

Shooting short videos in French with mobile phones

Serge Gabarre & Cécile Gabarre

(Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, University Putra Malaysia)

ABSTRACT

In Malaysia, the use of French language is virtually nonexistent. Furthermore, students who major in French frequently do not choose this program voluntarily; often it is chosen for them by a national clearing agency. In this context, how can we boost learners' participation and motivation in a course they have not selected? In a blended approach of e-learning, and m-learning, students were asked to use both the internet and their mobile phones to produce multimedia documents. These resources were then shared and evaluated on an e-learning platform. Evaluations were both self- and peer conducted. During and after this project, quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Our findings reveal that participation and motivation were mutually increased. This was achieved by implicating the students in the learning process, from the conception to the distribution and finally evaluation of resources. As a result, communication skills were boosted and an online community was forged. Could these results have been obtained without the use of technology? It is probable that an activity where messages were pinned on a board could also have enhanced the learning process. However, it seems unlikely that learners would have attained such a rich level of communication without employing ICTs. Mobile phones are important in the learners' culture and including this technology proved more effective than expected.

Introduction: Context

Unlike Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia, Malaysia does not share a colonial history with France. Of the three European countries that had some form of control over Malaysia, England has left the most obvious impact. English is still widely used in the media and along with the national language, Bahasa Malaysia, serves as a *lingua franca* between the three main ethnic groups in the country. On the other hand, the use of French is practically non-existent. Due to local legal restrictions pertaining to the ownership of large satellite dishes, the French language channel, TV5, is not available in Malaysia. Neither is French language radio such as RFI accessible, for

the same reasons. As far as the written press is concerned, it can only be found at specialised outlets. In the Malaysian context, authentic documents in French are only readily available on the internet.

Despite the lack of significant historical ties, French is still taught in Malaysia. Those wishing to learn the language may go to one of the two branches of the Alliance Française, 35 secondary schools, or 21 institutions of higher learning (French Embassy Malaysia, n.d.). Two universities offer Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) programs with French as a major. This article discusses a project that was conducted in one of them.

For the vast majority of the students enrolled in this program, French was never their first choice. When applying for university places after completing their secondary education, these students expressed their wishes by ranking their choices in order of preference. A national clearing agency then attributed places in the different programs based on various factors such as the students' results in their final examination or their language abilities. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising to find that the students are generally not motivated to learn French. It is not uncommon to have learners switching to another program at early as possible, which is after the first year. As educators, our task to boost the learners' motivation in an unfavourable context is a daunting one. How can we increase the learners' desire to learn and use a language that apparently does not seem to have a place in the local context? The lack of motivation to learn French is not specific to the Malaysian context (Kissau 2006). In a situation where English plays an important role at both the national and the international levels, it takes great motivation to invest time and effort to learn a foreign language like French.

This study focused on increasing the learners' motivation by using technology to mediate activities. From past observations, we had noticed that the learners were deeply attached to their mobile phones and often personalised them with stickers and ornamental attachments. We thus believed that bringing the mobile phones into the learning process would boost the learners' desire to learn French. We hypothesised that motivation could be heightened by gradually incorporating collaborative creative activities where the learners would use their mobile phones to produce multimedia documents in French. To further stimulate the students into taking charge of their learning we decided to include self- and peer- assessments in the activities. These types of assessment are particularly well suited to collaborative tasks (Conrad & Donaldson 2004).

The learners used French in three activities that were each divided into two parts. (See Table 2 in the methodology section for detailed requirements of each part.) The first activity, which was conducted individually, required each learner to post a picture in the online learning management system's (LMS) forum and to describe it with a 50-word text in French. The other learners were subsequently asked to view the pictures and post a comment in French. In the second activity the learners were divided in pairs and were expected to post a one-minute audio message in French followed by another audio reply of the same length. In the third and final activity, the learners were asked to shoot a 90 second video in French and to embed it in the LMS. As previously, they were also required to post replies.

