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**EXPLORING PUPILS' SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCES
OF LEARNING FRENCH AT PRIMARY SCHOOL**

THREE VOLUMES

VOLUME III

**Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics
University of Dublin, Trinity College**

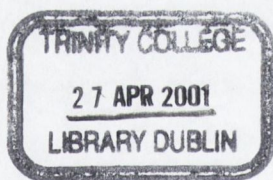
October 2000

Áine Furlong

OF LEARNING FRENCH AT PRIMARY SCHOOL
EXPLORING PUPILS' SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCES

THREE VOLUMES

VOLUME III



Thesis
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VOLUME III

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10. Group 1 discussion

(n = 138)

This discussion relates to the experience of participants who were attending French classes at primary level, at the time of the study. For them, the experience was still on-going and on its way to fulfilment. This temporal perspective is crucial to the understanding of these participants' reasons and/or motives to learn foreign languages. In other words, when considering the responses, one must adopt a similar perspective and, as it were, place oneself in the participants' shoes.

The discussion will refer to the collective hierarchies of the group. These hierarchies are not quantified in the results; however, for comparative purposes with G2 and G3, some hierarchies are visualised and appear in Chapter 8 of this study. References to the relevant table numbers feature after each title or sub-title.

10.1 Reasons and/or motives for learning a foreign language at primary level (Tables 11-20), (visualised hierarchy, Table 249)

The following two sections deal with reasons and/or motives for L3 learning at primary level and in general. In addition, satisfaction at having started French at primary level is probed in Section 10.3.1. While the corresponding responses may be seen as relating to motivational factors identified by Dörnyei (1994) at the language level, the learner level and the learning situation level, it is difficult to consider these responses as manifestations of L2 motivation *per se*; the responses are retrospective and cannot account for participants' future intentions.

However, Dörnyei perceives L2 motivation to correspond to the three basic constituents of the learning process (L2, L2 learner and L2 learning environment) and reflect the three different aspects of language (the social dimension, the personal dimension and the educational subject matter dimension) (1994, p.283). In this connection, G1, G2 and G3 participants' responses are related to the three basic constituents of L2 learning and to the three different aspects of language; the terminology proposed by Dörnyei will be preserved since it encompasses the L2 learning process, as well as the aspects of language. In this sense, the discussion of the L3

learning experience of G1, G2 and G3 will refer to the 'language level', the 'learner level' and the 'learning situation level'.

G1 are overwhelmingly in favour of foreign languages at primary level (Table 11). Their views are conceptualised in two ways:

- i. the collective hierarchy of reasons and/or motives in the group;
- ii. the nature of these reasons and/or motives.

With regard to (i), the reasons and/or motives fall into four categories. The two principal categories include pragmatic interests and references to the learning experience. The smaller categories refer to age and exposure time factors and general considerations. Pragmatism, for this group, essentially points to the potential gains at second level (Tables 12 and 249). This is in keeping with findings in the L2 motivation literature which suggest that goals, which, because of their nature may be loosely related to instrumental goals, are likely to be more influential than other types of goals in a formal situation (Dörnyei 1990, 1994; Oxford and Shearin 1994). The second principal category of reasons and/or motives relates to the learning experience; this category can be further divided into two sub-categories: the learning act and the learning situation. Perceptions of the learning act take precedence over perceptions of the learning situation; learning is perceived to be *easy* and the learning situation is then described as being *fun* and *different*. Hence, the emerging pattern from this group relates principally to the learner level. This is evidenced by the participants' concern for achievement at second level and their sense of self-efficacy – *it's easy*. The learning situation does not feature prominently in the learning experience category. In respect of age and exposure time, these young participants already perceive that L3 learning takes time and understand the importance of starting at primary level; this view supports the age-related position in applied linguistics which advocates 'the longer the better' (Genesee 1978, Hatch 1983, Titone 1986).

The reasons and/or motives are principally of a pre-conceived kind (Table 16); the goals outlined by the responses indicate that the learners intend to bring about a state of affairs (secondary school advantage); there are also socio-cultural influences (language utility, age and exposure time, knowledge of other cultures, etc.). In addition, references to the circumstances at primary level point to the learner and the learning situation levels as mentioned in the previous paragraph. Only small percentages are found in respect of the meaningfulness of the experience, as these learners have had limited opportunities to assess the overall value of the experience. (Tables 13-16).

A minority of negative responses indicate that reasons for not learning a language at primary school are rooted in the experience itself (Tables 11, 18-20). One response type indicates the possibility that some negative meaning has already been assigned to the learning experience – *I could get mixed up*. One notes with interest that negative perceptions in this group relate to the learner level first and then to the situation. Hence, participants do not express a sense of competence and self-efficacy – *it's difficult, I could get mixed up*; they also blame the learning situation – *it's boring* - and its irrelevance – *I don't need it [French] now* (Table 17). The temporal perspective of these participants suggests that the reasons are embedded in the circumstances at primary level category (Table 20).

To summarise, the findings suggest the following:

- participants' reasons and/or motives for learning foreign languages at primary level refer to pragmatic interests and to the learning experience; these views relate to the learner level and the learning situation level. This finding represents positive as well as negative feelings;
- when participants' temporal perspective is considered, we note, in the case of positive responses, the predominance of pre-conceived goals (pragmatic and socio-cultural) and participants' references to the general quality of the learning experience;
- when the responses are negative, the reasons are essentially shaped by negative perceptions of the experience; these learners do not report pre-conceived goals;

This last point does not suggest that these learners are without pre-conceived notions, but rather, that pre-conceived goals (pragmatic or socio-cultural) are not sufficient in themselves to sustain the learners during the experience. This finding is reminiscent of an observation made by Noels, Clément and Pelletier (1999) which proposes that '... learning a language for material rewards or because of some pressure is not supportive of sustained effort or eventual competence...' (p.30).

10.2 On the general importance of learning foreign languages (Tables 22-30) (visualised hierarchy, Table 261)

Table 22 suggests that nearly all of the group believe that it is important to learn a language in general. In responding to this general question, the hierarchy of participants' reasons and/or

motives changes, when compared to the previous report, and indicates that general socio-cultural considerations precede pragmatism (compare the reports which accompany Table 12 or Table 249 with the reports of Table 23 or Table 261). The importance of L3 learning, in general terms, rests almost entirely on pre-conceived goals (Table 26).

In the case of negative responses, the views expressed could either fall into the pre-conceived goal category or be attributed to the lack of meaning of the L3 experience. Negative responses do not refer to the circumstances at primary level category (Table 30).

To summarise, we can say that the *stock of knowledge expressed by the majority of participants in connection with the general importance of L3 learning is based on pre-conceived goals of a general nature, with, nevertheless, some degree of pragmatism. This observation applies to positive responses in particular, while negative responses also suggest a sense of perceived irrelevance in relation to the learning experience.

To conclude, the reasons and/or motives vary according to the disposition of the participants:

- when the disposition is positive, pre-conceived goals, which include pragmatic interests (mainly secondary school advantage), are combined with factors relating to the experience itself (the learning act and the learning situation); general considerations make minimal contributions;
- when the responses are negative, pre-conceived goals are not mentioned (pragmatic or other); the reported factors relate exclusively to the circumstances of the experience (the learning act and the learning situation).

On the basis of these observations, one can say that the manner in which learners connect with the experience is crucial, since it appears to affect the learner at the learner level and at the learning situation level. This mirrors recent motivational reviews which emphasise the role of experience as a determining factor in shaping learners' motivation at these levels (see Dörnyei 1994, Oxford and Shearin 1994, Ushioda 1996); it also suggests that general considerations for learning foreign languages and a pragmatic orientation to learning are not sufficient in themselves to support the learner when he or she perceives the experience negatively .

* a stock of knowledge reflects the group's shared socio-cultural values, perceptions and memories in response to a particular question.

10.3 The experience at primary level

(Tables 31-70)

This part of the discussion focuses on participants' views of their on-going learning experience. It is divided into two sub-parts; the first aspect deals with the learners' general level of satisfaction and the second provides a description of the learning environment

10.3.1 Part 1: on having started French at primary level

(Tables 31-39) (visualised hierarchy: Table 267)

The majority of participants express satisfaction (Table 31). The hierarchy includes four response types, with factors relating to the experience itself featuring prominently.

Pragmatism is still relevant and is followed by general considerations and age and exposure time reasons. The factors which relate to the learning experience are located mainly at the learning situation level - *it's fun, I'm discovering another language, it's interesting, I learn a lot, etc.* - There is no evidence of reasons and/or motives emerging from the learner level (Table 32). We note approximately equal proportions of pre-conceived goals and reasons related to the circumstances at primary level. The meaningfulness of the experience has not materialised yet (Table 35).

In the case of negative responses, the reasons relate principally to the learning situation - *it's boring, it's after school hours* - and to the learner's sense of inadequacy - *it's difficult, I'm too young, etc.* - (Table 36). We also note the overwhelming proportion of reasons derived from the experience and the premature decision to deem the experience to be meaningless (Table 39).

The findings suggest:

- when the experience itself is assessed positively, the order of reasons and/or motives in the hierarchy changes when compared to previous hierarchies; the learning experience comes to the fore and takes precedence over pragmatic interests; the nature of the reasons and/or motives also changes: the L3 learning situation itself becomes the determining factor; however, the participants refer almost equally to pre-conceived goals;

- when the experience is perceived negatively, the L3 reasons relate first to the learning situation and second to the learner himself/herself; there are no reports of pre-conceived goals.

10.3.2 General summary of reasons and/or motives for learning an L3 at primary level and in general:

Three questions were designed to investigate participants' reasons and/or motives for L3 learning. The questions led the participants to reflect in general terms on the importance of learning foreign languages, in a more specific manner about the value of foreign languages at primary level, and in highly contextualised terms about their own experience. We note that the closer the participants' focus of attention is to the highly contextualised question, the more likely the responses will reflect the learning situation level. As we move upwards, to the value of learning foreign languages at primary level, the reasons and/or motives fall into the learner and learning situation levels. When we reach the general question, the responses fall into the language level. This observation coincides with Dörnyei's remark suggesting that the language level is the 'most general level' and that the inclusion of the learner and the learning situation levels makes the L2 motivation construct 'more relevant to the L2 classroom motivation' (p.279, p.283).

In the case of positive responses, we note the presence of pre-conceived goals and pragmatism.

With regard to negative responses, there is little or no evidence of pre-conceived goals. This may be attributed to the learner's dependence on the circumstances of the experience at the learner level and at the learning situation level.

Hence, we may conclude that while pre-conceived goals and pragmatism play a part in the learners' general disposition, particularly in relation to positive responses, these reasons and/or motives are not sufficient to sustain the learner (at least at primary level) during the experience, when the latter is perceived negatively. These features may be associated with the language level. Factors related to the experience at the learning situation and the learner levels appear to be more powerful, both in the case of negative and positive responses.

10.3.3 The experience at primary level :Part 2 (Tables 40-70)

The second part of G1 participants' experience considers their views on the general organisation and content of the classes, their opinions of the teachers in general and their perceptions of native speakers as teachers.

The responses provided by the learners convey a general atmosphere of hard work and fun (Table 52). Evidence emanating from Tables 32 and 52 emphasises the excitement of discovering the new language, with a balanced approach to play and work (Table 53) and, sometimes, with a mixed intake of learners of different ages (Tables 48, 49, 50). More specifically, play and work relate to games and competitions, work groups and quizzes, written and oral work (Tables 60-64). Furthermore, there are reports of regular tests (Tables 69-70). Teachers are perceived in a positive light by the majority of participants (Tables 54, 58); attitudes to native French speakers suggest that participants do not perceive any particular advantages of being taught by a native French speaker/teacher, although some advantages are reported (Tables 41, 42); however, some comprehension difficulties are also reported (Table 43). The majority of responses suggest that the teacher helps the pupils; fewer responses also indicate help from peers (Table 59). Learning materials are reported as not relying on textbooks (Table 65) and homework does not appear to be resented by most of those who report receiving assignments (Table 56); on the other hand, homework does not appear to be a widespread practice in the general scheme of the classes (Table 55). A majority of participants report that one hour of French per week is sufficient (Table 45).

10.4 Feelings when speaking French (Table 71) (visualised hierarchy, Table 276)

The majority of participants express positive feelings when speaking French (Table 276). The responses indicate that participants are relaxed and able. This suggests that the learning environment is non-threatening for the majority of learners. When negative feelings are expressed, shyness appears to be the dominant feature of this category (Table 71).

10.5 Perceptions of cross-linguistic influence (CLI)

(Tables 72, 73, 74)

G1 participants indicate fairly similar proportions of positive and negative CLI between French, Irish and English (Table 72). Awareness of a previous knowledge of languages (the L1 and the L2) and lexical, grammatical and phonetic similarities between languages form the basis of positive CLI. Processing advantages are also reported - *I know how languages work* -, as well as translation and memory enhancement. In this context, English and Irish are identified, with the mention of grammatical genders in relation to the latter (Table 73). When CLI is not perceived to be of any particular benefit, we note that the participants are engaged in a contrastive exercise between grammatical and phonetic systems (Table 74). These reports indicate that a communicative approach in L3 learning does not necessarily prevent the development of Language Awareness. This statement contrasts with Dabène's views which suggest that while a communicative and learner-centred approach promotes the negotiation of learning objectives, the learner, in reality, is often faced with a *fait accompli*. In other words, the formative value of L2 learning is insufficiently explored (1991, p.60). Consequently, Dabène advocates the introduction of Language Awareness in preparation to L2 learning proper (1991). However, some advocates of Language Awareness do not share the view; Hawkins (1991) recommends the introduction of a bridging subject which would foster links with the learner's L1 and L2. Luc (1991) proposes that a conceptual approach to Language Awareness can only be conceived within the study and practice of an L2; according to Luc, the development of Language Awareness through the study of metalinguistic features serves no purpose if the child is not provided with opportunities to practise the L2 by means of trial and error (1991, pp.88-9). The findings of this study suggest that the flexibility which is inherent to a communicative approach does not preclude the development of Language Awareness (Furlong and Singleton 1998).

10.6 Perceived language difficulty (Tables 75 and 76)

More than half of G1 participants report no perceived language difficulty (Table 75); however, responses suggest problems which are language-specific and memory-related as well as difficulties with particular oral/aural skills (Table 76). In respect of perceived language difficulty, G1 do not appear to find learning French particularly easy. In addition to other language-related problems, participants identify pronunciation as a stumbling block in their L3 development (Table 76). The finding that L3 pronunciation is described as difficult by this age-group in particular, suggests that *young* does not necessarily mean *ease of learning* in relation to the acquisition of a native-like accent. In this respect, Singleton (1989) reminds us that evidence in the L2 literature indicating children's superiority in 'acquiring native-like accents more efficiently than older learners... is for a trend rather than for an absolute and inexorable law' (1989, p.151).

Nevertheless, in the light of participants' generally positive feelings when speaking French, it is possible to assume, at this early stage of the discussion, that the primary school environment, perceived by the participants as non-threatening because of the fun component, provides a suitable space for learners to overcome some aspects of perceived language difficulty.

10.7 Aural comprehension (Tables 77-79)

G1 responses indicate that French is frequently spoken in class (Table 77). A small degree of confusion is experienced on the part of the learners (Table 78); however, the general impression which is conveyed suggests confidence in one's own understanding, with a preference for teacher clues to guessing strategies in instances of confusion (Table 79).

10.8 L3 writing

(Tables 80-84)

Since L3 primary school experiences do not always provide access to the written forms of the target language - see the initial stages of the Scottish and the French projects (Rapport de l'Atelier 4B 1993) -, attitudes to the written dimension of this approach were probed. The vast majority of Group 1 stated that they do not object to writing *a lot* or *often* because it helps them to remember, to revise, to understand and to pronounce (Tables 80, 81, 82). Writing, for this sample, also provides focus, resulting in improvements in the quality and speed of L3 acquisition. The variety of the views suggests that the subjects respond to written stimuli by using a wide range of strategies, which if exploited more systematically, are likely to lead to overall improved learning (see Cohen 1982, 1992, 1995). The evaluation of the Scottish Pilot Projects in 1995 refers to the benefits of L2 writing and identifies strategies favoured by pupils for developing competence in the target language. As with our learners, young Scottish pupils suggest L2 writing as a strategy for pronouncing and spelling words (Low et al. 1995, p.87). Furthermore, L2 writing is also identified as a preferred learning and memorisation strategy, as opposed to repetition and homework which were favoured strategies of secondary pupils. The researchers attribute the reliance on L3 writing as a learning and memorisation strategy to the novelty of the language at primary level (Low et al. pp.88-9).

10.9 Attitudes to languages

(Tables 85-91)

In respect of Group 1, we note that their attitude to an L3 and/or an L4 is extremely positive and that interest covers a total of twelve languages from German to Arabic and Chinese (Tables 86 and 88) - an encouraging finding in the context of Dabène's endeavours (see 10.5). Most participants are pleased with French as an L3 and approximately half of G1 express a keen interest in the possibility of an L4 at primary level (Table 87). An interesting report emerging from G1's responses conveys an interest in learning Irish both as an L3 and as an L4. It is difficult to furnish an explanation for this comment since exposure to Irish is a daily occurrence in the participants' lives.

10.10 Perception of French people and country (Tables 92-103)

The positiveness of G1's attitude to languages in general is also reflected in their views on French speaking people. Although few participants had the opportunity to visit a French speaking country, the majority of the sample express a willingness to travel (Tables 92-94). The group display interest in other people, astute observation of speech and appearance differences, and tolerance - the differences are *interesting* and *normal* (Tables 97-100). The responses confirm similar views pertaining to the degree of empathy among the 10-12 year old age-group (see Schumann 1975). The perceived differences are essentially language-related, which, in many ways justifies the introduction to foreign languages at primary level. Additional differences are appearance-related and cultural. It appears that the cultural differences do not surface immediately in participants' responses. However, further probing reveals that cultural differences, as well as applying to customs and rituals, are associated with cross-cultural understanding - or misunderstanding - (Table 103). This suggests that a cultural awareness dimension in the L2 classroom would be very beneficial and timely in view of the children's general empathetic disposition; it would also ensure that this disposition is not taken for granted, but rather, encouraged and fostered. In this respect it is encouraging to note the inclusion of a cultural awareness strand in the Draft Curriculum Guidelines of the Pilot Project on Modern Languages in the Primary School in Ireland. As well as the promotion of personal and cultural sensitivity, the strand

'allows many possibilities for integration in other areas of the curriculum. Links with the social environmental and scientific education curriculum...afford the possibility for discussion on the customs... on what is produced or manufactured in countries, on the local currency. Maps,... models of famous landmarks,... music, ...clothing...and the use of e-mail and the Internet... serve to authenticate the information and consolidate it in [the children's] minds' (1999, p.9).

