of the combination of an individual's high or low affective filter and *comprehensible input*, Wong Fillmore saw aspects of the individual's personality, whether the learner is extroverted or introverted, as mitigating factors in Second Language Acquisition. Centered on an Acculturation Model of second language acquisition (Schumann, 1976), other theorists targeted *social* rather than individual characteristics as key factors in language learning. They argued that if there is a great social distance between two groups then little acculturation (i.e. the process of becoming adapted to the target language culture) will take place and the possibility of the learner becoming proficient in the target language becomes more remote. Working within this second paradigm, however, whether focussing on the social or the individual has serious pitfalls.

This conflicting research can be rather confusing. In fact, I have argued (Charbonneau-Gowdy, 2000) that in attempting to tease apart the individual from the social in their studies of second language acquisition, theorists have run amok. They do not explain, for example, why Vitalii in my previous study (Charbonneau-Gowdy, 2000) who stood at my classroom door each morning appearing to be shy and timid asking "May I come in?" would later exhibit rudeness and aggressiveness towards others in the class. Or why at times, he would be anxious to talk, and at other times sit sullenly refusing to participate. Theorists would have me accept that Vitalii was either motivated or not, possessing one set of characteristics and not others and immune to the social setting of his learning program. They would also have me believe that because there was a great social distance between his Ukrainian-Russian culture and that of English Canadians, his chances of learning English would be remote. In fact, by the end of the course, Vitalii had taken on many of the mannerisms of Canadian culture, as for example chewing gum, laughing loudly, slumping in his seat, behaviours frowned upon in his own military and culture. Indeed, he was quite successful in his second language learning. In fact, the findings in my previous research challenged literally many of the

claims made by theorists working in a neopositivist paradigm.

In the analysis of my previous data, I found evidence that learners **are** social beings and their learning is contextually dependent. These findings support what others working from a sociocultural theoretical perspective have also discovered (Maguire, 1994b, 1999; Maguire & Graves, 2001; McKay & Wong, 1996; Morgan, 1997; Peirce, 1993, 1995; Thesen, 1997; Warschauer, 1999, 2002, 2004). These researchers argue that the social roles learners play within social contexts, whether formally inside the classroom or informally in natural settings, affect the opportunities available for language learning and their openness to taking up and using those opportunities that are available to them. And vice versa, the opportunities to use their SL also influence the social roles they adopt. For example, one of the participants in the inquiry related to me: *"I think it is hard to speak. I think so. I feel my colleagues have better English than I. I know a lot of grammar rules and expressions but when I have to speak I don't know"* (Ferenc, Personal Communication, April 24, 2004). I argue that it is not the lack of facts or knowledge of rules that is holding him back from communicating freely, but how others will perceive him in his social context if he reveals a weakness in his abilities. In another instance Sergii, a Ukrainian officer, reported that he was a confident teacher and authoritative father in his own country. Yet, in the Canadian context he confided: *"I'm always nervous [in Canada]. Learning English at home, I am never nervous. It is my hobby"* (Interview, April 14, 2004). Sergii is clearly indicating that his confidence is not a static personality trait but socially constructed within the experiences that he lived each day while in the program. In both cases, either these learners' identities play a role in whether they take advantage of the opportunity to use their second language or the opportunities that are provided to them do not allow them to participate actively in the SL event. Ferenc's fear of being ridiculed leads him to refuse to practise speaking English in class with his colleagues; whereas Sergii's nervousness prevents him from relaxing and interacting with others. Instead, he spends most of his extra hours in his room studying words and grammar rather than **using** the language socially.

Both examples support sociocultural theory that assumes language learners can be agents in their own language learning. Or as Donato (2000) puts it: “*Sociocultural theory is about language classrooms where agency matters*” (p. 46). By agent or agency I reference Donato’s explanation of learners’ mediating their “goals, actions, cultural background and beliefs” (p. 44) in a second language context. From this perspective, Ferenc and Sergii’s language learning ultimately depends on whether they undergo or not the difficult, yet necessary transformation of the subjective positions they have constructed or that have been constructed for them in the language learning situations that confront them.

The growing body of research (Maguire & Graves, 2001, McKay & Wong, 1996; Morgan, 1997; Norton & Toohey, 2001; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000; Thesen, 1997, Warschauer, 1999, 2004) looking at the nature of individuals integrated into language learning contexts is dismantling the paradigms that blind some SL researchers and educators into believing that learners are passive containers or digital computers in which we dump knowledge. Sociocultural theory and research assumes that SL learning is intertwined with issues of identity, agency and power. Those working within this perspective are demonstrating how these issues are important to our understanding of whether learners invest or not in language learning. For the participants in these various studies as well as those officers who participated in my present and previous studies, it appears that taking advantage of opportunities to speak and to use the language were factors of how learners felt about themselves, their personal identities, and the social relations of power that existed in the contexts of their language learning.

Uncovering this connection between learners’ identities and the nature of language learning contexts is key to an understanding of how we can influence SL learning both inside and outside the classroom. Until now it seems much of what is called ‘success’ in my role as an educator has been equated to being able to manipulate learners to act in certain ways and then measuring the results through generalizable test scores. Working within this mindset supports the notion that teachers

are the sole sources of knowledge in a classroom and are subjugated to carrying out the methodologies established by those “above” while at the same time supporting evaluation systems as a means of control. Gee (1990) calls this mindset an act of colonization when one group accepts the imposed practices of another “just enough to keep signaling that others [those who dictate the Discourse] are their “betters” and to become complicit with their own subordination” (p. 155).

On the other hand, working toward an understanding of language learning as a sociocultural process implies that learning is co-constructed by learners and teachers in collaborative and empowering dialogues and that language learning is not a neutral phenomenon (Maguire & Graves, 2001). Unfortunately, from my perspective as a SL learner, teacher and researcher, too much of our attention in second language education is focussing on managing ‘success’ and too little work is being done on understanding the sociocultural nature of language learning. A perusal of recent articles in TESOL, one of the foremost journals connected to current practices in teaching English as a Second Language, confirms this observation. For example, in a recent issue of this journal (TESOL, Volume 38 (1), 2004), although the article section is equally divided between sociocultural and methodology issues, the research section itself is devoted completely to the area of testing, while the brief report section discusses an experimental study. The book review section is even less promising, only one out of six reviews includes books written from a sociocultural perspective. Maguire and Beer (2001) concur with this observation after a more in depth look at a variety of SL journals. The author of a recent review of empirically-based articles in the well-respected Language Learning Journal (Wingate, 2002) notes: “*[M]ethods that are sensitive to context and detail are of particular relevance for teachers trying to base their teaching on research evidence from their classrooms*”(p. 64). The situation in journals reporting on research in the area of computer assisted language learning (CALL) is even more dismal. Cries for more descriptive research that will help explain what learners experience from a sociocultural perspective when using this computer

technology for language learning are just beginning to be heard (Ruschoff & Ritter, 2001; Hubbard, 2003).

One reason for what I would consider a misplaced focus in second language learning toward academic posturing and away from learners and contexts may be the complexity involved in looking at learning sites. Bartels' (2002) alarming findings from interviews he conducted showed that an overwhelming majority of "applied linguists consider themselves primarily as researchers of language rather than as teachers of applied linguistics and therefore the idea of conducting research on practice does not occur to them" (p. 73). Bartels also observes that the research that is being done is almost exclusively on teacher methodology and didactics (Gatbonton, 1999; Hughes-Wilhelm, 1997). If the applied linguists in his inquiry are the same people who are educating future teachers, what examples are these linguists setting for the value of looking for answers to our second learning questions in classrooms? When these classrooms increasingly include computer technology, what insights are these teachers missing out on?

Another reason I would suggest for the focus being diverted away from learners' identities and related issues of agency and power, is the fact that these same issues are mirrored in the lives of teachers' own practices. In other words, reflecting on second language learners' and teachers in learning sites, I see a strange parallel. For example, most of the learners in my present, and previous studies expressed time and again how their anxiety at testing time reflected a loss of control. This loss of control placed them in a submissive position with respect to their abilities to progress in the language and to perform at their best. Because of their powerless positions they felt helpless to change those aspects of the program that they felt disadvantaged them. As one of my present participants, Alex, would say whenever we discussed one of these disadvantaging situations: "*Life is life*" (Interview, February to May, 2004). I think in these words Alex was confirming his powerlessness in making changes to the system that was in place for testing and which controlled classroom practices. Systemic influences are difficult to change.

So too, I would suggest is the case for too many teachers in second language learning contexts. Anna, a well-respected teacher in the context of the study, spoke exasperatingly to me of her desire to “*get out of teaching*”. After five months of working with her students, many of the officers in her group had received results on the final tests that indicated there was no change in their second language skills. (Personal Communication, December 2003). These less than illustrious results have a double sting to them. They not only suggest a lack of progress on the part of the students in Anna’s group but also challenge her abilities as a teacher. Like many in the profession, Anna is a part time teacher and how her students fare in the classroom has direct consequences to her possibilities for future employment. Many of the teachers in the study site work on five-month contracts and find themselves on a treadmill of constantly reapplying for their positions and proving their credibility in artificial hiring evaluation procedures. For example, some of the teachers have been subjected to these demoralizing and divisive practices four times in the last six years. Not only must the teachers’ tenuous positions influence their personal identities but also one would suppose that these subordinated subject positions would deter them from looking more closely and critically at what goes on in the socio-cultural political contexts of their practices. And all the less likely are they to be in a position to question the status quo and promote change to these practices. When there might be a need for change in the area of learners’ uses of computer technology for language learning, I have observed that they become ever more silent and just grateful to have this added resource.

The dilemma then appears to be a chicken and egg situation. The more the influences “from above” impose their practices on teachers, the less teachers are in a position to look more closely at what is going on in the contexts of their teaching. The less teachers look at what is happening with learners’ identities in their learning sites, the more they continue to impose the practices “from above” on their learners. In my experience, the fallout of this scenario of what Bourdieu (1998) calls ‘reproducing the system’ is that a growing number who have chosen the role of serving others through teaching are becoming desensitized to what is actually going on in their classrooms

and the impact of their practices on students. Those who remain sensitive feel less in a position to make changes because of the unstablizing factors of their employment.

If the purpose of education is to promote change then where does the chicken and egg scenario I have described above leave us? As a second language teacher, I cannot be content to deliver programs and prepare students for evaluations when my ultimate purpose for being in the profession in the first place is to serve my students and to help them to reach their human potential. Aiding others to reach their human potential requires me to look critically at the practices that are being carried out around me in the contexts of my teaching. An important part of working from this critical perspective is examining the way my own identity and those of my students are influenced by these practices and inversely how our identities influence the practices we take part in. But the real test of my commitment to expose and to influence change lies in an act that is far more difficult and perhaps dangerous: What do I intend to do about what I have found? Doing something about that which I believe fundamentally contradicts my beliefs in serving others will require me to look through different “eyes” and to interrogate the Discourses (Gee, 1990) that exist around me. By Discourse, I refer to the characteristic ways of talking, acting interacting, thinking, believing and valuing that frame the social practices of one group, for example a group of institutional administrators, or text book writers, or applied linguists, as opposed to another such as teachers and learners (Gee, 1992, p. 29). To attempt to change Discourses from the bottom is surely a challenge that requires much reflection and determination. Gee (1992) offers some encouragement. *“And sometimes we **do** change the dominant Discourses we achieve mastery over and, thus too, the society at large”* (p. 151). Although I have no aspirations for changes at the level of society, I do see hope for change on a one-to-one basis in the micro world I inhabit in my teaching military officers from a variety of countries.

The question remains, where do second language educators begin to make the fundamental changes crucial to their teaching practices? One might wonder why I pose this question given the proliferation of advice giving that appears almost without fail at the end of most of what is written in the literature related to teaching in general

and second language education in particular. Part of the problem is that the questions teachers like myself are asking in order to effect change especially in the use of computer technology for SL teaching and learning, are not being adequately addressed. Indeed, in the area of computer based-language teaching, Hubbard (2003) found that many of the questions about the effectiveness of CALL that have been asked over the last two decades by practitioners still remained unanswered. Another problem is in the time delay between when evidence is collected and when it is reported. Relying on the agendas of publishing houses and paper-based format rather than as a digitalized document means still a great deal of SL research remains untimely and inaccessible, although in the timeframe of this inquiry this situation is being rapidly reversed. Still, the fact that much of this reporting is in written text form with little in the way of images to support research findings begs the question whether new generations of researchers will be content to read multiple pages of text over the Internet. Unfortunately as well, the change that is suggested in the SL research in CALL appears preoccupied with outdated comparative methodological and individual learner-centred issues. The move to viewing SL learning from a sociocultural perspective in terms of issues of identity, agency and power, despite calls for such a reorientation (Hall, 1997; Lantolf, 2000; Norton, 2000; van Lier, 1994), with few exceptions (Fang & Warschauer, 2004; Warschauer, 1998; Lam & Lawrence, 2002) has yet to be heeded in the literature in CALL or CMC or else remains at the theoretical level (Tschirner, 2001; Hada, Ogata & Yano, 2002).

The path towards the change I am suggesting appears still unclear. The problem of where to begin to make fundamental changes in second language teaching practices reveals an interesting dilemma. On the one hand, there is a group in second language education, whose concern is methodology and evaluation and whose discourse promotes categorizing and generalities. Weedon (1997) warns that following this path can only lead to suppressing the social construction of individuals and silences political struggle and voices. This is certainly not the path I have in mind. On the other hand, the second group, those who are concerned with social construction of identity and

learning, views language as an effective political tool with which to theorize equality and open up the way for change (p. 79). Using language to liberate and empower has much more potential for me as I consider the group of learners I meet each day who represent countries that are struggling to form new democracies. But how do I step beyond the theoretical discussions of language as empowering to the point of assisting in the transformation of its practice? From where I stand as a teacher, I see this process beginning with the understanding and deconstruction of the Discourses that are preventing change in the SL contexts, contexts increasingly supported by computer technology, where the SL learners I meet use or choose not to use their SL. We have a choice. We can either continue to assume the role of second language colonizers, which will only strengthen the present hegemonic conditions (Macedo et al., 2003). Or we can promote second language as a powerful tool, which can be used by the learners we teach to break down political inequalities.

As a case in point, during one of my field trips to the Czech Republic in December 2003, I had the occasion to reunite with one of my previous students, Bohumil, a former colonel from Prague. The following vignette describes that meeting and includes indications of the important role his knowledge of English is playing in his life.

Reuniting with Bohumil

I am thrilled to meet Bohumil again. Seeing him in his own country, I notice he appears more relaxed, moves more self-assuredly and talks more freely than when he sat amongst the multicultural group of officers in my classroom in Canada. There he was a civilian, with no stripes on his sleeve to prove his status amongst the group of senior ranking military that made up the group. There he was a foreigner from a country, which he considered “poor” compared to the North American one in which he was studying. There he struggled to express his thoughts in English with those in Canada who had the cultural and linguistic knowledge that he would never have in the five months of his stay. He talks to me as an equal, rather than student to teacher, asks me questions that he would have never dare ask while in Canada. He tells me about his own life since we said our sad goodbyes after the course and about the whirlwind of international meetings that are now a part of his working life since he returned from Canada. The meetings are held all over the world and are a forum for representatives of

NATO countries to discuss the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction. He tells me how more prepared he feels to take an active role in these talks and to express his opinions than was the case prior to his studying English in Canada. Where once he would have been a passive participant in these types of meetings, now the self-assuredness he has acquired in English allows him to contradict the opinions of representatives of more powerful countries like the US and France, especially when he feels they are acting solely in their own best interests. He attributes the confidence he has at these meetings to the practice he had in the, often fiery, discussions amongst our culturally diverse group and to the occasions for discussions I arranged with students of political science at a local school and university. As we talk so candidly to one another it occurs to me that during his stay in Canada, Bohumil has not just acquired English and the ability to put words into sentences but rather he has learned a language that is enabling him to construct a new more powerful subject position in the face of complex, politically charged situations. The significance of this evolving empowerment is no small matter. It is especially important given the nature of the talks Bohumil is involved in and, as he points out, his position as member of a country that is just beginning to find its place in a world beyond a Soviet dominating regime.

As my reunion with Bohumil vividly shows, language, whether a first or second, is indeed a powerful tool. Historically, language has allowed one political leader, Hitler, to sway a nation to commit horrific acts and another, Ghandi, to bring about profoundly positive changes to millions of people. More recently, language is being used to double talk some of us into accepting inhuman acts of aggression against Iraq as justified and at the same time making a world stand up and take notice of the impact for all of us when such acts of aggression are committed. By language, I am not referring simply to words on a page or sounds that come from mouths but the many ways in which humans communicate- the inflections in voices, facial expressions, the clothes worn, physical stance and more. We can no more separate these signs used for communication or what Wertsch calls semiotic resources (1991, 1998) from words, including words in our second language, than we can still believe as the Saussurians (1974) did from a structuralist perspective, that words are simply abstract symbols with fixed meanings. Semiotic resources including classroom discourses contain powerful messages. For example, European students read not just the words I use but the clothes I wear in the classroom as signs of my authority as a North American teacher and worthy of being listened to and esteemed! They are reading these semiotic resources from their vantage

point, that is, from the point where their cultural, historical, social identities place them as members of a group of non-native speakers and according to their perceptions from a socio-economic inferior status. Indeed, I believe I reinforce this status in my SL classroom as I stand before them and line up an agenda on the flipchart for the day. Through these signs-standing, agendas, flipcharts, I communicate my authority for who, when and how and to whom students will speak. Similarly, when I ask students to sit alone before computers and expect them to complete drill-and-practice, or as they are pejoratively referred to as “drill and kill” exercises (Warschauer, 2004), I am using other signs, dressed up in multimodal form, to extend this authority for who, when, how and to whom they speak into a digital context.

On the other hand, as in the case of Bohumil, words and the semiotic resources included in language can have more empowering ends. Bohumil’s practice in using language (the words, the gestures, the intonation, the physical signs) to claim a voice in discussions in the SL classroom in Canada helped him to speak from a position of equality in the politically charged meetings he attended with representatives of more powerful countries. Gee (1992), would conceptualize Bohumil’s experience in Canada as an act of *learning* a language not just *acquiring* it. By *learning* he refers to understanding the various Discourses of a language where Discourses are the socially accepted ways of using words and other symbolic resources (p. 131). In other words, through practising the language in communicating both inside and outside the classroom while in Canada, he was able to understand how language was used to support the various Discourses that were present in those contexts. Through understanding, he constructed an empowered place for himself from which to speak.

There is a growing number of SL researchers who have already begun to conceptualize language and language learning in a broader sense. By broader sense, I mean seeing language as encompassing words and symbolic resources and language learning as dialogic (Bakhtin, 1986), inseparable from the social contexts in which it occurs (Vygotsky, 1981). These researchers (Hall, 1993, 1995, 1997; Maguire & Graves, 2001; McKay & Wong, 1996; Morgan, 1997; Norton & Toohey, 2001; Pennycook, 1996;

Roberts, 2001; Thesen, 1997, Warschauer, 1999, 2004) call for expanding the agenda of the study of language learning. Their work is admirable in view of the strong current in second language research that still exists that focuses on methodological and evaluation issues and continues to strongly influence SL classroom practices. More importantly, their work is crucial to those involved in SL education who on a daily basis, try to resist the currents and influences of methodological and evaluation- based practices and who are recognizing the global cultural consequences of teaching English in multicultural classrooms.

With only 6% of the world population speaking English as a native language, what are the consequences of English becoming the global language? Is the spread of English, as Rymes (2002) notes, a “colonizing threat to language”(p. 431)? If so, how can I satisfy the students with whom I come in contact and what seems their insatiable desire to become fluent in English and at the same maintain my own democratic principles which prevent me from being the colonizer? Many of these students relate how they spend the majority of their free time in their home countries working at their English. They take courses at their own expense and buy books and software, often at considerable personal sacrifice, in order to engage in self-learning. They use their limited resources to enrol their children in after school classes with English tutors.

In the next vignette, I recall an exchange I had in January 2002 during my first field trip to the Czech Republic. The exchange was with Lidia, a Czech teacher of English who I had met in Canada during the time she was attending a NATO-sponsored teacher- training program.

Forbidden Fruit

Lidia has come to the bus station to meet me. She smiles as she greets me and appears excited that I have made the effort to take time to include her on my round of visits while in the Czech Republic. We talk about her time in Canada and how she is adjusting to being home again. She mentions that her experience in Canada was not so good as she had trouble feeling comfortable with the Canadian family she lived with. They gave her little attention and she felt frustrated that she was missing out on an opportunity to improve her

English- her main reason for accepting to leave her young children and husband to spend five months away. Now that she was back in her home country, finding occasions to speak English were even more challenging. She has a busy day as a teacher to military officers and it is often difficult because of the lack of materials available, the absence of native speakers at the university and the fact that she and her colleagues are never sure of whether what they do is 'correct'. She shows me some of the materials she and other colleagues in the English Department at the University have been working on. In perusing the material, I am struck by the enormous energy and time that has gone into them. She tells me that she and her daughter have joined an American religious sect that is operating in the community. Her sole purpose in joining the group is that they offer lessons in English although these lessons come with a condition, that is to participate in the group's religious functions. While I am there I visit with a few of her classes and talk to the students. They are so attentive and serious about my presence as if it is of great importance. I speak to Lidia about my impressions of her students' eagerness to learn, which is so similar to what I see in the students who come to our programs from Central and Eastern Europe. I ask her to explain why it is so. She tells me that during the Communist era, a time not so long ago and which still weighs heavily on the psyches of most of the people in her country, English was considered the "forbidden fruit". Using the language or having materials in English was not only forbidden, but also punishable. And yet, according to Lidia, many realized that those materials and the language represented a way of life that they knew little about, but were certain that it offered possibilities that they were being denied.

Underneath this simple exchange with Lidia lies a powerful message. Within this unquenchable global thirst for English as a second language in a world, where as General Dallaire notes "80% of humanity are in the blood, in the mud and suffering" (Dallaire, 2004), there is a growing awareness. The awareness is that those who speak English "have", and those who don't, "don't have". Learning English is about wanting to "come in". From the knowledge and experience I have gained in working with multicultural groups of military officers from Central and Eastern Europe, Asia and the Middle East for the last six years, I realize that wanting to "come in" is not just about having more materially. It's about wanting to come into a dialogue, a conversation with the other 20% of humanity. In other words, it is not just about wanting "to have more" but about wanting "to be more" (Pennycook, 2004). "Being more" means having a voice, being respected as an equal participant in the dialogues that will determine one's place in the global future. Cornel West (1992) asserts that having and being are closely

related. The desire to have material resources in society and the recognition, sense of affiliation and security that comes with them are tied to how people understand their relationship to the world and their possibilities for the future. From this view, learning English not only has the potential of being a resource for economic opportunity, it is also a resource for social change (Rymes, 2002; Warschauer, 2002, 2004).

If Marshall McLuhan's (1962) words "the medium is the message" have proven valid, it is probably because he realized before many others that computer technology would play such a powerful role in human development. From the printing press, through television to the computer, technology has intersected with other broad social, economic, cultural and political factors to bring about transformations (Warschauer, 1998). Looking ahead to the 21st century, it is evident that computer technology in the form of the Internet is responsible for a major shift, or what Kress (2003) calls "a revolution", in the way we use language to communicate. It is rather ironic then that those who spend the major parts of their daily lives involved in the discussion and teaching of languages, have been relatively silent, with a few exceptions (Kress, 2003, 2001; Lankshear, 1997; Selfe, 1999; Herring, 1996; Hawisher & Selfe, 1991, Warschauer, 1997, 2002, 2003), about how computer technology and the Internet are influencing what we have, who we are and what we do. In the area of second language education, this silence is particularly surprising. There are some who see second language education as more than just a language training ground but rather as an interface in the creation of new possibilities and change. They recognize that discussions concerning computer technology, identity, and language learning must begin.

In the next sections, I draw on the theorists who have most influenced my thinking about the present and future role of computer technology and the Internet in learning second languages. I introduce the theorists whose work in language learning, identity, and power has framed my inquiry. In chapter two, I provide a more critical discussion of the assumptions and key concepts in their theories. In the final section, I reflect on my reservations about current thinking of communicative practices in SL

teaching and how this thinking relates to the use of computer technology to connect communities of learners for language learning.

Linking Language Learning and Identity

To begin the discussion of the role of computer technology in second language education, I start from three assumptions. The first assumption is that language learning is a social act; the second is that within all social acts there is an element of power; the third assumption is that learning is influenced by a multitude of contextual factors. Vygotsky (1962, 1978) considered individuals as inseparable from their social worlds. His work was instrumental in providing a base for further research into the role of social and individual processes (Werstch, 1998; Lantolf & Appel, 1994, 2000) in language learning. In Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, social interaction is considered a crucial factor in understanding human behaviour. From this view, social interaction not only governs the way individuals relate to one another, but also structures the intra-action, that is, the internalized acts of thinking and feeling within individual consciousness. This in turn leads to higher order functions of thinking. Language plays an important role and serves a mediating function in this developmental process. Sociocultural theory assumes that individuals develop knowledge of the structural and functional aspects of a language by using the language socially with others. This view contrasts with a cognitive-acquisition perspective that sees language learning as a solitary cognitive act of mental processing (Donato, 2000). Thus, when teacher and students talk together, their utterances are more than linguistic input, which they need to comprehend. These intersubjective utterances result in social practices that serve to help to shape, construct and influence learning. Within a social context, learners can move from being "other-regulated" to being "self regulated". In other words, the **inter**mental activity in a social context has direct influence on the **intra**mental at the individual level. As Vygotsky (1989) asserts "*social interaction produces new elaborate, advanced psychological processes that are unavailable to the organism working in isolation*" (p. 61).

Sociocultural theorists conceptualize language learning as a developmental

process that is mediated by semiotic resources (Wertsch, 1991). Semiotic resources include discourse, the physical environment, gestures and materials such as computers that make up the learning context. The characteristics of these resources determine in powerful ways how learners negotiate the social interactions that constitute their language learning. Another theme in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning involves the view that learners are active agents in the development of their language learning. This means that learners bring to interactions their own ways of thinking and feeling based on their historical, cultural and personal identities that were formed through previous interactions. With these thoughts and feelings they project their own future situations which they apply to present situations. In their work in child development, Vygotsky & Luria (1994) have shown that through symbolic operations with signs, or words, children open up a new field of action: "a field that does not lean on the existing present, but rather sketches an outline of the future situation of action and thus creates a free action, independent of the immediately effective situation" (p. 134-135). Sociocultural theory unites the past with the present and opens up the tremendous roles that history and culture can play in shaping second language learners identities in the future in the context of learning language. Understanding these roles can help explain the tensions that exist among learners, teachers and target language speakers whose cultures might be different from each other. Within second language interactions, learners are not only agents in the construction of higher order thinking but also agents in mediating their identities. Identities are dynamic and can be *transformed* from being *conformed to*, to being *opposed to* – offering empowering possibilities of social interaction in language learning.

Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) dialogic theory of language also helps to further our understanding of the importance of social interaction in empowering learners. Bakhtin uses the construct of dialogism to explain the nature of social interactions to mediate meaning. From this perspective language, in the broadest of sense (words, actions, images, spaces and so on), always invites a response in human consciousness to the words of others. The response to a sign, whether that sign is a word action image, or

space, is another sign. Embedded in these signs are the meanings constructed in past interactions. Therefore, each interaction is influenced by past interactions and the present interactions will influence future ones. This interplay of a sign with another sign, of past, present and future is the basis of individual understanding and meaning. In a SL learning context, through these interactive processes of answering one to the other learners can create and mediate new meanings. At the same time, they can create social and ideological changes to their individual identities. In other words, in dialogic interactions, there is a potential for empowering second language learners to have a voice, to invest in using their second language and at the same time to evolve as a human being. Thus when second language learners speak they are not only using language in a particular context they are shaping the very contexts that shape them.

Vygotsky's sociocultural developmental theory and Bakhtin's theory of language as dialogic have important implications for our understanding of current practices of using computer technology for language learning. First of all, using these theories can help us to critically examine the use of computers in language learning sites and the nature of the learning that is taking place. For example, if the military officers in my study are asked to sit alone at computers and perform repetitive tasks or connect lists of words with their translations, are they learning a language or memorizing facts? What are the implications of this use of computer technology on their voices and agency? Secondly, basing an examination of the uses of computer technology on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and Bakhtin's theory of language can lead to exploring the potentials of these resources for language learning and identity construction. In the case of this inquiry, for example, I have asked myself what are the ways computers can serve as tools for creating new places in the SL classroom for social interactive practices? And in the context of second language learning, how can the Internet be used with the group of military officers in the study, as a medium for changes to their individual identities at the micro level, and at the macro level, to their societies and the global community?

Linking Power and Identity

A second assumption on which I base my discussion of computer technology in second language learning sites is that in any social interaction in a real or virtual setting, power relations exist.

Weedon (1997) is especially helpful in conceptualizing the relationship between power, identity and language learning. Working from a feminist poststructuralist perspective, she uses her theory of subjectivity to connect language, individual experience and social power. From this perspective, Weedon explains the nature of subjectivity, or identity, as who we are as individuals. Our identities are the combination of our innate selves and the selves that are made up of the characteristics we have acquired through our experience of the world. Central to her concept of subjectivity is that it is a site of struggle, it can change over time and that the nature of a subject is nonunitary and multiple (Norton, 2000). This explanation may account for why Vitalii at one moment was asking timidly for permission to come into the language learning setting and at another time was aggressive to others in that setting. It may also explain why, at the beginning of the course, he appeared bored and sullen and later was diligent and interested. Weedon (1997) sees language as most important to this understanding of subjectivity. She explains: "Language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet, it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity is constructed" (p. 21).

Weedon was very much influenced by how Foucault (1980, 2000) theorized power. Both made an important contribution to our understanding of the relationship between identity and power. Through language we not only work out our identities but also set in place the power relations that determine those identities. In other words, in our social relations, we use language to establish for others and ourselves who *we are*—our beliefs, our values, our goals and our backgrounds, based on our innate and acquired selves. At the same time, we establish who *we are in relation to others*. Human beings

gravitate towards those who share similarities in beliefs, values, goals and backgrounds. They form discourses or ways of thinking, talking and acting, as a means of communicating solidarity to each other within a particular group. While these discursive practices serve to unite individuals, they are also responsible for marginalizing those who do not conform to the social rules and roles inherent in particular discourses. Take for example Sacha, a former Ukrainian student in the immersion program in which I teach. Many visible signs that contradicted the 'norm' among other officers served to label him as "marginalized": his physical appearance - the large hat that he wore that confirmed his affiliation to the group of Ukrainians and the inferior, outdated quality of his clothing; his reluctance to socialize when money was involved; his lack of facility with spoken English. These signs conveyed the message to others in the group that he was economically and linguistically deprived. When he entered into the company of a North American teacher, he quickly assumed a subordinate position and asked permission to come into the room. Language and identity in the guise of discourse is about solidarity, status and power.

Language, identities and discourses are constantly changing because power relations can serve to coerce or collaborate. In coercive relations, dominant groups, such as educational institutions or individual teachers can try to protect the status quo in which the access to symbolic (knowledge) and material resources (computers, money, goods) is limited to certain groups. On the other hand, collaborative power relations can serve to empower and change inequitable relations. In Bohumil's collaborative exchanges in the multicultural classroom in the English immersion program in Canada, he negotiated a sense of self and demonstrated more confidence. Ultimately, he used the discursive experience of the classroom to redefine his subject position in the international discussions with representatives of more powerful nations and to claim the right to speak.

With regard to computer technology, I concur with Warschauer (2000, 2004) that in many SL learning sites, including the one where this inquiry was conducted, teachers and institutions are choosing to use computers for drill-and-practice work,

information processing and electronic communication (communicating with machines). This use of computers serves to prepare students for work in their SL in service industries where basic functional skills are needed. Whereas using computers, or more specifically the Internet, to help students develop communication, collaborative and critical skills may insure that the SL learners have the more sophisticated skills required for the better jobs in society. I would add that acquiring these skills can not only lead to having the financial stability that comes with better employment but also the potential of having a voice and agency in constructing new possibilities for the future.

Individuals and SL learners are increasingly employing computers and the Internet as a resource for interacting in their second language. Weedon's subjectivity theory and Foucault's theory on power help us to begin to frame these interactions and to understand them in more critical terms. For example, when second language learners use computers to learn languages, how are their identities being mediated? How are the power relations inherent to these interactions being determined? Are these relations of power serving to enable or limit the range of identities that language learners can negotiate? Are the social identities that are formed in a virtual environment different from those in more traditional communication environments? While I have alluded to the answers to these questions in my example in the previous paragraph, I discuss them further in the next section and then again in chapter four.

Linking Computer Technology and Identity

A third assumption I make in discussing the use of computers for SL learning is that learners bring to the learning site a set of "nested contexts". Included in these contexts are "the shifting social, cultural, economic and political boundaries that intersect, overlap and collide in complex ways" (Maguire, 1994a, 1995, 1996, p. 220). These contexts represent the multiple layers of influence in learners' construction of identities.

Understanding the dynamics of how human beings with their complex identities intersect with computer technologies in SL learning will require a new theory of SL

learning that has not yet been adequately worked out. Part of the problem has been that SLA theorists, especially those working in CALL, have not conceptualized SL learners interacting with computers from a sociocultural perspective but rather have focussed on individual learners and based learning on transmission approaches. Nevertheless, in this increasingly technology-dependent world, a new theory is crucial for SL educators to frame their practices in terms of promoting language and computer technology to their students as valuable tools in their individual and societal development-where development is having *control over* and a *voice in* one's future possibilities.

In a society that is changing so rapidly socially, culturally, economically and politically, advancements in technology are often at the root of and are adding to the climate of change. Educators are scrambling to keep up. Many educators like myself feel ill prepared. Functioning in a virtual environment is challenging not only because it is a new context in which to work, but also because many of us have no previous examples from our early education experiences on which to base our teaching practices. In addition and at the same time, technologies are shaping our lives and the lives of our students in ways we don't yet fully comprehend, so we have no ready-made answers to offer to learners or to ourselves in connection with computer technology use (Hawisher & Selfe, 1999).

Change is destabilizing, but it is also the catalyst for learning. What can we learn from our present uses of computer technology in our SL learning sites? How can we broaden our understanding of the intersection of language and computer technology in relation to language learning contexts? One suggestion is that "we should continue to take risks in connection with the new technologies even when those risks produce results that are unsatisfactory" (Hawisher & Selfe, 1999, p. 4). In our SL teaching, taking risks could mean challenging the discourses that control our practices and exploring new ways of using computer technology for learning with our students. By 'new ways', I refer to finding alternatives to the dated methodologies that have been revamped in digital form and which, I believe, continue to marginalize SL learners by denying them a voice and agency in their learning.

Kress (1998, 2001, 2003) offers a further suggestion to the dilemma of how we might meet the challenge of understanding technology as it interacts with identities. He suggests that we are the makers of meaning and therefore it will be up to us, as educators “*to put us [our identities] and our sign making [social interaction through language] at the centre*” not in a way that we do as we wish, but **not** allowing ourselves to be victims of control either (2001, p. 176). Taking control of the technologies we use, I believe, will require that we take a harder and broader look at how the multiple-layered identities of our students are influenced by the present technologies in second language education. Taking control will demand us to examine the Discourses (Gee, 1996, 1997) that are present in our SL learning sites as we employ computer technology. Taking control will also mean that we explore how computers and Internet can serve to mediate and expand the choices that language learners have for creating new identities. Taking control suggests that we need to use our critical study of computer technology and language learning, as Feenberg (1999, 2003) suggests, to capitalize on the potential of this technology to influence changes not only on the level of individual identities but within societies as a whole. For second language educators whose main aim is to help learners reach their potentials and at the same time claim a voice in the global community, this perspective of language learning and technology offers new hope and incentive.

Going beyond our analytical frameworks and deconstructive analyses and connecting theories to practice, I think, is our only hope for change. But where do we begin, with theory or practice? Will a new expanded theory of SL learning that includes the use of computer technology inform our practices of computer technology or will an examination of computer technology being used in practice lead to new theory? Or will both of these avenues to change simply lead to a reification of old practices? Van Lier (1988) offers useful insight in looking at the use of computer technology in SL education from a sociocultural perspective.

To sum up, theorizing in SLA, to the extent that it means a principled and sustained attempt to come to an understanding of phenomena in the field is less a

matter of looking for causes, or positing laws, and more a question of listening, communicating and coming to agreements (p. 331).

The listening and communicating and coming to agreements that van Lier refers to will have to begin “at the bottom” by second language learners and teachers working through their practices toward a new understanding of the relationship between language learning and computer technology. Crucial to this understanding is exploring computers as an interface of SL communication.

Rethinking Communicative Language Practice

The construct ‘communicative’ as it is presently used in second language education needs to be re-examined. First, as a term used to depict a method of teaching, the word ‘communicative’ lacks meaning. The reason for the ambiguity, I believe, is that the term fails to draw consensus among those who claim to use communicative practices about what a communicative method actually means. So, whereas one teacher may consider embracing the ‘communicative method’ to mean lining up a series of speaking activities for her students for the day based on the structures she has taught, another teacher may see the communicative method as practising memo writing in preparation for an upcoming test. In the first scenario, communication is based on knowledge of the language where language is some form of genetic code structured in performance and a prerequisite for participating in the activities; in the second, communication is seen as an individual exercise of assuming a set list of preconceived ideas, meaning and values to satisfy a certain standard of acceptable practice. I would argue that neither of these conceptions of communicative, nor many other conceptions I see evidence of in the practices around me, are what Canale and Swain (1980) had in mind when they first developed a model in reaction to earlier translation and audiolingual methods. They explained their conception of a communicative approach as an approach in which “communication...must be as meaningful as possible and be characterized...by aspects of genuine communication such as its basis in social interaction, the relative creativity and unpredictability of utterance, its purposefulness and goal orientation and its

authenticity” (p. 33). The words “social, creativity, unpredictability, authentic” suggest the conversations that characterize our everyday lives, and that elude the discourse on programs, planned activities and testing. The paradox that has evolved between our everyday communication and school-based communicative practices is disturbing and needs to be realigned. In order to begin this realignment, communicative practices will have to be based on postmodern conceptions of communication. From this perspective, Van Lier (1994) for example, offers that communication is an exchange of ideas in which the goal, although never entirely met, is to come to an understanding where understanding is “primarily agreement or harmony with another person” (p. 231). Bakhtin calls this characteristic of communication as the ‘answerability to another’s words’. Bakhtinian theoretical description of communication, as a *unique* dialogic process, is also relevant here. He explains further that within the dialogic process conflicting ideologies and identities intersect. From this perspective knowledge (including SL knowledge), rather than being a prerequisite is actually constructed. Cognitive activity and the social activity of communication then are inseparable.

Second, even if second language educators agreed on a meaning for and uniform characteristics of communicative practices, there is evidence to suggest that what many profess to do in principle is not what they do in reality (Nunan, 2003; Pennycook, 1989). This is not surprising perhaps given the average class sizes of some second language classrooms. Trying to promote communicative practices with thirty-five students in a class of beginners clearly presents many constraints. Moreover, some of the SL educators with whom I have worked claim they lack the background in teaching communicatively simply because they have had no first hand experience. As a result, they tend to repeat the methods from their own language learning experiences or work on a trial and error basis. Through his social reproduction theory, Bourdieu (1991) explains that discursive practices-including academic ones in SL education, carry on and reproduce themselves by a biased mechanism of selection that favours those who hold the same or similar categories of perception. The theory also explains that it is through the perpetuating of certain discursive practices that many of our

social practices, including teaching, function to preserve the advantage of a Dominant class. There seems to be an indication here that the basic assumptions of teacher education beg re-examination (Bartels, 2004; Freeman & Johnson 1998b, 2004; Yates & Muchisky, 2003).

Third, there is a question whether ‘communicative’ methods are the panacea they were suggested to be for teaching second languages in the first place. A growing number of those involved in second language development in education (Singh & Doherty, 2004; Nunan, 2003; Pennycook, 2000b; Rymes, 2002; Sullivan, 2000; Warschauer, 2002) to name a few, are expressing strong reservations about the implications of inflicting Western-based ‘communicative’ practices on language learners in light of the growing realities of teaching English to culturally diverse groups. In other words, are our Western-based communicative practices of language pedagogy imposing dominant cultural values under the guise of “good” SL language teaching?

I am not suggesting here that communication should be discouraged in second language classrooms. On the contrary! What I am inferring is that communication, which I see as the only hope we have for learning, has to be rethought in terms of among whom, for whom, how, when, where and in what form it takes. Within this conception of communication, individuals, or SL learners, have “the right to speak and the power to impose reception” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 75) and also to be heard (Bakhtin, 1990). My vision is for SL pedagogical practices to encourage communication that offers an opportunity for a counter-discourse. Perhaps, the following narrative will illustrate what I mean by such communication.

Learning through Dialogue

A few years ago four of my five children coerced me into being a homeschooling parent. They had met a family whose children did not go to school and were impressed with the ways they were learning and the freedom that they seem to have in their lives. I conceded to try the homeschooling. In the beginning, every day I required the children to do work from the various textbooks that I had received from the Ministry of Education. But what began as my efforts to inflict my school-based teacher methods on their learning, soon ended up in

disaster. When I tried to come to grips with what was going wrong, I started to see the irony of all of my efforts and the children's counter efforts. While I was attempting to have one of them sit down at the table and do their math, he was pulling away wanting to help his sibling count and divide up the newspaper money they had made. Or for example, while I was insisting that one of the children complete the grammar exercises that I had assigned he wanted to work on a submission for a writing contest which he had heard had a monetary reward. When I wanted to discuss a chapter from the science book the children wanted to go for a walk down by the beach. Finally, I put aside most of the textbooks and our lives settled. Learning became living and communicating.

The fact that all of the children have become relatively 'successful' since that time might suggest that nothing was lost from their missing out on material laid out carefully in textbooks and on regular testing. In other words, instead of missing out I think that much was gained. By having gained and being 'successful', I am speaking here from a postmodern perspective, as being a responsible human being "not in the sense of suppressing one's self-interestedness and being rule abiding, but rather possessing the *"fundamental impulse to be an individual agent, to be someone whose existence makes a difference"* to the 'Other' (Cooper, 1999, p. 151). What relevance does this experience have to teaching groups of second language learners using so called 'communicative methods'? I would suggest that in 'playing school', that is on basing our SL pedagogies on suspect principles of communicative practices, we are missing out on some golden opportunities for learning, where learning means creating new possibilities for constructing learner identities. In our efforts to teach language using 'methods' that treat learners as entities and learning as linear and then topping it all off with evaluations that reinforce these perspectives, we are shutting out valuable opportunities for providing empowering possibilities.

But how do we as SL educators reverse the trend towards perpetuating discourses through our SL practices that serve to silence and subordinate learners to a Dominant Discourse? How do we move the discussion forward, in a more expeditious fashion, to approaches that begin with an understanding of *learners* as "human subjects with unique histories," (Lantolf, 1993, p. 232) and an understanding of *learning* as an opportunity not just for more materially but for more possibilities of "being" in the

future (Pennycook, 1999)? How do we set about redefining our aims as teachers of language to serve intercultural and interlinguistic needs (Macedo, Dendrinos, Gounari, 2003)? How do we begin a counter-discourse towards a truly social conception of communication? I think one answer may be by beginning to conduct these critical discourses and approaches in new spaces, in other words new places where the “multi-nested contexts” (Maguire, 1996) of learners’ identities intersect. Employing computers and the Internet for CMC, may be one such space where we can meet second language learners in methodologically uncontested ground.

Along with the knowledge we have begun to gather from literacy studies (Hawisher & Selfe, 1991, 1999), our lack of experience in a virtual setting can offer us the chance to reinvent ourselves as teachers and learners and how we mediate second language learning. These technologies are like new frontiers. They can be ‘colonized’ with extrapolations from what we are already doing assuming that we are being successful, or what Freire (1970) refers to as a ‘false consciousness’ about our hegemonic ways. Alternatively, computer technology can be the interface for allowing ourselves to shift our vision to new ways of doing and then critically examine those ways in light of learners’ identities, power and social investment in learning. The notion of investment I use here from Norton (2000) references much more than instrumental motivation in which SL learners have a desire to learn in order to have more material resources. In an expanded view of investment, I understand that when SL learners use any language they are exchanging not just information but are organizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to others. So an investment in using their SL is also an investment in learners’ identities, identities that can change and evolve over time (p. 10-11).

Teachers and those involved in education are learners too. We also have, as Lantolf (1993) expresses, “unique histories, goals, and voices” and we too can “actively create and recreate [our] world and [our]selves” (p.232). Moving towards these new frontiers together with learners will take much creativity and determination. It will involve working “from the bottom” and, no doubt, because of the status of that position,

may bring some disappointments. Critically examining our technological tools could provide second language teachers and learners with renewed hope. I found many of the participants in this study express that hope to “come in”, that is into the powerful discourses in their language learning contexts and in this world where they can claim a voice in their own future possibilities.

Research Questions

Although computers and the Internet have begun to receive attention in other educational research and literature, as for example in literacy studies (Hawisher & Selfe, 1991, 1999; Kress, 2001, 2003), discussion about these tools in second language learning education, with few exceptions (Warschauer, 1999; 2000, 2002, 2004; Kouritzin, 2002) are mostly at the practical level (Nunan, 2002) and based for the most part on accessibility issues. In setting about to focus on computers and the Internet in a second language learning immersion site, the questions I ask from a sociocultural perspective, reflect my search for an understanding of the connection between the use of computers and identity, power and investment issues.

1. Questions about contexts of language learning

What is the nature of the socio-cultural learning contexts of two groups of foreign military students studying English as a second language in Canada and in Europe? What is the nature of their former experiences learning English? What influences from their perspectives, do these contexts have on their ability to learn English? What role can CMC play in responding to the tensions, if any in these contexts?

2. Questions about identity construction and language learning

What are the social, political, cultural and historical contexts of these learners? How do these contexts affect their cultural and linguistic identity construction as they study a second language? From their perspectives, what part, if any, can computer technology play in their identity construction?

3. Questions about power and investment in language learning

What are the various networks of power in the second language-learning contexts in which the two groups study English? From the learners' perspectives, what influences do these power networks have on their identity construction? How do these learners see these power networks affecting their investment in their second language learning? What role, if any, does computer technology play in these power networks and the learners' investment in language learning?

Definition of Terms

In view of the theoretical framework I have sketched out in this first chapter in order to introduce the study, I understand the following terms to mean:

Agency: By agent or agency, I reference Donato's (2000) explanation of SL learners' mediating their "goals, actions, cultural background and beliefs" (p. 44). It is the active participation of individuals bringing to bear their unique values, assumptions, beliefs, rights, duties and obligations into their lives and their own learning. Agency, central to Vygotskian theories of learning (1994), refers to the nature of learners to formulate their own purpose-relations or goals in tasks, independent of the aims of others, and through speech act on these goals (p.173).

Second Language Learners: learners who are engaged in learning a language other than their first language.

Identity: the meeting point at which individuals are temporarily attached to subject positions constructed through discursive practices. It is a position, which the subject is obliged to take up in response to a lack with regards to the 'Other' (Hall 1996, p. 2). From Weedon's (1997) poststructuralist perspective, identity is a site of struggle for alignment with others, multiple and contradictory, and structured by relations of power.

Nested Contexts: the various "shifting social, cultural, economic and political boundaries that intersect, overlap and collide with each other in complex ways" (Maguire, 1994a, 1995, 1996, p. 220).

Power: from Bourdieu (1991), this term references for me a force that exists in all social relations, communities and institutions rarely in a physical form but rather invisible and only exists because it rests on the shared belief by both parties that the unequal relation between both parties is legitimate. In other words, those who benefit least from the exercise of power, to a certain degree, participate in their own subjection.(p. 23). With this invisible or symbolic power, symbolic and material resources in a society are produced, distributed and validated. Symbolic resources refer to resources that are intangible such as knowledge, friendship and education. Material resources are those resources that are tangible such as capital goods, money, and property. And from Foucault (2000), I understand power to be deeply embedded in social nexus, negotiable and operating at both the micro level among individuals within their social interactions and at the macro level in institutions such as governments, education systems and militaries. In other words, power is not outside relations. It produces relations. It is not just who or what exercises power but *how* power is exercised in the concrete and why (Hall, 1990). The impact of power is not only repression or oppression. Power can also result in resistance and through resistance new forms of self-awareness can be mediated and new identities constructed (Giroux, 1992).

Discourse: I use Foucault (2000) and Gee (1996) for this term. I reference the term Discourse to mean ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, speaking, reading, writing, and even dressing which can be identified to a group and which are “governed by rules of construction and evaluation that determine what can be said, by whom, in what context and with what effect” (Foucault, 2000). Gee distinguishes between primary and secondary Discourses. By primary Discourse, he refers to those Discourses that we are born into and take on as children from our parents and the culture we are a part of. Secondary Discourses are discourses that we acquire and are built on by traditions (armies, job sites, profession). They are ever evolving and growing in historicity (Gee, p. 109). We are all members of many Discourses and these Discourses, which represent our multiple identities, are overlapping and sometimes conflicting. Discourses are also characterized as being inherently ideological, resistant

to internal criticism, are defined by their relation to other Discourses, marginalize other Discourses and are intimately related to the distribution of social power and hierarchical distribution (p. 32).

Voice: the unique social language of who we are (our multiple selves) and what we are doing, made visible (Gee, 1990, p. 68). From Giroux (Giroux & McLaren, 1986), “the discursive means [that individuals use] to make themselves ‘heard’ and to define themselves as active authors of their worlds” (p. 213). And from Maguire and Graves (2001) “the speaking personality that is recognized, heard, or valued in an utterance or text [and I would include here visual texts] in a particular context” (p. 564). Within the utterances of individuals there are always the words of others in previous contexts as well as an orientation towards some future response (Bakhtin, 1988).

Self: the dynamic sense that individuals have of who they are based on the historical, cultural, personal experiences that make up their identities; a sense that is manifested and constructed through language. Like identities, selves are “multiple, conflictual, negotiated and evolving” (Canagarajah, 2004, p. 117).

Space: a physical, mental state or virtual place where individuals interact with the world and others. In a “third space”, or *espace vecu*, from Lefebvre (1991), individuals interact in social practices with one another.

Practice: within the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, a form of action that is both socially and historically determined and redetermined by social action and human agency. Implied within this conception of practice is the understanding that participants make changes and learn from those changes as they go, which in turn influences their practices. A critical perspective and ongoing dialectic analysis is inherent to this conception of practice. Lave and Wenger’s (1991) conception of communities of practice extends the notion of practice to include the social process of moving from peripheral to legitimate members of a community through the mentoring of more experienced members. Embedded in their conception of practice are themes of membership and belonging.

Subjectivity: from Weedon (1997), the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of individuals, their sense of selves and their ways of understanding their relations to the world (p. 32), which are defined and contested through language. Inherent in this conception of subjectivity and important to my study is that subject positions are multiple, dynamic and the site of struggle. The potential for change allows for intervention in learners SL subjectivities through educational practices.

Dialogism: a construct used by Bakhtin (1989, p. 5) to convey the idea that in an interaction of speaker with listener there is a mixing of intentions which serves to advance new meanings and to place the utterance in an ideological position in relation to another.

Habitus from Bourdieu (1977b), a set of subjective dispositions that are revealed in class-based social taste, knowledge, and behaviour and inscribed permanently in developing individuals. Linguistic habitus is a form of discourse, which is considered the dominant “norm” and by which standard the “value” of individuals are classified as acceptable or non-acceptable. As a result, language evaluation is often used as a mechanism to dominate other groups.

Ideology: from Gee (1996), the ideas, beliefs, principles and values people have. Ideology is a set of ideas at the base of economic or political theory or systems “that renders a given reality “natural” and thus impervious to intellectual challenge under its sway” (Halfin, 2002, p. 297). On the other hand, while the ideas that make up ideologies may be impervious, and imposed by institutions like militaries, governments and schools on individuals and societies, there is within human beings an option to either “dialectically create, **resist** (my emphasis), and accommodate themselves to dominant ideologies” (Giroux, 2001, p. 91). Bakhtin (1990) views language as a vehicle that supports ideological environments. At the same time, however, when individuals actively respond to the utterances of others they socially construct new meanings and new ideologies.

Silence: absence from speech, in a negative sense, due to being ignored, neglected, without words to speak out. Refraining from speaking can also be a form of resistance.

Computer Assisted Language Learning: a technological virtual environment where computer technology intersects with language learning and in which language learning has the potential to take place. The acronym CALL refers to the branch of SL research that is preoccupied with developments in this particular technological environment.

Computer-mediated communication: a powerful medium supported by computer technology and which allows human interaction that is written text-based and more recently audio- and video-based. CMC interactions can be many to many and are time and place independent.

Overview of the Dissertation

Two analytic themes resonate throughout the study: the dialogic nature of language and the power of language to transform identities. Identities, like language are sites of negotiations where the past and present converge. To unravel the social transformative nature of language in SL learning sites, including virtual ones, implies an understanding of social cultural and language theories. Thus, in the second chapter I theorize the metaphors of negotiation, resistance and change in terms of identity and investment issues in the context of second language learning. I argue for a broader theoretical perspective of language-use in the context of using computer technology as dialogic. I link an analysis of the narratives and observations of the participants in the study to an analysis of agency, discourse and power as they struggle to learn a SL through computer-mediated learning.

In chapter three, I explain the assumptions that have guided the questions I have posed in the study. The assumptions have underpinned the methodologies I have used in addressing those questions and the narratives and observations I have examined. As Norton (2000) perceptively notes: *How data is collected will inevitably influence what data is collected and what conclusions are drawn* (p. 16). In chapter three, I also situate myself as “an active agent” in the study. By “active agent”, I mean not only as one who, with the participants influences the action research process of the inquiry and reflects on it, but also as an active player in the negotiation of identity.

Language-use, including using a second language, whether face-to-face or in a virtual site unfolds within a social context. In chapter four, I convey the nature of some of the social contexts and discourses that influence the language uses of the participants who were studying English in an immersion program in Canada.

In chapter five, I use ethnographic tools to reveal how the multiple “nested” contexts and Discourses in the Canadian site influenced the practices inside the classroom and in CML. I explain how the classroom and CALL practices sometimes constrain and at other times provide opportunities for the military officers in the Canadian site to invest in using their second language. Through a discussion of a network supported communication that I set up in this site, I analyze why some participants were able to construct more empowered identities and agency in their language learning while others were not.

In chapter six, I continue the discussion of computer technology and identity construction but in the context of a virtual site. I describe online discussion sessions I conducted for a second group of participants in Romania and the Czech Republic using video- and audio-based computer-mediated communication over the Internet. Identities may be negotiated in virtual interactions but are still influenced by overarching discursive practices. Through analyzing the narratives of the participants in the European site, I uncover the tensions in their efforts to find a voice and to negotiate their identities in the Dominant discourse of the global community. I analyze the influence of computer technology on this struggle and their view of their ‘selves’.

In chapter seven, I discuss the major understandings that emerged in using computer-mediated communication for language learning in this inquiry. I reflect on the implications of these understandings for the military officers in the NATO- sponsored immersion program in Canada and those officers and students studying English in Europe. I also suggest implications from the research study for SL learners and educators, researchers, theory building and for policy makers working within second language learning contexts. I conclude with some self-reflective thoughts that give direction to my future as a second language educator and researcher.

CHAPTER TWO

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Introduction

I feel my emotions are put down here. Sometimes people ask us how much we make or our salaries. When we answer \$140 or \$200 for month for a colonel, they just look. I don't like this look. I know what is rich and poor. They aren't rich and we aren't poor.

I have changed since I am here. In my country I am all the time happy. I like to talk and be with my friends. But here I feel different. In my class teacher talks to Hungarians, Polish and Czech people about their countries. She never mentions Ukraine. I feel I don't exist.

My friends and I we are all right. We are nationalistic....so it is not important. It is NATO. The other countries think that we are not important. At first, I thought it was my rank. And it is, but I decided to ignore that in the class. That doesn't have to matter. I am not their subordinate. We are all students.

Sometimes we become discouraged and it is hard to study and do our best here. For example, if I am late for the class. I don't care. I am not important there. I'd rather talk with my (Ukrainian) colleagues.

(Nicholai, one of my students who had moved to another class, coming back to chat. November, 2001.)

These excerpts from my conversation with Nicholai, a young Ukrainian military officer who had come to study English in the NATO program date back to four years ago. Anyone watching a film of that conversation, had I videotaped it, would have seen and heard a lot more than a student telling stories out of class. If that "anyone" was a group of second language researchers, their interpretation of that scene would be particularly indicative of the current state of affairs in SL research. For example,

researchers like Dougherty & Williams (1998); Gass (1997), Krashen (1980, 1994); Lightbown & Spada (1990); Lyster & Ranta (1997), speak from what they claim as the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) stance. For these researchers, the pictorial image they might take in of this scene would probably be simply of a younger man and a woman talking. In listening more closely, most of the researchers from this SLA group would possibly take special note that the pair was talking in English and be immediately drawn to analysis by looking for cause and effects of the non-native-like ways the student expresses himself. Some might presume the woman was a native speaker. They might judge her to be a teacher and focus on the quality of the linguistic forms of her speech, her apparent effort to rephrase her frequent questions in order to provide more comprehensible input for this student, and/or her efforts to recast some of his words into corrected speech (Krashen, 1982, 1984; Long, 1977, 1985). As they watch the interaction, many of these SLA researchers would most likely be attentive to the man's speech and recognize an accent; some may perceive a Russian accent by the inflections in the tone, the misplaced word stress and the absence of the copula and article (Pienemann & Johnson, 1987; Pienemann, 1988). Many of these researchers might note the general attention to good form and functions such as the use of idiomatic expressions like "It doesn't matter to me anymore" and the frequency of certain grammatical morphemes (Pica, 1994; Lightbown & Spada, 1990).

Most likely there would be those who would argue among themselves as they take in the scene. They may debate the significance of the frequent uptakes of the teacher's recasts, the student's own self-correction, the strategic competence he used to keep the communication going as he stumbled over a word or pronunciation (Allwright, 1984; Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Some in the group might conclude that he was the woman's student, certainly not a beginning SL learner, and probably a good student at that. As the camera rolled and focused on the man in the scene, several of the researchers in the SLA group might draw their attention to his young age and marvel how young people pick up languages so well (Chomsky, 1965, 1980; Pinker, 1984). In listening to what the student says, some might form opinions about his personality,

questioning certain of his attitudes. From his comments, "*I am often late for class. I don't care. It is not important to me.*" they might question his goals and his attitude and glance at one knowingly, predicting that he had better change if he expects to do well on tests (Schumann, 1986; Dornyei, 1998, 2001).

And then, at the back of the viewing room, there could be another small group of viewers (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Goldstein, 1994b; Heath, 1983; Kramsch, 2000; Lantolf, 2000; Maguire, 1999; Maguire & Graves 2001; McKay & Wong, 1996; Peirce, 1995; Toohey, 1998, 2000; Wertsch, 1991), researchers who consider language learning from a sociocultural perspective. They might appear to be taking in the scene through different eyes. They would begin perhaps by scanning the physical space in which the conversation was taking place: a classroom, the woman standing on one side of the desk the man on the other, the man wearing a military uniform, with the markings indicating his rank, the teacher dressed well and very professionally. They too might conclude that the man and woman were teacher and student. After viewing the class, they might have noted the desks in a semicircle facing the front of the room, identical workbooks on each desk opened to the same page, the flipchart listing the day's lessons. Listening to the interactions between the man and the woman, they might notice the politeness with which the student asked for permission to come into the room, the way he hesitates before speaking as if was worried about the outcome of what he was going to say. They might notice the woman's ease in the situation as opposed to the man's hesitancy and awkwardness. The researchers, who would identify themselves as socioculturalists, would listen to his accent and think about the country from where he came and wonder about its history, about his reasons for coming to this country to learn a language, about the family he left behind and how he positioned himself in the new culture. They perhaps would think about how all this new set of contexts - military, school, classroom, country and culture - influences him and his learning. They might listen attentively to what he was saying and hear the human emotions he expresses both verbally and non verbally, emotions such as anguish, frustration, and disillusionment and feel strongly that these were integral to his identity as a learner and his learning.

Humans are by their very nature complex and dynamic beings and so are their learning contexts. As a researcher and teacher interested in second language learning from a sociocultural perspective, I have joined with the growing numbers of others in the SL research field, who think it imperative to move beyond looking at language learning as an internal mental cognitive process of acquiring rules and codes, beyond seeing learners as static beings with an unchangeable set of characteristics, beyond labelling learners as motivated or unmotivated, and beyond separating learners from their learning contexts. Instead, like others from the socioculturalist perspectives, I, first of all believe language learning is a developmental process mediated by semiotic resources (Wertsch, 1991, 1998) including print and multimedia materials, face-to-face and virtual classroom discourses, gestures and physical and digital environments. Second, from a Vygotskian perspective I believe instruction is integral to SL learning within a zone of proximal development whereby learners move from being object regulated to other regulated and finally to being self regulated learners (Vygotsky, 1978). As object-regulated, SL learners are concerned with describing and naming aspects in their environment, learning the words to call things in the second language in an effort to gain control over that environment. As other-regulated, learners interact with more competent others, such as teachers or speakers of SL to guide them in the use of the language in order to gain control over the task at hand, that is their effort to speak and express themselves. Eventually through this interaction, SL learners progress to being self-regulated. At this point they can resolve tasks on their own, especially the task of knowing what is going on around them and can present themselves in a manner in which they wish to be regarded by others. Third, I consider that learners' agency in the process of learning a language matters. I recognize that the students in the military I teach bring their own personal histories to their learning situations and these histories must be played out with others in order for language learning to be enhanced or successful.

I have been guided by these beliefs and consider them essential in my focus on the situated experiences and issues of language and identity construction of the

learners in the NATO-sponsored immersion program in which I have researched and taught for the last six years. I argue that in order to research and report on these issues, I needed to develop an expanded view of what constitutes semiotic discursive “tools”, or instruments that enable us to communicate, to include new spaces and new technologies that are rapidly becoming part of learning contexts.

In seeking insights into learners’ experiences in a language learning setting, I adopt a critical, constructivist, and social-transformative framework based on Bakhtin’s (1986) dialogic theory, Vygotsky’s (1986) socioculturalist theory and Weedon’s (1997) feminist poststructuralist theory. From their perspectives, language is not an abstract system but a series of unique utterances that form different competing, always political, never neutral discourses. Within these discourses which preclude a “self” and an “other”, our sense of selves, our identities are created and are constantly changing. I combine these philosophical conceptions of language and identity with Vygotsky’s sociocultural perspectives of language learning in which language plays a mediating function in higher order thinking and influences how learners move from self to other regulated actions. My goal is to move the discussion of language and identity in second language learning contexts into expanded digital discourses and new sites that are made available when the Internet is used for second language learning.

In this chapter, I begin by reflecting back on the excerpts from the conversation with Nicholai. Using this dialogue, I give a brief overview of the theoretical foundations and methodological approaches to second language learning that frame my inquiry. I then contrast these foundations and approaches, which have dominated second language research for the last thirty years, with more recent approaches in researching SL learning that consider the sociocultural contexts of that learning. I then examine the constructs of language and identity construction and the work that has most informed my views about language teaching and learning. I connect my conceptualization of these constructs to the new digital discourses. Digital discourses are becoming powerful interfaces in second language learning (Warschauer, 1999, 2000, 2002) and cannot continue to be ignored in our debates about language and identity in SL learning contexts.

A Theoretical Overview of Second Language Learning

Since the mid-1970's, a great deal of attention and theory building in SLA research has focused on linguistic and cognitive processes, for example as mentioned earlier input and output issues (Gass, 1997; Krashen, 1980; Mackey, 1999; Swain, 1985; Wong Fillmore, 1982), teacher and learner strategies (Bialystok, 1990; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1989; Pienamann & Johnson, 1987; Strong, 1983), and methodologies (Ellis, 1986; Lightbown, 1983; Lightbown & Spada, 1997; Long, 1980b). These processes have been considered as key components in successful language learning. With this narrow emphasis on linguistic and cognitive processes, although initially helpful in understanding what Hymes (1979) calls "the rules of use" of a language, SLA researchers have not been able to fully explain why, for example in the case of Nicholai, as quoted earlier, he had chosen not to interact in class, in other words, whose interests these rules serve. For example, if we can assume that using a second language is critical to improving in that language, then we could infer that Nicholai's language development would be in jeopardy. Nor can research that has examined motivation levels and individual personality traits (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995; Dornyei, 1998; Schumann, 1998) explain why some second language learners like Nicolai can be outgoing at home among friends but quiet and withdrawn in class.

Since the mid 1980's to early to mid nineties, there has been a growing concern with approaches that view language learning in terms of internalizing language rules, structures, and vocabulary while using various strategies. These positivistic arguments and realist approaches to knowledge, truth and objectivity have failed to reveal the complexities of the human consciousness and the situated experiences of learners. Practitioners have responded with communicative approaches to SL learning. The emphasis on communication has led to a growing interest in the sociological and anthropological aspects of language learning and more socially-sensitive and contextualized approaches to research. Much of this interest has been based on sociocultural, poststructural, and critical theory (Hall, 1993, 1995; Kramsch, 1993; Lantolf & Pavlenko, 1995; Pennycook, 1990; Rampton, 1995). Coinciding with this

interest has been a move in SL research to use research methodologies from the social sciences that lend themselves to sites of cultural production or reproduction (Davis, 1995; Lazarson, 1995; Maguire, 1989; Watson-Gegeo, 1988). Together this literature has conceptualized second language learners as social beings “situated within specific, social, historical and cultural contexts” (Norton, 2001, p. 310) and their language learning as a product of whether they resist or accept the positions offered to them by the discourses within these contexts. (Maguire, 1989, 1994a).

Meanwhile, as some researchers have been hotly debating their epistemological differences in how they view language learning, and whether these discourses are “incommensurable” or not (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Lightbown, 2000; Pennycook, 1994; van Lier, 1994; Yates & Muchiskey, 2003), those faced with the actual task of teaching and learning languages are left after thirty-five years of debate, and in an increasingly globalized world, with few answers to the important question: How do learners learn languages, in what contexts and why and why not? Larsen-Frieman & Long’s (1991) expression of this malaise at the beginning of the nineties is still relevant:

Although there has been an explosion of data-based research activity in the field of SLA, dissatisfaction is increasingly expressed by researchers themselves and by potential consumers of some of the findings, such as language teachers, to the effect that little of that research is cumulative and/or clearly motivated. They (researchers and teachers) want to know, in other words, where is it getting us. (p. 221)

It appears that the core of the debate lies in the fundamental view of what language is: an object of research or a practice of theory, ideology and positioning. Given developing technologies and evolving global relations in second language education, I believe a critical awareness of “language” and language learning is crucial to our understanding of why and how Nicholai invested in learning English. In the next section, the works of Vygotsky (1962, 1978), Bakhtin (1981, 1986), Bourdieu (1994), Gee (1992), Giroux (1986), Wertsch (1991) and Hall (1993) provide a conceptual frame for understanding language that has helped me to view language learning in relation to computers and the Internet supporting computer mediated communication.

Perspectives on Language and Learning

When the writings of the Russian scholar, Vygotsky were translated in the late sixties, the conception of language he proposed radically differed from those that were in use at the time and had a profound effect on how language learning was viewed. In the 1950's, those involved in studying language regarded it as a neutral system, a set of all-purpose tools used for communicating. This perspective of language stems from Saussurian (1974) structural linguistic theories, as well as Pavlovian behaviorist psychology. From this perspective, language is considered based on a chain of signs. These signs are made up of signifiers, which are sounds or written images and a signified, which is the meaning. There are no intrinsic meanings to a sign but a sign derives its meaning from its relation to other signs. For example, the word "student" takes its meaning from the difference it denotes from the word "teacher". In other words, meanings of words are socially produced, that is, the meaning of a word is based on the linguistic context in which it is used. Although a Saussurian explanation of language suggests that meanings are not predetermined, from this perspective once the difference is established for the signified, a sign is a fixed and an unchanging product of the conventions of a "speech community" (Saussure, 1974, p. 14). This view of language leaves no way to account for the fact that signs, like the words "student" and "teacher" can have many meanings and that their meanings can change over time and in particular nested contexts (Maguire, 1994a). For example, one of the meanings I view of "teacher" is as enabler of opportunities where learning may take place, whereas some of my students (as well as colleagues) view "teacher" as a source of information. Similarly, the term "student" can take on different meanings over time, for example, when I compare the decidedly diverse roles of myself as a young student in the fourth seat in the fifth row raising my hand and asking permission from the teacher to speak and the role of my students who e-mail me friendly letters or articles for a student newspaper over Internet. In the former, the term "student" references someone who has no authority to speak without consent from the teacher whereas in the latter the term "student" suggests an equal partner in an on-going conversation. Despite the fact that

I still see evidence of the former in too many language (and university education) classrooms, changes in the index of words like “teacher” and “student” give an example of how language is culturally, politically, socially and historically-constructed.

SLA scholars with a positivist stance have based their research findings on a Saussurian concept of language as a system of abstract and fixed signs. There are pragmatic reasons for this, not the least of which allows much of this research to separate itself from the language classrooms and more global learning sites (“messy places where very little can be controlled”, Personal Communication, Spada, N., November, 1998). The positivist stance also privileges a study of language and learning that fundamentally denies the relevance of human activity and the role of context in the learning and use of language (Crowley, 1996, p. 18; Pennycook, 2001). Instead for many within SLA, communicative activity is based on codes and “formal characterizations of language involving the linguistic competence (in Chomsky’s sense) to produce grammatical utterances” (Thorne, 2000, p. 228). Software programs for learning languages that are made up of elicitation devices reify SLA theories and practices.

For Vygotsky, a sociocultural theorist, language is comprised of signs or semiotic tools that act as a mediating means within social interactions. These tools, whether they are traditional words on a page, verbal sounds, physical spaces, or “technical tools” (Wertsch, 1991) such as hypertext and visual images, are artefacts that have been created over time and thus have historical dimensions. At the same time that these “semiotic and technical tools” are constantly being recreated and modified over time, so too are the thoughts, actions and beliefs of those who use them. In other words language, in any form, has the power to change how people think, how they view themselves and the world and how they act in that world. Through using these tools intersubjectively, or in the shared social worlds of individuals, people change intrasubjectively, that is within their mental capacity to think and form judgements via psychological mediation. Thus higher order thinking is *the result* of using language and not the *precursor* to it. Learners then are **not** loners who develop through the acquiring of codes or being

exposed to “comprehensible input”. Nor for learners is it “theoretically possible to acquire language without ever talking” (Krashen, 1982, p. 60). Learners’ minds are not containers into which others, like SL teachers or software developers, can put meanings for the learners to unpack and extract the meanings. Rather, in Vygotsky’s view learners are highly socialized beings and learning is the result of dialectic interaction in the historically situated activity of living. He states:

The use of signs leads humans to a completely new and specific structure of behavior, breaking away from the traditions of biological development and creating for the first time a new form of a culturally based psychological process (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 40).

This sociocultural/sociohistorical concept of higher order thinking and learning, and the importance of language in that development are specifically embedded in Vygotsky’s concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD is “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Essentially, Vygotsky explained that children as they socially interact with adults or more capable peers are able to reach their potential stage of development. This development entails such forms of higher mental activity as thinking, planning, voluntary memory, voluntary attention, creativity and control of semiotic systems, such as language. In the beginning, these forms of mental activities are regulated by others, or “other-regulated”. But eventually through meaning making events and in collaboration with more capable peers, they become “self-regulated” (Vygotsky, 1962). Wertsch (1991), a neo-Vygotskian theorist, explains this movement or transition, which takes place within the ZPD, as the eventual control by children and second language learners over their speech and psychological behaviours.

Vygotsky’s self-regulation theory challenges SLA research that views language learning as beginning in the minds of individuals and proceeding towards socialization and communicative competence as a fixed and predictable process of building

skills piece by piece. Instead language learning *originates* in socially constituted communicative practices (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991; Moll, 1990). Within these practices, individuals use the semiotic tools and resources around which these practices are structured. The unique ways that individuals choose to use the tools and resources then determine what they learn. This learning leads to individually-based developmental learning trajectories. Thus second language learners' individual development can never be understood apart from the contexts in which their learning takes place. In formal SL learning contexts, the quality and variety of symbolic (language) and material (computer technology) resources that are available to learners and the opportunities they have to use them will produce different communities of language learners and different learners (Hall, 1997). Compare, for example, the students of second language classes where communicating with other students and teachers in a collaborative manner both in class and with new technologies is encouraged and those students who still sit in rows and raise their hands before being given permission to speak by the 'leader'. Where does the potential for interaction and reflection, the key to cognition, lie?

Heath (1983), in her classic ethnographic study of language use in three communities, revealed answers to this question by illustrating the way middle-class people use language to educate their children:

It is as though in the drama of life, townspeople parents freeze scenes and parts of scenes at certain points along the way. Within the single frame of a scene, they focus the child's attention on objects or events in the frame, sort out referents for the child to name, give the child ordered turns for sharing talk about the referent and then narrate a description of the scene. Through their focused language, adults make the potential stimuli in the child's environment stand still and for a cooperative examination and narration between parent and child. The child learns to focus attention on a preselected referent, masters the relationships between the signifier and signified, develops turn-taking skills in a focused conversation on the referent, and is subsequently expected to benefit from, and eventually to create narratives placing the referent in different contextual situations. (p. 351)

Heath was able to show that the different language experiences of children in the three communities resulted in three very different communities of learners. The initial

interactions that took place in the early stages of the children's lives prepared them culturally, socially and cognitively for fundamentally different life roles. Warschauer (2000, 2002) explores the ways learners are experiencing new technologies in SL classrooms. He believes that the choices educators make for learners will determine the roles these learners play in future global discourses. He argues convincingly:

It may seem unpleasant to ponder a future world of English teaching in which a privileged group of students learn how to critique literature and produce sophisticated multimedia reports while the bulk of students focus on narrow vocational skills but that is the unequal state of education in the informational era. (Warschauer, 2000, p. 519)

Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) theory of language helps us to further understand why human interaction whether it be text-based, or through mediated speech, visual or computer-mediated technologies, has such a powerful role in language learning. Bakhtin (1994) opposed the *abstract objectivism* of the Saussurian concept of language, which freezes meaning to concepts such as "student" and "teacher", and is unable to account for either individual creativity or historical changes in language forms. Nor did he support what he called *individualist subjectivism* whereby creativity is located entirely within the individual psyche. Instead of these structuralist conceptions of language he saw language as a complex interrelation between micro (individual) and macro (social) contexts. From this microgenetic and macrogenetic perspective, human interaction involves individual consciousness, creativity and authoritative and discursive activity that is linked with the processes of social history (p. 11). He used the terms *monologic* and *dialogic* to illustrate the differences between the two views of language. Language as *monologic* is "isolated, finished, an utterance divorced from its verbal and actual context and standing open not to any possible sort of active response but to passive understanding" (p. 13). I view SL learners working alone in front of computers responding to cues from software in decontextualized drill exercises as an example of language as monologic.

Language as *dialogic* is human consciousness responding to a sign and thereby inherently active, interactive, creative and social. Because signs carry meaning and all

meaning is purposeful, language is inevitably social and ideological. In other words, when a student like Nikolai speaks, he is not only responding to the signs (words, actions, visuals, physical spaces) in his classroom but he is creating a new meaning for these signs through his own creative understanding of that classroom and what goes on there. It is in this space or what Bakhtin calls “the borderline between inner experience and social world” (p. 12) that Nikolai constructs his subject position. Most importantly, in the interest of Nikolai’s second language learning, this subjective act of understanding will generate sooner or later a counter statement (p. 41). Nikolai’s words are not only looking back to and responding to words that have been spoken. They are at the same time looking forward to the words that he anticipates hearing and that his own words will incite in his listener, the teacher in the previously cited interaction. Language, or discourse, as dialogic then, entails not only action but also counteraction. It is in this oppositional interactive process of “one” with an “other” in first and in second languages that social and ideological changes occur in the individual on a micro level and on a macro level in society.

Bakhtin believed that the same principles that governed individual discourses also were true on the macro level of world principles. He uses the works of Dostoevsky and his writings to convey this level as the great dialogue of:

..... not only individual voices, but precisely and predominantly the *dialogic relationship* among voices, their *dialogic interaction*. He [Dostoevsky] heard both the loud, recognized reigning voices of the epoch, that is the reigning dominant ideas (official and unofficial), as well as voices still weak, ideas not yet fully emerged, latent ideas heard as yet by no one but himself, and ideas which were just beginning to ripen, embryos of future world views (p. 100).

Bakhtin conceptualizes this conflict within language as two contradictory forces. One is the centripetal force that seeks to centralize and unify meaning in discourse. This force explains the impulse of listener and speaker to share understandings. It also underscores the tendency of dominant social or linguistic groups to impose their own ideas and perceptions on others in a monologic way. Authoritarian teaching practices

that Freire (1970) calls “the banking system” of educating, such as lecturing, are examples of such centripetal forces at work in language classrooms. On a more global level, so too is the hegemonic role that English is playing in international exchanges (Warschauer 2000, 2002). Macedo et al. (2003) explain how the workings of the dominant forces in the spread of English operate: “Those who are able to gain control over meanings and conventions of discourse are also able to promote their views of the world, their norms, their values and ultimately their interests” (p. 56).

In opposition to the centripetal force within discourse is a centrifugal force, the force of heteroglossia. This force tends to stratify and fragment the ideological thought that occurs within interactions into multiple worldviews (p. 15). An example of centrifugal force would be a group of students who sit questioning the nature and meaning of a lecture from their individual and multiple socio-historical perspectives, even those who doze off. Their reactions and interpretations of what is being said represent a plethora of ideas that are uniquely mediated in the minds of the listeners and serve to change the ideas being expressed into newly transformed ideas. According to Bakhtin (1981): “Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker’s intentions; it is populated- overpopulated- with the intentions of others.” (p. 294). These multiple intentions inherent to discourses are the result of historical and cultural factors that underlie every utterance and at the same time guarantee the uniqueness of that utterance. Thus, when individuals take part in semiotic interactions- literary, verbal, or technological, they are not only exchanging multiple meanings they are constructing new meanings. They do this by trying on the utterances of others and eventually using them in unique ways to serve their own needs and meanings. As these new meanings are constructed through language, so too are the subjectivities of the individuals who take part in the events. Vygotsky and Bakhtin’s theories based on the social nature of language and learning led to a new generation of education research. Vygotsky’s theory of the Zone of Proximal Development whereby more experienced participants in a culture introduce the tools to less experienced members and facilitate their learning compliments Bakhtin’s concept

of “meaning making” in which speakers within utterances are constantly constructing new meanings. Fundamental to both a Vygotskian and Bakhtinian approach to language learning is an assumption that learning is a situated practice in which people participate in sociocultural activities. Within these activities Vygotsky believes that individuals go from being “other regulated” to “self regulated”; for Bakhtin it is through these activities that individuals fashion their own “voice”.

From Giroux (Giroux & McLaren, 1986), I understand the voices of individuals to be “the discursive means to make themselves ‘heard’ and to define themselves as active authors of their worlds” (p. 213). Fundamental to this sociocultural approach is the assumption that learning and development occur when particular opportunities are created for learners to take part in specific local practices and social contexts (Lave & Wenger, 1991). By focusing on these contexts, the view shifts away from considering language as a set of rules, vocabulary and structures. The view shifts away from seeing learning as dependant on the personality traits and learning strategies of learners. Instead, the focus shifts to what opportunities including technological opportunities are being provided within the “communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The focus is also on how these opportunities are structured and whether they constrain or facilitate access to linguistic resources (Norton & Toohey, 2001). As the movements to “self-regulation” and gaining “voice” suggest, a shift in focus on opportunities rather than rules involves looking at how these opportunities influence learners’ identity construction and language learning.

In the next section, I discuss how the poststructuralist work of Weedon (1997) and various second language critical research scholars (Gentil, 2002; Ivanic & Camps, 2001; McKay & Wong, 1996; Norton Peirce, 1989, 1995; Norton, 1997; Norton & Toohey, 2001; Maguire, 1996; Maguire & Graves 2001; Thesen, 1997; Morgan, 1998; Angelil-Carter, 1997; Toohey, 2000) have influenced my interest in identity and how it relates to language learning particularly involving computers.

Perspectives on Identity

An epistemological stance to language learning based on poststructuralist theory assumes that language use is an inherently social act. It also accepts that the understanding of that social act is inextricably tied to the context in which the act takes place. Weedon (1997), in her study of feminist practices and poststructuralist theory, emphasized the social act of language use and how it affects individuals' subjectivities.

Language like feminism as an ideology, is highly political. Indeed, part of the dichotomy in viewing language learning, as suggested at the outset, has been a factor of fundamental differences in **what** language and discourse are and **how** they relate to issues of identity (Pennycook, 1994). This view of language sees it as "a system and then looks to discourse as a way of explaining how various contextual factors affect language in use" (p. 116). Another view sees "meanings as a product of social and cultural relationships and then turns to see how these may be realized in language" (p. 116). The former view of language looks at Nicholai's conversation and how he put together his words, the nature of the turn-taking that took place in his interaction with the woman and how patterns of his language identified him from a particular cultural group. The latter, based on a Foucauldian notion of discourse, asks why and how Nicholai says, or is limited in what he says, in his classroom context. Weedon (1997), influenced by Foucault and other poststructuralists (Derrida, Lacan, Kristeva, Althusser and Foucault), perceives language as "a place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity is constructed" (p. 108), a system in which signifiers have no fixed meanings but are rather temporarily tied to a specific discursive context. Within these contexts discourse is "the structuring principle of society, in social institutions, modes of thought and individual subjectivity; discourses are ways of constituting knowledge" (p. 108). As such, meanings are socially dependent and always open to challenge and being redefined with shifts in the discursive context. For Weedon, meanings in discursive events do not exist prior to their articulation. Instead, they are the result of discursive events and always historically and culturally specific. In this way consciousness, or the way we think, does not originate in our minds but is the effect of our social relations

in these discursive events. It is through language, that one mediates thinking, speaking and the meanings given to the world. An individual's subject position – that is the ways of being an individual, are partly tied to the range of experiences one has had in past events and, as well, are constantly changing as one mediates new discursive events.

