Global simulation: Fostering Students' Pro-activism in the Learning of French in Anglophone countries

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ABSTRACT

Learning and teaching activities evolve together with the didactics research progress. In foreign language teaching, the communicative approach, developed in the 1970s, positioned learners at the epicentre of the learning-teaching process, exposing them to realistic and authentic communicative situations.

New teaching activities and practices developed in order to answer the learner-centred approach needs, and simulation techniques found interest among many French foreign language experts. In the early 1980s, role-play activities were implemented in French foreign language classrooms and they became unavoidable activities in textbooks. They were eventually introduced as testing instruments in official certifications such as the French International Language Certificates DELF and DALF. The global simulation teaching technique, which appeared together with role-play, was more ambitious as it required learners to create and interact in a collective world of reference, in which they had to simulate fictional characters communicating with each other in a specific realist environment, and according to the on-going events and incidents occurring in this environment. In a global simulation, learners embark on a "realistic illusion" where they are actors as well as decision makers of the storyline. Unlike role-play, the global simulation teaching technique constitutes the core of the teaching content.

This paper aims to define the Global Simulation process and its technicalities, and to analyse its potential pedagogical advantages and limitations. The paper will attempt to present origins and concepts of the Global Simulation in FFL to value its pedagogical advantages from teachers' and learners' points of view, and to underline the possible obstacles and/or limitations of this communicative tool.

Keywords: French foreign Language, Learner-centred approach, Global Simulation teaching technique

1.   INTRODUCTION

In the early 1970s, teaching-learning Foreign Language (FL) [1] pedagogy made a significant step when it was recognised as an independent discipline. Galisson recalls that FL, back then, belonged to the "linguistic studies" division. The author argues that this categorisation was restrictive and inappropriate since FL experts were above all investigating the "how to teach and learn FL". Galisson (1991, pp.5-16) adds that FL teachers already borrowed concepts from socio-linguistics, psycholinguistics, ethno communicative linguistics, discursive analysis and pragmatism. In addition, Beacco (2007, p.58) observes that the didactics of French Foreign Language (FFL) gained their legitimacy when they adopted the communicative approach principles in the late 1970s. Until then, foundation texts such as those by D.A Wilkins (2000) were only bordering teaching methodology. They were omitting other fundamental conditions necessary to deliver efficient FL teaching such as: selecting material and medium, promoting authentic discursive situations, proposing realistic and credible systemization activities encouraging the development of learners' general communicative skills and stimulating learners' communicative initiatives.

At the early stage of the communicative approach implementation, Debyser (precursor of the Global Simulation (GS) [2] teaching method) believed that simulation-based activities like those offered to workforce participants in professional training, could also benefit learners learning. According to Debyser in the same way that trainees simulate situations close to their professional environment to become optimally operational in their intended jobs, learners could simulate real communicative situations to become optimally operational in their intended interactions in the FL (Debyser, 1973, pp.63-68).

In African Anglophone countries like Namibia, a GS teaching technique could help learners to contextualise the FL and culture as they are rarely if ever exposed to the language beyond the classroom. The Namibian geographic isolation from Francophone countries highly contributes to learners' difficulty to relate to the language and its culture. The concept of simulating to learn FFL could be an alternative to face this challenge.

2.   ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION OF GLOBAL SIMULATIONS

Early beginnings of the *Bureau d'Enseignement de la Langue et Civilisation françaises à l'Etranger*: first experimentation of Global Simulations in French as a Foreign Language classrooms. During an interview conducted by the *Centre International d'Etudes*

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[1] FL will be used to stand for Foreign Language
[2] GS will stand for Global Simulation.

Pédagogiques (CIEP) in April 2007, F. Debyser, second director of the *Bureau d'Etudes pour les Langues et les Cultures* (BELC) and pioneer of the FL simulations in classrooms in France, acknowledged that the BELC initial mandate (requested by the European Council) was to liaise fundamental research with concrete teaching applications to prepare and improve teachers' training before sending them abroad. From 1967, the BELC didactic training for teachers of FFL gained tremendous popularity. Training in French teaching methods were presented to participants as selective modules covering linguistics, lexicology, phonetics, classroom management and communication (CIEP, p.15). Between 1973 and 1975, in reaction to the rigidity of some textbooks viewed as contradicting the principles designed by the communicative approach, Francis Debyser, Jean-Marc Caré and Christian Estrade tested practical modules valorising creativity during BELC summer classes training programmes: role-plays, dramatization techniques and especially improvisation. Soon after, in 1974 during the height of creativity popularity, the team started offering GS training modules (CIEP, 2007, pp.17-18) that achieved immediate success among FFL teachers.