10.11 Conclusion of G1 participants' L3 experience at primary level

The discussion of G1 participants' L3 experience at primary level has shown that the presence of pre-conceived goals and a pragmatic approach to L3 learning are insufficient to sustain the learner during the experience, when the experience is perceived negatively. With regard to the latter perceptions, as well as in the case of positive responses to questions investigating the value and the satisfaction of learning foreign languages at primary level, the comments refer to the learning situation level with some evidence at the learner level. When foreign languages are considered in general terms, the nature and locus of reasons and/or motives for L3 learning changes and becomes removed from the learning situation: they are situated at the language level. In a phenomenological perspective, the experience at primary level has not acquired meaning yet; therefore the reasons and/or motives are dependent on apprehension ('because' reasons and/or motives) or on determination ('in order to' reasons and/or motives). However, responses suggest that, overall, the experience is perceived to be positive; this emerges from the participants' degree of satisfaction with the actual experience and from the majority of positive feelings that are expressed when speaking French. The reports also indicate approval of the mix of hard work and fun. The approach is multidimensional in that it appears to stimulate a variety of abilities and strategies within the learners themselves. The activities cater for the learner's cognitive dimension - written, aural and oral input/output - and his/her socio-affective orientation - games, competitions, work groups. Furthermore, the cognitive and developmental dimensions of the experience are emphasised in the CLI reports indicating the development of language awareness, in the L3 writing evidence suggesting specific L3 learning strategies and in the aural apprehension L3 input. Interestingly, this young group of learners do not display any particular 'ease' of learning, particularly with regard to L3 pronunciation. It is suggested, however, that the learning environment which is perceived to be non-threatening might facilitate the growth of confidence in this oral skill. Overall, the evidence gleaned from the subjective accounts of 138 learners points to the importance of the L3 learning environment. The discussion of G2's and G3's accounts will shed further light on the matter.

11. Discussion: Group 2 (n = 83)

The following discussion examines G2' s collective stocks of knowledge which represent the group' s values, perceptions and memories of the experience at primary level. The temporal perspective of these participants must be emphasised in order to understand the views which animate the learners. They are at Stage 3 of Schutz' s (1970) retrospective scale, i.e., the act has been executed and is being looked back on as a *fait accompli*. As explained in Section 10.1, references to the 'language level', 'learner level' and 'learning situation level' relate to the three basic constituents of L2/L3 learning and to the three different aspects of language.

11.1 Reasons and/or motives for learning a foreign language at primary level (G2, Tables 104-114)

G2 are overwhelmingly in favour of learning a foreign language at primary level (Table 104). The hierarchy of reasons given by G2 indicates pragmatic preoccupations (secondary school advantage) and reasons derived from the experience at primary level. Perceptions of age and exposure time-related reasons and general considerations are also mentioned (Table 105); this lends support to the proposition that in a formal L2 learning situation motives loosely related to the L2 instrumental orientation, i.e., secondary school preoccupations, exams etc, are likely to predominate over socio-cultural considerations (Dörnyei 1990).

When the reasons are placed in the temporal perspective of G2 participants, we note that they are essentially derived from the meaningfulness of the experience, with additional references to the circumstances at primary level; smaller numbers of responses reflect pre-conceived goals (Tables 110). A closer examination of the manner in which circumstances at primary level are construed reveals that the reasons are located at the learning situation level - *it's fun, interesting, to discover another language* - and at the learner level - *it's easy, I chose the language*. Interestingly, G2' s responses emphasise the discovery of another language (Table 107). This may be attributed to the fact that the novelty of the L3 is recent in G2' s memory. As we turn our attention to the meaningfulness of the experience, the reasons mentioned are essentially at the learner level and are applied to the secondary school context. The participants express confidence and improved competence - *it's easier to learn later, I*

understand more, etc. - (Table 108). The responses convey a sense of familiarity with the L3 and echo similar reports from the Scottish Projects:

‘...it has been a slow introduction, it’s been fun and easy enough...to understand. I think it has definitely helped me coming to high school’ (Low et al. 1995, p.75).

The meaningfulness of the experience can be categorised under three headings: general help at second level, language-related reasons and confidence-related reasons (Table 109). The emerging pattern shows that, aside from the general help at second level, confidence gains appear to carry slightly more weight than language-related reasons.

In respect of negative responses, the experience is perceived to be meaningless, irrelevant and even deceptive - *I thought I knew too much and never worked* - (Tables 111 and 114). We also note that G2 focus primarily on the circumstances at primary level (Table 114).

To summarise G2’s reasons for learning foreign languages at primary level, we note that, in the case of positive responses:

- there are large amounts of pragmatic preoccupations;
- the experience is assessed in terms of its meaningfulness at the learner level and the situation level;
- as a perceived advantage, confidence appears to carry slightly more weight than language-related factors;
- G2 express a sense of excitement at having discovered a new language at primary level.

In the case of negative responses, the reported reasons reflect negative perceptions of the experience at primary level and lack of relevance of the experience to second level.

11.2 On the general importance of learning foreign languages (G2, Tables 116-120)

All G2 participants responded favourably to this question (Table 116). The hierarchy displays three response types which comprise pragmatic preoccupations, general considerations and language-related reasons (Tables 117). The value which this group place on pragmatic reasons

seems to be at the expense of more general considerations. Most of the reasons are at the language level. None of the reports corresponds to the learner or the learning situation levels. Table 120 indicates that most of G2's goals are of the pre-conceived type. The meaningfulness of the experience is implicit in some of the responses which refer to a perceived advantage at second level (Table 119). This particular pragmatic orientation on G2's part is possibly due to the fact that, for them, the experience at primary level is relatively recent; this suggests that the experience is first assessed in terms of its immediate relevance. This finding illustrates the point made by Schutz (1970): 'the closer memory-evidence is to experience, the stronger it is' (1970, p.130).

Hence, so far the findings indicate that:

- G2 combine a pragmatic orientation along with more general considerations;
- G2 appear to have a strong sense of pragmatism; this may be attributed to the immediate perception of relevance of the initial experience to later learning;
- in a general sense, reasons for learning foreign languages are represented in the form of pre-conceived goals with, nevertheless, some references to the meaningfulness of the experience;
- these reasons are essentially located at the language level; this applies to both positive and negative responses.

11.3 The experience at primary level

The first of three questions included in this section of the discussion considers the degree of satisfaction expressed by G2 participants in relation to the experience at primary level.

11.3.1 Part 1: On the satisfaction of having started French at primary level (G2, Tables 122-132)

Satisfaction is reported in 89% of participants' responses (Tables 122). G2 supply three response types which refer to secondary school advantage, factors related to the experience and additional pragmatic preoccupations. As in the previous question, but in this case, very strikingly, we note that G2 evaluate the worth of the experience in terms of its immediate

relevance to their own learning situation at the time of the study (Table 123). The widespread nature of G2's views is at the expense of general considerations. The group also mention factors related to the experience. These factors relate mostly to the learner level. Here, expressions of a need for achievement – *I was better than the others* .-, of confidence, of perceived L3 competence – *I understand more, it helped the pronunciation* - are manifest. At the learning situation level, we note the ambience in the class – *it was fun* -, a sense of relevance – *it was a good base to build on, it helped in remembering* - and interest – *I discovered another language*. These responses suggest that while the learning situation level must have had a strong influence, the learner level appears to be more meaningful. A possible explanation for this phenomenon lies in the learners' increased levels of consciousness. These levels of consciousness are a function of the learners' stage on Schutz's retrospective time scale (Stage 3), which translates into an increased reliance on the meaning of past actions and less dependence on the actual features of the past circumstances. In other words, for G2, it is the interpretation of the past experience at primary level which, to some extent, informs their on-going L3 learning experience at second level. In phenomenological terms these reasons are of the 'because/in order to' type and combine apprehension and determination (see Motivation and Phenomenology in 2.4.3). Interestingly, when the nature of the advantages gained at second level is considered, language-related reasons appear to grip the participants' perceptions in a slightly more pronounced manner than confidence-related reasons (Table 127). This contrasts with the categories which emerged from the value of learning foreign languages at primary level. Table 128 indicates that the experience is assessed in terms of its meaningfulness and relevance to the participants' L3 learning situation at the time of the study.

Reasons given for being dissatisfied with the experience are associated with the learning situation – *it was boring, it had no effect* - and with the learner level – *it was difficult, I had no urge to learn, I was too young* - (Table 129). When the temporal perspective is considered, G2 participants assess the experience in terms of its meaningfulness and they also mention circumstances at primary level.

To summarise, we note that:

- G2 express their satisfaction in terms of the meaningfulness of the experience;
- meaningfulness is defined in terms of its immediate relevance to the secondary school situation;

- the contextualised nature of the question appears to influence the description of the types of advantages gained at second level: the reports indicate a higher incidence of perceived language-related gains than of confidence factors; this pattern is the converse of the responses provided to the more general question on the value of learning foreign languages at primary level;
- G2's reasons for being satisfied with the initial experience relate mostly to the learner level; this may be attributed to higher levels of consciousness which are manifest because of the retrospective time scale, the nature of the reasons ('because/in order to' reasons) and their relevance to the learner level ; these learners exhibit less reliance on the circumstances at primary level; this observation applies to positive as well as negative responses.

11.3.2 General summary of reasons and/or motives for learning an L3 at primary level and in general:

For G2, reasons for learning an L3 at primary level are expressed in terms of the meaningfulness of the initial experience. This finding indicates the development of consciousness on the part of the participants; furthermore, these reasons are located at the learner level in particular; this also confirms higher levels of L3 learner consciousness .

G2 refer to the notion of the discovery of an L3 at primary level and emphasise secondary school advantage;

When reasons for learning a foreign language in general are given, we note that participants' reasons are located at the language level and reflect pre-conceived goals. This confirms that this level is more distant from learners' real learning experience.

In the case of negative responses, we note participants' tendency to refer to the circumstances of the learning situation and their failure to assign meaning to the experience.

11.3.3 Part 2: on native speakers as teachers

(G2, Tables 133-135)

The majority of responses in G2 indicate that the teacher was a native French speaker (Tables 133). This appears to have made a difference for the majority of participants who responded to the question (Tables 134). The hierarchy in G2 suggests that the perceived advantages in a native French speaker are principally teacher-related with some learner-focused advantages (Table 135).

Attitudes to a native French speaker/teacher reveal that in addition to the predictable expectations of the acquisition of a better accent as well as insight gains into the French way of life, G2 report that the experience is more credible and that as a result, the students become more attentive (Table 135). This finding suggests that for some, L3 learning may lack relevance due to the perceived limitations in its applications of the material learned - i.e., genuine communication opportunities. However, it is expected that with the advent of Information and Communications Technology, one can assume increased opportunities in language learning applications (Cohen 1995; Calvert 1996).

No disadvantages associated with a native French speaker/teacher are reported; however, one must note the high rate of no response (Table 135).

Summary of views on native French speakers as teachers:

The views are, overall, positive and suggest teacher-related advantages in addition to some positive impact on the learners themselves, particularly in terms of behaviour (increased attention, credibility of the learning experience) There are no negative comments.

11.3.4 Memories of French class at primary level

(G2, Tables 136-137)

Memories of French class at primary level yield three response types which constitute the hierarchies in G2. They include language-related memories, memories of the learning environment and learner-focused memories (Table 136). Some participants express negative memories which are principally attributed to the learning environment; some G2 participants appear to associate negative memories with themselves. (Table 137).

In the case of positive memories, when the participants describe what took place, both the hard work and fun dimensions are present in their descriptions and they also refer to language learning and cultural elements (Table 136). The learners report games and the relaxed atmosphere, and provide some indications about their personal disposition at the time of learning – eagerness - and the manner in which the learning took place: some subjects report that, at the time and in that environment, it was natural to make mistakes as the classes were a confidence-building exercise. As a result, some specific language-related difficulties previously identified by G1 appear to have been overcome, namely the acquisition of good pronunciation (Table 136). The conclusion, in this respect, is that it is the primary school environment and the learning situation, rather than age-related advantage alone, which appear to foster the development of skills; these learning conditions, in turn, will help the learner to deal with problems at a later stage. The environment, on the basis of the above findings, can be defined as a space which stimulates the active involvement of the learner by promoting multiple and varied activities, at a particular time of his/her affective and social development - greater empathy, eagerness and positive attitudes. Additional evidence emerges from the learning situation, which includes specific references to group/team work in the learning experience at primary level. Dörnyei and Malderez state:

‘Groups can be a substantial source of motivation to learn the L2. It has been recognized increasingly recently, that group-based motives form a great proportion of the complex of L2 motivation; that is, the way the learners feel in their L2 classes will influence their learning effort considerably... Groups can directly influence L2 learning... ‘(1997, p.67).

We suggest that out of the evidence provided by G2 participants, it is possible to discern the dynamics of the French class in this L3 experience: *fun, games, hard work, no pressure, interesting, small class, group/team work, quizzes, relaxed*. As a result, it is also possible to note the influence of this environment on the learners’ personal behaviour, confidence and L3 progress; participants’ comments would appear to lend support to this assumption: *I enjoyed learning, we were encouraged, we were eager to learn, it was normal to make a mistake, I learned to be polite, I developed a love of French* (Table 136).

The particular quality of the primary school environment is, of course, the outcome of the general principles of a curriculum which encourages learning by discovery in a holistic manner. In this regard, other L2 experiences at primary level repeatedly run into difficulties when faced with the issue of continuity at second level. Reports of the early L2 instruction experiment in France mention that not only are the problems language-related - syllabus content -, but they are also related to the nature of the activities - curriculum principles:

‘There is no guarantee of any continuity at secondary school... Those who at secondary school teach the pupils they have taught at primary school make a determined and tangible effort to sustain the children’s motivation by continuing with the forms of work and types of activity which made the introduction a success. As the months go by, however, the importance of the textbook and the syllabus along with marking requirements focus attention on the linguistic content and prevent innovative approaches to teaching from being consolidated and evolving’ (Kuperberg 1994, p.91).

Summary of memories of the experience at primary level:

In addition to language-related memories, the evidence emphasises the crucial importance of the learning environment and its impact on the learners’ affective domain, and consequently on their L3 learning. The learning environment, here, means both the L3 classroom and the primary level environment. We propose that the combination of both dimensions provides the setting for a positive L3 experience, with positive consequences for L3 learning itself, as evidenced, for example, by reports of improved pronunciation (this particular aspect of L3 learning was previously identified by G1 as a major stumbling block).

11.3.5 Summary of the experience at primary level

G2 assess the experience in terms of its meaningfulness at second level and in terms of more general considerations. The perceived gains are language- and confidence-related. The participants’ reasons for approving the experience are at the learner level, which suggests the development of consciousness in G2. This phenomenon is also manifest when perceived learner-focused advantages emerge from the effects of being taught by a native speaker. With regard to the memories of the L3 experience at primary level, we note that the learning

situation at primary level, through its activities and group dynamics, seems to have influenced the L3 learners in a direct and long lasting manner (see Table 136).

11.4 Feelings when speaking French (G2, Tables 138-140)

The hierarchy in G2 suggests higher levels of positive feelings than of negative feelings. The manner in which the group's hierarchy is organised indicates that G2's responses favour confidence in their ability and knowledge of the language followed by enjoyment (Table 139). Exposure time reasons are also mentioned. We note that G2 base their negative feelings, principally, on their lack of confidence (Table 140). The identification of 'understanding' – *I understand when I speak* - as a significant factor for oral performance (Table 139) is particularly interesting in this context, as it picks up on previous evidence that such a strategy is more likely to succeed than mere repetition of formulaic expressions (see Wong-Fillmore 1979, in Chapter 3). With regard to negative feelings, the most important factors in G2's reports are the fear of making mistakes and peer-related concerns (Table 140).

Summary of feelings when speaking French:

- G2 associate more positive feelings than negative feelings with the act of speaking French.;
- confidence is identified as the principal reason for feeling positive; interesting reports specify 'understanding' as an additional reason for feeling positive when speaking;
- the fear of making mistakes and peer-related concerns are important factors in explaining negative feelings.

11.5. Relationship between the experience at primary level and the experience at second level (G2, Tables 141-147)

Table 141 indicates that the experience at primary level had an important influence on G2 participants. The influence appears to be positive and suggests the development of confidence, perceived language-related advantages and the perception of exposure time-related benefits. The details provided by G2 include the development of an *interest* in French. The interesting dimension of these reports lies in the manner in which they mirror findings gleaned from a qualitative investigation of learner motivation. Ushioda (1994) reports that many of the 27 third level students whom she investigated, accounted for their 'motivational impetus in terms of **past and present** learning [her emphasis] and L2-related experience' (1994, p.81). Furthermore, on the basis of the importance of a 'positive self-image and sense of competence in motivational thinking', Ushioda suggests that the competence of the learner from his/her subjective viewpoint will also have a part to play in motivation and achievement (1994, pp.80-82). She indicates that seventeen of her twenty student sample 'attribute their motivation... to one or more of the following factors:

- good French learning ability
- ease of learning French
- facility for language learning
- good academic record in French' (1994, p.82).

In addition, one of her students reports experiencing a sense of pride in possessing language skills. With regard to the last report, we note that the sense of pride is important to our participants in the *feelings* section (Table 138). In respect of subjective motivational factors, we note that our participants articulate the effects of their early L3 experience in similar terms to Ushioda's sample: 'ease of learning' is stressed – *it made French easier, it helped in secondary, it helped to work out French, I learned good pronunciation, I knew more, I got a good understanding of French, it helped to learn a fourth language, it was a good foundation, I remembered.*

When no relationship is perceived between the primary and the secondary experiences, the reports principally indicate that there are no links between the two systems. While differences in the L2 teaching approaches between the two systems are reported in the Scottish Pilot

Projects (1993-1995), there are nevertheless suggestions of continuity when the visiting language teacher at primary level was the teacher at second level, or a sense of repetition when the teacher had no experience of primary L2 teaching (Low et al. 1995, p.80). In the present study, the characteristics between the primary and secondary systems are perceived to be so different that transfer of previously acquired oral skills does not appear to be a natural occurrence (see Kuperberg 1994, in 11.3.4).