Bakhtin (1981) uses the term “official and unofficial consciousness” to explain how individuals’ behavioural ideologies’, that is their inner and outer speech and actions, are determined by the values (laws, morality and world outlook) of the communities and classes to which they belong as well as historically and socially by what a society sanctions or censors. In other words, an individual’s subjectivity is articulated in language every time she or he speaks. In principle, then, individuals are open to all forms of subjectivities. But in reality, historically determined social factors, as well as forms of power within the competing discourses individuals take part in, limit the range of access to subjectivities that are possible. For example, it appears that Nicolai’s subject position in the classroom discourse is defined by and determined by his nationality, his rank and his age, by personality and economic factors and also by his position as “learner” as opposed to “teacher”. As a Ukrainian then, he sees himself as marked by others in the group as “poor”. In the classroom, he understands that he occupies a marginalized position when it comes to speaking because he is young and a mere lieutenant, the lowest of officer ranks. As an Eastern European and SL learner of English, he feels he is invisible, unnoticed, “*not important*” to the North American English-speaking teacher who controls the classroom and determines what is said, as well as when, how and why he gets to speak.

At the same time, classroom discourse practices helped Nicolai’s to construct his marginalized subject position, these discourses also presented him with a means of resistance to that position. Weedon (1997) suggests that individuals are constantly subjected to discourses that offer conflicting subject positions. Invisible social power relations exist within every discourse. Discourses are “more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the nature of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects, which they seek to govern” (p.

108). Discourses, such as those in a SL classroom, in new technologies, in institutions like militaries or among one's own language group, are maintained by the agency of individuals who are willing to reproduce or transform the social practices and the power relations that underpin them. "Individuals are both the site and the subject of discursive struggle for their identity" (Weedon, 1997, p. 21).

Discourse not only constitutes ways of being of a subject, but by extension the emotional, mental and psychic capacities of individuals. Whether one accepts one's subject position in any particular context rather than another will depend upon the social status and power of the discourse in question (p. 93-94). From her poststructuralist perspective, Weedon argues that individuals are not passive but active agents in choosing their subject positions and their identities. When there is no choice, there is the option of resistance. Recognizing and being exposed to more than one discourse widens the choice of subject positions and/or the opportunities to resist. She explains: "The discursive constitution of subjects both compliant and resistant is part of a wider social play for power" (p. 109). Whereas Nicholai may have appeared as compliant to the marginalized position he held in the classroom, in fact by lingering behind in the corridors and interacting with other Ukrainians and thereby withdrawing from opportunities to be exposed to the English in the classroom, he assumed a resistant role to the power relations that existed there.

Through the social mediating of language identities are constructed or created. In the various social sites, in traditional and virtual language classrooms and computer technology discourses in which individuals participate, they are offered a range of sometimes conflicting subject positions. If the subject positions, or identities within particular discourses do not match their interests as individuals, then they may be silenced. On the other hand, learners may choose to challenge the dominant discourse by refusing to accept the subject position offered. These recourses (in other words to comply, be silenced or to challenge) are related to identity construction. Identity construction has potential implications for language educators and important consequences for language learning.

Identity issues have been gaining growing importance in second language research since the early nineties. My own interest began with observing my children as homeschoolers, and has evolved through my experience for many years in diverse formal learning contexts as a teacher and graduate student. Along with these more pragmatic sources, my preoccupation with identity questions has been informed indirectly or directly through readings from outside the second language literature, from social theory and a broad spectrum of educational research. Bourdieu's (1991b, 1998) social linguistic theory links everyday exchanges to both personal identity and broad social, historical and political issues. He uses the notion of "habitus" to explain how power relations are established in communicative acts. "Habitus" is understood as a form of apprenticeship, a socially learned discourse that can either allow or deny entry to particular social and cultural practices. When individuals speak they reveal whether they approach or diverge from the "norm" of the dominant discourses. In this way, whenever language is used there is an invisible but always present evaluation system that determines one's position in the social structure of an interaction. Thus individuals have various degrees of cultural capital (sets of predispositions to cultural knowledge including language knowledge) that shapes their discourse and "value" as an individual. The power of a linguistic exchange in identity construction occurs as learners interact in various ways with computers. Whether computers are being used for learners to respond machine-like to stimuli on a screen or to construct knowledge in ways that use their creativity in communicating with others, they can influence identities. Bourdieu (1998) argues:

The relation between two people [or people with computers] may be such that one of them has only to appear in order to impose on the other, without even wanting to, let alone formulate a command, a definition of the situation and of himself (as intimidated, for example), which is all the more absolute and undisputed for having not to be stated. (p. 52)

In other words, as the military officers in the immersion program sit passively before their individual computers and work away on software programs that require the manipulation of predetermined words and phrases, are they not unconsciously

accepting their position as subservient to the dictates of the dominant discourses that created and support the software that is being used?

Cornell West (1993a, 1993b) claims that inequitable relations of power exist among individuals. Like Bourdieu, he ties his claims to the economic differences that are a part of these relationships, although much less metaphorically than Bourdieu. West contends that those who have access to a wide range of resources in a society will have access to power and privilege. Having the advantage of power and privilege will influence how they understand their relationship to the world and their possibilities for the future. As a case in point, in the context of the inquiry, I interviewed a group of Afghan officers who had come to the Canadian immersion program. They spoke of their limited financial resources and the ruined state of their country's infrastructure after 25 years of war. They had little or no knowledge of computers or the Internet. Where do these personal and national conditions place the Afghans I interviewed in the social structure of the population of learners and native speakers in the immersion program? What do the economic discrepancies between themselves and others in the immersion program do to their construction of identity as they attempt to manoeuvre the use of computers for their language learning?

Stuart Hall (1995, 1996) treats identity as a concept in the process of being "under erasure". He argues that the deconstruction of the term by social theorists, like Bourdieu and West, has left it without meaning. And, as he explains because identity has not been conceived in new ways it goes on being used in the forms that have been traditionally criticized and deconstructed because no one has come up with a replacement. Hall offers an alternative to the traditional way of conceptualizing identity. His concept of identity was very important to my understanding of the learners in the inquiry as they mediated their language learning formally in the immersion program and in the virtual site online. Hall's treats identity as intricately connected to language which he sees as being organized into systems, or discourses. Within these systems, individuals claim their political, cultural, personal affiliations or identities. These discursal systems that support identities, tie individuals to certain ways of acting, thinking, feeling and

even can predict what the aesthetic qualities of their productions will be. These systems referred to by Hall as “discourses” are never static and are forever changing and are built on differences. Individuals gravitate towards discourses in which those who are members share some similarities, some common identity markers. On the other hand, identities are never the same since individuals can belong to many discourses. Derrida (1981) points out that it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely to what it lacks, to what it has been called, its constitutive outside, that the “positive” meaning of any term and thus its identity can be constructed. Derrida convinces me that within language learning where the discourses and identities of many individuals intersect, there is a potential for forming new discourses and transforming learners’ identities.

While Bourdieu, West and Hall deconstruct linguistic practices within social theory to uncover identity issues and relations of power, Lave and Wenger (1991) also working in social theory have argued on the source of linguistic interactions for *building communities of practice*. Essentially, Lave and Wenger’s theory suggests that through a process of *legitimate peripheral participation* (LPP) individuals move from the margins to the centre of interactive communities by being mentored or “apprenticed” by more powerful others in the group. This change from being an “apprentice” to a “master” involves much more than acquiring a few tricks of the trade. More importantly, LPP explains how individuals’ identities are transformed from being considered of little use to a group to vibrant, integral and respected members of a community. In other words, in SL learning the theory of communities of practice is much more than a justification for gathering a few students together for group work and hoping that those who have more knowledge will help those who have less. The theory frames as well the changes I saw in students working online, as they became more than just learners of language but eventually developed into individuals who took on more respected and self-respecting subjectivities. Subjectivity is defined by Weedon (1997) as “the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself, and her ways of understanding herself in the world” (p. 32). Lave and Wenger’s work helps me to

understand the changes I saw in the students subjectivities. The *communities of practice* theory explains why language learning can have a significant influence on learners' identity construction if the elements are in place for moving learners from apprentice to master positions. From their theory, I was able to envision a broader use of computer technology than I am currently seeing in many SL sites including the one on which this inquiry is based and to connect their theory to practice in the use of the Internet for building communities of practice.

In literacy studies, Gee's Discourse theory (1990, 1992, 1996) also sheds light on the construct of identity. Through the social practices individuals take part in, including learning a second language they define themselves by their ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, moving, speaking, and often reading and writing, as belonging to specific groups of individuals. These ways of being that tie individuals to certain sorts of people are called Discourses. For example the military officers I teach wear uniforms, salute their superiors and have names to call each other according to a hierarchy of ranks that make them members of a particular military Discourse. More than just a strong expression of personal and cultural identity, however, Discourses explain how and why identities are constructed and evolve. Gee points out that: "Each Discourse incorporates a usually taken for granted and tacit 'theory' of what counts as a 'normal' person and the 'right' ways to think feel and behave" (1996, p. ix). In assuming these acceptable ways, individuals assume identities that connect them to a particular Discourse and the ideologies that supports that Discourse. As a SL teacher, this point enables me to recognize that through my teaching practices in a real or virtual classroom I am not only offering the opportunity to learn a language but membership in a Discourse. By making available the option to change their Discourse patterns, I am also offering a chance to change to their identities.

In gender studies, Dillabough (2000), Belenky et al. (1986), Luke (2001) and Hooks (1994), along with Weedon (1997) analyze the stories of individuals who struggle with identity issues that influence their "ways of being, knowing, living." Through their stories, these researchers sensitize me more deeply to what it means to be an "outsider",

especially as I try to understand Nicholai and the participants in the study who struggle to be recognized on a personal level, along with their countries on a global level. At the same time, these stories offer insights into the option of resistance. Just as feminists seek to redefine their identities by examining how current discourses position them in society so too the learners from the study were faced in the online discussions with discovering how past and current political, cultural and pedagogical discourses have left them marginalized, or feeling “bad”, a term George, a Czech online student confessed to me. Through this critical examination of the various discourses that they faced in their learning and their lives some of the learners in the inquiry begin to create new identities based on difference.

In critical pedagogy, Friere (1970), Cummins (1996), Giroux, (2000), Kelner (2000), McLaren (2000), McCarthy & Dimtriadas (2000), Pennycook (1994), Phillipson (1997), Fine (1994), and Simon (1987) have led me to tease out and understand the ideological assumptions of the pedagogical practices in the various contexts in the study. It is through examining the basis of these practices, especially those involving computer technology, that I could begin to understand their influence on the identities of the learners as they negotiated their SL learning. For example, Giroux (2000) argues convincingly that the political agendas of current education based on instrumental reason and standardized curriculum is a training ground for preparing students to be complicit subjects in the corporate order. Is there a parallel between the general tendency in education towards standardization and the use of computer technology for teaching English using drill exercises and standardized testing for the officers in the context of this inquiry? What kind of global citizens are the Dominant Discourses hoping to foster through the practices they use to control how computer technology is used to learn languages?

These writers have enabled me to look critically at the use of computer technology for SL learning, and at the same time, have inspired me to search for new practices that might offer improved possibilities for identity construction. Kelner (2000) argues persuasively about the use of Internet technology in education:

There is of course the danger that corporate and commercial interests will come to colonize the Internet, but it is likely that there will continue to be spaces where individuals can empower themselves and create their own communities and identities. A main challenge for youth (and others) is to learn to use the Internet for positive cultural and political projects. (p. 216)

Giroux (2000) also argues:

Educators need to understand how different identities among youth [and others] are being produced in spheres generally ignored by schools...by analyz[ing] how pedagogy works to produce, circulate, and confirm particular forms of knowledge and desires in those diverse public and social spheres where sounds, images, print, and electronic culture attempt to harness meaning for and against the possibility of expanding social justice and human dignity. (p. 190)

Besides turning to these more academic sources for my understanding of identity, even in my pleasure reading, I have been drawn to an eclectic assortment of authors who deal with identity issues. For example, Eva Hoffman (1989) gives powerful witness to what it means to be a young Polish female immigrant to North America in her book *Lost in Translation*. Through her first person narrative, I have come to appreciate that “identities do not exist within individuals but are constructed in interactions between individuals” (Lantolf and Pavlenko, 2000, p. 171). Whether Eva, or Nicholai decide to use their agency and intentions to make the personal, cultural and linguistic transformation necessary to learn a language depends in part on the power relations that exist between the discourses in their natural or formal learning context and on their own position in those discourses. For example, I discovered that dominant discourses in the language learning sites in the study controlled when, how and where computer technology was used for learning. I asked myself what impact did this control have on learners’ identity construction and language learning when they used or were barred from using the computer technology? Oscar Lewis’s (1959) book, *Five Families* also explores identity issues. In this case, however, the ethnographic study of five families in Mexico reflects the potential for “othering” of which researchers are capable. In the book, Lewis portrays the daily struggles of individuals in families at different socio economic levels of Mexican society during the 1950’s. As I read the

book, I felt the sting of embarrassment for the individuals whose personal lives Lewis recorded in intricate detail from a distant observer stance under the guise of carrying out ethnographic research. I treated this book as a cautioning reminder of my responsibility as a researcher while I collected my data, made observations and took field notes, always attempting to share in the participants' experiences through their eyes.

Scholars who speak to me most profoundly and whose influence have most strongly affected my evolving perspective of learners in the contexts where I work and do research are, most naturally, in the field of second language education. Researchers such as Fairclough, (1992), Siegal (1996) McKay & Wong (1996), Norton Peirce (1995), Morgan (1997), Thesen (1997), Duff & Uchida (1997), Leung, Harris & Rampton (1997), Schechter & Bayley, (1997), Maguire & Graves (2001) Norton & Toohey, (2001), and Maguire, (1994a, 1996, 1998) have influenced the framework of this study. While some of this research has conceptualized identity as cultural, ethnic, or social, others have chosen to avoid categorizing and labelling. It is a fundamental propensity for human nature to categorize, label and compartmentalize. However, when the complexities of individuals in language learning contexts are being examined, I believe most strongly that identities, like minds, are not containers in which we can add contextual examples to build theories. Norton (1997) observed "the relationship between language and identity is an intriguing one because debates on theories of language are as inconclusive and indeterminate as debates on theories of identity" (p. 409). This observation suggests that there is much more to be done in researching identity and language issues- in what is researched, how the research is conducted and how we share the knowledge gained from this research. In the area of expanding knowledge about identity issues in the context of computer-mediated language learning, the need for research is even more pressing. Two recent studies, Maguire and Graves (2001) and Norton and Toohey (2001) have added important insights into the dialogue on identity and framed some of the questions and contradictions that surfaced in this study of SL learners negotiating their identities and SL learning with computers.

Maguire & Graves' Study of Young Children's Writing Practices

Maguire & Graves' (2001) longitudinal study of three young Muslim girls focused on how these children, new arrivals to Canada with their families, constructed meanings of their intimate and larger social relations as they participated in journal writing. The aim of their study was to examine the writing of these girls over a three-year period in an ESL classroom and determine their language development, the part they played in that development and how this writing contributed to their sense of self. Maguire and Graves used journal studies as well as home and school interviews to focus on the learning experiences of these children at home and at school. They based their findings on the assumption that the opportunity to write from one's own perspective is an essential condition for developing the linguistic skills for written expression. Their findings showed that the control these young girls had over their written expression was important in their development of competencies far beyond what is considered "normal" for L2 classrooms. Each of the writers, through the journals, conveyed her unique personality and her view of her own possibilities for herself at the time of writing. The young writers' identities were constructed through the acceptance of their voices being heard in the writing of their journals.

The optimism that all of these girls showed for their initial formal learning experiences cannot necessarily be tied just to their control over their writing process and the voice-centred nature of journal writing. However, the multiple views, personalities and voices, even critical ones, that were reflected in the journal entries and which allowed them to position themselves socially over the period of the study indicates that journals, and by extension any self-directed creative linguistic practice is a powerful means to facilitating learner-directed, self-regulated development of language learning. Maguire & Graves concur with Ivanic (1998) that as these children write, their texts provide a window on their stance, sense of personal agency, voice and possibilities for selfhood.

Maguire & Graves' study is very valuable to the present research into identity

issues in CMC for several reasons. First of all, their study supports my own observations and previous findings that control over one's learning is crucial to language development. It draws attention away from authoritarian, teacher-directed classroom practices, based on rule formation and elicitation devices. Instead, their findings shed light on the powerful way learner-directed processes such as journal writing in second language sites, can provide individual mediational means for learners to meet their linguistic goals. Maguire & Graves' study left me with several questions in researching learning in the Canadian and European sites in this inquiry: Who directed the SL in these sites especially when computers were involved and for what reasons, when, how and why? What opportunities did the learners in these sites have for self-expression in English in the classroom and when using computer technology? What means did the learners in the research site have to mediate their own learning when using computer technology? Does control over the movement of individual screens in drill exercises satisfy learners' needs to control their learning? What happens when learners are given an opportunity in their second language to express themselves creatively in a virtual site?

Secondly, Maguire & Graves' study broadened my understanding of the unique ways that learners evaluate their worlds and construct their identities through language. With regard to the military students in my study I asked: What insights into their place in the social contexts of their learning and in the global community can be gained through self-expression in their second language? If the journals used by two of the young girls, Heddie and Sadda, in Maguire & Graves' study were able to help position these learners for expanding their possibilities for selfhood, what other non-traditional discursive tools could I use for similar ends in the context of learning English in the global community? Could computer technology enable such possibilities? If so, what "voices", or "speaking personalities", as Bakhtin calls them, would be heard?

Finally, as a research tool and in the spirit of adopting an emic perspective, I see a direct relation between journal writing and the use of computer technology in SL classrooms as a potential forum for learners speaking and writing to intersect.

This is especially important when the learners are not young uninhibited children but rather male adults who typically shy away from expressing their ideas in writing. If, for example, I had asked Nicholai to express what he had to say that day in writing he would most likely have declined. On the other hand, I have found evidence that our understanding of learners' perspectives about their sociocultural worlds and their learning is often available in non-traditional spaces. These private spaces include not only personal journals but learners' living spaces, the pictures they wish to talk about, the e-mails they write, and even how they dress. Bourdieu (1991b) explains:

There is every reason to think that the factors, which are most influential in the formation of the habitus, are transmitted without passing through language and consciousness but through suggestions inscribed in the most apparently insignificant aspects of the things, situations and practices of everyday life. Thus the modalities of practices, the ways of looking, sitting standing, keeping silent or even speaking are full of injunctions that are powerful and hard to resist (p. 51).

Like Maguire & Graves who used the children's drawings to provide a window on the young girls' identities, I asked myself what technological tool will help get at the inconspicuous spaces where the identities of the military learners in the study are revealed and constructed? What insights can these tools reveal that will help me to understand not only about the identities of learners but will be a place for the learners to understand themselves and build new possibilities for selfhood? I recall a retort made by Eva, an attractive Romanian civilian working for the military, who responded to my compliment about how well-dressed Romanian women are: *"Even if we don't have much money, we manage to make the best of what we have to look attractive"* (Personal Communication, December 2004). I understood from her comment that dress was one way that she saw her possibilities for gaining self-respect and recognition in a world where perhaps her other symbolic resources were not valued. I asked myself, other than using two-dimensional drawings on a page to depict some of the identity issues I perceived in the study what technological means could I employ to represent this knowledge of identity to others?

Norton & Toohey's Comparison of Two Studies of Good Language Learners

Norton & Toohey's (2001) comparison of good language learners was based on two previous research studies they conducted independently in the 1990's. The focus of the comparative study was to identify some of the factors that were responsible for one of the participants in each of their previous studies to be regarded as a good language learner. Norton's (Norton Peirce, 1995) study of new immigrant women revealed that access to using and practicing English for these women was dependent on the Anglophone social networks in which they lived and worked. These networks, constructed by unspoken relations of power, controlled whether or not the women in her study were allowed to speak. Their lack of linguistic skills in English labelled them as "stupid" or "unworthy" both in their own eyes and those of their interlocutors. This labelling, as well as the missed opportunities to speak, affected their social identities and whether they considered it worthwhile to socially invest in using the new language. Norton's study was conducted in an informal learning setting of work and living. Toohey's (1996, 1998, 2000) study, in the context of primary school classrooms, showed how young children also had to negotiate power structures in order to participate in language practicing interactions with more capable others. She was able to demonstrate, by examining the disputes which took place in and outside the classrooms, how the social structure of these interactions defined what the children could or could not do and obscured their real efforts, initiative and expertise as individuals.

In their comparison of individuals in their two studies, Norton & Toohey (2001) show how both Eva, the adult and Julie, the child, came to be regarded as good language learners. Although based on entirely different contexts, the learners in both studies similarly refused to accept the subject positions that labelled them as "stupid" or "less worthy". They succeeded in resisting these subordinate positions and instead claimed powerful positions in their respective social structures. These subject positions provided them with increased opportunities for verbal and social interactions. They claimed these subject positions by making effective use of various individual intellectual and social resources. For example, Eva's linguistic knowledge of Italian and

Polish as well as her geographical knowledge of European countries was an intellectual resource that was valued by certain co-workers. This resource allowed her entry into the social worlds of her co-workers and gained her status. On the other hand, Julie claimed a position of respect in the group of young students because of her social resources: her friendships with adult and other respected child “allies” in the school. These social resources provided her access to the interactions of her peers.

The observations and conclusions that Norton & Toohey make in comparing the two good language learners are particularly interesting to me in my research of adult language learners who are newcomers to a North American language program. Firstly, their work draws attention to the complex nature of language learning and the importance of looking at the situated learning experiences of language learners, in order to understand that learning. More traditional efforts have viewed language-learning contexts as only the internal characteristics of language learners, their strategies and linguistic outputs. These narrower perspectives, as well as the SL programs that are their spin-off, fall short of helping us to understand why Nicholai, in fact, was not considered a good language learner. But how do I go about uncovering the identity issues responsible for learners I teach not reaching their potential in learning a language? In the large scheme of things, finding possible answers to this question is equally, if not more important, perhaps than the success stories of Eva and Julie. I recognize the importance of identity issues to understanding ‘success’ or lack of it in SL learning and also the necessity of looking at identity in the myriad “insignificant aspects of things, situations and practices of everyday life” (Bourdieu, 1991b, p. 51). But are there more expanded methodological tools to help me understand these issues? Will a representation in written text allow my vision to be wide enough to capture the complexities of the group of participants in the study as and they negotiate their identities and learning in a technological setting online?

Secondly, I am reminded, through Norton & Toohey’s observations, that learners have a variety of intellectual and social resources that can be used to negotiate their subject positions. The attention they draw to agency in this negotiation is essential to

me as an educator examining the interactions of participants in my research field who often find themselves in subordinate positions in a North American SL learning setting. Both Julie and Eva, as new immigrants to North America were in subordinate positions that affected their opportunities for learning and their voice. However, their respective resources became available as a means for changing their positions in dialectic interactions provided by a more powerful “other”. For example Eva’s boss organized social gatherings for employees outside work hours and Julie formed close relationships with her teachers. Both Eva and Julie’s identities changed as they developed new ways of thinking and seeing themselves in relation to others. Norton & Toohey, have added to the growing number of SL researchers such as McKay & Wong, Thesen, Morgan, Maguire, Graves, Warschauer who base their work on Vygotskian principles and show that both learners and educators, or more powerful “others”, are involved in changing identities. I asked myself as I worked with all those who participated in the study, including myself as a researcher and educator and learner, how can we together provide opportunities for mediating learning? Can computer technology be used in the context of the study as a means for mediating the SL learning for this group of military who are finding their way in a global organization like NATO? How can those who were participating in the study play a collaborative role in providing those opportunities?

Norton & Toohey, as well as other critical researchers I have previously mentioned, such as Stuart Hall, James Gee and Cornell West have shown in a variety of research settings that identities as well as contexts for learning are constantly changing and evolving. The conception of identities as dynamic and never stable conforms to Bakhtin’s notion of “dialogism”, which posits “language is a continuous generative process implemented in the social-verbal interaction of speakers” (Volosinov, 1973). As I observed and researched for the present inquiry, I was constantly aware of change. Some observations that I made in my MA thesis (Charbonneau-Gowdy, 2000), only four years ago, are no longer valid. For example, aspects of the military and classroom context that at one time served to subordinate some of the students are less an issue or have been replaced by others. Where learners were once segregated in their living

quarters according to their countries, the students are now mixed in their family units – the name for clusters of rooms with a central social area. This small change has had enormous benefits to the officers in terms of linguistic practice and cultural exchange. It also has served to destroy some of the marginalizing that I reported on in my previous study. The present groups of students have no alternative but to communicate in English, the common language in and around their living quarters. The intercultural friendships that the officers establish are often the beginnings of more long-term relationships that carry on once the officers have returned home. Not all the changes that have occurred since my last inquiry have been so positive. Indeed, waves of new students from countries new to the program have added new tensions. Notwithstanding the sometimes enormity of the tensions (such as access and technical issues) that computer technology in general had caused in this particular context of groups of military officers learning English, my research in the SL literature has continued to influence me to question not only the nature of the tensions but to question whether there could be an alternative scenario. In other words, could computers also serve to relieve some of the tensions that the military were having? Also, how would the use of computer technology as a communicative medium relate to identity construction, voice and agency for the learners as they negotiate their SL learning?

In this section, I presented a theoretical framework that has influenced my examination of the situated experiences of groups of military officers and students mediating their language learning both in traditional classrooms and in virtual environments. In the remainder of the chapter, I focus on the use and potential of computer technology as a communication tool and the influence that it has on identities in the context of SL learning both in an immersion program and internationally via the Internet. I now review the theory upon which current computer assisted language learning (CALL) is based. At the same time I problematize much of this theory and research, both epistemologically and methodologically, for failing for the most part to recognize sociocultural issues, including identity issues that are crucial for understanding the experiences of SL learners as they mediate their language learning

with computers. I discuss two research studies in computer mediated communication that have provided a basis for my inquiry into the particular experiences of the military participants in the study as they used computers as an opportunity for interacting in their second language.

Perspectives on Computer Technology

To resist technology is as futile as trying to turn back the tides. It has already swept over us in ways we have yet to realize. It is not a question of whether to accept or reject this new world, but who is going to use it and how (Taylor & Saarinen, 1994, p. 1).

The number of resisters to technology, especially computer technology, is without doubt on the decline since this observation was made nine years ago. Smith (2005) claims that CALL “has come of age” and that language teachers routinely integrate network- and Web-based activities as well as multimedia software into their syllabi as a matter of course. Is this comment perhaps somewhat shortsighted? Indeed, there are strong arguments to the contrary. For example, Cuban (2001), argues that while institutions with unprecedented zeal have been quick to furnish their classrooms, including SL ones, with computers, the ends to which the computers have been directed are dubious both ideologically and pedagogically. He contends that both ideologically and as a business related means to efficiency, computers have not delivered. From a pedagogical perspective, he gives evidence that most teachers use computers “in limited ways, producing few changes in how they teach and how students learn” (p. 107). Todd Oppenheimer (2003) findings support this argument. Drawing from extensive ethnographic research, he concludes that computers have become an outgrowth of academic breakdown, “a kind of red flag warning of deep fundamental decay” (p. xiii). He believes while “small fortunes” are being spent to buy and continually upgrade computer technology, the payback in academic results has been discouraging. Importantly, the issue of computers’ failure to deliver has raised some disturbing questions about the agendas of learning institutions in the first place. However, despite their different perspectives Smith, Cuban and Oppenheimer, agree on one point. All

three raise critical questions: Where and what are the key theoretical constructs that have been supporting computer assisted teaching and learning and why has this theory failed to serve teachers' and learners' understanding of their practices?

It seems since CALL first appeared in the mid eighties, CALL researchers have recognized a need for principled, or theoretically supported, ways to base the design, use and evaluation of computers in the SL classroom and thereby to justify their existence. From its original conception based on computational theory and subsequently on transmission theory as well as a model of the mind as an information processor, computers were treated as tools and that their use for learning was an a-social process of skill practice and information transfer. The learners who used computers were considered as uniformly constructed vessels ready to be filled. Framed with perspectives from psychology, computational linguistics and educational technology and numbers-driven methodologies, this research did little to appease teachers' and learners' concerns. Oxford (1994) noted that part of the reason for the dissatisfaction was that many computer systems were uniquely designed, or at least partly by computational linguists whose focus was on non-linguistic processes and little interest in learners. While many may argue that computers have progressed beyond being used for rote-type learning practices, evidence in the research site for this inquiry suggests the contrary.

Nevertheless, in the late 90's, in an almost ten-year delayed response to what was happening in mainstream SL research, there were signs in the CALL literature of a growing realization that the earlier theoretical models for CALL were misdirected and unpopular, supporting the oversold and unused observations of Cuban (2001). Within CALL are calls for new directions (Chapelle, 1999; Egbert Hanson-Smith, 1999) advocating a closer convergence to SLA and the interactionist theory on which it was basing its communicative practices in mainstream SL classrooms. This call for convergence seemed to accompany the growing use of computers inside and outside SL learning classrooms for communication in distance education and e-mailing, or as it is referred to computer mediated communication (CMC). Armed with the SLA research which claimed the importance of conversation (Hatch, 1978), of comprehensible input

(Krashen, 1982), of learner talk (Long & Porter, 1985) and of the quality of output (Swain, 2000) to language learning, CALL expanded its design and applications as well as its research agenda.

While the prospects of having learners engage in communicative events mediated by computers rather than perform “drill and kill” exercises alone in front of the computer is an attractive idea, the nature of the interactions and the methodological ways many CALL researchers studied CMC have raised some critical questions. Reflecting back to the two imagined groups of dichotomously-opposed researchers who watched Nicholai with his teacher as he discussed the tensions he was feeling with regard to his language learning, some familiar parallels are evident in recent research in CALL. For example, one group in CALL, (Balke & Zyzik, 2003; Pellettieri, 1999; Chapelle, 2001; Smith, 2005; Toyoda & Harrison, 2002; Kotter, 2003) are interested in CMC as sources of information, for what the interactions tells us about observable features of learners’ language-message meaning, modified output, attention to form and recasts. The aim of researchers who view computers as information transmitters is to evaluate the quality of the particular interactive task assigned by the teacher. These researchers generally are interested in the individual learner and use quantitative data derived from statistically generated discourse analysis and observations as the basis for their methodologies. The problems I have with most of this research is what it doesn’t tell me about the language experiences of students who are using computers to study languages. It doesn’t tell me for example whether Sergiy, an older Ukrainian officer in the study experiences the same awkwardness when he sits down to chat online with his group as he feels in class. It doesn’t tell me what cultural, personal, and pedagogical histories are behind the conversations that Remi, a young Czech soldier, engages in when he writes his e-mails. The research does not discuss the roles the Romanians and I were forming with each other through our dialogue online. Nor does this research focus attention on the need to expand the use of computer technology beyond written text. This research misses out on non-linguistic messages by being satisfied with only concentrating on written-based communication. The messages constructed through

lowered heads, frequent turnings aside and facial expressions that occurred in the online image-supported conversations, were an important part of understanding the communication and the participants' agency in learning. Nor does this research tell me how the online microlevel practices of the participants as they negotiated speaking English in a virtual setting were related to the macro level practices that were happening all around them.

There is a small but growing group of others in CALL (Belz, 2002; Egbert & Petrie, 2005; Kinkinger, 2004; Kramsch, 2000; Salaberry, 1999, 2000, 2001; Stevens, 2004; Thorne, 2003; van Lier, 2003; Warschauer, 1996, 2000, 2004) who relate well to the group of SL researchers who viewed Nicholai and the teacher's interaction "through different eyes". This group in CALL, like their counterparts not only in mainstream SL education but in literacy and cultural studies as well, are beginning to understand CMC from a sociocultural perspective based on constructivist views (Lebow, 1993). From this perspective, computers are considered more than just tools, but rather as Selfe (1999) explains "complex technological artifacts that embody and shape-and are shaped by-the ideological assumptions of an entire culture" (p. 2). For these researchers, comparing face-to-face with electronic communication is becoming a less important issue. Instead their interest lies in human/human interaction as opposed to human/ machine interaction and the potential for that interaction to move learners from 'other-regulated' to 'self-regulated' learners.

Researchers who study CALL from a sociocultural perspective put effort in understanding CMC from broad theoretical perspectives that might include communication theory, cultural theory, anthropology, social theory and critical education theory. A few from this group of CALL researchers are beginning to value computer-based SL communication in its fullest sense by exploring the growing importance of images to constructing meaning (Personal Communication, Petrie, March, 2005). Sociocultural researchers in CALL see rich descriptive methodologies as key to understanding learner-centred experiences in computer-mediated conversations and uncovering the power structures that control those conversations. They are discovering

the social forces that work to resist the conversations that computers can support and any changes that will disrupt the status quo. Most importantly, this growing group of researchers are concerned with linking technologically based communication to social change.

The research that holds potential for understanding CMC from a sociocultural perspective is in its infancy. As technological changes develop faster, voices within the literature on CMC and CALL are recognizing a critical need for more socioculturally based research in CMC. Salaberry (2000) expresses this need:

Such analysis [from a sociocultural perspective] appears to be inherently relevant for the assessment of the future agenda. Questions for quality of cross-cultural experiences should be expanded in order to provide a more comprehensive framework for the development of a valid research agenda. (p. 104)

In the research in CALL, identity has been for the most part completely ignored (exceptions being Warschauer, 1998, 2002, 2004, Fang & Warschauer, 2004). It appears that researchers in computer technology for language learning have been preoccupied with technical arguments, cognitive learning as well as proving the value of this technology in comparative studies with face-to-face practices. As a result, they have, perhaps unconsciously, been distracted from the sociocultural perspectives that are being treated with growing respect in SL research in general. Joy Egbert, editor of a TESOL publication in CALL recently commented to me: "It's time to stop comparing face to face and digital learning and put our energies into finding out more about the contexts of learning in virtual spaces" (Personal Communication, March 30, 2005). As the multicultural participants in the inquiry and I discussed the tensions they were experiencing and had experienced in their efforts to learn English, it became evident that some of the tensions were connected to the use of computer technology. An inquiry into those tensions required me to look from a sociocultural perspective at their contexts and at how computer technology was influencing their identities and inevitably their investment and agency in learning the SL. Two recent studies of learners involved in CMC offer important insight into my own research questions. In the next section, I

describe these two studies and how they framed my inquiry of the experiences of the military learners in the study as they negotiated their SL learning using CMC.

Warschauer's Study of Students Studying English in Hawaii

Warschauer (1999), employed ethnographic methods to study the use of the Internet in four language and writing classrooms in the U.S. state of Hawaii. He focused on four groups of learners including immigrant students to Hawaii, indigenous students, ESL learners, and speakers of second dialects. Warschauer had observed that these students seemed to be at risk of being marginalized in the academic and Hawaiian community for lack of expertise linguistically and in information technology. The aim of the study was to examine how teachers in the various sites were meeting the needs of their students who were struggling to culturally and linguistically participate “in the public, community and economic life in the 21st century” (p. vii) using computer technology.

Warschauer, acting as researcher and collaborator, analyzed the experiences of these groups of diverse students as they used two main computer technologies for reading and writing: computer-mediated communication and hypertext. He found that computer technology was used to serve the agendas of all of the teachers in the study despite their different approaches and beliefs about teaching and learning languages. For example, one teacher used computers for mastering structures based on her belief that that was an effective way to learn to write in a second language. Another viewed language learning in terms of allowing learners to be immersed in authentic, communicative writing practices. That teacher organized online discussions using appropriate software for her students. A third teacher believed languages are learned through becoming familiar with new discourse communities and so she used computers in a variety of ways to set up opportunities for apprenticeship learning such as for e-mail journals.

Second, Warschauer also found examples of how computer technology became

an opportunity for investment in learning as well as for an act of resistance. I use the term 'investment' from Norton (2000). She uses the term to reference the fact that learners not only become committed to learning a language but also and at the same time reorganize who they are and how they relate to the social world, and their identities (p. 11). He repeatedly observed that when students were asked to perform tasks that met the agendas of the teachers and not their own, the students responded with frustration and lack of enthusiasm. On the other hand, students worked best when the natural strengths of the environment (technological) were exploited rather than resisted. For example, students acted with interest and vigour when they were allowed to use the Web for researching their own interests rather than a predetermined site that suited the interests of the teacher. Students also worked best with the new media when they used it for realizing meaningful goals in the same way that the young writers in Maguire & Graves' (2001) study saw their journal writing as opposed to the tasks that were offered to them in later stages of their schooling.

Thirdly, when the learners in his study were allowed to negotiate their language learning and take ownership of that learning, they chose tasks that were meaningful to their realities. The agency they acquired in their SL learning was accompanied by changes to their identities. They began to assume more powerful subject positions in the SL learning classroom and in their lives even to the point of challenging traditional practices. For example, once the learners in one of these groups saw the potential of the Internet for authentic communication with classmates as well as long-distance partners, they became dissatisfied with using the computer for drill-like activities and were openly reluctant to defer to their teacher's instructions. Another group, non-privileged minority students from working class neighbourhoods, used computers to develop brochures for a variety of agencies in the community. Through their work, the students who were mostly immigrants were drawn into the community in ways that they would probably not have been if they had worked only in traditional writing genres. The students negotiated identities that were more open to the larger community and to integrating into it.

Warschauer's study has offered me a well-grounded base on which to critically examine the intersection of computer assisted language learning and identity issues in the context of my own second language teaching and research. Although the contexts are quite different, I see several parallels in the situations that existed for the students in Warschauer's study and the military officers in my own inquiry. First, just as the students his study were struggling to define their presence in the American community in Hawaii, so too are the military officers from former Warsaw Pact countries I worked with, trying to claim a 'voice' in the NATO military community and in the Western world. The dominant discourse in some of the Hawaiian classroom contexts prevented students from engaging in learning. So too in this inquiry, classroom practices in the SL contexts of the study were causing tensions and threatening to disrupt the participants' learning and their sense of "self", their subjectivities. In both contexts, there was resistance to change associated with computer technology. In the former, there was pressure between helping students to develop traditional academic literacies that would allow them to succeed in the institution or "electronic literacies" that would enable them to connect with the world. In the context of the military students in the programs I teach, I was finding similar resistance to viewing computers as tools for communicative practices. This resistance occurred despite the rhetoric of the aims of the SL programs and the support of the administration for computer technology-enhanced learning.

Selfe (1999) conceptualizes the discrepancies between rhetoric and practice thus:

[A]n exclusive focus on the positive changes associated with technology, often serves to distract educators from recognizing how existing social forces actually work to resist change in connection with technology; how they support the status quo when technology threatens to disrupt the world in any meaningful way; how our culture, and the social formations that make up this culture, react with a special kind of conservatism to technology, even as we laud the changes it promises to bring. (p. 293)

In light of Selfe's comment and Warschauer's study, I addressed two issues in my research questions that are key concerns in the SL context in which I teach and research. First, how are computer technologies shaping and being shaped by the identities of

the multicultural military groups in the study? The second issue concerns the potential of ESL educational practices, including the use of computers for communication. What kind of opportunities can computer technology and the Internet provide to the participants who come from a variety of cultural, linguistic and class backgrounds? Can computer technology and the Internet allow knowledge of and access to the discourses that will enable the participants to control their futures rather than be controlled?

Despite the similarities in issues in Warschauer's study and my own, he limited his inquiry to the development of electronically written literacies. My study focuses particularly on the development of the oral literacies of military students and the role that computers played in their efforts to improve their English. I define oral literacies as those ways of communicating that include speaking and listening. With the incredible speed at which computer technology is developing, communication over the Internet is increasingly visually and orally based rather than just in written form. Web cameras and microphones and increased bandwidth for carrying digital information are adding new dimensions to conversations via the Web. Since many of these conversations take place in English, there is increased urgency to consider these expanded spaces for conversations in view of SL learners and their identity construction. My focus on the oral literacies of the participants in my study has broadened my research lens to include the images that are a part of these visually-supported oral conversations. In a similar manner to Pink (2001), I have chosen to include visual ethnographic methods as a way of studying and representing my findings. Besides the different emphasis on literacies, there is further difference between Warschauer's study and my own. While he concentrated on the experiences of students within one nation state, my study is internationally based. The participants in this study were not limited to one physical space but were spread out in several countries – Romania, Czech Republic, Canada, and the U.S., and also informally with Hungary and Poland.

Summary

I began this chapter by quoting from a conversation I had four years ago, with one of the military officers in the context in which I teach and do research. In many ways, this interchange reflects for me the way second language research initiatives have missed the mark on what is really going on in SL language classrooms and other learning sites. On the one hand, while positivist research has looked for answers to language learning in controlled experiments and new programs based primarily on input and output theories, it appears that the reality for second language teachers is that teaching of language is influenced not by such abstract theories. Rather it is influenced by aspects of the multilayered physical, cultural, political, personal, sociohistorical contexts of learning contexts-contexts where, for example, many ESL teachers in my area of the world are forced to drive supply carts with few resources from class to class to teach language to thirty-five not surprisingly unmotivated learners in a single group (Personal communication, ESL teacher, May 2005). Also, while SL programs and testing procedures are being designed for learners as a linguistically homogeneous group, the reality is that many classrooms are the sites of multicultural and linguistic struggles. Whereas SL researchers, and many teachers still view themselves as the source of control of SL knowledge, many SL learners are learning in other ways, including technological ways outside the classrooms and despite formal teacher-driven initiatives.

I presented here an emerging alternative to the positivist view of how language learning may occur. This growing movement in SL research is looking at the broader context of SL learning. Research that is socio-culturally based has attempted to look closely at “what is really going on” in the messy places of natural and formal learning sites and to conceptualize the realities in relation to the identities, voices and agency of the learners who take part. Much of this context-sensitive research has been based on Bakhtinian and Vygotskian theories of language and language learning. Along with these theories, this research is supported by Weedon’s poststructuralist conception of identity as a site of struggle and also subject to change. In the context of researching the groups of military students in the study, I view learners too as “human subjects with unique

histories, goals and voices, who actively create and recreate the world and themselves” (Lantolf, 1993). Increasingly, this potential to create and recreate oneself is taking place in electronic discourses made available through new technologies. For example, Thorne (1999) found that when students interacted synchronously through the Internet, the environment allowed them a certain freedom to say things that they would not have said in a regular classroom situation. I have argued that those who are interested in learning and learning sites must include in their agendas close observations of the new computer-supported discourses. Researchers such as Maguire & Graves, Norton & Toohey and Warschauer have all provided powerful examples to frame my interest in these new discourses and the computer technologies that support them. Nevertheless, each of their studies suggests the need for further research. For example, what will the linguistic and identity implications be if the process of journal writing suggested by Maguire and Graves is digital? Can teachers like me use new technologies to give opportunities to learners to reveal their most powerful resources, resources which Norton and Toohey found provided valuable opportunities to speak? At the interface between electronic discourses and language learning, how can we move beyond an approach to education which reduces multiculturalism to simply understanding and *tolerance of diversity* and instead, as Warschauer suggests, to an approach that encourages learners to work actively towards *promoting cultural diversity* and social change? It is precisely questions such as these that may help us to address Nicholai’s dilemmas in the classroom and his learning English in general.

For SL educators and researchers like myself, exploring answers to questions and issues that concern us is our way of improving our practices. This exploration requires me to look through different eyes at my practices and to question the ontological, epistemological and methodological basis of that work. I feel a certain tension between trying to understand what is happening in the language learning experiences of the participants and seeing the ways my own beliefs and practices contributed to my understanding of those experiences. Perhaps, this is a tension that I share with other SL educators and researchers and indeed all those who seek answers to

learning in cultural contexts and who discuss changes to the status quo. Geertz (1972) alludes to this tension when he explains:

The whole point of a semiotic approach to culture is... to aid us in gaining access to the conceptual world in which our subjects live so that we can, in some extended sense of the term, converse with them. The tension between the pull of this need to penetrate an unfamiliar universe of symbolic action and the requirements of technical advance in the theory of culture, between the need to grasp and the need to analyze, is, as a result, both necessarily great and essentially removable. Indeed, the further theoretical development goes the deeper the tension gets. This is the first condition for cultural theory: it is not its own master. As it is unseverable from the immediacies thick description presents, its freedom to shape itself in terms of its internal logic is rather limited. What generality it contrives to achieve grows out of the delicacy of its distinctions, not the sweep of its abstractions. (p. 24-25)

In the next chapter, I explore how the questions I have posed and the principles that I have as an educator and researcher have paved the way for participatory action research (PAR). I explain the different phases of the PAR study and the data sets that each phase elicited.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Now in this part of the world we are a little fed up with this propaganda. Communis(t) [ism] is to blame. There is a lot of knowledge about this. We have to learn a lot of things. We have to learn to listen. Some people it is difficult to talk about politics-they are afraid. Talking about politics we have tendency to talk about the little things but don't talk about the big picture. It is a question of education. The new generation will be exposed to TV and will be different. Fifty years of Communist regime taught us to listen and obey. We don't want more politics because we were fed up with propaganda. We were forced to listen and usually was some BS and now we are fed up and we don't need for a while to have someone to tell us how to do it. Sooner or later we have to learn how to listen and to speak up about our opinions and what we want to do about things.
(Vali, a Romanian on-line student, E-mail November 3, 2004)

For the future, I believe this is the best challenge for all the governments and all the nations to leave [live] in peace, is not only a job for better development economic countries in the world. For successful all we need [is] a real, permanent and correct dialogue. No solutions by force, only dialogue and cooperation.
(Leo, a Romanian on-line student, E-mail November 2, 2004)

In these excerpts from e-mails sent to me from Romania, Vali and Leo touch on the past and present tensions that preoccupy their current thinking and what they see as crucial for the future in order for things to change for themselves, their country and the world. They suggest that Education, computer technology and dialogue are integral to the changes they envision. I began this inquiry by researching the tensions that exist for a group of military officers in the NATO program where I teach. The decision to conduct participatory action research (PAR) for this inquiry was not a deliberate one, but rather I was led to do PAR because of the tensions that existed for new groups

of military learners in the NATO program and because of the questions I had posed. Through this particular research inquiry process, I have moved beyond ‘the individual lives’ of military students from Central and Eastern Europe as they negotiated learning English in Canada. Besides this Canadian site, I have conducted the research online with a group of Czechs and Romanians that have drawn me to a second site in Europe. Like the multilayered nature of all living things, I have discovered that underneath the tensions that were visible on the surface for the learners in the study, were other ‘layers’ of other tensions, deeper and historically rooted, that seemed to directly influence their language learning. My dilemma was twofold: How could I get at these tensions? And more importantly, how could they be addressed? I consider part of my role as an educator, a researcher and as a human being is to understand and also promote change. In searching for answers that might lead to change in some of the tensions in the SL learning experiences of the participants of the study, I explored the use of computer technology. I wanted to determine whether and how CMC might support their desire to have oral practice in English. At the same time, I hoped that this dialogue would help them address some of the tensions that were standing in the way of their language progress. Indeed, with the growing importance of computers and the Internet to learning generally, and increasingly in SL sites, I could not ignore these tools. In other words, all of the participants collaborated in the process to examine SL learning practices, and to set about using computer technology for communication as a way to respond to tensions we saw in these practices.

Overview of Chapter

Every way of seeing is also a way of not seeing. (Silverman, D. 2003, p. 348)

This participatory action research (PAR) focuses on the tensions that Vali and Leo as well as others who participated in the study experienced in learning English. Using participatory action research and ethnographic methods of collaborative dialoguing, analyzing texts, observing images and videotaping, I sought not only to learn about and understand the multilayered contexts of the tensions that existed in their

SL learning, but also to explore with the participants opportunities for changes to their future conditions through the use of computer technology. As I illustrate in chapters five and six, the present conditions of the learners in the study are deeply rooted in their past. SL educators and researchers working from a sociocultural perspective are becoming increasingly aware of the connection between their micro-level practices in the classroom and the macro-level of interconnected global communities. Understanding the past as it intersects with the present with regard to learning English, has led me beyond the Canadian SL context where I work to researching in a European SL context as well.

In this chapter, I present the epistemological and methodological beliefs that guided my research of two SL learning contexts: Canada and Europe. I then lay out the specific research questions that evolved from my work in the Canadian context and which addressed the problems and tensions I was confronting in the dual sites. In this participatory action research inquiry, I focus on the identity and language learning experiences of a multicultural group of learners interacting via videoconferencing online. I divide the chapter into two parts. I first explain why I chose to research within a qualitative research paradigm. I also reveal my ontological, epistemological and methodological views that influenced the research of groups of military as they negotiated their identities and learning online. The second part of the chapter is devoted to the various phases of the study. I begin by discussing how the questions I asked led to the methods I used. In the latter part of this section, I explain the importance of visual images to the study and the construction of knowledge that took place with the participants. In chapter seven, I expand the discussion of images in more depth and argue the contradictions I see in current representations of SL academic research.

Part One: The Research Field and Paradigms

Over the last three years, I have been examining the tensions involved in groups of military studying English both in Canada and in Central and Eastern Europe. I have been influenced in my decision to do participatory action research for its emphasis

on the dialogic construction of knowledge and social transformation of practice. Participatory action research falls within a qualitative paradigm. Currently in second language research as in educational research in general, there is increasing evidence of the relevance that qualitative research has for understanding SL learning. However, Beer and Maguire (2001) have explicitly shown that the “gulf that lies between the two thought systems” (p. 137) in current first and second language research literature is far from being narrowed. Along with the disappointing evidence I cited earlier of the numbers of qualitative studies in two well-respected second language journals, TESOL and Language Learning, it appears that not everyone in Second Language Education has heard or more importantly perhaps is hearing about the potential insights that qualitative research can offer to understanding SL learning. Beer and Maguire consider the TESOL publication as an example of one of the more balanced journals for their acceptance of articles from a variety of paradigms (p. 133).

Within the CALL literature specifically directed to computer technology in second language learning sites, there too the evidence of qualitative research is beginning to appear but at a disturbingly slow pace. Even some studies in CALL where at first glance it appears that the researcher is interested in the emic view, in other words the individual perspectives of learners, the studies disappointingly use numbers- driven Lickert scales and questionnaires to determine learners’ views (Chapelle, 2000; Stepp-Greany, 2002). The knowledge these tools provide is partial and incomplete. Nevertheless, an interest for more descriptive studies was one of the key concerns voiced by CALL professionals in a recent international study (Hubbard, 2003). My search into SL literature revealed relatively little qualitative work being done in computer technology-based research. Save for a few recent studies (Belz, 2002; Fang & Warschauer, 2004; Lam, 2004; Thorne, 2003; Stevens, 2004), there seem to be few examples of research in computer-mediated SL international synchronous, or real time, communication. And this paucity exists despite calls to the contrary. For example, Thorne (2003) expresses the need to refocus CMC in terms of more descriptive studies in his words:

Internet communication tools cannot be fully apprehended from a positivist vantage point as generically “there” in the world. Cultural artefacts such as global communication technologies are produced by and productive of socio-historically located subjects. Such artefacts take their functional form and significance from the human activities they mediate and the meanings that communities create through them. (p. 66)

A perusal of recent doctoral dissertations in North America shows that there is indeed a growing interest in researching synchronous communication using computer-based videoconferencing technology. However, there was virtually none that I could find in the area of second language learning from either perspective. This is very surprising since international communication involving computer technology is a major reality of the 21st century and much of the impetus for the frantic scramble for ESL courses globally (Warschauer, 2004). Indeed, I see increasing examples in the private sector where opportunities for international ESL communication instruction are being offered over the Internet to the global market. It is critical, I believe, that SL research reflects this demand for network-based language learning.

Methodological, Ontological, Epistemological Views

I have chosen to conduct a qualitative inquiry for several deliberate reasons. First, the assumptions that exist within this paradigm coincide with the kinds of knowing I was seeking. For example, in phase two of the study my prime concern was not just how many computers were available in the site, nor whether these computers met the needs of teachers to record students’ progress. This information could have been elicited using more numbers-driven approaches or through formalized questionnaires. My purpose was to understand in what ways these computers as mediational resources or tools were being used for language learning and how those ways influenced the identities of the students and their learning from their perspectives. A qualitative research approach offered me multiple perspectives in understanding the multicultural group of SL learners and the nature of their learning. For instance, I could not justify approaching the participants in the study as the “privileged possessor of expert knowledge” (Lather, 2003, p. 200) from a Western, native language perspective. Rather,

I viewed the participants as collaborators who helped me in all phases of the study to construct meanings and insights to the questions that I posed originally and those that arose during the inquiry process. In other words, my epistemological beliefs about learning language as participatory and dialogic carried over to the learning process in the inquiry itself. All those who participated were also part of the analysis. For example, after we talked online the participants wrote e-mails, commenting on our online discussions. Also, at the end of the discussion sessions I met with each of the participants to talk about my on-going analysis and to compare that analysis with their own.

I approached the study by engaging a set of multiple beliefs:

- I acknowledge from a social constructivist perspective that what is “real”, useful and meaningful (including ways to take action) is found in the consensus of local and specific communities (Lincoln and Guba, 2000).
- I justify my beliefs from a hermeneutic perspective that meaning is not only constructed but also negotiated and involves letting go of past assumptions, including ways of knowing which are always evolving “always coming into being in the specific occasions of understanding” (Schwandt, 2000).
- I am concerned from a poststructuralist perspective with the deconstruction of “master narratives” (Luke, 1982), for example narratives that state that language learning is based on rule formation.
- I am influenced by a feminist and critical theory perspective in my methodological premise that transformation is dialectic and that empowerment of individuals is the result of action.
- I struggle from readings in cultural studies with its focus on identity, agency and change to respond to my own epistemological wrestling with textualism and the representation of knowledge.

- I believe that knowledge and subjectivities are co-created through communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991), a belief that is complimented by a participatory inquiry paradigm.

The multiple perspectives I used for researching and analyzing the data I gathered, reflect the growing number of paradigms of inquiry and methods of analysis from which researchers can draw (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). All of these labels suggest complex, and deep understandings of how one views the nature of reality (ontology), ways of knowing or one's connection to the known (epistemology), what one views as moral (ethics) and how one practices gaining knowledge about the world (methodology). While it is always difficult to stand outside ones' actions and thoughts and make declarations about how those stances fit with research paradigms, what is even more challenging is to come to grips with the fact that the principles behind those thoughts and actions, like identities, are complex and constantly changing. During the research process, changes in identities as well as epistemological, ontological and ethical stances were not reserved to the participants alone. Changes also occurred in my views as a researcher and as a SL educator.

How can I tie myself down to one view of knowing for example, realizing full well that no sooner have I typed the words on the page, than the words or labels for this or that paradigm or strategy, like the all-embracing significance of qualitative research itself, are constantly shifting and will refer to new or different things for different readers or viewers? And should that be surprising? From a poststructuralist/ postmodern perspective of language, the relationship of words to meanings is in constant flux. Nothing is stable. Denzen and Lincoln (2000) point out that in the last ten years "the borders and boundary lines separating these paradigms and perspectives have begun to blur" (p. 157). Lincoln and Guba (2000) reiterate this blurring with their much-quoted remark that the various paradigms in qualitative research are beginning "to interbreed":

On the matter of hegemony, or supremacy, among postmodern paradigms, it is clear that Geertz's prophecy (1988, 1993) about "the blurring of genres" is rapidly being fulfilled. Inquiry methodology can no longer be treated as a set of universally applicable rules or abstractions. Methodology is inevitably

interwoven with and emerges from the nature of a particular discipline. ... Indeed, the various paradigms are beginning to “interbreed” such that two theorists thought to be in irreconcilable conflict may now appear, under a different theoretical rubric to be informing one another’s arguments (p. 164).

Ironically, technology in the form of computers and the dialogic meaning making that computers are currently allowing may be an important factor at the root of the blurring of boundaries in research.

As I focussed on the two groups of CEE as well as a few Afghan military students communicating in English in a network based setting in Canada and online from Europe, I was confronted with several methodological challenges. My first challenge was how to frame the research questions so that they would help uncover the interplay of past, present and future issues that were relevant to the SL learning experiences of the participants. For example, when Sergii speaks to me about his dilemmas with the language testing in the Canadian immersion program, he explains that part of the problem stems from his past language learning experiences under a communist regime, a regime that differed profoundly from the North American system. At the same time, he worries about the reaction of his supervisor to the disappointing results he presumes he will receive, despite all his efforts to learn. Would these results mean the end of his opportunities to study English? Also, how could I frame the questions so that they would reveal the nature of my role as an educator, researcher and initiator of change? Other challenges concerned how to represent the knowledge I was gaining, particularly since some of that knowledge was supported by images. A good part of the discussions were conducted in a videoconferencing setting and many times the participants used pictures along with words to construct their SL learning. I also struggled with how to ethically approach the dispersion of this knowledge and at the same time respect the privacy of the participants involved. I discuss these challenges in the following sections.

Research Questions

My first challenge in such a dynamic site was in framing the research questions. The questions I asked were threefold:

1. What is the nature of the contexts for learning English as a second language for two groups of military students in Canada and in Romania and the Czech Republic?
2. What are the identity, investment and power issues that surface in these learners as they mediate their SL learning in these contexts?
3. What role does and can computer technology have in their identity construction and language learning?

The paucity of qualitative in the literature that examines the use of computer technology for language learning meant that my questions, like so much of the study, were very much a heuristic effort—a shared process of discovery for the participants and me as researcher. I grouped these questions under three major headings: contexts, identity construction, power/investment.

These questions were the starting point of an inquiry that set out to follow up on the MA study with a group of Ukrainians officers learning English in the Canadian site and on the tensions I reported (Charbonneau-Gowdy, 2000). Based on traditional perspectives of motivation in relation to language learning, these highly motivated, hard working officers should have been very successful in developing in English while in Canada. In fact, many of the senior officers left the program disappointed with their progress. I have claimed that to understand this phenomenon of why highly-motivated students who are hard-working and experienced learners have difficulties progressing in learning a second language, it is necessary to go beyond looking for answers in programs and personality traits. An understanding of the impediments to learning requires a wider socioculturally-based perspective of the language learning experiences of these officers to include the various “nested contexts” that had an

influence on their language learning. Power relations inherent in these settings, aspects of the program inside the classroom and ethnic and economic marginalizing outside the classrooms, denied them access to discourses which would help them regulate their own learning. On the other hand, some of the younger officers were successful in challenging the disempowered identities that were constructed for them in the program. By taking advantage of the symbolic resources available to them, these younger officers engaged in language learning opportunities. This investment in learning not only led to progressing in their second language, but also was reflected in new ways of thinking and seeing themselves in relation to others. A new way of thinking and seeing themselves resulted in a sense of empowerment that they carried beyond the language learning context into their personal and working lives in their own home country.

The questions for this inquiry at the outset attempted to put in place participatory action research that would respond to the immediate and important task of pursuing practical solutions with computer technology for SL participants through a reciprocal dialogic approach. I also considered these questions as an impetus to spark further discussions with those in second language education about the positive and negative potential that computers have for second language learners' identities and language learning.

Participatory Action Research

Traditionally, associated with radical social transformation in the Third World, much contemporary participatory action research has become an extension of applied research into practical, social, especially educational settings (Greenwood and Levin, 2000; Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000; Nunan, 2002). This approach to research evolved as a deliberate form of resistance to what were considered by some participants as acts of colonization. Those involved in this early form of participatory action research reacted to central agencies like universities that came into a site such as a school with the expressed purpose of imposing their normalizing research and policy agendas on people in these sites. No longer the vehicle for grand social change and resisting

oppression, PAR is about participants in a social setting deciding to take the “the construction and reconstruction of their social reality into their own hands, knowing they are not alone in constructing or reconstructing it, but nevertheless taking an active agential role in changing the processes of construction of social realities”(Kemmis and McTaggart, p. 572). In this inquiry, dialoguing with learners and teachers about the need for more communication between learners and speakers of English, was the incentive for this small group made up of me the researcher, teachers, Information Technology specialists and participants to use CMC to make changes to the access the participants had to SL learning.

I chose participatory action research (PAR) for several reasons:

- Those working within participatory action research (PAR) share a strong commitment to be agents of change **with** others in the research site through taking practical action. In this inquiry, I was concerned with finding ways to alter some of the practices that I saw in the immersion site which were counterproductive to the social identities of the students and to their language learning. I felt that any changes to these practices would have to come from the collective efforts of those involved. I believed that it could only come through a dialectic process of finding alternative ways of providing opportunities to students to use their second language. Much discussion that took place in interviews in phase 3 of the study consisted of looking collaboratively for alternative uses of computer technology for SL learning.
- The emphasis within PAR is on multiple perspectives. For example, in my inquiry I was very interested in how the participants’ learning in the study was influenced by wider social, cultural, historical and discursive conditions. I was concerned about how their learning experiences at the micro level of the classroom were connected with the macro level of globalization. During the ongoing analysis process, I did not limit myself to one theoretical perspective but worked from a variety of stances in order to arrive at new understandings of the

data. Combining the theories of language and learning with identity and power as well as readings in cultural, communication, general educational and literacy studies permitted me to arrive at a deeper understanding of both the micro and macro level when language-learning practice is mediated by new technologies. I asked myself in this on-going analysis: Whose interests are being served here? What changes are needed?

- PAR is about exploring connections and relationships among “objective” and “subjective” dimensions of the individual and the social, and not seeing them as polar opposites. In other words, I can not separate the participants and their learning practices from the vast historical webs that make up their social interactions. Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) argue that in PAR there is an aim to work with people to understand themselves “both as “objective” forces impinging on others and as subjects who have intentions and commitments they share with others, and both as people who act in ways framed by discourses formed beyond any one of them individually and as people who make meaning for themselves in communication with the others alongside whom they stand, and whose fates - one way or another - we share” (p. 579).
- PAR is an approach to research that supports not necessarily finding one particular means to an end. There are many means to ends, just as there are many research approaches and many ways to learn languages. But by employing a PAR approach, my purpose was not to achieve control as in improving the means to an end, such as a better way to learning a second language using computer technology. The purpose was rather for the participants, the second language learners and myself as researcher and teacher to critically analyze the use of CMC for learning and identity construction. This critical knowledge is what learners and teachers need if we are to make progress in our second language learning environments, whether they are in a formal or informal setting.
- There is often a concern expressed by those who practise PAR for finding effective ways to communicate the context-centred knowledge to academics and

others. I found in my readings of other action research projects alternative ways, such as the use of images, along with the traditional written word, to represent the findings in the inquiry.

- Within action research works, there is the premise that individual cases are important stepping-stones to reflection and further research. When others read about or see the representations of the results of this particular inquiry, through this reflective process, they may decide on its relevance to their own setting and whether the knowledge can be applied in some form in their own contexts. In this way, applying the knowledge gained from this inquiry becomes a reflective rather than an accepting ‘from above’ or generalizing process.

Finally, I chose a participatory action research approach because it provided a framework that supported my views of my role as a researcher and the roles of the participants in the study. Along with Habermas’ (1974), I am convinced that different research perspectives are not based solely on questions of the “machinery of research” or research techniques, but reflect something about researchers and their relations to the research act.

Researcher and Researched: Blurred Roles

Another challenge in conducting research in a technologically-based virtual setting arose in defining my role and the role of the participants. There was confusion, for example, over whether the use of the word ‘participant’ in PAR referred to my role as the researcher or whether it meant those who were “the researched”. Because the inquiry was based on initiating change, it engaged many participants- students, teachers, administrators and IT specialists. Typical of participatory action research, it was a shared learning process and as such the lines between who the researcher and theresearched were, were very much blurred. For example, at one point in the online sessions, Mignona one of the Romanian participants commented about the online sessions: *“You asked a lot of questions. You had to discuss a lot of issues. You know it’s not only*

talking about something and using your vocabulary, it's the way you think" (Interview, November 24, 2004). This excerpt from my interview with Mignona indicates her observations of me in the process of researching.

Another example of this blurring of roles occurred as a result of negotiating the software for the online discussions. I co-ordinated the actual physical setting-in-place of the online structure, a process which in itself helped uncover some of the power structures that resist fundamental change. However, once I had negotiated permission to have students take part in network-based communication in the Canadian site, it took five months to get the IT department to agree to install the software. Both SL learners and I were anxiously waiting to take advantage of this opportunity to practise English online. Through our discussions about the delays, we shared critical understandings about the layers of authority that exist in institutions like militaries and language schools that govern our actions.

All participants who took part in the study were committed to establishing communicative practice. For example, I worked hard to overcome the power structures that stood in the way of setting up the technical requirements for the online discussions over the Internet in Canada. Meanwhile, my European colleagues were attempting to convince their military administrations to invest in meeting their needs to practise their oral skills with speakers of English online.

We were all participants being *researched* by each other from different perspectives. In some sense we were all *researchers* with socially, historically, discursively formed perspectives, acting and observing the process and consequences of the change, that is communicating in English through videoconferencing online. For example, while I was trying to understand the historically, politically, and culturally-based identities of the Romanians in the context of their learning English online, many of the Romanians were trying to understand me as a North American first hand rather than from movies and media. Mignona observed: *"I believe you found out a lot about our country, about our customs, about our habits and about us as Romanians. I*

think there's more here than just talk and study English. We learned a lot" (Interview, November 24, 2004). Leo, a military officer in the same group commented about the exchange of ideas: *"I know what's happened here, what's happened there. It's a point of view of mine. It's a point of view of an American. It's a point of view of a Czech. It's a collective point of view"* (Interview, November 24, 2004). Leo was also constructing knowledge about what it means to be a North American. Sabin reiterated Leo's comment: *"for my colleagues and me it was a very good opportunity to learn you and to know a native speaker more deeply than on TV"* (Interview, November 24, 2004). Throughout the collaborative, multidimensional process, we reflected on the changes that occurred from our shared knowledge, for example, what CMC meant to language learning and in what way, if any, the CMC shaped and transformed in various degrees our identities and agency in that process.

The participants and I also recognized that our roles were political and we came to the realization in varying degrees that these roles were not neutral. For example, we realized, consciously or intuitively, that by participating in doing this research we were contesting the way things had always been done in the second language learning sites we occupied. We also recognized that by planning and participating in the CMC rather than being satisfied with using the software programs that were available in the SL sites, we were calling into question who has the power to initiate change in these sites, for whom and for what reason. By initiating the use of computers for SL international communication, we were questioning the legitimacy of continuing to invest millions in the ways computers were being used in the various SL learning sites. For the most part, in all of the sites this use was based on machine-to-human interaction as opposed to human-to-human interaction.

Many of us felt, consciously or unconsciously, the resistance and difficulties that accompanied our efforts to introduce change into existing institutions. Ivana, the Czech professor who was hoping to provide opportunities for her students to speak on line, commented in exasperation at administrative delays that were occurring in trying to get the online discussions set up: *"There are so many people in between us*

and what we are trying to do” (Personal Communication, May 2004). George, the IT specialist in the Czech Republic noted: *“Computers are not very good and headsets are not very good. They could spend more money for this but they didn’t do it”* (Interview, November 22, 2004). We knew that we were not alone in making decisions and that there were powerful forces that influenced the constructive process. An important caveat to this realization was the fact that we all had a part in deciding what is ethical and what and how the information about the changes we made in our context should be disseminated to others. We discussed how traditional pseudonyms were inappropriate when using a video-based representation of the data and what the impact would be of such representations on our privacy and reputations. We discussed such questions as: What was the point of changing names of those who were in the pictures if their images would reveal who they were? Who would view the images and would there be any impact, positive or negative in their lives by having their pictures represented in the research results?

The research process and the roles we adopted as researcher-researched did not merely reflect our “working the hyphens” (Fine, 1994) but working *at* and *within* the hyphens to transform our second language learning practices. Working in this space meant that there would be consequences. For example, by engaging in changes to the way computers were being used in the Canadian immersion site, we were putting into question the heavily funded locally developed Alliecs software that was being promoted and not widely used. Also, offering opportunities for military to meet and discuss online with native speakers might have undermined the mandate of the NATO program which was to have officers come to Canada and be exposed to the North American culture. We had to prepare for these and other consequences of our actions as we set about the process. In this sense we did not consider ourselves “cultural dopes” as Giddens (1979) remarked years ago in speaking about the general attitude toward participants in research studies. Rather, we saw ourselves as individuals who had the abilities to see the situation for what it was and the tensions that existed there. We also shared a desire to make ‘real’ changes, practical changes that would affect present realities and tensions,

for example, needing to practice English far from where there was access to speakers of English. I noticed on several occasions, for example, in the interview phase of the study that some would say such things as *"If it will help..."*, which I took to mean: I tell you what I am telling you because I hope it will help make pedagogical changes to the present situation. Another time, a student offered this comment about the testing process in the immersion program: *"I do not want to complain by telling you all this. I just want you to know these things ... in case it will help"* (Sergii, Interview, May 19, 2004). The desire to change and improve possibilities for language learning was a constant aim throughout the study. In the next section, I describe the ethnographic methods I used to collect the data in the inquiry and I provide details about each of the four phases of the study.

Part Two: Data Collection and Methods

I used individual and group collaborative dialogues online and face-to face, videotapes, still pictures, the e-mail journals of the participants and observations to understand the socio-cultural experiences of the language learners in the study and the institutional, historical, cultural and other contextual forces that played into those experiences. There were twenty-four participants at the Canadian site and twenty-one in the online group, nine in Romania and sixteen in the Czech Republic. At the Canadian site, the twenty-four participants came from different countries: three Czechs, four Afghans, three Russians, six Poles, six Ukrainians and two Hungarians. My aim was to understand the contextual forces and Discourses, in the Canadian and European language learning contexts and how the nature of the participants' co-constructed experiences online influenced their agency, identity and investment in language learning.

The data collection period consisted of four overlapping phases. For example, while I was interviewing students in the Canadian immersion program, in phase three, I was still negotiating entry into Romania, one of the European sites. Thus the process of negotiating entry, which is phase two, occurred simultaneously with phase three. Table 1 provides an overview of the different phases and the primary data sources.

Table 1: Four Phases of the Study

Phase	Type of Data	Amount	Example
Phase 1: Introducing Change January 2002 to December 2004	Field Notes	50 pages	Reflective journal notes from trip to Romania and the Czech Republic
	E-mails	150	Correspondence between myself and my contact in Czech Republic
	Documents	3	Proposal for the on-line discussions delivered to administration and teachers at Canadian site
Phase 2: Gaining Access September 2003 to July 2004	E-mails	250	Letter sent to Commandant requesting permission to conduct research
	Documents	6	Invitation to visit the Czech Republic
Phase 3: Interviewing March 2004 to May 2004	Interview notes	179 pages	Written transcripts of students' conversations with me
	Journals	44 pages	Reflections students wrote on various topics related to their studying English.
Phase 4: Online October 12 to November 26	E-mails	120	Students' correspondence regarding reactions to the on-line discussions and other issues
	Videotapes	11 hours	Footage of the sessions on line and in follow up face to face meetings

Other data were derived from field notes from various meetings I attended with military and school officials and personnel (MTAP administrators, Romanian senior military, testers, IT specialists, senior teachers and teachers). This data included

information regarding the CMC initiatives such as a report prepared after the initial visit to Romania and Czech Republic in phase two of the study. The data also included pictures of the participants, comments from teachers and administrators in both the Canadian and European sites as well as the numerous hours I spent around the Canadian and European study site mixing with students informally.

Phase One: Introducing Change

In 2001, I first met with Ivana Cechova, a professor at the university in the Czech Republic who was in Canada on a NATO-sponsored teacher exchange program called Train the Teacher. In our initial meeting at a social gathering, we discussed the possibility of connecting her military students in the Czech Republic with English speakers in Canada via the Internet. Six months later, in January 2002, I traveled to the Czech Republic, on my own initiative, and was invited to come to the Military University of the Ground Forces in Vyskov. Ivana was teaching English to military students, both younger soldiers who were getting their university degrees and older military officers who were studying English in order to enhance their professional skills. Several of these older military students eventually arrive in the language programs in Canada, although the practice of sending students to the MTAP program from the Czech Republic was phasing out during the latter part of the inquiry. I spent two days at the University discussing with Ivana how we would collaborate on setting up the SL discussions using videoconferencing technology. After the visit, I was also invited to spend a day at another military university in the Czech Republic, in Brno. There I met with another teacher, Sophia, who had come to Canada along with Ivana. I toured the school and observed with astonishment the enormous efforts that both teachers and students were putting into learning English. For example, Sophia recounted that she and her daughter attended evangelical religious meetings offered by a group of Americans for the sole purpose of having people with whom to practise her English. In exchange for the English practice, she and her daughter had to commit to taking part in the group's religious instructions. I recall asking Sophia why such motivation and

enthusiasm to learn English. *“Well, you know, during the old regime English was the ‘forbidden fruit’. It represented all those things that we couldn’t have and that we knew others in the West were having”* (Personal communication, January, 2002). During the visit to the university in Brno, I met with the director of the language department. After a short introduction, Pavel Zlamal explained his desperation to have a native speaker of English on staff and offered me a job. I declined.

I was anxious to go to these language centres because I felt it would help me to understand the kind of language learning experiences that the students who come to our programs have before they arrive in Canada. I believed that by having first hand knowledge of the language learning experiences of the students in our program, I would in a better position to understand some of the problems they were experiencing in the Canadian context. I observed that students in our programs were having a great deal of difficulty with our listening tests although francophone Canadian students who had taken similar tests were not. Teachers and administrators within the Canadian context speculated on reasons for these uneven results: differences in exposure to the language because of the geographical distances to English speakers; military officers are more order-givers than listeners; some suggestions related to questions of gender and ability to listen generally. Also, many students were arriving in our program having spent a great deal of time studying English but were unable to speak comfortably or with confidence. With a view to using computer technology to address some of the problems students were having in our programs, I wanted to see first hand the computer technology that was available to military students in the Czech military university language centres and when and how that technology was being made available for language learning.

During the visits, I met with teachers and students in six different classes from both the older and younger groups. I was left to talk with the students in their classrooms without their teachers present and felt that I was receiving a sincere view of some of the challenges these students were facing in trying to learn English from their perspectives. Their views were supported by comments that I heard from their teachers

about the difficulties of teaching English with what they saw as minimum linguistic support. In the following vignette, I describe some of my impressions from that first visit in January 2002 to the Czech Republic:

Visit to the Czech Republic, January 2003: First Impressions

When I arrived at the Base Ivana was there to greet me. She seemed very nervous and agitated and I asked her if things were going all right. She explained that she was apprehensive that my visit would go well. I was a little taken back by her remark as I anticipated that dropping in to her office for a few minutes and looking around the university was hardly cause for much concern. As it turned out, Ivana had much bigger plans for me than I had anticipated. The day was spent in a whirlwind of activities. After my passport had been checked and I had signed in with security, I was presented with an identification badge. Then I was ushered from class to class and asked to speak to students, introduced to other staff, and taken to lunch. I felt thrown back in time to a world of communism as I imagined it. The university consisted primarily of an overly-heated monster building. It was explained to me that the desperately hot interiors of the buildings was a carry-over from the Soviet Regime when state-run companies would increase their profits by providing as much heat as possible. There were gargantuan open spaces, small three-person antiquated elevators, long dark hallways with tiny doors behind which small sparsely-decorated offices housed three professors and their few books. Each room had one computer. The computer, I was explained, was used daily to find sites that might contain some English help for planning exercises, tests or activities. In the cafeteria at the long tables sat civilian and military eating identical soups and hot meals, everyone with a glass or two of yellowish tea before them. The classrooms on the whole were large lecture rooms, except for a laboratory with its individual listening stations that looked as though they were well used. Everyone I met seemed eager to speak but in hushed tones with serious-looking faces. After introductions, the topic frequently returned to the inevitability of being over-worked and the impossibility of ever getting beyond what needed to be done. Faces seem more aged than the years would suggest in a North American setting

Although my visit came twelve years after the end of the “old regime”, as those in this part of Europe like to call that period of history, life for Ivana and those students I spoke with seemed still reminiscent of former times. The visual signs I saw of the former regime were the stern faces, the lack of control over the heated building, the uniformity of the meals served in the cafeteria, the formality of the classroom layouts, the hushed tones when interacting with others and the sparsely decorated offices.

Everywhere I ventured that day, I recall now, I felt I was being given the status of a visiting dignitary. Nothing prepared me, however, for the meeting, that unbeknownst to me, was scheduled for the afternoon.

Winds that Separate

Ivana's initial agitation seemed to subside somewhat as the morning progressed. However, during lunch I noticed that she hardly ate and seemed jittery and again preoccupied. She mentioned that right after lunch we would be meeting with the Vice- Rector of the university to talk about "my project". I have not yet termed the dreams I am mulling over as a "project" at this point so I felt a little uneasy myself at the thought of explaining them fully to another, especially someone with the title of Vice-Rector. Nevertheless, I entered into the private elevator for the administrators of the university and ascended the building. Once I arrived on the upper floor, I was quickly introduced to the Vice-Rector. She is a short woman and with greyish brown hair, dressed in a long severe-looking grey suit and oxford shoes. Her serious demeanour recalled for me movies I had seen depicting Russia during the Cold War period. She had the same serious demeanour that I had been seeing in others. After introductions, I was whisked into a large room, which was filled almost entirely by a round wooden table. At the place to which I was assigned there were two small flags, one of Canada the other of the Czech Republic, two bottles of water and juice, a glass and some cookies on a plate. On the opposite side of the table where the Vice Rector sat there were identical refreshments and flags. Ivana took a seat beside the Vice Rector. I noticed there were no refreshments for her.

The Vice Rector spoke first, her words translated for me through Ivana. Then there was silence as they waited for me to respond. By then I had quickly surmised the formality of the situation and tried to stumble through some equally formal comments. Under the formalities I sensed a certain expectation of me as someone who had come to resolve a serious problem, a linguistic messiah who would unleash a culture and language by some mysterious means connected to some kind of technology. After I was shown, according to Ivana, the customary official video presentation of the university, we talked a little about "the project". I was told that there was keen interest on the part of the Rector, who apologized for not being present and that they would be very interested in pursuing the idea further with me. I tried to give some quickly thought-up definition to what I was hoping to do. I explained: "I have worked with students from Europe for a few years now and I can see that there is a problem for many who arrive in our programs with little practice in speaking English. Although they have a good basis in grammar and vocabulary they are unable to use what they know because they are shy to speak. With Ivana, I would like to change that situation by trying to find a way to offer practice in speaking English over the Internet." Each time

my comments elicited a nod of approval from the other side of the table. The vice rector spoke of her strong support for collaborating with Canada to help find solutions to the lack of access to native speakers of English both for the teachers and students at the University. Her words frightened me a great deal. I see myself simply as a teacher with an idea and a fellow teacher who wants to collaborate. The Canada/ Czech Republic collaboration seems well beyond my intentions or my authority. Even when I tried to explain that the “project” would be one done in the context of a dissertation and not necessarily in my capacity as a teacher for the Department of National Defence, the same nods were repeated.

Finally, it appeared that the meeting was over because the Vice-Rector stood and came to my place to present me with a gift. In her closing comments of appreciation for my visit, she then suggested that we take the elevator to the top of the building where we could get a wonderful view of the whole university /military base and surrounding countryside. As we climbed the set of stairs to the roof, with the vice rector in the lead, I sensed her pride in the institution. Unfortunately, when we arrived at the rooftop, fog ruined any hope of seeing beyond a few feet of the building. We seemed to be cut off from the outside world as we stood being blown about by the cold winds that pulled at the long skirt of the Vice Rector trying to raise it above her ankles. On the way down we talked about efforts that the University had made to encourage some British troops who were stationed on the base to mix with staff and students. Apparently, the British troops saw little to be gained from informal encounters with students and staff and had politely refused to participate. When we parted the Vice Rector expressed her anticipation of our future collaboration using computer technology

The unanticipated importance and respect that I was shown that day at the University was something that weighed on me throughout the study. I felt that I had been treated as a “saviour” who had come as a representative of my North American privileged country to eliminate the problems of one sector, a military university, of this emerging former communist state. Again I was reminded, as I am daily in my teaching practice, but this time in very clear terms, that the significance of teachers working in the ESL environment or what Singh & Doherty (2004) refer to as “contact zones”, has more to do with an intersection of cultures than passing along grammar rules and lists of vocabulary. My role as a SL researcher entailed not simply asking questions, gathering some evidence and walking away with results. My role as a SL researcher was deeply connected to social change.

While in the Czech Republic, I also met with six of my former students who had returned from Canada and the families of three of them. I felt fortunate to have this time to get better acquainted with their culture and to learn more about their political history from their own personal stories. I also made side trips to Poland and Hungary and there obtained further perspectives including historical and cultural ones. With each student whom I visited, I felt the conversations we had were far more open than they had been when we talked in Canada. I spent time at a military training camp in the backwoods of Poland; I traveled on a minesweeper; I talked with wives of former students about the pressures military life puts on their families including long separation periods for training and international exercises.

I have mentioned that Czech Republic was the country in which I was aiming to conduct this phase of the study because of the contact I had made with Ivana Cechova. However, a second country, Romania, also expressed interest in participating. One of my students, a Romanian Information Technology expert, who participated in the immersion program in Canada from January to June 2003, had heard me discuss informally the initial efforts that Ivana and I were making to connect our schools through the Internet. When he returned to his country, he approached the American ESL project director, George Bussey working in the Romanian Military Human Resources Department about possibly taking part in the project. There was great excitement and a flurry of e-mails that resulted in the suggestion that I come to talk to military administration about the proposal to conduct discussions over the Internet with their Department. Eventually, I was invited by George to come to Romania to talk with military personnel about the prospects of Romania taking part in the research study.