From Georges Perec's "Life, A User's Manual" novel to Debyser's "*L'Immeuble*" guide
In 1978, Georges Perec, a famous French novelist and essayist published *Life A User's Manual* which is his most notorious novel. Perec and Debyser's both admired the *Oulipo* group. The word '*Oulipo*', standing in the French language for "**Ou**vroir de **li**ttérature **po**tentielle**",** was founded in 1960 by Raymond Queneau and François Le Lionnais. It consisted of a gathering of mathematicians and writers, among them Georges Perec. As explained by Bénabou (2010), Professor of Romaine History at the University of Paris VII and member of the *Oulipo* group, during an interview for Radio France International (RFI), *Oulipo*'s prime idea was to apply mathematic models to French Literature, using for instance constraining writing techniques such as "writing a text omitting the letter E". Georges Perec's *Life, A User's Manual* is a 600 page exemplification of the *Oulipo* perspective as the author compelled progressive layers of complexity in his writing techniques as chapters unfold. The novel related the daily life of characters living in a Parisian apartment block during a period of more than half a century. The writer described every detail relating to characters and building transformation. Perec invited his readers to progressively explore each room of the Parisian building with its in-depth history and depiction of characters. In his narrative progression, he applied constraining systematic grids to develop his storyline in the shape of a logical puzzle. As Bénabou pointed out, *Life A User's Manual* was a great illustration of the *Oulipo* vision since Georges Perec used an indefectible narrative system that readers could hardly detect.

Debyser was not a member of the *Oulipo* group but he was attracted by the scientific and creative resonance of the scholars' experimentations. He explained that the creativity that he wanted learners to use in the FL could be stimulated by game-like activities based on the FFL (CIEP, p.18) as in the *Oulipo* exercises.

Perec's novel became the thematic stimulator of Debyser's first publication of a GS

guide entitled *L'Immeuble* in 1986. Like Perec, Debyser created a simulation occurring in a Parisian apartment block where learners were asked to become residents – co lessees- and to interact with each other about daily life issues. The accuracy used by Perec to explore his Parisian building and his characters was used in *L'Immeuble*'s didactic design as Debyser directed teachers and learners to meticulously depict the building construction, the location and the characterisation of the learners/actors. Step by step, learners were enlivened by a myriad of individual characteristics that the class was meant to rigorously follow and to coherently use in the motion simulation plot. In *Simulations Globales*, Caré & Debyser recommended that "the space of the building must be comprehended [by learners] as a global reality that [learners] must entirely explore on the model of Georges Perec's meticulous investigations" (1995, p.9). Debyser even dedicated *L'Immeuble* to Georges Perec, he said: "Without [...] *La Vie mode d'emploi*, *L'Immeuble* would not be" (Debyser, 1986).

2.1   Global Simulations on domain-specific French and French for Specific Purposes

Mangiante and Parpette (2004, pp.16-18) explain that domain-specific French appeared before French for specific purposes, and was conceived for students or professionals aiming at peculiar professional areas: Juridical French, Medical French, and Hospitality French. French for Specific Purposes was not related to a speciality but to a unique demand (for instance, a private company requests FFL teaching content tailored to the company's specific needs).

As expressed by Qotb (2007, p.9) in the introduction of *Vers une didactique du français sur objectifs spécifiques*, the running twenty-first century globalisation impacted the economic field and influenced cultural and technological areas. With exponential exchanges between countries and cultures, language teaching became a great necessity, and the language teaching content grew from general to specific French language adapted to diverse publics, cultures and environments. Therefore, English, French and German for specific purposes boomed in the late 1980s, and are still currently developing according to the contemporary requirements.