Literature Review

Motivation

In a study conducted by Gardner, Tremblay and Masgoret in 1997, the relationship between several factors important to language achievement in French was observed. They theorised that “motivation, language aptitude, and language learning strategies cause language achievement” (Gardner, Tremblay, & Masgoret 1997:353). Previously, Dörnyei described motivation as “one of the main determinants of second/foreign language (L2) learning achievement” (1994:253). It is thus obvious that motivation is a crucial part of language acquisition and should not be overlooked. Yet this statement leads to another question which every language instructor ponders: how does one increase the motivation of his or her learners? Setting a task that can be successfully achieved can lead to an increase in the feeling of self-efficacy (Dörnyei 1994) which is linked to confidence and motivation (Gardner, Tremblay, & Masgoret 1997).

More recently, it has been argued by Chen, Warden and Chang (2005) that learners of Chinese origins are more inclined to perceive success as that of the group rather than that of the individual. A sense of responsibility towards the group pushes these learners to excel so that they will not let down the others (Robert 2002). In our selected group of learners, the Chinese community makes up more than half of the class. Chen, Warden and Chang’s research (2005) on the influence of culture on motivation as well as past experiences hinted that group work could be the key to increasing motivation. However, the ethnic composition of our cohort combined with a classroom arrangement of clusters of tables does not readily stimulate intergroup communication. In order to use the driving force that could result from the Confucian heritage learners, it is imperative that groups be multiethnic. A random selection of students would then seem to be the logical approach.

Task based learning

Ellis (2000) evaluates a task by its ability to build up language competency through communication. Yet communication may take different forms: from traditional written exchanges to asynchronous audio online messages that can be delivered through podcasting. The use of podcasts as a source of pedagogical materials, especially in the language classroom, is well documented (Rosell-Aguilar 2007) and with the development of web-based learning, downloadable audio materials offer a strong potential for language learning (Edirisingha, Rizzi, Nie, & Rothwell 2007). Although we strongly believe that listening to audio documents is essential in language acquisition, we feel that producing them is as important. According to Stanley (2006), a task that places the learners in a more active role enables them to practise and even learn from their mistakes. The task of producing audio documents is technically relatively easy and can motivate learners to focus on the quality of their work. Similarly to audio documents, online videos are now also used to enhance language learning. Web-based services such as *Dailymotion* or *YouTube* are gaining in popularity (Mullen & Wedwick 2008) and are even used to stimulate learners’ motivation (Kelsen 2009). By providing a free service of video on demand, such websites offer authentic language documents with endless pedagogical possibilities. In one very interesting approach, a language class used *YouTube* to post its own creation, a German soap opera (Alm 2006, 2008). In this project, the instructor used the participative nature of Web 2.0 to increase the motivation of his learners. Every week the learners used camcorders to record a new episode. We believed that similar motivation could also be achieved using the mobile devices that the students already own. Prensky argues that “television journalism” and “creative movie making” are just some of the pedagogical

possibilities offered by mobile phones (2005:7). It is thus possible to imagine using mobile phones to create documents easily (Labourdet 2008).

Using mobile phones as a creative tool

The ubiquitous nature of mobile devices has led us to research the distribution of course content designed for mobile or m-learning. Part of the success of using mobile phones as a learning tool is due to the personal attachment that the learners feel towards their mobile phones (Gabarre & Gabarre 2009). However, distributing course material does not stimulate interactivity or peer communication since the learners are mostly passive receivers. The mobile phone, which is not only a communication device but also sports numerous other features, is not exploited to its full potential. In more interactive project reported in a recent study, Korean learners were engaged in making a video with their mobile phones in an English L2 class (Meurant 2007). This task proved quite effective as it enabled the students to post their productions to an online social network.

In order to be sufficiently motivating, a task needs to be both challenging and attainable (Dörnyei 1994). We believe that an activity of the kind reported by Meurant can meet our requirements and motivate our learners to apply their learning in a challenging way. Although most of our learners' own mobile phones are capable of taking videos, this tool remains often unused. In Japan, it was observed that although students made extensive use of their mobile phones to communicate, video recording was almost always the least frequent of activities (Thornton & Houser 2004, 2005).