The second step in the initiation phase of the inquiry occurred in September 2003 at the Canadian military base where I teach. In order to proceed with the international project part of the research that I had set out, I needed the support of administrators and teachers of the MTAP program at the Language School. I began by meeting with the Commandant of the School and briefly explained the nature of my research plan and particularly the plan to conduct discussions via the Web with

our European students. The Commandant seemed skeptical at first due to an on-going computer technology project in the Department being established for distance teaching that was already in existence and that was experiencing costly difficulties. However, as I talked, the Commandant softened and offered to proceed with a formal review of the suggestion once my proposal was prepared. As directed by the Commandant, I then prepared a detailed proposal and presented it to one of his administrators to be approved as an 'acceptable' military document (see Appendix 1). This original proposal changed significantly over the period of a year before the actual Internet discussion took place. Most of the changes involved finding a technological solution that would be financially and technically suitable to all three countries. I then distributed copies to staff and administrators and held a meeting in November 2003 to discuss my ideas. Ivana, the professor from the Czech Republic, attended the meeting. She had been sent by the Rector of her university to Canada to take part in face-to-face discussions about the pilot project. I was aware that Ivana's trip to Canada came at a considerable expense for her military university. This was a concrete indication I believe of the genuine interest and commitment that she and her administrators saw in the chance to open up a forum for dialogue via the Internet between the two countries.

Shortly after the meeting, in December 2003, I made a second trip to the Czech Republic and this time also to Romania. In Bucharest, I spent three days at the Romanian Military Human Resources Directorate where I met with the military employees, international representatives, and senior military administrators both informally and formally. I had dinner in a local restaurant with the American project director who had arranged the invitation for me to come to Bucharest and had set up the meetings. George had worked on various second language development projects and was important in giving his perspective of the situation in Romania. He was especially interested in the research since he could foresee in the near future that he and other foreign representatives in the SL area would be soon leaving. Before they left, he wanted to be assured that the Romanians would have the support that they needed in delivering their ESL program. He also acknowledged his frustration with the current

direction that NATO-sponsored language programs were going in the area of testing led by the Americans. He was able to provide insight from personal experience into the enormous energy required to initiate change in the language programs within the Romanian military institution.

At the Human Resources Directorate, I spoke at length with members of the testing section. They were extremely happy to speak with me especially since at the time they were responsible for preparing English language placement tests for the Romanian military. The head of this section expressed her frustration at not feeling capable of doing this without assistance from English speakers. *"I am in shallow water here and it is not pleasant"* she remarked (Lucia, Personal Communication, November 2003). Members of the section, some of whom have limited knowledge of English culture, reported to me that they had made attempts to write to the testing section in Canada for help. Responses to their requests for help, apparently, most often came in the form of a few sentences and lacked the specifics that the Romanians were looking for. While I was in the Department, the Head of the testing section asked me to help with making recordings for the listening tests that they were preparing for their students. Apparently, it is difficult for the head of the section to find native speakers to record the material that make up the listening tests. The experience gave me insight into the linguistic demands put on students in the Romanian ESL programs. Many students, like some of their teachers, are expected to meet the challenges of British or American influenced testing with very little exposure to the culture embedded in such testing. The extract below gives a sample question from the listening test that was being prepared during my visit.

Extract from English Language Proficiency Test

Section B For items 6-24 answer the questions using no more than 4 words

Text 6 Listen to an announcement. While listening, answer the questions below.
You have 30 seconds to read the questions.

Questions (30 seconds)

Now listen to the announcement:

Everyone is invited to see the parade on the Air Force Day. It will take place on June 15th. The parade will start in front of the headquarters building at 1100 hours, continue on Main Street and end in front of the base library. Casual clothes are recommended. Feel free to take pictures and enjoy yourselves with the refreshments provided in exchange for your one-dollar coupons.

The demands both in time (30 seconds to read and respond), quality of response (4 words) and in understanding culturally specific cues (for example, “one-dollar coupons” and “casual clothes”) are indicative of some of the kinds of challenges these tests represent for Romanian military officers.

During the visit, I also met with two language directors from the British Council and the French Military Legion, who represented two other interests, other than the Americans, in the development of language training in Romania. I socialized with my former student, Catalin, and his young family on several occasions and even toured with this student into remote parts of the country. Throughout this visit, I was able to view from an “insider’s” perspective how countries like Romania, who are further from Western Europe geographically, politically and economically, are coping with the demands that the end of the communist era has brought to their lives. During the visit, the Romanians in the Directorate and the French, American, and British ‘interested’ parties expressed to me their opinions about the difficulties that they experienced daily and the roadblocks involved in making changes, especially in second language education. The knowledge I constructed in Romania along with the follow-up e-mails and faxes added to my understanding of the enormous historical, political, cultural complexities that needed to be considered in any ESL initiative. After decades of being ruled by powerful institutions under the former Soviet regime, the social transformations that are required for Romanians to take the responsibility for initiating changes are coming at a very slow pace. The military, one of the only central pillars

of the Soviet era to remain, continues to maintain its stronghold in the new political order. Within this institution, there are several levels of authority one must approach in order for a change to be approved. Social researcher Rutland (2004) refers, correctly or not, to Romania as living a “phantom democracy” (p. 8). Besides the human factor involved in making changes, the economic costs are a further deterrent in a country that has a way to go to meet other Europeans standards of living. I observed the enormous weight of these challenges in the disparaging comments of some Romanians I spoke with. One senior military remarked to me when I expressed great enthusiasm for living in Romania one day, “*Why would anyone want to live in Romania? Perhaps, you don’t know it yet*” (Personal Communication, December 3, 2003).

On the same trip to Europe, I also arranged to go back to the Czech Republic. Almost two years had elapsed since my previous visit. This visit was much more formal than the former. I was provided with a room and lodgings at the University and was treated as a visiting dignitary in some sense. All my meals were served to me in the private dining room of the Rector of the University, a military general. I visited again with the Vice Rector as well as with the head of the Language Department, teachers and five groups of students. I had asked teachers for an opportunity to meet again with the students to talk about the plans for establishing a connection via computer technology and to get their feedback. Some were very outspoken in their comments that contrasted remarkably with the experience I had on my former visit. I weighed their comments carefully in the setting up of the online discussions. For example, some students at that meeting suggested that the opportunity to participate in the CMC sessions should be done by the students not the teachers and that the sessions take place during class time rather than after hours. I spent an evening with Ivana’s family and another with a group of her students informally over dinner. This was a highlight for me as the young military students dressed in their informal clothes were more relaxed outside the military base and seemed to talk more freely about their experiences. Their conversation gave me a glimpse, from a younger person’s perspective, of life and learning English in the Czech Republic in this historical period of such rapid, profound change.

Ivana proudly took me on a tour of the Self Access Centre, a computer technology project that she and another teacher had worked to set up at the university. Although they managed to get approval from the administration of the university, the actual setting up process was difficult and demanding, especially given the resistance and apathy from some other teachers in the Language Department. They also encountered communication problems with the British Council who sponsored the hardware and software for the Centre. A discussion concerning the details of their struggles gave me insight into some of the problems I was about to face, the questions that would arise in the study and the multiple discourses to consider when embarking on change. More importantly, listening to their experiences and noting the discrepancy that existed between the positive administrative support they found and the constraints in my own organization for initiating change gave me much to reflect on during the course of the study.

Phase Two: Gaining Access, September to October 2004

I had two aims. I wanted to look at the tensions that existed in the program where I have been teaching, especially regarding the use of computer technology for language learning. When I had uncovered some of the tensions that existed there, I collaborated with teachers, IT specialists and students to try and set up international CMC using a multistream videoconferencing Web-based interface. My intention was to see if these discussions in English might succeed in addressing some of the tensions I was seeing in the immersion site. With these objectives in mind, I needed access to my own Canadian site in order to focus on a small multicultural group of officers and their learning within an immersion program in Canada. I also needed access to one or more European sites so that I would be able to focus on another group of international students in order to understand their language learning experiences in a virtual setting.

My first step was to gain access to the three research sites, Canada, the Czech Republic and Romania, in order to be able to talk to students, teachers, and staff about the language programs. I was a known entity in the case of the Canadian site and was

supported by well-respected employees in the other two sites - in the Czech Republic and Romania. Access was not difficult, although there was a fair amount of paperwork involved in getting the official letters required to officially enter the military university in the Czech Republic and the military base in Romania.

My second step dealt with how I was going to set up the discussion sessions on the Web. This turned out to be an extremely complex process. As a teacher working toward change “from the bottom”, the multi-layered power structures I faced provided a grim insight into our evolving global society post 9/11 and to the realities of the roadblocks and conflicting interests that stand in the way of transforming language learning practices. In this section, I summarize the two processes as they occurred during this phase of the inquiry.

Accessing the Canadian Research Site

My request to do research at the Base in Canada was initially accepted without question. I had been teaching in the NATO program for five years and had just been granted permanent status. As a result of my new status, I had access to the education incentive programs that the Department of National Defence offered to employees within their Department. I had applied for and had been granted a year’s absence to research computer technology within the MTAP program. As part of the Education Leave process, I had prepared a description of my proposed research and a justification of its practicality to the MTAP program. The relevance of this research to the Department was a major factor in my being awarded the paid time off to continue my doctoral studies.

In August 2003, as I was about to go on Education Leave, I wrote an e-mail to my immediate supervisor requesting permission to conduct the research (See Appendix 2). In the request, I briefly explained the nature of the research. I indicated that the inquiry would be multi-faceted and would require me to be on site several times a week. I offered to notify the supervisor in advance of these visits. My supervisor

forwarded the e-mail to the Commandant of the Language School who subsequently gave his permission by return e-mail, which I received in September 2003.

Teachers on staff were informed in a memo about my Education Leave. I also followed up this notice by talking to teachers personally about the nature of my research in general. In order to access students who might be interested in participating I met with individual teachers and explained the purpose of my study. I needed the teachers' support for two main reasons. I knew that I would be conducting some interviews during class time and I wanted to test a new software program that would require the teachers' cooperation in giving up their personal time to be trained in the software. It would also require time out from the teachers' own agendas for their students. I sought their interest in being a part of the study and also having their students take part in interviews once a week. Five teachers volunteered to participate in the inquiry.

Accessing the European Sites

Gaining access to the European sites, in the Czech Republic and Romania was originally negotiated on my behalf by contacts I had made in the immersion program. There was Catalin, a former Romanian student in the MTAP ESL immersion program and Ivana, a teacher who had come to Canada previously to study in the MTAP Train-the-Teacher program. These contacts allowed me access to meet key informants-administrators, teachers, students, testers and foreign personnel in both countries. The access came in the form of e-mailed invitations from each country followed up by faxed letters of introduction to visit the two sites (Appendix 3). The letters of introduction were considered essential in order to have the authority to be on the military sites. I received them in November of 2003.

Having the opportunity and permission to be on the military sites in my own country as well as in the Czech Republic and Romania was only one part of the gaining access phase. The second part was to establish an international group of second language learners in each of these sites with whom I could carry out discussions in

a virtual site. My aim was to understand how the identities of this second group of virtual learners were constructed and their learning influenced in the context of using a computer technology that was both image and oral-based. To take on such a project, I wanted to enlist the support of as many ‘stakeholders’ as possible of those who were involved in some way with the officers who come to our programs. Believing from a Bakhtinian perspective that within dialogue new meanings are constructed, I sought to set up new conversations about the use of computer technology in second language learning sites especially in the international multi-cultural context of the program in which I was a teacher. I sought to begin that dialogue among the multicultural students who come to our programs and among teachers, administrators, technicians, testers, curriculum people and others responsible for the structures that support these second language programs.

Shortly after receiving letters of invitation in November 2003, I traveled to Romania and the Czech Republic. My plan was to meet with staff of the military language departments in each of the respective countries. I wanted to discuss a proposal I had written and sent ahead regarding involving students in these sites in discussion sessions using videoconferencing technology over the Internet. In the following vignettes, taken from my field notes, I describe two scenes, one from each country, which give insight into the receptions I was given in the respective military departments responsible for language teaching.

Visit to Romania, November 30 to December 7, 2003: First Impressions

I have been driven from my hotel through the streets of Bucharest to the military base where I will have my first meeting with military officials from the Romanian Human Resources Directorate. As I drive through the streets lined with beautifully-constructed buildings that have been left to fade and decay, past the packs of wild dogs that roam the streets and which are an embarrassment to local residents, through the crowded traffic where motorists see laws as something to be broken, I am reminded that this city was once called “little Paris”. The title has long lost its allure, as has the city, the grim results of a fragile economy and political uncertainty in face of the demands to find its place with the East or West and their respective attempts to draw this country closer.

I am ushered into a room where a former student, a senior military female officer, who has only recently returned from an MTAP immersion program in Canada, greets me and then quickly excuses herself. Catalin, the IT director of the office and a student from my previous class who has accompanied me, explains that she is embarrassed to speak with me for fear that her English will not be “good”, especially in the presence of a teacher.

I then find myself directed down a long narrow hall in the midst of a major reconstruction and being introduced to the British Council and French Foreign Legion language directors as well as to George, the American representative who was responsible for my visiting Romania. We spend a few minutes at small talk, joking and exchanging stories in a spartan room with a long narrow table and chairs, flimsy and rather fragile looking and reminiscent of church basements in my youth. Suddenly, with the entrance of three military senior officers, the group is silenced. We sit down at the table. I am on one side in close proximity and directly facing the obviously most senior officer in the group. Catalin is on my right, an interpreter next to him and the foreign representatives at the other end of the table slightly removed from the interaction that is unfolding. The atmosphere is extremely official and formal. I have come prepared with a written proposal for the online discussions I am hoping to set up. I have sent this proposal ahead and some are holding it in front of them waiting for something to happen. After the senior officer greeted me briefly, speaking through a translator, I am given the chance to present “my case”. When I stop speaking there is complete silence. Then the senior officer begins a discussion in Romanian with Catalin and his entourage, none of which is translated for me. Finally, the senior officer across the table looks directly at me and begins to speak. I feel the anticipation and tension in the room mount. When he opens his mouth to speak, not a sound can be heard around us. This officer begins by outlining the reasons that the discussions will be difficult for the Department to organize, the money that it will cost and the present problems at the military university with Internet access. Then in a change of course, he goes on to say that, nevertheless, it would be very good for the Romanian military to do: *“First of all, because it is modern and secondly because we need it”* he remarks. The mood again changes in the room. I hear shuffling of feet, sighs of relief and side remarks from the foreign end of the table. Just then the senior officer who has said that he has decided to “recommend” that his superiors support the online discussions gets up from the table. Everyone follows suit. He very officiously wishes me a good stay in Bucharest. When I reply that I am very excited by the city and would one day like to live there he responds through the interpreter: *“Why would anyone want to live here. You haven’t been here long enough to know what it is like”* (Personal Communication, December 3, 2003). As soon as the words have exited his mouth he turns and quickly leaves the room followed by his entourage.

Once the entourage has left those remaining in the room, spirits rise and there is great excitement. All present congratulate me profusely and gather coffee and

sweets as if in celebration. Although pleased, I find myself wondering why the hype. The proposal, despite its importance to me, seems fairly insignificant in the grand scheme of what these military officers do.

As I leave the building a little while later, the head of the testing department runs up to me in the narrow hallway. She has heard the news and in the short interval has already devised a way that the discussions might be good for her department – a way to collaborate, i.e. seek help, she explains from the testing department in Canada. *“I am preparing placement tests for our military in English right now. It is not easy, you know. I am in shallow water, shallow water. It is not a good position.”* (Livia, Personal Communication, December 3, 2003).

I have come to realize, although I have trouble accepting, that in the eyes of many of my students as well as the military I met that day in Romania, I have the ‘cultural capital’, that is, knowledge of English and financial stability as a member of North America, to deserve a great deal of respect and to be treated with much deference. There was evidence of the recognition of that status that day when the woman officer quickly excused herself from my presence not wanting to engage in conversation for fear of showing her lack of knowledge of English. Another example of the status I was granted, was reflected in the senior officers giving me an audience and their time despite my being a civilian with normally little official importance in the eyes of military. The derogatory remarks the senior officer made about his own country in my presence, which I inferred as a comparison with my own, and the pleas of the director of the testing department who saw me as an answer to all her insecurities in the preparation of her tests were further indications of the status they conferred on me. I viewed the reaction of the group to the decision to go ahead with the proposal as joy at the prospects of the door being opened to Romanians for opportunities for using English - the once forbidden fruit.

A few days after the meeting at the Human Resources Directorate in Bucharest, I flew to Prague and from there travelled to a small town in the south of the Czech Republic to discuss the proposal for online discussions with teachers, students and administrators at the Military University of the Ground Forces. In the following vignette, I describe this visit.

Second Visit to the Czech Republic, December 7 to December 11, 2003:

Turning from East to West

As I drive through the countryside from Prague to the small town where the University I visited a year and a half earlier is situated, I am taken by the changes that have occurred in the short time since my last trip. Where once the suburbs were lined with old communist-style apartment blocks, new office buildings and prosperous businesses now line the route. Signs like Sony, Toyota and McDonalds along with other indications of multinational interests are prevalent everywhere.

When I arrive in Vyskov, Ivana is there to greet me with her husband. They drive me to their home, an apartment in a block of flats not far from the University. Ivana, who has recently stayed in my own home during her trip to Canada, apologizes for the small size of her place and for the conditions in the public areas of the building. I only notice that her apartment is spotless and extremely orderly in comparison to mine. She offers me supper with her and her husband. Her two teenage boys will eat after us because there is limited room in the kitchen. Her husband seems shy even though we have spent a bit of time together the last time I was there. Ivana explains that although he has been studying English he has a great deal of trouble gathering up the courage to speak it especially in front of a “native” speaker. I notice her two sons are the same despite the fact that they too have supposedly been taking English in school for many years. After supper, Ivana shows me the corner of the living room where she goes to relax and read in the little free time she has on the weekends. She talks about how tired she always seems to be and how much she is looking forward to the upcoming holidays. She has been traveling a lot with the Rector of the University lately acting as interpreter, despite having no training. In the last month she has been to Turkey and in a few days will be off to Italy with him. She dislikes the interruptions to her teaching and her family life. As she puts it: *“If the rector, a general, asks me to go with him, what can I say”* (Field Notes, December 7, 2004)? On the other hand, she mentions, these trips with the General gives her access to discuss with him and win his support for the online discussions we are hoping to set up together.

The next day Ivana meets me at the University and takes me to her office. Whereas the last time her colleagues were quiet and formal in my presence, now there is joking and camaraderie. I notice that each teacher has her own computer and there are far more resource materials on the shelves. I am then taken to be introduced to the Department Chair, a very unassuming woman who immediately apologizes for not speaking English and then welcomes me to the University through Ivana’s interpretation. From there we go to a large classroom where I meet several groups of students who have been assembled together for my visit. I have asked to meet with the students to gather their

reactions and input for the idea of online discussions. The discussions are difficult at first. Most students are shy to speak and those at the back seem to be discussing amongst themselves. After the teachers who are present leave the room, for those courageous enough to voice their opinions, the conversation turns to complaints. They speak about very large classes, little opportunity to speak in class, and too few hours of class time. "How can we learn a language in one class a week?" someone questions, while others nod in solidarity. I asked them about their reaction to being able to take part in online discussions using videoconferencing software. One student suggests some kind of secret ballot for choosing participants, otherwise the students might feel embarrassed in front of their classmates. Others talk about their busy schedules and that these "extra" sessions would have to take place at the end of the day so as not to conflict with their work.

Ivana is very anxious to show me and is particularly proud of the Self Access Centre that she and another teacher have been organizing. The Centre is located in the library. It is divided into three sections, two large and one smaller area. The first large section has ten computers. Students are sitting at the computers. Ivana explains that the British Council has given the computers to the University provided that the school uses their software. As I wander around the room, I notice that none of the students at the computers are using them for English, whether software exercises, nor logged on English websites, nor to e-mail. On the other side of the area there are several desks around the circumference and a large desk in the middle. At one end, there is a bookshelf. Ivana points out that she and a few of her colleagues have been working hard on building a bank of reading, listening and writing materials, generally exercises gathered together in notebooks for students to use on their own. The shelves are around one quarter full. There are no students on this side of the room. Finally, at the end of the tour she takes me to a small area earmarked for students to meet and practice speaking with teachers. It consists of a table and two chairs. Ivana mentions that unfortunately very few students take advantage of this opportunity. She adds somewhat sternly that those who complained to me in a group session earlier in the day about classes being too large have no right to be unhappy given the opportunities they have to use this Centre and don't.

Later that day, I am once again whisked into the elevator to meet with the same vice rector I saw on my last visit. When I exit the elevator I am taken aback at seeing the female vice rector. She has completely changed in appearance. Now slim, with reddish hair and wearing a fashionable outfit and shoes, she hardly bears resemblance to the woman I met just a year and a half ago. Her demeanour is friendlier and slightly less formal this time. We sit at the same big round table, she on one side with Ivana, sitting beside her translating, me on the other. As last time, one flag of each of our countries have been carefully placed in front of where we sit. She smiles periodically as I explain the proposal that I have sent about the online discussions. This time she seems more hesitant about the

idea given the costs I have quoted. She is uncertain how the University will find the funds. At the end of our meeting there is still a gift, but this time rather than a military souvenir of the University I receive a craft typical of the Czech Republic.

At meal times, Ivana and I walk by the long tables of staff eating in the cafeteria and sit alone together in the private dining room of the General, a room reserved for his special visitors. We are served extravagant, copious amounts of food and on the last day even a packed lunch is prepared for me to take along on my two-hour trip back to Prague.

As I say goodbye to Ivana, she seems nervous, as do I, about what will happen to our plans for the future online discussions. *"I will do everything I can. Believe me"* she says, as she waves good-bye. *"When I go with the General to Italy, I will speak to him."* (Field Notes, December 10, 2004)

From my observations during this second visit, I saw how life is changing at a fantastic pace in the Czech Republic. Expectations of organizations like the European Union and NATO have put tremendous pressure on this small country to conform and grow and win favour from the "West". On the macro level, it appears that big multinational businesses are staking their claims in a free-for-all to the ever-increasing consumer market. On the micro level, people like the vice rector, the students and Ivana are forced to work at break-neck speed to change and catch up to these demands and to take advantage of whatever and whoever will help them along the way. Here too as in Romania, I felt as I was being viewed as one of many potential sources of help to meet those macro demands – a source of establishing contacts with Westerners and conversations in English, absolute prerequisites for acceptance globally. Along with this special status, I was treated with much respect and guarded care in hopes that I could follow through with meeting those needs, at whatever cost.

I have alluded already to the arduous task of initiating these 'new' conversations in the context of PAR using computer technology. I wrote over fifty formal letters and received almost an equal number of responses. I exchanged over two hundred e-mails and numerous fever-pitched international telephone calls. There were countless hours of formal and informal meetings and discussions in Canada and the European countries. There were disappointing moments, and at times I considered abandoning the idea to

conduct discussions via the Internet. But through the process, regardless of the outcome, I learned a great deal about political, bureaucratic, and cultural power structures in institutions. I came to understand how they work to resist change and new possibilities at the classroom level.

Each time I reached a wall of resistance in setting up the online discussions I wondered if I had come to what Faubion (2000) termed “the understanding of the limits of my capacity to know” (p. xxxiv). However, each time I was spurred ahead by the enthusiasm of others, especially in Europe, in the dialectic I had started. As I began to analyze the walls of resistance to the online discussions I was proposing within the process of the participatory action research study, I became aware that the power structures that I was encountering were embedded in the complex socio-cultural phenomenon that make up the “multiple-layered” contexts of learning.

The importance of the “multi-layered contexts” of learning settings to understanding language learning has been demonstrated by the work of Maguire (1994a) as well as an increasing number of other second language researchers who view language learning from a socio-cultural perspective (Maguire, 1994b, 1999; Maguire & Graves, 2001; McKay & Wong, 1996; Morgan, 1997; Norton, 2000; Peirce, 1993, 1995; Thesen, 1997; Warschauer, 1999, 2002, 2004). In the next chapter, I elaborate on the interconnected contexts where embedded relations of power (or the fallout from them) played an integral part in the opportunities that the participants had for practicing English and ultimately in developing in their language learning online.

Phase Three: Background Information through Interviews, February to May 2004

In my decision to proceed with participatory action research that aimed at setting up online discussions in the context of military language training and to determine the influence of computer technology on a group of learners’ identity construction and investment in language learning, I felt it was very important to interview current students in the program. I wanted to understand whether the tensions I saw and had

reported on earlier in the same site with the group of Ukrainians had evolved and or dissipated. Also, with my focus on computer technology, in particular, I needed to understand the experiences the current students were having with computer technology in their own lives before coming to Canada and in the context of the five-month immersion program.

Interviews in Canada

From February 2004 to the end of May 2004, I met with students individually once a week. I began with twenty-four students, all from classes whose teachers had agreed to participate in the inquiry. I spent a day in each of these teachers' classrooms observing and taking part in the activities. At the end of the day, I introduced myself, and allowed students to ask me questions about my family, my work and my life. Entering into a research study with participants meant forming relationships with them. A crucial part of that formation I believed was to be open and revealing of who I am and my background. I explained to the participants the nature of my research inquiry in general. Sensitive to the fact that some students would miss some of the information given orally, I provided the participants with a written version of this information. Many understand the written word better than the spoken, although not all. For example, the opposite is the case for the Afghan students who find writing and reading more challenging than listening. However, for the other students who were more at ease with reading and even for the Afghans, I wanted to give them time to digest and reflect on their willingness to consider their participation.

One issue that arose in the process of seeking participants for the interview phase of the study was whether to exclude classes in which there were Afghan students. I did realize that if the participants were only Eastern and central Europeans, the research study would be less complicated, 'tidier' perhaps for those who would read it and decide its worth. However, at the same time I felt strongly that in the multicultural settings that we as SL educators find ourselves, we cannot begin to sanitize the nature of our work to fit the agendas of others. Besides, from what the students were saying

to me anecdotally in the halls when I stopped to chat, it seemed that some of the experiences that the Afghans were having as newcomers to the program reflected back to what I had seen with my first group of Ukrainians four years earlier. Intuitively, I saw how important it was to hear the voices of these particular students as valuable to my understanding of a growing number of students from more 'remote' countries coming to the immersion program.

The day after I handed out the written information about my research interests, I met with the students in their classes again. I distributed a detailed information sheet and asked students who were interested to return it to their teacher signed the next day. At the first meeting with individual students I asked each of them to sign a consent form. (See signed Ethical Review forms, Appendix 4). One student withdrew on the first meeting. He volunteered the reason for his withdrawal from the study. He explained that he worked in intelligence in his country's military and felt our discussions might compromise his obligations to his position. There was another student who eventually stopped coming. A Ukrainian officer, not originally in the study, requested to take part and quickly assumed the time period that was left open when the original participant stopped being involved. I was impressed that the majority of students made their appointments with me without fail for the thirteen weeks. Even with the distractions of the testing period when many felt under great pressure they continued to meet with me. In the last days of the course, and after the testing was completed, a few students still asked to carry on with the interviews. All students thanked me for giving them the opportunity to discuss in English. One Ukrainian student, Jan, remarked: *"In the class I speak not long time. With you I speak 20 minutes [each time we meet] but in class we have 5 periods but I speak only 20 minutes [all day]. With you I speak for twenty minutes"* (Interviews, May 5, 2004). Jan is lamenting the twenty minutes he feels he gets to use his second language in five hours of class compared to the 20 to 25 minutes in one interview. Given Jan's comment, one might question whether the communicative methods that the MTAP administrators profess are being used in the program are actually being practiced in the classroom.

Initially, I scheduled twenty minutes per student for each interview. I call the time I spent with the students interviews but in fact they were collaborative discussions. Despite the timetable I had set up, the discussions inevitably lasted for twenty-five minutes to one half hour and even longer for those who came at the end of the day and after class time. It appeared that the students were delighted to have someone to talk to in their second language in a relaxed and informal setting. I wanted the discussions to be open-ended conversations and for the students to feel that they were at liberty to talk about anything that was on their mind. They were aware of the purpose of the study and of the ethical consent process I had set in place. Although many tried to keep their discussions centred on their experiences in learning English, they were not always successful. We often talked about families, past life experiences, future dreams, topics of special interest and loneliness and other feelings. As in the homeschooling experience I had had several years earlier, the formality of researching and practising English became more like the patterns of just living out lives through talking and interacting.

I felt strongly that structuring our discussions with specific questions would set up a teacher-student relationship and would only get at issues that were important to me. In this scenario, I might fail to hear some of the stories that they would have otherwise told me and perhaps miss the meanings they were trying to construct with and for me. If I asked students direct questions such as how much time they spent online in the computer room after class hours, I might fail to see issues that were more important to them. For example, I might not gain an understanding about how and why their access was limited during their stay in Canada or the fact that some were embarrassed about not being familiar with using computers. I acknowledge that there may be more complex ways in which to get at the issues I was hoping to address in the inquiry. I chose a more descriptive means because of my belief that it is through human stories, sometimes elicited through images, that we can relate to the experiences of others and through relating be drawn to action.

Most interviews began with general invitations or questions that led to conversation such as: *“Tell me about learning English before you came to Canada. How do you spend your time after class hours? What did you think about the computerized testing?”* Most of the interview time I spent listening and jotting down bits of speech. Since many of the students spoke slowly, I was able to sometimes even record whole passages relevant to the research questions. I often interrupted the conversation to clarify something that the participants had said. I asked questions, paraphrased their words and at times went on extensive tangents with them to get at the meanings they were voicing in their comments. For example, exploring the roots of Vitalii’s stoic, often-repeated phrase *“Life is life”* led both of us to new understandings of the historical and present contexts that make up his realities.

Audiotaping and Videotaping Discussions

I had avoided audio-taping our discussions because I understood the importance of privacy to military officers in general from my previous research. For example, I was sensitive to the fact that many of these officers who have come from former communist regimes feel uncomfortable with being recorded on an individual basis. In fact, on a few occasions a couple of the officers asked that I not even record in writing their direct words for fear of repercussions. Having said this, one Russian student asked if he could record our conversations so that he could listen and practice what he heard after the interview. I accepted without hesitation and asked if I might have a copy to which he most willingly agreed. Unfortunately, in the final rush to get ready for his return home, he forgot to leave me with a copy of the tape.

This raises a further point concerning videotaping the students in the immersion program who participated in the interview process at the Canadian site. Although I had mentioned it as a possibility in the consent form for students in both the immersion program Canadian site and the European one, some students and a few teachers in the Canadian site seemed reluctant to be videotaped. Because I had built a relationship with most of the students I interviewed, I felt I would compromise that position by

videotaping them. I also realized that the logistics of videotaping some students in a group and not others would be unrealistic. I did receive their support when I videotaped them on occasions outside the classroom such as on graduation night and at the International Night. The latter is an event when students from each country represented in the program display artifacts from their militaries and countries and provide national food to each other and Canadian visitors and staff.

With regard to videotaping as part of the ethnographic process, I found the reluctance of some of the participants interesting. Their reluctance contrasted sharply compared with the enthusiasm I encountered a few years earlier with a former class I was teaching in the same immersion program. At that time, I had spent five months daily teaching this particular group and when I approached them with the idea of videotaping them for a day or two for a course project, they were very willing to give their approval. I realized at the time that this group of individuals was showing an enormous trust and confidence in my intentions because we had come to know and respect one another during the five-month immersion program. Interestingly, this group was one of the most challenging and fragmented groups I had ever taught. Despite the difficulties I encountered with the group, however, I believe their co-operation with my request revealed their acknowledgement of the tensions within the immersion program and that they were interested in doing what they could to help to improve that situation even if it meant being videotaped. Indeed, they were quite relaxed during the videotaping. The dialogic process we participated in together as a group both during and after viewing the videotape as well as the ones that perhaps my reflections on the process along with other researchers has resulted in (Mitchell, Kusner, Charbonneau- Gowdy, 2004), has led me to recognize the potential for valuable knowledge that lies in attending to visually-generated data in SL sites.

New technologies such as computerized video editing and multistream video and audio transfer software are placing increasing pressure on researchers to redefine their ethical standards. Those researchers who stand firmly against visual representation of data on ethical grounds point to the intrusive nature of videotaping.

Proponents of such a stance argue that maintaining institutional ethical committees to govern research is the only means to protecting individual anonymity and the rights of children and other individuals who unsuspecting and unable to protect themselves. Although honorable in principle, others (Christians, 2000; Denizen, 1997; Greenwood and Levin, 2000) question these traditional views of institutional ethical responsibility as sometimes hierarchal, self-serving and missing the point. This critical group of researchers base their claims on several grounds: the impossibility of there ever being “watertight confidentiality” and the inadequacy of institutional review boards (Christians, 2000); the lack of control in universities over research that is dictated by corporate and political interests which leads to fear of resistance and is tied to upsetting the financial stakeholders (Greenwood and Levin, 2000); that by creating unrealistic ethical roadblocks to visual data there is a cyclic loss of knowledge which could lead to resistance especially from qualitative research where researchers are prevented from “arming [themselves] with all possible arguments, methods and data” (p. 93).

From my perspective and in light of the rapidly changing world of telecommunications we live in, I am not sure I agree with the arguments of those who speak critically, and perhaps too simply, about the new evolving ethical dilemmas in research. I do question, however, whether enough discussion has been spent on these crucial and complex issues. Notwithstanding, it does seem surprising to me that at the same time that researchers in qualitative research who call for the viewing of each context as non-generalizable and unique in its potential for knowledge, can take an opposite stance when the view of contexts involves ethical issues. When the suggestion is made for treating each context as unique ethically, the red flags quickly fly high. Videotaping in many research contexts may be inappropriate and unethical, but I question painting all contexts with the same brush. A few researchers (Christians, 2000, Denizen, 1997; Ryan, 1995) are beginning to promote an ethics of ‘caring’ to replace what they consider the narrower ethical standards of current research. Their promotion is based on beliefs of our intrinsic responsibility to sustain one another’s existence and identity in communities. Christians (2000) argues that “Moral duty is nurtured by the

demands of social linkage and not produced by abstract theory” (p. 147). Prosser’s (2000) argument that in the end “the final arbiters of ethical decisions may lie not with the visual researcher, nor the research profession who are not in a position to know, but with participants who, in accepting or rejecting the investigator signal their response” (p. 119), best explains what happened in the case of this inquiry.

There is little doubt that computer technology has introduced some thorny issues into recent research arguments. However, regardless of the outcome of these discussions, I predict that they will lead eventually to the realization of the tremendous privileges that teachers have as “insiders” to what goes on in language classrooms and the powerful advantage this knowledge can offer to educational research.

Phase Four: Data Collection Online, October 12 to November 5, 2004

Meeting a group of Czech and Romanian students on line on October 12, 2004 marked the beginning of a major initiative in the action research study. It also marked a turning point in the bureaucratic struggle to find and access the necessary funds to conduct the online discussions, in aligning the support of three militaries of defense to allow the discussions to take place online and in finding a suitable computer software technology that would respond to the needs of the online discussions.

The online discussions took place each morning Canadian time, which was the afternoon in Europe, four days a week for three weeks. I spent one hour with a rotating group of the Czechs that included twelve military students and four employees of the university (two full professors, a military IT specialist and one other officer) and then two hours and a half with the nine Romanians. The software that I used allowed me to have up to ten students on screen at one time (See Figure 2).



Figure 2: Meeting Online with the Czech Republic

In the case of the Romanians, there was insufficient bandwidth on their side so I found it necessary to discuss with students individually while the others listened and watched on a large screen on which the website image was projected. I spoke with each of the Romanians for fifteen to twenty minutes. It was always difficult to stop the conversation and move on to the next student. Many often complained that the time had gone too fast and wanted to continue our discussions further. In the afternoon, I periodically met on line with a multicultural mix of former students including one who had taken part in the interview phase of the inquiry in Canada. At one point, officers from Hungary, Czech Republic, and Poland all met for discussion sessions. Notably, a former Ukrainian student participant in my MA research tried to be included in the sessions but did not have sufficient bandwidth.

Before the first online discussion session, I sent information and consent forms modified to reflect the online nature of the discussions to the teachers in each country. These forms were distributed and signed by the students and held for me until I revisited the sites at the end of the three weeks.

Along with the discussions, I asked each student to write a daily e-mail to

me. I chose the topics according to the list of interests the students had sent to me in an introductory letter at the beginning of the three weeks. These e-mails were not obligatory. As it turned out the younger Czech students whom I only saw once a week wrote e-mails to me sporadically while the Romanians whom I saw daily were far more consistent in their correspondence. I attributed this difference to the closer bonds that the Romanians and I generally formed over the period of the CMC discussions. The topics about which the students had written me, served as the basis for conversations on line the following day. Many times the discussions veered off in other directions. For example, the Czechs had just undergone a move of their university from a small town and had amalgamated with another military university in a nearby city. The students were often anxious to talk about on-going issues arising from that move.

Informal Gatherings Face to Face

At the end of the three weeks, I revisited the European sites in order to meet with the students face-to-face. These visits were by invitation from each country through formal channels, in this case through the military attachés at the Canadian embassies in Warsaw and Kiev. When I arrived in each country, students who were meeting me for the first time off line greeted me warmly and entertained me for the two or three days I spent with them. Before my arrival, the students in both countries had organized local tours followed by dinner together where they were anxious for me to taste their national foods. These informal gatherings were very useful in understanding how the students viewed the online discussions and to explore with them more deeply the nature of the influence, if any, on their language learning.

Besides the informal get-togethers, I conducted and videotaped face-to-face collaborative discussions with nineteen of the participants individually and with four groups of the participants in the online discussions. Local administrators arranged press conferences in both places with local and military newspapers. See Appendix 5 for copies of two of these reports, one from the Czech Republic, the other from Romania. I also met with teachers and IT staff members who were involved in some way with

the participating students. In these meetings I sought their feedback about the online discussions. I met with administrators in the Czech Republic and Romania to listen to their impressions from an administrative perspective and in order to thank them for their collaboration.

Photo taking, filming and the students' pictures formed an important part of the online discussions and the follow-up face-to-face meetings in Romania and the Czech Republic. Some students, especially those who were more timid about their English, sent pictures to accompany their written e-mails. In addition, I chose to capture many moments of our follow-up reunion on film, videotaped all interviews, and arranged for one day of the online discussions to be filmed. An example of the significance of these images occurred during my follow-up visit to the Czech Republic. One of the professors of the University, a 55-year old participant in the online discussions and a very accomplished man in his professional field, had had a great deal of trouble speaking initially online. In fact, he avoided looking into the camera at all. Eventually, he raised his head and joined in our conversations, asking questions of others and making comments. When I met this man face-to-face for an interview at the university where he worked, he had prepared for our meeting by bringing some favourite photographs of his family, his beloved dog and his home to show and explain to me. He talked hesitantly but non-stop for twenty minutes about his life, his academic world and his life in former times. I saw these photographs as his means of opening up and trusting in my interest in him. These images also were, I believe, a means for this obviously very intelligent man to use his second language to reveal his cultural capital and win my interest and acceptance. Through them he was able to show me that he was not, in his words a "poor student", but a very learned man whose opportunities to practice his English had been limited by the political, cultural, economic and pedagogical circumstances in his life. As he explained: *"I started study English when I am 20 but all my life I only read, only write and don't speak or listen"* (Interview November 22, 2004). Just as Eva in Norton's study (1995, 2000) finally gained entrance into the social network of her co-workers through exposing her own ability to speak Italian and her geographical knowledge

of Europe, so too this very reserved and private individual used personal images as a means of breaking down the social boundaries that separated us and of engaging in conversation. As Collier and Collier (1986) offer, when there is status difference involved between parties, photographs can provide a neutral ground and something common to talk about. Unfortunately, I finally had to interrupt this man in order to give his colleague a chance to speak.

Summary

In this chapter, I explained and provided my methodological, ontological and epistemological rationale for the data collection process and data sources. I presented the questions that framed my research. I described the four phases of the study: 1) introducing change in the immersion site in Canada and in language centers in Europe, for example the networked intranet program in Canada and the online discussions with Europe; 2) gaining access to the various sites of my inquiry, for example by negotiating the plan to conduct online discussions from Canada with the Canadian, Czech and Romanian militaries; 3) particulars of the data collection period, for example the four phases of the study from the initial idea to finally meeting with students and others in Europe; 4) a description of how I conducted the discussions on line, for example the logistics of meeting several students at a video and audio-supported website each day.

In chapters five and six, through my analysis of the CMC that took place in Canada and via the Internet with Romania and the Czech Republic I respond to the questions that I have posed. But first, in the next chapter, I outline the various contextual influences that have played a role in the language learning experiences of the group of military officers studying English in Canada. I describe these multilayered contexts as I consider them profoundly important to understanding the tensions that existed for the military officers studying English. It is with this understanding that I explored the use of CMC both in Canada and with Europe as a means to respond to the tensions of the participants as they negotiated their identities and inevitably their investment in SL learning.

CHAPTER FOUR

EVOLVING CONTEXTS

Introduction

Chaotic Thoughts

Of course before visiting a country it is very important to know as many details about this country as possible. However, it's a difficult question which period of the history was better for Ukrainian folk.

Before 1999 there wasn't any unemployment in the SU [Soviet Union]. Everybody was sure then they eventually would have all necessary things for a happy life. The constitution and the government guaranteed for everybody a job, free an apartment, education and a medical aid and treatment too. Anybody could be able to earn minimum money without making the hard efforts. The most people considered they lived well, had no complaints and were happy, because they didn't know that life could be much better

There were many strange things in SU; for example, election system was very funny then. There were no any discussions about elections, because exceptionally communistic party decided who had to be a member of the parliament. Each voter received the papers with names of chosen peoples and only dropped its into a box without remarks. Human rights in the SU were only on the paper, not in real life.

During the Soviet period, the state controlled everybody and everything. Formally, each republics of the SU had autonomy, had its own flags, constitutions, and other state symbols. But Russia was the largest of the union republics in territory and population. Ethnic Russians dominated in Soviet politics and government, they also controlled local administration in other republics so local habitants didn't like Russian, especially in the South ones. But

the government had never mentioned about nationality problems and conflicts publicly and has never tried to solve these important questions.

In my opinion, it was one of the reasons for collapsing the SU. All republics looked forward to be independent from Moscow.

When the SU was broken up, Ukraine encountered with serious economical, political and others troubles. The inflation decreased in value the money and common people quickly lost all theirs savings. Prices were increased very fast; people were shocked because they didn't expect that market economy would make they poor and didn't know what to do. Unstable period had lasted until national currency was introduced into practice.

Now we only begin to live in democratic community and I think life is getting better. (Yevhen's written journal: Expressing his views about his country, Ukraine, March, 2004)

Overall, the transition from communism to liberal democracy constitutes one of the most complex and difficult types of social, political and economic transformation...the great drama of totalitarianism has not yet ended. Its consequences will be felt for many years if not for generations. At the moment, one can only hope but in no way predict that in many post-communist countries, the wandering in the wilderness between communism and the promised land of liberal democracy will not take the biblical forty years. (Khazanov, 2004, p. 50)

When speaking of the transition from communism to liberal democracy, the social historian, Khazanov couches his comments in metaphors. Yevhen's however are to the point. It has not been easy for people like Yevhen, a Ukrainian military officer in the Canadian site, to give up the security of a government-sponsored job, housing, education and health care, in exchange for the financial and political chaos that followed the fall of communism. While Khazanov may predict that the transition to democracy will be automatic albeit long and complex, Yevhen is not quite so sure. Yevhen is sure of

one thing however. He believes that one of the reasons that the Soviet system collapsed in the first place is the failure of its government to listen and allow dialogue.

Many changes have taken place in the last four years since I first began researching the learning experiences of a group of military officers who come to Canada from Central and Eastern Europe. The changes in the context of the immersion program in which these officers study English reflect the state of flux that exists in all social contexts and at the same time the influences that global connectedness is having on their lives. In this chapter, I discuss the layers of contexts that support and entwine the act of learning a language in a NATO-sponsored program in Canada. By bringing to the forefront the intricate nuances of these contexts, I aim to give to the reader the necessary background in order to understand the identity construction and learning practices of the particular group of officers who participated in the study at the Canadian site.

A large number of officers now arrive in the immersion program with some knowledge of English, although it is often written and grammar-based. Many officers have traveled outside their own countries whereas in the past their trip to North America was most often the first time they had been abroad. They seem worldlier and less shocked by cultural differences than officers did generally a few years ago. Much of this growing familiarity with western ways is, I believe, attributable to the globalized society in which we live and which is largely supported by technology. From a poststructuralist perspective, the changes I have pointed out here are not surprising. Contexts, like identities are never stable. Contexts are constantly fluid as new knowledge and realities are constructed. The changes that I have observed in the NATO setting where I have taught and researched are intricately entwined in the evolving identities of the officers who study there. I now outline briefly some of these contextual changes. The changes in the “nested contexts” (Maguire, 1994a) overlapped with and were an integral part of understanding the changes in identities of the learners in this inquiry. These contextual details explain the extreme drive of the participants to learn English both in Canada and in Europe and some of the reasons for the tensions that prevented them from doing so.

Thee World-Political Contexts

Since 2000, a total of ten of the countries represented in the immersion program are now full-fledged members of NATO (See Figure 3). This new alliance membership status has resulted in more Western influence on these countries' militaries as they scramble to meet the interoperability¹ standards of NATO in their equipment, ways of doing and the training of their military personnel. The changes in professional training and operations have meant more travel for many of the officers who come to our programs.



Figure 3. Map of Nato Members

For example, now, as opposed to four years ago, many of the officers in the immersion program have spent weeks and sometimes months in training programs in the U.S. and Western Europe. One Czech student who now serves as a civilian on a committee in international discussions of policy on Weapons of Mass Destruction wrote recently of his on-going travels: *"I know lots of airports and hotels. If the next year is the same like this one, I could write a book, something of Around the World with North*

¹ A term used in NATO to express a requirement of its member countries to share standards with regard to such things as language, equipment, policies and procedures.

Atlantic Travel Organization” (E-mail, Bohumil, November 18, 2003). With English being one of the official languages of NATO, more travel means more occasions for Bohumil to use English to communicate at meetings and informal gatherings with other military. Having a say at these meetings means he must make an effort to maintain his oral competency while in his own country. With a busy work schedule and difficulty finding guided practice in English, he told me that this is often problematic.

At the same time that some of these countries (Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary) have become members of the European Union, more countries, for example Romania, have been designated as invitees. This new development may result in additional changes to the officers’ personal, economic, historical, cultural and political lives. As one student commented: *“We don’t know yet what the changes will be. But I am sure my lifestyle will change”* (Personal communication, Pavel, a former student, May 5, 2004). These lifestyle changes along with those brought about since the fall of Communism between 1989 and 1991 are best understood in view of the constraints put on individuals by the previous political regime. Understanding the political pressures during the Soviet regime and since 1991 on individuals’ identity construction, I found gave me insight as I sought to understand how the participants’ identities and investment in English were influenced and constructed in the CMC sessions both in Canada and in Europe.

In his social-historical study of post Soviet identities, Halfan (2002) explains that under Soviet rule, ideology was something to be mastered, something that could be acquired by speaking, thinking, acting, feeling in a specific, studied way. He writes:

According to old historiography, the Soviet subject never entered into a creative dialogue with ideology. The subject was either completely taken in by it, becoming a ‘true believer’ or remained indifferent, only adjusting his lips and his body to comply with what the regime required. (p. 19)

I see traces of this relationship to ideology in the way some of the officers in the study seemed to view their language learning. Sergii, a Ukrainian officer, begged me for information, or what he termed “examples” that he wanted me to prepare, so

that he might master or memorize them and regurgitate my prepared samples exactly as answers at test time. Halfan proposes that the Soviet regime's ideology was based on the belief that the world and human beings could be completely remade. The ultimate goal of this regime was to combine man and machine and thereby produce a population of workers who would adopt the rhythm and efficiency of factory equipment with robot-like disciplined minds and bodies. Indeed, anyone who challenged this goal by daring to think creatively was considered deviant and often sent to labour camps in Siberia to be 'reformed'. Universities were considered the breeding grounds for individualism and those in them were to be mistrusted. For example, Ivana Cechova, the teacher contact in the Czech Republic who helped to set up the online discussions there, told me of the difficulty in getting into university during that era. One had to be a member of the Party and not to have been involved in any anti-Party activity such as attending church services (Personal Communication, January, 2001). Also, once having attended university, one's social status was at the bottom of the social scale. During my first visit to the Czech Republic in 2001, I recall how Eva, a teacher at the Military University in Brno, seemed embarrassed at the somewhat surly behaviour of the cafeteria attendants who served us lunch. Eva apologetically explained that the servers were living in the past when they were the elite of the school and that it was they and the janitor, as opposed to the Director of the University, "*who called the shots*" (Personal communication, January 2001). Cornel West (1993a, 1993b) points out that people who have access to a wide range of resources, and in this case food in the cafeteria or school supplies like keys and chalk, will also have access to power and privilege.

Indeed, the tensions existing within and among the countries of Central and Eastern Europe that Khazanov (2004) refers to in the opening excerpt to this chapter are often remnants of past resentments. The reasons for this animosity are complex but will have to be addressed if these new countries of NATO are to work together. Examples of this animosity surfaced in a former group I taught in the immersion program at the Base. During an in-class discussion, the Polish students in the class pointed out the number of their relatives who died in trying to hold back the advancing Germans

in World War II because they were alone while their neighbouring countries had quickly capitulated. Officers from these countries were in the room and the comment was met with silence. Another example occurred in December 2003, while doing fieldwork in Romania in the first phase of the study when a former student I spoke with explained his country's animosity toward the Hungarians. He dated it back to the 13th century when disputes began over the occupation of Transylvania, disputes that continued until 1947 and which still raise resentments among Romanians today. He commented how being in the same class as a Hungarian while in Canada was at first rather difficult for him. *"I was surprised at him [the Hungarian classmate]. I didn't expect him to be a good man. At first, I saw trouble but at the end, it was good"* Catalin, Field Notes, December 6, 2003). Some students of the countries represented in the immersion program at the Base were quietly antagonistic in their comments toward Russians and Ukrainians for the years of Russian control during the Soviet era. Many mentioned that as Russia was the Mother country, many of the restrictions to their lives came from the Kremlin. Leo, an online participant from Romania wrote in an e-mail: *"[R]ecently, we endured a lot sufferings from the Russian occupation and communist era"* (E-mail, November 2, 2004). I assume working through these resentments has not been easy and will take time. Leo continued in the same e-mail by offering ways to solve these tensions. He recognizes that his country and others will need to cooperate if these tensions are to be resolved. By co-operating he explains, does not just mean economically, but through dialogue. He writes:

We need so much to transform our life.. We need to improve our industry, our economy; we need to cooperation, to make more and more products together. Let's make things better together; for me it is a good purpose of globalization. Otherwise, this globalization can create a serious problem for all. Many problems exist already in the Middle East, where many Arabians peoples fight against this tendency, against the occidental civilization. So, globalization is a good and generous idea, but is very difficult to apply without creation some local tensions. For the future, I believe this is the best challenge for all the governments and all the nations to leave in peace, is not only a job for better development economic countries in the world. For successful all we need a real, permanent and correct dialogue. No solutions by force, only dialogue and cooperation! (E-mail, November 2, 2004)

NATO must also recognize the need for dialogue to address some of the past resentments it sees in the new countries joining NATO. And much of this dialogue through necessity is in English. In other words, working through the resentments will require individuals in this group of military participants at least, to be able to converse and express their opinions in English. Besides the MTAP program, they offer other opportunities for military officers from CEE countries to promote intercultural discussions. For example, one of my former Czech students, Pavel, spent six months in a discussion program in Italy designed by NATO to get high-ranking military from these countries talking: After he completed the course he wrote:

Nevertheless staying in Roma was very useful for me. I obtain information, which I will never get in my country. Now I can see world a little bit more complexly and I am less and less optimistic about future world order. (E-mail, Pavel, January 21, 2004)

I understand from Pavel's e-mail that the time he spent in Rome was fruitful in some ways. He has begun to talk to representatives from other countries about important issues. From our exchange about this program, I learned that each day he had English language training in the morning and the afternoon was spent in small groups. The group's task was to come to some agreement through discussion on a pre-assigned controversial military topic. In Pavel's e-mail, he suggests that he did construct new meanings from these discussions. The fact that he is left with a "less optimistic" feeling at the end of the 5-month program indicates to me that more discussions like those he had in Rome are needed.

Pavel's words recalled for me the famous opener from the novel *The Tale of Two Cities*: "It was the best of times. It was the worst of times." (Charles Dickens, 1859, p. 1). It is the best of times for many of these countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Formerly strict regulations for travel and opportunities to know about others in the world have disappeared. Economies in these countries are improving, albeit slowly; access to more of 'what the West has' is starting to become a reality in their contexts. New political (and military) partnerships with the rest of Europe and abroad are being

formed. Not surprisingly, many serious-looking faces and quiet demeanours of students who used to arrive here to attend our programs are now increasingly being replaced by recent students' more cheerful and friendly appearances.

However, it is also the worst of times. Pavel's words reflect a less than optimistic prediction for the future of the world. I felt the same kind of reference to the possibility of a less than positive future in Leo's words "*many problems in the Middle East*" and the suggestion of possible "*force, rather than dialogue*" (Interview, November 24, 2004). Many times in discussions with participants in Canada and online with the Europeans, they spoke about the global situation and how it influenced them in their personal peace of mind and in their thoughts about their futures. Some spoke about terrorism and how it has infiltrated every sector of peoples' lives from travelling on commuter trains and subways to working in an office building or doing one's banking. The fallout from recent attacks has shaken trust both in governments and in "others". Warring nations seem far from being ready to accept conditions for peace. It is no secret that enormous sums are being spent on armament and machinery, in Iraq for example, rather than for more humanitarian causes such as the fight against AIDS. These facts weigh heavily on all citizens of the world. That weight is especially burdensome for the military officers and their families whose lives are framed by the duty to defend and protect others. The conflicting feelings that Pavel expresses I think go deeper than just political and economic concerns. He has spent five months away from his family learning English with a group of officers from other countries; some are former enemies. He has come home with "a lot of information". He has not returned home with a feeling of confidence that an understanding has been achieved and all the necessary communication has taken place. This kind of understanding apparently will take more effort, more time and much more intercultural dialogue. Rutland (2004) hints at the reasons why such a dialogue will require more time for individuals from post-Soviet regimes:

The countries of the former Soviet Union have experienced a dramatic and disorienting political transformation over the past decade. Powerful institutions that have ruled people's lives for decades disappeared almost overnight – not

only state structures such as the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Gosplan, but also institutions that shaped social behaviour down to its roots. (p. 6)

The profound impact that the former regime had on people in Central and Eastern Europe perhaps comes as no surprise when we consider that the state had a monopoly on all decision making, on deciding what was right and wrong, correct and incorrect. “True believers”, who were activists and therefore potential heretics if they ever became dissatisfied, were exterminated. Those remaining were left to be apathetic or cynical (Khazanov, p. 23). As I began this inquiry I asked myself how would Pavel and others from post-Soviet countries find a personal “voice” rather than repeating the ‘Party-line’ “voice” as a first step in improving the outlook for the future?

For Afghanistan, a new country represented in the immersion program, politics has also had a bearing on changing lifestyles as is currently happening in Central and Eastern Europe. Having spent the last twenty-five years ravaged by war with Russia followed by civil war with the ruling Taliban, many of its citizens, including military officers, were forced to flee to Pakistan or abroad. Life in Pakistan was generally spent in refugee camps. The tensions of living in poverty and crowded conditions, “in a no man’s land of barren camps along a dusty border” (Globe and Mail, Jimenez, 2004) were heightened by being a misplaced unwanted person living in a country that was traditionally considered ‘the enemy’. Those who stayed back and fought or lived under the Taliban were forced to live in constant fear of losing their lives or property. Towns were and continue to be ruled by warlords who are generally the families with the largest number of male offspring. For example, Ahmed, an Afghani officer who participated in the interview phase of the study explained: *“More sons means more power and more money and people will not attack you”* (Interview, May 21, 2004). These sons then form bands to protect their families and govern with their might for their own powerful ends.

The friction and fear that surfaces through the control of community warlords has its roots in language. The linguistic lines are drawn between those who speak either

of the two national, Iranian-based languages: Dari and Pashtu. These tensions even filtered into the classrooms of the immersion program at the Base. Teachers and the Afghani students themselves reported problems between the two linguistic groups over the period of being in the immersion program here in Canada. Besides this friction, in Afghanistan the enormous pressure to conform to time-consuming traditional religious practices and laws adds to the difficulties of the majority of its citizens. For example, one student explained that if he missed even one of the five prayer meetings required each day, his neighbours would appear en masse at his house and force him to participate. Also when fighting breaks out between local districts everyone is forced to fight *“Districts are fighting and you must fight, even if you don’t want to fight”*, this same student remarked (Interview, May 21, 2004).

With the fall of the Taliban and the entrance of the US troops looking for Osama bin Laden, life in the cities has improved somewhat. In the towns and suburbs, however, people cling to old ways. One of the students lamented about returning to his house in the village and the various restrictions that were part of his life in Afghanistan:

In the village, relationships with neighbours is difficult. For example, there is a rule: You must go to the village mosque five times. This is difficult for some people. You must wear a special hat. They have a party [meeting] to make a decision against someone. You must go but you don’t want to participate. (Interview, May 21, 2004)

As an indication of the fear under which most citizens continue to live in Afghanistan one student spoke about his reluctance to give up his personal weapons that have become a necessity in that country. Even with UN-led troops in Afghanistan, the same student explains that fear is ever-present:

The UN will give me \$400 for each gun. That is a lot of money in Afghanistan. Every person has two or three guns. But I will never give them my last gun... we have no guarantees in Afghanistan yet, because, for example, yesterday I found 10 soldiers were killed. Two British people were killed also. This is [an] abnormal [way to live]”. (Interview, May 5, 2004)

Saddened at the thought of going home to Afghanistan, one of the Afghan

students remarked in the last few days of the course: “*There are so many laws there. Life is very difficult*” (Interview, May 22, 2004).

The students from the countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Afghanistan, which are represented in the immersion program at the Base and in those that participated in the online discussions, each have their own historical and political experiences to relate. Yet, all these countries share a commonality in their present struggle to rise above the years spent under totalitarian regimes and to take their places among nations of the West as independent states. Apparently, this move toward a more democratic system will not come easily. A recent account of the reality of what is happening in the day-to-day- lives of citizens in these countries reflects a “phoney democracy” (Rutland, 2004). Rutland explains:

[A]n increasing number of countries ...have introduced the formal institutions of democracy, such as periodic elections, without having created the political and social conditions that turn such institutions from a facade into a functioning reality. (p. 11)

If Rutland and other historians, sociologists and economists who are studying the complex situations in former Soviet Union countries are correct, going from a façade to deep democratic principles will mean more than holding free elections. For example, in Ukraine, according to Prizel (2004), “a collective memory of prolonged, unified independence” (p. 110) is lacking. The population has been divided historically by language and religion. People have suffered for decades under occupation and totalitarian regimes and more recently by a corrupt elite. A social and economic infrastructure crippled by the Chernobyl accident in 1989, has left many Ukrainians to take on the role of bystander, feeling they have no say in their country’s future. “*Life is life*” Sergyei, a Ukrainian officer at the Base so often remarked in resignation over the course of the interviews I conducted in phase two of the study (Interview, March to May 2004). The shallowness of a fragile democracy was obvious in a recent presidential election process. International observers reported widespread abuse and fraud. A surprising and hopeful sign, however, is that mass demonstrations succeeded

in overturning the decision and plans for a repeat election was in the offing (Mark MacKinnon, Globe and Mail, December 2, 2004).

Some of the participants who spoke to me in interviews at the Base during the third phase of the study were quick to shun the North American ways as deficient in some respects compared to their own nationalistic lifestyles. Yet, most of the students in the interviews and online discussions were united in one belief: they saw learning English as a key factor, rightly or wrongly, in their struggle for personal and national advancement. Gyorge, a Hungarian officer, whose work entailed a lot of contact with international delegations, expressed this idea clearly in an interview to me:

In the NATO countries a lot of people speak English. English is the important language. The PFP [Partnerships for Peace] countries don't speak English. For good relationships between NATO and PFP they have to speak and to speak they need English. We have joined NATO and now we try to teach our officers and teachers to go to other countries to learn English. Study is not a problem. Practice is a problem. (Interview with Gyorge, May 6, 2004)

Even if there is recognition that English will influence their political position in NATO and globally for better or worse, Gyorge admits, there is a great need for practice in the language.

The Military-NATO Context

Tied closely to the political realities in the countries represented by the officers in this inquiry is the context of their military lives and the role that NATO plays in those militaries. A majority of the officers who come to the language immersion programs purport to be apolitical. *"I am military people. I don't have to have my opinion. I just obey,"* explained Vitalii (Interview, March 24, 2004). Dmitry, a Russian officer, concurred: *"I work for my government. I no political person"* (Interview, April 14, 2004) They are quick, however, to comment on the changes that their countries' relationships to NATO have meant. Claiming to be apolitical is indeed a matter of empty words.

The NATO organization was originally formed among Allied states after World War II as a protection against the threat of military retaliation from the emerging powers of Soviet and Warsaw-pact countries. Since the fall of communism around 1991, NATO has increasingly set its sights on increasing its membership and thus expanding its strength farther into Europe and Asia. Partially as a means to lure new countries into the Alliance, agreements were signed to provide training to the then intermediary new member states called the Partnership for Peace (PFP). The Partnership for Peace sees as its main goal:

...expanding and intensifying political and military cooperation throughout Europe, increasing stability, diminishing threats to peace building, strengthening security relationships by promoting the spirit of practical commitment to democratic principles which underpin the Alliance. (NATO brochure, 1999)

An important part of this goal was to offer second language instruction in both English and French, the two official languages of NATO. The rationale is that in order for countries to be able to co-operate and strengthen their relationships they have to speak together and this requires a common language.

As a member of NATO, and a bilingual country, Canada sees itself in a unique position to offer opportunities to learn English and French as part of its commitment to its NATO membership. Besides language courses in Canada, officers from Central and Eastern Europe, from Russia and a growing number of other countries have taken part in a variety of other military training courses offered by the original founding Western countries of NATO. The NATO courses fall under the MTAP initiative offered to countries that NATO, for various reasons, has chosen to support. Besides the opportunity to travel and receive training in the MTAP programs, military officers from these countries are eligible to apply for the coveted positions in the NATO headquarters in Belgium or Italy. Working abroad in whatever capacity has always meant an increased salary and more financial stability for families back home.

However, the prestige and increased military opportunities offered by NATO have also come at a cost. The requirements to standardize equipment and operations

have strained the already tight budgets of the new member countries and those preparing to join. The tight budgets have been further threatened by recent decreases in international support since the end of the Cold War (Moses, 2003). To meet the financial demands of membership in NATO, new and prospective countries from Central and Eastern Europe have had to reorganize and downsize their militaries. This downsizing has put an added stress on most military personnel, 'never knowing if one's job will be the next to be axed or considered redundant'. Losing a military job is a serious matter in Central and Eastern Europe where recent unemployment figures hover around 20% and as much 40% in Russia and Ukraine. Several of the students whom I interviewed spoke of informal work employment as a protection against low wages and the possibility of loss of employment and being asked to leave the military. Florin D., one of the Romanian participants had a small mechanic business on the side; Catalin, a Romanian IT specialist who helps coordinate the online sessions with Europe repairs old computers from Western Europe and sold them in Romania. Southworth and Hormel (2004) confirm this anecdotal evidence in their recent work in Eastern Europe where they estimate 9% of the population is involved in informal, non-registered employment (p. 161). Some of the officers I spoke with explained that they saw joining the military as there only hope for work and financial stability for raising a family. This reason for joining meant that some of these individuals felt less suited to the job as military personnel than others and they reported their working lives had not been easy. Ferenc, a Hungarian at the Canadian site and Florin B., one of the Romanian online participants talked about the difficulties they had adjusting to military life. Marian, another Romanian wrote in an e-mail:

When I was in the high school (I graduated a military one) I wasn't so sure that a military career fitted better with my way of being. Even now there are moments when I am wandering what could happen whether I will choose other way in my life (In this moment it is hard to take a decision like this because I have to support a loan and I need financial stability. (E-mail, November 4, 2004)

Being not suited to military life added to the pressures of being sent to a posting that was unchallenging or inappropriate to their training. Florin, for example, was in

logistics whereas his interest and training had been electronics. Pressure to take on extra employment, to stay in the military and work under duress or dissatisfaction and to have to learn English in order to advance in their positions seemed to be some of the disadvantages of their countries joining NATO.

Within NATO new and or prospective members such as Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic and Romania as well as others have had to bow to the wishes of the established members. For example, students from Poland have explained how in having to choose standard equipment such as airplanes, they feel coerced by the U.S. to buy their used planes instead of better and more competitively priced Scandinavian models. In exchange, they are promised the opportunity to purchase the next castoffs of the U.S. military in a few years. When asked to participate in the war in Iraq, despite their normal reluctance, they are hard pressed to refuse. Pavel, a Czech officer I interviewed at the Canadian Base, cringed at the idea of having to serve in Iraq and stated: *"As new members of NATO we must show ourselves to carry our responsibility"* (Interview, May, 2004). It appears that while Canada was able to refuse to take part in the war in Iraq, countries like Poland, Hungary, Ukraine and the Czech Republic had no real say.

Indeed, having a say in the military hierarchy of NATO to a large extent depends on the ability of officers from these new and prospective member states to communicate in English or to a lesser extent in French. Without this ability to converse freely in these mainstream languages, officers from these emerging countries who attend international planning meetings and operational exchanges and exercises are not able to fully participate or share their expertise. Not only is this inability to enter exchanges in English, or albeit French, a loss to their militaries, but it must come at a personal cost to their self worth as well. For example, one of the Romanian participants in the CMC online, Adrian talked about an international meeting of communication experts that he attended in Italy. He explained his feelings of embarrassment at that meeting in an interview I had with him face-to-face at the end of the online sessions:

I knew a few English words and was very embarrassed. I looked for people who would speak French but even the French spoke English so it was very

embarrassing. I wanted to say something when we went out for a drink...we used our hands, a piece of paper. I tried to communicate. On the Italian exercise I realized how important English was. (Interview, November 24, 2004)

Adrian had been sent to Italy by his military to share his technical expertise and to learn from others at the meeting. Despite his efforts, he was unable to share his knowledge or gain new knowledge because of his poor English. His lack of English was a source of personal embarrassment to him

Sociolinguistic Contexts

Of the many languages spoken by the officers who participate in the language programs offered by NATO, there is one common language thread-Russian. Even the Afghani students, new to the program, seem to understand when other students communicate in Russian. One of the teachers in the MTAP program who taught a group of four Afghani, one Russian and a Polish officer remarked: *"Whenever things get complicated in class, they all [the students] break into Russian, even the Polish officer"* (Field Notes March, 2004). And Petra a student in the Czech Republic commented: *"My friend. My friend works in the airport and she says everyone speaks Russian. She says that it is close to our country; everybody understands it. In the future we will do more business there"* (Interview, November 21, 2004). After over forty years of Soviet rule in Central and Eastern Europe and the twenty-three years of occupation in Afghanistan, the Russian language still exists as sometimes active, sometimes passive knowledge for many adults in a majority of these countries, although, I was told, some do not want to admit it. But the use of Russian as a language of communication and commerce is changing. Adrian remarked to me: *"After 1991, [there is] not much pressure to study Russian"* (Interview November 24, 2004).

When I visited the Czech Republic for a second time in December 2003, I was overwhelmed by the changes that had taken place since my former trip two years earlier. An obvious difference was the preponderance of English influences everywhere – music, billboards, movies and television programs, not to mention evidence of

Western-owned companies like Sony, McDonald's, and others. Streets were full of English-speaking tourists and sales clerks, who two years earlier had shyly turned away when I spoke in English, this time responded proudly in heavily accented English to my requests. When I met with the young students at the military, they communicated a great desire to improve their English skills but expressed frustration at not having adequate means to do so. Classes are large they said; there is little chance to speak and discuss. I encouraged them to travel and to take advantage of every opportunity to use English. Since those comments, three students e-mailed me and made arrangements to come to Canada in the summer of 2004 and two more are planning to visit in 2005 in order to practise their language skills –another indication of the strong impetus students have for improving their English.

The Polish and Hungarian students I interviewed at the Base expressed to me that the situation in their countries was similar to that in the Czech Republic. More Western influences have brought great pressure to learn English. One Polish student, Artur, mentioned that with his job in computer technology, his entire working day is often spent with English documents. However, when it came to speaking he felt at a disadvantage. He felt he needed more opportunities to speak in English. He related how he often used Internet chat rooms to practise his English but that the language was very different than that he learned in classrooms. (Personal communication May, 2004).

On a trip to Poland in 2002 to visit former students I stayed with the family of a Polish officers. He and his wife had one child and were expecting another baby. They lived in a small one-bedroom apartment in the suburbs of Warsaw. I was surprised to learn that they found the funds to send their five-year old to an English tutor twice a week after preschool. I have also noted how the officers who come to our immersion programs from Poland and Hungary are anxious to bring home books and other learning materials to use in helping their children learn English.

In Afghanistan, the picture is quite different. There too the need for English is ever-present. Information about the circumstances in Afghanistan helped to frame

my understanding of the needs of the participants to learn English for international communication in their military work. Also the former Soviet presence in Afghanistan had an impact on the education of some of the Afghan participants. Their former education (and lives), which was heavily Russian-influenced, gave me another perspective on how this educational background influenced the identities and knowledge construction of the participants from CEE in the study. With a growing presence of NATO troops in this country, the pressure for members of the Afghan military to be able to communicate with these troops is a reality that needs to be addressed. The Deputy Director of MTAP explained that that is why Afghan officers are being invited to the MTAP program in Canada – to learn English and to mix with officers of the CEE countries (Personal Communication April, 2005). This is another example of where dialogue (in English) among these countries seems to be a priority for NATO. The Afghan culture is largely an oral culture. The emphasis in learning is to a large extent on speaking. Oral English is relatively common in Afghanistan for a variety of reasons. Many who fled their country during the Taliban rule went to North America and other English speaking countries. They have since been enticed back by the UN led forces to take up leading roles in the new government. Their presence and knowledge of English has influenced those in positions of authority to follow suit. The Afghanis who fled to Pakistan were also exposed to English in the UN-run refugee camps. Much of the administration of their presence in Pakistan was conducted in English with UN officials. Their children studied English in the camp schools. During the period of the inquiry in television news reports from Afghanistan, I saw evidence of young children in the background shouting out in English as reporters were conveying their messages in front of the camera. Many of those who stayed behind in Afghanistan lost the opportunity to study formally because the Taliban destroyed most schools. One student from the immersion program who participated in the interview phase of the study mentioned, *“For thirteen years I didn’t use a pencil. Now my mind is all mixed up”* (Interview, March, 2004). Nevertheless, there were opportunities to use English even for those who stayed behind in Afghanistan and who chose to fight against the Taliban. Many of these Afghanis found themselves increasingly having to communicate in English with the US

foreign forces who were in their country for support against the Taliban.

In Russia and countries in between like Romania and Ukraine, English has become more and more most citizens' language of choice. Where once students from these countries came to our programs with little or no English, a growing number have already acquired basic skills in English even before they come. For a few years Russians chose to study only French in our programs. In these countries, foreign influence first arrives in the form of help to learn English. For example, the British Council is heavily involved in Ukraine and Romania. The Ukrainian students in our immersion programs whom I interviewed explained that this linguistic help comes in the form of offering individual study programs, teacher training and support to institutions for computer purchasing. In return, the students, teachers and institutions are expected to use the British Council books, materials and software as well as take advantage of their ESL course offerings.

Community Context

When I first began teaching at the research site six years ago, the strong community ties displayed by officers arriving in Canada to study struck me as noteworthy. Each country's delegation lived, ate and recreated together. Some groups spent weekends socializing with their local compatriots who had immigrated to Canada. Social interaction, except in the classroom, rarely occurred amongst the various nationalities. Different nationalistic ties were so strong that cheating within delegations during tests was rampant, much to the chagrin of the testers and teachers. This 'help' was explained to me as a way to support one's fellow comrade.

Since the 2000 inquiry, the interactions among the multicultural groups in the NATO immersion program have evolved. Nationalities are interspersed in the living quarters. International teams are often formed for after class sports games and it is not unusual to see mixed groups chatting and eating together in the Mess, the name given to the dining hall and bar area of the Base. On weekends, many multinational groups

rent cars and travel together. Others who stay behind may party together. Sometimes there are gatherings of members of one nationality. However, a few students whom I interviewed in Phase II of the study shared that their participation at these gatherings was out of obligation rather than desire to be with fellow officers from their own country. Over the last three years, I have noted that visits with local community groups are less frequent and more poorly attended. Indeed, a few students voiced their frustrations at spending their valuable after-class hour time with these 'old nationalists'. It appears from listening to these remarks that the younger generations of officers from Eastern Europe who are coming to our programs are beginning to exhibit a desire to move on from reliving their national pasts and to embrace what is 'out there' beyond their country's borders. At the International Night celebration, where at one time only Canadians would go from table to table testing and trying different ethnic foods, now the intermingling includes the international students in the immersion program. Apparently, community borders are taking a less rigid form in these latter groups of students. Many students I interviewed noted how Canada is so multicultural compared to their own countries and often remarked on how they were impressed at how well different nationalities seem to live and get along together here in Canada.

This is not to say that tensions do not still exist amongst the different nationalities of students who study in the immersion program. One Russian, Vasily, reported in an interview that he was quite taken aback by a comment made to him by a Lithuanian. There had been a celebration put on by the Lithuanian delegation to celebrate their entrance into NATO. Vasily, a participant in the second phase of the inquiry, who had been invited to the party explained: *When I arrived [at the party], I was asked very interesting question [by a Latvian]: "After Latvia is invited to NATO, our countries will be enemies?"* The Latvian was suggesting that with his own country apart of NATO and Russia not, that their countries would be on opposite sides of a political and military line. Vasily recounted to me that his reply to the Latvian was: *"According to Churchill, England has not enemy, England has only interest...Russia has no enemy. Russia has only interests"* (Interview, March 29, 2004). These remarks suggest that the

tensions which surface in the immersion program amongst some delegations reflect national tensions that have been simmering for many years between Russia and former Soviet Union countries and have not dissipated with the fall of communism.

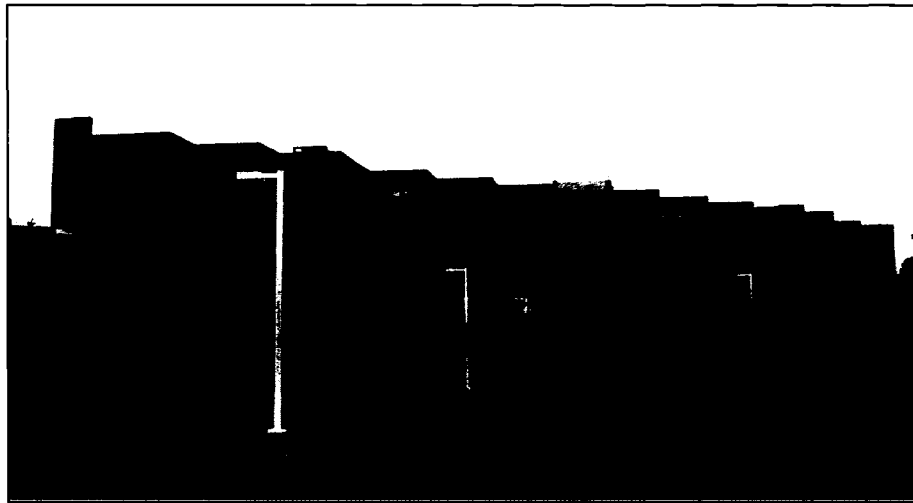


Figure 4. Canadian Base

The Canadian Base itself (See Figure 4) is located in a small bedroom community of forty-five thousand people outside a major city. For many in this community, French is their first language and English, if they speak it, is their second. Travel to the major city is problematic for most students because of the difficulty in accessing the bus service. The building itself is a superstructure, resembling an enclosed village that includes services and student housing as well as the school classroom and facilities (See Figure 5 and Appendix 6).

Besides the officers in the immersion program, the Base community includes Canadian military officers who are studying English or French and military recruits who are doing their basic training. There is also a largely French-speaking civilian and military administrative personnel who are responsible for operating the Base. In my MA study, I found evidence of feelings of resistance to integrating amongst these various groups. Now, the walls between the Europeans and the Canadians seem more

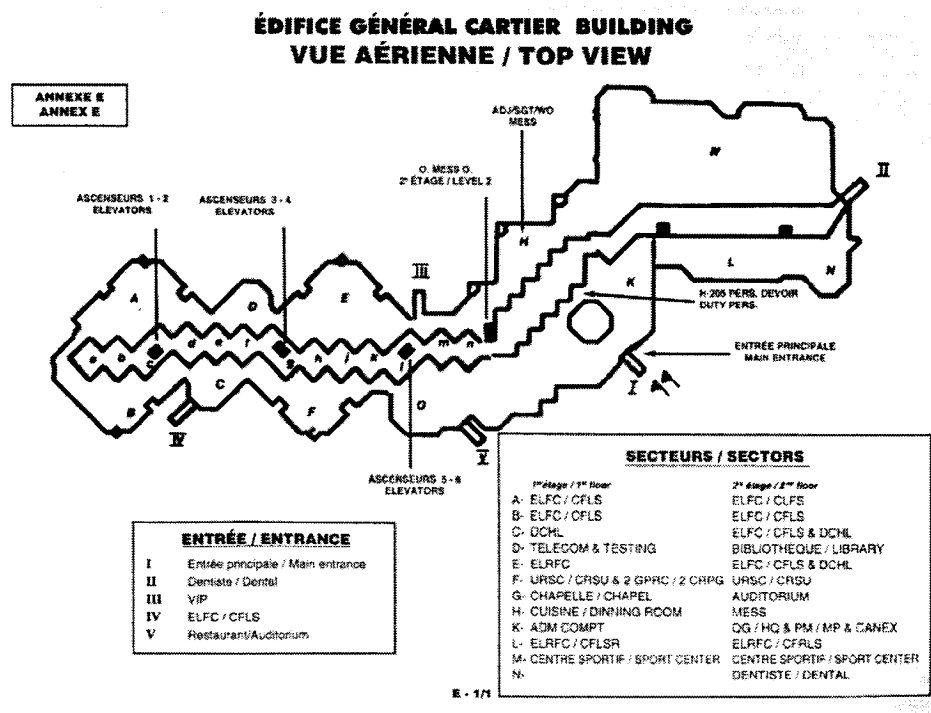


Figure 5. Interior Floor Plan of the Mega

penetrable. Some MTAP teachers make efforts to organize discussion classes with the Canadian students. However, only Francophone students learning English participate in these exchanges; anecdotal evidence suggests that Anglophone students consider these meetings as non-productive given that they are at the Base to learn French. Apparently, these resisting Canadian military students seem oblivious to the fact that many of them will most likely be working alongside the visiting military personnel in future peacekeeping operations. Organized cultural outings are now mixed with students from the MTAP program and Canadian students. Sports events increasingly involve groups of Canadians.

Nevertheless, some students I interviewed reported that it is still very difficult for them to mix socially with the Canadian English speakers. Sergii, a Ukrainian, remarked at one point in an interview:

We haven't had enough chance to meet with native speakers. I can't break the ice in this country. I must be introduced. Very often I don't say what I think, even now...when I go to my room I will know what I wanted to say before...it was very easy. Why did I not say what I wanted to say? Maybe I try to look intelligent...I know meeting with English people is most important. (Interview, April 14, 2004)

Sergii's reluctance to interact with English speakers, his inability to say what he wanted to say is not a linguistic problem. As he explains, it was "*very easy*". His reluctance to initiate a conversation and the feelings that prevented him from speaking seemed to stem from his concern for rules and looking intelligent in the presence of others. The potential for the worth of his symbolic resources being questioned here, appears to weigh heavily on him. Eventually, he relinquishes his agency in practicing English regardless of the importance he places on speaking in his SL. Sergii's social identity, as defined by a site of struggle and structured by relations of power (Peirce, 1994) is certainly a factor in his choosing to speak and inevitably his language learning. I have seen in the fieldwork and interview phases of the inquiry that Sergii is not alone.

Administrative and Physical Context of the School Site

The Canadian Defence Academy of the Canadian Military operates the Language School and the NATO-sponsored immersion program for military officers from abroad. The Language School rents the physical space and some services from the Base Administration, which is a separate entity and chain of command. The person in charge of the school chain of command is the Commandant, a major in the Canadian military (Appendix 7). Each of the various sections of the school: curriculum, standards or testing, information technology, the audio video department, the Canadian French and English language programs along with the international MTAP program report to the Commandant. The school is one of two other in Canada that offers language programs to international military students. Both other schools are located in the province of Ontario. Decisions that are made by the Commandant have to go up the chain of command to his superiors at the Faculty in Ottawa and eventually to the highest

level in Kingston to the Canadian Defence Academy (Appendix 8). MTAP contracts the day-to-day functioning of its program for international students to the military. The administrative structure for the MTAP program is based in Ottawa and is headed by a director and deputy director, both civilians. This administration has no authority over the arm of the military that actually runs the MTAP program. However, since the MTAP program has a separate budget and subcontracts the program to the Canadian Forces Language School, it does have some influence over how the military administers the MTAP section.