As mentioned in the introduction, GS technique was initially created for professional purposes. Logically, GS guides emerged when French for specific purposes appeared. Among other themes covered in domain-specific French, one can cite the international conference, the hotel, the hospital and the enterprise. Domain-specific GS followed the same structural design but their target language tasks differed according to the professional environment. For instance, Magnin (1998) created an online GS based on the theme of "the enterprise" directed at Human Resources students by using the structure of the *Entreprise* GS guide but requiring learners to refer to authentic French employment state services websites to create their virtual firm organogram and to produce job descriptions and advertisements for their enterprise.

2.2   Global Simulations and Information and Communication Technologies

The integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in FFL language classrooms undoubtedly improved the GS teaching technique. With access to the internet, online GS projects emerged in different sizes: one of the largest GS recorded in FFL was organised by Perdrillat (1997) and named the "Ademirnet project". It was organized between 1996 and 1997 and involved 250 learners from 18 institutions (comprising secondary schools, high schools and universities) from different continents and countries (Canada, United States of America, France, Belgium and Germany). Ademirnet ended in the production of an intercontinental, collective novel based on *L'Immeuble* global simulation guide.

During the international conference on education in Beijing in 1997, Magnin (1998) asserted that the internet was indeed highly beneficial for GS. The instant updating of information about the GS story evolution and about its participants was facilitating the project. Furthermore, the Internet added a true, authentic, communication dimension to the experience. During her online experience with a group of students from the University of San Diego, Magnin provided students with Internet access outside class hours, and punctually used the computer lab for specific collective sessions. She is convinced that the access to unlimited web information enriched the quality of the simulation. She reported that students obtain information on many different topics, such as geography, music, news, history, art or sports and many more (Magnin, 1998). In the same presentation, Magnin depicted another course that she based on a GS *L'hôtel* by Pacthod (1996) and that she conducted with students specializing in hospitality. She designed the GS webpage with several internet websites linked to well-established French hotels. According to her, the real e-documents truly gave value to the online GS authenticity.

2.3   Interdisciplinary Global Simulations

Since the early 1990s, Jacobs (1989) campaigned for interdisciplinary curricula to be implemented in schools in the United States. In the first chapter of *Interdisciplinary curriculum: Design and implementation*, she argued that the exponential growth of knowledge in all topics is a call for revising curricula and for considering an interdisciplinary mode of instruction. In her view, it solved fragmented schedules at schools that are generally seen by teachers as a burden to implementing certain activities in class, and to answering the learners' individual needs (that are sometimes not addressed in a 40 minute period). She added that any interdisciplinary approach prepares learners to what the professional world will require from them, since most current jobs are nowadays multifaceted.

She depicted interdisciplinary activities as "a knowledge view and curriculum approach that consciously applies methodology and language from more than one discipline to examine a central theme, issue, topic, or experience" (Jacobs, p.12). In that sense, an interdisciplinary learning-teaching concept and GS share the same holistic approach. As language subjects are communication vectors, any interdisciplinary experiences are adjustable to a GS teaching technique.

3. DEFINITION OF THE CONCEPT OF GLOBAL SIMULATION ACTIVITIES

From a didactic point of view, Debyser's will to generalise simulation techniques in FFL classes emerged in reaction against dialogues proposed in SGM (Structuro Global Methods)[3] in the 1960s. He classified these dialogues as unconvincing "attempts" to reach a language closed to reality that remains quite artificial and sometimes implausible (Caré & Debyser, 1995, pp.7-8). He claimed that when the communicative approach imposed itself as the predominant FL teaching method, simulation techniques were systemically incorporated in FFL classes. Indeed, Puren (2013) confirms that simulation was the main pedagogical concept innovated by the communicative approach. Simulation activities were generally included in textbooks exercises tasking learners to simulate daily life situations related to studied topics. Also named "role-play" activities, they were based on interactive exercises between learners to recreate communicative situations in which participants practised three language aspects; linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences (*Dictionnaire de didactique du français*, 2003, p.142).

According to Debyser, role-play presented limitation due to the manner in which it was implemented in FL lessons. The role-play activities were disrupted sequences which were far from global communicative language situations. For him, they only provided learners with situations of a "sliced reality" of daily life that did not provide them with strong communicative skills. They were failing to promote learners' creativity and were lacking spontaneity in communicative situations.