Self-evaluation

Creative collaborative tasks should increase the learners' will to participate if they are involved in various parts of the process. The learners need to take control of their planning, production, distribution and assessment. Giving more responsibility to the students through self-assessment can lead to a more active role (Klenowski 1995) and thus increase their motivation. The opportunity for self-assessment is also claimed to maximise the effect of engaged learning (Conrad & Donaldson 2004). This is not a new concept as it had already been demonstrated that conducting a self-evaluation enables a learner to become more self-sufficient (Holec 1990). At the same time, self-evaluation demystifies the assessment process (Fetterman 1994). Furthermore, self-evaluation is shown to facilitate language acquisition by stimulating the students to be aware of learning strategies (MacIntyre, Noels & Clément 1997). However, self-evaluation should not be perceived as a flawless panacea that should be instituted in every classroom to solve the lack of motivation. Matsuno (2009) points out that although this process has pedagogical values, it is too strongly linked to each individual to have a true assessment value.

Peer evaluation

In contrast, peer evaluation demonstrates better assessment skills that are less related to the learners' own aptitudes (Matsuno 2009). It appears that the inclusion of peers could play a crucial role in supporting the learning process (Saito 2008). In another study also conducted with Asian learners, peer evaluation was found to be beneficial as it brought a "deep approach to language learning" (Cheng & Warren 2005:111). This study revealed that the process of peer evaluation brought unexpected pedagogical advantages. In some ways, the actual marks given by the students in the evaluation could in fact be less important than the critical thinking involved in the process of assessing their peers. Nonetheless, even without much evaluator training, peer

assessors are most of the time quite reliable (Saito 2008). In order to obtain the advantages of self-evaluation as well as those of peer evaluation, a combination of these two techniques may be appropriate. A mixture of both techniques could also have the advantage of mitigating any attempt from learners at being over-generous in their self-evaluation.

Methodology

This research project conducted in 2009 involved a group of 22 first year undergraduates, aged 20 to 25 ($M = 20.7$, $SD = 1.0$) at the University Putra Malaysia. All participants were Malaysian nationals enrolled in a B.A. program majoring in French as a foreign language. During the first semester, the learners were not exposed to the faculty's e-learning platform or to any form of m-learning. For this project, they were given a questionnaire pertaining to the usage and features of mobile phones. The first semester was solely used as a preliminary phase to investigate future possibilities. As can be seen in Table 1, the features on our learners' mobile phones were quite impressive. Based on these findings, it was decided to use a combination of e-learning and m-learning during the second semester over a period of 8 weeks.

Although this project also involved the distribution of course materials through mobile phones, this aspect was not included for investigation as it is the subject of another publication (Gabarre & Gabarre 2009).

The current LMS used by the faculty is the Dokeos platform. This e-learning platform offers both synchronous and asynchronous communication tools. The LMS also allows the creation of groups of various sizes. Documents can be posted and retrieved by learners. One feature that is of special interest to this project is the possibility of including multimedia objects within a forum post. These objects can be pictures, sounds or even videos. It is also possible to include flash documents or links to external resources on the web.

Table 1: *Features available on the learners' mobile phones*

Feature	Percentage ($n = 21$)
Recorders	
Camera	95%
Video recorder	95%
Sound recorder	86%
Players	
Radio	90%
MP3 player	86%
Other	
GPS	52%

Note. Duplicate features were not counted when a learner owned more than one mobile phone. Missing values were treated as negative answers.

As an introduction to the main communicative features of the platform and the forum, the learners were asked to post an introductory message. This non-graded activity took place in the classroom, that is, in a face-to-face situation. Rapidly, the students were able to post their messages and some, while investigating the features available, managed to include pictures along with their texts. With little introduction to the *reply* feature, true exchanges in L2 took place on the platform. A few students even went so far as to start several threads on different topics in the forum. With the assimilation of the e-learning platform, tasks involving the learners' mobile phones started. Altogether these comprised 15% of the final mark for the course.