Within the section of the school designated for the MTAP program, there are two languages being taught to the international officers. One group of students receives English instruction, the other French instruction. In other words, both Francophone and Anglophone teachers teach in the same pavilion. These two teaching areas were at one time in separate sections. Apparently, the two were integrated for two reasons. First, the combination was an attempt to promote closer communication between Francophone and Anglophone employees. Historically, there have been a lot of workplace problems in the Language School. A formal workplace study assessment attributed the tensions partly to communication problems among the different sections of the school and partly to language differences. Anecdotal evidence from employees who had worked in the Language School for many years expressed that the tensions also were a reflection of French-English relations that existed in the larger political society. Second, since both the Francophone and Anglophone MTAP teachers report and are served by the same military staff, it made sense to combine the two in the same section of the building. There are two civilian senior teachers, or supervisors who are responsible for the day-to-day operation for each of the languages in the section. One bilingual civilian employee who reports to the senior teachers performs the administrative duties for both language-teaching areas.

Approximately every five months new students arrive. Normally, the numbers of students are somewhat consistently around sixty-five. Most programs require thirteen

teachers and one social director. However, these numbers change with the fluctuation of numbers of students in the courses. A senior teacher administers the programs. Ten of the teachers have responsibility for individual groups that range from six to eight students. These teachers teach five periods a day and normally remain with their students the entire five months of the program. One period a day a spare teacher replaces the homeroom teacher. During the period of the study, several teachers were working on term contracts. Some of these teachers were working with no employee benefits. They are frequently required to reapply for their positions. This hiring process is repeated every one and a half to two years for non-permanent, so called term teaching staff. It generates a list of teaching employees to fill the teaching positions not filled by permanent teachers. During the second phase of the inquiry in which I interviewed the officer student participants, there was one such hiring process taking place for teachers. The hiring process is rigorous. There are four stages and a person applying has to be successful at one stage to move on to the next. The stages include: the eligibility of the applicant as indicated by a CV, a three-hour written knowledge and aptitude test, a board interview and a French language oral proficiency test over the phone. The entire process lasted over six months, caused several changes in classroom teachers and was reported to be a major source of disruption for senior teachers, teachers and students. Fluency in English, a B of Ed. and some language teaching experience is a requirement in order to apply for a position in the Language School. A teacher who had taught during a summer term and who was working on a MA in Second Language was eliminated from the process after the writing test. One non-permanent teacher who had been working at the school for over two years did not make it through the writing test stage of the hiring process. A new teacher with no experience in the MTAP program replaced her in mid term despite the fact that the hiring process was not even yet completed. In the end, the list that was created was deemed not useful. There was a serious drop in the number of incoming students for the subsequent program and most of the term teachers were not rehired. In the next vignette, I describe an interaction I had with one of these term teachers:

Job Insecurity

I stopped in to visit Mary today. She was looking particularly harried. I asked her if everything was all right. "I'm so tired", she related. I told her I understood having taught in the program. Linda went on to say, however, that it was not just the teaching of her group that was the source of her fatigue. She explained that she was exhausted because she was working three jobs (this one plus two others). When I asked her why she responded "Yea, well this job is not secure. I could be let go anytime. I have to keep my other fingers in the fire." She also explained that she had gone to the three-hour test (part of the latest hiring process) the night before after teaching all day and that the senior teacher had just dropped by to say he would be by tomorrow to sit in on her class and to observe her teaching. "It's the second time in five months!" she remarked. (Personal Communication, February 2, 2004)

The pressures of being a term employee weigh heavily on the mind of teachers like Mary. In the vignette, she expresses her feelings of lack of personal and financial security in her future, loss of control over free time because of having to take on extra work and to attend testing sessions in order to be placed on a hiring list and finally being subjected to frequent observations by the administration. New teachers reported that they receive a couple of days of training before they are expected to teach. My experience was similar. These pressures seem to prevent some new teachers on staff from testing new practices in their classrooms. Understandably, over the period of the inquiry, Linda declined offers from me to show her how to use the software programs in the Multimedia Room. When I asked her if she wanted her students to take part in the CMC sessions other teachers and I were planning she declined. "*I have enough on my plate*", she replied (Personal Communication, March 2004). Mary's reluctance to explore new ways of knowing were understandable and suggests that seeing the micro picture of multiple contextual factors in learning settings is crucial for making changes in these sites. Eventually near the end of the program, her students pressured her to take them to the Multimedia Room. Only then did she decide to take part, but by then the software was no longer available.

There is also a military presence within the MTAP section of the Language School. These Canadian military personnel report directly to the Commandant. They

are the MTAP Section Chief and his staff of two administrators. Their duties are related to all areas other than language instruction for the visiting students. This includes: orientation, accommodation, travel, liaison with foreign attachés and general life on the Base. They work closely with the foreign military and as such require a fair amount of sensitivity to the adaptation process of these officers while in Canada. One of the Canadian military assigned to this task expressed how little in-depth training that they had received in preparation for incoming students from abroad. She remarked how difficult it was to relate to the cultural differences of the incoming officers without some knowledge of the cultures represented by the students. For example, she explained that the Afghan students could not address her using the feminine form 'Mam' for females, as is customary in the military. Instead, they insisted on calling her 'Sir'. (Shirley, Personal Communication, March 23, 2004). In another example Shams, one of the students from Afghanistan I interviewed had a serious run-in with another member of this administration staff. It was a misunderstanding over his absence from class because of a doctor's appointment. In fact, permission had been given but notice of the permission had not been relayed to the person in charge of absenteeism. The Afghan officer was deeply wounded by the lack of tact on the part of the Canadian officer. In an interview, he described the scene for me:

[The Canadian military staff member] knocked very badly on my door. He was with one bodyguard. He speak me very impolite. I couldn't accept. When I came back to class I went to [Chief of MTAP program]. I told him they make a mistake about me. When a guest come in our country we don't treat them like that. We have an agreement with the Canadian Embassy. We are first group to come from Afghanistan. This is Canadian government problem. He insult me. After this week, I don't like Canada. [Chief of MTAP program] is a good man but maybe [The Canadian military staff member] is intolerant with foreign people. I told him I am a captain. You are a 1st Lieutenant. Take care. I have to carry good culture and feelings back to Afghanistan. I want to tell him: Please don't make your students the enemy of Canada. Maybe now we have a good relationship between Canada and Afghanistan. It's important to keep this good relationship. When I went back to my room I couldn't sleep. I had a very bad headache. I tried to find a scarf to tie around my head but I couldn't find one so I used me tie. (Interview, April 21, 2004)

Shams spoke to me of feelings of dejection, anger and disappointment in the Canadian military system and in our cultural practices toward “guests”. He compared this treatment to how one would be treated as a guest in Afghanistan. He tied this poor treatment to the relationship between Canada and Afghanistan. His immediate reaction was to turn against Canada and in fact, to request permission to go home. Although this particular student was usually very outgoing and enthusiastic to practice English with everyone, for a while after the incident he refused to talk in class and lost interest in socializing after class hours. I wondered if teachers and administrators had an opportunity to communicate about the incident.



Figure 6. View of Classroom

The MTAP section of the Language School where I teach has small classrooms (See Figure 6), three computer rooms and an audio laboratory. One computer room is off-limits to the international military officers and is only available to Canadian military from another section and teaching staff. This particular computer room is considered a potential security risk for foreign military to use since the computers in the room offer access to both the D1 (the name given to the Canadian Forces internal network) and the Internet. There are two other computer rooms (see Figure 7) in the section

one for international students learning English, the other for those learning French. There are ten computers with Internet and a printer in each of the latter two rooms. These rooms are supposedly available for the use of the students twenty-four hours a day. Combination locked doors allow access in the after-school hours. There are also computers with Internet available during limited hours in the Base library. Nevertheless access to computers and particularly the Internet is an important and sensitive issue at the School. For example, during the inquiry some of the French teachers were experiencing problems with students who were spending time between classes in the computer room and were often late for class. The teachers requested that the Internet be available only after class hours. When the request was acted upon by the IT Department, the locks on the Internet were placed in both the French and English computer rooms. Some English teachers reacted strongly to being denied the use of the Internet with their students during the day. The incident is an example of the lack of communication that sometimes exists between various departments and sections of the School. The lack of control the students, and often teachers, have with regard to computer technology has been an on- going problem in the School. I return to this issue later in the chapter.



Figure 7. View of the Computer Room.

Educational Context

The curriculum for the program, The Canadian Forces English Course (CFEC) International was prepared four years ago by MTAP teachers in Ontario and Quebec and by the on-site curriculum section at the Language School. Teachers are encouraged to use the program and to add their own materials as long as they adhere to the sequence of functions that is laid out in the curriculum. The curriculum is made up of some grammar information that support the main activities intended to develop functions in listening, reading, writing and speaking. A portion of this curriculum was taken from an earlier version of the program designed for Canadian Francophone military learning English. There are audio and videotapes to accompany the curriculum; a CD equivalent is being prepared. There is an audio laboratory in the MTAP section. Teachers take students to this room for individual listening activities using either the curriculum tapes or commercial audio material.

Besides the regular curriculum, teachers are encouraged and do use the bank of supplementary materials available to them in the library in a section called the Resource Centre. Students are not allowed in this part of the library. This policy is one example of how authority at the Language School is based on a rigid chain of command that spills over into the teaching area. The mindset that teachers are the controlling factor in what, when, how and why students learn is still very prevalent at the Language School and indeed in the organizational structure of the institution. For example, when I raised the possibility of giving students access to the Resource Centre materials to members of the Pedagogical Committee, there was uniform disapproval. One teacher explained: *“What if students get a hold of material that you are planning to use in class. It would destroy your lesson if they already knew the material or activity”* (Field Notes, November 18, 2004).

The materials contained in this Centre are catalogued according to target-based skills: listening, speaking, writing, and reading. There is also an extensive grammar section and an activity section. A good deal of the material in the Resource Centre

is very dated. A fair amount of it reflects translation and audiolingual SL teaching methodologies. A committee has been set up to look into renewing some of this material but the process is slow. For example, in the two years that the committee has been in existence, 16 read-along books have been ordered. A library of videos, DVDs and CDs is available for teachers to take out for use in the classrooms from the supply section which houses program textbooks and other supplies. The senior teacher and a representative of the supply section have chosen most of this material. Teachers have been asked for suggestions for purchasing this type of material. Students are not permitted to borrow media material nor do they have VCR or DVD players in their family units, the name given to their accommodation sections. However, a growing number do arrive with laptop computers and could take advantage of the DVDs if they were made available to them.

Testing is an important part of the curriculum. Students are tested for reading, listening, writing and speaking. Testing is done when the officers arrive at the beginning of the course and then again at the end. There is a Standards Section at the Language School, which is responsible for organizing and overseeing the entire testing process. The Standards Section has traditionally developed the tests that they use. However, in the last two years an agreement made within NATO members to standardize testing has led to the adoption of American-developed multiple-choice tests for listening and reading. Currently, the Standards Section develops the writing tests and tests speaking through individual oral interviews with the students.

The tests are a major source of concern for all - teachers, administrators and students. Teachers have little or no knowledge of the actual tests that are administered and therefore feel ill-prepared to advise their students. There are test booklets available for teachers to help prepare their students. These booklets contain a couple of samples of the types of questions asked on the computer-based tests and general advice about test procedures. When the results are not always favourable, especially in listening, some teachers feel at a loss about what they can do for their students. A well-respected

teacher in the program confided to me at the end of the session that took place during the inquiry: *"It is the first time in my career that I want to quit. What is the point of teaching if you can't help your students to improve"* (Personal Communication, Anna, June, 2004).

Administrators have problems with the testing as well. During the research study, the senior teacher wrote a letter to the Standards Section. An excerpt from that letter explains some of the frustrations that those administering the program have with the tests:

Last week I was faced with the awkward situation of trying to explain to an English-language teacher from Russia that the results she obtained in her end-of-course examinations (1 in Listening, 2 in Speaking) were an accurate reflection of her linguistic abilities.

There is a problem here. Teachers and students are puzzled, even frustrated by the difficulties encountered in the listening test. (E-mail, sent December 16, 2003 to Standards Section)

In this e-mail, the senior teacher is responding to the frustrations and complaints from teachers and students about the standardized listening tests that are used for determining students' second language profiles at the end of the course. The letter also reflects the lack of communication between sections and the language schools that offer NATO language courses both nationally and internationally. It indicates the primacy given to "compromising" the secrecy of the testing material. This secrecy weighs heavily on students who come to the program from post-Soviet countries where teachers are considered allies against the system. One Ukrainian student I interviewed came to me distraught on several occasions. Even from midpoint in his five-month course he was concerned about the final tests. In the following vignette from an interview I had with him, he exemplifies this anguish:

Angst about Testing

Sergii was very worried today. He is thinking about the tests at the end of the course and feels that his teacher is not preparing him well. *"I must be able to*

know some rules at the end, topics we will have". His rationale for needing this information: "Maybe I do some things not useful for the tests. I lose time and waste time, not productive". He thinks it would be useful to have lists of subjects they "must know. It would be nice to have some examples with answers". He explained that if he doesn't have practice before the tests and doesn't know what will be asked, then he will have time problems in the tests. "Even I know the answers but I don't have enough time to write answers. After the test when I review questions I think I know the answers for all questions. But when I have short time and it is nervous situation I can't... Especially when I lost time on one question, I don't hear second question".

S. then goes on to talk about another reason for not succeeding at test: *"Sometimes we have different signs [views] in the same problem". He explained that when he is faced with a multiple-choice question he knows that 2 of the answers are obviously incorrect. But when he has to decide between the other 2 answers, it is difficult. One might be more correct from a North American perspective but the other might be correct from his cultural perspective. He gives an example: Statement: The sun arose and we got up. Question: When did we get up today? There are four answers. Two are obviously wrong. But the two that are left: 1) We got up early. 2) We got up late. In North America the answer 'We got up 'early' may be correct. But, Africans would say 'We got up late is correct' because in Africa they get up 2 or 3 hours before the sun rises to work because of the heat. He continues his argument: "Every day I work in the test books. Sometimes, I'm no agree with author. For your country, it is maybe right but for my country not". He suggests that these tests are maybe good for Canadians but for students from other countries: "We must live sometime in this country before we can understand". (Interview Notes, March 17, 2004)*

The problems of testing weigh heavily on this Ukrainian officer. These problems are grounded in diverse cultural differences between himself and North Americans: his strategies for learning, the relationship he sees for teacher and student and the ways he views such mundane activities as rising in the morning. His solution to the problems of testing is for students like him to get to know the English language culture better through more extended interaction with native speakers. Despite this student's insight however, which was repeated by others who participated in the interviews, the classroom and extracurricular activities leave many students feeling that the immersion program does not prepare them for the realities of the final tests.

In the spring of 2003, a Pedagogical Committee was set up to address ongoing weaknesses in the program at the Language School. It was formed as a way to respond to problems of prolonged employee/management problems, mostly determined to be communication-based by formal workplace review as well as to implement educational change in the school. The committee, made up of a senior teacher and three volunteer teachers held its first meeting in May of 2003 and the second not until late January 2004 due to a need to co-ordinate efforts with a similar committee on the French teacher side (Personal communication, October, 2004).

The Committee produced a document outlining their concerns (Appendix 9) and indicating the main aims of the Pedagogical Committee: to encourage management to order new materials especially in the area of computer technology and to improve the training and technical support offered to teachers once the computer technology is in place. Previously, new materials and software were purchased as a result of suggestions from individual teachers to the senior teacher who then considered the request and, depending on funds available, sent in an order for the materials. Problems stemmed from a lack of communication among teachers about materials as well as from the absence of training. The latter put strain on already overworked IT staff that had to respond to frequent requests from teachers for assistance. In the future, Pedagogical Committee members will recommend materials to the Committee. Also, the Committee and IT Department prepared a document that laid the process for having new software approved (See Figure 8). According to the 16-step potentially year long process, it could take from 10 months to a year before new software can be ordered and installed permanently. The time delay is due to: a) a multi-leveled chain of command; b) the presumed security risk of anything technical; c) management's reluctance to provide software training to teachers except during periods when students are not present.

Draft Procedural model for new software

1. The pedagogical committee identifies a product for consideration.
2. The pedagogical committee verifies with DSI/ISD (Division des systèmes d'information/Information Systems Division) if the product is feasible/compatible and with Standards to assure the product is compatible with the Training Plan.
3. The pedagogical committee seeks DSI and local ISSO (Information Systems Security Officer) approval.
4. If the feedback is positive from all concerned, the trial product is installed on a trial basis and evaluated further by designated technician for network compatibility, and associated installation and maintenance costs; by committee members and other teachers for pedagogical benefits, user-friendliness; by the Responsible Senior Teacher for initial and ongoing training needs and costs and Standards for acceptability regarding training plan.
5. Based on feedback from pedagogical staff, the designated technician and Standards, the pedagogical committee recommends or not to purchase.
6. DSI submits a cost impact report. The responsible Senior Teacher submits a cost impact report, which evaluates costs associated with demands on staffing related to teacher and student training on software.
7. To move forward in the process, the product must be approved by the national ISSO and CDA's IMCCB (Information management Configuration Control Board). Require approval from National ISSO.
8. If all required authorizations are obtained, recommend the purchase of the software.
9. Purchase software.
10. Installation.
11. A designated technician studies the software and informs the pedagogical committee how to access the product and make it work.
12. Based on recommendations from the committee and operational requirements, the senior teachers designate a teacher or senior teacher to be the pedagogical software expert for the product in question.
13. The senior teachers schedules a training period, which allows the designated expert to develop a good understanding of the software. The software expert works with the designated technician as necessary.
14. The designated expert works with the pedagogical committee to prepare presentation materials and a set of guidelines or a handbook, which must be approved by the committee and the Senior Teacher(s) responsible, that will be used to familiarize or train teachers and students in the use of the software as necessary, in initial familiarization sessions and ongoing training. The pedagogical committee produces a handbook or written guidelines.
15. Taking into consideration operational needs, the Senior Teacher(s) establish initial or ongoing training and orientation schedules for teachers and students, informing staff and students by class or individually.
16. The designated pedagogical software expert trains and orients teachers in the use of the software as scheduled.
17. The designated pedagogical software expert trains students by class or individually as required. In time, the classroom teacher should take over the training and orientation of students. In the case of some programs, the classroom teacher may from the outset familiarize students without the aid of the designated expert.
18. The designated technician is responsible for technical maintenance and problem solving. Teachers report problems they or their students encounter in the lab to the technician. The technician reports user-generated problems to the Senior Teacher responsible who will decide if more training is required or if changes to the handbook and guidelines need to be made or if other measures can suffice.
19. With time there may be technical changes, upgrades and interruptions in service that change the way in which the software can be used. In that event and as soon as possible, the designated technician will inform the responsible Senior Teacher who will inform the pedagogical committee and staff.
20. The pedagogical committee will review procedures and recommend changes as necessary. The pedagogical committee revises prepared materials and training procedures as necessary based on feedback from the pedagogical staff and students.

Figure 8: Draft of Software Approval Procedure

The Committee is also responsible for making recommendations regarding professional development and training for teachers. This responsibility concerns attendance at conferences and in-house professional development days. The decision to send teachers to conferences, especially the TESOL Conference which is a primary source of current pedagogical information and materials, has been discontinued apparently because of discontent with previous decisions made by administration about who would attend” (Personal Communication, Senior teacher, October, 2003). Likewise, the three in-house professional development days have traditionally held little interest for teachers and have been poorly attended. Since the workplace assessment and formation of the Committee, however, more planning is being put into these days and appears to have somewhat more interest for teachers.

Computer Technology Context

Technology equipment in each classroom consists of a TV, DVD player, videocassette recorder and radio, stored in a metal cabinet and locked by the teacher at the end of the day and a personal computer loaded with Microsoft Office and an internal e-mail account system on the teacher’s desk. Computer security is a main concern of the military and causes many inconveniences for teachers and students: lack of access to most websites from classroom computers, limited access to Web information on the public computers in the School, delays up to six weeks for new teachers coming into the School to access computers because of security clearance checks required for teachers. As one teacher reported: *“These teachers’ computers are useless. Every time you go into a site a firewall comes up and blocks what you want to read”* (Personal Communication, Anna October 15, 2003). Teachers are strongly instructed not to allow students to use the classroom computers despite that fact that some students are far savvier about computer technology than their teachers. One teacher observed that it is much easier to ask a student for help when there is a question about the computer technology than to wait for a technician to be called by the secretary (Personal communication, March, 2004). In other words, the school policy does not allow students to use their information technology capital to negotiate their identities in the classroom.

Since there are no computer-based activities in the curriculum or in the Resource Centre, teachers supplement their teaching partly with four commercial software programs. These commercial programs are kept in a cabinet in the secretary's office in the MTAP/PAIM section. One locally developed language software program, called Allié, is installed on the computers in the multimedia laboratory. The commercial material consists of: Ellis (a program heavily geared toward speaking and pronunciation using a repetition approach similar to an audio-visual methodology), Tense Busters (a bank of verb-drill exercises), Tell Me More (a multiple skills-based exercise and activity program) and TOEFL Listening Tests (preparation for multiple-choice listening and reading tests). Although these software programs are licensed and ready for use, they are not always available to teachers. In the program session, which went from August to December 2003, for example, teachers were expressing frustration at still not having the option to use the software two months into the term. One teacher, Jane, remarked: *"It's ludicrous to be at this point in the program and things are still not settled"* (Personal communication October 16, 2003). In fact, the software was not available for the entire August to December 2003 program. Again, during the period of August to December 2004, commercial software was unavailable for most of the session. It appears that some teachers at this research site were very anxious to transform their practices and to explore the use of computer technology to support these transformations but there was a lack of communication between teachers and IT departments. As a result, teachers are left little choice when using the computer lab with students.

Apple (2000) argues:

Without an analysis of such transformations and the balances of forces that have created such discomfiting alterations, without an analysis of the tensions, differential relations of power, and contradictions within it, we are left with increasingly elegant new theoretical formulations, but with less-than-elegant understanding of the field of social power. (Bourdieu 1994) on which they operate. (p. 226)

Apple's argument is based on his observation that much of the transformation he sees in current educational institutions is suspiciously moving in fundamentally rightist

directions, directions that are closely tied to economic power. For example, when the British Council supplies computers to CEE countries such as the Czech Republic and Romania, they do so with the understanding that the benefactors of their computers will use their teaching and learning software and traditional type materials that have heavily Western-based content. Also, in the long term once English is learned through the use of these materials the British expect to increase economic ties with these same countries. This long-term vision is clearly stated in the British Council mission statement. From this perspective, teaching is seen as supportive of the need of the state and central forces control learning. According to Apple the ideologies, like those that I suspect are supporting the use of computer technology in the SL research site where I teach, will only be exposed through mixing with the “gritty materialities of daily economic, political and educational /cultural struggles...so that these positions do not remain only on the theoretical or rhetorical level” (p. 247). I use Apple’s argument as well as others’ in the literature to claim the need to examine the Discourses that are supporting the use of computer technology in the context of this inquiry in order to understand how these Discourses influence the identity construction and investment in learning English for the group of participants in the study.

The Language School is proud of Allée, its in-house designed software program. The program has required a major commitment both in time and money of the Canadian Forces Language School since the mid nineties. A member of the IT staff who has worked closely with the program since the beginning reported that Allée has been 10 years in development at a cost of \$ 12 Million (Personal Communication, April, 2004) and five to six million for ongoing maintenance. It was prepared and continues to be developed and maintained technologically and pedagogically by a staff of six employees from the Information Technology (IT) and curriculum departments at the School. The original version was for Anglophone Canadian military learning French. However, two years ago, a translated version for students learning English was produced. The program was designed especially as a distant learning initiative to respond to the needs of many Canadian military personnel who are unable to re-

locate to attend classes but who need to learn a second language as part of their job description. The program is directed towards helping students learn basic skills in English and French. The e-learning curriculum is connected closely to its paper version. This connection is intended to allow students in the basic computer course to make a smooth transfer to in-class instruction at a more advanced level once they arrive at the Language School. The Allié computer program consists of multiple activities and exercises in pronunciation, listening, writing and reading that students can self-correct after completing. A dictionary and phonetic exercises have also been developed to compliment the curriculum. The dictionary was produced on site and took almost a year and the time of several employees to complete.

Students are expected to have done one level in ten weeks, or one hundred hours. They are partnered with tutors located at the school. From their own computers, tutors are able to check student progress by viewing assessment charts. With this information, they then can respond online or speak directly to their students by phone to discuss more serious problems. The students themselves are in 20 language centres, called laboratories, scattered across Canada located on military bases. A CD version of the curriculum has been made to allow students to work at a computer on their own time outside laboratory hours and an online version is presently being prepared.

The Allié program has had its share of challenges. One has been justifying the reportedly twelve million that has been spent on developing and maintaining the program thus far. An IT specialist working with Allié told me that some laboratories in the country are often underused (Personal Communication, April 2004). For example, in November 2004, there were only 20 military students across Canada using Allié. A staff member who was working on the curriculum commented that there are some serious weaknesses from a pedagogical perspective. She traced these weaknesses to the fact that experts in computer technology rather than pedagogy spearheaded the program (Personal Communication, March, 2004). From a technical perspective, some employees voiced concern about emphasis being placed on development. For example, the dictionary that was prepared as part of the software program could have been

bought commercially and adapted for a fraction of the cost. *“Our interest is in teaching language, after all, not developing technology”* (Personal communication July 5, 2004).

There have been some serious glitches in the original version of the Allée curriculum that caused problems for the international students learning English as well. For example, the directives for exercises in the first levels of the program were in French, which the international students don't understand. Administrators at the Language School are well aware of these glitches and have assigned special projects to employees in curriculum to find and correct the glitches. Some of these glitches have been cleared up, especially the typographic ones, but teachers still report on-going problems for the international students using the program. For example, because the Allée program is not based on the CFEC (Canadian Forces English Curriculum) International, it is difficult to co-ordinate activities for students in harmony with what has already been taught. One teacher commented that *“If you start a theme halfway through [in order to have students practise a particular function], the students quickly lose interest and become frustrated because they are not familiar with the words and structures that appeared earlier [in the thematic unit]”* (Personal communication, April 22, 2004).

Training sessions for using the various technologies that are available to teachers is the responsibility of two different departments. The technical department provides 'ad hoc' instructions and trouble shooting for the traditional technology in the classroom, such as the TVs, radio amplifiers, cassette recorders, VCRs, and DVD players. The Information Technology (IT) section is responsible for explaining to teachers how to use the computer equipment as well as responding to their on-going needs. The IT section periodically gives group sessions to teachers in order to update and train them in various programs available on their personal computers. However, these sessions are not always timely. For example, when new photocopiers were installed recently the training was provided only to a few administrative employees because training dollars were being saved for when access to the photocopiers would be available from each classroom computer. The situation caused severe disruption to teachers and eventually to their

students because the machines, when used by the untrained teachers, were constantly breaking down. Also, when the new access to the photocopiers from the teachers' computers was installed, several teachers mentioned to me that the training that was promised never materialized.

There have been no training courses offered for using the software in the Multimedia Room. As a result, some teachers have been reluctant to take advantage of what is available. Those who use the material do so as a diversion from classroom activity. As one teacher explained: "*We have to do something in here. The students want it. It's embarrassing*" (Personal communication, Ann, September 24, 2003). During the inquiry period, four of the thirteen teachers used the Multimedia Room on a weekly basis with their students. Of the other nine teachers, some used the computers periodically but most not at all.

As mentioned, students and teachers have access to Internet on the ten computers in each Multimedia Room. Because of security issues there are frequently times when the Internet is down. Besides the period of three weeks when the English teachers were trying to undo a decision that the Internet not be available during class hours, there were several other times when students had no access. The Internet provides an essential means of outside contact for the officers in the program and they quickly become discouraged when it is down. Many students daily keep abreast of news from family, work colleagues and national online newspapers. During the first ten days of the course and then again on several days throughout the program that started in January 2004, students had no connection with these outside contacts. Is uninterrupted Internet access a luxury or a necessity? The fact that the Language School military administration has provided access codes to the pavilions and again to the computer room inside the pavilions so that students can use them twenty four hours seven days a week may indicate that they see the Internet as an important service that should be available to the foreign students who attend their programs. As an educator who views learning English as a means of participating and critically examining the dialogues that are being constructed globally, I question how the participants in the study can begin to

improve in English outside of formal learning contexts in order to critically understand these dialogues without having full access to them?

Judging from my observations on the occasions I passed by the Multimedia Room and from reports of students in the interviews, when the Internet is operational, the ten computers in the Multimedia Room are constantly booked. In the past, some students have told me that they get up in the middle of the night in order to have a chance to go online. An Afghan officer observed: *"There are 10 computers for 70 guys who are trying to solve their problems: to learn something in English or communicate with relatives. Sometimes you have to wait one hour"* (Interview notes, April 13, 2004). On the subject of computer technology, the same Afghan officer lamented that there were no typing courses given to his colleagues in his delegation. Many spent the first few months not using the computers presumably because of embarrassment or feeling intimidated by the machines.

Student Contexts

There have been some significant changes in the makeup of the student body since the MA study. Officers from other countries have been added to the roster, for example Afghanistan, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia. Despite the greater variety of nationalities, Russian is still the lingua franca.

I have seen changes in the economic status in some of the groups who have arrived in the program as well. For example, in the original group of Ukrainians money seemed to factor into many of these officers having an opportunity to use English outside the classroom. For example, if students were all going out to a restaurant together with their teachers on a cultural outing, even though they received a per diem, the Ukrainians would not eat and miss the opportunity to use English in order to save the money to bring home. Although I still saw signs of these habits among a few of the students there seems to be generally more money available for spending. Certainly, among the Ukrainians, I found evidence of spending on computers, cameras

and travel that I had not seen before in the group of officers in the MA inquiry. One of the participants, Yevhen in the present inquiry, went to Niagara Falls three times to visit relatives over the course of his stay in Canada. Some of the Ukrainians I interviewed arrived with their own laptops. Another recently wrote that he was about to purchase one now that he is home again partly in order to keep up his English.

Students from other countries, for example Afghanistan, have replaced the Ukrainians on the socio-economic scale, a scale that is rarely discussed but forms an unvoiced influence in interactions both inside and outside the classroom. A miscommunication before their arrival meant that the Afghans came without their uniforms. The fact that they are the only officers in civilian clothes further defined them as 'different'.

During the period of the inquiry, the Poles, Czechs and Hungarians had been advised that their attendance in the program would no longer be subsidized by Canada. With the prospects of having to pay their own way, some of the students from these countries talked with concern about what they could do to maintain the skills they had learned in English after they returned home. All involved in the program realized that the price would be too high for the militaries of these three countries to continue to send their officers. The makeup of the student population in the program was beginning to shift to the East, to Asia and to Central America.

Summary

I have described the various contexts within which the inquiry took place. These contexts were important not only for understanding the factors surrounding the officers' SL learning in Canada but are keys to understanding the historical, political and cultural identities of the participants before they arrived. This historical perspective is crucial to my analysis of the officers' learning as they interacted with computer technology both in the European site and in Canada and the changes to the construction of language and their identities in the virtual site online.

CHAPTER FIVE

NETWORKING AS A MEANS TO BECOMING

Introduction

English is like an ocean – [It is] too difficult to swim in the whole ocean...The main problem is we don't speak good because we only have short time to talk to teacher. We, some people need to speak to other people.

(Kahlil, an Afghan student in the MTAP program speaking to me in an interview, March 23, 2004)

Learning is in the conversation. (Tarule, 1996, p. 282)

Khalil's words and Tarule's observation support the Bakhtinian belief that learning of any kind including languages is dialogic. Khalil's words and our discussion about the meaning of these words allowed me to understand from his perspective the nature of his struggles to learn English. To be thrown into the "sea of English" is an overwhelming experience for him. To face the need to converse in English in the 'real' world, he depends on guided practice with teachers and others in conversation, to improve his skills in English and to give him the courage to speak. This need for guided conversation in English was repeated many times throughout the discussions I had with the participants both in the Canadian site and in the virtual setting online.

In former Soviet Socialist Republics, the State interfered with, or more often silenced, many of the conversations that took place there. Learning was limited to what the Party considered as acceptable knowledge and speaking meant repeating the Party line especially in public spaces such as classrooms and military working settings. Since 1991, much has begun to change in this part of world. Some speculate that change has been precipitated by developments in technology especially in the media, computers and the Internet. People in these countries suddenly are privy to new information and new conversations or dialogues through media and the Internet that in the past would

have been unheard of. Besides learning from these conversations that there is a life to be led that is radically different than the controlled one of the past, people in Eastern and Central Europe have begun to realize that their access to the global dialogues that are taking place and shaping the world will depend on their ability to speak English. Unfortunately, after years of being told what to say, having a voice in these conversations has not come easily. Shaking off the belief that their personal opinion is neither worthy nor acceptable of being expressed is difficult to change over night. And so because the skills are lacking, it is easier to remain silent.

An important theme that emerged from my analysis of the military individuals' interview comments, and from my observations and their interactions on line is the need for these learners to "practise speaking", that is to engage in authentic and meaningful conversations and dialogues in order to improve their second language proficiency. However, certain factors in their language learning contexts, as I discuss here, prevented them from having that opportunity. Although they were fully aware that they needed to speak English in order to improve, there were few speakers of the English language in their own countries and even in the Canadian formal learning context with whom they could interact. Second, their national, social, personal and military histories compounded and contributed to their feelings of inadequacy in the second language and led many to construct identities that prevented them from speaking. By "identity"(Peirce, 2000), I refer to how they understood who they are in the world around them, how that relationship is constructed across time and space and how they understood their possibilities for the future (p. 41). Third, where computer technology could have offered these learners a way to enter authentic conversations, too often it was used by learning institutions, programs and teachers to control what, when and how speaking takes place. For example, most of the time that the officers were allowed in the computer room, if at all, was spent using software based on drill practice exercises and where communication with family, work and colleagues was prevented by frequent interruptions in Internet service. As I argue later, these online interactions were important sources of knowledge and social resources for some of the participants

and when they were denied access, their subjectivities in the classroom were adversely influenced. Thus, when the opportunity to engage did present itself in the classroom or outside, many of the learners in the study found themselves in the paradoxical positions of being shy to speak and apologetic of their capabilities in their second language. They were prevented from developing an agency in their language learning and kept from entering the very conversations that are crucial to learning.

On the other hand, when these learners were given the chance to use computer technology to take advantage of guided practice in their second language to communicate, some of them undertook to reform the selves they displayed in the classroom. They began to construct new identities by appropriating new voices, which meant more interaction in the language and a new sense of self and language fluency. By self, I am referring to what Harré (1987) references as “the still centre of experience” (p. 110), a system that is coherent and dynamic (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995) continually changing and emerging as individuals take part in the cultural practices, especially verbal ones, of their lives. For example, Sergey was quite silent inside and outside the classroom and constantly deferred to others in discussions. When he had the opportunity to be involved in conversations using computer technology, he was able to appropriate words from text on the Internet. He used these texts to claim an authoritative voice, which eventually led him to assume the role of leadership in the discussion and a new subjectivity.

The question I asked and explored with the participants concerned how computers can be used to serve their need to claim opportunities to use English and at the same time mediate new identities. In this chapter, I discuss this mediating process for the Central and Eastern European and Afghan military officers studying English in the Canadian geographical space. I draw on all the data sources but primarily the documentation from oral interviews I conducted with them, as well as the transcriptions from synchronous and asynchronous conversations the participants had on computers using Daedalus (1997) software. In the former, I found rich first-person accounts of what it means to the officers’ identities to integrate into a multicultural classroom in

North America, into the SL conversations that take place there and the discourses that control their entry. In the latter, I explore the process of this integration through the semiotic evidence of network-based speaking/writing discussions. I argue that for some of these officers at least, computer technology can serve two disparate functions depending on its use. Based on traditional instructivist theories with their transmission-based modes of SL learning, it can be used to reinforce their identities as marginalized. Alternatively, supported by constructivist theories and communicative approaches to SL learning, it can offer a mediational means for some of the participants in their struggle to claim a voice in the conversations that they are beginning to be a part of, both in their multicultural classrooms and more broadly in the international military contexts in which they work.

Studying English in Canada

I think people in Canada live very good, work hard, very good politic, economic situation is very good. Sometimes they have problems but they are small problems. They have very good medical services when they don't work. They live safely. It is very goof for me to see because in Poland many people have hard life. (Jan, a Polish officer in the MTAP program, May 21, 2004)

Jan's comments made in the final days of his stay in Canada reflect some of the conversations and observations he has made during the five and a half months he spent learning English. He sees the good things that exist for people in Canada and he reflects on how they compare to his own country, where life for many is "hard". He suggests that being exposed to this way of living has been very good for him. It allows him to see new possibilities. Social historians Schchenko and Schukin (2004) studying Central and Eastern European countries since the fall of communism observe: "They never expected that in the course of their lives, they would ever have an option of seeing capitalism with their own eyes" (p. 94).

When military students from abroad like Jan arrive in Canada in order to study English, for some it is the first time that they see capitalism and democracy "with their own eyes". Indeed the director of the MTAP program, Arthur Mansoulis, shared

that he is under great pressure from the prospective NATO countries who are being offered assistance in language training, for efficiency and economic reasons, to send North American ESL teachers to these countries as opposed to having students come to Canada. He has withstood this pressure because as he stated to me *"You may be a very nice person. If I sent you over there as a teacher, the students you taught would meet one very nice Canadian, but they would not know how our democracy works or what other Canadians are like. That is personally very important to me"* (Personal Communication, January 13, 2004). However honourable this motive may be, the stories behind the 'coming to Canada' are often left untold in a formal sense within the Department. The experiences of the multicultural groups who come are only judged by the statistics generated from evaluation forms quickly completed on the last day of the course and from the language level results of students derived from the end-of-term tests. The questions in the evaluation forms are intended to elicit an understanding of students' satisfaction with physical and pedagogical aspects of the program and with the organized sociocultural outings. The final report prepared from the statistics of the responses by the senior teacher is then sent up the chain of command for those in 'higher places' to contemplate and discuss. A summary of some of these statistics, recently sent to teachers for the program between August to December, 2004 indicated that the students in that program were generally very satisfied with their experience. It is noteworthy, however, that only 45% of the students reported that they were satisfied with their opportunities to speak English. In the space for written commentaries, the question was asked: What part of the course would you have liked to do more? The majority of responses concerned an increase in opportunities to speak and use the language. Following is a list of their responses:

I would like to increase practice work during our course.

I like to practice to do more.

More speaking contact with Canadian officers.

Visited some place we had talked with some people by English. Grammar rulls.

I like to speak for the all time during the class room.

More speaking with Canadians and more time outside the class.

Practise speaking.

Reading books with audio support.

Maybe the grammar.

Speaking, Listening.

I would have liked to practice English language in this course.

Both.

More listening activities focused on "How listen and understand English."

Meetings with other Canadian classes.

Listening.

Listening.

These parts were listening, speaking because this course offered me good possibility for me.

Conversing with Canadian students and out class activities.

Speaking and writing.

I think we have to do all of them. Because all of them were usefull for me.

It'll be usefool to increase practice of speaking.

I would liked to do more speaking.

Writing exercises.

Writing.

I think examination was for other level because we study at other level. Visits.

The speaking practice. For me, speaking was the most important goal, but unfortunately I hadn't many possibilities to practice it.

Writing.

In speaking.

(Excerpts from the End of Term Evaluations, December, 2004)

Interviews

Between March 3 and May 21, 2004 I interviewed a group of twenty-four students from Ukraine, Russia, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Afghanistan (See Table 2). I used these interviews as collaborative discussions, which the participants and I shared together each week for thirteen weeks, not just as sources of data to be abstracted and tabulated but rather as a hermeneutic research process where we constructed meanings in order to make sense of their lives in Canada learning English, who they are, what they are doing and where they are headed (Polkinghorne, 1988). I argue, just as their SL learning is a process of going from other to self regulated through the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978), so too was the analytical process of my understanding of their experiences. It was a shared activity whereby I was guided by their words and meanings to a point where I could discuss the findings from my own perspective with them as a SL educator and researcher. Discussing and analyzing these conversational interviews then was an open process of intentionally looking for what was meaningful and important to the purpose of the research, that is, to understand the identity construction of the participants and the powerful discourses that influenced that construction as they learned English in Canada especially when that learning involved computer technology. The dialogic analytical process led not only to an understanding of that learning but to a counter argument and change. This on-going process of analysis, understanding, counterargument and change connects to the Bakhtinian notion that *“language is a continuous generative process implemented in the social-verbal interaction of speakers”* (Volosinov, 1973).

The group of officers I interviewed had come to Canada at the expense of the Canadian government in order to take part in social-verbal interactions in English. All but one of the participants in the interviews were quick to point out to me that they were happy to be here. *“I have good feelings to be here”*. Raqib, from Afghanistan said (Interview, March 8, 2004). The exception was a Hungarian student who had just

Table 2: Participants at Canadian Site

PARTICIPANT	NATIONALITY	APPROXIMATE AGE
1. Major Thomas	Czech	mid thirties
2. Col Zedenek	Czech	mid forties
3. Maj Miroslav	Czech	mid forties
4. Capt Raquib	Afghan	mid thirties
5. LCol Abdhul Ghias	Afghan	mid thirties
6. Major Kahlil	Afghan	mid thirties
7. Captain Farid	Afghan	late twenties
8. Cdr. Dmitry	Russian	mid twenties
9. LCdr Ruslan	Russian	late twenties
10. Col Vasily	Russian	mid thirties
11. LCol Vitalii	Ukrainian	early thirties
12. Maj Oleksander	Ukrainian	mid thirties
13. Lt Yevgen	Ukrainian	late twenties
14. LCol Yevhen	Ukrainian	late thirties
15. Col Sergii	Ukrainian	mid forties
16. Capt Andriy	Ukrainian	mid twenties
17. LCol Wieslaw	Polish	early forties
18. Capt Waldemar	Polish	mid thirties
19. LCol Jan	Polish	early forties
20. Cdr Marek	Polish	mid forties
21. LCol Andriy	Polish	mid thirties
22. Major Slawomir	Polish	mid thirties
23. LCol Ferenc	Hungarian	late thirties
24. Maj Lazlo	Hungarian	mid thirties

completed a 10-month course in his own country and as he explained: *“I didn’t learn much. The object was to pass the test”*. Then when he was anxious to get back to his job after the language training in Budapest, he was informed that he was being sent to Canada: *“I was not too happy to come to Canada. But I have to do it for my job”*

(Ferenc, Individual Interview, March 4, 2004). With Ferenc as with all the military officers in the program, the decision to come to Canada for the language course was made by others. Sometimes the competition to be chosen was fierce. In Afghanistan for example, Raquib mentioned he was tested with 90 others for the 10 spaces that were available from his country. Many of the students said they felt privileged to be allowed the opportunity. *"All my life I dreamed about trip to other country, maybe Canada or U.S.A."* Vitalii revealed to me one day near the beginning of the interview sessions (Interview, March 18, 2004). The opportunity is dually rewarded - a chance to improve in English in a native speaking environment and a means of making extra money for families at home.

The chance to improve in English was of vital importance to many of the participants. For example, Lazlo, explained that he was the Chief of Protocol for the Hungarian military and spends a lot of time with foreign visitors. Another officer, Sergii, works as chief of a medical institute in Ukraine and is frequently called upon to translate documents and interpret in medical cases. A Polish officer, Andrej, works with a new unit in his military since 9/11, which is responsible for rescuing hostages and protecting dignitaries visiting political hotspots around the world. He travels a lot in his position and mentioned that he had recently worked with international teams in such hotspots as Yugoslavia, Haiti and Iraq. *"In these situations, communication must be very clear"*, he noted. When he first started with the unit, he explained that his English was very poor. *"I didn't speak. My colleagues spoke and supported me"* (Interview, March 4, 2004). Slawomir, another Polish student, described how he worked for an Air Search and Rescue (S&R) team and frequently attended international meetings with other teams. He recalled how difficult his first meetings were when he was unable to express himself. Being a very outgoing person with strong opinions he found it hard not to talk. At the same time he explained that he was hesitant to use the English he did know: *"All my English practise was in the classroom and my English was very artificial"* (Interview, March 4, 2004).

Most of the students I met the first day of the interviews wanted to talk about their weaknesses in speaking. They apologized to me, sometimes repeatedly, at that first interview for their “mistakes”. Some blamed these weaknesses on their former efforts at learning. There were those who were self taught. Yevhen, for example, explained how he had taught himself for two years before he married; after that he explained his life was too busy. Working six days a week from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm and one and a half hours travel each way to the Base where he worked, left little time for anything else. Any time and energy he had left, he said, he wanted to devote to his family. When he did study English on his own he used a dictionary, books and cassettes. “*The cassettes were horrible,*” he mentioned. He talked about how he carefully covered up answers in the textbook with a piece of red glass, so determined was he to memorize what he needed to know. After two years he was proud to have learned 2000 words, although by the time he finally was given an opportunity to take a formal language course, he reported that he only “*had 1000 words still*” (Interview, March 4, 2004). Farid, an Afghan, told me that his father who could speak English taught him many words behind closed doors at home, but was never allowed to speak English in public during the Taliban rule. Andrej remembered how he would buy sheets of paper at the local store, each with an English thematic unit, because at the time he was beginning to teach himself, English books were unavailable, a fallout from Communist times when anything English was forbidden.

Some of the participants in the interviews who had learned English on their own before coming to Canada talked about computer software programs they had used at home in their after work hours. Tomas, who had turned to self-study when his request for language training had been refused by his supervisors, used computer games and MSN chat to help him learn. These programs were interesting but he said that he felt he had only gained passive knowledge and saw a lot of disadvantages to this form of learning, especially with no one to speak to and to correct his pronunciation. Other students were enthused with the software they had used and had even brought it to work with while in Canada. They proudly talked about their favourites such as English

Translator and Euro +. A couple of the officers were anxious to demonstrate them for me on their laptops during the interviews. The list of programs they mentioned were: E-teacher, Plus Talk It, English in a Pill, English Translator 3, Euro +, Teacher 4.0, Collins dictionary and BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation).

Ruslan, a young Russian officer who lived in the far remote eastern end of the country, was completely self-taught in English. He said he had used many computer programs in the past especially to learn vocabulary: *"I have enough vocabulary to express any thought. But I can't use them"* (Interview, March 29, 2004). Many of the participants expressed that they saw learning vocabulary as a constant and one of the most important challenges in learning English. These officers equated their knowledge of vocabulary with knowledge of English. Some explained the complicated ways they would try to increase their vocabulary bank. Most admitted that once they 'learned' the words they often were not able to actually use them, in a conversation either because they forgot or had no opportunity to use them or were not sure how to place them in a sentence correctly. Raquib observed: *"If I speak English everywhere I can remember and use my new words. It is the easiest way to learn English"* (Interview, March 29, 2004). Leons, a Latvian officer commented: *"If I want to understand English I must have good vocabulary. If I want to improve my pronunciation I must get conversation with real English people"* (Interview, April 6, 2004). Khalil, an Afghan officer stated that: *"For me a very good opportunity to learn is to speak. When I'm able to tell other people about problems, when I must react quickly"* (Interview, April 13, 2004).

Taking a work-sponsored English language course as opposed to learning on their own had the potential of offering the officers a chance for conversation in English they recognized that they badly needed in order to improve. These officers considered the opportunity to take part in learning in a formal way a privilege. This was due in part to the fact that learning a language allowed them time away from a demanding job and work schedule to concentrate on English. Also, many believed taking a formal language course was a step towards having greater knowledge of English through practice in the language and of paramount importance to their career advancement and financial

stability. As well, perhaps because of their backgrounds living under a restrictive regime not to mention their life in the military, I observed that many liked to be in a situation where they were led rather than the reverse. On many occasions throughout the interviews and indeed in my experience working in the immersion program, I heard comments such as *“You’re the teacher. It’s what you decide”* or such things as *“You tell me what to do and I will do it.”* Being in subordinate positions in the classroom with respect to the teacher and indeed in their lives as military based on their rank seemed quite natural to these officers. I recall one teacher telling me that her Afghan students for example, refused to call her by her first name as was the custom in the program but instead insisted on the polite form of address “Teacher” as used in his country (Personal Communication, Anne, May, 2004). Not having learned the voices of power for historical, political and cultural reasons meant that many of the officers initially lacked the critical skills to reflect on the powerful discourses that controlled their language learning in the program. Without these critical skills some of the participants seemed unable to consider the possibility of having more agency in their previous courses they had taken and in the present one in Canada.

The officers who had the chance to take language courses in the past in their own countries, sometimes perceived that the courses were beneficial. From my discussions with students who were pleased with former courses they had taken, it was inevitably because the courses offered opportunities for speaking in situations of ‘real’ communication. In such courses, the local teachers taught grammar and there was the added benefit of having access to American or British teachers for periodic private conversations. Rightly or wrongly many ‘glorified’ having access to native speakers of English in their courses. Yevhen, a young Ukrainian officer explained the daily schedule of one such course in order as they appeared in the day:

- review of words learned the day before, for example teacher holds up card with Russian word, students give English equivalent;
- review of grammar from previous day
- new words

- new grammar
 - test of vocabulary and grammar prepared by local teacher
 - listening
 - American listening tests
 - each week on Friday and Saturday there were tests in speaking, writing and listening. For the speaking and writing tests students would prepare topics on their own to write or speak about. Saturday, there were American reading and more listening tests.
 - weekly 20-minute conversation with an American teacher
- (Interview, March 4th, 2004)

Yevhen considered the emphasis on grammar and vocabulary a welcome part of this course. His years of studying language on his own and under the old regime had convinced him that to learn a language, it was essential to know the grammar and vocabulary. Indeed, he did have a very good grasp of grammar, noticeably when he sometimes wrote e-mails to me. However, he admitted, that he rarely participated in oral discussions in class. This next excerpt is from one of Yevhen's initial e-mails to me:

After that I arrived in Canada, first of all I have called my cousin, Irina. She has been warned before and waited for my call. We were exciting [excited] because our last meeting was more than 30 years ago. While we were speaking she offered me to visit her family as soon as it was possible. We decided that I had to visit her on the first long weekend and later we switched [exchanged] our photographs by e-mail to recognize each other. (E-mail from Yevhen, March, 2004)

Yevhen's e-mail indicates that he already had a fairly good linguistic structural command of English at the onset of the course. It also indicates that he was beginning to use computer technology (and images), via the Internet to negotiate for himself an entrance into an English-speaking world, something he was as yet unable to do in the context of his learning in the classroom or the immersion program.

Other officers I spoke with reported that their experiences taking courses in their own countries were less positive. Waldemar mentioned a course in Poland with very

strict young and inexperienced Polish teachers who tested him daily; he was required to complete lots of exercises and homework. In this course, he felt he had learned a minimal amount. *"You can't force someone to learn,"* he suggested (Interview, March 8, 2004). Sergii took a course with the British Council in Kiev. *"As a rule, we studied grammar reading and writing. They were not of much use,"* he said; *"I have not had enough practice to speaking"* (Interview, March 4 2004). Vitalii had taken a similar course with the British Council in Kiev. *"It was difficult. I had Ukrainian teachers. I understand all new material but my head doesn't use this material... When I want to use this sentence [its words and structures], I don't remember"* (Interview, March 18 2004). This excerpt suggests that even though Vitalii understands how to use the grammar and structures he learned in his course, the knowledge he gained was unusable when it came to authentic conversation. The facts and rules that were taught to him were forgotten or unproductive when he had to actively speak in English. The problem in Ukraine, according to Vitalii, is to find a chance to practise English. *"Ukraine has many problems,"* he added. He seemed embarrassed by his inability to speak well and was one of the participants who regularly apologized for his 'poor' English.

The lack of opportunity to practise English in their home countries was repeated again and again throughout the discussions with the participants. Slawomir, expressed well what others alluded to, that a vital part of learning English was having a chance to engage, especially orally, in conversation with other speakers of English. Perhaps, because he had tried to teach English to his own daughter when she was required to catch up after switching schools, he showed a good deal of understanding when it came to language learning. He pointed out the first day I met him: *"I think I learn better when I am with others and I do ordinary things. For me it is the best situation for learning"* (Interview, March 8, 2004). Most students I spoke with referred to the importance of finding others to speak with during their stay in Canada. They were aware that practicing speaking was a deciding factor in their improvement in the language. Indeed, many regarded that having an opportunity to engage in authentic oral conversation with English speakers as the single most reason for them to have come

to the course. Wieslaw explained: *“very important to me speaking because I need to in my job. When we have to write a letter I will get a translator. But when I talk to me English colleagues or German colleagues no translator. Only are translators at official meetings”*(Interview, March 23, 2004). Tomas supported the same sentiment: *“I don’t want to learn very strictly in my room but I prefer in ordinary life. Best is learning during lessons with our teachers then after that I can speak with native speakers in the gym”* (Interview, March 29, 2004). Tomas sees practicing conversation in a classroom context as valuable preparation for speaking with others in ‘real’ situations such as in the gym.

At the beginning of the interview period when the students had recently arrived in Canada, they all seemed eager to find opportunities to speak and use the language both inside and outside the classroom. Their continued interest in having one-on-one interviews with me, both during class and in their free time, indicates their enthusiasm to practise speaking English. Classrooms offered an ideal place for participants like the Polish officers Slawomir and Wieslaw and the Afghan Farid to take part in the conversations they considered so important to their development in English. I observed some of their conversations when I spent time in each of their classrooms. I also observed that all three officers held positions of authority with respect to other students in the group. For example, Slawomir, a young and intelligent Polish officer, held valuable socioeconomic resources compared to two more highly ranked Ukrainians, a less outgoing Hungarian and much older Polish officer in his group. Similarly, Wieslaw, an experienced and well-travelled Polish officer in a class with four Afghanistan students and a very young Russian, was able to use his experience and comparative socio-economic resources to be the main speaker in the group and to preoccupy the attention of the teacher. Farid, an Afghan student in the same group, began in a subordinated position in this dynamic. The students from other countries and some administrators saw the Afghans as ‘poor’ ‘unwesternized’ and questioned their worthiness to be in the school because of their lack of basic skills in English. Farid, on the other hand, quickly overcame this subordinate position in his classroom. All

students in his group soon realized that Farid was a member of a rich and powerful family. His brother is a general in the Afghanistan military and Farid himself had served as chief bodyguard to the former ruler of Afghanistan who was replaced when the Taliban regime seized power. Farid had travelled and experienced much in his young life. He bragged about the number of guns he had that he used to protect his family and country. He has two sisters who are doctors and work in European countries. His past experiences along with his socio-economic background earned him a powerful position in the classroom. He was able to use his social resources, that is, as member of an elite family and having important connections, as currency in claiming authority to speak in the classroom. Just as Julie and Eva in the Norton and Toohey's study (2001) claimed a voice by taking advantage of their resources and changed their positions in dialectical interactions, I observed that all three students, Slawomir, Wieslaw and Farid claimed the right to speak, and to be heard as they regularly used their second language in the classroom.

Other officers were less fortunate in their pursuit of opportunities to speak English. Dmitry, Ferenc, and Yevhen, for example, had difficulty finding their voice in their respective groups. The following vignette based on my field notes from the interview phase of the inquiry reflects Dmitry's dilemma:

A Bad Day for Dmitry

Dmitry was not in good form today. As he approaches me to sit down to talk I notice that he has a deep furrow in his brow and that he looks worried. When I greet him and ask how he is doing, he responds with: "*I don't know what I will do about my language*". He is worrying about having another change in teachers. It is the third one he has had in eight weeks. He seems anxious to talk to me about his feelings. He explains that the problem is in his opportunity to speak and how the class is spent: "*50% of the time teacher talks with Wieslaw and Farid; 50% of the time not talking at all, only teacher talks.*" He continues: "*Last two weeks I see no progress in my study.*" When I ask Dmitry why he doesn't speak he explains that when he does Farid interrupts or is able to respond faster to a question from the teacher. (Interview, March 18, 2004)

Dmitry's fears about his classroom are weighing heavily on him at this point in

the course. He knows that he has been sent to Canada to make significant improvements in English and that he must speak the language in order to progress. His efforts are thwarted in the context of the classroom because his right to speak has been denied him for two reasons. First, he has had to adapt to a change of teachers and all that that entails. He also recognizes that the teacher is the authority and principle decision maker for determining who gets to speak in the classroom, including herself, and that, within this scenario, he has no right to a voice. When Dimtry does manage to speak, his more dominant fellow classmate interrupts him. He recognizes this classmate's resources, such as more knowledge of English and higher socio-economic status in the group. Indeed the classmate is more aggressive in proclaiming his powerful position and Dimitry is forced to defer to him in an attempt at conversation. Dimitry is silenced. In a subsequent conversation with Wieslaw, Dimitry's more vocal classmate, about the dynamics in this group he explained why others don't speak: *"That is not my problem. It is a competition; everyone have to fight to speak. If they don't speak, it is their fault. They are afraid to speak"* (Interview, March 18 2004). To Wieslaw, the classroom is not the place for true communicative interaction where listening and allowing others to speak are important. Instead, he perceives his second language experience in the classroom as a competitive battleground for the attention of the major holder of power, which he considers to be the teacher in the class. Two other participants used the same word "competition" when speaking about the opportunities to speak in their classrooms. As Cornell West (1993a, 1993b) points out, those who have access to resources and power will have the right to speak and to be listened to. In this scenario, Dimitry appears doomed to silence.

Ferenc is another participant who talked about his problems in the classroom during the interviews. Ferenc, a quiet Hungarian officer who spoke in a soft unassuming way, alluded to his difficult past when speaking about his son who was about to graduate from high school. He mentioned that he didn't want his son to follow in his footsteps and join the military. *"The first ten years [in the military] were very very difficult for me. I don't want the same for my son"* (Interview, May 6, 2004). Ferenc often worked

as a trainer in his military job. In this capacity, he explained: *"I'm a leader and I have to speak a lot in the [training] classroom"* (Interview, March 24, 2004). But in the immersion classroom, he reported: *"I'm shy because I afraid I make mistakes. It is hard to speak. I think so. I feel my colleagues have better English than I. I know a lot of grammar rules and expressions but when I have to speak I don't know"* (Interview, April 14, 2004). Despite his knowledge of grammar and his comfort in speaking as a trainer in his own country, Ferenc felt at a disadvantage in the second language classroom. He did not feel he could use his knowledge in dialogues with others. When I asked if he could change this situation, he replied: *"I think I can't."* The social identity that Ferenc had constructed in the classroom was different from his identity in his own working environment; he felt powerless to change. Ferenc's discursive identity positioning of himself, seems to be based in the way he understands others in his group position him.

Yevhen, who was in the same classroom as Ferenc, rarely spoke. When I asked him why, he said that he had had trouble with his throat when he was younger and couldn't project his voice well. Yet, their classroom was a very small room and the eight students' chairs and desks were arranged in a semi circle in close proximity. One of their classmates, Slawomir, mentioned in frustration during an interview how he and others in the group found the silences of Ferenc and Yevhen difficult.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. People have good opportunity to discuss but students don't speak. I create new subjects about independence. I try to discuss with every people but if these people don't discuss this situation I try to improve my knowledge, my words, my pronunciation. (Interview, March 24, 2004)

In this excerpt from a conversation I had with Slawomir, he laments the fact that students like Yevhen and Ferenc are missing out on opportunities to speak and use English in the classroom. When he introduces what he feels is an interesting topic, what he refers to as a "hot stone", some students don't get involved, so he occupies the conversation and uses the time to his own advantage. When I ask Slawomir why he thinks Yevhen and others in the class don't speak he replies: *"Yevhen has a lot of knowledge, but maybe he is shy, maybe environment, unfamiliar country, difference*

between salary, equipment” (Interview, March 31, 2004). Slawomir suggests that Yevhen’s discursively constructed personal identity in the classroom, based on his socio-economic status in North America and his position among other military officers in the group whose salaries surpass his own, overrides the assets he had in English and prevents him from participating.

On another occasion, Slawomir wanted to talk about a further attempt he had made to create a discussion. He said that he had introduced a topic that he was sure would elicit conversation in the group, but Yevhen did not participate. Slawomir speculates that the reasons are partly political. In the next excerpt from my interview notes, Slawomir explains:

It depends on the political situation. Ukraine has independence short time. We have two blocks: East and West. There was a lot of indoctrination and people from Ukraine feel this pressure of indoctrination still. When I ask what is your opinion about independence he [Yevhen] said: “*I saw on TV program about bad habits (smoking)*”. He totally changed the subject-like independence is a taboo subject. They [Ukrainians] are in another country. Last time it [Canada] was an enemy country in Warsaw pact. We are now in the NATO pact. Ukraine is still not. As soldiers we know about these things. Maybe he is afraid about his future. If he tells more about different subjects he will be fired. (Interview, April 7, 2004)

Slawomir feels a responsibility in the classroom to encourage talking and discussion. He sees the opportunity to study English in Canada as the only chance for most officers to make strides in the important task of improving their ability to speak English. Moreover, he believes that the classroom where he spends the majority of his stay in Canada must be a place for practicing English if he is to succeed at attaining his socio-linguistic goals. He recognizes that some officers in his class are not entering into the discussion and so he tries to introduce topics that will spark more reaction. Unfortunately, Yevhen feels threatened and instead changes the subject. Slawomir thinks that Yevhen’s unwillingness to enter discussions, despite having first hand knowledge about the subject, is due to his fear of reprisal from his superiors. Speaking out perhaps could even cost Yevhen his job. On the other hand, Slawomir, like many of his

colleagues continues to distinguish his own country, Poland, from Ukraine. The former he considers 'the west' the latter 'the east'. Such distinctions among former Soviet countries are common with the officers who participate in the program and explain part of the basis for the marginalizing that occurs in the MTAP student body.

The submissive roles that some of the officers accepted among their colleagues explains why they allowed the most powerful in their groups to establish their authority and choose advantageous and authoritative subject positions in the classroom. These submissive roles were not necessarily part of the 'quieter' students' personalities. In fact, in other contexts, these same officers held leadership positions. Dmitry, a platoon commander, despite his basic knowledge of English, spoke openly and freely with me and was very outgoing in his own group of officers. Ferenc was a military trainer in his country and did a lot of talking in the Hungarian classrooms where he taught. Yevhen was a very young Lieutenant Colonel, a rank that indicated his high degree of leadership abilities. The identities these officers constructed in the immersion classroom were partly a result of the cultural identities they brought to the classroom and partly a result of the power structures that were set up there. These power structures were based on symbolic resources such as knowledge, socioeconomic status and cultural capital. Because of these power structures, students like Dmitry, Ferenc and Yevhen were initially silenced and prevented from interacting and speaking in English, a key to their improving in their second language. As Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) have explained, for newcomers to a culture such as Dmitry, Ferenc and Yevhen, learning a second language is not merely a phonological or linguistic problem. Adapting to the new culture is about withstanding and or being converted from "subjects actively embedded in their world", of military, family and social lives in Russia, Hungary and Ukraine respectively and reduced "into objects no longer able to fully animate that world. In other words, it is about loss of agency in the world, an agency in large part constructed through linguistic means" (p. 164).

Using Computer Technology

Computers were considered by the participants as key tools for improving their English both inside and outside the classroom. Perhaps because of their past didactic teaching practices to which they were exposed in other learning situations, some suggested that using software to practise words and grammar would improve their knowledge in English. Others expressed that the Internet was a powerful source of information that would be useful for their English, although in daunting amounts to say the least. Despite their enthusiasm for computer technology generally, the majority of participants expressed opposite feelings about the use of computer technology for testing.

Testing

The power structures that silenced some officers in their classrooms were present in another form at testing time. The testing procedures used in the immersion program were also responsible for a loss of agency for most of the participants. I began to hear comments suggesting the tensions that surrounded the tests about midway through the course and even sooner from some participants. Ruslan, the Russian student who had put enormous energy into preparing himself for his course in Canada through self-teaching and computer programs, was particularly worried about the approaching test periods. He frequently came to the interviews feeling tired and exasperated with his efforts yet determined to improve before the tests. Early on in our discussions, while discussing his frequent attempts to get the attention of the teacher in class, he linked these interruptions in class to the tension he feels about the final tests:

Ruslan's Worries

Ruslan started the interview today by stating: *"I am drained!"* He talks about how much energy it takes to learn English and to *"interfere somebody"* in class in order to practise. When I question him about the fairness of such action to others in the class, he replies that he sees it [speaking English in class] as a *"competition"*. Besides, he adds, he is worried that there are only two months

left. *"I don't think it will be enough for me to get good results. I must force myself to learn more and practise more. Sometimes some thoughts appear to me in my mind when I listen to the radio. I can't catch information. I can't understand every word. I become pessimistic about my test."*

We talk a little about how important the test results are to him. If he gets low marks he says, *"I can't explain my proof [prove] that I am a person of potential. They [my superiors] [will] see me as a useless man, good for nothing."* Before he came to Canada he says he spent two years preparing: *"computer courses, self-study, self-culturation"*. He has done all this in order to win the approval of his superiors and be chosen to come to the immersion program. Now that he has been given the chance he must take optimal advantage. *"Now I must go further and further."* (Interview, March 24, 2004)

The high stakes that the tests hold for Ruslan are not just indicative of their importance to him in proving his own self-worth, that is, whether he is a "useless man or not". More importantly they speak of the powerful Discourses that exist in his life as a military officer. According to Ruslan, these discourses dictate his worth as a human being and as a soldier in terms of his capacity to learn and perform in this case in English. Although some of the officers seemed to take these power relations that existed in their militaries in stride, Ruslan was weighed down by them. Indeed, he was driven and compelled to go to great lengths to study and practise in order to pass the tests, even if this meant being aggressive in class or ignoring his own physical well being. Part of his exhaustion, he explained, was not just from the energy he expended in class, but from the enormous amount of time he spent out of class reviewing and studying in preparation for the tests. All of this combined effort allowed him little time for sleep and relaxation.

Sergii, an older serious-looking Ukrainian officer, was also very preoccupied throughout the immersion program with the testing period that was approaching. Like Ruslan, Sergii had worked hard to teach himself English. He had also taken courses in Kiev at the end of long working days that went from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm, sometimes six and seven days a week. He related how he would often spend his free time translating and reading texts in English, 'as a game'. Indeed, learning English was Sergii's hobby and had been for many years he reported. But the thought of being tested in English in

Canada changed the stakes of the game of learning to a dangerous level. I recall on one of the first occasions I met with Sergii, he implored me to help him. In the following notes from my interviews with him, he vividly expresses his concern for the tests:

Sergii and Testing

Sergii arrived at our meeting today serious looking as usual but he seemed extremely agitated as well. He explained that he really needed me to help him. The final tests were on his mind and he was worried that he was “losing” his time in the classroom and that he wasn’t being well prepared. “*I must be able to know some rules at the end [for the final tests], topics we will have...it would be nice to have some examples with answers*”. Without this specific help he feels he will not be able to pass the tests. Even if he knows the answers to questions on the test, without practice beforehand he will not be able to answer quickly enough. “*But when I have short time and it is nervous situation I can’t*”. He also worries about the nature of the tests, that they will not be understandable to him culturally. “*Sometimes we have different signs [views] in the same problem.*” Every day he works in the test booklets that have answers provided. “*Sometimes I not agree with author. For your country, it is maybe right but for my country not*”. He suggests that these tests may be good for Canadians but he suggests: “*We must live sometime in this country before we can understand*”. (Interview, March 17, 2004)

Sergii’s preoccupation with the end-of-program tests was not new to me. I had seen similar angst over tests many times before among the students in the programs. In explaining to me that he did not feel prepared for the tests because his teacher had not given him the questions, I was reminded that he was simply reflecting the system of learning that was common in his country under the former regime that others had expressed to me before. According to Sergii, it was a teacher’s mandate to be her students’ ally against the administration’s formal testing. The best way for teachers to prepare their students was to give the answers to those tests so that at test time the students who had heeded the teachers’ advice and counsel by memorizing the test answers would excel. Instead, he faced the prospects of presenting himself at the test without knowing the questions and answers. In this scenario, even if he could understand the questions he would not have memorized the answers as he had in his own system, and which for him meant he would not have enough time to complete what

he did know. Also, the American culturally-based nature of some test questions would further impede him from displaying his knowledge of English. The tests were measuring only one kind of literacy and did not draw on the extensive knowledge he felt he had of the English language. In this way, the tests failed to elicit his knowledge.

The prime reason for Sergii's concern about the tests and his lack of agency in preparing for them surface at the end of the program. His fears seem to be based on what his commander would say on viewing his results on his return home. The power that this commander holds over Sergii is particularly vivid in the following excerpt. Although he has not yet received his results from the tests he had done, he is already feeling unhappy and pessimistic about the final level that he might receive.

Sergii's Fears

The test could not check my work here. It may test my knowledge but not my work. We are very different and maybe you can't understand me...But I will receive a rating and when I return home and my commander will see my score, if it is zero, they will say during four months I did not go to class. I did not study. They will think I went to the restaurants, to the nightclubs, only had a holiday. This is a big problem. Nobody can argue that I did not work in this course. But nobody is interested what I did, only in my results... I can imagine what my commander will think. (Interview, May 19, 2004)

Sergii had little faith in the testing process in the program. He felt that they did not reflect the work that he had put into his studying English since he arrived in Canada nor what had been taught to him. In the following excerpt, he speaks of his marginalized feelings because of his unfamiliarity with the form of the standardized tests and his uneasiness with the subject matter:

Tests: Linguistic Knowledge or Culture?

I have not had enough practise with such tests. If I had the same tests in Ukraine, I might get the same mistakes. English, American tests are very different. When I tried to solve the situation, not language, not the grammar, it was difficult for me to find the right answer. I don't go in bank. I don't have familiarity with cheque or credit card. (Interview, March 24, 2004)

Sergii suggests in this excerpt that the testing subject matter is unfamiliar to him. In his country he does not use banks or credit cards. Although he does not use the term, I understand from his words that the electronically-based tests marginalize his knowledge because they are North American-based. Once Sergii participates in the testing, he perceives that his results would not be good, that he would not reach a 'satisfactory' level and that his commander would seriously question his efforts during the program. Despite his hard work and efforts to study, Sergii presumes that his commander might think he had frittered his time away in entertainment during his time in Canada. His feelings of hopelessness regarding the tests are so strong that he even suggests they have been purposely designed to deny him success. In his own role as a teacher, he confided: "*It depends on the teacher [in this case tester]. If I want to give the student a high level I know what I should ask. If the student is intelligent student but his behaviour is bad I know what to ask to give him a low level and to show him what he doesn't know*" (Interview, May 21, 2004). In this excerpt, Sergii feels that the tests were designed to "trap" him, to prove his unworthiness, that he is "*bad*", and to show him what he didn't know. As such, the effects of the tests are that they marginalize him and prevent him from assuming agency in his language learning. Sergii's own inner thoughts and assumptions derive from his previous experiences as a teacher compound his feelings of inadequacy and lack of control in his learning.

Sergii's lack of control in the testing process was evident from our first meeting. The electronically based listening and reading tests that were used at the end of the five-month program are borrowed from the Defence Language Institute (DLI) in Texas. The testing department normally prepares the writing test. However, during the inquiry period Sergii and the other officers were expected to try out a computerized version of the written test based on knowledge of English grammar prepared for francophone Canadians. The computerized test results were compared with their results on the current handwritten short answer version. Anne, one of the teachers, explained to her students who were nervous about doing the test that the computerized version might eventually replace the handwritten version "*because they [the testers] will have control*."

Usually you [the students] have control” (Field Notes, January 29, 2004). Indeed, in the next program the computerized version of the written test was formally adopted. Students and teachers have no recourse but to accept. They are removed from the testers who make up the tests and no specific feedback is provided. Also the subject matter in the tests has little connection to the program and course of study in the classroom. As a result, Sergii felt powerless in preparing beforehand for the tests and during the tests because of the time factor and foreign content. Afterwards, he could not understand why the work he had accomplished and the knowledge he felt he had was not reflected in his results. Most importantly, he worried how he could explain to his commander the reason why he had not met his expectations.

Other students spoke of similar feelings of lack of control in the testing procedures. Farid felt that he had “the devil” sitting beside him tricking him into choosing the wrong answer of four choices (Interview, May 12, 2004). Laszlo remarked that the tests, except for the speaking interview, were ‘artificial’, and had little resemblance to reality. In the tests, unlike in real life, he explained you cannot ask for something to be repeated or to discuss a point that is not clear with the person you are conversing with. *“The test is opposite the life”* (Interview, May 19, 2004). Laszlo, an extremely affable individual and seemed to me well chosen for his job as chief of protocol of the Hungarian military showed uncharacteristic anger in our discussions after the tests. He explained the source of his anger in the comment: *“I was angry [during the listening test]. We had only five seconds for decision. I didn’t catch previous topic but new conversation sounds. It’s terrible!”* (Interview, May 6, 2004). Many students confided that the tests were like “lotteries” and that their hard work during the program had not helped them to respond to questions. Wieslaw commented: *“Funny situation-smart man goes to test. But his face changes in test. He look at sky for answer”* (Interview, May 21, 2004). Kahlil, one of the Afghan students observed, *“This test is like lottery. All life is lottery. In our country, life is chance- some people have good chance, others don’t have good chance. Before I came to Canada, I thought it [life as chance] was just in Afghanistan but now I see it is here too”* (Interview,

May 21, 2004). In Khalil's comment I see the lack of ownership and agency he feels he has in his learning and the testing process as well as in his life in Afghanistan. He is surprised that the powerlessness he feels, in this case towards the tests, has not changed by coming to Canada. What is significant here is that the tests, which Khalil has worked hard to prepare for for five months have subjected him to the same feelings of helplessness that he has in his own country of Afghanistan. These feelings of helplessness and lack of agency are the antithesis of those upheld by democratic principles – the admirable incentive on the part of the Canadian Government that brought him to Canada in the first place.

The lack of control that the participants felt towards the testing in the program, particularly the technology-based standardized tests, did not go unnoticed by teachers. They themselves felt powerless to make changes to the system. One teacher I spoke with remarked: *"It's a good thing we give them their results on the last day, that way we don't have to deal with their reactions"* (Personal Communication, Anna, April 2004). This same teacher supported by colleagues had put pressure on the administration to look into the disturbing discrepancies that existed in the listening test and her personal evaluation of her students' capabilities. The senior teacher prepared a letter and sent it to the testing department. In it he expressed his own and the teachers' concerns with the pedagogical assumptions of the computerized tests as well as their failure to reflect the knowledge of the students. No changes were made to the testing system during the period of my inquiry.

The tensions that surrounded the testing system in the program appeared to stem from the standardized technology-based tests prepared outside the immersion program rather than the oral interviews. The use of computer technology in these particular tests seemed to homogenize language learning to a set of 'correct' answers for a series of questions whose subject apparently had sometimes no bearing on the lives of the students I interviewed, nor in the way that they and their teachers had worked to develop their language learning. I observed that both teachers and students felt a lack

of control in the learning and testing process and victims of a system that seemed to be unchangeable.

Computer Technology and the Internet

Discussions about the use of computer technology in other areas of the program surfaced in the interviews with the students. Frequently, issues around the availability and quality of the computer technology in the program were important to the officers' perceptions of the standards of the SL program. When the students arrived in Canada they were excited about being here and were anxious to begin interacting orally in English. Their first obligation was to contact their families to confirm their safe arrival. Unfortunately, for several days the Internet system was down and access to e-mail was cut off at this crucial time. Jan, a Polish student was most distressed. He expressed how he felt at that time: *"I was very nervous because I was the first time in North America, in Canada and in the course and 5 months I must leave my family. My son is young and looks for his father"* (Interview, (March 8, 2004). Anne, a teacher who, from 'the front lines' of the classroom, saw the fallout of this lack of access for students to their families and friends remarked: *"It is unbelievable! If there was work to be done on the computers why wasn't it done before the students arrived"* (Anne, Field notes, February 3, 2004)

The problems with the Internet, each time lasting a few days, plagued students two more times during the program. On one occasion when a teacher asked for an explanation, one of the senior teachers replied that the reason was confidential and could not be discussed. The lack of communication between administration and teaching staff with regard to computer technology put the control of access firmly in the hands of those in charge. As one technician observed: *"They [the administration] don't care about the problems down below. They have other things to think about"* (Field notes, February 3, 2004). Ultimately, the losers in these instances were the students. Being away from their families for over five months is an enormous sacrifice both for the officers living in Canada and for their families elsewhere who must cope without them

at home. By mid-course, many participants were suffering from loneliness and found it difficult to concentrate on their language learning. Wieslaw remarked halfway through the course: *"I had enough English"* (Interview, March 18, 2004). The following excerpt from my field notes dated March 17, about midpoint in the 5-month program, gives evidence of the malaise I saw in the words and behaviours of the participants.

Thinking about Home

Ferenc seemed a little down today. He said that he was having a lot of problems with learning English. Later that day Marek and I looked over his journal that he gave me about his earlier trip to the US. He talked about how much he and his family had enjoyed their first visit together to the US. He too seemed a little down. He said that he liked to be here but that *"the one problem is we are too far from our families. It would be wonderful to go home and come back one time during the course"* (Interview, March 18, 2004). Yevhen arrived to talk after Marek. He said he was homesick. *"It would be better to study English in Ukraine than in Canada"* (Interview March 18, 2004). He talked about how much he misses his wife and how he wished he could write to her by e-mail but that there was no computer at home. Lazlo came next. He was physically sick with a bad cold. However, he was looking forward to next week when his wife would be coming to visit him. Only Andrej was in good spirits today. His wife was coming as well although he worried that there might be a problem because she was having difficulty getting a visa. "It's crazy!" he remarked about the red tape involved in having his wife visit. Then Wieslaw spoke: *"I've had enough English!"* and at the end of our sessions as he walked away he declared: *"I love my wife."* He too had family on his mind. (Field Notes, March 18, 2004).

The problems the students had with loneliness and homesickness appeared to be alleviated somewhat by access to the Internet. When we began our discussions some of the officers would often begin by telling me that they had written to their wives the evening before and how good it was to 'chat' with them. There was no doubt that for many, the Internet represented an inexpensive alternative to phone calls for keeping in touch with their children and spouses at any time. For those whose family had no access to Internet as in the case of the Afghan officers, the time away from families was almost unbearable. Raquib, for example thought only about going home. He described how his young son had slept beside him for two weeks before his departure.

Besides keeping in contact with their families, the Internet allowed others to keep abreast of what was happening in their countries and their jobs. With NATO standardization policies in effect for new member countries, upgrading equipment meant less money for personnel. Participants from all the delegations of countries represented in the MTAP program, and whom I interviewed, talked of the vulnerability of their positions because of the pressures on their militaries to conform to new standards. Indeed, holding on to their positions in the military and resisting being considered redundant was the prime motivation for many to leave their families and countries for such a lengthy period and to improve their English skills. Jan, a Polish officer who suffered from being away from his family expressed the reality of this motivation in his remark to me: *"Maybe after that [after all], we have one incentive for improving our knowledges [of English]: Who is the next to go?"* (Interview, March 23, 2004). The fear of losing one's job and not knowing who will be the next on the redundancy list was a reality expressed to me on several occasions during the interviews. Clearly, the jobs of some of these officers were in jeopardy. Several told me that being informed about the latest at work and in their country was imperative in assuring that their position be there when they returned. Some saw corresponding online with colleagues and reading online versions of their country's newspaper as essential. Without being able to have control over the computer technology that would allow them to connect with their families and work and their countries, some officers found it difficult to concentrate on their language learning and thought only of returning home.

Computer Technology as Exclusionary

When the computers and Internet were in service, teachers and IT staff as well as administration assumed that access problems were resolved. However, a more subtle inclusion issue arose with regard to the Afghan students in the program. Dimaggio and Hargatti (2001) have asserted that digital inequality implies more than just access to computers but encompasses variables like skill (how to download material and communicate online), social support (access to advice from more experienced users)

and technical means (equality of bandwidth). The Afghan Delegation Head, Abdul Ghias, explained to me that other officers in his delegation felt at a disadvantage in the computer laboratory. At the outset of the immersion program, the Afghan students had very limited knowledge of computers. Abdul Ghias spoke for his colleagues in explaining that they were happy to have exposure to the computer technology. Khalil, another Afghan officer, explained that in his country, learning consisted of *“read books and write in notebook”* (Khalil, Interview, March 24, 2004). Farid mentioned that with the Russian invasion, Taliban rule and rebel fighting in the last thirty years in his country, it was a luxury even to have windows and desks in schools let alone computer technology (Interview, March 3, 2004).

But Abdul Ghias also saw the frustration of his compatriots in front of the computer and their marginalized position in comparison to officers from other delegations. Wieslaw, a Polish officer voiced one day what some of the other participants alluded to on other occasions: *“Afghan are different people. Afghan people go slow”* (Interview, March 8, 2004). Abdul Ghias, a proud senior officer, well respected within his own delegation, no doubt felt the sting of his subordinate position amongst others in the computer room. He raised his voice in anger one day in the computer room after having struggled to keep up with others using the computer technology. I noted his words in my field notes: *“Why don’t the administration give typing lessons and computer training to Afghan delegation at the beginning. Many days [when we first arrived] we do nothing”* (Interview, April 7, 2004).

As a result of the absence of any organized opportunity to have basic typing and computer training, I observed how some of the older Afghan officers avoided the computer lab altogether. On the other hand, I noticed that several of the younger Afghan students sought help from more qualified officers in other delegations and learned how to manage with the computer technology. For example, when his teacher gave him an assignment that he had to e-mail to her, Raquib was at a loss. He sought help from another officer and completed the assignment. Eventually, Raquib began to surf the Net for information and regularly wrote in English to fellow Afghan officers who had been

sent to Texas to study English. At the end of the program, he talked about his plan to buy his own computer in order to continue practicing English at home in Afghanistan and to be able to correspond with the friends he had made in Canada. Farid related that sometimes he stayed up until 1:00 am writing e-mails “*only in English, because I want to improve*” (Interview, March 31, 2004). Egbert (2005) and others working in CALL research (Blake, 2000; Chapelle, 1998; Egbert & Hansen-Smith, 1999; Long & Robinson, 1998; Sengupta, 2001; Warschauer, 1999) are recognizing the benefits of using computer technology as a means of social interaction rather than for information processing. Both Raquib and Farid refused to accept their subordinate positions in the computer technology environment. Instead, they capitalized on their new skills to use computer technology for interaction and ultimately for improving their language learning. With Internet technology they were able to create new possibilities for practicing English in the future.