The order of the skills which are reported to have benefited most from the initial contact at primary level include *understanding, speaking, reading* and *writing* in descending order (Table 144). Considering that previous responses indicated confidence in speaking as a result of 'understanding', this would suggest that the development of aural skills at primary level is likely to be a valuable asset for the learners' L3 oral performance at a later stage of their language experience.

The headstart reported by G2 participants indicates that, for most, it was immediately felt in first year, and that for some, it extended to the final year of the junior cycle (Table 145).

These findings are extremely encouraging.

The comments relative to commencing secondary school are also extremely positive and indicate perceptions of more knowledge, ease of learning and encouragement from the secondary school teachers (Table 147).

Summary of the relationship between the experience at primary level and the experience at second level:

- the experience at primary level appears to have had a positive influence on G2 participants at second level;
- the benefits are associated with confidence, perceived language gains as well as perceptions of exposure time-related benefits; dimensions such as interest and subsequent ease of learning are also reported;
- when no link is perceived between the experience at primary level and feelings when speaking French at second level, the dichotomy of the two systems is emphasised;
- comprehension is the first reported benefit followed by speaking, reading and writing;
- the relevance of L3 learning at primary level is immediately perceived in first year-secondary; in addition, reports indicate that it is still perceived to be relevant in the final year of the junior cycle of the secondary school system;

- finally, on starting secondary school, the majority of participants report a positive experience in relation to French.

11.6 Perceptions of cross-linguistic influence (CLI) (G2, Tables 148-151)

The most interesting trend which emerges from G2's comments suggests that Irish and English are perceived to have little negative influence on the learning of French. The languages are reported to have either no influence or a positive influence; in respect of the last comment, the influence is perceived to be extremely positive in the case of the influence of English on French (Table 149). This evidence is encouraging and suggests favourable conditions for explicit and systematic work on Language Awareness. Another interesting finding derived from the junior group's reports indicates perceived positive CLI of Irish on French (Table 148).

In the case of transfer from French to Irish and English, in spite of reports indicating no influence, it is interesting to note that G2 appear to be somewhat sensitive to the influence of the L3 (Tables 150, 151).

Summary of cross-linguistic influence:

Overall, cross-linguistic influence does not appear to be perceived by many participants; however, when perceptions are reported, these indicate more perceptions of positive cross-linguistic influence than negative perceptions; this finding suggests propitious conditions for the introduction of a Language Awareness component in the language learning experience of the learners.

11.7 Perceived language difficulty

(G2, Tables 152-155)

Over half of the participants in G2 do not perceive French to be difficult (Table 152). The hierarchy of perceived language difficulties is dominated by *grammar*. G2's concerns focus on *spelling*, *understanding* and *speaking* (Table 153). These differences are possible reflections of the learning environment and the associated demands within the group. G2, were preparing for the Junior Certificate examination which emphasises aural comprehension skills and does not include an oral component. One wonders, if the focus of the examination was different, would the perceived difficulties be different? For example, if the Junior Certificate examination included an oral test, would speaking become more problematic for G2?

Confusion between the oral and the written codes of French is experienced by a large number of participants (Table 154) and G2's responses assign similar characteristics to Irish, German, English and all foreign languages; however, it should be noted that Irish and English are likely to be the two languages encountered by the participants on a daily basis (Table 155). Interestingly, the previous reports indicate that *spelling* is identified more frequently than *understanding* in G2's hierarchy of perceived language difficulty. This suggests that this group are still in the process of establishing connections with the various forms of the L3; this process reflects complex-thinking which eventually enables concept formation in later adolescence.

Summary of perceived language difficulty:

- when G2 report difficulties, they mirror the L3 skills which are specifically tested in the examination for which the group were preparing at the time of the study; hence, it is fair to ask, if examinations were to change their emphasis on particular skills or add new L3 skills, would participants' perceived difficulties also change?
- confusion between the oral and written codes of languages are reported by participants in G2; this possibly reflects the cognitive developmental processes which G2 were going through at the time of the study; these processes establish associative bonds

between various L3 forms such as encoding and decoding written and oral L3 features.

11.8 Attitudes to languages (G2, Tables 156-165)

High levels of satisfaction with the initial choice of French as an L3 at primary level are expressed by G2 learners (Table 156). When preferences for an alternative L3 are mentioned, the following hierarchy emerges: German followed by Spanish; smaller percentages include Irish and Russian (Table 157). Encouragingly, approximately half of G2 show an interest in an L4 at primary level, with German and Spanish dominating the list. Irish also appears as an L4, and one wonders if this reflects a desire for increased exposure to the language or, on the contrary, if it suggests that the L2 status of Irish should be demoted to that of an L3 or even an L4? (Table 158, 159).

A relatively large number of participants report taking an L4 at second level (Table 162); German and Spanish emerge as the selected languages (Table 163).

Some participants in G2 gave up French at second level. The reasons provided by G2 are positive associations in respect of German. Additionally, G2 report negative associations in respect of French (Table 165).

Summary of attitudes to languages:

- overall, attitudes to languages in G2 are positive; approximately 50% of G2 participants report undertaking the study of an L4 at second level;
- approximately 50% of participants' responses indicate an interest in an L4 at primary level; German or Spanish are favoured as an L4;
- there are some indications that some participants would have preferred these languages as an L3, instead of French at primary level.

11.9 Attitudes to the school subjects of French, Irish and English (G2, Tables 166-175)

When extra-curricular value is assigned to the subjects of French, Irish and English, we note that G2's hierarchy includes French, English and Irish in descending order (Tables 166, 169, 171). The general impression conveyed by the group suggests that the three subject areas are treated differently. There appear to be few connections between each of these school subjects; French is perceived as a language which combines general considerations, pragmatic preoccupations and enjoyment (Tables 167, 168); Irish, on the other hand is principally a source of general considerations with some evidence of a pragmatic orientation and enjoyment; however, there are also reports of negative perceptions (Table 170). In respect of English, the focus is essentially pragmatic, along with the consideration that the language allows for personal expression and enjoyment (Table 172).

Nevertheless, and in spite of the apparent unrelated nature of these school subjects, it is difficult to overlook the quantity of views expressed by the participants in relation to each language. When one examines such views, the underlying potential of a cross-curricular approach to language learning becomes discernible and it becomes clear that much could be explored and articulated by way of a comparative study of the various languages concerned. Self-assessment in the three subjects of French, Irish and English suggests that G2 perceive their performance in English to be better than in French and Irish (Tables 173-175). Irish is reported as the subject where participants perceive they perform least well.

Summary of attitudes to the school subjects of French, Irish and English:

- the three languages appear to be valued for different and independent reasons in approximately 50% of G2's responses; the lowest extra-curricular value is assigned to Irish; nevertheless, the richness of the accounts provided suggests that cross-curricular links would enrich and broaden participants' perceptions of language learning in general;
- G2 express enjoyment in the subjects of French and Irish;
- when G2 assess their performance in the three languages, Irish is reported to be the subject where the participants perform least well; French and English appear to be the source of higher rates of perceived success.

11.10 Conclusion on G2 participants' L3 experience at primary level

The L3 learning experience of G2 participants is assessed in terms of its meaningfulness, that is, in terms of its relevance at second level. We note that G2 are sensitive to the immediate effects of the initial L3 experience on their current L3 learning experience at second level. On considering perceived language difficulties, G2 appear to be actively engaged in complex-thinking by making associations between various L3 features, as suggested by their concern for spelling and reported confusion between the oral and written codes of languages.

The learning situation of G2 participants also underlies their comments. Exam exigencies are reflected in their perceptions of language difficulty.

Additional dimensions emerge from this L3 experience at primary level. One of the most striking aspects is the emergence of a learner's consciousness. This is manifest in the retrospective glance cast by the participants, which invokes the meaningfulness of the experience in preference to circumstantial factors. The past experience is a source of information for their on-going actions at second level. Additional evidence of learner consciousness is provided by reports of factors which are located at the learner level as opposed to the learning situation level. Further reports suggest perceived learner-focused advantages in respect of being taught by a native French speaker; these reports stretch beyond the usual benefits associated with contact with native speakers.

The reported gains are language-related and include confidence and ease of learning. The learning situation at primary level is specifically identified as an important factor in the development of these assets.

Feelings when speaking French reflect positive and negative states. With regard to positive feelings, confidence in one's own ability and knowledge, as well as enjoyment are mentioned, and in the case of negative feelings, the fear of making mistakes and peer-related concerns are expressed. Participants' feelings, when speaking French, appear to have been influenced by the experience at primary level. However, it should be recorded that some participants did not perceive any links between the primary and the secondary experiences.

Comprehension is reported as the first skill which benefited from the early L3 experience and we propose that this skill plays an important part in the ability to speak in the L3, as reported

by some G2 participants. The headstart experienced in the first year of secondary school appears to have been long-lasting: some participants report perceived advantages in the final year of the junior cycle. This fact may also be attributed to the support and encouragement which most participants report receiving at second level.

Finally, general attitudes to languages, the decision to undertake the study of an L4 at second level by many participants, the minimal amount of reported negative CLI, the richness of participants' views on the subjects of French, Irish and English are all factors which point to the propitious conditions for an introduction of a Language Awareness component at an early stage. Such an undertaking would possibly contribute to the further development of learner consciousness.

12. Discussion: Group 3 (n = 61)

The following discussion examines G3's accounts of their experience at primary level. The discussion includes many features, already identified in respect of G2, thus emphasising similar perceptions and memories in the two groups. The temporal perspective places participants at Stage 3 of Schutz's (1970) retrospective scale, i.e., the act has been executed and is being looked back on as a *fait accompli*. The three basic constituents of the L2 learning process and the three different aspects of language, namely the language level, the learner level and the learning situation level, will also be referred to in this discussion.

12.1. Reasons and/or motives for learning a foreign language at primary level (G3, Tables 176-186)

G3 offer a large number of responses in favour of learning a foreign language at primary level (Table 176). The hierarchy of reasons in G3 indicates pragmatic preoccupations (secondary school advantage) and reasons derived from the experience at primary level. Perceived age- and exposure time-related reasons and general considerations are also mentioned (Table 177). G3's reasons reflect the meaningfulness of the experience for the group and make additional references to the circumstances at primary level; smaller numbers of responses refer to pre-conceived goals (Table 182). The reasons appear to be located at the learning situation level - *it's fun, interesting, to discover another language, there is less pressure in primary school* - and at the learner level - *it's easy, I chose the language, to get a taste for the language* (Table 177). G3's perceptions refer specifically to ease of learning at primary level. Could it be that the more advanced level of G3's L3 learning is also perceived as being more difficult, and that the retrospective glance triggers nostalgia? (Table 179). As we turn our attention to the meaningfulness of the experience, the reasons mentioned are essentially at the learner level and are applied to the secondary school context. The participants express confidence and improved competence - *it's easier to learn later, I understand more, I remember, etc.* - (Table 180).

The meaningfulness of the experience is divisible into three categories: general help at second level, language-related reasons and confidence-related reasons (Table 181). The pattern

suggests that, in addition to secondary school advantages, G3 appear to value confidence gains to a greater extent than language-related reasons.

In respect of negative responses, the experience is perceived by some participants to be meaningless, irrelevant - *It had no effect* - (Tables 183 and 186). There is also some evidence of pre-conceived goals in G3 - *it could damage Irish*.

To summarise G3's reasons for learning foreign languages at primary level, we note that, in the case of positive responses:

- there are large amounts of pragmatic preoccupations at the senior cycle;
- the experience is assessed in terms of its meaningfulness at the learner level and the situation level;
- references to confidence appear more widespread than references to language-related factors;
- this group report ease of learning and fun; the latter comments suggest a certain degree of nostalgia if one takes into account the more advanced aspects of their language learning;

In the case of negative responses, the reasons reflect negative perceptions of the experience at primary level and perceived lack of relevance at second level.

12.2 On the general importance of learning foreign languages (G3, Tables 188-196)

While a large majority believe in the importance of learning foreign languages, reservations were expressed by some G3 participants (2% of responses, Table 188). The hierarchy displays pragmatic preoccupations, general considerations and language-related reasons (Table 189).

Most of the reasons are at the language level; however, there are some references to the meaningfulness of the experience at primary level. None of the comments relates to the learner or the learning situation levels. Table 192 indicates that most of the goals are of the pre-conceived type.

Negative perceptions suggest that there is no need for a foreign language.

Hence, so far the findings indicate that:

- G3 comment in terms of pragmatic preoccupations and general considerations;

- reasons concerning the importance of learning foreign languages are represented in the form of pre-conceived goals with, nevertheless, some references to the meaningfulness of the experience;
- the reasons are essentially located at the language level; this applies to both positive and negative responses.

12.3 The experience at primary level

Here, G3 participants' satisfaction in relation to the experience at primary level, as well as their perceptions and memories of the experience, are discussed.

12.3.1 Part 1: on the satisfaction of having started French at primary level (G3, Tables 197-206)

Satisfaction is reported in 93% of G3's responses (Table 197). G3 provide four response types which comprise secondary school advantage, factors related to the experience, additional pragmatic preoccupations and general considerations. Factors related to the experience are mostly located at the learner level. Here, expressions of a need for achievement – *I was better than the others, I'm able to keep up, etc.* -, of confidence – *I developed confidence, I was allowed in the A stream, there is less pressure in first year* - of perceived L3 competence – *I understand more, it helped the pronunciation* - are manifest. At the learning situation level, we note references to the atmosphere of the class – *it was fun, it was different* -, a sense of relevance – *it was a good base to build on, I remembered* - and interest – *I discovered another language*. These responses suggest that the learners have developed an awareness of themselves as L3 learners.

When the nature of the advantages gained at second level is considered, there are more widespread reports of language-related reasons than confidence-related reasons (Table 202). This may also be related to increased levels of L3 learner consciousness as suggested in the previous paragraph. Table 203 indicates that the experience is assessed in terms of its meaningfulness and relevance to the participants' learning situation at the time of the study. However, G3 also include references to the circumstances at primary level and to pre-

conceived goals. G3 represent the oldest group in this study and this suggests that, perhaps, the wider implications of L3 learning begin to develop as a broader sense of the world is perceived. This coincides with adolescents' transition from an initial introspective and self-centred orientation to the gradual internalisation of broader views and concepts.

Reasons provided for being dissatisfied with the experience are associated with the learning situation – *it had no effect* - and with the learner level – *I was too young, it was too late* - (Table 204). When the temporal perspective is considered, G3 assess the experience in terms of its meaningfulness.

To summarise, we note that:

- G3 express their satisfaction in terms of the meaningfulness of the experience;
- G3 refer to general considerations as additional factors;
- the contextualised nature of the question appears to influence the description of the types of advantages gained at second level: the reports indicate a higher incidence of language-related gains than of confidence factors. This pattern may be seen as reflecting the development of L3 learner consciousness;
- G3's reasons for being satisfied with the experience relate mostly to the learner level.

We suggest that this relates to higher levels of consciousness which are manifest because of the retrospective time scale, the nature of the reasons ('because/in order to' reasons) and their relevance to the learner level .

This observation applies to positive as well as negative responses and is also observable in G2's responses (Tables 122-132).

12.3.2 General summary of reasons and/or motives for learning an L3 at primary level and in general:

The meaningfulness of the experience is reflected in the responses of this group. This finding indicates the emergence of consciousness on the part of the participants and this is echoed in the predominance of responses which appear to be located at the learner level . In this aspect, they resemble G2.

G3 reminisce about the perceived ease of learning at primary level, and acknowledge the gains at second level; however, they also display an awareness of L3 benefits which extend beyond

the formal learning environment. These findings would suggest that G3's reasons for L3 learning have become integrated into more general considerations which outgrow context-dependent perceptions such as second level advantages.

When probed on the general importance of L3 learning, we note that participants' reasons are located at the language level and reflect pre-conceived goals; references to the individual as an L3 learner or to the L3 learning situation are not included at this level. This phenomenon is also manifest in G2 (Tables 116-120).

12.3.3 Part 2: on native speakers as teachers (G3, Tables 207-209)

The majority of responses in G3 indicate that the teacher was a native French speaker (Table 207). This appears to have been perceived as making a difference for the majority of participants who responded to the question (Table 208). The perceived advantages in a native French speaker are principally teacher-related alongside with some learner-focused advantages (Table 209).

Attitudes to a native French speaker/teacher reveal that in addition to the predictable expectations of the acquisition of a better accent, as well as insight gains into the French way of life, the experience is also perceived as being more interesting and more relaxed; it is presumed that the higher levels of attention which are mentioned in some responses are derived from these factors (Table 209).

No disadvantages associated with a native French speaker are reported; however, one must note the high rates of no response (Table 209).

Summary of views on native French speakers as teachers:

The views are, overall, positive and suggest teacher-related advantages in addition to some positive impact on the learners themselves, particularly in terms of behaviour (increased attention). There are no negative comments. These views echo those found in G2 (Tables 133-135).

12.3.4 Memories of French class at primary level (G3, Tables 210-211)

Memories of French class at primary level yield three response types which constitute the hierarchy in G3. They include language-related memories, memories of the learning environment and learner-focused memories (Table 210). Some participants express negative memories which are principally attributed to the learning environment (Table 211).

In the case of positive memories, when the participants describe what took place, the hard work and fun dimensions are present in their descriptions and they also refer to language learning and cultural elements (Table 210). The learners report games, drama, songs and the relaxed atmosphere, as well as some indications about their personal disposition at the time of learning – eagerness ; some subjects report that it was natural to make mistakes which suggests that the learning environment was non-threatening; as in the case of the G2 responses, good pronunciation and group/team work are identified as some of the perceived features of French class (Table 210).

The dynamics of the French class in this L3 experience are also echoed in G3's responses: *fun, games, hard work, no pressure, interesting, small class, group/team work, quizzes, relaxed, drama, songs, mixed class*. The features of this environment seem to have influenced the learners' personal behaviour, confidence and L3 progress: *I enjoyed learning, we were encouraged, we were eager to learn, it was normal to make a mistake, I learned to be polite, I developed a love of French, I tried harder in secondary, pity I gave up* (Table 210).