3.1 Debyser's definition of a Global Simulation in FFL

For Debyser, a GS teaching technique strongly supported a learner-centred approach as learners are the main actors and decision makers of the story of the GS. In Debyser's teaching technique, learners create their own model of reference and interact in it using the FFL. Technically, the GS technique complied with a determined chronological order. Firstly, learners need to create and depict a realistic environment, in which learners add

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[3] Language teaching method introducing audio and visual as media of instruction.

their own characters and then interact with each other managing daily life incidents and relationships. He believed that GS can be implemented at any language learning level. GS is conceived according to learners' ages, interests and language level; for instance *Le Cirque* (= the circus) addresses a young population whereas *La Conférence Internationale* targets adults.

At each GS teaching sequence, all new information invented and simulated needs to be recorded, archived and respected in order to secure the all-round coherence of the GS story and its progression. Debyser (Caré & Debyser, 1995, p.63) calls this information the "collective memory". For oral competence, semi-guided dialogues (for instance, dialogues canvas found in the professional world activities in GS on domain-specific French), updated lists of lexicon expressed during the GS and speech acts used for role plays, constitute elements for the collective memory. All written productions should be archived. In the GS *L'Immeuble*, Debyser invites participants to produce a short story related to residents' lives.

3.2   Inventing the Global Simulation place-theme

The GS project starts by selecting a space and a theme that needs to be logical, real and adapted to the participants' population. The first step for learners is to describe their collective environment. This description can be mainly architectural - a collocated building or a circus - or geographical - a village or an island - (Caré & Debyser, 1995, p.9). Authors advised that a restricted or framed environment is more suitable to conduct a GS scenario. They stated that the space should rather be a building than a location or a town, a village rather than a region. It is then easier to manage the narrative pertinence and accuracy. The visualisation of the environment is concretised by a drawing or a map; in *L'Immeuble* the class fills up the flats represented on a building plan; in *Le Village* and *L'île* learners' own portions of land are transcribed onto maps.

While the class depicts its new universe of reference, they must accredit the figures of the chosen environment. For instance, Debyser (Caré & Debyser, 1995, p.27) premised that if the GS occurs in a Parisian building during the 1900s building, then it is likely to have a building of five or six floors plus an attic generally transformed into smaller, individual rooms. If the GS is happening in a HLM, there will be a hall, a lift and minimum of 10 floors.

More adventurous students may abide itinerant GS like the cruise or the expedition. With an ambulant GS topic, the environment is depicted in adherence with the journey (visited towns, monuments, people met on the way). Debyser and Caré (*Simulations Globales,* 1995, pp.86-97) shared several canvases from former GS trainings, one of them being a bus expedition in the region of Perpignan in the South of France.

3.3   Creating fictional identities

Once the GS decorum is settled, Debyser encourages learners to "own" the premises. This phase could be named "characterisation"; learners need to create their identities (physical appearance, psychological portrait, biography, past, habits).

To facilitate this task, GS guides propose pre-defined lists of characters (modular according to the class size). For example, in *Le Cirque*, authors prescribe five couples, seven men, four women, two teenagers, and two children, all of variable age ranks. In *L'Immeuble*, the teacher is solicited to give learners semi-guided portraits as follows: "In the large apartment Number 4, a rich old widowed granny lives alone with her two Siamese cats. She is helped by an au pair young English lady who is accommodated in one of the small attic rooms, Number 10, on the fourth floor" (Debyser, 1986, p.14). Once foundations are laid, learner-residents embellish their profiles; professions, habits, personalities, hobbies by simulating communications through fax, telephone and business cards.

3.4   Creating the environment

Once the place and characters are abundantly defined, residents start interacting: firstly, participants meet in common places (such as the building hall or the stairs) with simple situations like morning greetings on the way to work. Then they follow telephone conversations related to small services between neighbours (need of a babysitter, collecting an important letter, giving water to the plants while on holidays).

The teacher can, at that stage, plan intervention from visitors; friends, family members, caretaker (played by the teacher, outside guests or other residents from the apartment block). As relationships develop, lessees celebrate special moments (birthdays, Christmas, a new born baby) and sadder ones (moving out, quarrels). They also have to solve common issues affecting their community like an increase in rent and vandalism. These issues are a pretext to collective managing tasks; an official meeting, a strike and letters of discontent.