Computer Technology for Language Learning

Computer technology issues in the immersion program were not just confined to problems of accessibility and inclusion. Many of the officers used the Internet regularly not only to correspond with family, friends and colleagues at home, but also as a tool for improving their English. For example, Vitalii reported that he spent many hours searching the Internet. He looked up information pertaining to mechanics, a subject not only of personal interest to him, but also a means of extra income at home in Ukraine. He brought a picture of himself with his car to one of our regular meetings together and used the image and some of the technical knowledge in English he had gained from searching on the Internet in that discussion (See Figure 9). In this picture he is standing with a friend in the streets of Lyvov in Ukraine before his beloved car that he has built from bits and pieces using his own self-taught expertise and information he has read on the Internet.



Figure 9. Vitalii and His Car

Others mentioned shopping online for purchases that they wanted to make while in Canada. Vitalii remarked about the use of computers: *"Computers is the best for learning English because it has picture, video, sound and text. If I buy a newspaper, I have only one thing"* (Interview, March 29, 2004). The transformation of the media of information and communication from words on a page to the multimodal format that is possible with computer technology, according to Vitalii, has powerful implications for his understanding and interest in reading English. He reported that his interest is heightened and that his informal efforts are enhanced by this new computer technology as he attempts to improve his English language knowledge.

Many officers seemed to share Vitalii's enthusiasm for the computer-based Internet as a source of information of the English language and culture from such sources as news, sports and entertainment sites. Having this information allowed some of the officers to feel more comfortable within a North American milieu. As the weeks progressed in the program, I saw evidence of this growing affiliation with the North American culture. For example, some altered their style of dress from the formal European clothes that they had arrived in, to sporty athletic wear. Others began chewing gum on a regular basis and many invested in expensive new technology like digital

and video cameras and laptops on which they were able to practise their English by connecting to the Internet from their own rooms. They talked in an informed manner about North American movies and entertainers; many invested in popular American music. While in my earlier study, I saw evidence that the Ukrainian participants spent a lot of their free time listening to music from their own culture, many participants in this study increasingly invested their time and money in English language pop music.

I observed a different scenario when it came to using computer technology in a more formal way for language learning. The changes were evident particularly as the officer students tried to navigate the various software programs that existed within the section during the five-month immersion period. I noted that many students (and, in fact, many teachers) did not use the software programs that I knew were normally available in the section. When I asked students the reason for this lack of use, they gave me two reasons. First of all, only the teachers could sign out the commercial software during class time. The programs were kept in a cabinet in the secretary's office and not available after hours when students had time, if there was a computer free, to work alone on this software. This restriction to the software in the program caused considerable frustration among the officers who had expected that the quality of the resources in this North American Base would be far superior to their own country. Others were simply disappointed at the scarcity of opportunities to learn using computer software. Many of officers who had little access to computers in their own countries told me that they were fascinated at the prospects of being in control of their own learning using computer technology. Without access to this software, some participants voiced that they felt that they were being denied all the possibilities they needed to improve and prepare for the tests. Wieslaw explained: *"There are many [software] programs in the Mega structure which I can only use in the classroom. I want to use this program all the time...After using this program they put them in the box and lock and save [them] in a cabinet. It's no good"* (Interview, March 29, 2004). Having the teacher as keeper of the key and controlling Wieslaw's access to the software that he had learned to use was "no good" for him. He saw that his efforts to improve his English by spending time in the

computer room using the software were thwarted by the regulations in the Department. Even in class time, Wieslaw had little time for working on computer software programs despite his familiarity with computers. He was in a class with four Afghans who were beginners in English and who had no prior experience with computers. His teacher explained to me that she felt that the Afghan students in the class were so confused in their efforts to adapt to Canadian culture and learning English that she had refrained from using computer technology almost entirely: "*Me, of all people*", insinuating that it was out-of-character for her (Field notes, January 28, 2004). This particular teacher was quite knowledgeable about computers and software and was often sought out by other staff members as a resource person.

An exception to this restriction was the locally developed Allée software program. Allée was installed permanently on the computers and was available to officers in their after-class hours. When I asked the participants their opinions about Allée and whether they used it regularly there were mixed reactions. Two teachers I talked with, who often took their students to the computer lab, remarked that they had observed that initially their students were quite excited with the Allée program but after a few weeks there was much less interest. In the following excerpt from my field notes, I describe a period in the lab with Anna's students as they work with Allée.

Working with Allée

One of the teachers, Anna offered to have me spend some time with her students in the computer room today. She explained that the students were working with the Allée program and she knew that I was anxious to take part. We were both trying to understand why students were losing interest after a few weeks of using the computer program. The program is technically sophisticated with video and sound and lots of variety in the activities offered in the program. As I wander into the room, I am struck at how each student is facing their individual screen, not speaking to each other but instead working at exercises. As one exercise is completed, students click a button and a new exercise appears. I am reminded of the conveyor belt in the factory that we take the students to as part of their cultural tour while in Canada. The only difference is that students can click a button to be given the next exercise. The teacher, like a factory floor supervisor, has a central control system for checking and evaluating the progress of students.

As I circle the room unnoticed, I stop to watch one student, a Ukrainian, who is reading a text about Billy Bishop. I ask him what he has to do in the particular exercise. He immediately complains that he is supposed to read the text but that there are too many new words and he spends a lot of his time looking up words. In the next exercise, he has to read another text with a different set of new words. Because he never gets to practise the words he looks up in between the readings, he quickly forgets them. *"I lose [waste] my time"* he remarks. I wonder what relevance Billy Bishop has to his life as a Ukrainian military officer.

Another student in the group is intent but seems frustrated with doing an exercise in which he has to fill in the blanks. He asks Anna for help. When Anna glances at the exercise, she recognizes that it is too difficult and tells the student he can skip it and go on to another. *"This program is new and some exercises are not good quality"*, she explains. When she says the same thing to the next student, he insists on trying to work through the exercise, *"Even though it is too difficult for him"*, Anna shrugs.

After the students leave, Anna and I talk. She tells me she is trying to spread out the use of Allié with other software programs so students don't get bored with it. She explains that her previous group was initially quite eager to work in the computer lab, but after a few weeks of using Allié, they tired of it and groaned whenever she scheduled a session in the computer room. Anna says that one of the problems is that when she is working on some concept with the students in class, she looks for a similar practise in the Allié program. Unfortunately, when she brings her students to the lab, they don't know the vocabulary that is used in the exercises and are at a loss. (Field Notes, February 18, 2004)

Much of the hype that has surrounded the use of computers in language learning sites has failed to consider the practices of learners such as I saw that day in Anna's class interacting with the Allié software program. While well-intentioned technical expertise in instructional design has been valuable in providing attractive, learner-centred material for learners to manipulate, the lack of experience of these experts with the contexts of learning a second language have resulted in lacklustre and short-lived enthusiasm for working with software such as Allié among those learners for whom it is intended. Presenting a uniform product to single learners working alone ignores the fact that SL learners have limitless interests and a need to interact through dialoguing with others in a Bakhtinian sense in order to learn a second language. Failure to

understand the importance of human interaction to SL learning, or any learning for that matter, on the part of computer technology design experts makes much of the software material like *Alliée* attractive to some in theory but counter-productive in practise.

My observations that day in the computer room were repeated on other occasions when I dropped in to interact with other participants. The problem of impenetrable vocabulary and content that was irrelevant to the lives of the officers was one issue. However, in my discussions with Anna I sensed that the situation was more complex than that. In this context, computers were being used to provide 'solitary' busy work and at the same time were depriving the officers of something that they had all professed as their singular most important reason for coming to Canada - a chance to communicate in English with other speakers of the language. Furthermore, their results could then be tabulated for those in control, for example the teacher, to evaluate. Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) argue that loss of agency, in this case while using computers in a way that for example *Alliée* instructs learners, is not only about, "severing one's union with the world inhabited by others, it is, and perhaps more profoundly so, about losing connection to one's own inner world" (p. 165). Whereas, Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) were basing their comments on the narratives of immigrants to a new culture and language, their words are especially relevant, I believe to the learners in Anna's class as they worked with *Alliée*. Their loss of agency also involved a severance from their own Polish, Hungarian, Czech, Russian and Ukrainian worlds and their inner speech that would allow them to negotiate with the world that was being presented on screen. Instead, they were being manipulated to think only in terms of how the technical designers thought, the sentences they chose to display on the screen, the possible answers that could be used as responses, the sequence of ideas that followed one after another and the vocabulary that was available to them. Both Bakhtin and Vygotsky considered inner speech a central human mental function that allows individuals to make sense of their experiences of the world. Without inner speech then there are no experiences and for these learners that means their sociohistorical perspectives are suppressed. Bakhtin and Vygotsky also agree that through inner speech

we organize and integrate the events that take place in our lives. Without this inner speech, Anna's students were unable to organize or integrate into the English-speaking world.

Computer-Assisted Networking: Seeking Solutions

In keeping with the nature of participatory action research, with the collaboration of teachers in the Canadian immersion program, I introduced a communicative-based software to students who had agreed to participate in my research. Also as part of the action research mandate of the study I was hoping to respond to the experiences of the officers whom I observed seemed powerless and frustrated while working with the Alliee and other software programs. I also was researching a use of computers for CMC that might respond to the needs of students like Yevhen, Dmitry and Ferenc and others who were expressing to me in the interviews their feelings of being in subordinate positions in their respective classrooms. I wanted to explore whether using alternative software would have a positive influence on the tensions that were taking place in these two contexts. As well, I wanted to find out if their identity construction and investment in using their second language would be different while using this software than it was in the face-to-face context of the classroom. Unlike the Alliee program and the other software that was available in the immersion program that confined students to working alone, I wondered whether a group-oriented software would allow for different dynamics than were occurring in the face-to-face context of the classroom. Warschauer's study (1999) of groups of young university students in Hawaii suggested that there would be changes to the dynamics but I was interested in understanding the changes for my particular group of multicultural officers studying English in the context of the immersion program in Canada.

I had approached the supervisor of the English section of the school about using a recent trial version of Daedalus with the classes involved in the study. Daedalus is a writing-based software that offers synchronous as well as asynchronous possibilities for groups of students to interact. Since there was no cost involved in using the trial version

and I was making the arrangements and training teachers and students, the request was easily granted. I mentioned the prospects of using this new software to the participants and teachers early in the study and all seemed anxious to take part in the trial. In the ongoing interviews the officers frequently asked about the status of Daedalus and when it would be installed on the computers. Unfortunately, two months into the study Daedalus still had not been installed. The explanation I was given was that the request had not followed the proper chain of command. The senior teacher who was involved in the original request was able to confirm that indeed the request was made through the proper channels but that the IT Department were reluctant to support a request made by one individual teacher. They were unaware that the decision to try out the Daedalus software had been discussed by several teachers. I volunteered to organize the ordering and trial of the software for the teachers who were interested in using it. There was another reason for the reluctance on the part of the IT staff. With their involvement in the development and support of their inhouse Allée program, there was understandably little time left to consider or time necessary for supporting alternative software. As one teacher commented: "*They [the IT department] can't understand why we need anything other than the local program*" (Susan, Field Notes, January 28, 2004). Ultimately, it was evident that the use of computer technology for language learning in this immersion program resulted in a new hierarchy in this educational institution where users like the officer students and teachers were at the mercy of those who were holders of the technical resources, in other words the technical expertise to manage the program installation. In this case, the 'experts' not only controlled *who* had access and *when* to the computer technology that was being used for language learning but also what the nature of that use was and the kinds of learning that could take place.

Eventually after several months, Daedalus was installed and most of the participants had an opportunity to use the software with their classroom groups over a period of two or three sessions. Dmitry and Farid's teacher, Anne, declined the offer for her group to use the software in the computer room. With the majority of her students being from Afghanistan, she explained: "*It's too much. They can only learn one thing*

at a time. Learning a language and then the complications of the program is enough to contend with" (Field Notes, January 28, 2004). The Afghan students had very little exposure to computer technology, "*only at the UNICEF offices*" Farid explained (Interview, January 28, 2004). A teacher who replaced Anne did show their group the basics such as word-processing as well as how to set up an e-mail account and send e-mails. Unfortunately, by that point the trial period for Daedalus had expired.

During the computer sessions with the other groups, I acted as a participant in the discussions on line. I also observed the dynamics of the four different groups and made transcripts of the various smaller group exchanges. I then used this experience and information in my discussions with the officers in the regular private interviews. By referring to what I had read in the transcripts and/or observed in the network session, I was able to enter in discussions in the interviews with the participants in a more informed, participatory way. Instead of just asking Sergii, for example, how he felt about the virtual discussions, I could explore with him his reasons for copying excerpts from the Internet to use in his own arguments with his fellow classmates.

Discussions in an Asynchronous Platform

In the first computer session, the groups used the Daedalus software for an asynchronous discussion. In this session, each student was asked to write to the other members of the group, much like a group e-mail. The teacher had requested the students to write their opinions about the possible expansion of the European Union to include each of their own countries. Ferenc, the usually passive listener in class, was a major contributor to the discussion and even found time within the short session to write a response to Yevhen. In his response Ferenc not only acknowledged Yevhen's point but also chose to add a correction, an indication perhaps of his comfort with his language abilities in writing. The following is an excerpt from that discussion:

Connecting in a Network

From: ferenc szankovics

To: Everyone

Subject: European Union

Date: Wednesday, Mar. 24, 2004 09:51AM

The question has positive and negative part. As far as I know the joining European Union will be useful for young generation. They will have good opportunities find a job in country of EU. My sons can speak English and German and they are studying at the University of Economy. After graduating they want to find a job in Germany, because the salary is better than in our country. I think they have a good chance to do it. The other side of the coin is the economy of our country. I think we will face many problems. Hungary is agricultural country mainly. The question is: What will happen with the Hungarian agricultural product? (For example the French product is better than ours) Will have any market for our product? How way will attend the environmental requirements for EU? Will have enough money for attend different requirements? I don't know. I am not an economy expert.

And after all others had read each other's submissions, Ferenc sent the following to Yevhen:

From: ferenc svankovics

To: Yevhen Shendiuk

Subject: Re: European Union

Date: Wednesday, mar. 25, 2004 10:00AM

****begin original message****

I consider that enlarging the members of EU is a good way to merge all European countries into a one organization. After that we would have the same monetary system. It allow to make financial counseling between all countries very plain. Citizens will be able to travel within EU without the visas. It will be easy to do monitoring for traffic because each vehicle will have only standart car number. More problems can be solve easier and faster. But this even can case

****end of original message****

I agree with you, but I think it wont be a quick movement. (joining) Every country has to attend many requirements before the joining.

Ferenc's submission to the network discussion displayed a comfort with the language that he was unable to express verbally in the classroom. Not only was he able to speak with ease about his own opinions but also in the timeframe of the discussion

period, he was the only one in the group who had the time to respond to Yevhen's point. When I pointed out to Ferenc in a follow-up interview how adept he was in the language he responded: "*[Normally] I am shy because I'm afraid I make mistakes. I wasn't worried on the computer. Writing is my stronger part of my English knowledge. I felt comfortable*" (Interview, March 24, 2004). I encouraged him to use his ability in the language by interacting more in the classroom; he responded that he would try. Indeed, Ferenc did make an effort orally after his experience with the network discussions. A few weeks later he reported: "*I tried to speak more. I felt good about it. I had a small success*" (Interview, April 21, 2004).

Yevhen, another 'silent' member of the classroom, found the Daedalus exchange a chance to express his opinions about topics that interested him. In an interview after the session he explained: "*It was unusual. I never see such programs. It is interesting. We use topics closer to our lives-family, sports, maybe about films, other general topics*" (Interview, March 24, 2004). However, he felt at a disadvantage when it came to typing in Roman script as opposed to his own Ukrainian script:

I type very slowly. I use only one finger. In my job I use only Ukrainian keyboard, especially [like] all Ukrainians...I tried to learn [to type on my own] but I got stuck. In Ukrainian and Russian I can type very quickly. I tried to read all transcripts I can't...not time to write. (Interview, March 24, 2004)

The fact that Yevhen was able to offer an opinion in the asynchronous interchange on the topic of the European Union, despite his disadvantage when it came to typing, suggests to me that he felt more comfortable in the networked discussion than he did in the classroom. Warschauer's (1999) findings that computer network-supported discussions, such as Daedalus, offer advantages to the face-to-face interactions in the classroom for some students seems to be confirmed here for Yevhen and Ferenc. Also, Roed's (2004) research in CALL, has shown that people behave differently in computer mediated communication environments than they do face-to-face. They show fewer inhibitions, divulge more information about themselves and are more honest and open in discussing their viewpoints.

Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of peripheral participation supports the fact that Ferenc and Yevhen, by participating in the "culture of practice" that was taking place, were more than observers as they were often in the classroom, but were gradually working out for themselves what constitutes the practice of this community. In Lave and Wenger's words such an enterprise provides "opportunities to make the culture of practice theirs" (p. 1995). However, Yevhen admitted in the post-Daedalus interview that discussing the European Union was problematic for him: *"More difficult because...I didn't know a lot about this problem. Ukraine wants to join but it is a very long way. It's [would be] useful. We must join. I think our life will be easier"* (Interview, March 24, 2004). In these comments to me, Yevhen freely admits to the social and economic difficulties that his country is experiencing. This was a remark that he could never make in the classroom nor evidently even in a technology context for fear of further marginalizing himself and Sergii in the eyes of others in the group. In this situation, his fear prevented him from participating fully in the exchange and from becoming a "full practitioner" in his second language.

Rosy pictures of how computer-mediated discussions resolve problems in the SL classroom especially for 'peripheral members' (Sproull & Kiesler, 1991; Mabrito, 1991) are beginning to be questioned in CALL research (Schultz, 2000; Egbert, 2005). Slawomir, the outgoing young Polish officer, is a case in point. In the classroom Slawomir occupied a lot of the oral discussion and had talked disparagingly to me about his frustrations with other students not joining in the discussions. Yet, in analyzing his experience using the technology-based written forum for discussion, it was apparent that the identity he had constructed in the classroom changed quite dramatically. In the following excerpt from the Daedalus discussion, Slawomir wrote:

From: Slawek

To: Everyone

Subject: the European Union is expnded

Date: Wednesday, Mar. 24, 2004 09:51

Dear everyone

In my opinion it is normal way if we think about the present time of Europe. I think that new cantries and citizens can improve theirs an ekonomik situations. This is one way the second is they can look at theyr coulthur and independence. The ferst point of viou is real life. The second thing it depends of citizens. They should thing obaut treirs countries about coulthur.

His three and a half line submission (in the original text format) differed substantially in length and depth from that of Ferenc, and most of the others in the group. Well aware of his weakness in spelling, Slawomir limited his opinion to an uncharacteristic few words not wanting perhaps or able to expose this weakness to others in the group and compromise the powerful position he had established in the classroom.

Sergii also found himself in a difficult situation when asked to express his own opinion to the group in the technology context but for different reasons. In the following excerpt from the exchange he wrote:

From: Sergii Hetmanets: To: Everyone

Subject: European Union

Date: Wednesday, Mar. 24, 2004 09:52 AM

The subject of expanding European Union to include more contries is not very easy to discuse right now without preliminary preparation of the speech or note main idea, targets, positions or attitudes different contries which complete the European Union, their leaders and top politics. But in my mind, if you are interested in my oppinion, in such situation, in such astable world people to protect their countries, their families and their children from menace of war and especially from the treat of the international terrorism must find common opinion in many their contradictions and to be united. Therefore, the idea of European Union on the one hand help only their governments to improve and stabilizate.

Sergii promptly protected himself from how the others would judge his contribution to the discussion with his opening line that suggested that he needed more information. He further perceived that he either did not consider himself linguistically capable of offering an opinion or else feared exposing his opinion to other classmates

in his comment: “*if you are interested in my opinion*”. As a result, his ‘opinion’ was relatively vague and seemed to express the “official line”. His comment did not contain all the personal references that, for example, Ferenc’s argument contained. It appeared that even outside the threats that the classroom presented to him, he was unwilling to use his extensive knowledge of grammar and vocabulary to develop his ideas. Sergii was well aware that investing in and using his second language was an important prerequisite to his progress. We had talked about it together on several occasions. In fact, sometimes he would volunteer to write to me many times at length on a topic that was preoccupying his thoughts. For example, of all the participants, Sergii was the most prolific in his journals to me. Furthermore, he seemed grateful that I would read his work. In these journals, he developed arguments and voiced his opinions concerning his country and his language learning. He even ‘dared’ to criticize the weaknesses of the immersion program to me, a teacher. Sergii felt he could not speak from this stronger position in face-to-face discussions in the classroom. Nor could this particular technology context allow him that opportunity either. Sergii’s investment in using his second language was thwarted by the marginalized identity he had constructed in both these contexts.

Sergii and Slawomir and to some extent Yevhen were unable to take full advantage of the technology context for participating in the language for the reasons I have presented: Sergii because he felt that his opinion was ‘unworthy’, Slawomir because he was embarrassed by his linguistic ability in writing and Yevhen because he equated speaking openly on a political issue to betraying his duty as a Ukrainian military officer. Sergii, Slawomir and Yevhen’s experiences are not surprising in view of the research on social identity.

Discussions in a Synchronous Platform

In the second session using Daedalus, a more complex picture emerged of the shifting identities of these particular officers in the use of computer technology. In examining an excerpt from the transcripts of the second session (See Appendix 10 for full transcript) that was a synchronous conference much like an Internet ‘chat’ session

among Sergii, Ferenc and Andrzej, I noted that the frequency of student's interaction in the discussion did not resemble what I had observed occurring in the classroom. Ferenc, as he had done in the asynchronous discussion, again took on a greater role in the discussions than he had in the classroom. I watched as he wrote furiously during the interchanges. Andrzej too showed a change in his self-confidence during the sessions. In this particular session, his contribution was minimal. Andrzej's travels had offered him experience that added to his seniority in the classroom. He was often outspoken in expressing his point of view especially on political issues. But in this second session, when offering his opinion involved exposing his weakness in writing, he chose not to interact to the same extent as others. He explained later to me that writing was a real challenge for him, even in his own language. He said that he felt self-conscious and at a disadvantage during the discussion. He elaborated on the ridicule he had endured in the past because of his poor spelling. *"My writing is no good"* he confided to me after an earlier session in the privacy of an interview. *"I don't feel interested in this kind of exercise. I don't like writing. It's hard time for me. When I'm in my room I can check my spelling but in the computer room I don't have a chance. Maybe I am ill"* (Interview, March 24, 2004). Andrzej was aware of his weakness in writing and projected this feeling in speaking of the upcoming writing test as *"mission impossible for me"*. He quickly saw how this weakness in writing handicapped him in the synchronous exchange where there was little time to think about linguistic accuracy. I witnessed how he seemed uncomfortable during the session, slumped and shifted often in his chair. He displayed little of the confidence I had seen outside the computer room. At one point, he turned to me and completely out of context commented that he felt that those students who had very basic knowledge of English should not be allowed to participate in the immersion program. I was surprised by the comment and asked him to clarify. He suggested he was referring to students in the program like those from Afghanistan. Perhaps in expressing the comment, Andrzej hoped to gain face in what was an embarrassing situation for him. He perceived that with the computer discussion, his own identity as a member of a more powerful delegation and as a confident individual was being called into question.

I found it ironic that the struggles that Andrzej was having with expressing himself in writing were similar to the problems the Afghan students were reporting as well. In the case of the Afghans, their problems were based partly on the fact that their country had been at war for thirty years. Also, they are considered an oral culture so the emphasis on expressing themselves in writing is a relatively recent phenomenon for them. Indeed, teachers of some of the Afghan students mentioned to me how quickly their Afghan students had progressed in oral English compared to writing. Whereas in the case of the European officers, such as Andrzej, Lazlo and Slawomir, all who were talkative outgoing individuals who seemed comfortable speaking English, the reasons for their difficulty in writing was more complex. In an interview, Lazlo expressed his personal challenge with writing in the Daedalus experience in this way:

It was very good but my words knowledge is very poor...For me the problem is the words. My brain works differently than others. I don't spell the words good. I think that we had to take a lot of tests and we have to only circle and choose the best answer but I don't write and that's why my writing skill is no good but I try to be good. (Interview, March 24 and March 31, 2004)

In this excerpt, Lazlo claims that his problems with writing are because he is different from others. Part of the reason, he sees for this weakness is the standardized tests that he has used in the past where he was not required to write but simply circle an answer. It is interesting that Slawomir, Andrzej and Lazlo all preferred the synchronous 'chat' session as opposed to the 'asynchronous' one. With the necessity to respond quickly, post evaluation of the transcripts revealed a lot more written errors. It is a growing phenomenon that pressure to overlook linguistic accuracy in computer mediated communication is a growing reality. Maybe with knowledge of this reality, Slawomir, Andrzej and Lazlo felt that their spelling and grammatical errors were less noticeable in the synchronous context where others were being less attentive to details.

Discussions in a 'Secure' Technological Context

Yevhen's experience in the first session might lead one to conclude that this particular software did not provide a context for him to (re)construct a new identity

while in Canada. While it is true that Yevhen continued to be a passive member among his classmates, in the second synchronous session when he was in a small group discussion with me alone, he was very vocal. He was able to express his views on women working in the military, despite the fact that he was talking/writing to me as a woman. The interesting change in Yevhen is supported by recent CALL research (Thorne, 1999) that showed that students often say things in synchronous connections that they would not say in a regular classroom. My experience with Yevhen had indicated that his behaviour on-line was out of character compared to what I had seen face-to-face. He was generally soft-spoken and agreeable. On the contrary, several times in our conversation on-line, he refused to concede when I found fault with his opinion. The following excerpt from our on-line dialogue points to this emerging new more powerful identity:

- Yevhen: It's a bad idea to use women during the battles, it's only men's job.
- P: But women want to be treated equally. They train the same as the men, why should they not go to war? In Israel they do.
- Yevhen: I'm sure they cannot accomplish this job as the men, the women are usually weak.
- P: Those are fighting word!!! Some women are just as strong and would take exception to what you said. So where do you see women as being effective within the military?
- Y: OK, exception can be. For example, I have one subordinate, she is pretty and she works in my group as an interpreter, she perfectly works with some papers and documents. BUT I cannot force her to work more if our business needs it, because a baby is waiting her at home.

(Daedalus Exchange, April 15, 2004)

Although Yevhen had been open with me during the interviews whenever I had pressed him in the past, especially about language learning methods, he would always agree. Teachers hold a powerful place in Ukrainian culture. Normally, it would be frowned upon to be so openly critical as Yevhen was here in arguing with me over women's place in the military. I started to notice signs of Yevhen building a more

powerful identity and investing more actively in using his second language. It will never be clear to me whether it was the software experience, our interviews or some other factor. For example, he made disparaging remarks about a European teacher who spent a few days in his class. He described her methods as old-fashioned, even though these methods resembled the ones he had spoken so highly of at the beginning of the course when talking about a course he had followed in Kiev. Yevhen became more adventurous than other Ukrainians outside the classroom. He travelled to Ontario to visit a relative and accepted an invitation from an Anglophone military officer to go by car. He told me afterwards: "*We spoke for 2 hours. We talked about things we have in common. The driver was from Burlington. He was immigrant from England. He understood me. I understood him*" (Interview, April 14, 2004). I remember remarking at the extent to which Yevhen, who rarely spoke in class, had changed. Also, at the end of the course, Yevhen was the only Ukrainian to offer enthusiastically to join an on-line group of learners for oral discussions that I was proposing. He has since bought a computer and uses it frequently for communicating with me and other English speakers he met while in Canada.

Making Synchronous Discussions 'Secure'

To return to my discussion of the second Daedalus session, quite surprisingly Sergii, the other Ukrainian in Yevhen's group, took the lead in this discussion. The particular interchange was about the war in Iraq. Instead of displaying his usual reticence to add his opinion to political discussions or to any discussion for that matter, as was the case in the regular classroom, Sergii was the most outspoken in the group. I observed, however, that several of his comments had been quickly copied from the Internet and pasted into the discussions. It appeared that Sergii had solved his reluctance to discuss politics by quickly lifting the words from others more knowledgeable and fluent in the language than himself. Like his pleas for me to provide 'stock' answers for the tests, Sergii, even in this informal interaction, seemed to suggest by his actions that his own words were "unworthy" of being heard and that the "official-line" on the subject was of more value.

Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) offer an interesting explanation for Sergii's actions in borrowing words from the Internet rather than using his own in the Daedalus discussion. These researchers' analysis of new immigrants, suggest that the process of adapting to a language and culture is characterized by a self-translation metaphor rather than the traditionally accepted acquisition one. Within the former, they distinguish a continuous loss phase followed and overlapped by a second phase of gain and reconstruction. The first phase contains five stages: loss of linguistic identity, of all subjectivities, of the frame of reference between words and meanings, and of inner voice along with language attrition. In the second phase which is particularly relevant here there are four critical stages: the appropriation of others' voices, emergence of one's own voice usually in writing first, reconstruction of one's past and finally continuous growth into new positions and subjectivities (p. 163). Sergii's "appropriation of other voices", in this case information he took from the Web, seemed to be a first stage in his reconstruction of his identity from the quiet unassuming person he portrayed in the classroom to an authoritative leader in this computer technology setting.

Even when he was not citing from the Internet, Sergii maintained his role as animator and leader of the discussion by confining his remarks to questions. For example, throughout the interchange on the subject of the war in Iraq he asked nine questions such as:

I mean who is interested in this war? How long do you think it will last?
How many people from both sides will be killed before the problem solve?
How to solve the main problem of terrorism? Do you have any proposal or any ideas how to solve this problem?
What shoul[d] we do (I mean all peacefull people) in such kind of dangerous and unstability in that area?
Ferenc. Are you sure? I mean that the war [will] stop next year?
We have some very nonstability palces on the earth with there lidrs who wants to redistribute all over the world. What should we do in such situation?
(Transcript of Interchange Conference, April 15, 2004)

Sergii used the Internet information to construct a new subjectivity. His comment: *“Gentlemen! Let’s start our conference. Who wants to open?”* which led off the discussion reflected this more powerful stance. Throughout the discussion he maintained his leadership role by formulating questions that he put to others in the interchange. Near the end of the discussion, Sergii drew from the subject position he had created in the technology-based interchange to voice a rare expression of personal feelings towards the topic of discussion. *“Are you sure?”* and *“ I don’t thinkso”* he responded to comments by Ferenc, and then in guarded terms he briefly added: *“Sometimes I think some powerful leders it is not enough resolve to use all possibility to stop.* (Daedalus Transcripts, April 15, 2004). Finally in his self-defined authoritative role as animator, Sergii ended the session with another citation from the Internet.

Transcript from Interchange Conference Thursday, April 15, 2004

[#0034 10:02:01 AM] Subject: Iraq

Sergii

Some news: Saddam Hussein is the conductor of this symphony. The tensions would escalate when he restricted the access of the inspectors. Most likely, his policies were directed at a domestic audience: he is still playing the part of the Defender of the Iraqi People. Saddam,s regime is shaky. There have been repeated purges in the years since the Gulf War, and some of them have been very bloody.

Using the computer technology interface and the Internet, Sergii managed, perhaps ever so briefly, to construct a new position of authority with others in his group. This (re)construction process allowed him to speak and use his second language more freely than he had in the SL classroom face-to-face. In the secure space of the computer technology-based interchange, he risked voicing his opinion on a ‘hot’ political issue, which could have compromised his position both culturally and militarily in the multicultural group. My observations of the dynamics in the classroom combined with Sergii’s admission that he rarely spoke indicated that he avoided taking the lead in the classroom. However, in the virtual site, he allowed himself to change. His evolving

subjectivity recalled for me the one Sergii had described he had in his own military as instructor and within his family as a strict father and husband-a stance Sergii never managed to show in the threatening face-to-face multicultural second language classroom.

Comments on Participants' Experiences with Computer Technology in Canada

Looking more closely at the contexts that the participants in this inquiry were faced with as they negotiated their learning of English, it seems apparent that the various computer technology contexts in the immersion program had some influence on the officers' identity construction and their investment in using their second language. With regard to the Internet, when it was available to the students, some officers were able to draw from the strong subject positions that they occupied within their families and workplaces. The influence of these contexts on their identities, albeit from a distance, allowed many of the officers' security and peace of mind as they struggled to adapt to a new culture and language. Without this contact with their own family and work culture that the Internet provided, some officers became homesick and distracted from their main goals in coming to the program - that is to take advantage of this rare opportunity to immerse themselves in English. In the case of the Afghan students, their exclusion from the Internet was for less obvious reasons than interruptions in the service. With a lack of skills or training in computer technology, some of the older Afghan officers accepted their marginalized subject positions without question and avoided taking advantage of the opportunity to use their second language by using the computers. On the other hand, a few younger Afghans invoked the help of colleagues from other cultures and exploited the tool as a means of communication and improving in English. In this way, they withstood the social stratification that was occurring among the students in this particular computer technology context and as a result constructed new identities that challenged the discourses that labelled them as "poor and backward". These challenging positions then had a direct influence on their progress in speaking and interacting in English.

As a means of communication, the Internet was also an important source of cultural information that became much more relevant to some of these officers once they had left their own countries and were seeking acceptance in a North American setting. The Internet provided added exposure along with television and movies to the North American culture. This exposure to language, much of it intertwined with images as in the advertisements that are integral to the Net, allowed many of the participants an easier and faster entrance into the culture than was possible with simply written text. This window into the English culture was not always so available in the make-up of the multicultural classroom where only the teacher represented the North American culture. Some officers took on more 'westernized' identities in their outward appearance and habits. I observed how several of the participants, equipped with these new emerging identities, grew progressively more relaxed and open with teachers and me as well as Canadian military and staff at the Base. Consequently, their agency resulted in their establishing more equitable subject positions with others and creating richer opportunities to use and improve in their second language. Essentially then, computer technology in the form of the Internet helped some of the participants enter the discourses that they were confronted with in the SL learning context and contributed directly to increasing their opportunities to interact in English.

Computers as Negative Influence

With regard to computer technology being used for testing, the picture that the majority of the participants created was much less rosy. Like any tool, computer technology can be put to more or less constructive applications. According to this particular group of officers, testing time was a prime example of the latter. In the case of the listening and reading tests, the technology used to standardize the makeup of the tests as well as the way they were delivered caused many problems for the students. Given the high stakes that the results of these tests held for the futures of many of these officers, it was not surprising that they wanted to do everything they could to be successful. Many reported the long hours they studied and prepared for the final

tests. Some officers, such as Sergii, began preparing and worrying right from the very beginning of the course. Despite their own efforts, however, the officers felt powerless in facing up to the discrepancies between what they had learned and the knowledge the tests were determining. They also reported that they felt controlled by the time constraints during the tests and marginalized by the culturally specific subject matter. In this context, could it be that the computer technology used for testing was being used intentionally or unintentionally to deny them control over their success on the course and their possibilities for the future? As in many cases when human beings are denied control over important aspects of their lives, the result is anger and resistance, escape or apathy. I observed all three emotions among the participants. Burdened with a lack of control and the added emotions that went with it, Sergii, for example, left the course very disappointed with his results and worried for his future-ironic and yet tragic when all his life this intelligent, very motivated man had considered learning English a hobby and his favourite pastime. I have since heard that after he returned home, Sergii was asked to retire from the military.

In spite of the fact that the participants felt that technology, as it was used at testing time, robbed them of a sense of control in their efforts to progress in English, most had an opposite view, initially at least, of computer software. Just as many advertisements that promote commercial software would have us believe, some participants expected that sitting alone in front of a computer using decontextualized exercises to memorize and practise vocabulary and grammar at their own rate was equivalent to being in control and learning the language. Previous experiences studying language in other formal settings or on their own had conditioned them to thinking that repetition and knowledge of words and grammar were keys to the language learning progress. Computer software would allow them a candy-coated 'fun' way to learn. Some brave students, who had worked with software before in their own countries because that was their only opportunity to 'use' the language, had persevered. However, among this group there were participants who were quick to point out that the knowledge they gained in using software of this sort was inappropriate, quickly forgotten or not relevant

to 'real' live communication. Some expressed that this work had done little to improve their ability to speak in English. Knowing what they didn't know or had forgotten left many feeling marginalized as they attempted to communicate orally and as a result they expressed that they were fearful to speak. In this subordinated position, Ferenc, for example chose not to speak in the classroom. Others spoke but their language was often difficult to understand. The teacher who complained bitterly about the stilted and incomprehensible way that her student Ruslan expressed himself was a case in point. Perhaps, she had forgotten or did not connect the fact that most of Ruslan's efforts to learn English had been with commercial computer software. His online 'chat' conversation provides an example of his 'bookish' formation:

As to the explosion I have heard nothing hance, I consider that someone is doing his or her attempt to create an aliphant from a fly by posing every hooligan action as a terrorist one (Daedalus Transcripts, April 20, 2004).

Ruslan's language, a fallout from self study using computer software, not only posed problems with his teacher but placed considerable demands on the group dynamics and their ability to communicate among and with each other.

Access to Software

In the context of the immersion program, there was also much tension surrounding the availability and quality of the software. Students like Wieslaw found it "no good" that the programs that were used by some teachers were sometimes unavailable for him to use in his free time. An exception to the difficulty of accessing certain software was the Alliéé program, a program developed, upgraded and maintained at considerable expense by the Department's curriculum and technology sections. Alliéé was installed on all computers and was available anytime to students during and after class hours. However, despite the state-of-the art video and sound features of the program which allowed the students to view clips of conversations and the obvious efforts that had been put into developing a variety of language activities, students and teachers related that they quickly tired of using this software. My observations,

supported by comments from teachers and staff members inside both the curriculum and IT departments confirmed what the participants expressed to me they indeed were experiencing. The software did not respond to the linguistic needs of the students in the immersion program, a crucial factor to the success of any program (Tudor, 2001). Instead of providing them with an interface for communicating with others in their second language, the software served to control and force-feed them in a solitary activity of manipulating words, grammar information and bits of rehearsed speech which, according to the participants, were quickly forgotten in 'real' communicative situations.

Warschauer (1999) illustrated in his study of Hawaiian second language courses of English, students quickly lost interest if the tasks using computer technology served the interests of the teachers rather than their own. The response of the participants in my study in the Canadian site to not having control when using the computer technology, was frustration and a lack of enthusiasm. Besides the questionable validity of the long-term advantages of using the program, some of the participants felt marginalized by the decontextualized material and cultural irrelevance of the content of the Allée software. Their lack of agency in controlling what they did with the material and its level of difficulty acted as a further deterrent to their understanding and comfort with the material. As a result, although the participants were very enthusiastic about using and practising their English with computers, the software served only to isolate them and eventually led them to refuse to want to take part in using their second language. As Waldemar so aptly commented: *"You can't force someone to learn"* (Interview, March 24). Although he was referring to the large quantities of exercises and homework assigned to him by a former teacher in Poland, the parallel between those assigned exercises and the Allée software, indeed much current language learning software, seems strikingly similar. Selwyn (2002) argues that education of any kind should be a 'conversational business', critical and emancipatory rather than about the transfer of information and of determinate skills. Like the homeschooling experience I had a few years ago with my children, learning became less and less the 'business of school

work' and more and more the business of just living, where living was made up of the conversations that took place in our daily lives together. It appears developers of software programs for language learning need to reassess the tenets that support their work. They need to consider the importance of human to human communication to language learning. Until they do, I predict that their programs will have disappointing results.

The Allié program reminded me of a similar SL program developed by another Department of the federal government that I had used earlier in another context for teaching French to federal civil servants. Several years into the application of that particular program, and several millions of dollars of investment later, when students' results were deemed consistently disappointing, research showed that this program had been built on basically flawed principles. I see striking similarities between the principles on which that federal SL program was based and the ones that are supporting the Allié and other commercial software that were being used in this particular SL context. Whether in traditional classroom activities or with computers, the experience of this group of participants indicated learners do not learn by memorizing facts, manipulating functions, and being forced to digest chunks of language. Languages are learned through a dynamic dialogic process of negotiating identities in communicative events with others. As Sergii explained in a journal that he wrote to me:

Learning English is like learning to swim or playing ball. We learn to swim by swimming, to play ball by playing ball and to speak English by speaking English. A good ball player spends days, months, years practising. He has to learn to meet the situations as they arise. (Personal Written Thoughts, April 17, 2004)

The students were not alone in experiencing problems and tensions in the use of computer software to improve their language learning within the immersion program. Some of the teachers saw themselves in no better a position. Those who spoke to me expressed that they felt powerless as well. They recognized and were frustrated by the fact that most of the software was quite dated and had been around for several years. They also felt ill at ease using the software that was available without training.

Apparently, their requests for training had been unheeded for a variety of reasons, mostly because there were no experts for training within the section and hiring outside resource people had repercussions on budgets.

Others who were more familiar with computer technology saw its potential for helping their students. They explained to me that they wanted to please their students by taking them to the computer room but were “*embarrassed*” by what was available for them to use. Still others, like myself, who sought alternatives to what was available, felt overwhelmed by the lengthy process entailed in having software approved. This process involved a good deal of paperwork that had to be prepared by the teacher who made the request and, as mentioned earlier, up to one year waiting for approval that the software met department standards for security.

Access to Dialogue in English

All of these constraints pointed to the lack of control in using computer technology that both teachers and students felt in this language learning setting. From my conversations with the participants halfway through the course, it was apparent that the lull in their enthusiasm for learning English and fear about being unprepared for the upcoming tests was not entirely a result of the natural process of adapting to a new culture. Part of their concern, which they repeated during many interviews, was their disappointment at not having enough oral practice in their second language. Jan’s observation that the twenty minutes he spoke during the interview added up to more than he spoke all day in the classroom was just one example of the lack of opportunity that he had in the context of the language program to speak English. He expressed his disappointment that our meetings were only once a week. Kahlil made a similar observation. In his case, however, there was the added problem of breaking the cultural barriers that separated him from officers in other delegations. Having come from a country that had suffered through war for over twenty years, being forced to flee to a refugee camp in Pakistan, returning to his home to live in fear of the political and religious-based infighting among his own people had left its mark on him and his

colleagues. This difficult background marked the Afghans as “different” and may have attributed to the fact that there was little interaction between the Europeans and the Afghans. Kahlil commented:

The main problem is we don't speak good because we only have short time to talk to teacher. We, some people need to speak to other people. Now is a problem, each group speak in their own language, they speak among themselves; it is not good for me. (Interview, March 23, 2004)

Finding opportunities to speak English was a prime concern of all the participants. Outside the classroom many spent a great deal of effort and expense to develop friendships with native speakers. Some would pass their time in social areas of the Base looking for people with whom to talk. Several travelled in order to be exposed to English speaking environments. Despite these valiant efforts only a few were able to break the down the wall that separated them from English speakers. They explained their concerns of being a “bother” and “not wanting to disturb” others while underscoring their feelings of being “disadvantaged” linguistically and “foreign” socioculturally in relation to the English speakers.

Inside the classroom, some participants such as Ruslan competed to the point of exhaustion for the attention of their teachers and to ‘have the floor’. As a Russian and member of a citizen of a former ruling power, young, intelligent and having spent two years studying English intensively on his own he had no fear of speaking in whatever circumstance. Ruslan’s situation demonstrates that having the opportunity to speak English and using it both inside and outside the classroom was not simply structured by the amount of time that was spent in the classroom nor with native speakers. Other more complex factors were at stake. A complex web of nested contexts, such as historical, cultural, personal, military and linguistic, to name a few, determined the identity Ruslan negotiated in any one situation. For example, in my discussions with Ruslan, I understood many factors that might have influenced his competitiveness and disregard for others to have a chance to speak in the classroom: his seemingly obsession with grammar rules and learning local idioms, his incredible drive to teach himself English

before he arrived in Canada and to study and learn while here to the point of extreme physical exhaustion, the reason he taped all our conversations in order to replay them, the way he memorized idioms and used them continuously in his conversations even if it meant he was misunderstood and his hesitancy to socialize with Canadian military in the Mess. The multiple contextual factors included his Russian Soviet background, in which men were encouraged to resemble machines, the feeling of superiority he may have felt towards others in his group as member of the former elite Russian army, the strict nature of his military education, his personal determination to prove his worth as a soldier to his superiors in a culture where only those who distinguish themselves get recognized and rewarded with a job which would provide the basic necessities of life, and his recognition of the socio-economic difference between himself as a 'poor' Russian foreigner with weak English skills compared to the seemingly financially comfortable, confident native-speaking English Canadians in the Mess. All of these contextual factors as well as others and the discourses that supported them help to explain Ruslan's expression of pessimism about his ability to succeed in English. They help to explain why he created a monologic as opposed to dialogic engagement with English in Canada – both inside and outside the classroom. These contextual factors help to explain the metaphor Ruslan uses to express his knowledge, "a small furnace packed with coal...that can't burn or burns too slowly and doesn't produce heat...only producing smoke or a small flame." It may explain why Ruslan befriended a street person in the nearby city and agreed to visit him in his apartment despite his expressed fears for his physical safety.

Some of the same and as well as other contextual factors may explain why Farid expressed the sentiment: "*I am not smart*" (Interview, April 7, 2004) despite the fact that he showed himself on other occasions to be very knowledgeable. These contextual factors may also help to understand why Raquib said in referring to himself and other Afghans "*The problem is we don't speak good English*" when, in fact some of the Afghans in the group made significant progress orally due in part to time spent on the Internet communicating with others in English. The identity that Ruslan as well as other

participants in the Canadian site constructed in the interactions embedded by discourses determined whether they perceived that they had a voice in the various settings inside and outside the classroom - whether they felt 'worthy' enough to speak or to be listened to. In other words, the identities of the participants were negotiable, fluid and changed with the different settings. For example, Farid used his military background and membership in an 'elite' family in the beginning to negotiate a position of respect within the group of students in his classroom and with some of the teachers. From this subject position, he felt he had the right to speak and be listened to when he spoke English. However, sometimes when the national tensions that existed in his country surfaced in the classroom, he assumed another identity. He reported: "*I saw their faces become sad. I stopped speaking*" (Interview, April 17, 2004). Outside the classroom, his symbolic resources-his family status and military experience he believed were not valued in the beginning in interactions with Canadian military at the Base. He spoke of times when he initiated conversations in the Mess but that the Canadian military he spoke with quickly brought those interactions to a close. He related to me that he felt Canadians would not want talk to him. "*Canadians are very busy, here to relax. I don't want to disturb them*" (Interview, March 8, 2004). In this context, the identity that he constructed and was constructed for him as a "foreign" Afghan from a socio- economically deprived country, resulted in his feelings of being unworthy and from speaking and investing in improving his English. However, as he spent more time on Internet communicating in English with friends studying in the US, talking about the American culture and gaining information, much of it from images, about the American culture from the Web, his identity changed. He took on the habits of the American culture: "*You have to make yourself like the country you are in*" he said in an interview. With this change in his identity, he had more confidence to speak to others including Canadians. "*I speak to everybody*" he remarked (Interview, April 21).

Other officers, like Dmitry, Ferenc, Yevhen and Sergii had difficulty finding a voice in their respective classrooms. Ferenc related in an interview "*In the classroom, I lose my voice to speak.*" As for Dmitry, the teacher and a more vocal student controlled

when and for what reason he had an opportunity to speak. *"When I speak Farid stops me. He can speak more fast"* (Interview, March 18, 2004). Ferenc's self-perceived relative linguistic ineptness limited his possibilities for entering dialogues. *"I'm shy because I afraid make mistake... I know a lot of grammar rules and expressions but when I have to speak I don't"* he said. His extensive knowledge of grammar and the structure of the language impeded his desire to speak and interact in English and help shape his classroom identity as *"shy"*. Yevhen felt socioeconomically and culturally marginalized as did Sergii, an older Ukrainian, who also felt disadvantaged by his incapacity to respond quickly if he wanted to speak. Sergii explained: *"I try to speak in the classroom but I have little possibility. I don't like to be in a hurry before I speak."* Each of these officers explained to me in the interviews how they equated their success in learning English to the opportunities they had to speak and use the language in 'real' communicative events. However, various factors influenced their subjectivities both inside and outside the classroom and prevented them from attaining their goals. Some of these subjectivities were constructed by the students in reaction to the Discourses that they read in the context of their SL learning, for example in the American-based computerized testing. Sergii observed: *"It [the test] was useful for us to show us that we don't know anything"* (Interview, May 5, 2004). Others subjectivities were historically rooted in their desires to be a good student, a good soldier and to return home and please the expectations of their superiors. Ferenc explained to me: *"I am trying to learn everything but all the time I am under press[ure]. I must get STANG qualifications, at least.. If I go home without this qualification he will think I do nothing in Canada"* (Written Journal, March 3, 2004). The Discourses that controlled some of the officers like Dmitry, Yevhen, Sergii and Ferenc were silencing factors in their efforts to speak and interact in English.

Many SL researchers and enthusiasts of computer technology worldwide have heralded the use of computer as a means of improving learners' contact with their second language. In this particular SL military and multicultural context, however, the tensions and problems that the participants experienced in attempting to find

ways to use their second language to communicate were ill served for the most part by the irrelevant computer software that was available in the program. Basically, lack of control, accessibility and misinterpretation of student and teacher needs were at the heart of this lack of service. The stories the participants related as well as my observations regarding the use of the Internet, the testing procedure and the availability of computer software confirmed this interpretation.

Testing New Waters with Daedalus

However, when the impediments of control, accessibility and misinterpreted needs were overcome, sometimes for ever-so-brief intervals such as in the case of the Daedalus experience, technology could be seen to offer an alternative scenario then what occurred in the classrooms. In this case, there was a glimpse of hope that certain technologies could offer possibilities for dialogue. For example, the Internet as well as movies and music served as a window on the North American culture and allowed students a quick entry into relating more easily, albeit superficially through dress and interests, to those with whom they sought to interact. As Farid, an Afghan student who had had little exposure to the Internet in his own country insightfully observed: *"In my country I have different behaviour and here I have to make myself like Canadian people. You have to make yourself like the place you live"* (Interview, May 12, 2004). Farid seems to be expressing the sometimes difficult, sometimes painful process that is involved in entering a new language and culture. For Farid, it is through intention and agency that he must decide to transform himself to be "like a Canadian", for example in the way Canadians dress, the way they act, the music they listen to, and how they spend their free time. All of this information was available to him through technology, that is the media, and the Internet.

For Raquib, the Internet provided him a chance to correspond *"only in English"*, as he reported, with other Afghans who were studying in Texas in the U.S. and to construct knowledge by comparing each other's impressions of the cultural habits of the North Americans they were encountering. Trying on new ways and being critical

observers of new cultures are enriching experiences and the precursor of change, the essence of education. Indeed, supporting such change is part of the proud mandate of the Canadian government- supported program in the first place, and the personal reason why the Director of the MTAP program felt so strongly about sponsoring students to come to Canada rather than sending teachers to the countries represented in the program.

The Daedalus software was also an interface that compensated for and provided some relief from tensions that existed in the classroom. Considerable resistance from those who controlled computer technology in the immersion program, in other words the chain of command in the organizational structure of the Language School, had to be overcome. Once the software was in place, however, many of the participants in the study reported that they found it beneficial for practising and using English for communication. As Khalil reported: *"This practise [using Daedalus] was good and useful for us. It was useful for writing but also for speaking and our reading messages. Also, I could get some experience from other students"* (Interview, March 31, 2004). Khalil's comment about the merits of the writing exchange with his classmates was not surprising given the research that has emerged in the SL literature on the use of Daedalus interchange software for learning language. Warschauer (1999), Hudson & Bruckman (2002), Sengupta (2001) and Kern (1995) are just a few of the researchers who are showing that conversation patterns change significantly when conversations move online and that interactions among students weigh heavily as a source of knowledge construction.

Daedalus differed considerably from other software that the students had used prior to coming to Canada and indeed while in the immersion program. While the latter emphasizes decontextualized practice of words and functions as a means to becoming proficient in the language, the former is based on the concept that language learning is a dialogic constructive process in the act of communicating. While the latter group of software puts control of the material that is used and the evaluation of learners in the hands of the developer and the teacher, the former puts control of the content of

the message in the hands of the learners themselves and evaluation as a shared group activity. While the latter treats 'the learner' as stable and unified, the former allows for learners to change and develop, to take on new identities. Ferenc, for example, was able to overcome his usual shyness about his linguistic capabilities in speaking by drawing on his resources as a writer and to take part in social interaction much more actively during both the synchronous and asynchronous group discussions. These activities were very liberating for Ferenc. In subsequent classes, he reported to me that he was continuing to be a much more active player in oral discussions. He told me that he had tried very hard to speak in class and even to strangers at the Base. Noteworthy, I think, is the fact that Ferenc was very pleased with his results at the end of the course especially in speaking despite his initial struggles.

Not all the experiences using the Daedalus were so obvious. Yevhen was unable to shed the feelings of being subordinate to others in the group during the first online session. He wrote only a few short vague remarks. On the other hand, when he was put in a small group interchange with me as his partner, he shared his opinions quite openly and wrote and spoke at length. Using the Daedalus software appeared on the surface to be somewhat unhelpful to Yevhen's need to (re)construct the subject position that he portrayed in the classroom so that he could interact with his classmates. It also might lead one to think that this particular use of computer technology could not contribute to Yevhen's language learning. However, his actions outside the classroom indicated the contrary. It might be that the Daedalus experience acted as springboard for his many efforts outside the classroom to engage in using his English. I noticed a change in Yevhen's willingness to use his SL after the online sessions. These efforts included his initiative to travel to Ontario to visit a cousin, his lack of hesitation to talk for hours with the Anglophone military soldier who drove him, and his critical comments of a visiting teacher to his classroom. Yevhen, unlike most others after the oral interview that formed part of the testing procedure, remarked: *"It was a great time! This was very good for me, so I wasn't nervous"* (Interview, May 9, 2004). Despite the fact that Yevhen was subjected in the oral interview to what would 'normally' be a stressful situation for

most of the participants, he enjoyed the experience. I understood from his feelings about the interview that Yevhen had made much progress since the beginning of the program when he feared to speak in front of others. He too was very successful in reaching his goals by the end of the course. He was very enthusiastic to join the online conversations that were planned for a later phase of the study. Yevhen has since e-mailed me that he has purchased a computer for home, quite an investment for his level of salary, and regularly 'chats' in English to people all over the world. As an indication of the long term influence of his experiences in Canada, he has written and followed up on his desire to join the online chat sessions.

Taking part in the Daedalus experience was positive for Sergii as well. During the session he was able to construct a more powerful subject position among others in the group and indeed led the session as animator. He was even able to overcome what he felt was his greatest hurdle to being more interactive in the classroom, that of having to respond quickly in a discussion. The means he used to attain this position, that is borrowing excerpts from the Internet, may be considered questionable. Instead of using his own symbolic resources, of which he had many, he relied on those of others borrowed from the Internet, which he felt were more worthy. Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) argue convincingly that appropriating the words of others is an important stage in the (re)construction of identity in a new language. Because of the limitations of having the Daedalus software only for a short time, the identity Sergii constructed in this particular activity was not long lasting. Perhaps, if there had been the opportunity to have more than a few activities with the software, Sergii might have been able to negotiate this kind of role to his advantage more often. Unfortunately, the resistance on the part of the institution to invest in the software precluded that. Maybe if he had had additional opportunities in the network setting, Sergii would have dared to enter into discussions and express his views at greater length with the rest of the group face to face. These interactions would have presumably given him the opportunity to use the linguistic resources he had acquired after years of studying on his own. As well, these interactions would have allowed him the chance he needed to use his second language

in 'real' dialogue - the prime reason he and most others in this inquiry had come to Canada.

Challenges with Daedalus

The Daedalus experience of using computer technology to communicate online was not positive for all of the participants. Taking part in a writing-based interface despite the similarity of this medium to oral interaction was an enormous challenge for some officers. For officers such as Lazlo, Slawomir and Andrzej, who struggled with the written word, the response to the online sessions was less favourable. All three of these students were usually very outgoing and willing to invest in using their second language, but the linguistic demands that surfaced during the Daedalus sessions caused them embarrassment and a reluctance to engage. The challenges these students faced in a writing-based CMC environment were not limited to their problems with a second language. All three related that they had difficulties writing in their own language. Andrej said: "*My writing is no good... Even in my own language, I make mistakes*" (Interview March 24, 2004). Lazlo explained: "*For me the problem is [writing] the words. My brain works differently than others*" (Interview, March 29, 2004). The fact that they preferred the synchronous 'chat' sessions to the asynchronous e-mail ones for practicing their second language is important to note. It appears they too chose the session that was more like talking and where attention to the rules of the language was less an issue. In this writing/talking context, they were able to transfer their more outgoing SL 'speaking' identities into the 'chat' sessions. This is not surprising perhaps given the impact that the enormous popularity of commercial Internet 'chat' networks has had on literacy. In this medium, literacy is taking on new meaning, and traditional rules of the language are being challenged or ignored. With the emphasis on dialogue within digital communications, focus on form is losing ground even in first language interactions. This point became particularly relevant to my inquiry as I sought to not only understand identity construction using computer technology but also to respond to the participants like Lazlo, Slawomir and Andrzej who expressed that they felt 'marginalized' and silenced in a more traditional written communication medium.

Returning to My Theoretical Framework

Re-examining the findings thus far in the inquiry, in light of the theoretical framework I presented in chapter two, helps to conceptualize what was happening in the Canadian physical space and also to explain the motivation for the fourth phase of the study.

Before the participants arrived in Canada, many of their previous experiences learning English were based on Saussurian concepts of language whereby language is seen as a system of fixed signs, divorced of the contexts in which it is used. From this perspective, practising grammar rules and memorizing chunks of language and vocabulary were considered the means to learn a language. Perhaps, because of their realisation that this methodology had failed to allow them access to oral fluency in the past, or perhaps the idea came instinctively, virtually all of the participants recognized that their fluency in English and thus their prime concern in Canada was, in a Vygotskian sense, to use language as a mediating means within social interaction. As Vitalii explained: *“I think I learn better when I am with others and I do ordinary things. For me it is the best situation for learning”* (Interview, March 8, 2004). Vygotsky’s theory of language also helps to explain that within the social interactions, or “being with others” in which the participants sought to be engaged, there was a potential for change.

The change that the participants spoke of was not confined simply to their language skills in speaking English. Many spoke of learning English not only as part of a transformation from second language learner to fluent speaker. Just as it had been for Eva Hoffman (1989), learning English for the participants represented something more profound. Learning English represented the (re)construction of themselves from members of a society where *“human rights were only on paper, not in real life”* (Journal from Yevhen, March, 2004) and where one’s right to an opinion and to have a voice was usurped in exchange for social support. It represented a transformation of their subjectivities to being considered as respected members of the global community.

In other words, while the participants intersubjectively mediated the tools of language such as verbal sounds of speech, the visual images that were important to them such as their pictures of family and friends and the hypertext that they manipulated online, they could also be transformed intrasubjectively. By transforming intrasubjectively, according to Vygotsky's theory, there is support not only for the idea that social interaction is the key to becoming bilingual but that this interaction has implications for changes to identity as well.

Unfortunately, while the potential to transform their language ability and themselves was present in this SL learning site, some participants were prevented from taking advantage of this opportunity by powerful discourses that controlled their participation in the social interactions that presented themselves. Bakhtin's (1981) conception of the underlying and conflicting centripetal and centrifugal forces in language explains their inability to engage in these social-transformative interactions and their loss of agency in their learning. A centripetal force, or unifying tendency to centralize meaning, may explain why Slawomir was anxious to talk in class with his colleagues and share understandings. At the same time however, this force also underscores the tendency of dominant groups to impose their ideas and perceptions on others and the tendency of others to allow it. In the classroom, Slawomir and his colleagues from NATO countries attempted to steer the conversations in directions that Yevhen and Sergii were not comfortable with discussing. Another example of how centripetal force was active in this setting stemmed from the way computer technology was being used in the program. The culturally-specific nature of the tests as well as the in-house software programs like Allée imposed ideas contrary to what the participants recognized as important to their transformation, speaking and interacting in their SL. Rather than promoting a liberating transformation, the testing and software programs in particular served to impose a monologic view of language based on language learning theories that emphasize instruction and their transmission-based modes of learning (Ruschoff and Ritter, 2001). This monologic view, which Bakhtin (1994) explains as "standing open not to any possible sort of active response but to passive understanding"

(p. 131), made it problematic for the participants to meet their aspirations to become speakers of English and agents in developing what Freire (1970, 1994) describes “[their] significance as human beings”(p. 69-70). For example, in describing his reaction to the multiple choice listening tests, Lazlo commented:

In the test it is very difficult for me. There are four answers. It is difficult to choose the good answer. Sometimes I had to shoot [guess]. The tests are artificial because if I have problem I can arrange it [in real situations]. Maybe I will have to ask one or two times to repeat the question but in the test I don't have that chance. The test is opposite the life. The test answers are very very long. I don't have enough time to choose the right answer. (Interview, May, 19, 2004)

In this testing scenario, Lazlo recognizes that he has no chance to respond, that indeed his personal response to the questions, perhaps a clarification or point of discussion are irrelevant. What the test requires is choosing, or rather guessing, from a set of another person's responses, presumably the person who conjured up the test. What Lazlo is recognizing is that testing was not only inauthentic, but also that it deprived him of his agency and his sense of self. Farid vividly reflects a similar loss of control that he felt at testing time in his comment: *“I felt the devil sit beside me with a gun in my head tricking me to choose not correct answer”* (Interview, May 12, 2004).

The loss of control that the participants expressed that they sensed in taking the computerized tests seemed similar to what they experienced while using the available software. Here too, the template-formatted material in the Allié, Tell Me More and Ellis software used in the immersion program along with the software that some of the students had brought from home, provided a set of answers, a predefined list of choices that the authors claimed to allow interactive learning but instead like the testing deprived the participants of agency and the right for their own voices to be heard. In this scenario, the software constructed subjectivities for the participants that ironically resembled ideologically those that they had experienced as members of a former communist regime. In that regime, all basic needs were provided in exchange for silence, acceptance and forfeiting the right to an opinion. Similarly, the software programs limited their agency and inevitably their right to speak and to be heard. The

software did this through promising progress in second language learning in exchange for the learners submitting to decontextualized programmed exercises and exercises based on repetitive chunks of language. Dominant discourses, or what Weedon (1987, 1997) refers to as “the ways of constructing knowledge” (p. 108) were inextricably embedded in both contexts. These discourses defined the participants as unthinking, machine-like, and controllable. It is not surprising that the students and teachers became frustrated with the software that was available and loss interest in using it.

Both the tests and software that were available in the immersion program conspired to control the nature of the interactions that were available in the program for the participants and their identity construction. Weedon’s (1987) poststructuralist perspective of identity as the site where individuals can comply or resist helps to explain why some participants were able to challenge the subject positions. By using the software, some of the participants recognized, perhaps, that they were accepting a position as complicit subjects in the corporate order (Giroux, 2000). This conception of identity also explains why, when the participants were given the opportunity to use computer technology in alternative ways, that some participants were able to challenge the subject positions that they occupied in their classrooms and within the immersion program and construct new identities. Some of the Afghan students who had little knowledge of computers and whose teacher had refrained from exposing them to this computer technology, sought out others to help them. From a Vygotskian perspective they went from being other regulated to self-regulated through the facilitative explanations of their friends who had more expertise. At the same time, they used the computers, more specifically the Internet, to create opportunities to dialogue with others in English. In a dialogic use of language, Raquib and Farid were actively creating new knowledge about life in North America in a virtual social context with their countrymen who were stationed in Texas. They also used the information they gathered on the Internet, especially through the image-based texts which were easier for them to understand, to expose themselves to the cultural ways of North Americans. Vitlaili’s

comment: *"A computer is the best for me for learning English because it has pictures, video, sound, and [written] text"* (Interview, March 31, 2004).

The value of images for language learners has been argued in the literature for quite some time (Wright, 1976). Krashen (1993), the New London Group (1996) and Norton & Vanderheyden (2004) more recently are showing that multimodal text, which includes images, dialogue and text, is a legitimate text and can offer SL learners a point of entry into the social world of the target culture and a chance to interact with speakers of the language. Indeed, with the knowledge they constructed from the Web, Raquib and Farid took on some North American ways-the material objects they invested in like clothes and cameras, the music they listened to and the movies they watched. Farid considered this cultural knowledge of critical importance to his opportunities to use and practise English. He explained: *"In my country I have different behaviour and here I have to make myself like Canadian people. You have to make yourself like the place you live"* (Interview, May 12, 2004). Both Raquib and Farid showed more fluency at the end of the program than their colleagues who avoided computers and the Internet. Unfortunately, access to this powerful technological medium that allowed some of the participants to move from the periphery of the North American communities of practise closer to its centre (Lave & Wenger 1991) was at the discretion of the institutional administration at the military Base. Carmen Luke's (1992) point in reference to conditions at the macro level of society is pertinent to the micro level of the institution in this immersion context:

The problem is...that the liberal state can grant legal and equal opportunities of access to the public sphere without providing for women/marginalized groups the conditions for equal participation...This move, in turn, denies them equal access to the power (and rewards) with which to articulate and legislate change in their diverse interests. (p. 36)

Cornell West's (1993a, 1993b) conception of the relations of power that exist among individuals and between individuals and institutions helps theorize the power that the military institution in the Canadian site had within the immersion program. That power was tied to its access to resources, especially economic and technological. West

argues that people who have access to a wide range of resources in a society will also be able to access power and privilege. The military institution at the Base used their power not only to control when, as in the availability of the Internet, and what, through their security firewall, but also how computer technology was used for language learning. In the case of the proposal to try out software in the school that would offer an interesting alternative to their in-house *Alliée* program, the *Daedalus* software was only temporarily available to students.

My findings that support computer technology as a communication medium for SL learning and identity construction can be theorized from several perspectives. First of all, Bakhtin's theory of language as dialogic helps to explain why Ferenc, Sergii and Yevhen in different ways were able to construct subjectivities that were different than the subject positions they had in the traditional classroom and which silenced them. His theory states that dialogue, the interplay of one sign with another sign, is at the basis of understanding or learning. Using the communicative interface of the software, all three participants were able to respond to each others' words in the virtual space. In so doing, they generated counter statements to the ones that had been constructed in the classroom, that they were "quiet, linguistically inferior and marginalized". Through counteraction of "one" with the "other" in the networked communication, they were able to transform themselves socially and linguistically even for ever so briefly as in the case of Sergii.

From Vygotsky's theory of language we can also understand why Ferenc, Sergii and Yevhen's opportunity to socially interact in a communicative practice in the virtual site had implications for their use of their SL. Both Yevhen and Sergii, were able to use the expertise of others to facilitate their understanding of English and to be more forthcoming in engaging in conversation. Sergii, borrowed words from the Internet to assist him in expressing his views while Yevhen's conversation with me as a speaker of English helped him to actively engage in speaking/writing. It appears that computer technology in this case provided an interface for their development within the Zone of Proximal Development, from what these learners were showing as capable of doing in

the traditional classroom to what they actually accomplished in their second language in the virtual site. After their experience with the computer technology, all three displayed characteristics of what Vygotsky terms 'other-regulated' as opposed to 'self-regulated' learners to varying degrees. Ferenc took on a much more active part in the classroom discussions; Sergii was able to verbalize his criticism of the testing procedures; Yevhen pursued many opportunities outside the classroom to engage in speaking English.

Being a self-regulated learner is central to theories of identity. Weedon's (1987) understanding of identity as a site of struggle that can change over time and that is nonunitary and multiple, explains why Sergii, Yevhen and Ferenc were able to contest new subjectivities than those they had constructed in the regular classroom. Weedon connects these changes closely to language, including a second language. All three found themselves in a situation where they felt they could use their symbolic resources, such as the ability to write well or to manipulate information from the Internet, to express themselves in their second language. In this regard, the experience of being in the virtual site also allowed them to construct different identities. In other words, the agency they felt they had in the virtual site to speak, allowed them to (re)create their identities and a new voice, a SL voice, with increasing strength and power to be heard.

Although computer technology in this experience served as an interface for the development of Sergii, Ferenc and Yevghen's agency in their SL learning, it was not the case for all those who participated in the Daedalus experience. Hall's conception of identity (1995, 1996) as being never static, always dynamic and tied to the Discourses that are integral in individuals' lives lends support for why the experiences of some of the officers who participated in the virtual discussions were less positive. Andrejz and Slawomir's identities changed during the Daedalus experience because the discourses that underlined their efforts in the networked conversation convinced them that their sense of self in relation to the "other" was less worthy in the written word. Because they were not proficient writers, a powerful resource when learning a second language, they expressed feelings of being unworthy to take part in the political, cultural and personal identity changes that would allow them to affiliate with others in the group by investing

in using their second language. In other words, because of the written basis of this virtual exchange, they lost an opportunity to participate in a dialogue that could have had empowering possibilities for their identity construction and implications for their investment in language learning.

The community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) that developed among some of the participants in the linguistic interactions using the Daedalus computer technology allowed for a free flow of ideas and expressions of opinions. The experience with Daedalus suggests there is potential in CMC for enabling some learners to move from the margins of social communities of learning to vibrant, integral and respected members. Recognizing that vibrant, integral and respected members are by their very nature engaged in using language, including second languages, had important implications in the fourth phase of the study.

Summary

In this chapter, I have described and explained why the participants in the study, who come to Canada primarily to speak English, are prevented from doing so to their full potential. Feelings of being marginalized linguistically and culturally coupled with certain computer-based aspects of the program, conspired to reduce their interactions in English and added to their feelings of being disempowered. Lack of access to training for those unfamiliar with computers, culturally biased tests, transmission-type software programs and controlled access to the Internet are a few examples of the obstacles that marginalized them. Nevertheless, when computer technology was used to allow some of the participants to socially interact whether through the use of the Internet or in guided networked interchanges, some officers were able to rise above their disadvantaged positions and construct changes to their identities. These changes were coupled with greater agency in their language learning characterized by an increased effort to engage in opportunities to use English, a critical view of the context of their learning and an empowered sense of planning their own futures. Not all of the officers

benefited, however, from the CMC technology experience. The written based nature of the software contributed to their lack of engagement in using their second language and a loss of self-esteem.

In the next chapter, I discuss the potential outcomes and influence of an expanded form of CMC in technology-spawned communities of practice not only on the micro level for individual SL learners but on the macro level in the global community.

CHAPTER SIX

(RE)CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES ONLINE

Introduction

The sense of the value of one's own linguistic products is a fundamental dimension of the sense of knowing the place which one occupies in the social space. (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 82).

Many of the officers who came to Canada to participate in the SL immersion program arrived with the preconceived notion that they would have unlimited access to practising their oral English. Many soon became disappointed and disillusioned to find that the opportunities to speak were limited not only by aspects of the program in Canada that served to marginalize them but also by the historically, culturally and personally based identities, with which they were attributed. As Pierre Bourdieu's comment suggests, the value of their ability to express themselves was a factor in how they felt about themselves in relation to those who occupied the same social space. By social space, his comment is not just limited to the micro level of the immediate SL program, but to the macro level of their place in the global community.

In this chapter, I move away from the Canadian physical space to a virtual site and I discuss the CMC interactions that took place there with the military participants who were based in Europe. My purpose is to report on the influences of the online discussions in English on the identity construction and language learning of students from Romania and the Czech Republic. For this discussion, I rely partly on my field notes of the online oral interactions, coupled with data from the e-mails we exchanged which complimented the oral interactions. The collaborative discussions we had in the virtual space were continued in face-to-face interviews that I had with the Europeans in their respective countries at the end of the online sessions. These interviews were videotaped and add to the data that supported my findings. Within the stories we constructed online and face-to-face, I have chosen first person excerpts which help

describe what it is to be members of communities from Central and Eastern Europe and to struggle to learn English in those communities and be denied opportunities to interact with speakers of the language. It is true that direct intervention of a communist regime was no longer a factor in learning English –the “forbidden fruit”. Nevertheless, I use the word ‘denied’ to express the fact that subtle and perhaps just as powerful discourses based on political, historical, cultural and personal factors, denied many I spoke with from opportunities in their second language. An important theme that surfaced in my analysis of their comments was the need, from their perspective, to improve their formal language studies to include guided oral practice with speakers of English. Without this guided oral practice and exposure to English speakers, their identities as ‘formerly communist’, ‘poor’ and ‘second world’, that were deeply rooted in their political, cultural, social and historical backgrounds, prevented them from investing in using their SL when authentic English situations **did** arise.

I argue that using computers solely for drill practice and information, as was the case for the most part in both the Canadian and European sites, while giving these participants contact with English, deprived them of the opportunities to use and practise their second language in ‘real’ situations. More importantly the use of computers for drill practice and information transmission in their formal learning contexts also deprived them of agency in their learning that was essential to their mediating their relationships to the world. Paradoxically, without an active agency and investment in using their second language in interacting with others, their historically-based subjectivities were confirmed and reified. Conversely, taking advantage of computer technology to provide an interface for image and oral-based guided interactions in English via the Internet, provided a means to mediate their subjectivities and to give some individuals in this group of learners the tools to (re) construct their identities and a voice to decide their futures. The growing potential of computer technology to support such endeavours are echoed in the words of Feenberg (2002): “What human beings are and will become is decided in the shape of their tools no less than in the action of statesmen and political movements” (p. 3). I further argue that for this group of learners

whose lives have been historically shaped so profoundly by the decisions of statesmen and political movements, the potential for empowering possibilities that guided interactions in speaking English in a video-based context over the Internet were able to offer to them, deserves attention.

Studying English in Europe

We know we are considered bad people by the West. So we have to work hard to show our best, to prove that we are different, not what they [the West] think.

(George, a Czech participant in the online discussions speaking to me in the follow-up interviews in the Czech Republic, November 22, 2004)

I hope that you will remember Romania as it is and not as the paper or in the media or something like this.

(Cezar, a Romanian officer and IT specialist who help coordinate the online sessions in Romania, speaking to me publicly on behalf of those who participated in the online discussions in the context of my follow-up visit to their country, November 25, 2004)

For cultural invasion to succeed, it is essential that those invaded become convinced of their intrinsic inferiority. (Freire, 1985)

The feelings that George and Cezar express here are not merely the personal insecurities of two individuals faced with entertaining a foreign visitor to their country. Instead, I take these comments to be powerful testimonies of members of former Warsaw pact countries who are finding their ways into a new global community where English is the language of choice and where a country's worth is in the degree to which it can turn its eyes and ideologies towards the West. Freire (1985) argues: "For cultural invasion to succeed, it is essential that those invaded become convinced of their intrinsic inferiority".

In the previous phases of the inquiry and also from my experience in teaching in the immersion program, I understood that, for many people in Central and Eastern Europe, English is still a ‘forbidden fruit’ in many ways. On the macro level, a strict communist regime that sets restrictions on access to English no longer exists. However, on the micro level, a much more complex set of economic, cultural, linguistic, pedagogical, institutional and social circumstances have arisen within a political ideology that prevent many of those who want to learn English from doing so. This is not to say that some of the military participants I talked with did not have access to the grammar and rules of this second language. Some of those I spoke with online had studied English in school and some had even used self-study as a means to gain knowledge about the language. By self-study I refer to engaging in language learning through their own devices, such as working through exercises in grammar books they purchased, using software to build their vocabulary knowledge, and taking part in intercultural ‘chat’ sessions online. Both initiatives were very helpful to the participants for understanding the formalities of the structure of the language. Those I interviewed did not lack the motivation to learn English, nor the desire to work hard to be able to use the language. The testimonies of sustained effort and their investments of time and money in courses, self-study and computer technology were proof of their commitment to learning. Yet, many expressed feelings of inadequacy with regard to themselves and their abilities to speak English. George and Cezar’s comments in the beginning of this section are just two examples of the feelings that others expressed. In these marginalized positions, many of the participants I spoke with hesitated to invest in speaking English when they did have an opportunity to do so, as for example in international military exercises such as UN peacekeeping or joint training.

In the Canadian immersion program context, I had observed that feelings of being marginalized and inadequate often resulted in learners resisting to invest in using their English. Still in this context and with these tensions in mind, I sought to expose the officers to interactive, communicative based computer technology software. Through my analysis of the use of computer technology for social networked interactions, I

found changes occurred. I felt encouraged by the potential I saw for some technologies in this SL learning site, such as the Internet and Daedalus software, to meet the needs of the participants to engage in using the language for meaningful goals and at the same time for (re) constructing their identities. With these new identities, I observed that some invested more in their SL by speaking out within their multicultural groups both inside and outside the regular SL classroom.

Equipped with the experience of using computer technology to provide students with a communication rather than simply information-based interface to improve their speaking skills, I then entered a broader setting, the European one, where the majority of participants in the Canadian immersion program had had their initial experiences learning English. The absence of opportunities to speak and practise oral English in their own countries was understandably a complex issue for some of the officers who came to Canada to study. Yet, for most it became clear from their conversations that this lack of access to oral practice in English was, in part, at the root of their feelings of exclusion and inadequacy both in the context of the Canadian immersion program and in the international military contexts in which they worked. I wanted to determine if computer-mediated communication might address these tensions and at the same time provide one of many possible long-term solutions to their SL learning dilemmas.

In the fourth phase of the study, with the help of an IT specialist at the Canadian site I set in place a video-supported website (See Figure 10). The site consisted of one screen with eight smaller and two larger screens embedded in it. One of the larger screens was for me as native speaker of English and as guide for the discussions. The second large screen was for whoever was speaking and periodically for a guest English speaker whom I invited to the site. For the specific purposes of the discussions, the Canadian company, called ICI Design of Quebec City, that designed the software developed a feature that allowed me to click on the screen of the person who was talking and to move their image to the second large screen. I requested this feature in order to provide important non-verbal visual clues, i.e. facial and mouth movements, for example, which I considered important for the participants' understanding and to our collaborative discussions.



Figure 10. Video Supported Website

An example of the power of this software to communicate these non-verbal images can be best exemplified in the following anecdote taken from my field notes:

Feeling Sad

I began the sessions on-line today by feeling a little sad. It was nothing serious. Just before going on-line I had gazed out my window to see that snow was falling and my immediate reaction was “Oh, no! Winter is starting. So soon!” I intended to talk about the weather once I was on-line, but, as was often the case, the conversation went in another direction and the subject never came up. I noticed that Sabin seemed distracted during the conversation and was not participating to the same extent that he usually did. Later in the day when he wrote me an e-mail, I understood what was preoccupying him. He wrote: “*Dear Paula... I’ve lost my mind during our language course because I’ve been also a little bit nervous because of your sadness and I totally forgotten to apologize*” (E-mail from Sabin. November 10 2004). I realized that the power of my facial expression to communicate had not been overlooked by Sabin. (Field Notes, November 9, 2004)

This anecdote not only confirmed what communication theorists have well established, that non-verbals are integral to our interactions in whatever language we

speak. This anecdote also revealed for me the potential that computer technology and the Internet have for knowledge construction through online communication.

In chapter four, I described the significant amount of correspondence and negotiating that was involved in gaining access to the students who eventually took part in the online sessions. Actually, the bulk of this correspondence was due not to any resistance from the military institutions in Europe, although there was understandable concern about cost to them, but from the military administrators implicated in Canada. The Europeans welcomed the opportunity to provide their students with an opportunity to speak and interact in English. The interest of the Romanians was shown, for example, when a senior military officer in the Ministry of Defence sent a formal letter to acknowledge the beginning of the online sessions (See Figure 11). Their only hesitation was for the budgetary concerns involved in ensuring that their computer technology met the requirements for the software to function. Also, any decision to proceed had to come from officials at the Ministry level, a process that proved time consuming in Europe and much more so in Canada. In Canada, permission for the project was considered initially as a threat to the on-going development of the Allée distance education software and was turned down by the military officer, a Lieutenant Colonel, at National Headquarters who is responsible for all language schools in the Department. However, by approaching the MTAP program director, which is a different arm of the National Defence Department, I was able to receive financial support to pursue the plan to connect with the Europeans online. Once the funds were allocated from the budget of the MTAP program in late January 2004, however, there was a six-month delay in procuring the monies from the military administration. My Education leave advisor suggested that I contact policy personnel in Ottawa regarding the problem. In response to my letter, the Director of Policy and Planning for the Department called a meeting with the deputy-director of MTAP, a representative of military and me. The military were assured at that meeting that there would be no transgressions of policy by transferring the funds directly. It appeared that the issue

was settled. However, the procurement then had to go through provincial channels that again caused more delays. The Deputy Director of MTAP told me that recent political scandals in Canada being investigated by the Gomery Commission were making the military decision makers unduly nervous about accessing money transfers (Personal Communication, June, 2004).

**ROMANIA
MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENCE**



Human Resources Management Directorate

**20 September 2004
-Bucharest-**

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Ottawa, Canada**

Partnership for Learning Pilot Program (PLPP)

We are very pleased to be able to take part in the Partnership for Learning Pilot Program (PLPP) in Romania, with the cooperation of the Canadian Forces Language School in St. Jean, Quebec. Furthermore, this program couldn't come true without your special assistance.

Romania will be participating in the Program, set to start on October 4th 2004, with the students in the Defence Resources Management Centre in Brasov.

For the technical and pedagogical details, please contact the parties responsible in this Center, at contact@cmra.ro: Maj. Vasilescu Cezar, the IT specialist and Mrs. Tătar Livia, for administrative and pedagogical issues.

We are anticipating that this pilot project will give us the opportunity to improve the English language skills of the students.

Finally, it is our hope that this form of distance learning using the Internet could represent a possibility of future cooperation between our language training departments.

We are looking forward to this important cooperative event.