Incidentally, a particularly interesting reference is made to 'games' by a seventeen year old:

'...these games and riddles stick in your [mind] and can be useful in future years...'

(see Appendix for the complete statement).

Summary of memories of the experience at primary level:

G3's memories reflect an experience which occurred between four and six years before the present study was launched. Yet, these memories mirror those of G2 (Tables 136-137); the importance of the learning environment, its impact on the learner's affective domain – confidence gains - and his/her L3 learning – perceived language gains - come to the fore.

12.3.5 Summary of the experience at primary level

G3's reports contain similar perceptions of the experience to G2's. First, the experience appears to be assessed in terms of its meaningfulness at second level and in terms of general considerations. The perceived gains are language- and confidence-related. Second, the participants' reasons for approving the experience at primary level are situated at the learner level and point to the development of learner consciousness. This phenomenon recurs when perceived learner-focused advantages emerge from the effects of being taught by a native speaker/teacher. With regard to the memories of the L3 experience at primary level, we also note the importance of the learning situation at primary level which seems to have influenced G3 participants in a direct and long lasting manner (see Table 210 and Appendix for a 6th year student's comments on games at primary level).

12.4 Feelings when speaking French

(G3, Tables 212-214)

G3 participants express more positive feelings than negative feelings (Table 212). G3 report enjoyment first, followed by confidence in their ability and knowledge (Table 213). Age and exposure time reasons are also mentioned. The identification of 'understanding' – *I understand when I speak* - as an important factor for oral performance (Table 213) is particularly interesting in this context, since it was also identified by G2.

Negative feelings convey perceived language-specific difficulties in particular (Table 214). Finally, the most important factors emerging from G3's negative feelings are the fear of making mistakes and peer-related preoccupations (Table 214).

Summary of feelings when speaking French:

The following features emerge from G3's responses:

- more positive feelings than negative feelings in relation to speaking French;
- enjoyment and confidence; *understanding* is mentioned as a reason for feeling positive when speaking;

- negative feelings can be explained in terms of the fear of making mistakes and peer-related concerns.

These affective characteristics are also found in G2 (Tables 138-140).

12.5 Relationship between the experience at primary level and the experience at second level (G3, Tables 215-221)

Table 215 indicates that the experience at primary level had an important influence on G3 participants. The influence is perceived as being positive; participants comment on the development of confidence and mention perceived language-related advantages, as well as age- and exposure time-related benefits. G3 also refer to factors related to the learning situation at primary level (Table 216). They include the development of an *interest, a love of French* and a sense of competence – *I was good at it so I worked at it*. In this connection, the achievements at primary level appear to prompt sustained work at second level (Table 216). Finally, G3 identify factors related to the learning environment as having had a direct influence on their ability to speak in French – *I learned without pressure, I learned in a relaxed atmosphere, it was fun, I met French people for the first time*.

When no relationship is perceived between the primary and the secondary level experiences, the reports principally indicate that there are no links between the two systems

The order of importance attributed to the skills which are perceived to have benefited most from the initial contact at primary level is remarkably similar in G3 and in G2. The table shows *understanding, speaking, reading* and *writing* in descending order (Table 218).

The headstart reported by G3 participants indicates that, for most, it was immediately beneficial in first year, and that for some, it extended to the final year of the senior cycle (17% of responses, Table 219).

The comments relating to secondary school are also extremely positive and indicate perceptions of knowledge, ease of learning and encouragement from the secondary school teachers (Table 221).

Summary of the relationship between the experience at primary level and the experience at second level:

- the experience at primary level appears to have had a positive influence on G3 participants at second level;
- the benefits are associated with confidence, perceived language gains as well as perceptions of age- and exposure time-related benefits; dimensions such as interest, a love of the L3 and a sense of competence are reported by G3, who also lay emphasis on subsequent ease of learning;
- when no link is perceived between the experience at primary level and feelings when speaking French at second level, the dichotomy of the two systems is pointed out;
- comprehension is the first reported benefit followed by speaking, reading and writing; L3 comprehension was also identified by G2 as an important skill and factor of successful L3 oral performance;
- the relevance of L3 learning at primary level is immediately perceived in the first year of the secondary system; in addition, reports indicate that it is still perceived to be relevant in the final year of the senior cycle of the secondary school system;
- when starting secondary school the majority of participants report a positive experience in relation to French;

Finally, these reports are reminiscent of G2's accounts (Tables 141-147).

12.6 Perceptions of cross-linguistic influence (CLI) (G3, Tables 222-225)

The most interesting trend which emerges from G3's reports suggests that Irish and English are perceived to have little negative influence on the learning of French. The languages are reported to have either no influence or a positive influence; in respect of the last comment, the influence is perceived to be extremely positive in the case of the influence of English on French (Table 223).

Summary of cross-linguistic influence:

Overall, reports from G3 suggest that cross-linguistic influence is either perceived as positive or not perceived at all. Similarity of perceptions between G3 and G2 emerges once again.

12.7 Perceived language difficulty (G3, Tables 226-229)

Over half of the responses in G3 indicate that participants do not perceive French to be difficult (Table 226). *Grammar* dominates the list of G3's perceived difficulties with additional references to *writing*, *speaking* and *understanding* (Table 227). In this connection, the older group were preparing to sit the Leaving Certificate examination, which places high demands on L3 writing and entails an oral examination. Hence, the pattern of perceived difficulties seems to reflect examination requirements; this intriguing phenomenon is also manifest in G2's reports: they too, report perceived difficulties which reflect the focus of their Junior Certificate examination.

Confusion between the oral and the written codes of French is reported in 40% of participants' responses (Table 228), and similar confusion is reported in Irish, German, English and all foreign languages (Table 229).

Summary of perceived language difficulty:

- the perceived difficulties mirror the L3 skills which are specifically tested in the examination for which G3 were preparing at the time of the study; this pattern is also manifest in G2's reports of perceived language difficulty (Tables 152-155);
- confusion between the oral and written codes of languages is reported in 40% of responses.

12.8 Attitudes to languages (G3, Tables 230-239)

High levels of satisfaction with the initial choice of French as an L3 at primary level are expressed by G3 participants (Table 230). When preferences for an alternative L3 are mentioned, the following hierarchy emerges: German followed by Spanish; smaller percentages refer to Sign Language (Table 231). Encouragingly, responses indicate that approximately half of G3 participants would have liked an L4 at primary level, with German and Spanish dominating the list (Tables 232, 233).

A large number of participants report taking an L4 at second level (Table 236); German and Spanish emerge as the selected languages (Table 237).

Some participants in G3 gave up French at second level. The reasons supplied indicate, on one hand, a preference for German and on the other hand, difficulties with the French teacher at second level (Tables 239).

Summary of attitudes to languages:

- overall, attitudes to languages in G3 are positive; approximately 75% of responses indicate that the study of an L4 at second level was undertaken;
- approximately 50% of participants report an interest in an L4 at primary level; German or Spanish are mentioned in this context;
- there are indications that some participants would have preferred these languages as an L3, instead of French at primary level;
- reasons for giving up French at second level relate to a preference for German and teacher difficulties;

Attitudes to languages and in respect of language choices are similar in G2 (Tables 156-165).

12.9 Attitudes to the school subjects of French, Irish and English (G3, Tables 240-248)

Responses under this heading indicate that more value is placed on the subject of English than on the subjects of French and Irish (Tables 240, 242, 244). As for G2, the three languages appear to be appreciated for different reasons (Tables 166-175).

G3's responses bring interesting trends to light; in respect of French, we note relatively high levels of pragmatic preoccupations. G3 are close to completing the senior cycle of second level education, which implies that opportunities to apply the L3 in a concrete manner are emerging as career and/or third level decisions are made (Table 241). Patterns for Irish indicate that negative perceptions of the language outweigh the enjoyment factor in G3's hierarchy; once again, this possibly mirrors the learning situation of the group who were experiencing examination pressures at the time of the study – *it interferes with other work, it means pressure* - (Table 243). In respect of English, enjoyment is mentioned. This may explain why G3 initially attributed higher extra curricular value to this subject (Table 245). Self-assessment in the three subjects of French, Irish and English suggests that G3, perceive their performance in French to be better than in English or Irish (Tables 246-248). Irish is reported as the subject where participants perceive they perform least well.

Summary of attitudes to the school subjects of French, Irish and English:

- the three languages appear to be valued for different and independent reasons , as indicated by approximately 50% of G3's responses; the lowest extra-curricular value is assigned to Irish;
- the pressure of examinations is suggested in G3's responses, as reflected in their perceptions of French and Irish; however, in respect of English they appear to enjoy the challenges of its literature and the higher levels of thought and expression;
- when G3 assess their performance in the three languages, Irish is reported to be the subject where the participants perform least well; French and English appear to be the source of higher rates of perceived success;

Similar attitudes and perceptions emerge from G2's responses (Tables 166-175).

12.10 Conclusion on G3 participants' L3 experience at primary level

Overall, G3's experience of French at primary level appears to have been extremely positive – 93% of responses indicate that participants were glad of the initial experience.

The emergence of a learner's consciousness is manifest in G3 participants' retrospective accounts, through recurring references to the meaningfulness of the experience, in preference to circumstantial factors. This observation applies to positive as well as to negative perceptions. Furthermore, the responses indicate G3 participants' awareness of themselves as L3 learners; mention is made of perceived language-related advantages, confidence gains, a sense of competence and ease of learning; in addition, learner-focused advantages are reported in respect of advantages associated with native speakers as teachers.

The positive dynamics of the class at primary level are identified as meaningful factors which seem to have influenced these subjects' L3 learning. These views emerge from G3 participants' enduring memories of the experience and feelings when speaking French.

Comprehension appears to be the principal locus of benefit and the perceived advantage in first year is reported to have been sustained through to the final year of secondary school by some participants. Similarities are found in G2's perceptions of the learning environment at primary level, in their reports suggesting the development of learner consciousness and in the perceived gains at second level, which also include confidence, ease of learning and improvements in L3 comprehension.

The learning situation of G3 participants at the time of the study underlies their comments. Pressures related to the final examination of second level studies are reflected in their perceptions of language difficulty as well as in their views on the three school subjects of French, Irish and English. This pattern is also perceptible in G2's responses.

In conclusion, we believe that one of the key outcomes of this experience at primary level is the development of learner consciousness. This proposition is derived from the discussions of G2's and G3's accounts. The emergence of learner consciousness was achieved first by an early start which promoted L3 learning as an experiential-developmental process, and which integrated L3 learning into the general cognitive development of the children. Second, the break which occurs at the transition between the primary and the secondary systems, the

change of environment, the different teaching approaches, as well as the encouragement received at second level, further contribute to the awakening of consciousness; the phenomenon is akin to 'the law of awareness'. This law suggests that 'a disturbance in an automatic activity makes the actor aware of that activity' (Vygotsky 1962, p.16). We suggest that these events in children's lives act as disturbances in the automatic activity of going to school; these disturbances, brought about by the new environment and the new learner status, represent and force a shift in focus by triggering awareness of pre-existing resources and knowledge. These resources are put to work in the new environment, provided that it sets challenges by addressing this stock of knowledge. Hence, in this study, consciousness of one's abilities and knowledge must also be seen as a direct expression of L3 learner consciousness. It is only in this sense that the L3 experience at primary level can be deemed to be truly meaningful.

13. Comparison of Group 1, Group 2 and Group3: discussion

This section compares some of the hierarchies displayed by participants across the three age groups. The following aspects of the study are compared:

- reasons and/or motives for L3 learning;
- learners' satisfaction at having joined French classes;
- learners' feelings when speaking French;
- perceived language difficulty.

The comparisons establish patterns of similarity across the groups but do not discuss the detail of the hierarchies since these were examined in previous sections.

13.1 Reasons and/or motives for learning an L3 at primary level (Tables 249-257)

Tables 249, 250 and 251 indicate that G2 and G3 share higher levels of pragmatism in their reasons and/or motives to learn an L3 at primary level than G1; however, references to age- and exposure time-related reasons, general considerations and factors related to the experience at primary level feature in the three groups' hierarchies with minor variations between the percentages. As we consider the retrospective time scale which reflects the participants' perspective, we note that factors associated with the initial L3 experience have become meaningful for G2 and G3 (Tables 252, 253, 254). G1's reasons and/or motives for learning an L3 at primary level are essentially of the pre-conceived kind; in contrast, hierarchies in G2 and G3 do not present very high levels of pre-conceived notions. This observation possibly reflects changes which occur over a period of time, in individuals' perceptions, as a result of experience.

Negative responses to the question suggest that there is little or no evidence of pre-conceived goals in participants hierarchies across the three age groups; on the other hand, reactions to the actual experience, as a set of circumstances or in terms of its meaning, come to the fore (Tables 255-257). In this instance, perceptions appear to be directly dependent on and affected by the experience to the point that pre-conceived goals, even of the pragmatic sort, are insufficient to justify the deployment of effort to learn foreign languages at primary level.

Summary of reasons and/or motives to learn an L3 at primary level:

- G1's reliance on pre-conceived goals contrasts with G2's and G3's propensity to refer to the meaningfulness of the past experience;
- G2 and G3 display large degrees of pragmatism;
- negative responses result directly from the experience across the three age groups, a fact which appears to supersede pre-conceived notions.

13.2 Whose decision was it that you should learn French at primary level? (Tables 258-260)

The patterns between G2 and G3 are similar and suggest that older participants have developed an awareness of parents' role in providing and financing learning opportunities for their children. G1, on the other hand, talk more about self-motivation and about sensitivity to peer influence. We believe that the two perspectives are, probably, accurate reflections of the actual situation : parents, individuals and peers, all exerted some influence, implicitly or explicitly, depending on the degree of awareness of participants at the time of the study. In this connection, the Final Report of the Evaluation of the Scottish Projects points out that a probing of parents' views would undoubtedly yield some interesting dimensions (Low et al 1995, p.175).

Summary: Whose decision was it that you should learn French at primary level?

Although there are some differences between the youngest group and the older groups, influences appear to emerge principally from parents and participants, and to a lesser degree, from peers.

13.3 Is it important to learn foreign languages?

(Tables 261-266)

With regard to the general importance of learning foreign languages, G1 and G3 appear to have more in common with one another than with G2. General considerations and pragmatic interests are reported by G1 and G3 in roughly equal proportions, a fact which suggests a richer mix of reasons and motives for L3 learning in their cases than in the case of G2. This may be related to age and developmental factors, G1 participants displaying an open disposition to foreign cultures (Singleton 1989, Schumann 1975) and G3 having internalised broader views of L3 learning as a result of a longer and perhaps more varied exposure to the L3 than G2. For their part, G2 emphasise a pragmatic orientation to L3 learning and the three groups do not report many language-specific motives (Tables 261-263).

Identical patterns emerge from Tables 264, 265 and 266 and reflect the finding that the three groups' motives, associated with the general importance of L3 learning, are of the pre-conceived kind.

Summary: Is it important to learn foreign languages?

G1 and G3 express more general views in relation to L3 learning than G2 and this may reflect both age and developmental factors within each group. G2's motives appear to relate to the pragmatic relevance of L3 learning in particular, at the expense of more general views.

However, the pre-conceived nature of the reasons and/or motives for L3 learning in a general sense is noticeable across the three age-groups.

13.4 On the satisfaction of having started French at primary level

(Tables 267-275)

G1's satisfaction is principally associated with factors related to the experience which they were undergoing at the time of the study. This contrasts with G2 and G3 whose satisfaction emerges from the relevance of the initial experience to their learning situation at second level. In addition, G1 express pragmatic interests, along with some general considerations and age- and exposure time-related reasons. The last two response types receive little or no attention

from G2 and G3. (Tables 267-269). Turning to the temporal perspective of the three groups, we note that G1's reasons and/or motives for being happy with the classes at primary level are derived from an almost equal mix of pre-conceived goals and from the circumstances at primary level (Table 270). In contrast, G2 and G3 do not refer so much to pre-conceived goals, their satisfaction with the initial experience being defined in terms of its subsequent meaningfulness (Tables 271, 272).

In the case of negative reports, the patterns indicate that for the three groups, dissatisfaction is associated with the circumstance of the experience at primary level or its lack of relevance at second level (Tables 273-275).

Summary on the satisfaction of having started French at primary level:

G1's satisfaction relates to a number of factors arising from the learning situation as well as general considerations. G2 and G3 express satisfaction, essentially in terms of the relevance of the initial experience to second level.

In the case of dissatisfaction, we note across the three age groups, the absence of pre-conceived goals and the exclusive reference to factors associated with the experience at primary level and/or its lack of relevance at second level.

13.5 Summary of reasons and/or motives for learning an L3 at primary level and in general

G1's responses refer to the circumstances of the on-going learning experience and pre-conceived goals, while G2's and G3's reasons point out the meaningfulness of the initial experience. However, we note an emerging trend between G1 and G3: G1 and G3 appear to share a slightly wider perspective of L3 learning than G2 (see Tables 261 – 263); this pattern is repeated in the participants' reasons for being satisfied with the experience at primary level (Tables 267-269).

In the case of negative perceptions, reasons against L3 learning at primary level and dissatisfaction with the experience are all related to the experience itself and/or its irrelevance at second level. This pattern is valid for the three age groups.

13.6 Feelings when speaking French

(Tables 276-278)

Within each group, there are more expressions of positive feelings than negative feelings when speaking French. Similarities between G1 and G3 emerge and suggest slightly higher levels of negative feelings than in the case of G2 (Tables 276-278). It is difficult to explain why these similarities exist in this context.

13.7 Perceived language difficulty

(Tables 279-281)

The tables indicate that the younger learners do not find L3 learning particularly easy when compared to G2 and G3. However, the three groups' responses indicate marginally higher percentages referring to *no* perceived difficulty than to perceived difficulty.

Patterns of similarity between G1 and G3 emerge as the two groups appear to experience slightly more difficulty with French than in the case of G2.

13.8 Conclusion on comparisons between G1, G2 and G3

Notwithstanding G1's propensity to mention pre-conceived goals in contrast to G2's and G3's references to the meaningfulness of the experience at primary level, the general impression conveyed by the juxtaposition of the three groups' collective reports suggests resemblances between the three sets of learners; the similarities are found in their reasons and motives for L3 learning and for their satisfaction with the experience at primary level; analogous features also emerge in feelings when speaking French and perceived language difficulty. In addition, an underlying pattern of similarity also appears to be manifest in some of G1's and G3's responses. Their comments include references to a wider view of L3 learning than in the case of G2 (Tables 261-263 and 267-269). The similarity is repeated in the contexts of feelings when speaking French and of perceived language difficulty; marginally higher percentages in G1 and G3 indicate more negative feelings when speaking French and more perceived language difficulty than in the case of G2 (Tables 276-278 and 279-281).