3.5   Creating incidents and events

Apart from these usual daily life routine situations, the class progressively faces incidents and events. Once again, teachers mainly favour plausible events to have opportunities to practise the authentic, targeted language content. For instance, a flood or a fire can strike, thus requesting police and fire brigade interventions. Somebody might need a medical assistance resulting from an accident in the building.

But teachers might equally stimulate "special" events; for instance, a famous person can visit one inhabitant creating an incredible attraction for the whole community.

Improvisations are unlimited according to teachers' and learners' imagination and needs.

4.   TEACHERS' ROLES

A GS pedagogical activity is commonly run on a long-term basis and constitutes the core mode of teaching content and mode of delivery. It is no hidden fact that teachers attempting GS need to dedicate time in preparing the GS sequences and need to be open to a new sort of class management. Using published GS guides helps those adapting to the new teaching technique. They summarize steps to follow with the class and provide reference documents.

Implementing GS in a FFL class defies teachers' ability to assume multifunctional roles. Reviewing the communicative approach principles, Bérard divides FFL teachers' functions into three main categories; teachers as work organizers, as communication facilitators within the group class, and as linguistic and communicative references (Bérard, 1991, pp.101-102). In Chapter 3 of *L'approche communicative*, the author shares her observations and conclusions on a research that she conducted in different FFL classes among learners and teachers[4]. Quantitatively, her study demonstrated that FFL teachers spent most of their time in class endorsing the role of "organizers and game masters"; they stimulate learners' participation, impulse class work rhythm, provide documents and organize them, and they monitor class work as well.

4.1   Teacher as the GS game master

The FL teacher is the GS game master. He/she prepares the lesson plan: objectives, linguistic extra activities, GS documents, media and space. He/she needs to plan and decide in which proportion learners' invention and creativity must intervene in this lesson plan. At each sequence he/she introduces the session topic, in the manner of a storyteller, and includes targeted language objectives. Learners generally discover the GS content at that stage, not prior to the class, in order to create spontaneity and to cause curiosity among participants. Haydée Silva, in *Le jeu en classe de langue,* rightly explains that mystery stimulates curiosity among learners and increases at the same time their motivation (2008, p.15). The function of game-master includes clearly explaining the instructions and justifying the rules inherent in the GS activity. These rules are necessary to monitor the GS group and the progression of the learning process.

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[4] Evelyne Bérard is a French Professor in FFL didactic at the University of Franche-Comté, holder of a PhD in FFL didactics with a thesis on "The Communicative Approach".

4.2   Teacher as the GS facilitator

Even though GS techniques were established thirty years ago, some teachers are still reluctant to implement them because they negatively anticipate the challenges attached to change, for learners and for themselves. It is indeed true that any new teaching technique first destabilises learners. It moves them from their teaching reference zone, and their ability to adapt is subject to their own teaching cultures. Therefore, learners involved in GS must be given sufficient time to adapt to its concept and rules, and must be helped by the teacher's constant guidance.

Nevertheless, thanks to the design of the GS, most learners progressively adopt some mechanisms in their understanding of the GS organisation that they generally adopt fast. Nonetheless, the teacher endorses the responsibility to guide them through the GS experience by assisting individuals and work groups in tasks, by referring them to tools and orienting their learning strategies. These roles are usually required from FFL teachers in a communicative approach but they are certainly more intensively practiced in a GS teaching technique.

4.3   Teacher as a linguistic reference

In the French language, the word '*Maîtres*', translated by 'Masters', was the first name used to designate teachers. *Maîtres* meant being knowledge experts in a subject. Teachers were mainly seen as knowledge transmitters, and therefore, in the case of language teaching, they were learners' exclusive linguistic references. With pedagogy evolution, this definition of teachers diversified as new pedagogical material and teaching techniques evolved.

In a GS pedagogical activity, teachers remain subject references and language assessors. However, there is a distinction in conducting correction and evaluation because communication and interaction are constantly tested. In the GS activity, teachers will make sure to place communication as a priority. For instance, teachers will leave learners to perform an entire role play rather than interrupt them to correct their linguistic performance as mentioned in the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (The European Council, 2000, p.9).