Sincerely,

Chief of

**HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT DIRECTORATE
Major General**

ION GURGU

Figure 11. Formal Letter from Romania

In this fourth phase, for four weeks in October and November 2004, I met and conversed online with military students from the Czech Republic and Romania. After the sessions, I travelled to these countries and met face-to-face with them individually and in groups to talk about their experiences learning English in the European setting and their impressions of the discussions I had conducted over the Internet at the virtual website. Many of the stories these participants told about their efforts to learn English resembled what I had heard in the interviews in Canada. Some had previous formal SL experience. Most of the younger participants, for example, had begun studying English in elementary school. At the time that they entered school, the change in government regimes had already taken place. With these political changes, Russian was no longer an obligatory subject of study. Instead, English or German had replaced it. In the next two sections, I present the stories the military students in the Czech Republic and Romania told during the online discussions, through their ongoing e-mails and when I met with them face to face in their countries at the end of the online sessions. My purpose is to show how these stories contributed to a dialogic that enabled the participants to make sense of the events in their lives and their SL learning. Through the process of constructing their stories, some of the participants were able to envision ways to alter them.

Interviews and Observations in the Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic the majority of the online participants were young university students. There were fifteen in all whom I met online, twelve female students, two male students, and one male IT specialist. However, because of other commitments placed on the students by faculty at the university there were some of these students who only appeared once. A smaller group of 'regulars' (see Table 3), met me once a week and in a few cases more often, over the period of the online sessions. The IT specialist, George, was responsible for the technical support on the Czech side of the communications. He regularly joined the discussions in order to have the opportunity to improve his English. The students were completing an undergraduate degree in a military university located in a large city south of Prague. They were involved in various

academic streams related to their fields of interest and chosen according to the areas in which they were expecting to work in as members of the Czech Army. The students ranged in age from 19 to 23.

Table 3: List of Participants in Online Discussions from the Czech Republic

Participants	Description
Vlasta	Female, early twenties, 4th year
Marketa	Female, early twenties, 4th year
Hana	Female, early twenties, 4th year
Petra	Female, early twenties, 4th year
René	Male, early twenties, 3rd year
Jan (John)	Male, early twenties, 3rd year
Jiri (George)	Male, mid twenties, IT specialist
Jiri (George)	Male, mid fifties, Professor
Zedenek	Male, mid fifties, Professor
Ivana	Female, mid forties, Professor

The exceptions to the military university students in the group were two, fifty-year-old permanent professors of the university who were taking an English course at the University in order to improve their facility with the language. Their motivations for studying English were twofold: personal challenge and to facilitate their communications with other specialists in their academic fields. As one of these professors reported: *“I started study English when I am 20 years, but all my life I only read only write and don’t speak or I alone listen.”* (Zedenek, Interview, November 22, 2004). I inferred from his comment and from others that he made online that for this man who had lived the majority of his life during the former regime, the idea of English as a forbidden fruit was a personal reality for many years. Although he doesn’t speak directly of the restrictions on using English that existed during those years under communism, he didn’t need to. Conversations that I had had with Ivana, his teacher who had collaborated with me to set up the CMC online, had told me about the strictly enforced restrictions on learning English. It was even forbidden to have English language materials or media, which meant that for twenty years Zedenk had taken some risks in reading and writing in English. Besides these two professors,

Czech teachers of English and others in the University periodically joined the online discussions out of curiosity. Participation in the online discussions was voluntary and occurred after regular class hours. Some of the military students were more consistent than others in attending once they had signed up. Academic demands from professors of other areas of study caused some of these participants to reluctantly forfeit their time online. These students explained, that being called at the last minute to attend extra sessions frustrated them, but they had no authority to refuse.

The young military soldiers who regularly attended the sessions were in the formative stages of their military careers, attending university and being trained for the paths they would follow in their own militaries. Many expressed the hope to eventually serve in leadership roles in NATO. Learning English is seen as a very important part of this training. Several participants with whom I spoke, dreamed of being fluent so that the doors to the careers they aspired to would open. Nevertheless, the road to learning English was not without its bumps and potholes.

Petra, one of the university students explained that she had begun learning English in elementary school. She said that every year the teacher taught the same material and that none of these teachers could really speak English. By high school, because she lived in the capital city of Prague, her school, unlike in other parts of the Czech Republic, was able to attract teachers who were English native speakers. However, she explained, these teachers in her opinion, didn't have the skills to teach the language. (Interview, November 22 2004). Yet, Petra saw a great need to speak in order to improve her English and to ensure a future position in her military. When I asked her how she would do that, she replied: *"I will have to learn English for myself in my free time"*.

Vlasta, another Czech student, spoke very positively about her experiences in elementary school. Her teachers had used the British Headway program and she had lots of opportunities to listen, to write and to speak in English in a small group. In secondary school the situation drastically changed. In this setting, she found the 'large' classes of

twenty students taught by Czech teachers who “*werent so good, werent motivated or motivating*” (Interview, November 22, 2004) counter-productive to her aspirations to improve in English. She felt that she was making little progress. Thus, Vlasta in her early teen years and on her own initiative took extra English classes at night twice a week. In these small classes, she was able to practise her English with the Australian and British teachers who taught her and other students who had paid to take the courses. She reported: “*It was very good for me*”. Unfortunately, as her university course work became more demanding, she reluctantly had to abandon the extra courses and with them her chance to practise her oral English.

Marketa’s early years of studying English in elementary school were very frustrating for her. The teacher, a Russian, was very strict. “*We had to learn everything by heart and write these sentences on paper. We had to learn.*” (Interview, November 22, 2004). Apparently, the former regime’s mindset was and may be ever present in the realities of some students learning SL. In high school, on the other hand, classes were small, frequent and with lots of discussion and essay writing. Marketa liked the fact that she had the same teacher throughout high school, a Canadian named Trudy whom she fondly recalls: “*It was very good. We had to speak very often.*” When she arrived at the university she felt again disappointed with her opportunity to practise her English in a formal setting. She explained: “*Here our teachers are changing very quickly. We had different teachers in first and forth year. In second and third year the teacher didnt care about us so we had to do everything what we want*” (Interview, November 22, 2004). Marketa’s English progress in the classroom, like many other participants I spoke with hinged on the importance her teacher placed on her and her fellow students. Also, she found it difficult to speak in class because many times she was asked to discuss military subjects. “*I’m not a real soldier that is why I couldn’t discuss problems very good. I didnt know about that, very little. So I didnt like these lessons because it didnt give me something*”. By “*these lessons didnt give me something*”, Vlasta explained that she meant that the lessons did not provide her with what she needed to improve in English - an opportunity to speak. In the class

discussions she had to refrain from speaking because lacking control over the subject matter marginalized her from others in the group. In these cases, she felt that she had to remain silent. Marketa spoke hopefully, nevertheless, about improving her English in the future and being able to portray her own identity in the context of using her second language:

So I hope in my future, I would like to ...improve my speaking. I know that sometimes I can understand very good...but I cannot know what to tell at the same way, like in my native language like in Czech. So it would be very good for me because I'm a very talkative person, very much in Czech. So I would like to improve my speaking. (Interview, November 22, 2004)

John, a quiet, soft-spoken Czech military student was also determined to improve his English communicative skills. He remarked that although his school years were good for learning the rules of English, he attributed most of his progress in learning his second language outside the classroom to using computer technology. He explains in the next excerpt that he had little alternative given his interest in computer technology and the fact that English is the language of choice in this domain:

Technology is my hobby. Everything about computers is in English. I had to learn English myself ...to understand computer language. I think some language, passive language improvements, can be taken with games -a natural way to learn a language, not like in school. Who [If a person] wants to understand this game he must learn something, not because he must but because he wants to. To do something on Internet is great! For passive practice it is very good. English is on a high level, good pronunciation. On the news, I hear not only people who are native speakers but others who have problems with pronunciation. I see not only me has problems with pronunciation. I hear people in Europe have the same pronunciation. (Interview, November 22, 2004)

John's passion for computer technology resulted in him being frequently exposed to English, an English different than what he was learning in school. By that, he meant where the rules and structure of the language were of less importance than they were in formal contexts of English and where he was learning out of choice. Through his interest in computer technology, he was able to develop his second language thus enabling himself to access the games he wanted to play, to the world and to others who spoke English. He admits that he is not as engaged when using his English in computer

games as he is when he speaks. With the computer he mostly listens and reads, but feels it is a valuable activity all the same. He reported that his exposure to English through computer technology also helped him to realize not to feel inhibited by his pronunciation, a major concern he had initially when he began learning the language. Through computer technology he was exposed to other second language speakers and realized he shared the same distinction of other Europeans who spoke English of not having native-speaker phonology. With computers and the Internet, he explained, there was always the option of replaying what you see or hear. John admitted that he spoke very little in his English classes and that any improvement he made in the language was the result of his use of computer technology: *"I think I improved my English better on Internet and on computers and on listening to English films"*.

George, a young military officer with a quick smile and friendly personality, was the IT specialist at the Czech site who helped to set up the connection for the online sessions. He also chose to take advantage of the opportunity to practise his English and frequently joined the oral discussions over the Internet. George had started to learn English formally when he was at high school. He recalled: *"It was good for vocabulary or grammar but not for talk to people"* (Interview, November 23, 2004). George reported he had had many opportunities during those years to speak in class. However, he was discouraged from using these opportunities knowing that the teacher was Czech and could translate a word for him or explain any questions he had quickly and more efficiently in their own language. For these reasons, he said there was not much impetus to risk possible embarrassment by speaking in English. Like John, he sought more practical opportunities for practising his English through the use of computer technology. When he started working at the University in the computer department, he suddenly had access to the world of the Internet. He quickly joined 'chat' groups and found people in the U.S., Canada, Australia and even Germany to 'talk' to in English. He explained that in the contact he had with these 'friends' he did not use 'real' English: *"It was only writing, a specific kind of writing because you don't use English words like in the dictionary, you write quickly and use short terms like 'see*

you' is two letters- CU. But, I think it helped me with my English. I think it did''
(Interview, November 23, 2004).

The differences between writing online versus writing for print technology, what George refers to as 'real' English, have been much discussed in literacy studies. Literacy scholars seem to agree that the vast differences in styles reflect our post-modern age (Cooper, 1999). In SL research, Lam (2004) summarizes recent research in SL literacy practices in online written communication. From these studies and her own work, she notes that online English is being used for creating socially constricted discourses much the same as in traditional forums of communication. On the other hand, her own study of two Chinese girls' interactions shows that online chat has implications for the creation of new discourses that could have positive implications for some marginalized groups of SL learners. Lam's findings are confirmed by George's experience online. The more informal literacy that he used to communicate with on line in 'chat' sessions allowed him to 'speak' with others, just as it had for Andrzej and Slawomir's using the Daedalus at the Canadian site. For George as for Andrzej and Slawomir, the nature of this informal, online literacy had certain advantages. However, Internet literacy in English did not entirely prepare George for communicating in a world outside the virtual reality of the Internet. In 2003, George was sent to Iraq for six months. In the next excerpt from an interview, he explains:

I didn't speak to native speakers as much because we was, our hospital was, located in their own place. So, I have only ten opportunities, uuh, chances [during work], to speak to some native speaking people. But in our free time and we had much free time, we couldn't do anything like go to city or jogging or something. We was still in our Base watching American movies without Czech voices or subtitles, no subtitles. It was another opportunity to learn. And of course we met people from other countries and we talked to them in English but I don't understand them very well because people from South America, for example, have very bad pronunciation. It's terrible. It's like Scottish, I don't understand any word. It's very difficult for us. I could spoke to them many times but I had a fear. I was very shy to speak to someone. I made many mistakes, so I was a 'silent boy'. (Interview, November 23, 2004).

‘Speaking’ on the Internet in chat sessions was much different, George discovered, than trying to communicate with other military in the context of his mission in Iraq. His observation is substantiated by recent research in CALL. Weininger & Sheld (2004), for example, have examined the question of whether online “written speech” approximates “oral speech”, specifically to determine if online “chat” is an appropriate means of rehearsing for face-to-face interactions. They conclude that “chat” offers a third space that approximates oral interactions but is decidedly different.

When George took part in international missions such as he did in Iraq, he lacked experience in expressing his views with others in English. His years of schooling and his own efforts to learn English only prepared him for passively participating in English interactions such as watching movies. But this passive experience, like his previous ones, did not help him when it came to speaking with other foreign officers in English, the only language they had for communicating among themselves. When confronted with the need to communicate in these situations, the nature of George’s identity changed from being an outgoing and friendly military officer to becoming a shy “silent boy”. He chose not to invest in opportunities to improve his second language.

By using computer technology outside the context of the classroom, John and George were able to negotiate identities with which they were comfortable in the informal digital space of online chatting and computer games in English. Nevertheless, as their comments demonstrate, often the literacies they acquired with computers in these spaces, or what Bourdieu (1991) calls “habitus”, through gaming and media, could not serve them academically. This disparity between what they acquired in their “habitus” and what they were learning in the formal environments prevented them from being able to interact in the classroom and to build on their acquired knowledge. Gee (1991) has demonstrated and John and George’s experiences exemplify, the result of this disparity plays out in the identities of individuals often in disturbing ways.

Some of the other Czech students had also used computer technology to increase their contact with English. In the more formal setting of the university site where the

participants in the online sessions were physically located, computer technology was offered for students to practise English. The Czech participants showed little interest or enthusiasm for the type of activities offered by the software programs. Most students reported that they only spent time at the Self Access Centre where the computers were located when their teachers directed them to go as part of their in-class activities. The students used this time to work with the online dictionary or to search the Internet, as for example to look up information as directed by their teachers for essays, assignments or presentations. They also reported that they were sometimes required to practise vocabulary through working on exercises on software that had been bought from the British Council in return for their providing the university with the computers. Many students reported they quickly tired of these exercises even though they believed their professors' claims that this work was necessary in order to progress in their SL. Nevertheless, Petra explained that she and her colleagues were spared the guilt of not following their teachers' advice with regard to working on the software programs. At the time of the study, two Czech military universities had amalgamated and the Self Access Centre was not as yet operational. Prior to the move, however, when the Centre was accessible, teachers reported that much to their disappointment the majority of participants generally chose not to go or used the computers for other purposes than contact with English.

Interviews and Observations in Romania

I also met a group of Romanian students online during the fourth phase of the study. This group was made up of ten, mostly military officers, who were attending an intensive English course at a Management Training Centre in the mountainous region of Romania northeast of Bucharest. There were eight men and two women (See Table 4)

Table 4: List of Participants in Online Discussions from Romania

NAME	DESCRIPTION
Sabin	Male, young unmarried officer who recently graduated from university in aerospace engineering
Daniela	Female, a 24-year-old civilian woman with an economics and accounting degree who worked as a 'reviewer' in a Military Prosecutor's Office
Adrian	Male, 32, a telecommunications expert who worked as a signal officer and who had participated in several international exercises because of his skill and knowledge in his field
Vali	Male, a forty-three-year-old senior officer "diplomat engineer" who had just returned from Ethiopia and Eritrea where he served as a UN observer
Florin B.	Male, a young officer who worked in electronics and had recently been required to move to logistics because his military section had been closed
Florin D.	Male, a thirty-eight-year-old who was Chief of a Maintenance Centre for Military Vehicle Repairs and who had recently flown to Iraq as a highly qualified vehicle inspector;
Marian	Male, thirty, who worked in an anti-aircraft battalion and was working on his doctorate in psychology;
Mignona	Female, a thirty-two-year-old single mother, who worked as a civilian translator in Military Headquarters
Leo	Male, a scientific researcher in his early forties, joined the group midway through the four-week discussion period

Most of these individuals had served in the military for over ten years. All were highly educated and many were experts in a variety of fields not solely limited to their work. All ten were away from their homes and regular duties in order to take part in the intensive English course in Branov. Their participation in the online discussions was voluntary. Three of their classmates chose not to participate.

I found distinct parallels between the early language experiences of the Czech students and the Romanian students. For several participants in both sites, formal learning of English in school settings had been problematic. Except for a few sporadic opportunities to take military language courses, most had to pursue their own means to

develop and practise their second language. This is not an easy task in a country such as Romania where people generally struggle with other more important basic livelihood issues on a daily basis.

Most of the Romanian participants pointed out at the outset that any knowledge of English they had was not a result of their early years at school. The majority of those who had experienced English in school were not impressed with how they had been taught and considered much of their early language experiences as non productive. Vali, for example, blamed his dissatisfaction with his early experiences in English on frequent changes in his teacher, *“three teachers in four years”* (Interview notes, November 25, 2004). Florin D. explained, *“I didn’t learn much in high school. Maybe the teacher was maybe the problem because she wasn’t interested so much in her teaching”* (Interview, November 25 2004). Similarly, Mignona explained that, despite her English teacher having other physical and cognitive resources that she considered important, the teacher’s lack of care for her students was missing: *“She was beautiful and smart but didn’t care very much about teaching others”* (Interview notes, November 25, 2004). Mignona described how her English classes were scheduled at the end of the day, and more often than not, students were allowed to leave early if they promised to complete a few extra grammar exercises for homework.

The lack of importance that their schools’ administrations placed on their learning of English contrasted sharply with the participants desire to improve their competence in their second language. All the Romanian participants at some time or other had made efforts to learn the language on their own. Daniela who had had no formal English in school was completely self-taught and proud of her efforts. *“I learned on T.V cartoons when I was young, listen to music and my little brother who is helping me. He’s a big help”* (Interview notes, November 25, 2004). In military school, Vali had to take German instead of his first choice, English. Later when he tried to take English courses offered by the military, his supervisors repeatedly turned down his applications giving no explanations. Consequently, he reported that he *“learned by [his] own means”*. He had an interest in computer technology so he began to learn

English by studying IT books, which were in English and became savvy in the English world of computer technology. Mignona, despite the fact that she was a translator, remarked that her early years were unproductive for learning English. *"I had to learn by myself, to study by myself, so that's why I'm not very good"* (Interview notes, November 25, 2004).

A few Romanian participants did have the chance to take previous English language courses. Marian admitted that he had not really learned much English in school. He reported that it was only when he took part in an American-based English course offered to him through the military that he felt he had made progress in his second language. He spoke positively about this experience. There were lots of opportunities to speak, listen, read and write. When I asked if he had had trouble speaking in that course he replied: *"I had trouble, I have trouble with speaking. But after four months I became more talkative than I was at the beginning"* (Interview notes, November 25, 2004). Florin D., was also thrilled to have the opportunity to be offered an English language course by his military department in 2002. He had been forced to study Russian, French and German in school when what he really wanted was to learn English. He saw English as a means not only of gaining job security, satisfaction and advancement in the military, but also allowing him to enter more easily into what he considered the fascinating world of North American culture via the medium of cinema. He was so happy with the idea of learning English after the first course, he applied for further courses. However, each time he was turned down by his superiors. For supervisors in a downsized military in Romania who must juggle operational demands with requests for training, language or otherwise, it is often easier to deny requests than find replacements. When Florin D. had a couple of months between two assignments and before he had to report to his new duties, he took the opportunity to sign himself up for another English course without requesting approval from his regular supervisor. Unfortunately, this supervisor considered Florin's action as an act of subordination for failing to submit a formal request to him. In the following excerpt from the interview

with Florin, he describes his current dilemma because of his decision to attend the English course.

After this course I tried to attend other courses but my seniors said that I had to stay to work and not to learn any more English. I like to learn. I like to do what I know to do. But in our country at this moment you have to do the work that isn't so, for me, isn't so good. I have to do my job. Da [Yes] I have to like it [my job]. (I am here at his course because) I got an assignment in another unit and I used this opportunity to subscribe to another course and I expect them, my seniors, to be a little angry when I be back. This assignment in another unit is finished, done and I have to go back to my previous unit. I got the assignment to get in 2005 the rank of major. And because I'm at this course they gave the opportunity to another colleague to get this rank and I have to go back to my previous position. I hope this [the chance to raise my rank] will happen maybe next year but I 'm not very sure. I'm a little disappointed but.... I think this course made them a little angry. And it's OK. I'm happy I learned some English. (Face-to-face interview, November 25, 2004)

Florin's decision to enrol in another English course came at a heavy price with regard to an expected promotion. It caused problems in his relationship with his superiors who saw his decision to take the course as an act of defiance. It also resulted in a loss of opportunity for an expected raise in his military rank. Instead, he was faced with going to an unattractive position in an area of work that had little interest for him and at a salary that would be lower than if he had succeeded in obtaining the promotion that he had been told previously was earmarked for him. In other words, Florin's passion to learn English came at considerable cost to him financially and psychologically. He often appeared sad on line, as the consequences of his predicament seemed to preoccupy him while in the second language classroom. It also appeared to weigh on his self confidence. When I inquired if he participated in the discussions in the course he was attending in Brasov at the time of the online discussions, he responded:

F. Not so much. I interfere with just some statements just with some sentences. I don't usually have some discussion. I have all my sentences in my mind but it's difficult to tell them what I think. I avoid to discuss much.

PCG Because of your English?

- F. No, in fact, in my mind I have sentences and an idea but, I don't know, it's as I am. Some have more knowledge and management is not my field and they have more experience and they can express their ideas. I think they are better, yes in Romanian, and can translate their ideas.
(Interview notes, November 25, 2004)

With regard to Florin's sense of self, the precarious position and lack of control he occupied in his work situation seemed to carry over and influence his language learning. Florin's intentions in pursuing his studies in English were admirable - to improve himself as a military employee. As in other aspects of his work, he always put forth his best effort. "*I made my job the best I can do*", he said proudly. The loss of recognition and encouragement that he experienced and indeed expected from his superiors left him doubting his abilities. In the English discussions, he refrained from expressing his ideas. He felt he knew what to say in English but doubted the worth of his opinions. As a result, he allowed himself to make a statement only periodically in the classroom discussions.

Florin was not the only one to express problems in having a voice in the SL intensive course that coincided with the online discussions. For example, Leo seemed very enthusiastic about learning and indeed was very knowledgeable about a variety of subject areas. He expressed that he too felt reluctant to share fully in classroom discussions. Part of the problem was due to what he considered an administrative error. On arriving at the Management Resource Centre, he had to undergo rigorous placement tests and an interview before a large committee. The results of this testing had placed him in one of two groups. The members of the group to which he was assigned were considered to have lower level proficiency. Unfortunately, a few days into the program, it happened that two students who were in the higher group were considered beyond their level and a switch had to be made. The administrators asked Leo to move to the 'higher' group. He explained that the misjudgement in the administrative pre-testing, which resulted in his switching groups, caused problems for him to integrate into the new group. He had not only arrived late after the other students had had a chance to bond, but also, felt labelled as 'linguistically inferior'. Leo seemed to be an outgoing

individual and probably could have adapted and perhaps resisted his disadvantaged position. However, his disadvantaged position in the classroom was deeply rooted in his prior experiences with language learning during his early years at school. He reported that those early experiences in a formal language-learning context had marked him for life and that he found any classroom context counterproductive to learning a language. He explained: “*All the time school is for me very difficult for me to make connection [to life]*” (Interview notes, November 25, 2004).

Leo, a highly educated senior military officer, had spent most of his life in formal learning contexts as a scientific researcher. One would naturally suppose with having spent so much time in academia that he would feel comfortable in such settings. He related that he frequently attended large conferences where he presented his extensive expertise in his field to others. Yet, in the language classroom he felt uncomfortable speaking and using his second language. Part of the reason for his discomfort was that he found it difficult to connect what he did in the classroom with what he needed to do in ‘real’ life, that is communicate in his SL about what he wanted to say. In the formal learning context of a SL classroom he felt singled out. “*I feel like an actor on a screen, [or] in [on] the stage. Everybody looks for him [me], waits for him [me] to say one word, puts me in the lights*” like an “*actor in [on] stage*” (Interview, November 25, 2004). In the classroom he envisioned that everyone was waiting, watching for him to speak and there to judge his every word. Leo explained that he did not feel the same in ‘real’ situations in his day-to-day life.

With the opportunities to use and practise their second language limited to a large extent by circumstances beyond their control, many participants in the Romanian site reported that they felt at a disadvantage especially linguistically when speaking with native speakers. Even the teachers in Romania and the Czech Republic who were involved in supporting the online sessions, with their advanced knowledge of English, would frequently comment on how difficult it was for them to be in the company of an English speaker. Livia, one of the English teachers at the Centre where the participants were studying English, commented:

I'm glad you said that you would like the project to continue. Personally, it's just my opinion, I think it's really, really good, really useful. I must admit when I heard of it [the online discussions], I was rather nervous. So it is natural for students to be nervous too especially in the initial stages. But all in all, I think we were really nervous. Obviously you don't have this problem in Canada, but here we don't have too many native speakers. And this is an opportunity that must be used. (Interview with teachers and IT specialist, November 24, 2004).

Livia and other teachers' comments reminded me of those made by George in the Czech Republic. He described that on his mission to Iraq he played "silent boy" when he found himself with an opportunity to use his basic knowledge of English. Teachers, like George, seemed to suggest that their identities as confident teachers of English changed when they were confronted with the necessity to engage with English speakers. In these situations they became nervous and assumed a "marginalized" and "incompetent" subject position. Marian, one of the participants and a doctoral student in psychology had had a lot of trouble speaking in the context of the American course he had taken prior to attending the course he was in at the time of the discussions online. He reported that in the American course, initially he was unable to call upon his educational and interpersonal resources. Vali talked about his recent mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea where he worked with a multicultural force of UN observers. In this setting, intercommunication was of paramount importance. Vali described himself as "a talkative one" usually, but in Ethiopia where the language of communication was English he said: "*I felt pretty scared especially about my speaking. I was afraid not to make grammar mistakes and I was rather silent.*" (Interview notes, November 25, 2004). Vali was a self-taught SL learner and lacked practice communicating orally in English. He reported that although he felt he had an extensive knowledge of the grammar, this knowledge deterred him from speaking because he feared making errors. As a result, he was not able to voice his opinions and share his considerable military experience in this important UN delegation setting. Adrian had invested considerable time reading technical books in communications to improve his English. But when the time came to speak to technicians in other countries, he confided he was not able to access the knowledge of English that he had learned: "*I knew only a few English words*

and I was embarrassed. I worked with people who would speak French but even the French spoke English so it was embarrassing” (Interview notes, November 26, 2004).

Mignona talked about the stresses of her job working with other military translators in English. She explained that because she was self-taught she felt that she always had to prove herself to others in the office. She vividly recalled her first meeting with a ‘native speaker’:

Yes, at work I’m always nervous. When I was talking to George Smith [an American language director]...we were 4 or 5 people there in a room just like this one. We were talking. Someone said something. Someone interrupted and interfered. It was OK. Suddenly everybody left. Here I was, me and George. I was really terrified. I don’t have this opportunity to talk to natives [speakers] and he was a supervisor. I was really frightened, very nervous (Interview notes, November 25, 2004).

Of all the Romanian participants in the study, Mignona was the most proficient in English. Indeed, the majority of her work was spent translating documents from English to Romanian. All of her expertise in English was the result of her own self-study efforts.. Nevertheless, in the context of being in the presence of the American, she sat passively and let others do the speaking. Later, when she came face-to-face alone with the American language director, when there was no choice but to become visible, she reacted with extreme nervousness and fear. As was seen in the context of the immersion program, these reactions, indicative of the marginalized position that some SL learners construct for themselves or are constructed by others for them in the presence of certain other speakers of English, are deterrents to practising their speaking and improving in a second language. Yet, developing her proficiency in English was one of Mignona’s most important life goals.

Sabin’s story of his encounter with English was even more disconcerting. Sabin, a young aerospace engineer and scientific researcher, recently graduated, realized early on the importance of learning English to his career. As he explained: *“As you know, there will be more countries joined NATO and there will be more need for international contacts and the language barrier should be overcome”* (Interview notes, November 26,

2004). After finishing his university studies, he began using certain technologies, like the Internet, movies and tapes to continue to learn English. He even managed to find an American company that offered distance education courses by mail and which he worked at faithfully. His first opportunity to test his knowledge came in the form of an offer from a professor in the U.S. to come and do graduate work there. Sabin was thrilled! The prospects of moving to the States meant certainly that there would be the potential for a more interesting and prosperous future that matched his personal aspirations. He realized, however, that first of all he would have to pass two language tests. In the following excerpt from the interview transcripts he explains what happened:

I also had an increasing interest in English since last year when I had an opportunity to follow a course of master in U.S. in New Orleans but as a prerequisite I was asked for some accredited test like TOEFL or and GRE and I tried to learn more English. I think TOEFL is not a problem for me but regarding the other test, the examination it's a little bit too hard for me in point of view of speed. I don't have all the practice and all the speed needed for me to solve problems in time race against social period of time. But as a level of difficulty I think I managed. I managed also GRE test.... But the most difficult for me was analyzing a text...They provide you with some possible answers and you have to pick the correct one and are not so simple like in TOEFL. They are very close answers and slight differences and you have to pay attention to that slight differences that differentiate the good one and the bad one. (Interview notes, November 25, 2004)

As this excerpt reveals, computer technology in the form of standardization testing was acting both as a potential door opener and closer for both Sabin's financial and professional future. Sabin and the developers of the test were using this technical yardstick to measure his ability in English. Confronted by a lack of agency in controlling the time constraints and sociocultural issues that arose in the context of the testing, Sabin saw himself as 'below acceptable' even though as he explained, he did manage to pass the practice version. Sabin had been singled out by his Romanian professor as an ideal candidate to take advantage of what he considered an amazing opportunity for further paid study in the U.S. This opportunity would have been a unique gift for a young man setting out on a career and especially considering the difficult economic times in Romania. Instead, because of the negative experience with the technology-

based testing, Sabin deemed himself unworthy of the opportunity and chose not to pursue the fellowship. One can only speculate at the extent of Sabin's loss of opportunities. This loss came not because he was unable to pass the test, but by his own admission, his failure to recognize that he could realize his own agency.

Missing out on opportunities for professional advancement are always disappointing. More serious are the silencing and exclusion that occurs when, as the stories from Vali, Mignona, Adrian and George from the Czech Republic clearly illustrate, SL learners are denied possibilities to practise their language skills in communicative events. With opportunities to engage orally in English, I believe these stories could have different endings. Sociocultural research in SL education and other disciplines as well is demonstrating that learners' identities are dynamic and changeable through dialogue. The online discussions that were set up among the various sites in Europe and Canada were an effort to allow the SL learners in the study to begin to have such possibilities.

Online with the Czech Republic

October 19th, 2004 was the first day of the transatlantic connection via Internet to military individuals in Romania and the Czech Republic. The connection that we were about to make seemed a bit overwhelming for everyone concerned- the military participants, the teachers in their respective sites and even the IT staff. Although international communication via the Internet has become rather routine in the last five years, the opportunity to take part in guided online videoconferencing discussions as a means of practising SL is still not yet the norm. When these discussions are conducted from various locations synchronously, that is, in immediate or in real-time, the experience is even more unique. The connection was made possible through a technique called 'multi streaming', an audio and video messaging technology whereby information is sent separately to a central location and then combined and transmitted onwards.



Figure 12. Talking Online with Canada and the Czech Republic

The ICI-Design software developed specifically for this SL discussion application provided participants each with their own screen. In other words speakers from several locations could be on line together interacting orally and visually from multiple locations. In Figure 12, Information Technology specialists in two sites in Canada and from the University in the Czech Republic as well as Ivana Cechova and I discuss the website which the Czech students will use in the subsequent weeks for conversation. The interface at the particular website online was also set up by ICI Design specifically with the pedagogical needs of this particular group of SL learners in mind. To connect to the website required 1 MGB of bandwidth for each computer as well as a headset for listening and speaking and a web camera for the user. The Czech Republic was able to provide their students with the necessary bandwidth and equipment to conduct the discussions. As a result, they made full use of the potential of the software. They took advantage of having up to nine students online at any one time and were able to interact with speakers from other physical spaces. For example, on one occasion there were several Czech students, Canadians in three different cities and a visitor speaking from Boston U.S.A.

In Romania, the website was used differently. The Management Training Centre where the Romanian students were physically located was able to provide their students with state-of-the-art computers and hardware such as cameras and microphones. However, the bandwidth needed for each computer did not meet the 1 MGB required for running the software. It was decided to conduct the sessions one-to-one. In other words, each student would carry on a discussion with the teacher online at the website. The rest of the participants would watch and listen to the discussion on a large screen set up in the computer room at the Management Training Centre. Some of the Romanian participants questioned me about the fact that they were not able to conduct the sessions in the way they had originally been told it would be done, in other words, as the Czech participants were proceeding. I understood their disappointment and explained to them that since the problem stemmed from the less than adequate bandwidth in Romania, our only recourse was to encourage the military there to consider buying more bandwidth for any further sessions. Despite the initial disappointment, however, once the discussion sessions began, the Romanian participants overlooked the situation and got on with communicating online as intended. Some of the IT specialists in Canada who were involved in helping to set up the discussions seemed to consider the Romanian application a disappointment because the software was not used to its full potential. However, as education researchers in computer technology are beginning to discover, it is through these apparent 'failures' that discovering how computer technology can be used as a democratic tool will be understood (Van Lieshout, Egyedi, Bijker, 2001). Uncovering the reasons why the Romanians were denied access to multi-site speakers may lead to elements of exclusion and disproportionate access to power. Uncovering these tensions may help to determine what needs to be changed to meet more democratic ideals in the use of computer technology.

Despite their general enthusiasm for having the opportunity to practise their English, many in the Czech Republic seemed nervous the first few times they met online. And their uneasiness was for good reason, given that 1) we were using a state-of-the-art computer technology; 2) the participants were going to be speaking English in

the presence of an English speaker and their own colleagues; 3) there was a natural fear of the unknown. The following vignette based on my observations and field notes that I wrote most days after the sessions online, alludes to these difficulties.

Day 1: A Bundle of Nerves

The first session started late. I was a little worried so I went on MSN to write to George to see what was going on. When we finally connected on line it was confusing. Ivana's microphone was hardly working and so her message kept cutting out. The first student was Jane. She talked freely about herself and her summer but many times when she didn't know a specific English word, she would turn to Ivana for help. I asked her to introduce the others who were present on the website but she misinterpreted me and understood that she had to tell me things about them. I tried to get the conversation going among the students but the technology was too cumbersome and didn't allow it to happen easily. One thing I did notice was that the third student spoke quite clearly and I wondered if it was the quality of her headset.

All three students seemed a bit reluctant to be there. I wondered if Ivana coerced them a little. After they went off line, Ivana and I talked. She seemed to be confused that the sessions were starting. She talked about another test next week when we had agreed that this day was the first day. I asked if there would be four more students tomorrow and if she could encourage them to write e-mails to me. None had done so by the end of the day. (Field Notes, October 19, 2004)

An onlooker who might have been present that day would have wondered what worth there was in continuing. I asked myself a similar question. There were the technical problems that were responsible for the poor reception. Also, I questioned whether the students had been coerced to participate. While I had assumed that we would just talk, our attempts at discussion were frequently interrupted when students turned to Ivana or each other for translations. There were frequent misinterpretations of simple requests on the part of the students and surprisingly of Ivana, despite her advanced proficiency in English. In contemplating the value of such dialectic interactions, I concluded that during the many years I had spent in traditional SL contexts, especially in my own teaching practices, I had had and seen attempts at communication that had likewise been problematic. In these contexts, there were sometimes moments of technical breakdown, there were times when one

person indirectly or directly controlled who got to speak and there were periods of misunderstanding. Technical difficulties, overly talkative students and SL learners as well as first language interlocutors who fail to listen well, are common occurrences *outside* the virtual site as well.

In this case, faulty headsets were the cause of the technical breakdowns. I understood that the technical condition of the resources was an example perhaps of an administration not entirely convinced of the idea for the online sessions and not willing to invest in better equipment. As Ivana voiced later in an interview, “*When we started, people [the administration] hesitated. [It’s a] good idea, but impossible to arrange*” (Interview notes, November 22, 2004). George, the Czech IT specialist confirmed what Ivana was saying: “*Computers are not very good and headsets are not very good. They could spend more money but they didn’t do it*” (Interview notes, November 23, 2004). Obviously, the online discussion sessions that had been teacher instigated up to this point, lacked the prestige of a top-down invested initiative. As the Deputy Director of the MTAP program in Canada who had sponsored the online sessions astutely advised after the sessions ended: “*Any attempt to continue these online exchanges will have to come from above. We will never put this kind of effort in place from below*” (Interview, April 30, 2005). Although this observation may be valid, I also agree with Alderson and Beretta’s (1992b) statement: “In the real world, innovations are often the result of individual[s]’ vision, energy and commitment, not rational planning and experimentation” (p. 272). In other words, I would suggest that the first movements toward change have to come from those who feel the tensions and then convince stakeholders that the idea was theirs all along!

The misunderstandings I had online with Jane and Ivana is a common characteristic of SL and indeed first language interactions. After that first day online, a follow-up discussion helped to work out our differences in understanding. There were benefits to this breakdown, of course. It was René, one of the participants who frequently came online that brought these advantages to light for me. He was discussing the online sessions in a large group interview that took place on my final visit to the

Czech Republic in November, 2004 in phase four of the study. René was trying to compare learning a language as an academic exercise as opposed to learning through authentic activity such as orally interacting with others. He remarked: *'If I learn only with paper than I know them [words] but if I hear them [words] and see them [words] from your mouth, I learn them'* (Group Interview, November 22, 2004). René was explaining that SL words, seen on a page, is one form of knowledge. Words on a page like academic knowledge lack authentic practice in meaning making-the essential ingredient of learning. René's comment reminded me of the power of most everyday exchanges to construct meaning and knowledge. So intent was I on the technical aspects of setting the online communications in motion that day, that I neglected to see the linguistic and cultural advantages in the mediation process itself. Constructing meaning together with Ivana and the students on line that day and on many other occasions in order to mutually understand one another, was what René considered to be a 'real' form of SL learning.

The issue of control and whether Ivana had insisted that her students take part in the sessions also needed to be addressed. When I asked her, she said that she had only announced it to all of the groups and several volunteered. However, when I wondered if she had to encourage these students to come on line, she replied in an interview: *"Ah... I think yes, a little bit because they did not know what to expect. In two weeks it was better. When I came to check what was new they told me - We don't need you here"* (Interview, November 23, 2004).

Vygotsky's conception of learning as movement from being 'other' regulated to 'self-regulated' is relevant in the case of the students I spoke with online from the Czech Republic. From individuals who, at the outset of the online discussions were nervous, had difficulty to speak or who relied on their teachers to translate, I saw evidence of a group of evolving self-determined learners who used the computer technology to their advantage. In the next noteworthy excerpt from my field notes, I provide an example of how a group of older students at the Czech site moved towards being self-regulated.

Taking Small Steps Toward Communicating

I had a conversation today with three teachers, two senior professors and one lecturer who are learning English as well as teaching at the university. The first student I greeted, George, was extremely shy and did not look into the screen at all. Everything I said to him, his colleague translated and yet George did not or could not reply. Even when I spoke with simple words, he could not respond. The second participant, Zdenek, was a little more outgoing but very hesitant. I asked them all to ask questions and suggested it as a way of beginning to get to know one another. The younger lecturer, Blazek, whose English was better, was more communicative, but very serious.

It was interesting to watch the changes that occurred both visibly and orally within the course of 45 minutes. Blazek became humorous; Zdenek was more talkative and began to share little anecdotes about his life. George who had declined all chances to speak and ask questions of others in the group, suddenly raised his head at the end, looked into the camera and asked if he might ask a few questions before we signed off the website. (Field Notes, October 27, 2004)

The communicative process I witnessed that day, both verbally and nonverbally, at first glance may appear not particularly significant. Such occurrences ordinarily happen on 'first days' presumably in many other language-learning sites. On 'first days', some students take time to acclimatize themselves to new surroundings and to others in a group as well as to differences in teaching styles from what they have experienced in previous SL situations. Of consequence here, was the nature of the acclimatizing and the changes in communication that took place online. While e-mailing is viewed as one of the best choices of the Internet for teaching language (Warschauer, 1999), one wonders if the changes that occurred in George, Zdenek and Blazek over the period of one hour would have happened in a written e-mail exchange or even in a traditional classroom setting. Interestingly, George's English teacher confided to me that it was quite amazing George had chosen to engage in the discussions that day at the end of the session. In her own SL class, in which George was a student, he had only said a few words over several months and indeed rarely communicated with her even in his first language. It appears that the power of this particular computer technology to transmit the non- verbals in the exchange, a critical part of any successful communication, had an important influence on these students' engagement in discussions and in using their SL orally. George's way

of being, his identity, in the SL context, seem to be transforming each time we met. He seemed a little more engaging and open to questions. When I went to the Czech Republic after the online discussion sessions had ended, I met face-to-face with the two professors, George and Zdenek. I was pleased to see George was the first to initiate the conversation that day. He began by talking about pictures he had brought of his family, his garden and his pet. In Figure 13, George is speaking enthusiastically about a Canadian living in Nova Scotia with whom he has been a penpal and has corresponded in English through e-mail over the last several years. Eventually, I had to interrupt the conversation with George in order to allow Zdenek time to speak in the timeframe we had together.

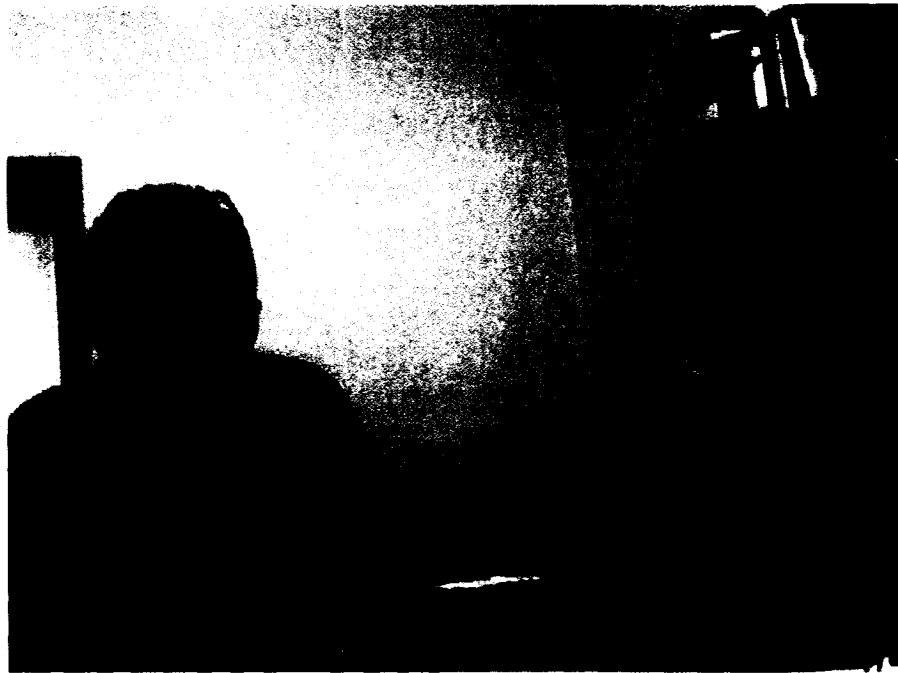


Figure 13. George Speaking While Zdenek Listens

There were other signs that the discussions online were having some influence on the participants in the Czech Republic. At the beginning of the sessions I had asked the students to write introductory e-mails and to give some information about themselves so that we might be able to talk more easily online. The first e-mails were disappointing, especially considering that most of the students had been studying

English for over 10 years. Many wrote one or two lines. The following e-mail from Kvita which she signed with “hi” rather than “goodbye” is an indication of what I received:

Dear Ms, My name is Kvita Strakrábová. I study in Brno The University of Defence. So I am soldier. My hobbies are sport, animals and other. I am looking forward to speak with you.

Hi Kvita (E-mail received October 23, 2004)

The apparent hesitation on the part of the Czech students to be more participative in the e-mails was visible at the website as well. Every day for the first few days, a new set of nervous students would appear. Initially, most of the time the students would offer one-line responses to questions that others or I had asked but would become a little more engaging at the end of the first session. However, I observed that the students frequently would request explanations or translations in Czech from their classmates or teacher who was in the room. After the first week, I began to see the same students online more regularly and the e-mails became longer and more informative. The following example of an e-mail sent from Kvita that arrived after several days of the discussion sessions, reflects the greater engagement that I was seeing online.

Hi Paula,

I am in Military for more than one year. In this time I study the second year of this school.

You asked me if I am happy with my choice. It is very hard to answer this question, but I must say that the system of this school I like. But I cannot say what will be in the future. Your next question was if it was easy choice and I must say that definitely not, because I really did not know where to go to school. I tried it a year before I went to this school, but I was too young to go to Military. So I started to study language school and during study I made me sure that I wanted to try it again, because I like uniforms. Many people are here because of money but me not. I am here because I wanted to be a soldier. And I must say that army changed me.

See you later Kvita

(E-mail, received October 29, 2004)

Online, the Czech students talked about their lives as young military and their future aspirations as officers. René, for example, explained that his motivation for joining the military was to get an education. Twenty percent of the Czech population is educated he said and he wanted to be one of that twenty percent. Petra worried that the career that she had initially chosen to prepare for in environmental protection, had been cut from the military and wondered where she would go the following year when she finished her studies.

At first the conversations were light and informative, but eventually they began to discuss more critical issues. They were very interested in discussing the recent move of the university from a small town in order to amalgamate with a larger university in a nearby city. Military students who had been in separate locations were now together. They talked about the inconveniences that the move had caused to their personal lives. They spent much more time travelling back and forth to the previous location to attend courses because there was not enough space for those courses to be offered in the new location. This meant longer days and giving up on other plans at the end of the day, such as coming online. The extra hours put strains on them academically since their studying hours were reduced. The students seemed to enjoy the opportunity to discuss their concerns. On one occasion, a teacher joined the discussions. When he was asked by the students for his opinion on the amalgamation, he quickly closed the subject with a curt comment. *"It is time to stop discussing these subjects and get on with our life here in Masaryk"*, he remarked. A few minutes later, he left the website and did not return. I understood from his comment and action, and it was confirmed later by Ivana, that it was inappropriate to be critical of the military decision to move and that any voicing of opinions about the subject was considered disloyal to the administration.

At one point in the sessions, I had arranged that my son, who was a few years older than the Czech students, to join the discussions online from his office at a university in northeastern United States. They spoke quite easily, asking questions of him, cultural questions such as what he likes about living in North America and whether he knew anything about the Czech Republic. They also posed questions to him

that initiated discussions and elicited conflicting opinions about morals, politics and education. They wanted to know for example, if he had a girlfriend and if he lived with her and what his mother would think of it if he did. They asked about his impressions of the war in Iraq and his feelings about living in the U.S. at this time of war. They responded to his questions about why they had decided to join the military. They were candid in explaining their reasons; some saying for job security after graduation, others only to have their education paid for, while others wanted to take part in active service. I noted that many of the participants in the study had come a long way in their willingness and openness to interact. I wrote in my field notes:

'Seeing' Progress

Today was by far one of the most exciting days of the online sessions. The students talked freely with Jean-Paul (my son) about many things. They asked him about his girlfriend whether he lived with her and how his parents and his society regarded such a decision. They wanted to know what he knew about the Czech Republic and about his job at the university. They debated about sports and various teams. They had a lot of questions and I was impressed at how some who had seemed shy at first found many things to ask and had comments to make. At one point, I realized that the students were doing all the talking and that I had spent most of the hour observing. (Field Notes, November 11, 2004)

Just as I observed in my field notes, the students eventually became more engaged and engaging. I noticed as the sessions progressed students who initially had seemed particularly 'quiet' compared to others, became more outspoken. For example, John who professed he had gained much of his knowledge of English from his interest in computers, behaved similar to the way George the older professor had at his first online session. He slouched in his chair as if to avoid his image being recorded on the website. He succeeded most of the time in avoiding looking into the camera and speaking to me directly. Indeed his face was hidden from the screen most of the time. He was slow to respond to questions from others and myself and sought translations from his peers. When he did reply, his answers were very brief. Eventually, he became more interactive. I recall noticing how he was sitting up straighter in his chair and speaking out more often and expressing with more personal opinions, even after a

couple of sessions. He talked about this transition in an interview at the end of the online discussions.

PCG: Why didn't you speak much in [your regular] English class? Were you nervous?

John: Maybe.

PCG: Were you nervous online?

John: No. At first, of course. I think there isn't many people for them isn't big stress. When I first went I didn't know nothing. I knew it will be some kind of discussion. I didn't really know who would be on the other end of the discussion. And I really didn't know what kind of questions and problems we would solve. The second time, after I was silent the first time, I started to speak.

(Interview notes, November 23, 2004)

John's transition from being more silent to talkative may be attributed to the fact that he was in a new SL learning situation, as he suggests is typical for most people. However, the contrast of his way of being in the regular SL classroom and the changes he constructed to those ways eventually in the virtual classroom suggests that there was more to the changes than simply adapting to a new setting. Something in the context of the online discussions was more conducive for John to invest in speaking out and using his SL. Recent research in broader educational computer technology used for communication applications is showing similar patterns in learners online (Hudson & Bruckman, 2002; Spears et al., 2001). It is noteworthy that John, who by his own admission, was somewhat reserved in his own language, was the student who chose to sit beside me at social gatherings during my follow-up visit and who talked at length in his SL. In the final group interview, he expressed his feelings clearly about the experience:

It's good to be with a native speaker so we can improve our speaking. It's different between school English and online discussions. In school, if we don't know a word, we can look in the dictionary but now online we must just speak. At school we don't speak much; we don't speak with teacher. This [online discussion] is good for me. I am really happy. I am really happy to have this opportunity to talk to you. (Interview, November 23, 2004)



Figure 14. John Speaking Out

By comparing learning in class with the online discussions, John may be expressing his frustration with the formality and artificiality of classroom learning. In his view, the classroom does not prepare him for a natural conversation situation where looking up words is unrealistic. He sees using the language by conversing online closer to natural situations, as a pleasant and fulfilling way of practising his SL.

René, another student who participated in the discussions showed a transition that was also noteworthy. In contrast to John, René seemed more outgoing on our first meeting online. He appeared excited by the computer technology and eager to take part. When it came to speaking, however, he appeared to have problems in expressing himself. At first, he just smiled a lot and either didn't speak or used a phrase or two to respond. I recognized that he was interested however in the discussion session because he would appear on days when he was not scheduled to be there, and sometimes three times in a week. One day, it happened that the regularly scheduled students had been required to do extra work for one of their courses and were not available to come. So that day there were only René and George, the technician, who was a regular as well. In the following excerpt from my field notes, I write about that session:

Turning points for René and George

René shocked me a little to day. When I opened the session by asking him how he was instead of the usual one or two word accompanied by a broad smile, he responded more seriously: *"I have so much to tell you and I don't speak English well"*. I encouraged him to try nevertheless and so he began to speak. George added to my comment: **"Now we have choice [to speak] before we didn't."** I wasn't sure whether George meant in former communist times or in the regular classroom setting, but I was pleased that René began to speak nonetheless. He talked at length about his study program about his daily schedule and how seriously he takes his military life. We discussed George's recent six-month stint in Iraq, what the experience meant to him, and how he saw positive results to the U.S. bombing even though before he went he was opposed to the invasion. When George talked about how he worries about the fact that the Iraqians who can change the situation in Iraq are leaving and those who most need to change can't, René added that he although he was disappointed at missing out on opportunities to go to Iraq and Yugoslavia, he was happy being spared the danger of going to these places. Nevertheless, he knows he is a soldier and must always be ready to obey orders. Besides, he added, these missions are ways to get extra money.

In a final comment, as if to sum up what lay between the lines of our whole discussion, René remarked: *"There is the 'West' where no one is taken care of, but there is independence. And in the 'East' everyone is being taken care of, but there is no independence. Our country wants to move towards the 'West' but I don't think anybody here is sure how to do it"*. (Field Notes November 2, 2004)

This exchange represented another significant day in the online sessions, which left a lasting impression on me as an SL educator. I read in this interchange more than just two young soldiers giving their political views on the situation in their country and the world, a rare occurrence in my experience with most military officers to do. I saw more than just two Czech students practising their second language. I saw in this exchange a breaking of a silence. It was a breaking of the silence of two SL learners who were hesitant to engage on other occasions because of feelings of inadequacy in their SL. It was the breaking of the silence of two military soldiers who traditionally are trained to hide their political opinions even when their lives are or will be, directly involved, in other words, to hide their private selves from their public selves (Debold, Tolman, Brown, 1996). It was a breaking of the silence of two citizens of the 'East' who

were shedding the shackles of their former regime that had controlled who spoke, what was spoken and when they could speak. These two military SL learners in the context of an online conversation were regaining their right to speak.

The power of dialogue, in a Bakhtinian sense, to transform and change those who enter into it, is only beginning to be documented. I felt I witnessed that dialogic power during the SL exchange I had with René and George online that day in November. I saw evidence that René, and George were revealing, and at the same time constructing through the complex social interactions made possible by computer technology, subjectivities that defy the discourses that had historically silenced them. René began to write e-mails regularly to me and continues to do so. When I arrived in the Czech Republic after the online sessions, despite meeting with me and having interacted quite a bit in the large group interview, René asked to meet with me again individually to talk and show me pictures of his family, his girlfriend and of his beloved motorcycle.. Also, when the university recognized the cultural and linguistic potential of a visiting English speaker and asked my accompanying colleague to address three different groups, René chose to attend all three sessions. I read this as a further indication of the change in his identity as a SL learner, normally too “shy” to put himself in the threatening situation of having to use English.

George had also shown that something changed in him that day in November in his online discussions with René and me. He alluded to this change not only in his comments to the teachers at the University the next day but as well in our face-to-face interview at the end of the session at the university in the Czech Republic. We were discussing the fact that he had so many opportunities in Iraq to speak and he had chosen to play ‘silent boy’. *“Yes, it was a big difference two months ago and today. I don’t know more vocabulary or more grammatics but I have no fear to speak. It’s excellent”* (Interview, November 23, 2004).

George and René were not the only ones who participated in the study in the Czech site to notice that there was a change. Others like Petra, John, Marketa, and

Vlasta had similar comments to make. Petra was able to say that it was great to have the practice with a native speaker but that it didn't matter whether it was English or Russian, that to her it was all "*a political game*". Vlasta saw the potential of speaking English using the computer technology from her home to others worldwide rather than in the context of a university. Maybe she was suggesting that the experience online had empowered her to realize that SL learners as herself need not be limited to the physical infrastructure of a university to support their needs to meet and interact with others in her SL. Perhaps she was imagining decentring some of the control that she was experiencing in the institutional setting where she studied. In this institution, the control that had caused her to miss a few sessions on line in order to attend extra classes reflected a discourse in which other academic subjects were considered more valuable than learning English. Marketa, who had complained that often she could not be her talkative self in her second language, remarked "*I feel very good when I speak to you [on line]*" (Interview November 23, 2004). George who assisted at many of the sessions added his own observation of the changes in some of these participants. George made the following comment in the context of a group interview in the Czech Republic in which all of the participants in the online sessions assembled together to discuss their experiences:

I saw many people and many groups. I was mostly in all discussions and I can see that people in second and third time discussions were not so much scared as before. I think this discussion is the best maybe not for learn more words but break the scared for speak, you know what I mean. I think it is the most for me it's the most important thing (Group Interview, November 22, 2004).

Perhaps, some day George, René and some of the other participants in the Czech site would come to Canada and like the military officers who attend the NATO-sponsored immersion program, have the opportunity to take part in an experience to learn and interact in their second language and to see "*how democracy works*" and "*to break the scared*". Maybe that experience would be transformative as it was for Ferenc and Yevhen, whom I met and interviewed in the Canadian site in the earlier phase of the study. And maybe it would not. However, for this group of Czech students, having the

opportunity in the context of their own country through computer technology tools and the Internet to author themselves in their second language is noteworthy. It is especially noteworthy that the selves George and René were authoring were alternatives to the selves that they had traditionally assumed or that were attributed to them as military soldiers from Eastern Europe, as students and as SL learners. For Bakhtin (1981) and Vygotsky (1978, 1986), changes to the self always take place in the context of ongoing dialogue. In this case, computer technology that allowed both oral and visual communication was the interface for ‘real’ dialogue.

Computer technology, like any tool, can be used for remedial drills and exercises or it can be used for transformative practice. When the Czech participants employed computer technology to seek out information for presentations or work on drill exercises, they saw these activities as a response to a discourse that dictated that languages are learned through an objectifying practice of transmitting and digesting information. Some of the students accepted this premise. It was in their roles as military, students and members of a cultural community to do so. However, they found it difficult to sustain interest. On the other hand, when they took part in the online discussions, the enthusiasm that many of them showed and reported was not directed at the computer technology but at the power of this technology to allow them to communicate and to “break the scared” to speak. In other words, the intersubjective experience the Czech participants had in the context of the SL dialogues online, which was supported through visual, oral and written language allowed some of these SL learners at least to change intrasubjectively. Through the dialogues, they were able to become subjects actively embedded in mediating their worlds as young future military officers. Empowered with (re)constructed subjectivities, they were able to envision new possibilities for themselves and for their language learning. As René observed at the end of the sessions: *“New doors open to me”* (Interview, November 22, 2004).

Online with Romania

Meeting with the Romanian students for the first time on line was challenging for all involved. Due to the decreased amount of bandwidth available at the Romanian site compared to the Czech Republic and Canada, IT and pedagogical participants in Romania and Canada decided that I would speak with each student individually while the image and sounds of that interaction would be projected on a large screen in the computer room so that the other participants could watch and listen. In the next vignette, from my observation notes during the third phase of the data collection period online, I describe our first meeting:

Talking with Romania - so far away

It's the first day of speaking with the Romanian students on line. They all have written a little introductory e-mail to me about themselves, short formal notes about their backgrounds and professions. The e-mails are much less general than the ones written by the Czechs, so I am assuming since I have some substance to start with, that all will go well. Sabin is the first to speak. He seems serious and immediately launches into the current educational system in Romania, the importance of English for NATO interoperability and his love of travelling to exotic places. There are frequent and long interruptions in his speech and a couple of times the connection is broken entirely. Each time Sabin must get out of the website and log in again. I feel a bit like Alexander Graham Bell making his first long distance call to his colleague in Boston. Each time I suspect that Sabin will give up and I will receive the message that the technology is too cumbersome to continue, but each time he comes back on line. He talks almost without stopping for twenty minutes and then I have to interrupt, to tell him it is time for the next student. Sabin seems a little disappointed but promises to write more on the subject in an e-mail to me.

Every twenty or so minutes, I meet another student. Some, like Sabin, seem very anxious to talk. Vali, for example, wants to discuss his UN assignment to Ethiopia and Eritrea. I notice he often uses awkward or bookish words and phrases as did Ruslan, the self-taught student in Canada. While others, like the two Florins and Daniella are more hesitant and seem ill at ease. Florin D. sits far from the screen and responds to any attempts I make for conversation with short answers. Florin B. hardly ever looks into the screen and it is difficult to keep the conversation going. He seems grateful for the technical problems as it helps fill the time he has to interact with me on line. Daniella frequently fidgets with her headset and eventually removes it and uses only the microphone, which causes even more

breakdowns in communication. Marian keeps bringing the conversation back to questions for me as if to save himself from speaking. While Mignona insists on bringing the conversation back to questions in order, it appears, just to prolong her time on line.

I realize when I speak there is a serious echo because my voice is being broadcast in the room. Vali tells me the broadcasting of my voice has been arranged so that all the participants can hear English from a native speaker. For many it is for the first time as one officer explained “*other than on TV or in the movies*”. I notice as well, that the other students, even those who have had their ‘turn’, have stayed behind. In the background they are listening and making comments, reacting to what has been said and offering help to the one who is speaking. I also am told that the discussions are taking place at the end of their day, during their free time after six hours in SL class. I feel relieved to hear that all were given the choice to participate in the online discussions.

At the end of the session that day, it appeared that the idea to go ahead with conversations with a group from Romania was rather overly ambitious. Technically speaking, the delays, echo and frequent interruptions would have been counter-productive in any communication. The fact that the communication was in a second language and that the objective was to encourage interaction in order to progress in that second language, made the technical problems all the more problematic.

In those first few days of the sessions and after those initial conversations on line, many people involved on both sides of the Atlantic were most definitely questioning the worth of continuing and for other reasons than just technical. In an interview at the end of the sessions, Marian, a Romanian military officer, recalled his feelings during that period: “*Honestly speaking, in the first few days, I thought why I do thatI follow the course six hours per day with Aura and after that with Paula. Where is my [free] time*” (Interview, November 25, 2004) Marian was in a particularly difficult period in his life at the time of the online sessions. Along with being in the midst of a doctorate while still working full time, he had one young child at home and his wife was expecting another any day. He spent many weekends travelling back and forth to the south of Romania, a distance of 250 kilometres to be with his young family and to arrange new accommodations before the birth of their next child. He began our first

interview by apologizing for being so tired because he had risen at 4 am that morning to drive from his hometown to the SL site. He also wrote in one of his first e-mails: *"I'm sorry I had no time to prepare something else for our meeting yesterday. I was home last weekend and you know my family, my child kept me occupied most of my time"* (E-mail, October 24, 2004). During the period of the online sessions he was buying a new apartment and was trying to arrange the financing with a bank. Borrowing for mortgages is a new phenomenon in Romania, a Western-influenced practice that is only beginning to take hold in this country. Apparently, there are many difficulties and frustrations, as corporate and individual citizens adapt to the process and feel the pressure to purchase beyond their actual financial resources.

Burdened with the responsibilities of his family, once Marian was at the language-learning site, the pace was no less demanding. Along with the others, he spent 5 hours from 8:00 am to 1:00 pm without a break, studying English in the classroom. After lunch and a break, those who had chosen to take part in the Internet discussions would come back at five o'clock to the school for the two-hour online session that went until seven. Every evening, there was an e-mail to write to me, if they chose to do so, and homework for their teacher. It is no wonder that Marian questioned: *"Where is my time?"*

Adrian, a communications expert, also had trouble deciding to take part in the online sessions. He explained to me in an interview: *"I can say I was afraid I'm not enough time to learn part from our course [at the Romanian site] and part for an online course...The first two days I felt I didn't have enough time to do both"* (Interview November 24, 2004). Besides Adrian's reservations about joining the online sessions due to the loss of time, he said that in the beginning he also questioned whether the computer technology that we were using would be adequate to allow good communication between the sites:

In the first moment I was afraid to take this online course because I used Yahoo messenger and I know that over the Internet there are some problems and the picture is not so good. It's so important to have some contact with the other

person to see the body language. When you don't know very well the language that is spoken, you try to complete with body language. You try to complete the understanding with body language. (Interview, November 24, 2004)

Initially, Adrian feared the online discussions. He knew from other experiences in previous international exercises, that not being able to speak and communicate his thoughts in a second language, could be potentially very difficult and embarrassing. With his knowledge of communication, he recognized that body language, or non-verbal cues, are an important part of conveying his message especially as a second language learner. His experience with computer technology in the field of communication left him doubtful that our conversations could be successful.

Doubt, fear and embarrassment were sentiments that I heard and read repeatedly in e-mails from the participants during the first week of the discussions. After our first conversation, Florin D. wrote the following e-mail:

Hi Paula!

As you have seen, my English is not so well and for this reason I am now in Branov [the Romanian language learning site] for improve that. I don't use English language at my job every day, but this year, in May I was called to make a presentation for ours Maintenance Center for a NATO delegation. It was a hard job for me. By the way, I stil feel inteligent, becose for me was not first experience online. I have many romanian friands around the world, and I use sometime audio-video conferences in internet. Fortunately it works better than yesterday. And now a few words about my trip in Italy.....

With hope that you'll understand my letter,

Yours truly,

Florin D.

(E-mail, October 20, 2004)

Daniela wrote a similar apology for her level of language but also adds, as if having committed some breach of pretence, that she has been self-taught in English:

Hello Paula!

I will start this mail by making a confession, not a guilty one but still... I haven't studied English at school, not at all. So all that I now I learned by my self, I'm a self-taught person :-). What I now I learned by watching TV, by listen to a lot of music. I like verry much to hear music and to sing also, when I'm alone of course. I'm a little bit shy I have to get accustomed with the person I'm talking before I feel at is, so please have patience! In school I studied French for 9 years and German for 6 years. You now French is very similar with my mother tongue, and is verry easy to learn it. We are a latin people. You see I got something in common with Ricky Martin, we both have hot blood running through our veins. I never liked German language , I only now ich weisse nicht deutsch" it means "I don't now German" :-).

This course is verry usefull for me and I hope that at the end my English will be improved.

I hope also that you will not be too disappointed reading my confession. See you tomorrow!

Mignona

(E-mail, October 20, 2004)

Florin B's opening lines in one of his first e-mails seemed the most desperate:

Hello!

I'm sorry, but I'm not such a good speaker how I want to be. I'm a shy person even I dislike this thing. I prefer writing to speaking. Maybe, this online English course will gave me the chance to change me a little bit. I hope so. I like movies probably because I dislike having discussions, but in the same time I want to know more about life and not only. You asked me to tell you more about last movie I saw. When I watch a movie, I'm not interested in remembering the name of the movies or of the actors. I just watch the action of the movie. The last movie that I saw had the main character Al Pacino. He acted an old policeman who had made a mistake in his past. He had used some false evidences to send a killer to prison. One of his workmates had found out that matter. During a mission, his mate told him about that and he threatened Al Pacino that he would say to his boss. Because the weather was foggy, Al Pacino shot his mate by mistake, trying to scare the person who they were looking for. The policeman died in a while. In those circumstances, Al realized that he could use that situation in his interest. He stated that the shot was fired by the person he was looking for. A young hardwoker policewoman picked up evidences and after a difficult and careful work she proved that it was Al's fault for that murder. That's all !

With regards, Florin

(E-mail, October 21, 2004)

At the outset of his e-mail, Florin D. seems to denigrate the efforts and sacrifices that he has made in the past and continues to make to learn English. He refers to his knowledge of his SL language as a mere “piece” of what he needs in order to express his ideas well. Florin adds to these feelings of inadequacy, later in an interview, when he sheds light on the subjectivity he had initially constructed for himself in the group: *“In the beginning it was difficult for me. Our group is made of different people with different knowledge and some of my classmates had assignments abroad and they know more English than me”* (Interview, November 25, 2004). It was not surprising with these feelings of being marginalized, that Florin was so difficult to converse with at the beginning of the sessions and often allowed many silent moments to seep into his time on line. Florin was not alone in feeling inadequate. Even Mignona, despite being quite fluent in her SL, commented online: *“I am self-taught. That’s why I don’t speak so well”* and then added in an attempt to include others in her observation, *“We are like intelligent dogs. We know our limitations. It’s a complex”* (Field notes, October 20, 2004).

The metaphor Mignona uses to paint the cultural characteristics of all Romanians including herself, is not an attractive one. She suggests that Romanians share the same ‘complex’. Despite their intelligence they are like obedient dogs who know their limitations and what options are open to them in life. Mignona’s cultural comment was not new to me. I had seen evidence of similar remarks from Romanians before in other contexts. On my first visit to Romania when I came to discuss with Romanian military officials the possibility of the Internet communications, the most senior officer at the meeting made such a remark. This officer was responding to my enthusiastic comment that I was so impressed with Bucharest that I would like to live in Romania some day: *“You have not been here long enough to know what it is really like”* (Field Notes, December 2, 2003). Such disparaging remarks gave me the impression that some Romanians I was meeting were less than enthusiastic about their country, especially when compared to others in Europe.

I had first encountered a similar sentiment from the student, Catalin, whom I had taught in the Canadian immersion program from January 2003 to June 2003. It was Catalin who was responsible for encouraging the Romanian military to invite me to their country in order to be included along with the Czechs in the online discussions. The comment was made in the context of a trip I had taken with a multicultural group of students I had taught, to see parts of Canada our students would not normally see. Catalin had decided to go despite the fact that for him, the trip represented a real financial sacrifice. In a private moment with me during the trip, he shared how he felt ‘different ‘ than others in the group. He had spent more money than he could afford to be included in the trip. He explained how difficult it was still for him to make the decision to go but that he had felt it necessary in order to save face and be accepted by the others in the group. The other officers were from Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, countries that were financially more stable than his own. *“I wish that I could leave Romania and move to another more stable country like Canada”*, he remarked. *“But it is too late for me. I am too old. I must do everything now that my son has that opportunity”* (Personal Communication, April 2003). The feelings that Catalin was voicing, concerning the marginalized position that he believed he had among his group of colleagues, apparently was obvious to others as well. A teacher in the MTAP program had observed: *“You know they [students from other delegations] always look down on the Romanians. They don’t trust them”* (Personal Communication, January 2005).

The reasons for the stereotyped identity that other students in the Canadian context had constructed for the Romanians, based on historical or socio-economic factors, were undoubtedly complex. But in the first few days of the online sessions that I conducted a year and a half later, I recognized a similar theme. Comments I had heard from Catalin, from the teacher at the Canadian site, from the Romanian senior officer who responded cynically to my enthusiastic impressions of Bucharest, as well as from the Romanian participants in the online discussions themselves, all referred to a cultural identity characterized by feelings of being marginalized.

In the first few days of the online discussion session with the Romanian participants, several of the students voiced their feelings of inadequacy. Florin D., for example, insisted after the first session: *"I stil feel intelligent"* as if his intelligence was in question. In the first meetings online, I asked the participants to prepare and discuss a topic that interested them. I found their responses to this assignment telling. Sabin, began his first discussion with words that seemed to reflect the positioning of himself as "less intelligent":

I've been thinking about what topic you should be interested of as to be of mere use for you also. There could be a lot of things to talk about but I think that talking about models would be a good subject to debate-neither trivial, nor too simple... Yes I have to admit that this could be a challenging topic to approach to, even for a literate person... So I'll dare to start (E-mail, October 24, 2004)

He considers himself "inferior", in some way, with respect to me as a native speaker. He seems very concerned that his topic which he "dares" to speak about, be of "mere use", meaning of 'some use', not too trivial or too simple but rather challenging for a 'literate person', by which I take to mean 'well educated'. Indeed, it appears that his concern might lie more in meeting intellectual approval from me rather than a topic that interests *him*. Daniela, too, seemed to construct a similar subject position. Instead of speaking about her interest in mysticism in her own words, she wrote a few brief lines and sent me an excerpt from the Internet. Following is an portion of that e-mail:

From: Daniela

Long time ago I discovered that I'm drew by the mysticism, by the occult part of life, of creation. I love the unknown! It attracts me as a magnet. I want to find out more about the creation of our world, Eden and Hell, Adam and Eve, about Egyptians mystery with their Pyramids and their Gods, things as regards Greek Myths, and so on.

Unfortunately I haven't had enough time or opportunity to read more research in this aria, but ... who knows? This maybe a new beginning. When I was a little girl a read a book called " The Myths off the Olympians " and I were very impressed by it, therefore I have search the Internet and I have found some information about Greek Creation Myths. Reading this article I have realized that it is a little bit different by the one that I have read, but in the essential part it is similar. So, I am sending it to you, hoping you will become interested too.

See you on Monday!

“In the beginning there was only Chaos, an empty void. This huge vacancy gave birth to Gaea (the earth), to Tartars (the great region beneath the earth), to Eros (the god of love and attraction, to Erebus (the darkness of the underworld), and Night (the darkness over the earth). Then Erebus slept with Night, who gave birth to Ether (the heavenly light), and to Day (the earthly light). Later Night alone produced Doom, Fate, Death, Sleep, Dreams, Nemesis, etc. Meanwhile Gaea alone produced Uranus (the starry sky), the Mountains, and Pontus (the sterile sea). Uranus became mate and equal to Gaea, because he “covered” her on all sides. As a couple (he-sky, her-earth) they procreated the Twelve Titans, the three Cyclopes, and the three Hecatoncheires (with the fifty heads and hundred arms each... (E-mail. October 24, 2004)

Vali, unlike some of the others, appeared very confident in his abilities in his SL and was the self-appointed leader of the group. Yet, he too seemed to adopt a marginalized position with me at the outset. An example appears in one of the early e-mails he sent, in which he chose to discuss the etymology of certain words that he has been using in class. Why he chose the subject based on linguistics in the first place, was indicative of his desire to impress, I believe. To present his discussion, he copies from the Internet and mixes these excerpts with a few of his own comments. In the final paragraph of the e-mail, Vali says:

I'll wait for your quotas referencing what I wrote above, with guidance in my future evolution learning the language. I want to be more specific and tell you that I'm open to critics coming from a native speaker with a certain expertise, not mentioning here the connection we've established between in these last days (E-mail, October 24, 2004).

Vali's request for me to correct his work, no doubt came at considerable effort and time given the formality of the language. The language Vali uses here was not confined to writing. On the contrary, in the beginning he used this style in expressing himself often orally as well in what appeared an effort to 'talk up' to me as native speaker, as a researcher and/or as a North American. Vali confirmed my observation in a comment later in our discussions of the online sessions: *"When I'm talking with my colleagues I do not control my grammar or in speaking so well. When talking with you,*

well a different person, and especially a teacher I have to control myself not to say not to make a mistake” (Interview, November, 25, 2004).

Both Vali and Sabin were intelligent, well educated and experienced military officers and had no reason to ‘speak up to’ or to try to impress me. In fact, as I conversed with all of the participants in the online discussions, I was amazed at their extensive knowledge and expertise in a variety of fields. As I explained earlier, many were bilingual and highly educated.

The reasons for Mignona’s reference to the national ‘complex’ and the subordinate subject positions her fellow Romanian colleagues have constructed appear to be historically and culturally constituted. The students alluded to the root of these historical and cultural factors in their discussions online. Mignona, for example, spoke about the influence of the past in one of our online conversations and repeated the subject again in an e-mail: *“We look into the future but sometimes forget that many things from the past (which we might consider them as unimportant details) influenced and still influence our life.”* (Online and e-mail, November 12, 2004). In part, as Leo explained in our discussions, it is Romania’s long history as a country controlled by others. The Roman, Ottoman, Turkish, Russian, German/Hungarian and Russian Empires have successively ruled this small country over the last 1000 years, each inflicting its own *“battles and sufferings”* on the Romanian people. In the following excerpt from the online discussions, Leo explains the national identity that has resulted partly from this history:

So the feel of insecurity for us is almost historical feel because of our geographical position between great Empires....It is our chance in history to be chosen by these countries to be part of them. Our task is not to be proud. We are a kind of problem for Europe (Field Notes, November 9, 2004).

Years of being ruled by others due in part to their geographical situation, Leo points out, have left his country with feelings of insecurity and lack of pride - an embarrassing problem for Europe to contend with. After the Communist regime failed to build a solid national infrastructure, his country was left with *“industries and factories*

which are too large and...people don't have work". Leo concludes that the only reason Romania has been chosen by NATO as a new member is: *"NATO wanted to have a secure border between the Middle East and Iraq and other worrying areas and the rest of Europe".* Leo does not see NATO's choice of Romania as a new member for its intrinsic value as a nation, but as a stalwart between the new borders of Eastern Europe and still unstable Middle Eastern countries.

Sabin suggested that the system of education in the past as being at the root of some of the same national identity problems. He explained:

Many of our nowadays problems are deeply educational problems...In my country, I find this as the hardest heritage of the dictatorial recent history we have to deal with. People lack character, use to lie, doesn't care about the others and think that vulgarity they are doing is normal. All in all leads to a society showing no respect to themselves or to the law (E-mail, November, 9, 2004).

According to Sabin, the former dictatorial communist regime, through its educational system, was successful in developing the intelligence of its former citizens, as he stated elsewhere, but left a legacy of citizens with no feelings of self-respect or respect for laws.

I observed that perhaps part of the national identity issues that surfaced in my discussions were related to living in an environment of fear and helplessness with regard to their job situations. Many spoke candidly about the lack of control they felt in their present positions. Florin B., who had chosen to take another English course, reported that he was expecting on his return to work after the course, to be 'punished' for his independence with a demotion in his job - a position that would be boring and of little help towards his future aspirations. He wrote: *"It's difficult to think about this, because I still don't know my position"* (E-mail, October 27, 2004). Vali, just back from Ethiopia and Eritrea discovered that he had been displaced from his former post and had been re-assigned a job that was below his capabilities. He quickly realized that the job would not be challenging for him and requested a transfer from his superiors. The request was turned down with no explanation given. He wrote:

Please, do not ask me what is happening or why doesn't anybody need my expertise or my experience, not mentioning here my training background, because I do not have an answer, the situation is quite strange and I don't know why my superiors are afraid to provide, at least, a polite explanation. (E-mail, October, 27, 2004).

Sabin, a scientific researcher in aeronautical engineering, expressed his frustration with his current position: *"I can say I'm not so satisfied with my actual job. Even though I am working in a research institute for the army, most of my job is not real research, but some paperwork"* (E-mail, October 27, 2004). Mignona spoke of endless working hours translating NATO documents, being understaffed, and receiving no extra remuneration for overtime. As she put it; *"If you are a good worker, you'll get rewarded with some more work. It's some sort of recognition"* (E-mail, October 27, 2004). Marian confided to me: *"It's a little hard to talk about a job which is changing all the time (I mean its requirements). Despite of my job description sometimes I have to do other tasks"* (E-mail, October 27, 2004). Daniela summed up what working for the military meant and what many of the others were expressing in more subtle terms: *"If they tell me to do something I do"* (E-mail, October 26, 2004). All of their comments were also voiced in our oral discussions online where we had to chance to tease them apart looking sometimes for reasons and solutions.

It may be that the lack of control some students experienced in their working lives along with their historical and educational backgrounds were at the root of the marginalized positions that many assumed in the second language context online. Their subject positions surfaced in their interactions with me as a native speaker of English and from the West. As the conversations evolved, however, I recognized that there were subtle changes taking place in some of the marginalized positions they displayed. What began as an exercise of just getting to know one another in a second language, evolved to another level - some students seemed to be developing a better understanding of themselves as well. Interestingly, much of this interaction began with images.



Figure 15. Florin Dreaming of Owning a Motorcycle in Italy, and at His Military Workshop

For example, Sabin sent pictures over the Internet of his favourite ‘exotic’ places in Romania. Florin D., who had been so reticent to speak, chose to ‘talk’ through descriptions of pictures he sent of a recent trip with his wife to Italy, of his work, (See Figure 16), of an important mission to Iraq (See Figure 17) and of historical places to see in Romania. Vali recalled how he had delivered a baby in the back of a jeep in Eritrea and proudly sent me pictures of his ‘adopted family’. He described the incident as one of the most exciting in his life. In Figure 17, he holds the new baby up for his colleagues on the UN team at their camp in Eritrea. Some used pictures and excerpts from the Internet to inform me about topics that interested them, for example, Daniela about mysticism, Florin about outer space, Adrian about photography. Eventually, however, the images and excerpts led to verbal commentaries. In the commentaries, they began to express their personal views more extensively and, of course, constructed in their second language both in writing and orally online.



Figure 16. Florin B on Mission in Iraq



Figure 17. Vali Holding His 'Adopted' Baby in Eritrea

In one of our sessions, Mignona talked about terrorism, a subject for which she had strong feelings, given her position working for the military. We discussed globalization and Romania's role in that process, as well as its potential membership in the European Union and its new position in NATO. Instead of assuming the role of

‘victim’ that seemed to surface often in our initial discussions, I began to see signs of some of the students taking on more agency in our conversations. This agency came in the context of talking candidly and with conviction about their future plans. Their plans entailed initiating steps to improve their working lives, their personal lives and their lives as citizens. For example, in the latter part of the course, Váli used strong words to convey his opinions about the future. In one of his e-mails he wrote:

Many of us went to school during the communist regime, graduated and got the first job under the same circumstances. Fed up with that kind of propaganda we became immune to the politicians’ dissertations- not mentioning that the politicians themselves weren’t too competent into this domain, they had to learn new things. But we will work harder on it. Hopefully, in the future we will become capable to go the next level and we will become more tolerant with our fellow citizens. We will learn to listen and to act accordingly. (E-mail, November 4, 2004)

In this e-mail, Váli sees hope for resolving the problems caused by the previous repressive political regime through initiatives not ‘from above’ but ‘from below’ where individual citizens, like himself, choose through struggle, tolerance and respect for others to create a better future. It is noteworthy that the words Váli chose to express his ideas have also changed. He speaks to me candidly person-to-person, rather than as a SL speaker to a native speaker in the convoluted language he had used earlier on in our discussions. Recalling some of his earlier expressions such as *“I will wait for your quotas referencing what I wrote”*, *“guidance in my future evolution”* and *“the connection we have established”*, Váli now chooses more colloquial speech such as “fed up” and “BS”. The change in tone in his language may signal as well that Váli is not only repositioning himself in respect to me as a native speaker and teacher but also that during the online sessions he has appropriated the words of others with which to accomplish this repositioning. He continued with these further comments:

Now in this part of the part of the world we are a little fed up with this propaganda. Communis(t) [ism] is to blame. There is a lot of knowledge about this. We have to learn a lot of things. We have to learn to listen. Some people it is difficult to talk about politics-they are afraid. Talking about politics we have tendency to talk about the little things but don’t talk about the big picture. It is a question of education. The new generation will be exposed to TV and will be

different. Fifty years of Communist regime taught us to listen and obey. We don't want more politics because we were fed up with propaganda. We were forced to listen and usually was some BS and now we are fed up and we don't need for a while to have someone to tell us how to do it. Sooner or later we have to learn how to listen and to speak up about our opinions and what we want to do about things. (E-mail, November 4, 2004)

In this e-mail, Vali opens up more of his "biographical self" and discusses the social repercussions of living during the former repressive regime. Through this discussion, he voices what it meant to be controlled on a personal level by this regime. In mediating this knowledge with me in the context of this e-mail and the next day online, he works out what is needed for Romanians to move beyond the influence of that regime and to re(construct) a better social world.