Table 2: *Organisation of the three activities*

Activity	Requirements	<i>n</i> in group	Tools used
Image with text			
Part 1	Post in the forum a picture with a 50-word descriptive text in French.	1	Mobile phone, LMS
Part 2	Post in the forum a 50-word comment in French to two messages that were posted in part 1.	1	Mobile phone, LMS
Audio message			
Part 3	Post in the forum a 1-min audio message in French.	2	Mobile phone, conversion software, LMS
Part 4	Post in the forum a 1-min audio message in French replying to another group's part 3 message.	2	Mobile phone, conversion software, LMS
Video message			
Part 5	Embed in the forum a 90-s video message in French.	3 or 4	Mobile phone, <i>YouTube</i> , LMS
Part 6	Embed in the forum a 90-s video message in French replying to another group's part 5 message. or Post in the forum a 1-min audio message in French replying to another group's part 5 message. or Post in the forum three 50-word comments in French to messages that were posted in part 5.	3 or 4	Mobile phone, <i>YouTube</i> , LMS

The learners engaged in three sequential tasks of increasing difficulty. To compensate for the rising level of complexity, an element of collaboration was included. Past experience and current

literature (Dörnyei 1994) revealed that through group work, students could understand and produce more complex documents than when learning alone, while at the same time group work increased their motivation.

In a gradual transitional approach, the first task was a simple continuation from the introduction to the e-learning platform. For this task as well as for the subsequent ones, instructions were given on the Dokeos platform and in the class in a face-to-face setting. We asked each learner to take a picture on the campus using the mobile phone's built-in camera and to post the picture in a new thread in the first activity's forum. The picture was to be accompanied by a short text in French of about 50 words in length, both descriptive and explanatory in nature. The learners were required to describe the context and give reasons for selecting their picture. This first part of the activity lasted one week. In the following week, the learner had to select at least two threads and post replies commenting on the original message. Following the two week activity, self- and peer evaluation forms were given to the class. Learners had to evaluate their own work based on various criteria such as the ability to use relevant lexical and grammatical elements seen in the class, accuracy and appropriateness of the language, relevance of the comments and even to the extent to which they had learnt from this activity. Following this, learners submitted their work for peer evaluation to two other students that they had selected in the class.

For the second activity, groups of two learners were randomly created. This task involved recording a conversation between the two members. Once again, it was conducted using the learners' mobile phones, this time using the audio recorder. The theme of the dialogue was to enquire about the other person's likes and dislikes. Several other requirements were set. The length of the audio message was fixed at about one minute. The recorded document was to be posted in the relevant forum accompanied by a verbatim transcription. The purpose of the transcription was to compensate for poor recording quality that was expected from older mobile phones. As before, the first part of this activity was done over a one-week period. Similarly to the first activity, the second week was used to stimulate communication within the class. This time, a single reply was required but it needed to take the form of an audio message. Self-evaluation and peer evaluation were once again used but this time at the group level. A joint assessment was made for each pair in the class.

For the third and final task, groups of three students were randomly created. As previously, this activity was performed in two parts. This time, the groups were given more freedom as the task involved the shooting of a short video using the learners' mobile phones. The theme, the setting and the organisation were left to the discretion of the groups. The only requirement was to post a 90-second video on *YouTube* and to insert an embedded link in the relevant forum of the e-learning platform. In the second week, as with the previous two tasks, the learners had to post a reply in the forum. This time however, in order to evaluate the learners' preferences the groups were given three options. They had to choose between posting three written texts, one audio message or one video. Self-evaluation was once again conducted at the group level and peer assessment was done within the class.

Data collection

During the eight weeks that the experiment lasted, participation in each part of the three activities was observed and corresponding data were recorded. After the assignments were completed and evaluated, the learners were asked to complete a questionnaire on their perception of each activity. In the questionnaire, we enquired about their perceived enjoyment of the three different

assignments on a 5-point scale. A value of 1 denoted the least enjoyment while a value of 5 represented a strong liking. The same scale was used to evaluate the perceived ease of the activities where a value of 1 indicated a very hard task and a value of 5 represented a very easy one. For each question the learners were given the opportunity to justify their answers by writing some additional comments. At the end of the questionnaire the learners were instructed to write freely any other comments they may have had on the assignments.

In order to select learners for interviews, the questionnaire data were then analysed to obtain total and mean values (see Table 4). We first looked at the highest total (30), which corresponded to the answers of nine learners. From these we randomly selected half of them (5) to be interviewed. The learners were divided in two groups based on the similarity of comments they added on their questionnaire. Three learners (F.C.3, M.C.1 and M.C.2) wrote about how they enjoyed communicating on the platform. Two other learners (F.C.4 and F.C.5) noted that French was now something they liked. We then looked at the lowest total (18), which corresponded to two learners and randomly selected one (F.C.6) for an individual interview. Two other learners were also selected to be interviewed, as their answers appeared to us to be particularly interesting. F.C.7 was selected because although she enjoyed the three activities, she found them to be rather difficult. F.M.6 was chosen for her answers on the third activity and for her comments on the collaborative work. All five semi-structured interviews were conducted one week after the end of the assessment of the third activity.