5.   LEARNER-CENTRED LANGUAGE ACTIVITY

According to the *Dictionnaire de didactique du français* (2003, pp.39-40), the « learner-centred » notion relates to a new axe of focalisation in language didactics, positioning learners at the epicentre of the teaching-learning relation. The notion originated from the constructivist theory initiated by Piaget in France and later completed by Vygotsky and Bruner. Constructivists argued that learners' cognitive development was stimulated

by their environment and that they had to be actors in the teaching-learning process. They illustrated this theory by explaining that learner's perception and learning come from their experimentation. As cited by Froyd and Simpson (2010), for Collins & O'Brien 'student-centred instruction' meant:

> *"Student-centred instruction [SCI] is an instructional approach in which students influence the content, activities, materials, and pace of learning. This learning model places the student (learner) in the centre of the learning process. The instructor provides students with opportunities to learn independently and from one another and coaches them in the skills they need to do so effectively. The SCI approach includes such techniques as substituting active learning experiences for lectures, assigning open-ended problems and problems requiring critical or creative thinking that cannot be solved by following text examples, involving students in simulations and role plays, and using self-paced and/or cooperative (team-based) learning. Properly implemented SCI can lead to increased motivation to learn, greater retention of knowledge, deeper understanding, and more positive attitudes towards the subject being taught"* (Froyd & Simpson, p.6).

In this definition, learners are considered as both the initial and final focus in the language learning-teaching content, and they are deeply involved in the teaching-learning process. The one to one teaching mode, teacher versus the class, is no longer, and is replaced by multidirectional class interactions. In this new class configuration, depicted by Collins & O'Brien, the place reserved for simulation activities is important. The Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) compiled by the European Council in 2000, has, since its publication been, the FL guidance reference for curricula, target language content, teaching method orientation and assessment. For the CEFR:

> *"In an intercultural approach, it is a central objective of language education to promote the favourable development of the learner's whole personality and sense of identity in response to the enriching experience of otherness in language and culture"* (The European Council, 2000, p.9).

5.1   Learners' needs

Bérard (1991, p.32) summarises the learner-centred approach by the following steps: identifying learners' needs, drafting learning objectives, defining content and selecting appropriate pedagogical teaching-learning material. To achieve these objectives, the

GS place-theme should be selected according to learners' ages, interests and language needs. Presenting a paper on a GS project with students, Dupuy[5], citing Lee's research, explained that when choosing a topic, teachers should take into account: "learner background; interest and relevance of topic under consideration; ability of topic to spur learner imagination and creativity; appropriateness of topic for long-term work; link between topic and previously acquired language and culture knowledge" (Lee, 2002). In her work with FFL third year students, Dupuy (2006) chose *L'Immeuble* because most students already had a short immersion in Paris, and others were about to go to France or to a francophone country. As *L'Immeuble* GS was based on life in a Parisian building: it was preparing students to use or face needed situations.

Topics covered by a GS teaching must follow the syllabi requirements. But the fact that learners choose and evolve through characters empowers them in developing their FL learning to match with their own interests; be it personal or professional. They also experience self-directed language that is in line with their direct needs and personal development.

On that note the CEFR clarifies that the FL teaching:

> *"approach [...] views users and learners of a language primarily as 'social agents', i.e. members of society who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action. While acts of speech occur within language activities, these activities form part of a wider social context, which alone is able to give them their full meaning"* (The European Council, 2000, p.18).

Since a GS activity solicits each learner to play a part in the creation of the storyline, they are constantly given the opportunity to express their social character and be considered as an individual personality (and thus even if the personality is fictional).

5.2   Game-like activity

Role-play as well as simulation is sometimes classified as drama practices or alternatively as game-like exercises. Certainly, GS do have game-like aspects as opposed to classical teaching methods. Among qualities attributed to game-like activities, Silva (2008) indicates motivational, affective and social advantages. She explains that a game in language classes brings learners out of their egocentrism. The game invites them to socialise with each other and induces communicative behaviour. Games also teach learners how to manage collective task-based activities. They give opportunities to

expand human contact and to valorise intercultural transmission. This aspect is thus applicable to the teacher-learner relationship that is definitely not as rigid as for traditional pedagogical activities (Silva, 2008, pp.25-27). As learners take control of the game, the focus is no longer on the teacher but on and between them –a game or GS are therefore ideal to conduct learner-centred pedagogy.