With regard to G1's and G3's references to general considerations for L3 learning, it is conceivable that G1's disposition to L3 learning reflects an open attitude to foreign cultures which may decrease in early adolescence (Schumann 1975); this may explain why more general views of L3 learning are scarce in G2. In respect of G3, their developmental phase and age would suggest that concepts and generalisations have been formed, exposure to the L3 has been varied and possibly successful, and therefore, L3 learning is integrated in a wider framework.

In respect of feelings when speaking French, it is probable that the novelty of speaking French is perceived as a challenge by the younger learners; in the case of the older learners, for the first time, oral performance has become the subject of a formal assessment in the L3 learning experience and as a result, the source of more anxiety than in the past. This may also account for the reports of higher levels of perceived language difficulty in G1 and G3 than in G2; for G1, the L3 is new and these learners have to form many new language-specific associations; for G3, L3 learning at senior level of the secondary system places substantial demands on learners. G2, for their part, appear more pragmatic in their attitude to L3 learning; furthermore, the benefits of the early exposure to the L3 are possibly more perceptible for these participants, since the experience at primary level is still a recent event in their lives. Finally, the comparison of G1, G2 and G3 shows that, when L3 learning is perceived negatively within each age group, the reasons are rooted in the experience itself and/or its irrelevance; this confirms the importance of the quality of the learning experience in language learning.

14. Gender-related considerations: discussion

This part of the study has revealed significant differences between female and male learners in respect of various foci. From these differences, two characteristic traits emerge in the learning styles of these participants : more girls appear to be fully involved in the learning process and the subject matter, making the experience an end in itself; the outcome of this learning approach seems to lead to individual, social and environmental resourcefulness. For their part and to a larger extent, boys prefer to set goals without relating to the subject matter, a process which diverts their attention away from the learning process. In this case, the learning process becomes a means to an end. Consequently, a larger number of boys do not appear to be as individually, socially or environmentally resourceful as girls; this is apparent in their yielding to external factors, their lack of co-operation with their peers and their unease in the learning environment.

When we consider the learning experience, we discern that more girls than boys are willing to invest time in the development of their L3 - *it's useful , to understand more* (Table 284) -, and for wider, general considerations - *for travel, holidays, for the future, for good education, etc.* (Table 288) . This suggests that the rewards are developmentally-related and within a broader conceptual time-frame; we note that the investment on their part is experiential - they have fun, they are interested, (Tables 290, 292) -, that it is also social - they co-operate with their peers (Table 296); we become aware of the ability of more girls than boys to draw on a multi-dimensional experience - they do not resent being in a mixed age group (Table 292), they do not resent additional work (Table 297); a larger proportion of girls also use mixed and varied strategies in comprehension (Table 311), book use (Table 298) and writing tasks (Table 313). Furthermore, more girls than boys appear to be self-driven, as is evident in their self-motivation when joining French classes and their confidence in their own ability (Tables 286, 290).

On the other hand, more boys than girls appear to need 'an agenda' to justify their learning experience (Allwright 1984; Graham and Rees 1995) - *it will help me in secondary school* (Table 284) , *I need it [French] for college* (Table 288). The aforementioned authors suggest that the 'personal agenda' issue is related to the principle of relevance. It seems that more male than female learners, in this study, perceive the relevance to lie in the concrete application of their knowledge - *to talk to people* (Table 290) ; this piece of evidence suggests that more

boys than girls need to find an outlet for their knowledge in real communication situations which, to boys in particular, may appear more meaningful than the collaborative activities of the communicative L3 classroom. In this study, a larger number of male learners do not seem to evolve comfortably in a multi-dimensional experience – more boys than girls resent mixed age-groups (Table 292) - and appear to be uncomfortable with the teacher (Table 293) as well as rejecting the idea of additional L3 related work (Table 297). In terms of strategy use, a larger number of boys appear more limited than girls in comprehension tasks (Tables 309, 310, 311), book use (Table 298) and writing tasks (Table 313). With regard to cross linguistic influence, more boys than girls display higher levels of sensitivity to Irish, the more distant language (Tables 304, 306), in contrast with the girls, who turn to English for support in L3 acquisition, more readily. These findings may be an indication of the language difficulties encountered by boys in particular. It is possible that in comprehension, for example, some of these learners do not know how to meet the challenge and have recourse to compensation strategies – *guessing* (Table 311). The ‘don’t know how’ factor is expressed clearly by some male participants in the *low self-esteem* category of this investigation (Table 301). This sense of helplessness may help us understand why these boys do not appear self-driven, as they respond to external pressure - *parents and peers* (Table 286) -, and external goals - access to *third level education* , *emigration* (Tables 284, 288). Furthermore, more boys than girls do not seem confident in their own abilities and suffer low self-esteem (Table 301). On the basis of this evidence, more male language learners display a real disadvantage when compared to their female counterparts. Some L2 gender-difference studies (Zammit 1992; Martin 1994), confirm that boys appear to find foreign languages more difficult than mathematics and resent the workload associated with the task. Also, as seen in the ‘personal agenda’ issue, perceived relevance of the subject matter seems to trigger willingness to work on the part of male subjects (Graham and Rees 1995). Hence, a closer study of the possible correlation between perceived difficulty, relevance and the male’s representation of the world through language usage may help us understand the problems of these learners.

Sperber and Wilson (1986), in analysing the principle of relevance, propose that humans try to process information as productively as possible, and ‘try to obtain from each new item of information as great a contextual effect as possible for as small as possible a processing effort’ (1986, p142).

When considering the male language learner, we recall that the only connection which appears to be made with the L3, in this study, is with its application, namely *talking to people* (Table

290). However, the learning experience did not meet this expectation, in that more boys than girls did not seem capable of involving themselves, and of finding relevance in the process (Table 291). We also note that these learners' difficulties appear to be at the input – *understanding* - and the output – *speaking* - stages of the L2 information processing construct (Tables 309, 310); this implies that the processing effort required would be very costly. Drawing on Sperber and Wilson's theory of relevance (1986), such learners would be entirely justified in questioning the relevance of L3 learning, since a maximal processing effort at the input stage would be perceived to be required; furthermore, at the output stage and in respect of the expected contextual effects resulting from these learners' processing effort, the learning situation is not perceived as providing suitable/relevant opportunities to apply this new knowledge in a meaningful manner: application of the L3 here is expected to occur in a real communication situation and communicative interaction in L3 classroom is not interpreted as a meaningful exercise leading to the attainment of the desired contextual effects, that is, *to talk to people*. Therefore, one must ask why a language class which does precisely that, i.e. provide the context for 'talking' opportunities, does not succeed in integrating many of its male learners. Perhaps a third dimension needs to be considered, namely the individual's socio-cultural representation of the world through language usage.

From a female's point of view, as has often been reported in L1 and L2 studies, language is used as a channel for seeking information, or 'active listening' (Hickey 1992), a trait which may explain why no significant comprehension difficulty is reported by more girls than boys in this study (Table 309). Language is also used as a form of reciprocal support (see Johnstone, Ferrara and Mattson-Bean 1992), which translates here into co-operation with peers (Table 296). Language for females also appears to be a connection between themselves, the other and the world (see Gilligan 1982); the personal investment in the L3 learning situation - *fun, interest, excitement and L3 related benefits* (Tables 290, 292, 299, 302) - , and the significant extra-curricular value placed by the girls on French, English and Irish seem to confirm this (Tables 320, 321, 323, 324, 325). Finally, the female superiority in verbal skills and discourse management is now widely accepted (see Nordenstam 1992, Halpern 1992). It is therefore not surprising, in an L3 learning situation which encourages communicative skills within the classroom itself, that these learners will be very successful.

From a male's point of view, language is used as a channel for giving information, a means of control and attention seeking, and an extension of the individuation process which defines him against the other and the world (for L1 studies see Rundquist 1992, for L2 studies see

Bucaille-Euler 1993; Surridge 1993). This study shows a concern for the self on the part of more boys than girls in the form of a personal agenda; more boys do not relate to the L3 beyond the curriculum, they do not remember the dynamics of the class, i.e., fun and excitement; they hope to be able *to talk to people*, yet the act of *speaking* in the L3 presents difficulties; more boys than girls define their feelings in terms of knowledge of the L3 and not in terms of enjoyment and are sensitive to peer influence (Table 301). In this study, a larger proportion of males than females appear to be more dependent on L3 writing in order *to learn better* and *to remember* (Table 313), a trait possibly linked to their reported superiority in spatial, visual, and analytical skills; other studies show that they perform more successfully in formal oral and written discourse (see Roen and Johnson 1992; Nyikos 1990). Hence, when one considers the male cognitive style - visual, spatial, analytical -, his psychological make-up - the definition of the self against the world - and the manner in which he uses language - information giving, attention seeking, humour -, it becomes evident that the language classroom rarely presents itself as a context from which the male learner can derive relevance. The evidence provided by the results of this study also appears to be congruent with the theoretical discussion of the notions of apprehension, perception and memory. In this connection, the learner's apprehension of the L3 material is situated at the input stage of the L2 information processing construct. Skehan proposes that this stage is dependent on phonemic coding ability, particularly at 'the beginning levels of L2 learning'. The input stage depends on the ability

'[to convert] acoustic input into what might be termed as processable input... and... failure in this area may mean virtually no input to deal with...' (Skehan 1998, p.203).

It is, therefore, possible to conceive that the significant differences which emerged out of the boys' perceived language difficulty responses, and in particular *understanding*, *understanding teacher* and *all of it [French]* (Tables 309, 310), are the result of an inability to 'convert acoustic input into processable input'. Furthermore, the literature in gender-related differences concerning perception of sensory input identifies the lower sensitivity of males to auditory stimuli (Baker 1987). In phenomenological terms, such difficulties are likely to have an impact on the nature of these participants' motivation to learn; the evidence suggests that more boys' responses refer to the language level and principally in the form of an instrumental orientation (Tables 284,288). Incidentally, this orientation contrasts with wider views of L3

learning as expressed in the responses of a larger number of girls than boys. Furthermore, the differences suggest that more boys appear to remain at the language level, without moving to the learner and/or the learning situation levels (compare, for example, boys' and girls' reasons and/or motives for being glad, Table 290). In this regard, previous discussion of the general effects of the experience (see Sections 5., 6. and 7 and Noels et al 1999) showed that motives associated with the language level were not sufficient in themselves to sustain the learner during the learning experience, particularly if the experience was perceived negatively. In phenomenological terms, motivation to learn an L3, for these male learners, is likely to be the result of determination rather than apprehension. This is confirmed when we contrast girls' more frequent reports of self-motivation against boys' more frequent reports of parental and peer pressure (Table 286).

With regard to perception, we note significant differences in boys' and girls' perceptions of the L3 learning situation. More boys than girls do not appear as comfortable in the L3 classroom, either with teachers or with peers and they do not register the same level of satisfaction with the experience as reported by girls (Tables 289, 291, 293). Furthermore, fewer boys display a marked awareness of others, as suggested in their responses dealing with perceptions of French people (Tables 326, 327), of French native speaker/teacher (Tables 294, 295) and of French as a school subject (Table 320).

The combination of apprehension and perception of the learning environment, also appear to affect the resourcefulness of the learner. More boys, in contrast to girls, seem to resist co-operation with peers (Table 296) and experience more CLI from Irish, the more distant language; fewer boys than girls use English to help them learn French (Tables 304, 306, 307). Furthermore, more boys than girls incline to resort to compensation strategies such as guessing in aural tasks, while more girls mix top-down and bottom up strategies in such tasks (Table 311). Supplementary evidence suggests more limited use of learning strategies: a large proportion of boys perceive a book as reinforcing old knowledge, whereas some girls also mention the acquisition of new knowledge (Table 298). Similarly, L3 writing, for a few girls, triggers additional learning strategies when reports indicate the establishment of phoneme and grapheme correspondences (Table 313).

With regard to the output stage of the L2 information processing construct, we note that boys report difficulties in *speaking* (Table 309). This stage is dependent on the activation of memory and enables fast access to and retrieval of information (Skehan 1998). In this connection, the gender differences literature identifies memory at the core of females'

underlying cognitive abilities, while males appear to rely on mental representations in order to solve problems (Halpern 1992). Hence, it is reasonable to assume that the perceived difficulty at the L2 output stage, which some boys report, may in fact reflect differences in underlying cognitive abilities. If this is the case, the ability to hold mental representations in an L3 learning situation is likely to be of limited help to male learners at the output stage and particularly at the beginning levels of L3 learning.

Finally, an interesting phenomenon emerges from these results; responses emanating from girls' comments in particular identify the two skills in which boys report most difficulty – understanding and speaking – as specific loci of benefit, derived from the experience at primary level (Tables 284, 302). This would suggest that, in this instance, the L3 learning situation fostered the development of existing faculties among female learners, with possible negative consequences for male learners. If this is the case, the early L3 learning situation may contribute to a widening of the gap between the good language learner and the poor language learner. The evidence gleaned so far would suggest that this may be the case: more male learners than female learners report low self-esteem and giving up the study of French at second level (Tables 301, 319).

14.1 Conclusion

The phenomenological exploration of learners' consciousness provided access to the three components of consciousness, namely, apprehension, perception and memory. The retrospective accounts of 282 learners and their memories of an L3 experience at primary level, enabled us to grasp the meaning they assigned to this learning experience; it revealed that the manner of apprehension and the manner of perception of the L3 environment were expressed differently according to the gender of participants. The evidence gleaned from 178 girls and 104 boys suggests two different orientations in individuals' interpretation of the L3 learning experience. These orientations appear to be manifest in two domains: the socio-cultural dimension of L3 learning and the cognitive factors associated with L3 learning. The concluding remarks which follow will show how the phenomenological perspective which drove this study illuminates the socio-cultural and cognitive considerations referred to above.

The findings suggest that the male and female learners in this study do not apprehend L3 learning material with the same ease; reports indicate that more male learners experience difficulty at the input stage of the L3 information processing framework. Furthermore, the role of apprehension is also manifest when one considers the nature of these learners' reasons and/or motives for L3 learning. Girls, through more frequent reports indicating self-motivation and direct involvement, enter the experience by apprehending the L3 learning experience at the L3, the L3 learner and the L3 learning situation levels: at the language level more girls than boys display a wider orientation; at the learner level, more girls report the use of varied learning strategies in a confident manner and at the learning situation level, there is evidence of more frequent references to fun, excitement, interest, in other words, to their direct involvement in the learning situation. More boys on the other hand, possibly because of their initial difficulty in connecting with L3 input and a different socio-cultural agenda, appear to remain at the language level, the most general level and the most removed from the L3 learning situation; more responses emanating from boys indicate that their orientation is of an instrumental kind and as previous discussions of the experiences of G1, G2 and G3 showed, reasons and/or motives for L3 learning at the language level are not sufficient in themselves to enable the learner to establish stable and long lasting connections with the experience at primary level.

Perception or the manner of experiencing the L3 learning environment also suggests differences between girls and boys. More girls appear to enjoy the communicative features of the L3 classroom, whereas more boys assess the learning situation in terms of the body of knowledge acquired during the experience or in terms of negative perceptions.

The manner of apprehension and the manner of perception were shown to bear consequences for the learners' effectiveness in the learning situation: more girls appear to be more resourceful than the boys in their use of L3 learning strategies; evidence in this connection emerged in girls' more frequent reports of higher levels of peer co-operation, in CLI and the use of English as an L3 learning instrument, in the wider range of comprehension, L3 writing and book use strategies. These findings provide links with gender-related socio-cultural characteristics; reports of fun, interest and awareness of others, perceptions of the L3 classroom environment are congruent with girls' general communicative disposition and sense of connectedness with others and the world. Boys do not appear to interact with these aspects to the same extent.

Memory, the third component of consciousness, through learners' retrospection, provided access to the notions of apprehension and perception; in addition it also contributed to defining one of two learning orientations (Skehan 1998) and emerges as a key component of females' underlying cognitive abilities (Halpern 1992). With regard to the underlying cognitive factors associated with L3 learning, Skehan identifies phonemic coding ability at the input stage (*understanding*) and memory at the output stage (*speaking*) as key factors in the L2 information processing construct. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that these abilities, pertaining to female learners, are likely to profit from the challenges of an L3 learning experience. The results of this study show that more girls identify these two L3 skills as specific loci of benefit derived from the experience at primary level and that more boys than girls experience more difficulty in the processes of *understanding* and *speaking*. This suggests, that for some, the early experience enhanced certain cognitive abilities which facilitated subsequent L3 learning; sadly, for others, this dynamic may have led to discouragement, low self-esteem and the abandonment of the study of French.

The present exploration of these learners' consciousness highlighted differences in the meaning assigned to the L3 learning experience at primary level. The outcome of this analysis advocates the consideration of two learners' orientation in L3 learning; we, as teachers, must strive to integrate the two learning styles within the L3 learning opportunities we create, by considering a temporal/synthetic and a spatial/analytic orientation to L3 learning, as well as the respective socio-cultural and cognitive characteristics, which accompany these orientations.

15. General conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the meaning of an L3 learning experience at primary level for 282 participants, in 1994, in Ireland. In this context, L3 learning was seen as a human and a lived experience and phenomenology provided the methodological perspective as well as the analytical framework within which the study was embedded. Hence, consciousness was posited as provider of meaning and consequently, learners' subjectivity was probed. The instrument used to conduct this exploration was a questionnaire, which provided the material for the study in the form of retrospective accounts of three groups of individuals. At the time of the study, G1 were still undergoing the learning experience at primary level, G2 had completed the experience between one and three years earlier and G3 were looking back on an experience which had taken place between four and six years earlier. This temporal perspective corresponds to Schutz's retrospective time scale: G1 were at Stage 2 (the action has begun and the act is on its way to fulfilment) and G2 and G3 were at Stage 3 (the act has been executed and is being looked back on as a *fait accompli*, Schutz 1970, p.120). At the time, this learning experience was representative of similar L3 learning experiences at primary level in Ireland (see Harris 1992, I.N.T.O. 1991).