Findings

Our first observations are related to task number one. It was noted that not all students participated in this assignment. Within the group of 22 learners, two did not take part at all, while two others only contributed to the first phase of the activity and did not post a comment. It was later revealed that not everyone had understood that this activity would be graded. The assignment was perceived by some as a mere continuation of the non-graded introductory activity. It is thus not surprising that when learning motivation is low, an assignment that appears to have no grading purpose will not be undertaken. However, the 18 remaining learners were active and many posted more than the two required replies. One participant even posted more than 30 messages on the platform. The interviews revealed that self- and peer- evaluations were quite unexpected for the majority (88%) of the learners. The grading was done according to the marking scheme we had prepared. The learners' original production and the comments they made were evaluated for grammatical accuracy, lexical richness, communicative value, relevance and appropriateness of their message. Therefore, a message needed to be both linguistically correct and relevant to the communicative situation in order to obtain full marks. All students appeared to evaluate their work as well as their friends' work fairly. Zeros and below average marks were only given to those who did not participate or only partially completed the task.

For the second task which involved recording audio messages in groups of two, all students actively took part. This engagement marked a difference from the previous assignment and can be explained by two factors. First, everyone was by then aware that the tasks were contributing to their final marks. Second, when working in groups, 75% of the learners interviewed explained that they felt responsible towards their partner and thus had greater motivation to complete the activity. Each group fulfilled all the requirements of this assignment. The transcriptions which were initially intended to compensate for poor audio recording quality turned out to be superfluous, as all audio messages were perfectly audible. Collaboration within

each group played an important part as the quality of the various productions surpassed what had been achieved individually. Indeed, the richness of the vocabulary and structures used showed an improvement from the previous task conducted only a few weeks before. The evaluation, conducted in the same fashion as the initial assignment, revealed higher marks for the whole class. The main difficulty encountered while posting the audio messages was in the Dokeos platform's inability to accept any format other than MP3. Since most mobile phones used the AMR format to record audio, most of the learners had to find conversion software. Intergroup collaboration was noted during this phase with more technologically knowledgeable students helping others with the conversion steps. This concurs with previous studies (Chen, Warden, & Chang 2005; Robert 2002) which highlight the importance of collective success.

Table 3: *Rate of participation at each stage of the three activities*

	Picture with text		Audio message		Video message	
	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4	Part 5	Part 6
Rate	91%	82%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note. $N = 22$.

Although on average the learners felt that the assignments were gradually becoming more difficult (see Table 4), the data in Table 3 present an increase in the rate of participation across the three activities. Although we could be tempted to interpret these results as arising from an increase in motivation to use and learn French, the actual increase in participation probably stems from a different factor. This could be in part explained by the organisation of these activities. The first one was an individual task, whereas the second and third were both collective. F.C.6 explained that she “had to push the other members of the groups to do the activities”. This learner further justified that this was the reason why she preferred to work alone, as is attested by the values recorded in Table 4. Responsibility to the group might have been an important factor in boosting participation.

Table 4: *Learners' perceived enjoyment and ease*

Participant	Image with text		Audio message		Video message	
	Enjoy	Ease	Enjoy	Ease	Enjoy	Ease
<i>M</i> (SD)	4.6 (0.9)	4.3 (1.0)	4.7 (0.6)	4.2 (0.9)	4.5 (1.0)	4.1 (1.1)
Female						
Chinese						
F.C.1	4	5	5	4	5	4
F.C.2	4	4	4	3	4	4
F.C.3	5	5	5	5	5	5
F.C.4	5	5	5	5	5	5
F.C.5	5	5	5	5	5	5
F.C.6	5	5	3	3	1	1
F.C.7	5	3	5	2	5	3
F.C.8	5	5	5	5	5	5
F.C.9	3	2	4	3	3	3
Indian						
F.I.1	5	3	4	4	4	3
F.I.2	2	2	5	5	5	5
Malay						
F.M.1	5	5	5	5	5	5
F.M.2	5	5	5	5	5	5
F.M.3	5	5	5	5	5	5
F.M.4	5	4	5	4	5	4
F.M.5	5	4	5	3	5	3
F.M.6	5	5	5	5	3	3
Male						
Chinese						
M.C.1	5	5	5	5	5	5
M.C.2	3	4	4	4	5	5
M.C.3	5	5	5	5	5	5
Malay						
M.M.1	5	5	4	4	5	4

Note. Boldface values denote participants selected for interviews.