Vali's reference to education and computer technology as the context where change will begin, supported what some of the other participants were saying in their discussions of the future for themselves and their country. Sabin in this next excerpt and in other discussions we had, expressed renewed hope for himself and his culture through the education process. He talked about the need in his country for education to change from producing less honorable individuals to ones which treasure "true" values. As he remarked online in this excerpt:

Yes, we got larger and more comfortable homes, but fewer honorable characters, taller buildings but lower feelings, larger streets but narrower minds. Here education is crucial and not the education seen as a bulk of 'raw' information, but the education as culture, as patterns and means of preserving true values... [T]he models and self awareness around educational aspects of our lives are the most powerful means to communicate real things from one generation to another....So "satisfaction, effort and time" - I shall only say that if they are "provided" to the student by the teacher through whatever means (classes, books, video-tapes, hands-on seminars, online, etc) the process (the learning process as base for education) will surely repeat. (E-mail December, 2004).

I understood from his words that Sabin views education as a means of passing on culture rather than information, and that he considers teachers to be at the centre

of this process. He leaves the door open for teachers to enable the changes he sees are needed in his country. Sabin understands their role as facilitators using various technologies to hand down the “true” values that are integral to the passing of culture from one generation to the next.

Mignona also talked about the importance of education as the basis of change for her country. In this next excerpt from an e-mail, she criticizes past methods in education in Romania that rely on facts and information. At the same time, like Sabin, she offers her vision for the future. In a future that Mignona envisions, education will be based on learning what is practical and good teachers will be the enablers of this process:

I think we should do specific things. I believe we focus too much on learning stuff but we forget about the educational part (how to use this information we possess) And another thing: teachers play a great part in this show. If you have good teachers who knows how to reach you and that enables you to learn what you need and what will be useful for you in life (and all these should be done in a very attractive manner). That teacher could make a difference. (Interview, November 11, 2004)

Adrian appears to agree with Mignona about the role of education in his words: *“It is necessary to study objects which are helpful for life and jobs. You know we study a lot about almost everything, it takes us years, but when we live [leave] the school and start to work we realize almost nothing regarding the reality was told us ”* (E-mail, November 17, 2004) Adrian questions the value of what is taught in school and instead advocates a system that will provide practical help in what he needs for work and living.

The constructive critical awareness that Sabin, Adrian and Mignona display in these excerpts can be theorized, using Freire’s (1998) construct of “consciensization”. He uses this term to reference critical self-consciousness or “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (1984, p. 17). As the online discussion continued, I witnessed an awareness of the Romanian participants’ critical self-consciousness slowly and progressively unfolding, just as I had seen on the “**Turning Point Day**” with René

and George in the Czech Republic. Along with this critical awareness, I noticed that some students began to describe futures where they would have more agency in their job situations than they had displayed earlier on in the online interactions. For example, Florin D. talked about working harder to expand his own business, which he had recently started in his after hours. Florin B. contemplated what life would have been like if he had chosen to be a civilian, an indication that perhaps he would seek to think beyond the restrictions of military life. Mignona talked about applying for a UN posting. In the next excerpt from an e-mail she sent at the end of the online sessions, she wrote:

The final step will to be to apply to a UN job....So I'm getting busier and busier (and, of course more and more daring) every day. That is why, by the end of 2009 (if I live that long and I'm a little bit lucky) you will be talking to a UN employee working all over the world. No matter what, I'll struggle. Life is a continuous fight, isn't it? (E-mail, November 10, 2004)

The strength and determination that Mignona displays in this excerpt contrasts sharply with the self-effacing as well as self-doubting person her previous e-mails had shown. Whether this change came as a result of the discussions we had in English, one can not be certain. But having a forum via CALL to discuss and question the various power structures – political, historical and military that controlled her life from her perception, certainly had an influence on Mignona's English. She and others in the group began to notice linguistic changes in their SL as the sessions progressed. Mignona wrote: *"I realize that my mistakes [in English] reduce day by day. I think it is a good thing"*. (Online notes, November 2, 2004). Florin D. also recognized changes to his SL. In commenting on the online sessions, he explained what influence this experience had to his SL:

It was useful to me, I think to be more courageous to speak. The first time, if you remember, I was shy... shy to speak English, because I know my limitation. After 3 or 4 meetings I spoke much better. You let me to choose the topics and I tried to teach you something about Romania, something about nice places, nice places to see at that moment (Interview, November 26, 2004).

In this excerpt, Florin D. recounts how he saw the changes that were taking place to his online self in the first few sessions online. He ties these changes partly to the freedom he had to choose what he would speak about and the integral role he played in those interactions. Eventually, through using the second language, he became more comfortable and was able to progress. Marian's reaction to his online experience was similar to that of Florin's. He explained: *"I felt that it was good not only for vocabulary or for grammar but also for our confidence to don't be inhibited to speak with a native speaker. Before the online course I was a little bit embarrassed with you. Now I am OK"* (Interview, November 25, 2004). For Marian, as for others including teachers, being able to be comfortable in the speaking with a native speaker, in other words being able to overcome feelings of being marginalized, was a positive step to improving in their second language.

In an interview with Leo at the end of the course, he too was very explicit about how the changes in his fluency had taken place:

The online course [discussion sessions] is for me very helpful because you treat me like an equal... I say a word if I can, you put me another question. I understand that question, not very difficult for me. You find the correct words for me. I lose shy, I lose fear and slow day by day I improve my explanation, my discourse. I remember last day, I speak many sentences, not stopping- fluently. That not happen in the first day. The first day I say very short sentences, very difficult for me. (Interview, November 26, 2004)

In the intricate and complex way that individuals communicate, Leo saw our dialogic interaction as a mediating process through which he was able to construct linguistic knowledge or competence and at the same time (re)construct a more powerful position in the group of learners than he had had in the beginning. *"I lose shy. I lose fear"*, he observes. From this more powerful position, he was able to claim his voice in a group where, as a latecomer, he was initially silenced by his lack of linguistic skills compared to others. In using his second language to construct new meanings, he began to improve in it.

But Leo's recognition that he had improved in English brought more than the satisfaction that comes with learning a second language. Later in a face-to-face interview, he indicated what he felt was the 'real' significance of the improvement he had made in English during the online oral sessions. In the Czech Republic, George had suggested a similar idea when he expressed how improving in his language online "*opened new doors*" for him. In the following excerpt, Leo is able to verbalize what the significance of those "*new doors*" being opened meant to him:

For me it is interesting how experienced lived people in that place and for me it is a comparison. I live in Romania" I live in the 21st century. I had a grandfather. He is killed in the Russian fields in the war. You, what [who was] your grandfather? What kind of job you have? What kind of people? What kind of children? How your children understand you? It [Being able to communicate in English with others] is for me another experience. I put that experience in addition. It is for me like a book, like an open book. One chapter is good; one sheet [page] is good. It is for me an addition to my chapter and I improve my experience, **my human experience**. It is good for me, good for my children to explain in another way some kind of situation, because I know what's happened here what's happened there. It is many points of view. It is a point of view of mine It's a point of view of an American. It's a point of view of a Czech. It's a collection of a point of views. It is better for me in my way to choose the way for me is correct. (Interview, November 26, 2004).

Leo's change in identity and language learning is valuable to him because it allows him a key to interacting with others who are different than him and to compare his life with theirs. For Freire, "the foundation stone of the whole [educational] process is human curiosity. This is what makes me question, act, ask again, recognize." (1998, p. 189). Each interaction is a new story, a new page to add to Leo's book of life and act of being. Using English to interact with others is more important than just sharing knowledge. It allows him to see from many perspectives, to question, to try to understand many realities and create, of his own choosing, new possibilities for himself and his children.

As he talked in the final interview, it appeared that Leo was talking about the basic principles of creating a democratic life. In a very real sense, this extract supports my findings that computer technology when used as a communicative tool has the

power to transform and liberate and to promote democratic principles in powerful ways that we as educators are only beginning to comprehend.

Comment on the Czech Online Experience

For the most part, the Czech participants' SL experiences in their earlier schooling as well as some of their more recent ones, fell short in preparing them for 'real' communicative events in English. Many recognized, like Petra, Vlasta, John and George that they were left to their own devices to try to find opportunities to use their second language. All participants declared with firm conviction their great need for English. They realized the importance of being able to speak well in their second language for their future military or even non-military positions, especially given the demands of international co-operative efforts within NATO and the global community. Still their lack of control over improving the quality and quantity of the English instruction they received, both in the past and within their present university context left many to conclude that their interests were of little importance to those in control. Many expressed feelings of discouragement and frustration. As Vlasta so poignantly observed: *"It's interesting that everybody says English is so very important for you, for soldiers, but we don't have so good opportunity for studying [it] here"* (Interview, November 22, 2004). Vlasta's comment underlines the disjuncture that existed in this military context between the administrative rhetoric and the distant realities of many of these SL learners in their struggle to learn English.

In their frustration to avail themselves of more exposure to English, many of these students studied it on their own outside of their regular formal language learning contexts. Others used computer technology for that exposure. Those like John and George, who were frequent users of computer technology for interaction in English through games and chat, were under no illusions that this tool substituted for 'real' contact with speakers of the language. They explained that the 'chat' sessions and games they engaged in on the Internet were sources of "passive knowledge" of English. They both agreed that only through authentic dialogue could they gain "active knowledge".

I understood that by 'active knowledge', they meant the kind of knowledge that would allow them to communicate with speakers of the language. They also expressed the feeling that their virtual contact with English through games and 'chat' did not help to develop an empowered sense of self they lacked in 'real' communicative events where they could have used their knowledge of the language to improve. This finding supports what some SL scholars have noted. Warschauer (2003) argues that although basic CMC skills can be picked up quickly by learners without instruction in a chat room, this limited and limiting style of interaction has questionable usefulness in more cognitive demanding interactions in English such as writing an effective e-mail or speaking in a formal context of work and school. Lam (2004), on the other hand, found chatting can have positive implications for SL learners' identity construction. Nevertheless, John and George, both avid users of computers for 'chatting' and games, reported to me that, when faced with opportunities to use their English to speak, they chose to remain silent- John in his SL classroom and George in the multicultural setting in Iraq.

Within the context of the online sessions, some of the Czech students were able to confront the relations of cultural, military and institutional power that controlled their opportunities to speak and to develop their second language. This resistance came in the form of their questioning the practices of the University to offer classes in English, the quality of the teaching, the turnover of teachers and the number of students in classroom groups. Through the dialogic process in the virtual site, they not only confronted the tensions that existed in their experiences for learning but showed signs of beginning to construct changes to their identities. I witnessed outward signs of these changes by the more engaged personalities of the students in the discussions online and the enthusiasm that all of the students showed for my presence at the university at the end of the sessions when I visited the Czech Republic. They insisted on taking me out to supper without other teachers. John, the self-professed timid student, chose to sit beside me and was very engaging. Even George, the normally shy senior professor who rarely spoke in his own language, offered to meet with me and was very communicative in English.

I also became aware that students were taking on more control of their learning. After a few sessions, they dismissed their teacher from the computer room telling her they didn't need her for translation or help understanding what was being said online. I also saw a decrease in the looking to friends for translation of what I was saying. With this shift from being 'other' regulated to 'self' regulated learners, George and many of the other Czechs who participated, in his words, "*lost the scared to speak*". I observed that they were able to participate more fully in the conversations in their SL that, I as a SL educator knew would inevitably lead to learning. It is important, however, to recall the comments that George voiced at the post online interviews regarding how he positioned himself and his country in the global community. His reference to his country as being "bad" in the eyes of the West suggested to me that it will take many more conversations, especially SL ones, to undo the damage of a generation of silencing inflicted by the former regime.

Comment on the Romanian Online Experience

The struggle for linguistic and cultural respect that George refers to in his comment was also a constant theme throughout the discussions with the Romanian officers online. This struggle underlined some of the tensions I saw initially in some of these students both at the website and in through their e-mails. I began to understand that the tensions that surfaced in the discussions with the Romanians I spoke with online existed partly as a result of their history, also because of their educational background as well as their lack of control in their military working lives. These tensions appeared to have a strong influence on their identities. I saw evidence of this influence in the way many of the Romanians interacted with me as a native speaker and North American. The frequent apologies from many of the participants for the quality of their English and the reserved nature of others like Florin D. and Florin B. are just two examples of the identities I saw initially being constructed in my presence. The identities I saw presented online reflected for me the 'national complex' that Mignona had so astutely observed was characteristic of her and her colleagues. This national complex, which

she characterizes as being like “*intelligent dogs*” and which she referenced as obedient and non-questioning, limited their possibilities to have a voice in their SL. Indeed, two students who chose not to take part in the online discussions explained after the fact that they did not feel able or good enough to speak in their second language to a native speaker. These two students decided therefore to decline the opportunity to take part (Personal Communication, November 26, 2004).

For those who participated, however, I began to observe evolving identity changes. The changes I witnessed were constructed in both the written and oral online SL discussions. As we talked individually, and indirectly as a group because of the projection of the screen for all to see, the discussions opened new opportunities for building more powerful positions with respect to others in their group. It had begun as a ‘natural’ conversation where we spoke and wrote about our backgrounds and ourselves. These interchanges helped each of us to construct knowledge about the historical, social, political, economic and educational factors that were responsible for shaping our identities. I say ‘our’ because as I was becoming more familiar with the students, their backgrounds, their lives and their culture, they were gaining a window into my life as a North American and to me as a person. We talked about my family and the difficulties involved in raising children in Canada. For example, we discussed the challenges of remaining close in my immediate family despite the pressures for some to move to distant places for work and study. I shared with them aspects of my working life as a teacher for the Canadian military. We talked about the demands I saw for my country in being a member of a nation that neighbours the United States, in being a member NATO, and the political implications of those positions.

While the online sessions may have helped to dispel some of their misconceptions about life in North America, it was much more than a cultural exchange. Indeed the sessions provided the interface for a more important conversation. Within this virtual conversation, there was evidence that the participants were able to put into perspective the power structures - political, military and institutional discourses that controlled their lives. At the same time, they also had an opportunity to draw on their

various resources or “funds of knowledge” (Moll, 1992) as topics of discussion in their SL. The term is used to conceptualize “the essential cultural practices and bodies of knowledge and information that houses [people’s] use to survive, to get ahead or to thrive” (p. 21). For example, Vali used his experience as an international observer, Florin 2, his knowledge of his own country and Mignona, her expertise in languages as a means to gain status within the social structure of the group and self-respect in their relation to me as an English speaking teacher and a North American.

Although all these officers shared a national identity as Romanians, there were some participants who felt marginalized by the others in the group. Leo reported that he felt subordinated linguistically compared to the others. An administrative misjudgement of his capabilities had meant that he had to come from “the lower level” group part way through the course. Florin attributed his inadequacies to his self-perceived notion of being less experienced in life and in the military than the others. Yet, even these participants in the context of the online discussions showed a willingness to invest more in English. I recall how Florin, the most reluctant of all the officers to speak English in the beginning, made a point of being the one to sit beside me on outings in Romania at the end of the online sessions. Obviously, this particular officer had made much progress in his fear of speaking his second language. Along with the evolving confidence to speak English that many showed in the final days of the online sessions, they reported that they felt empowered in their broader lives and were able to imagine a future that allowed them control and new possibilities.

Returning to the Theoretical Framework

We look into the future but sometimes forget that many things from the past (which we might consider them as unimportant details) influenced and still influence our life.

(Mignona, a Romanian student writing in an E-mail, November, 2004)

When analyzing new democracies [in Central and Eastern Europe], we would do well to heed the impact of the past on the contemporary context. In this way,

we do not have to choose, as so often is the case, between distant and proximate models of causation. Both are critical, with the former going far to explain the latter.

(Bunce, 2004, p. 96)

Mignona's observation of the need to look to the past for a window into the current lives of her and her colleagues is parallel to the words of Bunce, a socio-historian. Indeed, the analysis of the SL experiences of the group of Europeans in the online discussions in the context of this inquiry adds further evidence to the importance of the past to the current tensions in learning English in these "new democracies". Bakhtin's (1981) dialogic theory, which conceives of language use as "populated and over populated with the intentions of others", helps to conceptualize these tensions. As the Czechs and Romanians spoke on line, they revealed to me that their ways of being were influenced by the discourses of the past regime, of their schooling and of their militaries, to name a few. Bakhtin believed that within utterances there was always a response in complex ways to other utterances. In other words, when individuals speak they are not just responding to others but in a very real sense are bringing to bear all the experiences of their past and present worlds. So when George remarks that he acknowledges that his country is "bad", he is not only speaking to me as a teacher and a North American but he is also responding to the years that his country was part of the Eastern Soviet Bloc, to the tensions that existed between the USSR and the 'West' during the Cold War, to his identity as a citizen of an emerging democracy and to a speaker of Czech as opposed to a speaker of the internationally-valued English language and more. Bakhtin's theory explains why the Romanian and Czech officers in my study had difficulty initially finding their voice in the online discussions. Their historical and cultural experiences under a past regime and its remnants in a present military conspired to deny many of these participants the "right to speech" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 648). This authoritarian regime translated itself in the education system and other cultural practices that individuals in these countries experienced in their daily lives. It exchanged the security of a job, food and a government apartment for freedom to have an opinion

and to do what one wanted-such as to learn English, to which Zedenek and George the Czech professors so poignantly attested.

The restrictions on learning English during the past regime were lifted when the political climate changed. However, its authoritarian and sacred word, a discourse as Bakhtin's (1994) theory explains that "freezes thought and understanding" (p. 17), has left its mark on the participants with whom I spoke online. This authoritarian word was evidenced in the stories that many of the participants recounted of their previous attempts to improve their English. The image of George, the older Czech professor who had spent years secretly trying to read and write or listen alone to English is one example. The strict former Russian teacher of English of whom Marketa spoke is another. Marketa explained: "*We had to learn everything by heart and write these sentences on paper. We **had** to learn*". Large classes, rule-centred programs in which the same material was repeated year after year were others. Even in the Self Access Centre, where the Czech military university proudly housed its computers and individual learning materials, the dominant discourses of the past echoed loudly in the living present. Those discourses could be heard in the software programs composed of decontextualized drills, the reading materials prepared so time-consumedly with questions and uniform answers expected and the image of the chairs for students to speak with teachers sitting side by side rather than facing, empty and rarely used. All reflected practices that "freeze thought and understanding" and reduce learners to objects.

The 'authoritarian word' as conceived in Bakhtin's language theory is reflected in current military practices in these two countries as well. In Romania, for example my analysis shows how Bakhtin's construct of a centripetal, the determinedly unifying force of an authoritative and intentionally persuasive discourse, existed within the military and decided who learned what and when and for what reason. Punishments were in place for those who questioned the official word. Bakhtin's conception of the centripetal force in language and its efforts to impose its own unified thought and understanding might explain why Vali was required to take German in military university, as well as

the subsequent refusals for ESL training. It also may explain the tragic story of Florin B. In military school, Florin B., who like Vali was passionate about English, had no choice but to take Russian and French. Later, determined to learn English, he was forced to surreptitiously sign up for ESL courses in between assignments. In so doing, he was reprimanded with a loss of promotion and assigned an unchallenging posting. *“Yes, I think the course made them [my military superiors] angry”*. Florin expressed his lack of control in all of this in his sad comment: *“[I]n our country at the moment you have to do the work that isn’t so good for you. Yes, I have to do my job...and I have to like it.”*

It is not surprising in this climate of control over how, what, when, why, where and for what reason the participants studied languages, that the participants expressed that they lacked practice in English and were unable to speak. Nevertheless, within both Bakhtin’s and Vygotsky’s language theories, there is an explanation for the responses that control had on the participants. For Bakhtin, every utterance generates a response from the ‘other’, even if it is within inner speech. The responsive interaction between ‘self’ and ‘other’ constitutes the dialogic capacity of language to make meaning. This inherent characteristic of language explains perhaps why many of the participants I spoke with had undertaken counteractions in order to learn English. Some, like Vlasta and Mignona had studied on their own. Daniela had watched cartoons, Florin movies; John, George, Vali and Adrian had tried to respond to their desire to learn through working with computers. Although these initiatives constituted responses to the controlling discourses in their lives, their attempts fell short of allowing them full access to learning the language, which for these participants meant primarily being able to speak and communicate.

Vygotsky’s explanation of learning and higher order thinking as constitutive of and in language through a Zone of Proximal Development offers an explanation for the general disappointment I heard from and observed in the participants concerning their abilities to speak English. In the ZPD, learners use the knowledge of more ‘experienced’ others to progress from being “other” to “self” regulated. Fundamental to Vygotsky and Bakhtin’s theories then, is that learning is a situated practice. By situated practice, it

is understood that the activity is a social act involving listeners and speakers. Most of the counteractive activities that these participants chose to engage in on their own in order to compensate for what their formal learning contexts were not providing, were computer-based. However, these computer-based interactions allowed little to help them improve in speaking the language. Like the Allié and other software programs in the Canadian immersion program, these computer tools may have offered contact with certain structural aspects of the language, such as vocabulary and grammar practice. They did not offer the all-important social element of language and learning - listeners and speakers.

According to Bakhtin, it is through listening and speaking with others that individuals, including the Romanian and Czechs who took part in the study, fashion their “voice”. The construct of “voice”, and the multiples selves that make up individuals, is integral to Weedon’s concept of identity. Weedon uses the term identity to conceive of individuals as beings who are fashioned by the multiple discursive events in which they take part. Language, depending on the context in which it is used, determines how individuals position themselves and their subjectivities. Therefore, while individuals are theoretically open to all forms of subject positions, the range of social experiences in their past lives and the power relations within them, limits these positions. For this reason, the subject positions that the Romanian and Czech students had online were limited partly by their own personal experiences in the past and also by the fact that their experiences included being military, male or female, learners as opposed to teachers, and by their nationality and citizens of former authoritarian regimes. In the remark she made online, Mignona speaks poignantly about how she sees herself in relation to others and the multiplicity of her subjectivities: *“I’m a civilian, a woman and a blonde in a military system? Who would pay attention to what I have to say?”* And on another occasion, she adds to this description the fact that she is a self-taught SL learner and a Romanian: *“I am self-taught. That’s why I don’t speak so well. We are like intelligent dogs. We know our limitations. It’s a complex”*. According to Mignona, her feelings of being marginalized in her social world were based on

her status as non-military, female, her physical attribute as a blond, her linguistic ineptness and her nationality. Although the reasons varied, the students repeated similar expressions of being marginalized on many other occasions. The subjectivities that the participants constructed at the micro level in their individual lives and learning contexts were carried over on the macro level in the way they saw themselves in relation to the global community. Examples are found in George's comment about being "bad", Leo's observation about his country being a "*problem for the rest of Europe*" and Cezar's remark about the necessity to change the preconceived negative conceptions that other nationalities have of his country.

The identities that these students had constructed were mediated through their past experiences. At the same time, their identities appeared to contribute to their feelings of being subordinated to me as a teacher, a native speaker of English and as a North American. These feelings of inadequacy were confirmed through the various opportunities that some of these learners had to use and develop their English. George's trip to Iraq where he played "*silent boy*" and Vali's being "*afraid to speak*" on the UN mission to Eritrea are two examples. Even the computer technology that some of these learners used, for example in the Self Access Centre in the Czech University, conspired to the loss of agency they felt in the world, by depriving them of the right to have a say in their learning.

Underlining Vygotsky, Bakhtin and Weedon's theories is the understanding that meanings and the construction of meanings are socially dependant and mediated intersubjectively before they occur intrasubjectively, in the minds of individuals. This idea has powerful implications for the learners in this study and explains why there was a gradual change in the identities of some of the participants during the online sessions. In the context of speaking and interacting online in English, many of those who participated in the study began to fashion new ways of seeing themselves and, with these new ways of seeing, they constructed new ways of being. Through CALL, supported by dialogic activities, they constructed new subject positions, first in relation to me as a native speaker and, ultimately, in their social worlds. The process of their

changes started hesitatingly and was often mediated by images - personal pictures, pictures downloaded from the Web, movies and the increasingly image-based news media (Kress, 2004). As they interacted more and more in English, they were not only investing in their second language, but also constructing new identities which reflected new ways of thinking and seeing themselves in relation to others. For example, George, “*the silent boy*” had interacted online as a student and also worked collaboratively with an IT specialist in Canada to set up the discussions. He talked about how the experience had helped him and his colleagues “*break the scared to speak*” and how he felt he had changed so much over the period of the online sessions. “*It’s a big difference two months ago and today*” he observed. Leo, in Romania, also commented on the changes. He saw in himself as “*courageous*” now and added “*I control the situation*” referring to his interactions in English.

For many of the Romanians and Czechs, the new ways of thinking and seeing themselves resulted in a sense of empowerment. Some of this empowerment was reflected in subtle ways by changes to their physical stances online. For example John started to sit taller and look directly into the camera. Some, like Sergii had shown in a virtual space in the Canadian site, began to be more prolific and took on more powerful subject positions by appropriating the words from the Web. Florin was anxious to ‘talk’ about the hidden treasures of his country with information from the Internet, and in the end, spoke with expertise and with much more pride of his country than he had at the outset. With a sense of empowerment, Sabin and Văli became vocal in their criticism of their national political and cultural systems. They talked and wrote at length about their own prescriptions for national, educational and global change. I saw in their prescriptions a sense of hope that I had not seen in their initial disparaging remarks about their country and jobs. Their prescriptions were signs of a practice of democratic freedom. Macedo (2003) writes: “[F]reedom is inextricably linked with the processes and functions that institute and sustain an autonomous society, where individuals, as a collectivity, participate in the creation of their own rules and institutions. This is a deeply democratic process” (p. 133). Indeed, language teaching and learning are deeply political practices.

Summary

In this chapter, I have described and explained why the participants in the study were denied opportunities to practice English in the European sites. Aspects of their educational, military and cultural lives conspired to prevent them from claiming control over their learning and left them with feelings of inadequacy with regard to English. Although certain computer technologies provided some contact with English, on closer examination, they proved to be either sources of further marginalization and or a means of usurping control, as it was in the case of some of the software and computer-based tests in the Canadian immersion program. This software offered contact with English but not an opportunity to socially interact. When computer technology was used as a communicative tool through the networked and online discussions many participants were able to have the opportunity in a virtual setting to use their resources to discuss and feel comfortable in speaking. However, speaking online provided the participants with more than the opportunity to exchange information with others in a virtual space. The online interactions also gave them the chance to organize and reorganize a sense of who they were and how they related to their social worlds. The dialogic process enabled the participants to make further progress in speaking English, and at the same time, to construct changes to their identities. Importantly, the evolving identities they constructed through their SL resulted in a greater awareness of the constraints to their lives, and in some cases, the personal empowerment to consider changes.

In the next chapter, I tie together the stories that took place in the two spaces of the study: the Canadian physical space of the immersion program and the virtual space of the online connections between Europe and Canada. These stories have portrayed an image of what it means to be a SL learner of English at the micro level in an immersion program and at the macro level with respect to the global community. In this last chapter, I summarize how CALL played a decisive role in whether this diverse group of participants were able to negotiate or were denied knowledge of and access to the discourses that would allow them to invest, and have agency in their everyday

lives. I discuss the understandings I have drawn from this inquiry of two unique groups of learners and the implications that these understandings may have not only for the participants themselves but for educators, SL and CALL researchers, theory building and for policy makers.

CHAPTER SEVEN

IMPLICATIONS: MOVING TOWARDS COMING TOGETHER

Through the process of this inquiry, I have been privy to many conversations. In the last several chapters, I have tried to represent the essence of those stories with words and images, some of which were used to mediate the conversations I had with two multicultural groups of learners from Central and Eastern Europe and Asia. The conversations I had with these groups of learners were diverse and ranged from their experiences learning English to their opinions about globalization. In those conversations, I focussed on topics that related to how the military students and officers who made up these two groups, negotiated their language learning in Canada and in Europe, especially using computer technology. From our conversations, I have tried to understand their perspectives as newcomers to a language and to the many Discourses that make up that language. My aim was also to understand from their perspectives, the multiple contextual factors that played a role in whether they acted upon their desire to learn English by investing in using their second language, or whether they refrained or were prevented from investing. Through the dialogical process of the inquiry that I shared with the participants, I have also reflected on my own identity and my role as an educator and critical researcher. I have reflected in particular on the responsibility I believe I have to influence change in the ways these two groups of learners used computers to learn languages. I have acted on those reflections through a collaborative process that set in place intercultural conversations supported by computer networks, but not always supported by the institutions in which they took place. In my commitment to the nature of participatory action research and indeed to dialogical teaching and inquiry, I have reflected on the implications of those conversations with the participants in face-to-face meetings following the networked discussions using Daedalus and online. And in the nature of ‘real’ learning, which I believe is built on dialogic relationships, I continue to carry on the connections, discussions, and

conversations through e-mails with some of the participants in both sites.

The computer-mediated conversations in Canada and online from Europe were rather ordinary conversations. Yet the distinguished scholar Ursula Franklin, reminded me recently: “Real people doing real things, that’s the source of knowledge” (2003). The participants were ‘real people’ – for example, a translator, a mechanic, a communications technician, a sailor, a teacher, an aeronautical engineer, an economist, a logistics expert and others. We were engaged in doing ‘real’ things, talking about our lives, our countries, our families, their experiences learning English and my teaching, our work and our aspirations for the future. In the course of those conversations, I found evidence that changes took place as the participants negotiated their learning both in Canada and online. These changes included the way they viewed themselves in relation to learning English and in the ways they viewed themselves in relation to their social worlds. I found evidence that computers, depending on their use as either a tool for supporting acquisition and manipulation of facts or as a structured, dynamic communication medium, played an important role in determining the kinds of changes that took place in some of the participants.

The role of computer technology needs to be (re)examined to determine its influence on identity construction and investment in learning in second language learning settings. My findings have demonstrated for the learners in this study that computers sometimes acted as a means to marginalize and objectify them, depriving them of agency and convincing them of their “intrinsic inferiority”, and at other times computers served as an interface for empowering conversations between learners of English and speakers of English. When computers were used for transmitting facts about the language, for manipulating words and structures in drill exercises or for supporting testing, learners felt that their symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1998) – their social, intellectual and cultural funds of knowledge (Moll & Dworin, 1996), seemed of little value. They claimed they quickly forgot or felt they could not use the knowledge that was presented. However, when computers were used for communication and the exchange of ideas or the acting out of “different types of selves” (Gee, 1996), there

was evidence that had both micro and macro implications. On the micro level, the conversations offered several of the participants opportunities for constructing more empowered identities and greater investment in language learning. The way computers were used in this scenario enabled communication through both written as well as audio/video data transmission. The subjects of the discussions were related to the lived experiences of the learners. On the macro level, computers allowed some participants to use these conversations to read their lives in a critical way. They looked critically at the way they had been historically governed, the system of education that had deprived them of the opportunities they desired and the military jobs that ignored their intellectual capital. Using the conversations to dialogically (re)construct their lives, some of the participants were able to envision new possibilities and to connect their lives beyond their national borders to the global community. I make the case that when computers are used to support the kinds of conversations in which this particular group of learners participated, there is a possibility of generating new understandings and providing new possibilities for global communities of learning in a second language. As a result of this action research, I have claimed that some of the individuals in this particular group of learners changed in the way they perceived their language learning practices, especially when those practices involved the use of computers.

In this chapter, I reflect on the understandings that emerged from my inquiry into the uses of computer technology for second language learning. I draw on these understandings based on identity construction and investment in second language learning to reflect on their potential value to those involved in second language education. With the knowledge gained through this inquiry, I examine the possible implications of my findings with respect to the use of computer technology in second language learning contexts: implications, first of all, for the participants in my research, my main concern, as they struggle to find opportunities to use and practise their oral skills inside and outside classrooms, particularly when access to English speakers is limited; implications for language educators who are seeking to expand their ways of providing and enabling students to have opportunities for communicative practice;

implications for computer assisted language learning researchers who are concerned about the ways computers are being used in second language contexts and the influence of these computers on learners; implications for second language theorists who are concerned about linking their theories about language learning to the realities of learning inside and outside the classroom; and implications for policy makers who face a growing demand to provide and justify the use of computers for computer-mediated language learning in their institutions.

Implications for Language Learners

I need more than a computer to have access to the real meaning of the new information age. I need to connect myself and that computer to a network of people, organizations, software and information programs.

(Bertram C. Bruce, 2003, p. 176)

Bruce's comment, from a computer literacy perspective supports an important finding in my inquiry. The military officers and students who participated in the inquiry required much more than access to computers to be able to learn English. Like all teachers, I am concerned about student needs. So often, I can mistake my students' needs for what I *think* their needs are. In this inquiry, I have tried through the many sources of data that were generated in the context of this inquiry to get at the 'real' needs and more precisely the participants' concerns in their efforts to learn English. My discussions with them, my reflections and my observations while they used computers and my on-going discussions with them about my reflections, helped me to recognize the concerns I saw that were most significant to their learning experiences. Their needs and concerns frame my reflections about the implications of this study into the use of computers for the military officer and student participants

Concerns about Opportunities to Speak

First, the participants did indeed require access to computers. However, they

needed more than just access, they needed to use computers to have guided practice in English. Reflecting on the increasing economic stability since 1991 in Central and Eastern Europe, it did not surprise me that in an informal questionnaire that I circulated at a final gathering with participants at the Canadian site, all participants, except the four Afghans in the Canadian site had access to computers at work or at home. Farid and Raquib, two of the four Afghans who developed certain computer literacies while in Canada, made a firm resolve to buy personal computers when they returned to their country. Indeed, seventeen of the twenty that had computers reported that they had already used computer programs for learning English. I found this information indicative not only of their enthusiasm to progress in the language, but also of the fact that sometimes computers offered the *only* hope they had for opportunities to practise.

But many commented that computers fell short of giving them the kind of practice they needed in the language to improve. That practice, they said, required most of all access to authentic language, especially interacting with people who speak the language. Norton (2005) notes that learners recognize the need for “mastery over English beyond the use of conventions and decoding of text” (p. 229). When Tomas applied for language training and his requests were turned down, he turned to computer software and the Internet to access English. Although he found these sources interesting at first, he described them in the following excerpt as inferior: “*The PC games were passive, for taking vocabulary, interesting but a lot of disadvantages, no one to correct my mistakes in pronunciation, not strict lesson hour*”(Interview, March 23. 2004). Tomas’ comment suggests that there were two weaknesses that he saw in using computers as an individually-oriented activity: the lack of interaction and access to guidance in the language, for example in pronunciation, plus the commitment that comes when there is a person with whom to talk is involved, or what Bakhtin calls the demand for answerability. Because of these weaknesses, his comment suggested that the computer fell short of offering him the help he needed to improve in English. Vygotsky insists language learning occurs through ‘real’ interaction with significant others.

Similarly, the Allée software program at the Canadian site appeared in the beginning very attractive to the participants. Yet, teachers and students eventually lost interest in using the program. As one teacher reported: "*The students get tired with it [Allée] after a few weeks. This time I am trying to spread the sessions in the lab out with other things.*" (Anna, Personal Communication, February 18, 2004). It appears that besides the more obvious technical problems with the software program, the instructions offered in French, the inaccessibility of the vocabulary and the culturally specific nature of the material, rendered Allée insufficient as a technological tool for progressing in English. Its emphasis on grammar and functional practice in the language in addition to students having to work in isolation, apparently did not offer what the students considered important for their development in their second language. Besides, despite the enormous amount of material that the developers added to the templates in the software program, the interaction of man and machine could not replace the uniqueness of human to human communication.

The participants needed one thing in particular in coming to Canada and they repeated it time and time again: contact with people with whom they could speak English. Raquib expressed the connection he saw between speaking and learning in these words: *If I speak English everywhere I can remember and use my words. It is the easiest way to learn* (Interview, March 29, 2004). René, a young military student in the Czech Republic made a similar observation about the type of learning that comes from interacting with others:

I think it is very important for English if you speak to native language speakers. If I learn only with paper so then I know them [words] but I don't hear them not from your mouth. If I hear them and see them from you mouth then I learn them. (Group interview, November 21, 2004).

René and Raquib express the conviction that speaking helps them to learn, and which I infer to mean to be able to use the words they need to express themselves in their second language. But would not watching a film in English allow him the same exposure to words, since he is seeing them used from the mouths of a native speaker?

The fact that he prefaces his comment with the importance of speaking with native speakers suggested that René, like Raquib, recognizes that the physical interaction and importance of non verbal cues in the context of speaking is required for him to learn. But is that all that he is reading in a face to face interaction?

Vygotsky's activity theory that views cognitive development and learning as an intrasubjective activity that is *preceded* by the intersubjective activity of human interaction certainly is confirmed for me in Raquib and René's comments. Throughout the period of the study, however, I saw evidence that some of the participants, for a variety of reasons were not able to enjoy the improvements in their language learning that comes through interaction. Either there were few opportunities to practise their second language or they were not able to take advantage of the opportunities to speak English that did present themselves.

In Eastern and Central Europe, participants commented that the access to using English was problematic. Their comments revealed that this lack of opportunities to speak English was in part a factor of a former strict communist regime, questionable language teaching practices, and Discourses such as those in the military that denied them power over their access to language courses. Livia, one of the teachers in Romania, commented that a lack of access to interact with English speakers was a reality for her as a teacher as well as for the students: "*Obviously, you don't have this problem in Canada, but here we don't have too many native speakers*" (Interview, November 24, 2004). Zedenek, the experienced professor in the Czech Republic, made a similar observation about the situation in his own country from a historical perspective: "*All my life I only read, only write and don't speak*" (Interview, November 22, 2004).

In Canada, where one would assume there were would be opportunities to speak and use English, the opportunities for engaging in English were structured by the identities the participants constructed for themselves in the learning site or else the identities that were constructed for them. Farid, for example, used his status as a

member of a well-known family in Afghanistan and his efforts to make himself be, as he explained: “*more like Canadians*” and to construct a subjectivity that allowed him to have frequent occasions to speak: “*I speak to everyone*”, he remarked. For others, interactions with native speakers were more problematic. Sometimes, the problems appeared simply linguistic. Khalil commented, for example: “*Sometimes the people don’t understand, then you don’t want to speak* (Interview, March 23, 2004). However, Sergii revealed that for him there were other factors that were at stake in whether he took advantage of opportunities to speak in English. Sergii had a good command of English both in speaking and writing, but when he was in a situation in which he had to use the language he often was not able to speak. The following excerpt from one of our interviews is a striking indication that Sergii was aware of his dilemma: “*Very often, I don’t say what I think even now...when I go to my room I will know what I want to say before... it [what I wanted to say] was very easy. Why did I not say what I wanted to say?*” (Interview, April 14, 2004). In other collaborative discussions, Sergii was able to construct the reasons for his inability to take advantage of opportunities to use his English despite his knowledge of the language. The program tests, which according to Sergii were foreign to him because they were based sometimes on American content, were one reason that he was prevented from engaging in his using his second language. His feelings that the speed of the classroom interactions that did not allow him time to prepare perfect answers, feelings based on previous discourses that encouraged grammatical correctness perhaps, were another reason he felt he could not speak. His position as a Ukrainian, which placed him low on the socio-economic scale, may have contributed to his silence in the classroom. As one of his classmates, Slawomir a Polish officer, observed about Sergii’s silence:

There was a lot of indoctrination and people from Ukraine feel this pressure of indoctrination still. They [Sergii and his other Ukrainian classmate] are in another country and Canada was an enemy country in the Warsaw pact. We are now in the NATO pact. Ukraine is still not. As soldiers we know about these things. Maybe he is afraid about his future. If he tells more about different subjects, he will be fired. (Interview, April 7, 2004)

Slawomir's observation that Sergii's reluctance to participate in discussions was historically and culturally based, was later confirmed in my interviews with Sergii. He confided that he felt that the tests were the Administration's way of showing him to be "bad", just as he had done sometimes to his own students. Slawomir, as a citizen himself of another former Warsaw pact country, probably also understood Sergii's fear of reprisal from his supervisor, once his tests results were revealed. It is noteworthy that Sergii was let go from the military on his return to Ukraine. It became evident to me that Sergii, like other students in both the Canadian and European site, needed much more contact with the language in order to overcome the historical, cultural and personal issues that prevented them from entering the powerful Discourses that sometimes prevented them from speaking and using the language to communicate. Sergii showed that he came to a similar conclusion when he remarked to me: "*Sometimes we [people in Ukraine as opposed to people in Canada] have different views of the same problem. We need to live some time in this country before we can understand...I know meeting with English people is the most important*" (Interview, March 17, 2004). The powerful role that historical, cultural and political Discourses played in Sergii's language learning are well supported by evidence in other SL contexts (McKay & Wong, 1996; Morgan, 1997, 2004; Thesen, 1997).

When Sergii and others like Leo in the Romanian site, who spoke of the classroom as a "*cold and rigid place*", had difficulty in their respective learning contexts, they constructed identities that made them feel powerless to speak and use their second language. Weedon's view of identity as a "site of struggle" helps to explain what occurred when the learning settings changed. When the participants were given the opportunities to dialogue in a computer-mediated environment, they were able to construct new subjectivities. Sergii became more authoritative in his interactions with others in his group. He took the lead in the Daedalus interchange, introduced questions to further enable the discussion with his classmates and even expressed a controversial opinion, a rare display of revealing the 'self' for Sergii:

Gentlemen! Let's start our conference...

My proposal is to discuss...

In that case there is another question: How to solve the main problem of terrorism? Do you have any proposals or any ideas how to solve this problem?" But I am sure when the U.S. and other troops leave Iraq the situation will be change for better.

(Daedalus Interchange, April 15, 2004)

The nature of the writing-based environment that the Daedalus software supported offered a chance for Sergii to contest and resist the marginalized subjective position he held in the traditional classroom. Researchers in literacy studies (Selfe & Hawisher, 2004) and in computer assisted language learning research (Warschauer, 1999, Roed, 2003; Ayres, 2002) are finding similar evidence of computers acting for empowering changes to learners' subjectivities in a virtual environment.

However, despite the encouraging findings that Sergii's experience and the literature support, I found further evidence that this writing-based environment was not suited to the needs of all the participants. For example, for Slawomir who as he admitted, hated to write, the online experience was marginalizing. "*It is very painful for me*", he said in an interview after a Daedalus session (March 29, 2004). Slawomir occupied a position of authority in the classroom, due in part to the cultural capital he had from his vast international experience. He spoke and led many discussions. Such was not the case in the virtual environment. There, his weakness in writing prevented him from engaging in discussion. His relatively few and brief comments in faulty English were written evidence of the pain that he felt in those discussions and his feelings of inadequacy. Andrej also alluded to a similar problem he had in the computer-mediated discussions. "*I don't like writing. It's hard for me. When I am in my room I can check my spelling but in the computer room I don't have a chance. Maybe I am ill*" (Interview, March 24, 2004). Andrej and Slawomir both recognized that the writing-based virtual exchange did not respond to their need to speak in English. Indeed, it served to diminish some of the value of their symbolic resources that they used in the

classroom to claim a voice.

Daedalus had limited success in helping some students construct more empowered identities and engage more fully in using English. The fact that some who engaged more than they had in the regular classroom setting, for example Ferenc and Sergii, suggests computers can be used interactively in formal classroom practices to offer promising possibilities to some learners. However, as Andrej and Slawomir's experiences indicate, and there were others, the writing-based communication did not go far enough in meeting the needs of this group of participants whose main goal was to speak English. These findings are supported by Vygotskian theory. Vygotsky (1962, 1978) considered the great nature and power of speech crucially important for learning and the development of higher mental functions.

When writing, however, was combined with oral speaking in a video-based environment during the online discussion sessions with Europe, my findings seemed to indicate that changes to the participants' identities and to their investment in learning were more universal than in the Daedalus exchange. The possible difference in the findings in the two exchanges may be partly attributable to the need for the participants to have access to verbal as well as non-verbal cues that were a feature of the online communication with Europe. Communication studies have long established (Draft & Lengel, 1984) the importance of non-verbal information to constructing meaning and vice versa.

Military officers and students in Romania and the Czech Republic expressed the same sentiment about 'authentic' oral contact that the officers in Canada had made. They needed to speak with native speakers of English. They felt they needed this engagement with English, especially in order to prepare them for the international nature of their work and to ensure they had a voice in those exchanges. George, Váli and Adrian had witnessed first hand what it meant to be in such situations and the problems it posed to their jobs and their subjectivities.

All the participants in the Canadian, Czech and Romanian sites confirmed what I had heard in the Canadian site - that they considered speaking crucial to their progress in using English in their roles as military soldiers and as citizens of an increasingly globalized community. Sabin's comment about using English in his job reflects this need:

I use it [English] intensively in my job. But in the future, I hope I will have to use it more and more because as you know more countries joined NATO and there will be more need for international contacts and the language barrier should be overcome. (Interview, November 24, 2004)

Despite their professed need and apparent desire to take part in the online discussions, ironically, the majority of the Czech and Romanian participants initiated their communications with a common sentiment - their lack of ease in speaking English and their fear and embarrassment to interact with native speakers. They communicated their feelings of fear and embarrassment in words of apology that many offered for their linguistic weaknesses. *"I'm sorry, but I'm not such a good speaker how I want to be,"* Florin B. remarked in an opening session. Others like John and George in the Czech Republic and Florin B. in Romania visually showed their uneasiness by slumping in their seats and hiding their faces from the screen. All three refrained from speaking. Still others, like Vali and Sabin seemed to try to impress with formal language that didn't match with the tone and subject matter of the discussions. This excerpt from Vali's early e-mails was indicative of his initial speech online:

I'll wait for your quotas referencing what I wrote above, with guidance in my future evolution learning the language. I want to be more specific and tell you that I'm open to critics coming from a native speaker with a certain expertise, not mentioning here the connection we've established between in these last days. (E-mail, October 24, 2004)

These visual, written and verbal messages suggested the kinds of subjectivities that many of the participants in the Czech Republic and Romania were constructing at the beginning of the online sessions. Their identities in the interactions online, historically, culturally, politically, pedagogically and personally rooted, were characterized by feelings of inadequacy and being marginalized.

Over the course of the online sessions, changes emerged to the subject positions that the learners in Europe initially revealed in response to me as a teacher and native speaker. By the end of the online sessions, there was growing evidence that some of the participants were making changes to their identities. For example, Mignona in Romania was apologetic about her abilities initially online and vividly described a scene with an American language coordinator as “terrifying”. She included herself along with other Romanians in her self-deprecating comment: *“I am self-taught. That’s why I don’t speak so well. We are like intelligent dogs. We know our limitations. It’s a complex.”* (Online discussion and written e-mail, October 20, 2004). The national identity that Mignona refers to and which I found evidence of in comments from other participants echo references to a national identity that I have read about in socio-historical literature about Romania (Light & Phinnemore, 2001). For example, Light’s comment seems particularly relevant:

Like other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, Romania is seeking to project a new self-image, or identity, to the wider international community. There are two elements to the process. First, Romania is striving to deconstruct a national identity created during four decades of Communist rule; that of a Communist, nationalist, totalitarian state forming part of the Soviet bloc. Second, Romania is seeking to remake itself, and to construct a new national self-image: that of a pluralist, capitalist, Westward-looking democracy consistent with its post-Communist aspirations. (p. 59)

Mignona was one of many examples of participants who showed signs of shedding her national identity and indeed her personal identity, which she referred to as being: *“civilian, a woman and a blonde in a military system? Who would pay attention to what I have to say?”* Through her discussions on line, she was able to resist the national and personal subjectivities that were constructed for her by dominant discourses in her life and that influenced her investment in speaking. Mignona, as well as others, was able to use this medium to construct a new identity - one that showed evidence of being empowered and able to envision alternative possibilities in the future. She spoke with much optimism at the end of the sessions about her plans to work at the UN to help her son to get a ‘good’ education and to find someone to love her. I argue

that the changes to identity that Mignona revealed in these remarks had implications not only at the micro level of her language learning but also on the macro level of her life as a member of a global community. She commented in the sessions and again wrote in an e-mail:

The final step will be to apply to a UN job... So I'm getting busier and busier (and, of course more and more daring) every day. That is why, by the end of 2009 (if I live that long and I'm a little bit lucky) you will be talking to a UN employee working all over the world. No matter what, I'll struggle. Life is a continuous fight, isn't it? (E-mail, November 10, 2004)

Mignona suggests that through struggle people become more conscious of their condition and this struggle in turn empowers them to engage in more struggles. The struggle that she has just begun to engage in suggests that she has moved beyond the national identity she portrayed at the beginning of the sessions, that of an "*intelligent dog*" that obeys without question. Her vision for the future reveals that the kind of struggle she engages in will be felt not only in her own personal life but also at a global level in her interactions and work internationally.

The computer-mediated discussions that involved a visual and audio component responded to the needs of many of the participants to speak and interact in their second language. All spoke favourably of the experience. But along with meeting the need to speak in English, the discussions also allowed the participants to critically examine the Discourses in their lives such as militaries, governments, and pedagogical practices that controlled the kinds of identities they portrayed in their learning. Within this critical dialogue many of the participants constructed more empowered identities necessary to "*break the scared to speak*". These were the words that George in the Czech Republic used to express an important advantage of the online discussions, that is overcoming identities that initially prevented many of the learners from engaging and expressing their voices when opportunities to speak did occur.

Concerns about Being Actively Engaged in Learning

The second need and concern that the participants expressed during our discussions was the need to be active participants in their learning. By active, I understood the participants to mean their need to have an agential role in what, when, where, why, and how they learned English (Maguire, 1994b). The need to be in control of their learning was expressed in several ways. First of all, in the Canadian site, it was expressed through their anger when they were denied control and obliged to take computer-based tests. Some referred to the test as a “*lottery*”. Others spoke of the time constraints in the tests in more striking metaphors such as having a “*gun to my head*”; still others, like Sergii, complained about the North American-based nature of the questions, questions for example that dealt with banking when, as he explained, people never use banks in his home country of Ukraine. Their lack of power in the final results of their tests was an insult to many of the participants and caused much anxiety. Sergii’s remark: “*But nobody is interested what I did, only my results*” (Interview, May 19, 2004) is an example of the loss of power he felt in the testing process.

Sometimes lacking control over learning seemed self-imposed. Ferenc’s constructed a subjectivity in the classroom that was based on his feelings that he lacked sufficient knowledge to be worthy of interacting and being listened to. His subjectivity in the classroom caused him much anguish. “*I try to speak but I can’t*”, he remarked. He reported that his lack of agency in the classroom was due to his fear of making mistakes. “*I understand and know grammar rules but when I speak and have to use the grammar rules it is difficult*” (Interview, March 17, 2004). Reluctance to speak for fear of making errors is a well-researched phenomenon in adult education research. Ferenc’s dilemma appears to be self-imposed. However, in examining the findings from a wider social context, I argue that his loss of agency is partly attributable to an over-emphasis on errors and grammatical form in his past experiences in formal language learning contexts. It is noteworthy that the identity Ferenc constructed in his classroom was not the identity he perceived that he had in his job in Hungary. In that setting he reported: “*I’m a leader and I have to speak a lot in the classroom*” (Interview, March 24, 2004).

It was in the context of the classroom and the many influences that existed there, that he took on a subjectivity that was characterized by feelings of inadequacy.

Other times, a loss of agency over learning was a result of the dynamics that existed in the classroom. Dmitry's desire to have a voice and his expectation to be listened to was thwarted by those who held more powerful positions in his classroom. Dmitry said in an interview *"When I speak [in class, Farid stops me. He can speak so fast]"* (March 18, 2004). He also reported that his teacher occupied 50% of the classroom speaking time and 50% with a more outgoing student in his group, leaving no time for him to engage. He realized that this lack of control was not ideal for learning. *"I don't know what I'm going to do."*

The learners in this study seemed well aware that engaging in their learning and having control over that learning was important to their progress in learning. However, teachers and software developers are sometimes oblivious or choose to ignore the need for learners' agency. For example, when some of the participants were expected to sit alone in front of a computer and perform grammar and function-based exercises both in the Canadian and European site, many quickly lost interest. Anna's students were reluctant to go to the computer room to use the Allée program and the new Resource Centre in the Czech Republic often sat empty. On the other hand, when the participants in these sites had the opportunity to use computer software in which their symbolic resources and their interests were integrated and in which they were in control of their learning, there was evidence that many reacted favourably.

In the Daedalus interchange, some learners perceived that they had had 'success' in their efforts to improve in their language learning. Lazlo found writing challenging and felt marginalized because of this weakness: *"I am a different learner...I don't spell the words good"*. Nevertheless, in the virtual site where he indicated he had agency to interact with others, he was able to resist his identity as a bad writer and to take advantage of the opportunity to improve. In the following excerpt, he explains the nature of his learning process using the Daedalus program:

This chat program is very, very good because we have to write, we say the mistakes. Maybe another guy write a wrong word. I see his mistakes and he sees your mistakes. This is good. I can learn (study) from this. I see the mistake and it's no difficult for me and the other student see my mistakes. I am so [the type of] man, if I see something I can see in my remember [memory]. If I write a memo and you correct for me after that I see the correct, I can't study my mistakes. But with other students it's more personal and I can remember. (March 24, 2004)

Lazlo considers this exchange with his classmates in the virtual space as a means for him to take charge of his learning and improve in the language. I site this as a vivid example of how learners are sometimes well aware of principles that we as educators learn in theory but fail to adopt in practice. Lazlo explained in a Vygotskian sense that he learned and remembered by collaborating in an interactive process with the community of learners in the virtual site. He saw their mistakes and corrected them in his answers and they saw his and did likewise. Through this interactive process, which he felt he controlled and in which he was actively involved, he felt he could improve his learning and become self-regulated. He suggested that the computer technology that allowed this kind of interactive learning process contrasted with the didactic practices that his teachers in the past used to correct his written work.

The online videoconferencing sessions were also a setting where the learners who participated enjoyed agency in their learning. From the very beginning, I envisioned the online sessions to be a collaborative process. At the outset, I asked each person to write and suggest topics that interested them. Although I used these topics as a guide to our discussions, frequently the conversations online went in different directions, as is often the case with 'real' as opposed to staged conversations. In Romania, the participants chose in what order they wished to speak and wrote e-mails on subjects that interested them and also subjects in which they had expertise and could 'teach' me. Even the timing that was arranged for the students to speak online acted only as a guide and was often loosely adhered to. If someone wanted to speak longer, I would seldom interrupt. I gave the time needed to those for whom it took a little longer to feel comfortable. The fact that there was a visual component meant that even if there

was a pause, there was always a presence of someone listening and willing to interact. Participants could prepare ahead and in writing the topics that we would discuss online and which allowed them to speak with more authority. Some participants began by borrowing the words of others, especially from the Internet. Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) suggest that this act of appropriating the words of others is an important phase for learners to move to new levels of understanding and reconstructing a voice in a second language.

Historically, Leo had had serious problems in formal learning settings. He reported that he was having similar problems engaging in the language learning class he was attending at the time. Nevertheless, he had a different view of the online discussions and testified to the agency he felt in this virtual setting. His comments were especially indicative of the implications for learners when they feel control over their learning that comes with interactive practices:

The online course [discussion sessions] is for me very helpful because you treat me like an equal... I say a word if I can, you put me another question. I understand that question, not very difficult for me. You find the correct words for me. I lose shy, I lose fear and slow day by day I improve my explanation, my discourse. I remember last day, I speak many sentences, not stopping- fluently. That not happen in the first day. The first day I say very short sentences, very difficult for me. (Interview, November 26, 2004)

Leo recognized the agency he had in his learning. He expressed his joy at this agency in words and visually (See Figure 18) when we met in the classroom in Branov for the first time in person at the end of the session. The meeting that day in a classroom, in the company of all his classmates, contrasted sharply with prior experiences Leo had had in previous classrooms. In those classrooms he was shy and fearful like “*an actor on the screen or on the stage. Everybody look for [at] him, waits for to say one word*” (Interview, November 24, 2004). Leo’s agency in the online sessions, it appeared, had enabled him to change.



Figure 18: Florin and Leo Smiling in Class at Our First Meeting in Romania

There were no tests at the end of the online sessions at the Canadian or European sites to determine progress in learning. My presence in Romania and the Czech Republic at the end of the sessions was all that came close to constituting a test. The participants showed delight at welcoming me to their countries and having a chance to speak face-to-face. In the pictures of Leo and Florin taken at our first meeting in Romania at the end of the online sessions, there is an indication of the pleasure I saw in their faces. I read their joy as a reaction to the renewed agency they felt in their language learning. I understood this joy to be intricately tied also to the new language learning identities they had constructed in light of this agency.

Evidence of the participants' progress and agency also came from their own testimonies, from my perceptions as we spoke on line and from the evidence I observed in their writing. Mignona remarked mid way through the sessions: *"I realize that my mistakes reduce day by day. I think it's a good thing.* (E-mail and online notes, November 2004). Ivana, the professor in the Czech Republic who worked with me to set up the online sessions, commented about her students: *"When I came to check*

what was new they told me: We don't need you here" (Interview, November 23, 2004). Her observation was further evidence that some of the participants had reached what Vygotsky would call a stage of self-regulation in their learning, no longer needing the help of their teacher with their interactions online. Adrian, a Romanian who began the sessions by sending pictures and short commentaries to me over the Internet, wrote at length near the end of the sessions and still continues to e-mail me. He tied the agency he felt in the online sessions to his progress in language learning with the comment: *"I wrote a lot about globalisation. I felt more comfortable talking about my background or talking about something related to my background and for this I chose this topic for the final presentation. Thank you very much.* (Interview, November 24, 2004). The final presentation that Adrian refers to was a means of measuring progress in the course that he was attending in Branov at the time of the sessions. The topic he chose apparently was an unusual one in the context of the course on English for management purposes. However, Adrian and another online participant Sabin convinced their teacher, Aura, to allow them to use the topic for their presentations. Sabin proudly sent me a written copy of his presentation at the end of his English program. According to his teacher, this topic, and many others we discussed online, were carried well beyond the hours spent in the virtual setting. She explained to me in Romania at the end of the project: *"I wanted to give them some leisure activities [organized outings], but I had to give up because they were too involved in writing e-mails, first of all, and then staying there and listening to the others and confronting ideas* (Interview, November 24, 2004). Aura's observation of the hours the students spent after the sessions continuing to write, listen and discuss the topics we touched on, was further evidence that the participants used the online experience to engage and progress in their language learning.

Concerns about Connecting with the Global Community

Sabin and Adrian's interest in pursuing the topic of globalisation was not an isolated personal interest of only two individuals in the group of participants. Many who participated in all three sites expressed their need to build relationships beyond their

own national borders. In the Canadian site, Dmitry called a visit to his teacher's farm to meet her family and friends "*the best three days of my study in Canada*" (Interview, March 8, 2004). He remarked at the end of the program:

[N]ow I have many new friends – all countries and Canadian officers too. I will tell my friends about Canada, about your population, history, interesting people and about the farm where live my teacher...[O]nly for me was a very good time...What is important for me is now I understand my new friends and they understand me. (Interview, May 21, 2004)

Raquib, an Afghan remarked on the positive implications of having different nationalities in his classroom because he realized they shared similar tensions in language learning: "*It's good to have other countries. They have the same problems*" (Interview, March 8, 2004). Jan expressed positive feelings about the exposure to a world beyond his own national cultural one: "*I had very well visit in Canada. [It was the] first time I saw Canadian and American people, how they live and work*" (May 21, 2004).

It was no coincidence that those who had experience in the global community through travel and forming relationships with other military held prestigious subject positions in the group. Zedenek, a senior officer, had great respect for Andrej, despite his more junior rank because he had international experience. He explained in an interview: "*I speak every evening with my colleagues in my family unit. I learn a lot from Andrej – he has travelled a lot and has a lot of experience*" (March 31, 2004). Andrej's cultural capital was also recognized in the classroom where he held a position of respect, despite his junior rank and young age.

The Canadian context should have been an ideal site for the participants to make the international connections that they needed. However, certain relations of power in this site prevented some of the participants from taking full advantage of the interactions that were available. Abdhul Ghias, the Afghan delegation head was unhappy that Afghans were kept together in their living quarters rather than mixed with other nations (Interview notes, March 18, 2004). He expressed his feelings of being excluded when other groups did not socialize with him and his Afghan colleagues. He said:

"Some people need to speak to other people...It is no good for me." (Interview, March 23, 2004). Certain classroom practices also prevented some participants from engaging in interacting with others and from forming the international relationships that they expressed were important to them. Dmitry commented: *50% of the time teacher talks with Wieslaw and Farid; 50% of the time not talking at all, only teacher talks.*" Miroslav who had a change of teacher mid way through the program expressed his opinions about the difference in the teaching practices of the new teacher. He felt the former had not allowed him full entry into the information about the people and situations in the news stories. He remarked: *"When we listen T.V, M.[his first teacher] was interested only in information but S.[his second teacher] helps us to know not only what this was about but goes deeper and tries to explain background"* (March 24, 2004).

Computer technology was instrumental for some participants to make connections in the global community. George, who took part in the online discussions from the Czech Republic, was delighted with the results of that experience. He expressed these feelings in his words: *"New doors are opened to me"* (Group interview, November 22). It is possible that George is suggesting in his comment, that the progress he had made in the English online would give him new chances to advance in his military, as no doubt it would. But getting to know George over the course of the project, I realized he most likely meant more than that. I read in his comment that the online sessions responded in an important way to his desire to be included and have a role in the global community. He showed this desire in many ways during the online sessions. He spoke with confidence about his mission to Iraq and the various cultures of people to whom he was exposed. He would look for occasions in his day to connect online with other Information Technology specialists all over the world. He spent a good deal of his free time using 'chat' to correspond with individuals outside his own country. Being connected and a part of the conversations that are going on globally was certainly important to George. Norton (2005) remarks that the desire for English, like literacy, is based on a desire on the part of many in evolving nations "to engage with the international community from a position of strength rather than weakness" (p. 237).

I saw evidence of George's enthusiasm to connect with others internationally repeated by many others in the groups in Europe and Canada over the course of the inquiry. Váli spoke proudly of his role as a member in a multicultural team of UN observers in Ethiopia. Adrian spoke of the important professional connections he made in Italy and Germany and how he looked forward to more opportunities to meet others in his field. On his office desk, Florin B. displayed pictures of himself in Iraq where he worked as part of an international team of mechanical experts. Others in the group showed a great deal of respect for George, Váli, Adrian and Florin B. and their cultural capital acquired from opportunities connecting with others beyond their own borders. This respect indicated, that although some of the participants had not had the opportunities that George, Váli, Adrian and Florin B. had had, there was a desire to do likewise. They saw knowledge of English as a means for them to do so. In our discussions in Romania, Sabin commented: *"In the future I hope I will use it [English] more and more because more countries joined NATO and there will be more need for international contacts and the language barrier should be overcome by all of us* (November 24). Mignona's plans for the future reflected this aspiration: *That is why, by the end of 2009 (if I live that long and I'm a little bit lucky) you will be talking to a UN employee working all over the world.*

Interacting with other nationalities was indeed important in all sites. In the Canadian site, Daedalus software supported some of those conversations. The exchanges in this virtual setting were especially helpful for some participants such as Ferenc and Yevhen to be more interactive with others than they were in face-to-face interactions in their classrooms. For others, however, the written nature of those interactions was problematic. In the European sites, on the other hand, the audio/video-based computer-mediated communications that took place online in the context of this inquiry, helped learners to meet their need to connect with the global community. The participants demonstrated that these exchanges were successful for connecting them to the world via their progress in English in several ways. First, with few exceptions, which in all cases were due to frustrations with some minor technical issues, the

participants were not ambivalent about the experience. “*Would you do it again?*” I asked Daniela in Romania. “*In a heartbeat*” she replied. “*Did you see a change?*” I asked Zedenek in the Czech Republic. “*Yes, of course*”, he replied. He explained that since the online experience, he used his inner speech to play out and prepare future conversations: “*When I want to speak I prepare things in English [not Czech]. It is a change for me... When I go to sleep I speak with you.*” (Interview, November 22, 2004). George in the Czech Republic said: “*Big difference two months ago [before the online discussions] and today.*” If there is evidence to support that the participants were learning English as a means to communicate with others who were not part of their national community, than the fact that they felt that they had made progress in English presumably meant that the online experience supported their desire for future communications in some way.

Others demonstrated directly that the computer technology helped them to envision their lives in a more global context. Vlasta in the Czech Republic explained how she saw the potential for using computer-mediated communication to connect to others: “*It’s new. You can be at home and speak English with people from all over*” (Interview, November 22). Mignona commented on how the online interchanges had helped her to understand me as a North American, an important factor given her plans for a future job in the UN: “*I think there is something more here than just talk and study English*” (Interview, November 24, 2004). Most notably, Leo said that global connections with others, as we experienced in the virtual setting, were for him an important part of his human experience that he would share with his children. He commented:

It is for me an addition to my chapter, and I improve my experience, **my human experience**. It is good for me, good for my children to explain in another way some kind of situation, because I know what’s happened here, what’s happened there. It is many points of view. It is a point of view of mine It’s a point of view of an American. It’s a point of view of a Czech. It’s a collection of a point of views. It is better for me in my way to choose the way for me is correct (Interview, November 24, 2004).

Leo's comments speak of the advantages he sees in interacting with others in the global community: mutual understanding and his own development as a human being. The online discussions allowed Leo to engage with others internationally. These conversations also provided him with agency to think critically about his options, or as he phrased it: "*the way for me is correct*" - an ideal way for him to promote his own empowerment.

Reflecting back to My Research Questions

I reflect back to my research questions. The first question: What is the nature of the contexts for learning English as a second language for two groups of military students in Canada and in Romania and the Czech Republic? In all three sites, there existed tensions with regard to participants finding opportunities to interact and use their English. These tensions surfaced particularly when there were opportunities to speak and where powerful discourses rooted in historical, political, cultural, pedagogical and personal factors in these contexts dictated whether the participants chose to be silent or were silenced.

The second question: What are the identity, investment and power issues that surface in these learners as they mediate their SL learning in these contexts? Some participants were able to mediate their identities as "second language learners" or as "members of a non-Western country" and resist the powerful discourses and barriers to learning and interacting. For others, it was more problematic. Because of their identity issues, some participants were unable to find a 'voice' inside and outside the classroom. Their lack of voice meant they had little agency in their language learning and were disappointed with their abilities to speak and use English.

The third question: What role does and can computer technology have in the participants' identity construction and language learning? I found evidence that the participants used computer technology for learning English in three distinct ways. First, they used computers to manipulate facts like vocabulary and to practise grammar and

functional forms in English. Computer technology in this scenario was also used to test their performance of the facts and structures they had acquired both in the traditional classroom and on computer. Based on my findings, I have argued that this use of computers robbed the participants of their agency in their learning and had a detrimental influence on their investment and identity construction.

Second, they used computers for their own personal use to surf the Net, to play games and to take part in 'chat' sessions. This use of computers had benefits for some participants. When using computers for Internet, games and 'chat', some were able to mediate identities that were more acceptable to the social situations in which they took part in their second language. For example, Raquib and Farid, the two Afghans who spent a great deal of time on the Internet, took on more 'Western' ways, as demonstrated by their casual form of dress, their choice of music and their outward behaviors, such as chewing gum. They also became more familiar with the discourses that allowed them entrance to the second language, especially in the virtual setting. Unfortunately, these knowledges and identities did not always carry over to 'real' environments.

Third, the participants used computer technology to interact in writing and orally online. I found evidence that using computers in this way offered some participants more enhanced potential for engaging in using their second language and constructing alternatives to the second language learning identities that they had constructed or that were constructed for them. In the networked computer-mediated communication based on writing alone, however, some participants were at a disadvantage because of their weaknesses using this form of communication. On the other hand, the audio and visual-based computer mediated communications, had a positive influence in various degrees on all the participants. This influence was noted in their personal engagement with learning English and their more empowered identities to resist the dominant discourses in their language learning setting and in their lives in general. There was also strong evidence to support that these videoconferencing computer-mediated communications changed the way this particular group of learners viewed computers for their language

learning practices and offered them new possibilities for using their English in the future.

Where do these findings and conclusions lead in terms of implications for teachers, researchers, theory building and policy makers? In the next sections, I discuss my research findings with respect to those whose interests lie in second language learning practices.

Implications for Teaching and Teachers

In chapter one, I began by posing many reflective general questions that have surfaced over the years of my teaching languages. These questions were based on a critical perspective of that practice and my struggle to understand on a deeper level what was happening in the various contexts in which I teach. Through the process of this inquiry, I have been fortunate to be able to engage more deeply in examining some of those questions through my research of the particular groups of military officers and students who participated and through a study of the contexts in which they were learning English. From this inquiry, I have moved a few small steps forward towards realizing how my teaching practices need to be (re)considered in order to meet the needs and concerns of future groups of learners with whom I mediate meaning in a second language learning context. While sharing here the knowledge about my teaching practices that I have gained, my hope is to allow others in second language teaching a point of departure for their self-reflections about their own multicultural language teaching practices.

First, I need to take concrete steps to become more at home in the use of computers for teaching second languages. Too often in the busy world of language teaching, it is easy to slip back into traditional ways of doing and to ignore what potential technological tools are available for mediating meaning. Finkbeiner (2001) suggests that teachers can only expect to teach life long learning practices to their students if they themselves engage in such practices. With the growing debates

(Chapelle, 2003; Warschauer, 2004; Salaberry, 2004) that are centred around how computers are used in formal and informal language learning contexts, both inside and outside the language classroom, it is imperative that I not only understand the technological potential of these tools, but also have knowledge about the current discussions in the literature concerning their uses.

Second, I need to take account of my teaching practices and the ways I intentionally or unintentionally promote language teaching as a method of passing on skills rather than as a dialogic process that is socially constructed and socially negotiated. I need to ask how my learners engage in learning in my classroom and outside of it and whether I am helping them through authentic engagement or merely a staged performance. In other words, I need to review and reflect on my meaning of communicative practice as a practice of empowered identity construction or a practice of silencing. To choose the former rather than the latter, I have to take account of the multiple factors that influence the language learning identities of my students. Cummins (2002) argues:

First, we must examine our interactions with students who are learning English not only through the lens of the technical efficacy of our instructional strategies but also through the lens of identity negotiation - the extent to which the classroom interactions we orchestrate build on and affirm the cultural, linguistic, intellectual and personal identities that students bring to our classrooms.

Third, I need to continue to monitor and take a more critical stance towards the way technological tools are being currently used in the context in which I teach. I am thinking in particular of computers being used both as instructional software and as a basis for testing to privilege certain kinds of knowledge and ways of knowing. I must question the discourses, for example that claim that passing computer-based tests equate to economic value and efficiency and at the same time deny both learners and teachers a say over the content of the tests or the types of decisions that are being made based on their results (Shohamy, 2004). I must also question organizations that use software that controls and defines knowledge on its own terms and according to its own agendas. In recognizing that power is being used in these two ways as an act of dominance

(Foucault, 1980), I must also recognize that it can also serve as an act of resistance (Giroux, 2001). As a teacher, who is herself being subject to these dominating forces along with my students, I must do more to actively oppose and take action with others who are concerned about the democratic principles at stake. I must continually struggle to make changes.

I recognize that my teaching is political and that what happens at the micro level of my classroom is intricately connected to the macro level of the global. I must act on this recognition rather than only muse about it. I need to continue to transfer the knowledge I have gained through my earlier homeschooling experience and this inquiry to look for new spaces for learning. I use spaces in the sense of human geographer Lefebvre (1991) who describes as *espace vécu*, a space directly lived through social practices. Based on this understanding of space, I am not limited to seeing learning taking place in interacting with a textbook, digital text or within the physical confines of the four walls of a classroom. Learning can take place wherever social practices occur, for example with the visual images my students often bring to me or in virtual communications. Increasingly, computer technology is playing a role in connecting individuals worldwide. I need to capitalize on the potential of computer technology to allow a new space for interacting in English with others, an interaction that could have democratic possibilities.

In my role as a teacher of English, I need to move beyond my personal debates about whether I am contributing or not to an act of imperialism (Phillipson, 1999b; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000a; Pennycook, 1994). Instead, I must listen, notice and try to understand the fact that my learners may have their own motivations for learning English (Maguire, 1999). I must enter their dialogues. When I asked the group of military students in the Czech Republic whether they considered English a threat, George responded: *"I am not afraid will everybody same. Maybe we will speak same language in official. But not in our home. We will never speak in English. Maybe one time French or English will be official language of European Union; we will never speak English in our home."* (Group Interview, November 22, 2004). Perhaps George

is overestimating the power of language to assimilate. But, knowing that this small country in Central Europe has managed to maintain its language through hundreds of years of occupation and domination, reminds me that there are other views than my own and that answers to questions about language and identity are always complex. I can begin to support Luke (2004) and Canagarajah's (1999) argument that individuals can engage in more than one language. My findings have supported the claim that Brutt Griffler (2002) makes that individuals from diverse nations have a desire to link to the world at large. The military officers and students in all three sites showed a concern for connecting with others. I need to view my practice of teaching in a more global way. I need to continue to find ways to have my students engage in dialectic with others globally, what Brecher et al (2000) call a 'globalization from below'. As the borders of countries begin to blur in global communities, the realities of the students' lives I find are being intermingled with the realities in other contexts, in other learning sites, all of which have an influence on their SL learning. As a SL educator I must be very concerned whether my students will undertake to construct new identities within the context of global intermingled realities or assume identities as marginal members of the larger community (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Offering learners the opportunities to use their human agency to critically examine their options in these spaces, as the participants and I did in the online sessions, can allow us to find ideological alternatives to our lives that promote empowerment. Giving second language learners the linguistic and technical tools to engage in these dialogues is one way I can contribute to the social changes as a teacher I seek to make,

Implications for Researchers

Since I began this inquiry four years ago, I have begun to see encouraging signs in second language research and research into computer assisted language learning. In second language research, there is evidence of more of this research moving away from postpositivism, a view that derives its traditions from natural science and supports its claims through laboratory-like controls, generalizability, and replication which strives

for universal appeal. Instead, looking at language learning in the sociocultural contexts in which it takes place seems to have growing appeal to groups of second language researchers. The latest TESOL Journal, March 2005 includes only one article that equates numbers and statistics to the complexities of language learners and the influence of multiple contexts on their language learning. There also appears to be an increasing move toward viewing language learning from a broader range of research perspectives as I have set out to do in this inquiry. On a much larger scale, a course offering at Princeton University for Fall 2005 in Applied Linguistics and Information Technology, will be co-lectured by twenty different faculty from a wide range of departments. This multidisciplinary course called, Human Identity in the Age of Neuroscience and Information Technology, will be taught by professors in psychology, engineering, philosophy, physics, history, English, molecular biology, computer science, comparative literature along with the professors in applied linguistics and information technology who are organizing the course. The course is a real-life example of the possible trajectory in which language research is heading.

In computer assisted language learning, the picture is less rosy but there are hints of change. For example, a growing number of researchers in computer assisted language research (Fang & Warschauer, (2004); Salaberry, 2000; Kramsch & Thorne, 2002; Stevens, 2004) are extolling the virtues and some of the pitfalls (Waire, 2005) of using computers to mediate language learning through online communication. These studies reflect a turning away, albeit slowly and certainly not universally, from viewing computer technology as a tool to support human-machine interaction to supporting human-human interaction. A book on CALL being considered for publication that I have just reviewed for TESOL publishers has a large majority of articles in which authors discuss their practices in online communication. This evolving change in perspective is a welcoming sign. A perspective that is centred on the importance of using computer technology to connect individuals in dialogic interactions, after all, lies at the basis of this inquiry. In the most recent issue of Language Learning and Technology, May 2005, for example, three of the five main articles are based on computer-mediated communication. Disappointingly, however, a deeper read of these articles suggests that

the call from Salaberry (2000) for research to move beyond comparisons of face-to-face communication with computer-mediated communication has not yet been entirely heeded.

Second Language Research

Considering some of the changing views of using computers for second language learning that have emerged in the literature, what implications can my research have for second language research and research into computer assisted language learning? First of all, my findings reveal that the second language research that is suggesting that communicative teaching practices are an established reality in classrooms where languages are being learned, is off the mark. We need more in depth classroom-based research that looks at the sociocultural realities of teaching and learning practices to determine what the impediments are to using communicative teaching practices in various contexts. Some work is being done in English as a foreign language teaching contexts (Carless, 2004; Nunan, 2003). I found it ironic however, that the participants in the inquiry who came to Canada from learning settings in which traditionally communicative language teaching practices were not used, commented on the need they had to speak more often in the Canadian context. Those who made this observation related that often the teaching practices they were experiencing in the Canadian site, stood in the way. In other words, the expectation for more communicative teaching was there but not delivered. Cohen (2002) and Nunan (2003) observe that teachers' knowledge, training and beliefs are central to the practices they use in the classroom. Supported by their observation and some of the participants' comments, I argue that a clearer understanding of the discourses, either in teacher training or in the teaching context or both, that are leading to teacher's preventing, discouraging or failing to encourage interactive practices among their students, needs to be explored.

I see a growing need for second language researchers to consider more diverse ways to (re)present their data. For quite some time, literacy and cultural studies researchers who are interested in sociocultural activity especially of learning, have

been employing images and other forms of representation such as theatre, photo voice and video documentaries to tell the stories of the participants in their studies and the knowledge that they have gained from their research. As second language researchers venture into the complexities of the multi-nested contexts where second languages are supposedly being learned, I would argue that written words are not enough to articulate the knowledge they are gaining. Also, often the very people that second language researchers hope to influence by their work, are sometimes excluded from that knowledge by academic jargon that marginalizes the uninitiated, such as second language classroom teachers. With the spread of English globally, increasingly second language speakers are now teaching English. Their interest in improving their practices by informing themselves of recent research and theory may be thwarted by the specialized academic language of scholars and researchers. Lin (2004), has found that much of the critical research literature that she tried to incorporate into her teacher education course in Hong Kong, had to be recontextualized into oral stories of the local culture in order for her group of Masters level Chinese English teachers to be able to construct meaning together. Academic literary text is just one way of knowing, but it is not the only way. The fact that a good deal of research is now appearing in digital form is also a factor that influences a need to include more images in presenting research. In a virtual setting, images have taken the primary position over written text (Kress, 2004). Readers, including new generations of researchers, will not be content to read pages of written text to gain knowledge of their areas of interest. In the next section, I explain and justify in more theoretical terms why I have used images to (re)present some of the knowledge the participants and I constructed in the inquiry.

A Case for Visual Ethnography

Images are everywhere. They permeate our academic work, everyday lives, conversations and dreams. They are inextricably interwoven with our personal identities, narratives, lifestyles, cultures and societies, as well as definitions of history, space and truth. (Pink, 2001, p. 17)

As I struggled to (re)present the findings of the online phase of the study, I was continually confronted by images that permeated the discussions, the stories the participants related, the observations I was making and the identity construction I witnessed in the participants. I recognized the limitations of the written word alone to convey this knowledge. I chose to use visual ethnographic methods, in this case the use of photographs and a video which is in the making, for several reasons. By visual ethnography, I refer to the collection and representation of visual data through photographs and video. My reading in social research (Mitchell et al, in press; Pink, 2001; Ruby, 2000) and literacy studies (Kress, 2003), as well as my own emerging findings, convinced me of the importance of images to my understanding of the changes in agency and identity that were occurring in the participants' SL learning. For example, Florin B., one of the Romanian officers, initially complained that he didn't like to write in English and reported that he felt embarrassed when speaking. His first correspondence to me was composed mostly of pictures. Eventually, he used these pictures to mediate new meanings – his pride in his country, his love of his family, his hopes for the future. Those first conversations supported by pictures were the beginning of Florin B. revealing his intellectual and cultural capital for others and me in the group. Eventually, through this revelation, he claimed a voice in the discussions. Another reason for including visual ethnographic methods as part of the tools of my research process was that they would best respond to the collaborative nature of participatory action research. I felt strongly that the findings should be conveyed in a form that would be inclusive of the participants, and in ways that they could understand. Since the participants were SL learners, I realized that the presence of images would be supportive of their understanding and meaning making. I saw this form of representation as not only crucial in providing an accessible way for those involved to understand their second language experiences in the context of the inquiry but as well for the stakeholders who supported the research. By including images along with more traditional forms of representation in my effort to reveal the perspectives and experiences of the learners who were involved in my research, I believed I might give back to the participants a forum for more empowering dialogue and change. There were

several examples over the course of the study where images mediated learning. George, the professor in the Czech Republic who initially had been so reluctant to speak, used his personal pictures to frame his conversations with his colleague and me when we met at the end of the sessions. René, another Czech, was anxious to meet with me to show his pictures of his motorcycle and family photos and to discuss his upcoming marriage. Florin B. and Vali sent pictures over the Internet to give me visual representations of their stories about serving in Iraq and Eritrea respectively.

I saw all of these reasons for using visual ethnography along with more traditional ethnographic methods of analyzing texts as supportive of my aims to provide the *thick description* (Geertz, 1973), which is characteristic of what Pink (2001) would call good representational ethnography. The prime concern of this research, and my own, is to give “voice” to the participants in the study. I aimed not only to speak *for* the participants but *through* their words and the images they used to mediate our mutual understanding and learning. Language learning is dialogic, complex and multidimensional (Maguire & Graves, 2001, p. 567) and the identities that structure this learning are socially constructed in particular historical and cultural practices (Norton & Toohey, 2001; Thesen, 1997; Morgan, 1997). I believe that the approaches that are sometimes used by researchers to examine SL learning have been too narrow. I have spent too many years in a classroom perhaps to accept that meaning making can be solely derived from the transcription of the words that were spoken or a description of the actions that were taken by participants. When we cross the line from seeing language learning as the acquisition of objective rule formation to the subjective study of persons and cultures in communication, we must be prepared for the complex webs of significance that we ourselves have spun (Geertz, 1973, p. 5). The written word is a very useful means of representing and communicating knowledge. In the opinion of an Education Technology director at my local university, it has only been so for the last ten thousand years – a ‘mere blip’ in the millions of years of human communication. Many academics, I would suggest, are “experts” at using the written word. After all, Luke observes the ‘ivory tower’ has become a “marketing machine” for words (Luke, 2001,

p. xxi). Moreover, most of us, no doubt, have had the language socialization advantages (Heath, 1983; Gee, 1992) that have allowed us to negotiate a system of education based on a certain way with words. These ways of using words have helped us gain entry into privileged Discourses. For those who have chosen to teach or work in that same educational system and within the privileged Discourses that inhabit them, we are often considered “the experts” with words. The written word has become our symbolic tool par excellence for representing knowledge. Working with words is our business. It is what we do best. Often, we have no recourse but to produce more and more. Luke (2001) observes:

Academic business in the age of globalization is as much about increased pressure for more research output as it is about electronic content delivery, marketing, and strategic research alliances with business and industry (p. xxi)

Perhaps because we are drawn so deeply into this “marketing machine” as Luke (2003, p. xxi) claims the ivory tower has become, we are only beginning to understand the many other ways that meaning is being constructed all around us. I am speaking here of popular media where the logic of the word is increasingly being replaced by the logic of the image (Kress, 2003).