The methodology which guided the study actively sought to reveal second order qualities (Husserl 1928), in other words, it aimed to reveal participants' perceptions of a 'lived experience' (Van Manen 1990). Thus, the research questions asked:

- had the learners connected with the L3 experience?
- had this experience been meaningful to these learners, in general terms and in terms of the effects of this experience on their subsequent L3 learning?
- if the learners had connected with the experience, what was the nature of these connections?
- if the learners had not connected with the experience, what were the corresponding reasons?

The learners' responses shed light on the manner in which the L3 environment was perceived ('lived' space); the accounts highlighted the traces left by the initial L3 learning experience ('lived' time); indications concerning participants' perceptions of their peers, teachers, and foreigners were also reported ('lived' other). Furthermore, the responses served to construct and convey the collective meaning of the experience; hence, responses were organised in

hierarchies and constituted participants' collective stocks of knowledge; the stocks of knowledge represented existing values, perceptions and memories shared by participants within the socio-cultural framework of this L3 experience (Schutz 1970). While each response was seen as constituting 'a part' of the 'whole', the experience itself was posited as open-ended. The responses were not treated as separate variables, but were treated as the varying constituents of the L3 experience. Visually, the responses emerged as blocks/bands of colour of equal size; furthermore, the visualisation of the data permitted varying percentages to appear in a clear and distinguishable manner, thereby offering a solution to the difficult problem of the statistical treatment of open-ended questions. The process of 'analysing and re-analysing', of 'writing and re-writing' contributed to lifting the study out of its local dimension and placed it in a wider perspective: learners' responses were interpreted as expressions of their consciousness and its constituents, namely apprehension, perception and memory. Consequently, a further dimension was revealed and led to the consideration of gender-related differences in the interpretation of the experience. The study, while being embedded in a phenomenological perspective, also relied on quantitative measures. These measures guided the establishment of hierarchies within participants' stocks of knowledge and also permitted the identification of significant differences between girls' and boys' responses. The methodological perspective also influenced the theoretical framework of the study; a 'conversational partnership' was initiated between views in SLA, cognitive psychology and phenomenological pedagogy.

The theoretical framework established a distinction between chronological-maturational arguments and experiential-developmental considerations in L3 learning. It evolved from a review of L2 age-related studies which showed that age alone, in a chronological perspective, was inconclusive in establishing the learning advantage of younger L2 learners (see Singleton 1989 and forthcoming). While the benefits of L2 exposure time were acknowledged, the notion on its own, as a measure of L2 attainment also proved problematic; comparisons between subjects' exposure to the L2 became inextricably interwoven with their age and the associated experiential-developmental dimensions of individuals. Consequently, another approach was adopted and considered L2 learning at primary level within a cognitive framework. This framework integrated experiential-developmental considerations as well as a socio-cultural dimension, all of which characterise formal instruction (Vygotsky 1962). On this view, two fundamental propositions emerge:

- i. instruction precedes development,

- ii. development is not seen in terms of fixed sequences of developmental stages but in terms of phases which are relied upon more or less intensely at particular times of one's development and to which one returns throughout a lifetime.

In respect of (i), the concept of mediation enables a child to achieve more than his/her age suggests, through co-operation with an adult or a more experienced peer. Hence, the role of the teacher and the place of instruction in a child's cognitive and socio-affective development become pivotal. On this view, instruction actively engages the potential of the child and does not wait for fixed stages of development to become manifest. The child's potential is embedded in his/her Zone of Proximal Development; this Zone varies from child to child and is not fixed by chronological age. This view is also endorsed by recent neurobiological findings, which propose that instruction in childhood physically influences 'the sculpture of our brains' (Robertson 1999).

The phenomenon of the Zone of Proximal Development is also integrated in proposition (ii); however, instruction here also serves specifically as a cognitive tool and becomes the dynamic which facilitates the interaction of scientific and everyday concepts. While everyday concepts (provided by experience) work their way up towards the acquisition of an explicit structure, scientific concepts (provided by instruction) work their way down and acquire vitality. In this connection, L2 learning was proposed as a cognitive tool for the enhancement of concept formation. L2 learning and teaching examples were provided to illustrate the process of concept formation through thinking-in-complexes. Such cognitive processes are initiated at primary level and lead to the actual formation of concepts in adolescence. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that L2 learning at primary level, in addition to the enhancement of a child's general cognitive and socio-affective development, is also likely to result in the solid formation of L2 associations (in cognitive terms), which will help in and perhaps accelerate the formation of L2-specific concepts at a later stage of L2 learning. Finally, the review of Vygotsky's theory of concept formation highlighted the crucial role of perception and memory in these cognitive processes. This last point establishes the link which exists between Vygotsky's psychology and phenomenology; furthermore, the two theories are equally focused on the acquisition of knowledge of the world, i.e., meaning, by considering the development of an individual's consciousness within a pre-existing socio-cultural framework. Hence, from this point of the study, phenomenology, as well as having served as a methodological guide, also delineated the parameters of analysis which would define the meaning of a learning experience. These parameters enabled the description of what 'entering

an experience' and 'experiencing' entail. 'Entering an experience' referred to motivation and considered L2 motivational factors, cognitive approaches to motivation and the phenomenological interpretation of motivation. In respect of L2 motivation, the literature now includes an expanded version of the L2 motivation construct which, in addition to the existing language level, includes motivational factors located at the learner level and at the learning situation level. The conclusions which can be derived from these developments are that the individual – the learner – and the learning environment – the learning situation – become key factors in L2 motivation (Dörnyei 1994, Oxford and Shearin 1994, Tremblay and Gardner 1995, Noels, Clément and Pelletier 1999). In phenomenology, motivation is seen as an underlying component of consciousness and is constituted by apprehension and determination. The apprehension of sensory and perceptual factors becomes central to motivation since these factors enable access to the experience. In the L2 classroom, the apprehension of audio material, particularly at the initial stages of the L2 information processing framework, as well as at the beginning levels of L2 learning, is identified as a determining factor in L2 learning success (Skehan 1998). This view of motivation is also deemed to be particularly relevant to a cognitive approach to learning in general (Ausubel et al. 1978).

With regard to 'experiencing' and the acquisition of meaning, the review focused on apprehension, perception and memory as the constituents of consciousness; each of these constituents was integrated in a cognitive approach to L2 learning and emphasised the key influence of sensory and perceptual factors, as well as the central role of memory, in L2 learning. In respect of the apprehension of L2 learning material, phonemic coding ability was described as the ability to translate acoustic input into processable input (Skehan 1998), thereby establishing the importance of sensitivity to audio input. In terms of perception, we proposed that intuition is the interpretative instrument which enables the individual to perceive the phenomena which surround us in a positive or a negative light. Hence, the learner, on a quest for meaning, is guided by intuition which also provides him/her with the material for meaning acquisition. On this view, two learning orientations emerged, each relying on the notions of time or space. Time translates into a temporal and synthetic learning style where meaning is processed aurally and verbally. Space defines a spatial/visual and analytic learning style where meaning is acquired through mental representations (La Garanderie 1995). These definitions are in keeping with a cognitive approach to L2 learning which identifies a memory-based learning style and an analytic learning style (Skehan 1998). In this connection, memory was also considered and emerged as a key factor in the L2 learning process at the central

processing and at the output stages of the L2 processing framework. Gender-related characteristics were attached to each of these constituents of consciousness. Hence, higher levels of sensitivity in hearing and in visual acuity were identified in females and males, respectively (Baker 1987); while the translation of these sensory differences into cognitive styles is acknowledged as being difficult, it suggests, nevertheless, potentially greater ease in converting acoustic input into processable input on the part of female learners.

On the question of cognitive preferences, females' precocious development of verbal skills and males' reliance on visual/spatial cues in order to acquire meaning were identified; the manifestation of these differences in childhood suggests that the reliance on a particular cognitive style is likely to develop into a habit on the part of the learner. Finally, the gender difference literature also highlights females' underlying cognitive processes as memory-based and males' propensity to resort to mental representations in order to solve problems. In the light of the pivotal role played by memory in the L2 learning process and considering females' memory-based learning orientation, it is conceivable that the process of L2 learning may be perceived as an easier task by female learners than by male learners.

A review of gender differences in L1 and L2 studies ensued and lent support to the aforementioned gender characteristics. In L2 learning tasks, males were reported to learn with greater ease when visual and spatial cues were provided (Nyikos 1990); they also appeared to use a direct cognitive approach in problem solving, using bottom up strategies and local strategies (Bacon 1992). This observation suggests a desire to understand the particular and the 'here and now'; in contrast, females were reported to use global synthetic strategies, an approach which translates into a wider temporal framework, where comprehension of the whole as opposed to the particular appears to be the aim. Furthermore, in a learning situation, the definition of a personal 'learning' agenda appears to be meaningful for male learners, who are also reported to display less compliance than females. The question of a personal agenda is seen as important in that it determines the perceived relevance of the subject studied and, as a result, influences the effort expended by the learner. Females are reported to thrive in co-operative learning situations and to work harder in enjoyable situations as well as in learning situations which provoke a degree of anxiety. Gilligan's (1982) metaphor of females' definition of the world as a social 'web' which establishes connectedness with others and the world through language use and males' hierarchical interpretation of the world was also mentioned. More recent theories based on the concept of gender *identities* as opposed to gender *differences* (Sunderland 2000) include the notions of masculinity and femininity as

socially and psychologically constructed phenomena. Finally, the present study does not advocate the separation of male and female learners in an L2 learning situation; on the contrary, it suggests that the accommodation of two learning orientations in the L2 classroom is feasible. The biopsychosocial model in gender difference theory lends support to this view (Halpern 1992). Furthermore, the nature of the integrated curriculum at primary level was also proposed as a particularly suitable setting for the creation of L2 learning opportunities which would combine the two learning styles.

In the light of these theoretical considerations, the present study explored the L3 learning experience at primary level, of three groups of participants. G1 were still undergoing the experience and the findings suggest that overall and for the majority, the experience was perceived in a positive light. The learners' motives and reasons for L3 learning combined pre-conceived goals in the form of a pragmatic orientation and general language learning considerations. These goals related to the language level; in addition, motives and reasons emerged from the circumstances of the L3 learning situation. Interestingly, in the case of negative perceptions, reasons were drawn from the learning situation only and excluded references to pragmatic interests and/or general considerations for L3 learning. This suggested that the last two references carried insufficient weight to sustain the learners in their efforts to learn an L3 at primary level. In this case, it is safe to conclude that the L3 learning situation itself and the individual's perception of it are influential factors in the motivation to learn an L3 at primary level; motivation here is interpreted in the phenomenological sense and refers to apprehension and determination.

The participants' reports of French class convey a sense of fun and hard work; the cognitive dimension of L3 learning is reflected in learners' descriptions of varied activities in the four skills and the use of particular strategies in aural and writing tasks, and in book use. Socio-affective factors also appear to be at play in the reports of games, competitions, work groups etc. . CLI perceptions emphasise the development of Language Awareness. Perceived language difficulty is expressed in almost 50% of responses and this suggests that L3 learning, in this study, is not perceived by these 10 to 12 year olds as a particularly easy task. In this connection, the responses identify pronunciation as a stumbling block. Attitudes to languages and native speakers suggest a great deal of curiosity on the part of these learners. Finally, while it is possible to discern the potential influence of the L3 learning experience on these learners, it was not yet possible to establish the meaningfulness of the experience.

In respect of G2, the experience was assessed, by the participants, in terms of its meaningfulness and in relation to its immediate relevance at second level. The past experience at primary level appeared to inform their on-going L3 learning experience at second level; this took the form of perceived language gains, confidence development and subsequent ease of learning. 62% of responses in this group (Table 141) suggested that the experience at primary level had influenced the way they felt when speaking French at the time of the study. The influence is reported to have contributed to the development of confidence and improved L3 language related features; additional reports indicated perceived age- and exposure time-related benefits. Comprehension was identified as the first skill to have benefited from the initial L3 learning experience, and this skill was reported by some G2 participants as having helped them to speak the L3. The gains derived from the experience at primary level appear to be perceived up to the final year of the junior cycle of secondary school in 14% of participants' relevant responses (Table 145). However, it should be noted that 38% of responses in G2 indicate no perceived links between the L3 experiences at primary level and at second level (Table 141). Finally, the features which G2 participants associate with the effects of the initial L3 experience are primarily located at the learner level; here, the reports speak of a sense of competence, confidence and ease of learning in the L3; in other words, while the learning situation at primary level is occasionally mentioned, we note, in contrast to G1's responses, that participants' perceptions have moved to the learner level and show less reliance on the learning situation itself. This progression suggests the development of an L3 learner consciousness.

G3's reports of the L3 experience at primary level echo those of G2. Like G2, participants in G3 assess the experience in terms of its meaningfulness at second level. The perceived benefits also relate to the learner level. The learning environment itself is also reported to have had an important influence on the learners' L3 development; this is manifest in 65% of relevant responses, which relate feelings when speaking French to the learning experience at primary level; perceptions of increased confidence, language-related advantages and age- and exposure time-related benefits are mentioned and also emerge in participants' memories of the learning environment (Tables 215, 216, 210). Perceived benefits are reported to have lasted through to the final year of the senior cycle of second level education in 17% of relevant responses (Table 219).

Patterns of sameness emerge across the three age groups. First the perceptions of positiveness in relation to the experience are reflected by participants' reported levels of satisfaction : 91%,

89% and 93% of positive responses in G1, G2 and G3, respectively (Tables 31, 122 and 197). The dynamics of the classroom appear to be similar in the mix of hard work and fun as well as co-operative learning. Perceived language difficulty is experienced by the three groups; as an independent variable, pronunciation, identified by G1 as a stumbling block in 46% of relevant responses (Table 76), is mentioned by G2 and G3 as one of the benefits derived from the experience (4% of relevant responses and 15% of relevant responses in G2 and G3 , respectively; Tables 142 and 216). In the case of negative perceptions, we note that G1, G2 and G3 refer to the experience itself and make little or no mention of pre-conceived goals even of the pragmatic kind.

The principal factor which distinguishes the groups is the temporal perspective within which participants find themselves. G1 who, at the time of the study, were not in a position to assign meaning to the L3 learning experience, derived their interpretation of the experience from a mix of pre-conceived goals and references to general language learning considerations, as well as from the learning situation itself. G2 and G3's reports are based on the meaningfulness of the experience and its perceived effects, which are principally located at the learner level. However, it is interesting to note that the prevalence of the learning situation in participants' perceptions is manifest across the age-groups; G2's and G3's reports of perceived language difficulty appeared to relate to their learning situation at the time of the study and reflect the foci of the examinations for which they were preparing. Finally, interesting patterns of similarity between G1 and G3 are perceptible through their general references to the value of L3 learning at primary level, through their reports of negative feelings when speaking French and perceived language difficulty. These patterns may in part reflect chronological-maturational features in these learners. The literature identifies G1's age group with an openness to other cultures (Schumann 1975), while G3's age-group may have reached a phase where concepts and a more generalised view of L3 learning have been internalised through participants' personal growth, and a varied exposure to the L3 over a period of time. In respect of perceived language difficulty and feelings, it is possible that the challenges set by the respective learning situations (the novelty of the L3 for G1 and the Leaving Certificate examination for G3) influenced the participants' responses where marginally higher levels of anxiety were reflected than in the case of G2's responses.

Throughout the analysis of participants' responses, the focus remained on individuals' apprehension, perception and memory of the L3 experience at primary level. This orientation aimed at reaching learners' consciousness of the experience and the outcome of this

orientation led to the identification of gender-differences in the three constituents of participants' consciousness. Differences were found in the manner of apprehension and the manner of perception, which in turn, appeared to influence learners' resourcefulness in the L3 learning situation, as well as the application of the L3. Through higher levels of reported self-motivation, more girls than boys appeared to enter the learning experience at several levels: at the learning situation level, girls' perceptions include higher degrees of fun, interest and excitement; at the learner level, there is evidence of perceived confidence, the use of varied L3 learning strategies, co-operative learning and at the language level L3 learning appears to include general considerations; incidentally, some of these characteristics, namely peer interactions and general L3 learning considerations can be seen as reflecting the female sense of connectedness with others and the world through language use (Gilligan 1982). More boys than girls, on the other hand, do not appear to access the experience in the same manner. Their involvement with the learning situation seems to be determined by pragmatic preoccupations, which remain at the language level. These interests appear to distract boys' attention from 'experiencing' L3 learning itself and do not prove sufficient to sustain boys' language learning efforts at primary level if the experience is perceived negatively. With regard to the notion of 'experiencing' L3 learning, while more girls report enjoyment, more boys seem to find comfort in a body of knowledge acquired during the experience; their plans refer to applying the L3 in real and concrete communication situations outside of the L3 classroom environment. These differences in apprehension and perception influence the resourcefulness of the learner: more girls appear to use the learning experience more frequently as a setting for L3 application (peer co-operation, fun, etc.); they also report a wider variety of strategy use in aural, written tasks and in book use, and in their choice of English as a source of help in CLI. The findings provide some support for cognitive differences in L3 learning. More boys' responses suggest higher levels of perceived difficulty at the input and at the output stages of the L2 information processing framework – *understanding* and *speaking*. In contrast, girls' responses identify these two skills as having benefited from the initial experience. This finding suggests that the experience possibly enhanced certain existing skills which pertain to memory-based underlying cognitive abilities; these abilities were identified as L2 learning aptitude traits, as a particular L2 learning orientation (Skehan 1998) and also as female cognitive characteristics (Halpern 1992). If the L3 experience appeared to accommodate this particular cognitive preference, it seems that some boys felt excluded as reports of low self-esteem and abandonment of French at second level would suggest. Bearing in mind that this

study did not initially set out to investigate gender-related differences in L3 learning, we are nevertheless in a position to point out some features which may be linked to established gender-related findings as well as acknowledged cognitive preferences.

In respect of a learning style which can be described as temporal, synthetic, memory-based and which includes a socio-affective orientation through one's sense of connectedness with others and the world, we note that, in this study, more girls report:

- a greater willingness to invest time in the L3 learning process – *language utility, to understand more, general considerations*;
- more self-motivation;
- more satisfaction with the initial experience;
- fun;
- increased ease in L3 understanding and L3 speaking skills as a result of the initial experience;
- peer co-operation;
- connectedness with the world and others through their perceptions of language/s and awareness of differences between people of different nationalities.