The positive impact of the collaborative task noted in the second assignment was heightened with the final one. Having three learners working together brought a positive group dynamic. F.C.3, M.C.1 and M.C.3 affirmed that they preferred to work in a group of three as they were able to have more ideas than when working alone or with another person. F.C.3 added:

I enjoyed doing this because I was with my friends in the group and I wanted to show that I can do something good. I wanted to do something better than the other groups.

Furthermore, the same three learners explained that with pairs, one of the participants tended to become the de facto leader. With a trio, the other two members were able to counterbalance the head of the group. This could explain why all groups performed remarkably well with no one being left behind. The added freedom in the choice of task proved effective in stimulating the learners' creative nature. As expected from the nature of this task, productions were extremely varied (cf. Yuksel 2005). Video productions ranged from descriptions of everyday surroundings to interviews on relationships, friends or the type of films students enjoyed. One group even shot a short documentary on Malaysian traditional music. Paradoxically, the groups whose members were more confident with their use of the French language produced videos relying less on verbal communication, whereas the weaker ones concentrated their efforts on the verbal skills. This situation shows a levelling of the differences in the groups. This could be attributed to the effect of the collaborative group work or to the fact that the task required more than language proficiency. Shooting the video, posting it to the *YouTube* server and inserting a link in the appropriate forum on the e-learning platform were for some groups far simpler than the second task which involved audio conversion. For these reasons, some learners focused their attention on the montage of the final product by including transitions, starting and ending credits, subtitles and music. One group of learners sought verbal perfection in their contents and chose to interview senior students. Another group even interviewed non-French speaking students. These students learned their lines phonetically before playing their role in front of the camera. To achieve this feat, each member had to assume the role of a teacher. Teaching the subject was an effective learning process and the ability reflected confidence in the use of the language. This was noted by F.C.5 who stated: "I was very happy to see my French online and I wanted to do more forum [sic]."

For the second part of the video activity (posting comments), we expected that most groups would opt for the technologically simplest option and produce only written answers. However, only one group did this while the rest opted for either an audio or a video message. Assessment results for the third task were even higher than for the two preceding ones, with learners evaluating their productions as richer.

The interviews revealed three main concerns that should be taken into account in future studies. First of all, 75% of the learners interviewed mentioned that they would have preferred to select their partners rather than these being imposed randomly. Several groups had members living in different colleges, which hindered their collaboration. In such a situation, constructive exchanges had to take place during class or in prearranged meetings. Although some level of communication was possible using the learners' mobile phones, most of the essential planning and decisions occurred in a face-to-face context. F.C.3, F.C.7 and M.C.3 argued that having the freedom to select their own groups would enable them better to complete their assignments.

The second concern was the weighting of the three assignments in the overall marking scheme. Each task accounted for 5% of the total marks; however, all but one of the learners interviewed felt that 15% was not enough. Instead they suggested that a cumulative figure of 30% for the three assignments would give them more incentive to excel in these tasks. F.C.3, F.C.4 and M.C.1 claimed that by having a stronger incentive they would have invested more time in the assignments and produced even better output. Their concern for the marks and quality of production revealed a sense of motivation.