On this theme, Selfe (1999) argues that words alone, and some would argue images also, are not sufficient to bring about change:

If we still concern ourselves with the study of language and the nature of literate exchanges [as hopefully we do in second language research], our understanding of the terms literacy, text, and visual, among others, have changed beyond recognition, challenging even our capacity to articulate them to the public and to one another in ways that will make productive differences to our lives and in the lives of others (p. 12).

So, when researchers give too often only a passing glance to visual images that are involved in communication and even less importance to those images in our academic discussions of second language learning sites, I believe we do a disservice to the “voices” we seek to have heard. A case in point of how voices can be heard through images was offered recently by a photo exhibition in the entrance hall of my Education

Faculty. Through a process called 'photo-voice' an education professor in the Faculty (Mitchell et al., 2005) has had families and friends of HIV and AID's victims in South Africa take pictures of how this disease has touched their everyday realities - an empty bed, school chairs sitting vacant, for example. The black and white depictions displayed there without the words of the researchers to interpret what is being said, allow the "voices" of those who participated to be heard in a different way than those who write about the disease such as scholars, medical experts, non-governmental organizations and policy makers.

What is the parallel here? In the context of this inquiry, in my effort to hear and make heard the "voices" of the participants, I found attending to the visual images helped me to understand the dynamic nature of the second language learners' identities as they negotiated language learning. The visual images I noted included: images of the changing physical appearances of some participants online, images of the individuals in groups and alone during interviews at the European site, images of the informal gatherings in the follow-up field visits, images of the physical context of the second language learning sites, images from the pictures that some participants sent to me attached to their e-mails or discussed with me in face-to-face and images of students interacting online.

Some of these images are placed in the dissertation; others are gathered together in a video I am planning on preparing. I am hoping that this video when completed, will depict with images in a different way than with words some of the knowledge I constructed through this inquiry. The knowledge I will be trying to (re)present will be of what it meant for this European multicultural groups of learners to learn a second language in Canada and Europe and how computer technology influenced that learning. I would argue that if in the context of researching I had chosen to ignore the images that I encountered, would I not miss crucial insights into the way the participants in both sites see their subject positions as Eastern or Central Europeans in a North American and global setting? Are the images not an integral part of their experiences in Canada and in their own countries? Are they not integral to their cultural and personal

lives? Also, if I fail to acknowledge or deem irrelevant visually based cultural tools or “genres”, these SL learners use to negotiate their learning, am I not blinding my view of these potentially critical venues of data and sources of insight for how learners’ subjectivities may be empowered or disempowered to invest in learning (Pennycook, 1999; Giroux, 2000)

Awareness of the importance of visual images to our everyday lives should serve as a reminder, I think, of the place they might occupy in our research activities. My purpose here is not to suggest that we abandon the written word in favour of visual images, but to argue that as images become more integral to our methods of communicating, we in second language education and research must attend to them in our meaning-making. Also, in our (re)presentation of the social realities of teaching languages, images must be used to enable us to make statements which cannot be made with words. Even if we are not yet convinced of the potential they hold for our understanding of identity construction and language learning, two technological developments, I predict, have and will continue to change our minds: digital video cameras and the Internet. I used these tools to help (re)present some of the multiple perspectives of the story I have told in the context of a written dissertation, a story of the identities of the participants as they negotiated their language learning in a virtual setting.

Human beings’ interest in creating images of themselves has existed since our earliest ancestors created pictures on cave walls. The fact that we have moved from those early wall carvings through the many stages that the visual arts have taken us to silent film and now to hand held cameras that allow us to film and view ourselves within seconds, is a testimony to the fact that this fascination has flourished. The preoccupation, or some may say obsession, with light, space and vision that is the stuff of images, as opposed to sound-based communication, as in “alphabetic” writing, has saturated current representation of meaning, (Kress, 2003). In fact, Kress suggests that:

After a long period of the dominance of the book as the central medium of communication, the screen has now taken that place. This is leading to more than a mere displacement of writing. It is leading to an inversion in semiotic power. (p. 9).

Kress argues that “power” of the image is increasingly defining the “logic of the word” in popular media. I have seen evidence of this power in the dialogic meaning - making I conducted in the context of this inquiry and indeed in my own teaching of language. It seems disturbing as I have argued earlier, despite some notable exceptions (Duff, 2002; Norton and Vanderheyden, 2004), that more attention has not been given in a greater range of academic research, particularly by those whose concern is with language, to the role images play in communication and the sociocultural contexts of learning.

Of course, one could argue that, in fact, anthropology, sociology and cultural studies have been employing film and pictures as windows for understanding cultural behaviors for quite some time. Although it is beyond the space here to trace the history of that use, my reading in these two areas of research leaves me with a few observations. First of all, as Ruby (2000) attests, after more than seventy years using film in the study of cultures, visual anthropologists are still struggling, with some notable exceptions (Harper, 2000), with how to use visual evidence to convey knowledge about cultures. Ruby (2000) attributes part of the reason for this struggle to anthropology not having produced many combined “*makers and thinkers*”. He explains that in the past in the field of ethnography, for example, most ethnographic films were produced by filmmakers for ethnographers, as opposed to ethnographers filming for themselves. Combining the commercial concerns and perspectives of a filmmaker with the anthropological interests of an academic, he contends, has produced limited successful documentaries and questionable knowledge (Ruby 2000, p. xi). Although Ruby’s point about documentaries is debatable, I do wonder if filmmakers and academics share the same kinds of views about ethical issues when representing the images of others. I ask myself if filmmakers, who are generally constrained by marketplace considerations and who have a potentially bigger audience for their works with all the legal implications

involved, might be more conservative in their ethical decisions. Academics, on the other hand, who are governed often by their own ethical review boards rather than national government legal bodies and whose distribution and audience potential is more limited, might have more freedom to discuss and justify the ethical guidelines they use in their (re)presentation of knowledge. While filmmakers can use actors to depict the kinds of knowledge they wish to convey, academics are most likely to have the participants in their studies portraying their stories. For this reason, might ethical considerations be less of an issue for the filmmakers than for the academics who would have a personal connection of some kind to the participants involved? Ethics when it relates to humans is never a simple issue.

One of the first reactions and signs of resistance to using more image-based (re)presentation in reporting research are the ethical issues involved. This is perhaps understandable given the post 9/11 era in which we live, with its emphasis on security. Denzen & Lincoln (2000) point out that as researchers seek better ways to make understandable the worlds of experience they study, they are faced with increasingly ethical complexities. Images are one way I see of allowing the stories of those who are silent to speak, to having them actively involved in (re) presenting their stories. While I can appreciate the sensitive nature of participant privacy in all research involving our social worlds, I also concur with Christians (2000) that water-tight confidentiality has proven to be impossible in any research (p.139). I join with a growing number of social science researchers (Christians, 2000; Denzen & Lincoln, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Posser, 2000) who are proposing a situational ethics that rests with the moral responsibility of researchers and the caring community relationships they have with participants rather than with strict adherence to the universal code of an ethical review board. Situational ethics is not often palatable to institutions built on rules and policing despite the realization that even strict rules can not ensure ethical behaviour. The recent revelation that South Korean researcher, Hwang Woo Suk who faked the existence of the stem-cell colonies he claimed to have cloned, is a case in point. Scientific researchers are no doubt questioning whether existing ethical policies are futile and

must be wondering what more can be done to prevent such ethical transgressions. I would suggest that situational ethics in the use of image-based (re)presentation of research, or any research, for that matter is not a utopian idea. When I consider the hundreds of thousands of students who have passed through the halls of Princeton University, a leading university in the U.S., never to have been invigilated during examination sessions but acting only on personal moral integrity, the idea of allowing researchers to decide with their participants the ethical boundaries of their research, gives pause for reflection. The ethical challenge in (re)presenting research with images should not be in meeting the standards of an autonomous group of reviewers but in the constructive process of a community of participants' and researchers' understanding and acting on what is morally acceptable to all concerned.

My second observation with regard to using images in research is that, in cultural studies as in sociology, too much emphasis has been placed on "how to" produce visual ethnography and too little on the potential value images have to generate new types of knowledge in our desire to understand the identity construction of those who interest us. The lack of discussion about the potential value of images may explain the paucity of visual ethnographic methods being used in second language research. Pink (2001) has suggested that this misplaced emphasis stems from a conservative perspective, based on a scientific-realist approach to social research. From this perspective, visual images should support, or illustrate, and their values should be dominated by the written word. Although Pink clearly recognizes that the visual may become more or less important than the spoken or written word in studies using ethnographic methods, she points out that: "Academic epistemologies and conventional academic modes of representation should not be used to obscure and abstract the epistemologies and experienced realities of local people" (p. 5). Of course, both words and images have the capacity to obscure meanings. I have observed that in all three areas of study: anthropology, cultural studies and second language research, there is a new movement afoot which is seeking earnestly to find an approach that aims, as Pink has suggested:

not just to study people's social practices or to read cultural objects or performances as if they were texts², but to explore how all types of material, intangible, spoken, performed narratives, and discourses are interwoven with and made meaningful in relation to social relationships, practices and individual experiences (p. 6).

Pink's suggestion that the use of visual data not be confined to passive viewing, but rather be used for the ethnographic knowledge and theoretical arguments they produce has had an influence on me as I conducted this inquiry.

I make these suggestions while considering the future of second language research as well as my own personal interest in the study of identity in this inquiry. My solutions are based on the premise if one, then two, then three. My first solution to the problem of "makers and thinkers" has been solved by modern technology. Innovations in video cameras have made filming and editing clearly within the realm of educational researching and the abilities of researchers. Secondly, the promotion and use of accessible computer technology along with the support of enlightened academics can generate further debates about the role images can play in second language ethnologically-based studies. Thirdly, if second language practitioners strive to produce more and more image-based research in their studies, I cannot help but believe that there is potential for this knowledge reaching a far greater population of others, being more understandable and generating more debate than is typical using written text alone. Who wouldn't be drawn more attentively into the speaking personality of little Heddie (Maguire & Graves, 2001) as she constructs her identity through journal writing, if the readers of this research could see not just her journal entries and little drawings but watch the way she moves and talks and interacts with others? How much richer would our understanding be of Norton's "good learner", Eva, if readers, like the researcher, could see and hear her speak? Combining findings in an oral/visual-based form with various other research could lead to new dialogues. For example, connecting Morgan's (1997) knowledge about intonation as he viewed images of Norton's Eva

² The term "text" here is meant to convey the idea of anything material (a book, a picture, a building, a space, a computer) or living (a person, a face, an animal) that conveys a message.

might shed different light on Eva's ability to take advantage of resources to gain access to powerful conversations. In my own research site, I asked myself: What potential for reflective practice would there be if my students and I could view what takes place in the contexts of our shared multicultural worlds? What would come out of this meaning-making event? Kress (2003) summarizes the point I am making in his comment: "To make meaning is to change the resources we have for making meaning, to change ourselves and to change our cultures." (p. 11). Indeed, computers and video technology are the changing resources we have for making meaning. Depending on how we use these resources as academics we have the potential to influence positive or negative change to ourselves and to our cultures. With regard to the multicultural group of officers in the study, I wanted to understand the kinds of changes computer technologies were making to their social identities and investment in language learning. Combining a participatory action research approach using ethnographic methods, including visual modes of accessing and representing the data seemed to respond well to these aims.

Computer Assisted Language Learning Research

In the area of second language research, specifically concerned with language learning that is assisted by computers, there is a great deal more to be learned from in depth research into the sociocultural nature of computer mediated communication among second language learners. Research that continues to have a limited and narrow focus on primarily linguistic issues of computer mediated communication is heading in a direction that a growing number of prominent researchers in second language research, including Donato, 2000; Maguire et al, 2005; Norton 2000; Norton & Toohey, 2004; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000 are questioning. The powerful potential that computers have to support increasingly more authentic forms of communicative interaction (Fang & Warschauer, 2004; Warschauer, 2003) through sound and visual images is certainly worthy of more attention. The attention I am referring to includes, as I have argued, viewing the use of computer technology through a wider lens than simply as a tool for passing on information or practising skills. More importantly, I am calling for computer

assisted language learning researchers to examine closely the sociocultural contexts of computer-mediated communication and the influence of that communication on learners' identity construction and agency.

There also needs to be accountability in the research for the vast time, effort and money that is being spent on researching more sophisticated templates for computer software based on second language acquisition theories. As critical researchers, we need to ask ourselves if the pressure to do research of this kind is coming from above or from within? Even more importantly and more urgently, we need to explore in great detail how this use of computer technology influences learners' identity construction and investment in language learning. Gaining this knowledge should lead us closer to working with second language researchers whose interest is in developing theories about language learning from a sociocultural perspective. In this dialogic, hopefully emerging second language theories will encompass learning in virtual spaces.

Implications for Theory Building

In chapter 1, I expressed my belief that the hope for changing some of the questionable practices used for learning second languages lies in connecting theories to practise. Indeed, if we believe that knowledge, and thus theories, evolve from looking at the day-to-day realities of language learning and "listening, communicating and coming to some agreements" (Van Lier, 1984), then it appears that there is little other choice if theory or practices are to evolve. While some may debate whether this evolving will be as a result of theory informing practice or practice theory, the essential question in my mind is how to draw theory and practice closer. Throughout the last several chapters, I have based my understandings of the emerging findings of a small group of language learners struggling to learn English on theories of language, language learning and identity. In other words, theory has informed my practice and informed me about the practices I have observed in the context of this inquiry. But now in the spirit of drawing practice to theory, the question remains: what are the implications of this research and the practices it reports on, for building or expanding theory?

I structure my remarks about these implications around the questions what, how and where theories are built. First, given my findings, I ask myself what theories need to be built? Having worked for the last four years to understand how computer technology fits into the language learning practices of a group of second language learners, many times I found myself like Khalil's metaphor for learning English, swimming in an ocean with little theoretical support from the literature in computer assisted language learning research. From my reading of this comparatively small quantity of literature and from the research experience of this inquiry, there is no doubt in my mind that there is an urgent need for theory to inform how computer technology can best serve our second language learners' objectives. I am speaking here not of theory based on statistics-driven research that tells me how many students have or don't have computers or how students respond to this or that type of template in a software program. Building theories on answers to these questions may be interesting for those who have faith in quantitative analysis, but this process and analysis does little for my knowledge of whether or how learners can use computers to speak and use English in 'real' conversations. Nor do the resulting theories enable me to conceptualize the use of computers as tools for language learning and constructing identities. It is imperative that research in language learning, especially the research that is informing and is informed by sociocultural theory, turns its increasingly experienced gaze towards deconstructing the complexities of learning languages in virtual settings. The consequence of sociocultural second language researchers not attending to, and very soon, not examining and expanding their theories in light of what is going on in these virtual settings, could be devastating. Institutions and second language learners are increasingly equipping themselves with computer technology to learn languages. Broadening second language theories to include and inform the use of computer technology may hopefully stop some of the spread of questionable second language practices with computers that I saw in the context of this inquiry, dead in its tracks.

Second, how do theories evolve? Theories, like language are or should be in constant evolution. For this evolution to transpire, a critical dialogic is imperative.

Critical theorists have added much to our knowledge of how language learning can be liberated from essentialist theories. In the context of this inquiry, critical theory was important in my viewing the use of computer technology for language learning and the Discourses supporting that use from a different perspective than many of my colleagues and researchers in CALL. However, Lin (2004) argues that, “how to move from criticism to substantive vision and from substantive vision to substantive action geared toward change is an unanswered question” (p. 277-278) in critical theory. The results of this study suggest that moving critical theory from the abstract to ‘vision’ to ‘action’ will require expanding the practice of research methodologies to approaches aimed at acting on existing theories and the second language practices we see that transgress those theories. My research has shown that using participatory action research provided a vehicle to take concrete action against the ways in which computers were being used to marginalize learners and deprive them of agency. As a result of taking this action, the findings may add to critical theory discussions about Discourses and how they operate with regard to computer technology. This action and the findings it has generated may give new reflections to second language learning theory discussions about the way computers influence language learners and their learning.

Third, where are theories constructed? I have often pondered about the homeschooling experience I had with my children and wondered whether the knowledge and theories about learning that I took away from that experience would have been as powerful had I read about the subject in a text or had been forced to adopt the practice of homeschooling by some government education policy for example, rather than just the urgings of my children. While I believe most profoundly that there are many roads that lead to knowledge about a subject, I also recognize that a lot of the learning I took away from that experience and the personal theory building I constructed were due to the fact that I was intricately tied to the day-to-day realities of this particular way of knowing and became passionate about it. Similarly, if the findings that have resulted from this inquiry have any value for theory constructing discussions, it will most surely be partly due to the fact that these findings were generated through

the collaborative mixing in the messiness of language learning realities and the passion I and others shared for making changes. I am not disclaiming the value of extended time for deep thinking that precedes theory, a luxury that ivory towers sometimes can provide. However, solely *thinking* without *mixing* with 'real' experience of practice, in my mind, leads to questionable theory, dangerous theory when I consider the historical influences of some second language theory on language teaching and learning practices that I saw evidence of in the lives and learning of the participants in this study. My findings add to the growing number of voices that are shouting out that substantive theory building in second language education will be generated through deep thinking but also must be supported by a critical experience with the complexities of language learning and their multitude of contextual influences.

In chapter 1, I expressed the hope that the participant action research in which I and the learners in this study engaged, would be the impetus for a new or expanded theory of language learning. While the energy involved in taking action as well as the duties of teaching full time can sometimes prevent the deep thinking that precedes theory building, nevertheless, in moments reminiscent of time spent in my youth in critical reflection, I have arrived at some evolving thoughts about a new theory of language learning that includes using computer technology. Language learning, like all learning is based on relationship building and the communication that is integral to that process. This sociocultural learning process can not be dictated by rigid rules, but by the dynamic contextual elements that are present in the everyday-like interactions that take place in our social worlds. In a virtual context, especially when audio-visually supported, relationship building takes on a new dimension. In this context, the speed of constructing a relationship is heightened and thereby so too is communication. As such, language learning in a virtual setting can be expedited based on the nature of such a context to allow greater agency and more opportunity for identity construction than in a traditional language learning setting. As long as this third space, or *espace vecu* (Lefebvre, 1991) is left to develop unconstrained by traditional approaches to language learning and teaching, such as testing and rule-based teaching, I believe that second

language learning and languages will develop in ways that offer exciting democratic possibilities for understanding and peace – the ‘real’ aim of learning.

Implications for Institutions and Policy Makers

This inquiry has been an effort of a group of students, Information Technology specialists, educators and myself as researcher to explore the ways our second language learning practices are influenced by various uses of computer technology. While it has been in many ways an effort “from below” to discuss and make changes, there is no doubt that “those from above”, the policy makers and institutions who have a stake in this process, have been implicated. Some of the involvement from the stakeholders at that level has been supportive; some of their interest has made it more difficult to change what I and others saw as problematic in our practices. What are the reasons for this less than encouraging support? What roadblocks can institutions and policy makers consider dismantling to improve those language-teaching areas for which they are entrusted.

One of the most powerful roadblocks to change in institutions is their need to protect the status quo. I find this characteristic of educational institutions particularly disturbing, considering that their mandate is to promote learning. Without change there can be no learning. Also, when institutions work towards maintaining the “ways things have always been done”, there are implications to the lives and learning of those students for whom they are supposedly functioning in principle. In the case of second language institutions, failing to adapt to new approaches of looking at language learning could mean that learners, who are in many ways at the mercy of these institutions, have fewer opportunities to use their second language to communicate with others. Maintaining the status quo in the type of training an institution provides to its teachers could mean second learners are instructed by teachers who can not offer them the opportunities in computer technology that could influence their learning, as well as opportunities for life-long learning. Protecting the status quo in the way that computer technology is used in an institution might result in learners being encouraged to waste

time on learning practices with computer technology that have questionable advantages. The protectiveness of established practices or ways of doing could lead to policy makers being uninformed of the opportunities in computer technology that are available for helping the learners and teachers for whom they are responsible. In this scenario, important opportunities for learners making connections that have empowering possibilities for life-long learning may be lost. Losing opportunities to communicate because institutions will not support new ways of knowing, may mean learners are denied access to spaces for critical learning that could lead to change, not only in their abilities in their second language but to their identities as citizens of a global community as well. Rassool (2000) warns: “[L]anguage rights, and the right to be ‘languaged’ effectively within a global arena defined by information technology ...combine with basic human rights” (p.396)

In recounting the difficulties of the process of setting the online sessions in place several well-meaning individuals remarked: “That is what institutions are like. You can’t change that.” I am saddened by these comments, not because they are discouraging, although the speakers might label their comments as just being “realistic”. I am saddened because they speak to me of the great weakness of neoliberalism – to accept our situations as unchangeable, to refuse to dream. Institutions *can* change and they do. However, it takes individuals, like many of the ones who collaborated on the online project, to be as Freire (1998) describes “determined” not “conditioned” and to recognize that: “History is time filled with possibility and not inexorably determined – that the future is problematic and not already decided, fatalistically” (p. 26).

Encouraging policy makers and those in institutions who are preconditioned to resisting change to consider new possibilities is the responsibility of all who are involved in language education. Universities who prepare teachers for their worlds in classrooms need to ask themselves if they are encouraging teachers to be critical educators, that is to be self-reflective critics of their practices and of the institutions in which they teach. When teacher education programs offer critical pedagogical courses to teachers, Lin (2004) argues, they allow teachers theoretical and dialogic tools for

change. With these tools, they can begin to question their own teaching practices and hopefully those of the systems in which they teach. This is the dialogic that may lead to substantive changes. These changes will involve moving towards a (re)conception of communicative language teaching, including one that includes computer technology. Changes will involve moving towards demands for more training in using computer technology. Changes will involve moving towards having a voice in the choice of how technology budgets are allocated. Changes will involve moving towards questioning how computer technology is used for their language learners. Changes will involve moving towards insisting on more democratic principles applied to testing (Shohamy, 2004).

Narrowing the gap pedagogically and communicatively between institutions where teachers are trained and institutions where teachers practice could lead to policy makers and educators in both places being more informed of the 'real' needs and concerns of second language learners in a globalized world. The dialectic that I am suggesting here is of one that involves taking risks. Straying from the security of the ivory tower of the university and the board rooms of military language schools and mixing with those in the front lines of teaching and learning second languages is one way of "engaging life so as to enrich it" (Giroux, 2001). In the politics of language teaching, I see communication in whichever way it can be supported, as a crucial step towards ensuring a democratic world.

Reflective Comments

Prescriptions are about the future. Participatory action research is about making changes in the present. Indeed, as a form of research, participatory action research is often not judged on its methodological sophistication but on the success it attains in contributing to social change. By using Participatory action research to conduct this inquiry, I was aware that there might be questions about its legitimacy as defensible research and whether the actions that were taken were only efforts at efficiency rather than social change. I am also aware that other participatory action research is sometimes

lacking in methodological sophistication required for more general or universal phenomena in exchange for generating timely evidence. The timeliness of the evidence can be used in a real-time process of offering practical and transformative democratic solutions in a setting, such as a second language learning context in which computer technology is being used in questionable ways (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000). I come to understand that the quality of participatory action research should be judged to the extent that it makes a difference to the every-day lived realities of the participants in their ordinary lives. I ask myself: What are the differences that have been made in the context of this inquiry?

As I apply the final words and images to the pages of this dissertation, militaries in three countries-Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Romania, have all applied to the Canadian military, through official channels, and are waiting to hear if the online sessions can continue at their own expense. The policy decision makers in these three countries have obviously considered that there is some benefit to the online discussion sessions for their military officers and students. Apparently, the outdated equipment that was available for the original sessions has been replaced in anticipation of future sessions.

Money from the directors of the MTAP program has been offered for a fact finding trip to Central and Eastern Europe to the Language School and others up the chain to encourage further communication about the online sessions with Europe. However, Canadian military have declined. Their focus is still on providing an online version of their *Alliée* software to the countries of NATO and especially the newer members.

Subsequent to the online sessions, the university in the Czech Republic from where the participants in the study were speaking, has presented a mini version of the online discussions to the attendees at a conference they have hosted, called IDET. There were more than twenty-seven Central and Eastern European countries represented at the conference. In Figure 18, one picture shows students from the university talking to me from the Czech Republic. A second picture that was sent is of a sign proudly displayed

at the Conference. The words that indicate the aims of the sessions suggest that some changes have occurred in the mindset of an institution that originally made computers available for form-focussed practice for the participants in my inquiry. The poster boldly states: *It is important to understand that this is **NOT** a grammar-based English course. It is an online opportunity to practise speaking, listening and interacting in English.*

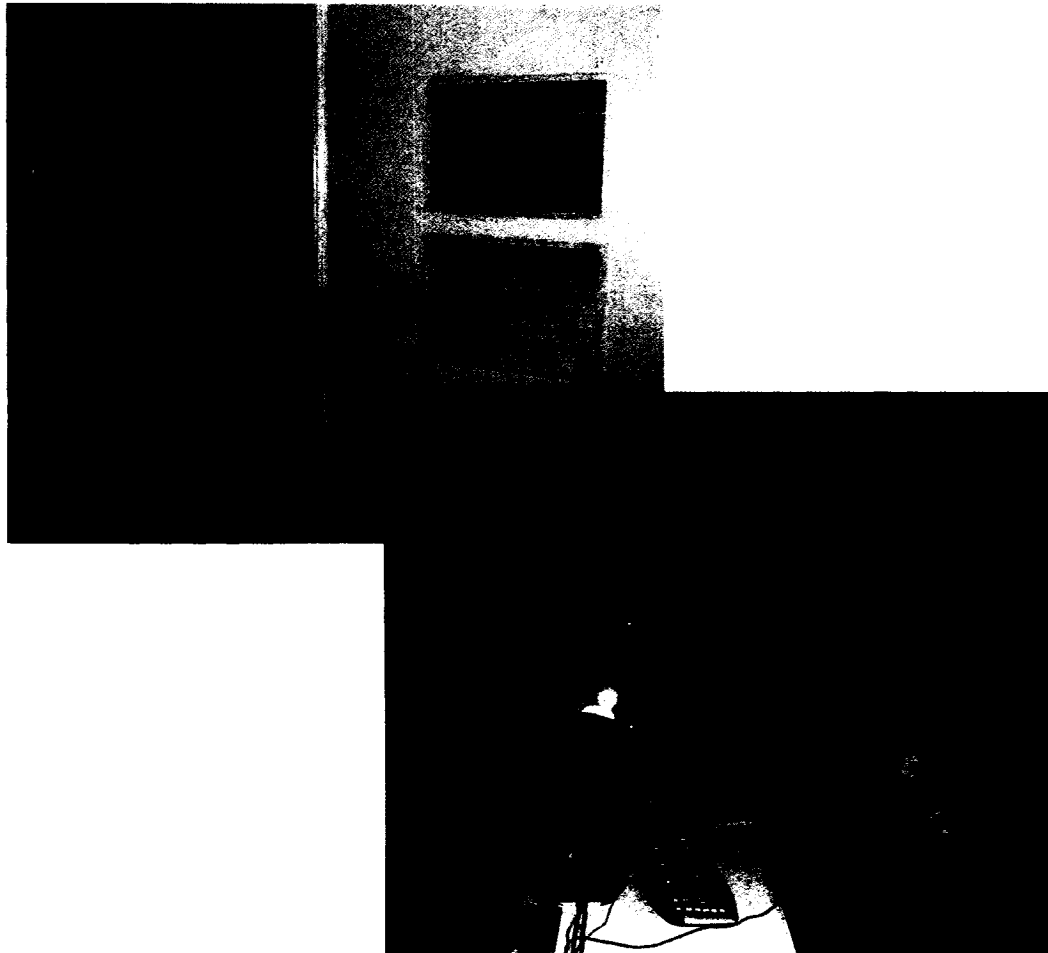


Figure 19. Pictures from the IDET Conference

The participants from the study still correspond. Two are marrying soon and have invited me to their weddings. Long-term connections have been made. A friendly well written e-mail from Vali indicates the extent to which he has progressed from those first formal messages he sent at the beginning of the session. He is off to Iraq where he will have the opportunity to mix with military from other nations. I am convinced he

will no longer be the “silent” one that he reported he was on the UN mission in which he served before our meetings online.

As for myself as researcher and teacher, I have also noted changes. For example, during the course of this inquiry I found myself questioning the legitimacy of my motives from a moral and philosophical perspective for setting up interactions using computer technology. Why am I doing this study and what am I hoping to accomplish? At what cost? Whose primary interests will the findings serve? The university in which I am studying? The language school where I work? Myself as a graduate student? The foreign military organizations? Or the students who have taken part in the study?

I have reflected a great deal on where I stand in conducting this research study. In choosing an interpretive qualitative approach, an approach that is concerned with the complex and holistic perspectives of others, I came to the conclusion that my concerns were not self-serving, nor in fact altruistic in a “researcher-as-colonizer” way (Villenas, 1996). I have deliberately chosen to engage others and myself in action research that would blur the boundaries between the countries, cultures and social contexts not only of the participants but mine as well. By doing so, I was hoping to create a new space, a third space, or an *espace vecu* (Lefebvre, 1991), where there were no “us” and “others”, no strict demarcation into groups. In such a space, I saw the potential for motives for communicating being based on listening for understanding from a broader perspective than just linguistic. The dialogues in this space would not necessarily lead to agreeing, but maybe to seeing a variety of vantage points and constructing new meanings. Ultimately, seeing from such a broad perspective is required in any ‘true’ learning experience and I would say especially in language learning. In the setting of a virtual second language classroom within my research study, I envisioned seeing from broad perspectives to what Fine (1994) calls “working the hyphens between self and others”. In other words, I wanted to create a space where I as researcher and the multicultural participants in the study, in self-reflexive ways, examined the politics of our everyday lives and what separated and connected our multi-layered identities and our investments in the language learning process.

I also questioned my role as a researcher working from a critical perspective. In the beginning of the inquiry, it seemed important to take a critical stance in order to understand the learning experiences of the officers in Canada. In my observations, for example, I concentrated on ways that their learning in the North American immersion program were lacking. For that group of learners and those in Europe I observed the many ways that they missed out on opportunities to use their second language. But on reflection, by taking this stance, I realized that I was speaking from a place as if I, as a North American, English-speaking teacher and researcher was in possession of an absolute, a “best way”. Such absolutes, which Pennycook (1999) suggests lead to the “othering” of learners, do not exist in second language education, nor in any other field of knowledge for that matter, and certainly not when working within new virtual spaces. I have no right ways, I only have the present and the way things are and the possibility to see this present in the larger cultural, political, social and economic context.

In the course I have followed in this study, I turn for explanation to Foucault (2004) who resisted the classic role of critical researcher. Instead he offers an alternative as someone:

who dissolves self-evident truths and universal explanations, someone who, in the midst of the inertness and restraint of the present, detects and points out the weak points, the openings **and** (my emphasis) the fields of force, someone who is constantly moving and who is not too precisely aware of where [s]/he will find himself [or herself] or what [s]he will be thinking a little into the future, since s[he] is much too preoccupied with the present.

Indeed, I am now returning to the classroom and to a new group of students and looking at new “fields of force”. I am told I will be teaching a group of officers from Afghanistan, Slovakia, Russia, Kazikstan and Ukraine. I will certainly be preoccupied. Deep thinking about future changes will be put aside temporarily. For now, I will act on those that I have come to through the process of this research. But I will continue to question. I will always question and think about “*why?*” and “*why not?*”.

My reflective comments on the research inquiry that I have discussed in this chapter include some of the changes I have seen to the participants, to the organizations

and to myself in the process of using computer mediated communication to learn a second language. Although I do not pretend to claim that the research that I report here will transform militaries or even military language schools, I believe the small steps that this group has taken in the way they use computers to communicate in English and for language learning has been transformative in their second language practices and their identities. I hope that these stories and transformative conversations are the beginnings of more empowering dialogues to come. Ultimately, dialogue in whatever language is the only way for difference in groups to be celebrated and lines of tension between groups dissolved.

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APPENDIX 1
PLPP PROPOSAL

PARTNERSHIPS FOR LEARNING PILOT
PROGRAM

PROJECT PROPOSAL

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TITLE OF PROJECT:

The title, **Partnerships for Learning Pilot Program**, was chosen for the proposed project for several reasons:

- Its reference to Canada's participation in NATO's Partnership for Peace, which involved the initial inclusion of 13 Central and Eastern European countries into the Military Assistance Training Program (MTAP).
- Its suggestion that the learning exchange that will take place as part of the pilot project will reflect the aims of Partnership for Peace, that is to promote international stability, in this case through linguistic and cultural communication and understanding.
- Its implication that, to be a partnership, all parties involved will share in the responsibilities of the planning, funding, operation and assessment of the project.
- Its further implication that the learning that takes place through this collaborative effort, both behind the scenes and within the virtual classroom, will include how technology might offer new ways to communicate and work interoperatively.

DESCRIPTION

The Partnership for Learning Pilot Program (PLPP) is a proposed distance education program for teaching and learning English as Second Language via the Internet. The project will consist of creating a virtual classroom whose participants will be located in Canada and, pending approval, two countries of

Central and Eastern Europe: the Czech Republic and Romania. These sites will be linked for three months (February to April, 2004) by a super high-speed videoconferencing system, which is presently being developed at McGill University in Montreal.

Current real-time conferencing systems being used in distance education have had some serious limitations that have prevented them from being used more widely. These limitations have included:

- Slow transmission of audio data, creating unnatural pauses between speakers;
- Poor quality video, preventing a clear view of instructor by students and vice versa;
- Cumbersome audio-video tracking, leading to distracting background noises and preventing freedom of movement by the participants.

The presence of these obstacles in conventional videoconferencing communication has discouraged the natural interaction that is typical in physical classroom settings. Furthermore, these drawbacks have made the use of videoconferencing particularly unsuitable for second language classrooms. This is especially the case where a communicative approach to language learning is emphasized. This currently used approach supports an interactive and collaborative style as opposed to lecture-based classroom dynamic.

The Advanced Learnware Network Videoconferencing System is being developed to overcome weaknesses in distance learning systems. At its current capacity the Advanced Learnware Network System has the capability of:

- Significantly reducing transmission delays so that there is minimal latency (time lag between) speakers;
- Providing close-up live views of instructors (and of students) that are similar, if not superior, in fidelity than to what is available to a physically present audience. This has been accomplished partially through the use of sophisticated display screens that offer life-sized images.

Although this research at McGill is still very much a work in progress, the system has already being tried and is being used successfully in several applications. These include, among others:

1. Master classes between world-renowned musicians and music students in McGill's Faculty of Music (see accompanying photo),
2. Classroom teaching in Engineering between universities,
3. Full-motion video negotiation simulations from the Management Faculty at McGill University to Masters of Business Administration (MBA) students at the University of Calgary.

In the case of the PLPP, it is anticipated that the Advanced Learnware Videoconferencing System will be used to establish English language oral communication classes between two Canada and two other locations:

1. The St-Jean Detachment of the Canadian Forces Language School (CFLS) in St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Quebec and the Military University of Vyskov in Vyskov, Czech Republic
2. CFLS and the Language Training Detachment of the Romanian Armed Forces in Bucharest, Romania

The two oral communication class sessions would run five days a week. In order to accommodate time differences between Europe and Canada, the classes at the Canadian site would run from 0830 to 1000 hours and the second from 1030 to 1200 hours. This would mean students in the European locations would be attending sessions in the afternoon; in Romania from 1530 to 1700 hours and in the Czech Republic from 1630 to 1800 hours. This schedule would allow for any technical adjustments that might be required both before and between sessions at the Canadian site. This timetable would also respect approximate current working hours in all locations.

Local instructors will choose students to participate in the pilot project. Ideally, there will be eight to ten students from each country who will take part. Given the trial nature of the project, it has been agreed that students at the high intermediate to advanced levels would be best suited for the sessions. This level was chosen for several reasons:

- Their European instructors have targeted them as a particularly needy group in terms of lacking access to more advanced guided oral interaction in English with a native speaker.
- They would be more able to enter into the discussions and benefit from an emphasis on oral communication.
- Their relative fluency in English would be advantageous in the evaluation stage of the project.

The English language instructional program of the PLPP, as mentioned above, will concentrate on oral interaction among the participants. However, written communication links using the Web will be set up among students and instructor to support the class discussions. This will allow for passing along required readings or for individual conferencing between students and instructor. The curriculum for the program will resemble other NATO-sponsored programs designed for international discussion and cooperation, for example at the Mediterranean Dialogue Course held at NATO Headquarters in Rome, Italy. The PLPP sessions will be opportunities for students to use their second language in debates, discussions and problem solving situations on topics relevant to their military working lives and the global community. The emphasis will be on supporting a learner-centred and engaged pedagogy. The material resources used to spark conversation will be chosen at the discretion of the instructor and in consultation with participants and colleagues. These resources may involve guest speakers from the local military and civilian populations. A course outline will be offered in advance. This outline and all materials used will be available at any time to local administrators for their perusal.

RATIONALE

It has been said that it is in talk, that most of us live the most vital moments of our lives. We must use face-to face interactions with others to accomplish whatever goals we have set, to become involved in those set by others or to negotiate and work through a set of mutually defined goals. At the same time, these interactions enable us to use our collective histories to create, articulate and manage our unique roles in these groups and to form bonds with members of groups (Hall, 1995). In this sense, in a second language-learning context, the ease with which one can express oneself is key to communication. In a military context that is increasingly multilingual, this communication is crucial.

Earlier research conducted within a group of MTAP second language learners at CFLS St-Jean (Charbonneau-Gowdy, 2000) strongly suggested that some of the learners in that group were at a

disadvantage within the Canadian language-learning context. Although the reasons for their marginalized positions were considered complex, the overriding result was that some experienced difficulty integrating into the Canadian culture. If we accept the fact that to develop in a second language one must use the language, then it appears that for some of the learners in the study at least, there were constraints to their use of English. As a result, some of these students did not reach their anticipated potential in learning English. This amounted to a loss of time, energy and resources on the part of the host country, in this case Canada, and to the individual learners and their military organizations. Furthermore, the disappointing results of some of the learners in the study, detract from the aims and objectives of the MTAP program, that is, to build cultural bridges and lay the groundwork for interoperability among NATO current and prospective countries. If these same students had had a chance to meet their teachers before coming here and had had some exposure to the Canadian military culture that exists at the CFLS and the type of language training that is practiced in the MTAP course, it is felt strongly that the chances for these students to progress when they arrived would have been enhanced. Indeed, in the last MTAP program some students were brought back for a second consecutive course for similar reasons.

Additionally, according to anecdotal reports from individual returning students, as well as teachers in their countries, many former MTAP students lack the opportunity to practice their newly acquired skills in English once they return home. Those who do need to use English on a more frequent basis, whether orally or in writing, often lack access to native speakers to whom they can go to clarify or pursue questions. A sign of a well-managed training program is to provide participants the opportunity to have occasional refresher sessions. These students would welcome the chance to speak periodically with native speakers in order to maintain and/or continue to progress in their second language.

The teachers who teach English in the countries that participate in the MTAP language-training program lay the foundation for the work that takes place once students arrive in Canada. For many of these teachers, English is their second language. Those who have attended the Train the Trainer Program in Canada report that the absence of native speakers in their local environments causes severe difficulties in the functioning of their language institutions. Having the resource of a colleague whose is a native English speaker would allow these teachers to validate their own work especially in areas of evaluation. Undoubtedly, such a professional exchange would be beneficial from both countries' perspectives.

It is ironic that the world population is growing progressively global-minded and at the same time many people lack the time, willingness or means to travel to learn another language. In the meantime, the Internet is opening up avenues for communication that are having profound effects on language, language learners and cultures. Experts are predicting an exponential growth in the need for language instruction as the requirement for international communication increases. Can web-based technologies provide the interface for sustainable language learning and cultural communication that military language programs such as MTAP (or the comparable French program, PAIM) aim to achieve?

The PLPP is an attempt to apply state-of-the-art technology to answer that question. If successful, this technology could be used to support and enhance current DND second language applications in the following ways:

- To serve the needs of the MTAP program in providing pre and post training contact with students
- To collaborate with language training programs in participating MTAP countries for coordination in areas of testing and teacher training

- To expand the numbers of students and introduce programs to new countries that could benefit from language training courses, either in French or English, offered by DND.
- To assist in providing access to second language learning to military in international trouble spots where the presence of teaching personnel is problematic.
- To support other computerized programs, especially those that are individual-based, as an oral interaction component.
- To give to military personnel in remote areas of Canada, who are unable to relocate for language training, a chance to benefit from conversation classes in their second language with experienced DND language instructors.

TIMELINE

The proposed timeline for the PLPP would cover a period of three months, from February 2nd through to April 30th, 2004. These dates were chosen:

- To coincide with relatively “quieter” periods in the MTAP/PAIM program when technical staff in CFLS St-Jean would be more able to offer any minor technical support that might be required after the initial installation of the Advanced Learnware Network System.
- To avoid busy orientation and testing times as well as holiday periods in the School.
- To allow for sufficient time to evaluate the program and analyze data in the personal timeframe of the volunteer instructor.

STAFFING

Paula Charbonneau-Gowdy will be the instructor of the PLPP communication sessions. She is an experienced teacher and a DND employee who has worked in the MTAP program at CFLS St-Jean since 1999. Ms Charbonneau-Gowdy is currently on DND Education Leave from her teaching duties with the MTAP program to complete a PhD in Second Language Education. It is her intention to use the experiences gathered from PLPP as part of her data collection material. This data will add to her research of the influence of technology on second language learners’ identities and learning. She is conducting this research in fulfilment of her PhD doctoral thesis, which she expects to submit to McGill University in early June.

In addition, it is hoped that local administrative staff and supervisors at all three sites will play a supportive role, if need be, in any incidental administrative matters connected to the course offering.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

The initial installation of the Advanced Learnware Network System for the PLPP will be the responsibility of technicians from McGill University in all three sites:

1. CFLS in St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Quebec,
2. The Military University of Vyskov in Vyskov, Czech Republic,

3. The Language Training Detachment of the Romanian Armed Forces in Bucharest, Romania. A requirement of the Advanced Learnware Network Videoconferencing System is an Internet bandwidth of 270 to 300 MBPS being made available for the three hours per day over the three-month PLPP.

Once installed, local technicians at all three sites may be called on to give minor support, if needed, or to troubleshoot in order to ensure the smooth operation of the technology and its components.

The physical spaces necessary to conduct the classes should be:

- At the instructors' end, a well-lit room, large enough for the technical equipment and furnished with a desk, a chair, a writing surface (black or white board) and a flipchart.
- At the students' end, a well-lit room large enough to accommodate the technical equipment, preferably a round or U-shaped central table, 8 to 10 comfortable chairs and a writing surface (a flipchart, or a black or white board).

FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS

To set up and conduct the PLPP in each location the following expenses are predicted:

Technical Requirements	Approximate Cost
Advanced Learnware Software	30,000
2 DV camera, 25MBP	6,000
*1 microphone	0
1 50 inch video display	6,000
Travel costs (2 trips)	5,000
Total Approximate Cost	47,000

*It is being assumed that a microphone could be made available on site in each location.

These represent the major expenditures of the pilot project. It is expected that the expenditures at each site (excluding travel costs for the European sites) will be self-funded. In other words, each site will be responsible to find funding for the set-up and technical equipment required for the program.

It should be pointed out that, if the project is successful, further courses could be offered at reduced budget costs given that the Advanced Learnware Network Videoconferencing System would already be on site.

OBJECTIVES

The PLPP seeks to achieve the following immediate objectives in the three-month period:

1. To put in place a web-based English conversation videoconferencing course which will connect an instructor in Canada with students in the Czech Republic and also in Romania.
2. To provide guided oral interaction practice in English to students in these countries based on their backgrounds, needs and interests, determined at the outset through their written and oral input.

3. To provide, as well, a forum for students to discuss and collaborate in their second language when dealing with issues related to their international military realities
4. To promote cultural exchanges between Europeans involved in the PLPP.

The long- term objectives envisioned are:

1. To test the feasibility of offering quality distance second language conversation courses using electronic communication for future applications (either for French and /or for English) both with Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), within Canada and globally. By quality it is meant that these courses will meet the high standards set by all those involved in the program- students, teachers, administrators.
2. To build and strengthen long-term partnerships and linkages between the Canadian and CEE militaries.
3. To encourage further collaboration among instructors and administrators in military second language departments between Canada and CEE countries, including on matters related to the MTAP program.
4. To promote mutual understanding and cooperation between Canada and CEE countries.

EVALUATION

The sources for evaluating the effectiveness of PLPP will be:

1. Pre and post-evaluation self-reports from each student outlining their personal objectives and comments about the on-line sessions and their progress;
2. Informal interviews with Romanian and Czech instructors
3. Observations of in-class sessions by technical, instructional and administrative staff at the various sites;
4. A video documentary reporting on the process which Ms. Charbonneau-Gowdy intends to produce in partial fulfilment of her PhD doctoral dissertation. This should offer an important vehicle for discussion and evaluation for those who are at arms length from the PLPP as well as for the individuals who have been involved from the outset in the project. Viewing this video might also assist managers and administrators when considering the possibility of offering similar distance courses in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following suggestions are offered to facilitate and insure, as far as possible, that the PLPP attain its objectives. It is recommended that:

- Ms. Charbonneau-Gowdy, who has the knowledge, background and enthusiasm to explain the PLPP, be responsible for delivering any presentations on the project.
- In the spirit of PLPP, any changes to the proposal outlined here be made, as far as possible, in collaboration with all parties involved.

- An opportunity be given to Ms. Charbonneau-Gowdy to visit the Czech Republic and Romania on two occasions; the first occasion at the outset, the second at the end of the PLPP. At the outset, it would be to meet the students and staff at the European sites and to facilitate the setting up of the equipment by McGill University's Advanced Learnware Network staff. The second trip would be to conduct a post-assessment of the PLPP.
- Any DND curriculum materials used by Ms. Charbonneau-Gowdy (for example from current MTAP programs) be pre-approved by administrators at CFLS St-Jean.
- A meeting be set up between DND management and McGill University to discuss issues related to the project.
- A professional French translation of the PLPP project proposal be arranged by DND.

APPENDIX 2

E-MAIL TO SUPERVISOR REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Date: August 19, 2003
To: Arunas Staskevicius
From: Paula Charbonneau-Gowdy
Subject: Conducting Research

1. As you are aware, I will be spending the next year on Education Leave, supported by the Department of National Defence, in order to complete my PhD in Second Language Education from McGill University.
2. For my recent Masters degree I focused on the concept of motivation for a group of Ukrainian MTAP students learning English. I now wish to expand my research view to include the learning experiences of new groups of students. In particular, I am interested in how various currently used and new technologies affect these students and their motivation to use English.
3. Over the next several months, my research will necessitate visits to the Language School to observe and interview students about their learning experiences. Naturally, I will be sensitive not to disrupt the teaching program in any way and will advise you in advance of my intentions to come to the School. Also, I will be explaining in writing and verbally to both teachers and students the nature of my presence at the Base.
4. The final PhD thesis should be completed by next July, 2004. No actual names will be used in the thesis and a copy will be made available to participating students, CFLS-St. Jean and to the Department of National Defence.
5. I would appreciate very much if you would discuss this matter with those whose approval is necessary and I thank you in advance for your continued interest and support in my professional development.

ZAMĚŘENO NA JAZYKY

Videomost s Kanadou funguje!

Mit učitelé z Kanady je pro mnoho z českých studentů, kteří se učí anglicky nebo francouzsky, celkem běžné. Časníci přijíždějí do naší země s cílem vyučovat zde svůj rodný jazyk. Paula Carbonneau-Gowdy však získává většinu času v kanadské městě St. Jean, a přesto se po čtyři dny v týdnu – přibližně hodinu denně – setkává se svými studenty z brněnské Univerzity obrany v rámci. Jak je to možné? Inu – skvělý nápad, technické možnosti internetu a dalších technologií přenosu dat a k tomu pak nápadem ještě hodně a hodně práce a trpělivosti lidí, kterým se podařilo vybudovat tento projekt.

Představte si místnost, ve které je několik počítačů, před nimi studenti se sluchátky na uších. Jakmile se posadí k jednomu z volných monitorů a oko kamery umístěné na jeho vrcholu vás zaměří, vstupujete do děje. Vidíte tvář své učitelky i spolužáků (také svoji) a ze sluchátek slyšíte jejich hlasy. Můžete odpovídat, diskutovat, sledovat reakce ostatních. Brzy propadáte tomu kouzlu, možnosti povídat si jako byste byli blízko sebe, v jediné místnosti. Dělí vás přitom nejen mnohatisíci kilometrů vzdálenost, ale i šestihodinový časový posun. To zde ovšem nehraje žádnou roli.

Zatím máme 8 videokamer, a výuka v malých skupinkách probíhá od pondělka do čtvrtka mezi půl třetí a půl čtvrtou našeho času. "Vysvětluje Ivana Čechová z katedry jazyků FEM. Tento neobvyklý výukový program spatřil světlo světa jejím přičiněním, a kromě naší země funguje podobný projekt ještě pouze v Rumunsku, zde ovšem limitován obtížnějšími technickými podmínkami než jsou ty naše.

"Při svém pobytu na kurzu v Kanadě v roce 2001 jsem se setkala s Paulou, a hovořily jsme spolu o této myšlence," vzpomíná na počátky tohoto projektu dr. Čechová. Paula Chabonneau-Gowdy vyučuje angličtinu na Canadian Forces Language School v St. Jean, která školi studenty ze zemí NATO i zemi partnerských. Možnosti spolupráce s bývalými studenty a pokračování ve studiu po jejich návratu domů byly obtížné vzhledem ke vzdálenosti, času a nákladnosti dopravy. Paulu proto napadla myšlenka komunikovat se svými studenty na dálku prostřednictvím videokamer a internetové sítě. Doktorce Čechovou tato myšlenka také velmi zaujala a po návratu domů pro ni začalo období obtížného hledání a zkoumání možností, testování technologií i přesvědčování lidí o tom, že jde o myšlenku realizovatelnou, přínosnou, správnou. Nebylo to lehké také proto, že podobné projekty zatím ve světě příliš rozvinuty nejsou. Postupně svým nadšením pro tuto věc nakazila i další a projekt získal podporu vedení školy, v té době ještě VVŠ PV ve Vyškově. Minulý rok proto mohl proběhnout ve znamení zkoušení technologií. Mnoho práce udělali počítačoví odborníci, Ing. Zdeněk Dvořák, prap. Jiří Mřenka a Ing. Zbyněk Vlach (Vyškov), které si na katedře jazyků velmi chválí. "Díky CKIS jsme mohli 4. 10. 2004, nyní už na Univerzitě obrany, zahájit zkušební provoz. Výuka samotná začala o týden později," pochvaluje si spolupráci dr. Čechová.

Studentky ze střední skupiny, kterou jsem navštívila, (shodou okolností jsou v této učební skupině samé dívky, což je ovšem jen výsledek rozřazovacích testů na počátku, kdy se vytvořily skupiny o přibližně stejné úrovni znalostí) neskrývaly svou spokojenost. Výuka se jim velmi líbí, a nejde jen o pravidelné povídání. Se svojí učitelkou jsou v kontaktu i prostřednictvím e-mailu, ona jim zadává úkoly které jí zpracované musejí odeslat. Procvičují si tak všechny jazykové

dovednosti – mluvení, poslech, čtení a psaní a také se takto vlastně osobně poznávají. Všechny dívky mají již za sebou zkoušku STANAG 2, a tento způsob vyučování jim pomáhá jejich dobré jazykové znalosti ještě více rozvinout. Vyučování je někdy opravdové dobrodružství – na příští hodinu si Paula například plánuje přivést do hodiny další 3 zatím neznámé hosty. "Studenty tato výuka ohromně baví. Aby bylo možné zjistit přínos tohoto způsobu vyučování, budeme na katedře srovnávat pomocí speciálních testů skupiny studentů zapojených do programu s jinými skupinami vyučovanými klasickou metodou," prozrazuje dr. Čechová. "Už nyní však vidíme, že se studenti ohromně zlepšují, jsou velmi motivovaní", chválí novou metodu.

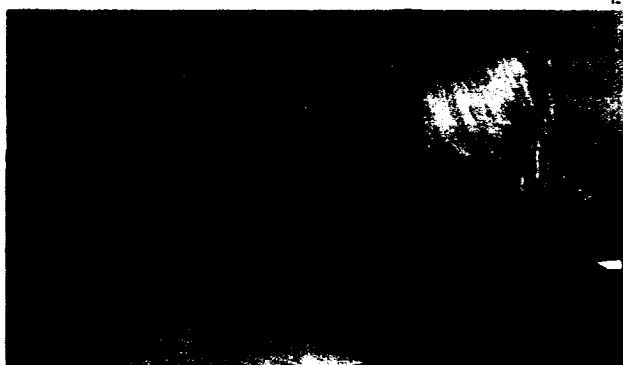
Motivace studentů je nyní ještě vyšší – jejich učitelka Paula Chabonneau-Gowdy ve dnech 19 – 23. listopadu navštívila Univerzitu obrany a se svými studenty se setkala osobně.

I. Zhubnová

rozenci, a sama má pět dětí. Podle jejích slov jsou takto velké rodiny v Kanadě obvyklé, a rodiče při tom nemusí zcela opustit myšlenku na kariéru nebo cestování. V její rodině se hovoří anglicky, ale manžel je z rodiny francouzské, a proto když se narodily první děti, mluvili na ně výhradně francouzsky. Experiment se podařil – bilingvní vjuka slavila ovoce. Všechny děti se nyní věnují nejen jazykům (široce po světě rozprostřená rodina jim dává příležitost k cestování), ale také hudbě, jsou velmi úspěšní. Nyní, když se blíží Vánoce, oslaví je společně. Přesto však vánoční svátky nemají v Kanadě tak velký význam, jako v Evropě, a v důsledku velkých vzdáleností se lidé tolik neschází jako u nás. Obvyklé bývá když Vánoce tráví společně jen rodiče a děti, širší příbuzenstvo už ne. Na tom, kdy je ten správný čas Vánoce se kanadské také neshodou, záleží na náboženství. Obvykle oslavují 25. prosince a slavnostní jídlo tvoří velký pečený krocan s nádivkou, do které dávají směs z kanadského světlého chleba, houby, maso, klobásu, a mnoho dalších věcí, ke krocanu se pak podávají speciálně upravené brambory s česnekem a zeleným sýrem. Tak to aspoň bývá u Pauli. Podávají také spoustu zeleniny a ovoce a na nádhání dětí pečou nejméně šest druhů cukroví.

Návštěva studentů v Brně Paulu potěšila.

"Být společně on-line je skvělé. Ale vidět v tvář je to ještě mnohem lepší" chválí si Paula možnost setkat se svými studenty. Setkání neproběhlo jen na půdě univerzity formou osobních "konzultací", ale i v neformálním prostředí. "I když účast byla dobrovolná, přišli úplně všichni studenti, takže jsme do restaurace, a bylo moc hezké je osobně poznat. I když my jsme se ve skutečnosti znali už dříve, protože jsme spolu už hodně hovořili po síti."



KANADSKÁ LEKTORKA NAVŠTÍVILA SVÉ ŽÁKY

Velmi příjemná, kultivovaná, milá a sympatická, nečekaně drobná a křehká žena se širokými zájmy, nadšením pro věc i spoustou energií a vůlí dosáhnout svých cílů, to je lektorka Paula Carbonneau-Gowdy. Přijela, aby se lépe poznala se svými žáky a ověřila dosavadní výsledky projektu, který nastartovala.

Žije v Kanadě, kde se mluví dvěma jazyky, a žije zde i mnoho národnostních menšin. Pochází z velké rodiny s osmi sourozenci, a sama má pět dětí. Podle jejích slov jsou takto velké rodiny v Kanadě obvyklé, a rodiče při tom nemusí zcela opustit myšlenku na kariéru nebo cestování. V její rodině se hovoří anglicky, ale manžel je z rodiny francouzské, a proto když se narodily první děti, mluvili na ně výhradně francouzsky. Experiment se podařil – bilingvní vjuka slavila ovoce. Všechny děti se nyní věnují nejen jazykům (široce po světě rozprostřená rodina jim dává příležitost k cestování), ale také hudbě, jsou velmi úspěšní. Nyní, když se blíží Vánoce, oslaví je společně. Přesto však vánoční svátky nemají v Kanadě tak velký význam, jako v Evropě, a v důsledku velkých vzdáleností se lidé tolik neschází jako u nás. Obvyklé bývá když Vánoce tráví společně jen rodiče a děti, širší příbuzenstvo už ne. Na tom, kdy je ten správný čas Vánoce se kanadské také neshodou, záleží na náboženství. Obvykle oslavují 25. prosince a slavnostní jídlo tvoří velký pečený krocan s nádivkou, do které dávají směs z kanadského světlého chleba, houby, maso, klobásu, a mnoho dalších věcí, ke krocanu se pak podávají speciálně upravené brambory s česnekem a zeleným sýrem. Tak to aspoň bývá u Pauli. Podávají také spoustu zeleniny a ovoce a na nádhání dětí pečou nejméně šest druhů cukroví.

Návštěva studentů v Brně Paulu potěšila.

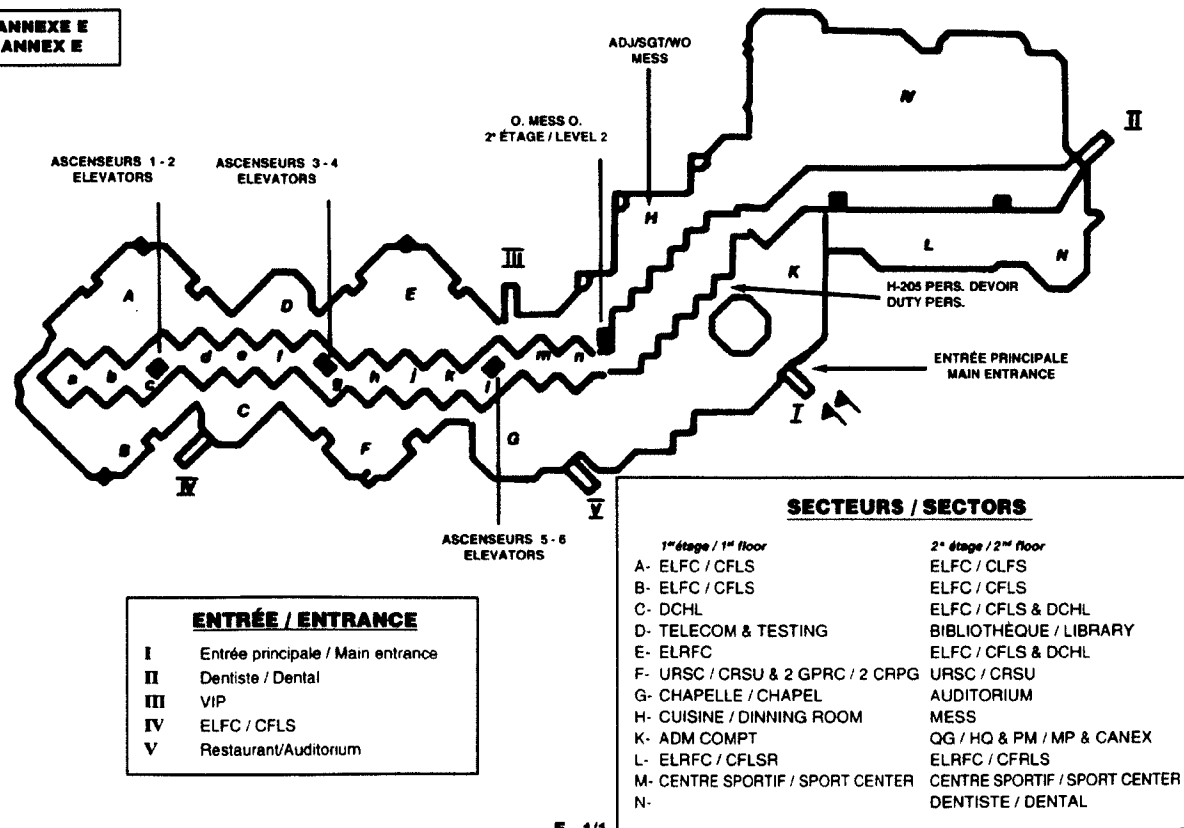
"Být společně on-line je skvělé. Ale vidět v tvář je to ještě mnohem lepší" chválí si Paula možnost setkat se svými studenty. Setkání neproběhlo jen na půdě univerzity formou osobních "konzultací", ale i v neformálním prostředí. "I když účast byla dobrovolná, přišli úplně všichni studenti, takže jsme do restaurace, a bylo moc hezké je osobně poznat. I když my jsme se ve skutečnosti znali už dříve, protože jsme spolu už hodně hovořili po síti."

APPENDIX 6

FLOOR PLAN OF CANADIAN BASE

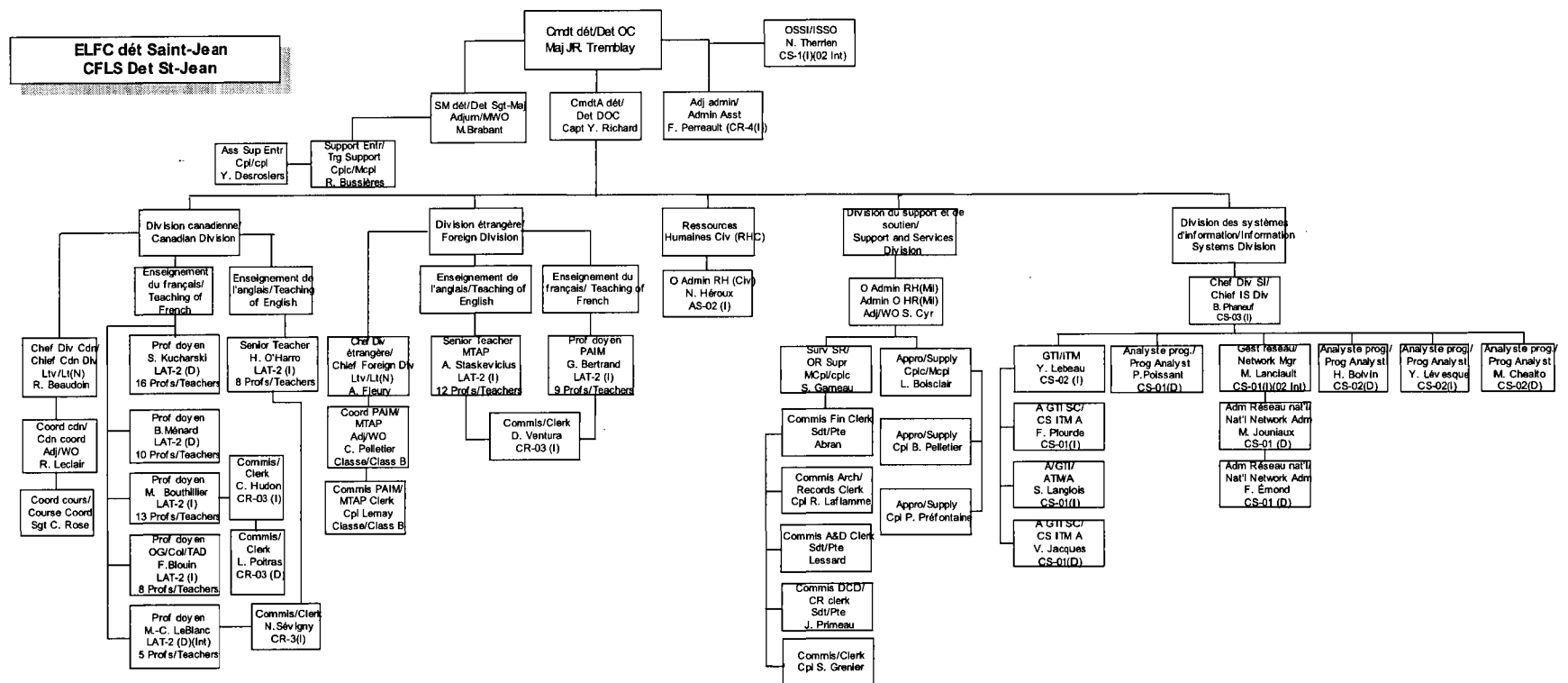
ÉDIFICE GÉNÉRAL CARTIER BUILDING VUE AÉRIENNE / TOP VIEW

ANNEXE E
ANNEX E



APPENDIX 7

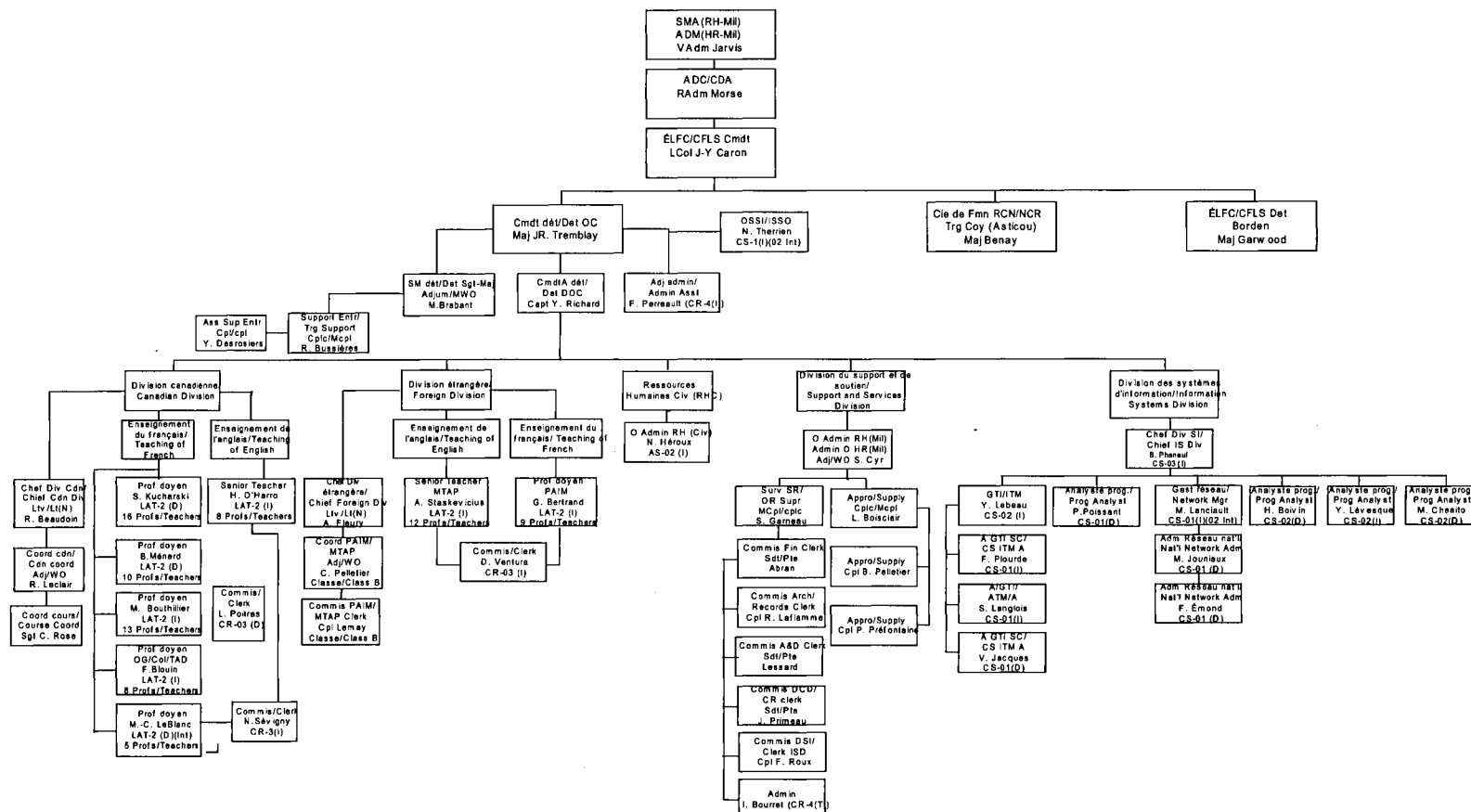
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART FOR LANGUAGE SCHOOL



Mise à jour:
1 déc 04
Updated:
1 Dec 04

APPENDIX 8

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART FOR THE CANADIAN DEFENCE ACADEMY



APPENDIX 9

PEDAGOGICAL COMMITTEE CONCERNS

07 June 04

Regarding ESL Software in CFLS Language Laboratories

1. Pedagogical Considerations

The pedagogical committee and the senior teachers are responsible for evaluating and recommending pedagogical support materials including texts, commercial programs, DVDs and software programs.

2. Computer Technology and Language Training

Computers are routinely used in educational institutions today. DND and MTAP students, accustomed to using computers at work and in their military training, are often disappointed with our limited use of computers in the second language course. Teachers expect to be able to incorporate computer applications into their lessons, not software alone but also web-based learning, text tools such as Hot Potatoes and Teacher's Pet, in-house programs such as Allies, and portals with common drives for teachers and students.

3. Technical Support

Because all pedagogical computer applications require consistent and informed technical support, it is particularly important that the pedagogical and technical teams establish effective communications and an efficient working relationship. We fully support Martin Lanciault's suggestion that a member of the technical support staff be present, as required, at pedagogical committee meetings, and we further recommend that that person be willing to provide technical advice and assistance in English on an ongoing basis.

4. Current Problems from a Pedagogical Perspective

Communication

- a. Aside from the 6655 troubleshooting hotline, there is no established system of ongoing communication between pedagogical and technical staff for discussion of matters pertaining to ESL software and computer technology in general. For example, the Senior Teachers assumed that the technical staff had installed the four software programs: Ellis, Tell Me More, TOEFL Mastery and Tense Busters as requested in the fall of 2003. The programs were not installed, however, and there was no follow-up communication to the Senior Teachers with the result that the programs were not available for the entire September to December term.
- b. The fact that there is no telephone in the E-238 multimedia lab is problematic for teachers who need to report problems or request assistance.
- c. It is unclear to teachers and other staff members who the pedagogical authority is, and what the exact chain of command for ordering and installing new material is. For example, in the case of *Daedalus*, there was a failure in communication that led to delays and disruption of services. Although the senior teachers asked that *Daedalus* be installed before Christmas to allow teachers to trial it without causing disruptions to the courses underway, it was not installed until after Christmas.

The State of the Technology

- a. Establish a system of on-going communication between pedagogical and technical staff. The 6655 line serves individual IT users well, but problems and developments of a more general nature should be brought to the attention of Senior Teachers who routinely communicate with teachers. For example, if teachers must access a program in a certain way, they should be informed.
- b. The four commercial programs serve a need and we do not want to lose them. However, there have been some difficulties with them. For example, *Tell Me More* worked well at the campus, but problems arose on the base. Teachers were not notified that the program had been re-installed in such a way as to make individual re-installment unnecessary and technologically inadvisable. In addition, the stations were not locked to prevent individual re-installation. When teachers attempt to use a program or the lab and encounter breakdowns, they avoid using the technology in classroom practices.
- c. Security and finances limit us. MTAP students are denied access to the DWAN. Licensing limits us to a maximum of ten computer workstations; consequently, commercial software is installed in one lab only (E-238).
- d. Although the MTAP-accessible version of Allies, with English instructions, was completed in the first week of April, it has yet to be installed. Furthermore, the English version of Allies has not been developed to the same level as the French Allié. Despite a definite lack of sophistication, the English program is useful but it does not answer all of our pedagogical needs.

Trial and Preview of Computer Applications

Download or use of commercial material, material from the Internet, or teachers' own programs is prohibited without prior approval. In order to get approval, the material must first be previewed and trailed. The problem is that there is no independent workstation available to trial material.

Teacher Training

Teacher training is inadequate. Teachers have expressed an interest in and need for training in the use of Allies, the existing commercial programs, the Internet and other educational computer applications for TESL.

Communication

- a. Establish a system of on-going communication between pedagogical and technical staff. The 6655 line serves individual IT users well but problems and developments of a more general nature should be brought to the attention of Senior Teachers who routinely communicate with teachers. For example, if teachers must access a program in a certain way, they should be informed.
- b. To permit teachers to call when they are having problems, install a phone in E-238.
- c. Establish the Pedagogical committee as the authority to which all requests pertaining to new material including software/computer applications must be addressed. All concerned parties (ITs, Supply, teachers, senior teachers, etc.) must be informed of the role of the PED Committee and the new procedural steps which will be put in place.
- d. Establish a procedural model for the pedagogical committee to identify, approve, recommend for purchase and maintain new materials. Include a designated member of the technical staff and/or standards for consultation.
- e. Create a form to be used by the pedagogical committee for the evaluation of proposed materials, pedagogical projects and new computer applications.
- f. Remind teachers to use 6655 and e-mail messages to Cpl Roux only for trouble-shooting classroom computers and lab stations, and not for any other purposes such as the installation of new software.

State of technology

- a. Keep the four commercial programs. Clarify the status of current installation and access.
- b. Establish a routine/schedule to allow access to E-238 for Canadians to use software. Consider assigning time slots if necessary. (Canadian use E-238 only for software. They would use A-271 for Allies, and E-271 for Internet and DWAN). Teachers should be informed.
- c. Install the version of Allies with English instructions as soon as possible. In the meantime, do not remove Allies from the system.
- d. Invest in more software programs. There are numerous commercial programs available that would meet our student needs. A lot are not technologically demanding and would not require huge network resources. Many are inexpensive, or even in the case of share-ware, free.
- e. Ensure that regular participation at conferences includes attending software displays such as the hands-on Electronic Village at TESOL conferences.

Trial and preview of computer applications

Provide an independent workstation where proposed new programs can be trialed and evaluated. In the event that more than one workstation is necessary for trialing, the pedagogical committee should be consulted.

Teacher training

- a. Provide teacher training in the use of Allies, the existing commercial programs, the Internet and other educational computer applications for TESL. Invite teachers who are using programs efficiently or who have gained expertise with certain programs to coach other teachers. Schedule time for training.
- b. Inform all teaching staff that there is a common drive (N) where teachers can post and share teacher-created material, ideas, and information.
- c. Inform teachers when there are problems with the technology, when programs cannot be accessed or how programs should be accessed.

APPENDIX 10

EXCERPT FROM TRANSCRIPT OF THE SECOND SESSION OF DAEDALUS

Interchange Conference Transcript

Instructor: Conrad Lee
Class: MTAP 6
Conference: Iraq
Sort order: chronological

[#0001 09:31:23 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]
Sergii Hetmanets:
Gentalmen! Let's start our conference,
Who wants to open?

[#0002 09:32:11 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]
Andrzej Kruczynski:
Hello, everybody in aur War in Irag

[#0003 09:33:20 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]
Andrzej Kruczynski:
Whot do you think about this problem Sergii

[#0004 09:34:22 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]
ferenc szankovics:
Hello everyone, I am sorry I had a bit problem to enter system, but I am ready now.

[#0005 09:34:24 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]
Sergii Hetmanets:
My proposal is to discuss about What do we know about purpusses?

[#0006 09:36:19 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]
Sergii Hetmanets:
Some information from newspaper
The Iran-Iraq war had been largely financed by the oil-rich gulf states, especially Kuwait. Now that the war was over, Kuwait demanded its loans be paid back. What's more, the price of oil, which had provided Iraq with most of its income, was low. Saddam accused Kuwait of deliberately flooding the market to pressure

[#0007 09:36:19 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]
ferenc szankovics:
It is difficult question Sergi. My opinion is it is strong demonstration only.

[#0008 09:36:37 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]
Andrzej Kruczynski:
Whot is mins purpusses Ser

[#0009 09:37:39 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]
Sergii Hetmanets:

I mean who is interested in this war?

[#0010 09:38:08 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

ferenc szankovics:

I think it is purpose, Andrzej.

[#0011 09:39:14 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

Sergii Hetmanets:

Some news: The U.S. took it from there, engaging in a military and diplomatic frenzy that resulted in a multinational force composed of several NATO countries including Britain, France and Canada, as well as neighbouring Arab states previously hostile to the U.S. Even former Warsaw Pact countries sent in units.

[#0012 09:40:57 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

paula gowdy:

Should the U.S. stay? as well as the other countries or leave Iraq to solve its own problems?

[#0013 09:41:22 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

Sergii Hetmanets:

How long do you think it will last?

[#0014 09:42:21 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

Andrzej Kruczynski:

In this operation many things must be changes in coalitions, especially in security, because the security is one of the new problems

[#0015 09:42:55 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

Sergii Hetmanets:

How many people from both sides will be killed before the problem solve?

[#0016 09:44:12 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

ferenc szankovics:

To Paula

U.S troops shouldn't stay in Iraq. I think the leadership of US is seeking the way of leave Iraq.

[#0017 09:45:33 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

Sergii Hetmanets:

In that case there is the another question: How to solve the main problem of terrorism?

Do you have any proposal or any ideas how to solve this problem

[#0018 09:45:41 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

paula gowdy:

to Ferenc

But can they leave and save face or will it be another Vietnam?

[#0019 09:46:13 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

Andrzej Kruczynski:

Poland should accept all aims in this mission (stability of democracy is the more important problem)

[#0020 09:46:41 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

ferenc szankovics:

The war in Iraq finished last year but the situation hasn't changed.

[#0021 09:48:09 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

Sergii Hetmanets:

What should we do (I mean all peaceful people) in such kind of dangerous and instability in that area?

[#0022 09:48:55 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

ferenc szankovics:

To Paula

Exactly, it will be another Vietnam. A lot of young people will die for nothing.

[#0023 09:49:08 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

Sergii Hetmanets:

Ferenc. Are you sure? I mean that the war stop in the next year?

[#0024 09:51:11 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

Andrzej Kruczynski:

In my opinion it is not easy to solve this problem, but we don't have choice we must stay in Iraq and try to solve this problem. I know that many people die, but we must do it.

[#0025 09:51:26 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

Sergii Hetmanets:

To Paula.

But, I'm not sure that when the U.S. and other troops leave Iraq the situation will be change for better.

[#0026 09:51:48 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

ferenc szankovics:

To Sergi

President Bush told to the all world the war is finished. (last May)

[#0027 09:53:58 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

Sergii Hetmanets:

To France.

I think it is not the best decision.

What should we do with their claim to change peace on the earth.

[#0028 09:54:02 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

ferenc szankovics:

To Andrzej

What kind of problem do we have to solve in Iraq?

[#0029 09:55:19 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

Andrzej Kruczynski:

to Paula i dont egry with you, whot is mins for nothing (they are try to help, the world geting creasy soldiers must fight for it is his job,

[#0030 09:57:52 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

Sergii Hetmanets:

To all.

We have some very nonstability places on the earth with there lidars who wants to redistribute all over in world. What should we do in such situation?

[#0031 09:58:41 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

Andrzej Kruczynski:

to Ferenc problem about (terrorist, democracy in Irag, and loiality to country who fight in Irag

[#0032 10:00:41 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

ferenc szankovics:

I think the beginning the war in Iraq was a wrong decision. The UN had to deal with this problem.

[#0033 10:01:06 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

Sergii Hetmanets:

I don't think so.

Sometimes I think some powerful leders it is not anough resolve to use all possibility to stop whorehouse.

[#0034 10:02:01 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

Sergii Hetmanets:

Some news

Saddam Hussein is the conductor of this symphony. The tension would escalate when he restricted the access of the inspectors. Most likely, his policies were directed at a domestic audience: he is still playing the part of the Defender of the Iraqi People. Saddam's regime is shaky. There have been repeated purges in the years since the Gulf War, and some of them have been very bloody.

Interchange Conference Transcript

Instructor: Conrad Lee

Class: MTAP 6

Conference: Women in the militar

Sort order: chronological

[#0001 09:31:20 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

Yevhen Shendiuk:

Is anybody here?

[#0002 09:32:46 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

paula gowdy:

Yes finally I'm on line

[#0003 09:35:24 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

Yevhen Shendiuk:

OK, I think there are some advantages and disadvantages when women join the military.

[#0004 09:38:29 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

paula gowdy:

What are the advantages? There are more people to join the forces but what about in battle?

[#0005 09:40:49 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

Yevhen Shendiuk:

It's a bad idea to use women during the battles, it's only men's job.

[#0006 09:42:07 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

paula gowdy:

But women want to be treated equally. They train the same as the men, why should they not go to war? In real they do.

[#0007 09:46:22 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

Yevhen Shendiuk:

I'm sure they cannot accomplish this job as the men, the women are usually weak.

[#0008 09:48:09 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

paula gowdy:

Those are fighting words!!! Some women are just as strong and would take exception to what you said. So where do you see women as being effective within the military?

[#0009 09:55:44 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

Yevhen Shendiuk:

OK, exception can be.

For example, I have one subordinate, she is pretty woman and she works in my group as an interpreter, she perfectly works with some papers and documents. BUT I cannot force her to

work more if our business needs it, because a baby is waiting her at home.

[#0010 09:58:11 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

paula gowdy:

Good point but isn't that a social problem.. women still seem to be the ones who must change their activities for the needs of the family. If you want her to stay, why can't her husband leave work so she can stay?

[#0011 10:00:47 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

Yevhen Shendiuk:

Her husband is also military, he works at other group.

[#0012 10:02:03 AM, Thursday, April 15, 2004]

Yevhen Shendiuk:

Thank for the nice conversation!