It is proposed that all these characteristics facilitate girls' interaction within the L3 learning environment and must lead to more robust connections with the process of L3 learning itself. With regard to a learning style which is described as spatial/analytical and whose socio-cultural characteristics are embedded in a concrete and factual interpretation of the world as well as in a hierarchical interpretation of others and the world, we note that more boys report:

- external pressure in the decision to learn an L3 at primary level;
- short to medium term goals - *secondary school, college, emigration*;
- an interest in real and concrete communication situations outside the L3 classroom – *to talk to people*;
- more dissatisfaction with the initial experience;
- some difficulties with L3 understanding and speaking skills;
- L3 writing (the visual form of the language) as a support for *better learning and recall*;
- concern about their status in the language class - *my friends laugh*;
- lower self-esteem;
- no perceived benefit associated with a native French speaker as a teacher;
- no extra-curricular perceptions of the subjects of French, Irish and English;

- greater incidence of abandonment of the L3 at second level.

These features suggest that males' connections with the L3 experience were more tenuous, fragile and removed from the L3 learning process itself.

Finally, the phenomenological perspective within which this study was embedded presented an L3 learning experience as a human and a lived learning experience. It provided a glimpse of the apprehension, the perception and the memories of 282 individuals whose consciousness of the learning experience was expressed in two manners which, while being different, are not proposed as separate entities: both embody a human understanding of the world. Hence, L3 learning, in this light, must aim to accommodate and foster connections with the experience of L3 learning in manners that will be perceived as being meaningful by all learners.

16. Bibliography

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17. APPENDIX

17.1 Group 1 questionnaire

**FRENCH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS
COUNTY WATERFORD, IRELAND**

The targeted respondents are aged between 9 and 12 years old.

Please, when you have a choice of answers, underline the correct one/s

Note: "French speaking country" = Belgium, Canada, France, Switzerland, North Africa, etc.

PART 1

Name of your school: _____ Class : _____

Are you a girl? , a boy?

How old are you? : _____

You decided to learn French because: - you wished it

- your parents wished it

-your friends were going to French class

Are you glad you started? YES - NO

If YES, say why : _____

If NO, say why : _____

Do you think it is important to learn languages from other countries ?YES - NO

If YES, say why: _____

If NO, say why : _____

Do you think it is a good idea to learn a language from another country at your age? YES - NO

If YES,say why: _____

If NO, say why : _____

Would you have preferred to start a language, other than French?: YES-NO
 If YES, which one? : _____

You are learning 3 languages, -Irish, English, French -. Would you like to learn a 4th language? : YES - NO

If YES, which one/s?: _____

When would you like to learn them?: - NOW, in primary school

-LATER, in secondary school

Do you think foreign languages should be learned by : - EVERYBODY

- MEN

- BOYS

- WOMEN

- GIRLS

Do you believe that knowing 2 languages - **Irish and English**- is going to help you to learn a 3rd language - **French** - ? YES - NO

If YES, say why: _____

If NO, say why: _____

Would you prefer to learn French DURING school hours / AFTER school hours?

Do you think one hour per week is enough?: YES - NO

If NO, say why: _____

Does it make any difference to you if your class is mixed with another class, when learning French? Say, 5th and 6th class together? YES - NO

If YES, say why: _____

If NO, say why: _____

PART 2

Do you think French class is different to other classes ? YES - NO

If YES, say why: _____

Do you think there is: - too much play
 - too much work
 - a good mixture of play and work

Do you think the teacher is: -too strict
 -not strict enough
 -just right

Is your teacher from a French speaking country or Irish?

Does it make a difference if your teacher is from a French speaking country or Irish? YES - NO

If there is a difference ,say why : _____

Are you given French homework? YES - NO

If YES, do you mind? _____

If NO , do you mind? _____

When you speak French in class, are you : -afraid
 -shy
 -proud
 -able for it
 -upset at being disturbed
 -in trouble
 -delighted
 -surprised
 -relaxed
 -worried

Do you find French difficult? YES - NO

What do you find most difficult in French ? _____

Does the teacher help you? YES - NO

Do your friends help you? YES - NO

PART 3

Did you ever visit a French speaking country ? YES - NO

If YES, how often ? : _____

If NO, would you like to visit such a country ? YES - NO

Does your teacher tell you about France or other French speaking countries?
YES - NO

Did you learn something about :

- the people
- school in French speaking countries
- the food
- children
- Christmas
- Easter
- or anything else? _____

Did you ever meet a person from a French speaking country? YES - NO
(your teacher may be such a person)

If YES, do you think such a person is different to an Irish person ? YES - NO

If YES, are these differences in the way he or she :

- speaks
- writes
- looks
- dresses

Can you think of other differences?: _____

How do you find those differences?:

- strange
- interesting
- confusing
- normal

If NO, do you think that you and the French speaking people are the same? YES -NO

If YES, say why: _____

If NO , say why: _____

17.2 Group 2 and Group 3 questionnaire

**FRENCH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS
COUNTY WATERFORD, IRELAND**

The targeted respondents are post- primary pupils at various levels including Junior Cert and Leaving Cert classes.

Please, when you have a choice of answers, underline the correct one.
Note: " French speaking country"= Belgium, Canada, France, North Africa, Switzerland, etc...

PART 1

Name your school: _____

Are you a girl ? a boy?

How old are you ? _____

Class: 1st year-2nd year-3rd year-4th year-5th year-6th year

When you decided to learn French at primary level, did you do so, because:

- you wished it
- your parents wished it
- your friends encouraged you

Are you glad you started then? YES - NO

If YES, say why: _____

If NO, say why: _____

How old were you when you first started : _____

What class were you in: 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th class ?

How many years did you spend learning French before entering secondary school? _____

Do you think it is important to learn foreign languages ? YES - NO

If YES, say why: _____

If NO, say why: _____

Do you think it was a good idea for you, to start a foreign language in primary school? YES - NO

If YES, say why: _____

If NO, say why: _____

Do you think it is a good idea for others to start a foreign language at primary level? YES - NO

Would you have preferred to learn a language other than French at primary level? YES - NO

If YES, which one : _____

Would you have liked to learn additional languages at primary level? YES -NO

If YES, which one/s: _____

Since you started secondary school, did you take up another language?YES - NO

If YES, which one : _____

Did you keep French as a subject? YES - NO

If NO, say why: _____

PART 2

Underline the preferred options

Do you believe your knowledge of Irish has:

- helped you to learn French
- had no influence
- interfered with French
- confused you
- made French more interesting

If Irish helped you, did it make French easier to :

- work out
- understand
- speak
- read
- write

Do you believe your knowledge of English has :

- helped you to learn French
- had no influence
- interfered with French
- confused you
- made French more interesting

If English helped you, did it make French easier to:

- work out
- understand
- speak
- read
- write

Did you find that learning French, made Irish:

- easier
- more difficult
- more confusing
- no difference
- more interesting

If French helped you, did it make Irish easier to:

- work out
- understand
- speak
- read
- write

Did you find that learning French made English:

- easier
- more difficult
- more confusing
- no difference
- more interesting

If French helped you, did it make English easier to:

- work out
- understand
- speak
- read
- write

Are you good, average, not very good at Irish ?

Are you good, average, not very good at English ?

Are you good, average , not very good at French ?

For you, is French : - just another subject
 - more than another subject

If it is more than another subject , can you say why: _____

If you have difficulties saying why, would the following suggestions help you ?:

French is also about: -sharing that language with other people
 -another way of life
 -a different people
 -a different country
 -a better job opportunity
 -a more interesting way of travelling
 -a way of realising that there are other people
 besides us, in the world
 -a way of understanding differences between other
 people and us
 -a way of making us Europeans
 - a means to an end (e.g. extra points for the exam)

For you, is Irish: - just another subject
 -more than a subject

If Irish is more than a subject can you say why: _____

If you have difficulties saying why ,would the following suggestions help?

Irish is also about: -knowing about the place we live in
 -knowing about other places in Ireland
 -knowing about other people in Ireland
 -highlighting one of the differences between the Irish
 and the rest of the world
 -becoming proud of being Irish
 -becoming embarassed at being Irish
 -sharing the language with other people
 -a better job opportunity
 -placing Ireland in the European community as a
 unique country ,just as France is, or Italy is.
 - more points for the exam

PART 3

Do you find French difficult: YES - NO

What do you find most difficult in French:

- understanding
- speaking
- spelling
- grammar
- writing
- reading

When you started French in secondary school, did:

-you know more than
the others

-the learning prove
easier

-you become bored
because you knew it
already

-the others in the
class resent your
extra knowledge

-the others take
advantage of you,
(homework help)

-the teacher single
you out

-the teacher ignore
you

-the teacher
encourage you

-the teacher resent
your extra knowledge

Did your headstart ,help
your French in:

- understanding it
- speaking it
- writing it
- reading it

Did you remain ahead in:

- 1st year
- 2nd year
- 3rd year
- 4th year
- 5th year
- 6th year

When you did French in primary school, was your teacher a native French
speaker? YES - NO

If YES, did it make a difference? YES - NO

If YES, can you say why: _____

Finally what do you remember about French classes at primary level; (type of class,
did you learn about the language, the people, the country, the food...)

17.3 Sample of completed questionnaire

G1 participant: completion time details

FRENCH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS
COUNTY WATERFORD, IRELAND

The targeted respondents are aged between 9 and 12 years old.

Please, when you have a choice of answers, underline the correct one/s
Note: "French speaking country" = Belgium, Canada, France, Switzerland,
North Africa, etc.

PART 1

Name of your school: Ursuline N.S. Class : 6th

Are you a girl? , a boy? girl.

How old are you? : 11

You decided to learn French because: - you wished it

- your parents wished it

- your friends were going to French class

Are you glad you started? YES - NO

If YES, say why : Yes because I like France
and I like the language.

If NO, say why : _____

Do you think it is important to learn languages from other countries ?YES - NO

If YES, say why: Yes because if you went to
a country it is nice to know the language.

If NO, say why : _____

Do you think it is a good idea to learn a language from another country at your age? YES - NO

If YES, say why: Yes it is easier to learn younger

If NO, say why : _____

Part one 5 mins.

Part two 6 mins.

Part three 2 mins.

17.4 Sample of completed questionnaire

G2 participant: views on the school subjects of French, Irish and English

For you, is French :
 - just another subject
 - more than another subject ✓

If it is more than another subject , can you say why: Because learning French adds a whole new dimension to your possible life .

If you have difficulties saying why, would the following suggestions help you ?:

French is also about:

- sharing that language with other people
- another way of life
- a different people
- a different country
- a better job opportunity
- a more interesting way of travelling
- a way of realising that there are other people besides us, in the world
- ✓ -a way of understanding differences between other people and us
- a way of making us Europeans
- a means to an end (e.g. extra points for the exam)

For you, is Irish: - just another subject
 ✓ -more than a subject

If Irish is more than a subject can you say why: Irish gives me a sense of heritage and I think that's important

If you have difficulties saying why ,would the following suggestions help?

Irish is also about:

- knowing about the place we live in
- knowing about other places in Ireland
- knowing about other people in Ireland
- highlighting one of the differences between the Irish and the rest of the world
- becoming proud of being Irish
- becoming embarrassed at being Irish
- sharing the language with other people
- a better job opportunity
- ✓ -placing Ireland in the European community as a unique country ,just as France is, or Italy is.
- more points for the exam

For you , is English: -just another subject
 ✓ - more than a subject

6

If it is more than a subject , can you say why: for me it allows me to transfer my thoughts onto paper, a form of self expression.

If you have difficulties saying why, would the following suggestions help you?

English is also about: ✓ - putting thoughts into words
 - communicating with other English speaking people
 - better job opportunities, here and abroad
 - using it every day, everywhere (school, home ...)

French spelling is quite different to French pronunciation. eg., "est" = "é"

Do you find this difference confusing? YES - NO

Do you know other languages which behave in a similar manner ? YES - NO

If YES, which ones: Italian, German, Spanish.

When you speak French in class are you: -afraid
 -embarrassed
 -proud
 ✓-confident
 -annoyed
 -in trouble
 -delighted
 -relaxed
 -worried

If you are confident, delighted, or relaxed, do you know why: _____

If you are embarrassed, afraid, annoyed, in trouble or worried, do you know why: _____

Do you think your first contact with French in primary school has something to do with how you feel when you have to speak French now? YES - NO

Say why: because in primary the level of french that I knew was low.

6

17.5 Sample of completed questionnaire

G3 participant: views on games in the language class at primary level

Did your headstart help your French in:

- understanding it ✓
- speaking it
- writing it
- reading it

Did you remain ahead in:

- 1st year ✓
- 2nd year ✓
- 3rd year ✓
- 4th year
- 5th year
- 6th year

When you did French in primary school, was your teacher a native French speaker? YES - NO

If YES, did it make a difference? YES - NO

If YES, can you say why: It helps to give you a better grasp on the accent.

Finally what do you remember about French classes at primary level; (type of class, did you learn about the language, the people, the country, the food...)

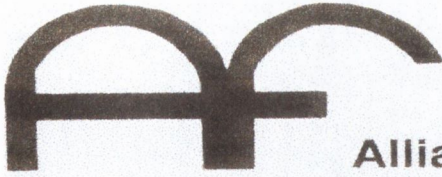
We learned about all aspects of French and the French way of life. The classes were interesting and enjoyable and I feel the more games you play in French or to help you learn some part of the language, the more pupils of primary level will enjoy the classes. These games and riddles, stick in your and can be useful in future years.

PERSONAL OPINION: Primary schools should be put under pressure to teach French, it for is fun more interesting, enjoyable and useful than Irish. Yet I would not object to learning both as is done in secondary school. ^{so} (But then again I'm past that stage ^{so} it is easy for me to say).

Yours,

Rachel Power

17.6 Letter to Group 1 parents and participants



Alliance Française (Waterford) Ltd

Phone : 051-86980

Knocknarea, Priest's rd., Tramore, Co. Waterford

Tuesday 25th January 1994

Dear Parent, Dear Pupil,

This is a request for your co-operation and participation respectively, in a survey I am conducting among primary school pupils attending French classes.

The children's participation will be crucial to the development of a research project I have undertaken in Trinity College, Dublin, which investigates foreign language learning in primary schools. In a broader perspective, the children's responses should contribute to the debate on foreign language learning at primary level in this country.

The questionnaire contains many questions which require Yes-No answers or simply a tick next to the answer of the children's choice; there are also questions which will require a little more time to answer. It is important that the children complete the questionnaire on their own.

The questionnaire is divided into three parts and I would recommend a pause between each section. Each section should not take more than ten minutes.

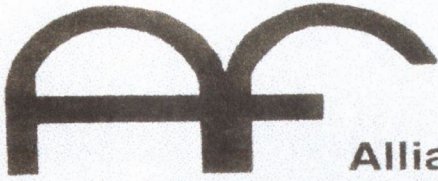
I would be grateful if you could return the questionnaire through the French teacher, not later than Friday February 18th 1994.

Many thanks, in advance, to you Parents for your co-operation and to you Children for your participation,

Áine Furlong

Registered in Ireland. Co. No. 142729.

17.7 Letter to Group 2 and Group 3 parents and participants



Alliance Française (Waterford) Ltd.

Phone : 051-86980

Knocknarea, Priest's rd., Tramore, Co. Waterford

Tuesday 25th January 1994

Dear Parent, Dear Past Pupil,

This is a request for your co-operation and your participation respectively, in a survey I am conducting among all students who attended our French classes while in primary school.

Past pupils' participation will be crucial to the development of a research project I have undertaken in Trinity College, Dublin, which investigates foreign language learning in primary schools. In a broader perspective, the responses should contribute to the debate on foreign language learning at primary level in this country.

The questionnaire contains many questions, which require Yes-No answers or simply a tick next to the selected answer; there are also questions which will require a little more time to answer. It is important that past pupils complete the questionnaire on their own. The questionnaire is divided into three parts and I would recommend a pause between each section. Each section should not take more than ten minutes.

I estimate that two weeks should be sufficient to complete the questionnaire; this is why I would appreciate your response by Friday February 18th 1994. For your convenience you will find enclosed a stamped addressed envelope. Should you have any problems with the questionnaire, please do not hesitate to contact me at the above number.

Many thanks, in advance, to you Parents for your co-operation and to you Past Pupil for your participation,

Aine Furlong

Registered in Ireland. Co. No. 142729.

17.8 Reliability-check 1

Dear

I have

What

How

When

Where

Why

How

When

Where

Why

Yours

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Or Fu

Lectr



7th March, 2000

Dear Aine,

I have considered the sample of your survey as requested. In my opinion the variables mentioned by the subjects in the open-ended questions have been appropriately categorised by you.

When I compared the results for this sample with the figures for the overall population, I found this sample to be representative for all but a few of the questions.

I found it interesting that in the sample I looked at, the girls seemed to have generally more positive feelings towards French than the boys, who appeared to perceive more difficulties and have more fear of using the language.

I wish you luck with your further research and look forward to reading the final results of your investigations.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Fionnuala Kennedy
Lecturer in German, Dept. of Humanities

17.9 Reliability-check 2

To Whom

I have

Children

Am I

by my

cases, I

derived

represent

categories

Yours



Dr Mari

A/Su Cl



Dept. Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
2, St. Andrews Terrace,
Newtown,
Waterford

Telephone: 051-878574
Fax: 051-878574

REF:

18th July 2000

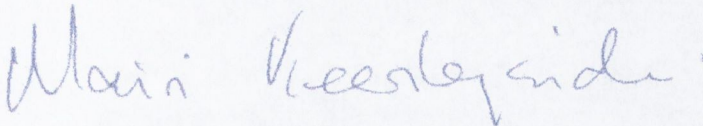
To Whom it May Concern

RE Aine Furlong, Knockarea, Priest's Rd., Tramore. PhD Thesis

I have examined a random sample of 30 completed questionnaires from Primary School Children, Secondary School Adolescents (junior and senior cycles) from the research of Aine Furlong.

In my opinion , the answers provided by the children indicated that, in the vast majority of cases, they understood the questions being asked of them. In my opinion the categories derived by Aine from their responses reflected the children's schema and were representative. In my opinion the responses can be coded by independent raters into the categories to a level of accuracy that would be statistically robust.

Yours faithfully,



Dr Mairi Keenleyside,
A/Sn Clinical Psychologist.