The third concern that was highlighted during the interviews was the evaluation of their work. All the learners declared that they enjoyed having the freedom to evaluate themselves and their peers but admitted that the task came with added responsibility. Self-assessment brought an introspective look into their true worth, whereas peer assessment was noted to have been a motivator to excel. This was described by F.C.7 who declared that she wanted to make sure that everything was perfect because the others would look at her work. In the process, they learned and used French. Of the learners interviewed 63% said that although they were willing to give themselves low marks, they could not imagine attributing a below average grade to others. Self-evaluation may in fact not reveal the true value of one's work: it may be a reflection of language anxiety with the more apprehensive learners underestimating their competency while the less anxious ones overestimate it (MacIntyre, Noels & Clément 1997). This situation is similar to that reported in previous research showing that peer evaluators tended to be more lenient (Matsuno 2009). When asked about how they graded their peers, F.C.3, F.C.4 and M.C.1 explained that they would first take a look at the way that person made a self-assessment and they would often feel that more points could be awarded. Seeing more worth in others than in oneself may be a cultural trait that warrants further investigations. F.C.6 and M.C.3 admitted that self- and peer-evaluations were opportunities to obtain higher marks than what they truly deserved. They felt that the lecturers would have given a more accurate assessment. It thus appears that our impression of the learners having correctly assessed their work could stem from the negating effect of unconsciously underestimating their aptitude combined with the feeling of consciously over-grading their assignment. Indeed, without the instructor's evaluation, the learners lacked the "informational feedback" which could have given them some clues on their performance (Dörnyei 1994: 278). On the other hand, F.C.3 and F.C.7 stated that their own evaluation was fairer as the lecturer was not always aware of the effort and time spent on assignments. A suggestion that may reconcile both points of view came from F.C.4 and F.C.5. They recommended that evaluation should be shared among the learners, the peers and the lecturer with the lecturer attributing between 50% and 70% of the marks. This solution could give the learners enough responsibility without diminishing the role of the lecturer, which is relatively important in a Confucian-heritage culture. These three concerns will need to be taken into considerations for future studies.

Conclusion and Discussion

This article has highlighted the way in which learning French was perceived as particularly pleasing by students who did not choose to register in this course by incorporating collaborative task-based learning with the use of mobile phones as a creative tool. Two-thirds of respondents enjoyed the three different assignments and asked to be included in similar activities in future classes. Only two learners had negative or neutral feelings about both the collaborative tasks. Participation in these two tasks was noted to be higher than in the individual ones. For 75% of the learners interviewed, the feeling of success in these tasks has boosted their self-confidence. Such a sentiment about oneself has been shown to be strongly linked to motivation (Gardner, Tremblay & Masgoret 1997). Two learners hinted that success in these activities caused them to be more motivated. Another reason for this increase in motivation could be related to the involvement of the learners at different stages of the learning process. They were responsible for designing their multimedia documents, enhancing them, posting them and finally evaluating them. During all activities, communication skills were practised and improved. Various documents were produced and submitted online with replies and comments in the forums. As a

result, a burgeoning online community emerged with exchanges taking place on the e-learning platform between learners who normally did not interact outside of their subgroup. It is important to encourage these types of activities to foster such a community to the point where exchanges are richer and lead to true computer-supported collaborative learning.

One might wonder if similar results could have been obtained without using such technology. It is possible to construct an in-class task where learners are required to describe a picture (Yuksel 2005). Role-plays where dialogues are crafted are common practice in language classrooms. There is, however, one aspect of these tasks that cannot be replicated without using technology. When replies are posted on the e-learning platform, they become permanently visible to other learners. A verbal comment in an exchange with another learner does not have the permanence which a lasting constructive dialogue enables. Furthermore, the asynchronous nature of the forum allows the learners to compose their exchanges over a longer time frame. Consequently, they have the opportunity to research the language structures at will and thus post messages that are closer to their desired level of competence (Robert 2002). Having students shooting videos is inconceivable without involving the technological element.

Chinnery (2006) noted that technology, when used in education, can become an instructional tool and thus can have a pedagogical use in language learning. More than a decade ago, in an article dealing with the virtual campus, Paquette (1995) prophesied that technology would evolve and enable communication through the exchange of audio or video messages. This situation is now a reality with students posting and replying to rich multimedia messages.

Using mobile phones in the language learning process has exceeded our expectations. These mobile devices are important to the learners' culture as they appear to be highly personal objects. Stickers often adorn their covers and mobile phone charms are seen hanging close to the mouthpiece. Mobile phones may appear to be out of place in the language classroom but the power of these small tools can be harnessed to motivate the learners in a collective effort of learning.

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