17.10 Sample of course content

COURS POUR ENFANTS : 9 - 12 ANS.

Progression débutants 1 ,

1) Présentations

Bonjour / Ça va bien / mal / assez bien
Comment tu t'appelles ? / il / elle s'appelle ?
Je m'appelle / il / elle s'appelle...
C'est un garçon / une fille

2) L'alphabet

3) Les nombres 1----> 10 ; 10----> 20.

Quel âge as - tu , a - t - il / elle ? J'ai ... , il / elle a...

4) Où est - ce que tu habites?

J'habite à...

Tu as / il a / elle a des frères , des soeurs ? Combien ?

J'ai / je n'ai pas / il a / il n'a pas / elle a / elle n'a pas.

5) Les fournitures

Comment on dit ... en Français ?

Concept du masculin et du féminin + le pluriel.

C'est un / une. Le / la . Des / les . L'.

Je voudrais ...

6) Les couleurs

J'adore le , je déteste le...

7) Les animaux

Tu as un animal ? J'ai / je n'ai pas de...

Révision du nom, de l'âge, des couleurs.

8) Décrire une personne.

Conjuguer ' être ' + les adjectifs.

Acteur, actrice, chanteur, chanteuse, sportif , sportive.

9) Les parties du corps

La tête

Le corps

Conjuguer ' avoir '

J'ai mal au / à la / à l' / aux

Il / elle a mal....

10) Situer

Sur / sous / dans / devant / derrière.

Révision des fournitures, des animaux, des personnes, du corps.

11) A droite, à gauche, à côté de, tout droit + les endroits

Va / tourne / allez / tournez

12) Les endroits + conjuguer aller + révision de, au, à la, à l', aux.

Progression débutants 2

1) Les nombres 20 ---> 100

Les mois de l'année, l'anniversaire.

2) Les jours de la semaine, l'heure.

Révision des endroits + aller

3) Révision de 'être', 'avoir'

4) Suggérer, inviter, prendre rendez - vous.

5) Conversation au téléphone

6) Les vêtements + conjuguer 'porter'

Description de l'uniforme

7) Les matières à l'école

Bon/ne, moyen/ne, faible en...

C'est difficile, c'est facile

8) La maison à l'extérieur, à l'intérieur.

Les meubles.

9) Les passe - temps

10) La nourriture

Au restaurant, du, de la , des, son plat préféré, une recette.

11) La journée + le verbes pronominaux.

12) Les possessifs.

COURS POUR ENFANTS : 9 - 12 ANS.
Progression débutants 1

* TESTS TRES COURTS A LA FIN DE CHAQUE UNITE + REVISION GENERALE
AVANT LES VACANCES SOUS FORME DE 'QUIZ' .

Objectifs	Moyens utilisés
1) Présentations ; Bonjour / Ça va ?/ Comment tu t'appelles? Je m'appelle... Et toi ?	Se serrer la main Prof---> élèves , ballon Elèves ---> élèves Elèves ---> prof Fixation au tableau et dans le cahier. Remarquer les lettres silencieuses et les barrer avec une autre couleur. Fabrication du passeport
Ça va ? Ça va bien /assez bien mal	Prof--->élèves, ballon élèves--->élèves, élèves---> prof. Fixation au tableau et dans le cahier
Révision / consolidation	Jeu de rôle.
Il/Elle--->comment il/elle s'appelle?	Prof--->élèves Fixation au tableau et dans le cahier. Jeu du menteur, 'il s'appelle Tom, non , il s'appelle Mark'
C'est un garçon/c'est une fille	Prof--->élèves Fixation au tableau et dans le cahier.
Travail sur les sons 'un','on','en','ill','oi'	Faire remarquer, et mettre des symboles phonétiques dans la marge du cahier.

Objectifs

Révision générale

2) L'alphabet

3) Les nombres : 0 -10

10-20

Moyens utilisés

Jeu : derrière la porte.
Envoyez 3 enfants derrière la porte et demandez-leur d'adopter une drôle de voix, et de dire quelque chose en Français. Faites-les rentrer et demander à la classe de deviner qui a parlé; 'C'est un garçon/une fille, il/elle s'appelle... Oui/Non, je m'appelle'.

Enonciation + répétition / Tableau, cahier.

Demander au hasard.

Jeu: Baissez la tête ! Le prof efface une lettre, les enfants retrouvent la lettre qui manque. Faire remarquer qu'on peut organiser les lettres de l'alphabet dans 7 colonnes correspondant à 7 sons : 'AH', 'bEH', 'EUH', 'Ei', 'II', 'O', 'qU'.

Demander aux enfants de retrouver les lettres qui comprennent ces sons. Par exemple, A,H,K. etc...

Epeler son nom en écrivant les sons sous chaque lettre et en utilisant des couleurs et de gros caractères.

Dictée de prénoms français en les épelant.

Jeu :Le pendu, en équipes ou individuellement, les mots sont en anglais.

Tableau, répétition, au hasard, 'baissez la tête', ballon, bingo.
Comme ci-dessus.

Objectifs

Quel âge as-tu? J'ai...ans

Quel âge a-t-il/elle? Il/elle a...ans

4) Où est-ce que tu habites ?

J'habite à.... en Irlande.

Où est-ce qu'il/elle habite?

Il/elle habite...

Tu as combien de frères, de soeurs?

J'ai, je n'ai pas de....

5) Les fournitures scolaires

Concept du masculin et du féminin

Comment on dit...en Français

crayon, cahier, trousse, règle, gomme,
livre, stylo, feutre, tableau noir,
taille-crayon, compas, cartable, table,
chaise

Moyens utilisés

Prof--->élèves, tableau, cahier,
passeport. Jeu de rôle, le douanier.

Jeu : compétition au tableau,
entourer le nombre que le prof
énonce, avant son adversaire.

Prof--->élèves, tableau, cahier, le
menteur, reconnaître son
passeport ou celui d'un autre.

Prof--->élèves, élèves--->élèves,
élèves-prof

Fixation au tableau, cahier,
passeport.

prof--->élèves, tableau,
cahier.

Tableau, passeport, cahier

Jeu : ramasser tous les passeports,
les lire et les enfants
reconnaissent le leur.

Jeu : le téléphone arabe.

Créer 2 colonnes au tableau

Masculin	Féminin
le--->the	la--->the
un--->a	une--->a

Les enfants remplissent les
colonnes, en demandant comment
on dit ... en Français?

Jeu: baisser la tête

Jeux: 2 équipes, 1 représentant par
équipe à tour de rôle.

a) Prof: 'montrez-moi le/la..'

b) Le prof montre, les élèves
répondent.

Objectifs

C'est un/e...

Je voudrais...

C'est le...

7) Les animaux

J'adore, je déteste

Le pluriel, les, des.

Les animaux

6) Les couleurs

J'adore, je déteste le....

Je voudrais le...

8) Les adjectifs

Conjuguer

Moyens utilisés

c) Vrai/faux : Prof: 'c'est un/e...'
élèves: oui, c'est un, non, c'est une...
Jeu: dans mon cartable, il y a...
Jeu: le pendu
Jeu: retrouver l'objet manquant
parmi ceux qui ont été présentés
par son groupe, sur la table.

Dictée: chaque enfant reproduit les
2 colonnes masc. fem. sur une
feuille. Le prof donne un mot du
vocabulaire des fournitures,
l'enfant place ce mot dans la
colonne qui convient. Chaque mot
comporte un numéro, et doit être
traduit par l'enfant. Chaque mot
vaut 4 points, 1 pour le genre, 1
pour le numéro, 1 pour
l'orthographe, 1 pour la
traduction.

tableau, cahier, et reprise de jeux Ce sont
ci-dessus.

Dessiner selon les indications du
prof + écrire la légende du dessin .
Les enfants peuvent aussi
dessiner au tableau et les autres
devinent .

2 colonnes (masc., fem.) + comment
on dit... en Français?

Jeux : baisser la tête, montrez-
moi..., vrai -faux.

Prof--->élèves, tableau, cahier, .
passeport.

Répétition, tableau, cahier.

Jeu: aligner les enfants, énoncer
une couleur, avancent ceux qui
portent cette couleur. Les deux

Objectifs

Nom + adjectif

Je voudrais+nom+couleur+SVP

C'est le + couleur

7) Les animaux

J'adore, je déteste

Tu as un animal?

J'ai, je n'ai pas de...

Les animaux (suite)

8) Les adjectifs pour décrire une personne

Conjuguer 'être'

Moyens utilisés

premiers arrivés, prennent la place du prof.

Le crayon rouge...

Jeu: retrouver l'objet manquant.

Tableau, cahier + demander à son voisin.

Jeu: mimer les couleurs

rouge = colère, timidité, sang, coup de soleil...

noir = oeil 'au beurre noir', prêtre.

bleu = triste, le ciel

blanc = la neige, maladie, mariée

vert = envie, maladie, Irlande

jaune = lâcheté, soleil.

Activité : 'colour by numbers'

Comment on dit... en Français+ 2 colonnes.

Jeux: baisser la tête, mime.

tableau, cahier, passeport.

Prof--->élèves, cahier, passeport.

Les lettres mélangées : un thca = un chat.

Inventer un animal pour la classe :

grouper les élèves par 3 ou 4, et

les laisser dessiner un animal

imaginaire ou réel; mettre les

questions suivantes au tableau :

C'est un chien?, comment s'appelle

- t-il? Où est-ce qu'il habite?, Quel

âge a-t-il?

La classe élit sa mascote.

tableau, cahier, répétition avec gestes et dessins.

Objectifs

Introduire 'nous', 'vous'





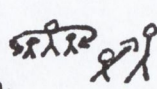
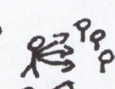

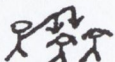
Les adjectifs
+ je ne suis pas

il /elle n'est pas

Les adjectifs (suite)

Un chanteur / une chanteuse
/ une actrice
Un sportif/une sportive

Moyens utilisés

Je suis = 
Tu es = 
Il est = 
Elle est = 
Nous sommes = 
Vous êtes = 
Ils sont = 
Elles sont = 

Faire remarquer les lettres silencieuses, les liaisons.

Jeux : Ballon, baisser la tête, donner le verbe sans la personne, ils retrouvent la personne : 'êtes'! --> 'vous êtes'.

2 colonnes, comment on dit description physique et morale.

Tableau, cahier.

Jeux : baisser la tête, mime.

Se décrire en 4 phrases, lire sa description.

Groupes de travail qui préparent la description d'une personne dans

la classe (une phrase pour chaque membre du groupe). Cette description est lue et les autres devinent de qui il s'agit.

Jeux : a) le prof donne une caractéristique; les représentants de 2 équipes miment.

b) le prof donne une caractéristique, les représentants donnent le contraire.

Jeu : coller le nom d'une personne Un ac dans le dos d'un élève; celui-ci doit découvrir sa nouvelle identité en posant des questions à la classe: C'est un garçon?

Objectifs

9) Les parties du corps
La tête--->un oeil, les yeux...

Ce sont...

J'ai mal à la/au/à l'/aux

Les parties du corps (suite)

Le corps ; le bras/les bras...

Renforcement de j'ai mal...

Il y a...

Moyens utilisés

C'est un chanteur? Il habite en Irlande? Il est blanc? Il est grand?...

Dessiner une tête au tableau et écrire les mots. Répéter en faisant les gestes.

Leur demander d'écrire les mots en incorporant la partie signifiée dans le mot, ex: la bouche.

Envoyer les meilleurs au tableau.

Jeu: 2 équipes, un représentant par équipe: a) montre-moi, b) le prof montre, les élèves disent c) vrai - faux

d) celui qui parvient à énoncer toutes les parties de la tête sans fautes.

Faire 4 colonnes avec 'j'ai mal' et 2 exemples pour chaque colonne.

Demander à chacun de fabriquer une phrase, de la lire à la classe et de la mimer.

Jeu: a) le prof mime, les équipes devinent.

b) Le prof dit, les équipes miment

Ecrire en incorporant le dessin de la partie mentionnée.

Relier le début d'une phrase avec la fin appropriée.

Jeu : papier plié. Groupes de 3/4 élèves; chacun dessine une partie du corps sans la montrer à ses partenaires. Il plie la feuille pour

Objectifs

Moyens utilisés

cachez presque tout le dessin en laissant un petit bout dépasser; ce petit bout constituera le début du dessin de la personne suivante. Quand tous auront contribué, la feuille sera dépliée et chacun devra décrire ce qu'il a fait, par écrit. Une fois ce travail terminé, le groupe peut montrer sa création à la classe tout en lisant la description.

Conjuguer 'avoir'

Même procédure que pour 'être'
Dictée : donner les verbes 'être' et 'avoir' dans le désordre, et en Anglais. Ils doivent retrouver l'équivalent en Français. Faire l'inverse, une fois l'exercice terminé.

10) Situer; sur, sous, dans, devant, derrière, dans, à côté de...

Introduire en faisant les gestes.
Tableau, cahier.
Jeu: a) le prof ordonne, les équipes exécutent
b) le prof mime, les équipes disent
c) vrai-faux

Situer (suite)

La diligence phonétique,
Le Petit Manuel.

Sur / sous

11 colonnes verticales, 2 lignes horizontales coupant les colonnes en 2.

	1	2	3	4.....11
SUR				
SOUS				

Objectifs

Comprendre des directives
'dessinez'

'Va' /'allez'

Révision des adjectifs, des couleurs
parties du corps.

Moyens utilisés

Le prof lit 11 phrases contenant 'sur' ou 'sous', les élèves doivent cocher la bonne case.

Jeu: groupes de 3/4, faire une petite construction en utilisant des fournitures, changer la disposition en déplaçant un de ces objets. L'élève qui a le dos tourné, doit préciser ce qui a changé.

Dictée de dessins: préparer quelques dessins très simples, et les directives qui correspondent à l'élaboration de ce dessin. Dicter ce dessin aux enfants et envoyer 1 enfant au tableau pour qu'il dessine ce qu'il a compris.

Recommencer l'exercice 2 ou 3 fois, puis demander aux élèves d'élaborer leur propre dessin avec les directives correspondantes. Des groupes de 3 élèves peuvent être constitués.

Ex: 'dessinez un cheval; sur le cheval il y a un chien; sur le chien il y a une poule'.

Jeu : course d'obstacles en utilisant les chaises et les tables de la classe.

Jeu : la mascote de l'école
Chaque enfant va au tableau 1 fois et des et donne des directives une autre fois. Ces directives contribueront à l'élaboration d'un monstre. Ex:

Objectifs

Situer (suite)

11) à droite, à gauche, tout droit,
en face de, au bout de...

12) Les endroits ;

la poste, la banque, le supermarché,
le magasin de bonbons, de disques,
de vêtements, la piscine, le camping,
le garage, le stade, l'école, la rue,
la première, la deuxième...

Moyens utilisés

Enfant 1---> 'dessine une grosse
tête rouge'. Enfant 2---> 'sur la
tête dessine un nez jaune'
Ensuite, donner un nom au
monstre, et lui faire un passeport,
(nom, âge, adresse...).

Tableau, cahier, gestes,
compétitions avec révision de sur,
sous...

Tableau, cahier, 2 colonnes ou
exercice de mémoire
phonologique: le prof distribue des
photocopies après avoir mélangé
les lettres de ces nouveaux mots,
et après avoir enregistré cette
liste de vocabulaire sur cassette.
Les élèves écoutent chaque mot et
essaient de retrouver la bonne
orthographe, la signification de
ces mots figure sur la photocopie.
Les élèves recopient la liste dans
leur cahier.

Jeu: baisser la tête
Dessiner un plan de ville, et
diriger les enfants dans différents
endroits de la ville.

Exercices complémentaires pour débutants

Deviner de qui il s'agit : penser à quelqu'un, les autres ont 3 questions pour deviner.

Alphabet codé : chaque lettre correspond à un chiffre. Ecrire des prénoms français en utilisant le code; les enfants déchiffrent ce code, et peuvent fabriquer leur propre code par la suite.

Dictée de dessins pour renforcer le nouveau vocabulaire, avec légende des dessins fournie par les élèves.

Dictée au mur: préparer un petit dialogue, le photocopier et l'accrocher au 4 coins de la classe. Chaque table doit recopier cette dictée en se déplaçant vers la photocopie la plus éloignée pour mémoriser le dialogue et rédiger ce dont ils se souviennent sur leur feuille.

Ils échangent leur feuille et se corrigent mutuellement (le prof aura fourni le texte original à chacun). Ensuite ils peuvent préparer un jeu de rôle inspiré de la dictée.

Vocabulaire des endroits : les enfants conçoivent des symboles pour ces mots (style guide Michelin).

Jeu de cour : Les aveugles et les paralytiques

Matériel ; autant de foulards pour se bander les yeux, que la moitié des joueurs.

Les joueurs se mettent 2 par 2, et conviennent d'un mot de passe en Français.

Un des 2 joueurs se place au milieu de la pièce / de la cour, et se bande les yeux; ce sont les aveugles.

Les autres ,qui sont les paralytiques, se placent autour des aveugles et marchent en cercle jusqu'à ce que le prof les arrête. Au signal du prof, les paralytiques crient le mot de passe convenu avec leur partenaire. Les aveugles vont alors tenter de les rejoindre. Les plus rapides gagnent, et à la partie suivante on inverse les rôles et on établit un classement définitif.

Jeu de révision : 'Talk about'

Le prof établit une liste de sujets déjà vus en cours + 8 / 10 mots - clés associés à ces sujets , ex: les fournitures = un crayon , une règle, une gomme... 4 élèves appartenant à 2 équipes quittent la salle, pendant que le prof dispose les mots-clés d'un des thèmes ,devant elle, mais à l'abri des regards des concurrents. Le prof fait rentrer 2 élèves de l'équipe A, à qui le thème

aura été indiqué. Ces 2 concurrents ont 1 minute de préparation + 20 secondes chacun pour mentionner un maximum de mots associés à ce thème. Puis, les 2 concurrents de l'équipe B, sont invités à entrer et à deviner le thème dont il a été question à partir des mots - clés qui n'ont pas été mentionnés.

Si tous les mots ont été utilisés par l'équipe A, l'équipe B n'obtient pas de points. (1 point par mot). Les gagnants sont ceux qui ont obtenu le plus de points, après avoir énoncé les mots d'un thème et deviné le thème de l'équipe adverse.