5.3   Language Project-based activity

In a project-based activity, learners are split into groups to solve challenging, authentic, curriculum-based and sometimes interdisciplinary problems. A GS activity is a project-based activity as it involves the whole group class. Learners build a collective memory, they engage in collaborative work and decision making, and they have to solve community problems. For instance, in *L'Immeuble*, Debyser suggested that learner-residents organize meetings to discuss collective issues: rental increases, a vandalized hall, a co-lessee's disturbance…   Learners are engaged in "simulating" social collaboration and reflection, and simultaneously preparing themselves for community life and human relationships.

Hence, the Second Heads of State Summit engaged teachers and educators in promoting: "methods of modern language teaching which will strengthen independence of thought, judgement and action, combined with social skills and responsibility" (The European Council, 2000, p.11). According to Thomas' review on Project-Based Learning (2000), studies proved long ago how project-based learning was positively influencing students' achievement. Among other studies, he refers to a major research, conducted in American Schools between 1995 and 1997, that demonstrated an important improvement in students' test scores and standardized tests of academic achievement. Thomas concluded that Project-Based Learning (PBL) was a "more popular method of instruction among learners and teachers than traditional methods" (Thomas, 2000, p.37), that learners were more inclined to attend classes, were more self-reliant, and that they improved their attitudes towards learning.

In addition, PBL is providing a platform to manage and monitor big group numbers as well as individual abilities. The PBL mode of instruction helps to answer the challenges of the class heterogeneity. Teachers can identify individual proficiency and then apply a differentiating pedagogy; adapting tasks to learners in agreement with the targeted reinforcement. Secondly, in a PBL activity, as the language achievement is not the only part expressed and assessed, learners usually feel empowered to express themselves.

5.4   Creativity and Authentic language

Creativity and authenticity are promoted in the communicative approach and considered as conditions for learner-centred teaching. Because the GS technique asks learners to monitor the storytelling, it offers them an opportunity to free their creativity

and imagination. Each learner has to play a part that he/she defines and transforms in an unprompted manner. Learners are thus having, to a certain extent, the power over the on-going GS. The advantage of this strategy in languages is to obtain spontaneous language –getting closer to authentic language and interaction. Language teachers usually employ these game-like, simulation activities to fix theoretical language concepts in a concrete and joyful manner. On this issue, Dupuy (2006), referring to Beckett (2002, pp.52-65), reported that after having conducted a GS, students expressed their satisfaction towards the 'creativity' provided in the GS technique. They appreciated that they had 'a word to say' in the GS project and storyline. When learners use a fictional identity in fictional situations, they usually feel more comfortable to express themselves in the FL: it disinhibits learners. Few learners might be reluctant at first but most enjoy pretending being somebody else.

6.   GLOBAL SIMULATIONS AS AN ADVANTAGEOUS ACTIVITY IN FRENCH FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN ANGLOPHONE COUNTRIES

Teaching FFL in Anglophone countries enacts the challenge of transmitting a linguistic-cultural reference environment that does not exist beyond the classroom. Therefore, FFL and culture has to be recreated and simulated in class. In such a situation, FFL teachers need to provide activities and documents that balance this lack of exposure. A GS teaching technique could help learners to better contextualise the French and Francophone language and culture.

6.1   Authentic Foreign Language

With regard to FL teaching content, the CEFR insists on the fact that it should equip learners:

"To deal with the business of everyday life in another country, and to help foreigners staying in their own country to do so; to exchange information and ideas with young people and adults who speak a different language and to communicate their thoughts and feelings to them; to achieve a wider and deeper understanding of the way of life and forms of thought of other peoples and of their cultural heritage". (The European Council, 2000, p.10)

This depiction entails that the foreign target language should be relevant to current communicative interactions and be as diversified as in real life. If the quest of French language authenticity in a none-francophone country is challenging, a GS activity gives the chance to learners to taste an intensive simulation of French daily life "as if" in a French country. The classroom still restrains the quality of authenticity and learners

simulate with other learners instead of with Francophone people. However, the GS pedagogical exercise certainly exposes learners to more realistic interactive situations imparting social and cultural behaviours and codes.

6.2   Learning Foreign Language Sociocultural codes

The sociocultural content suggested by the CEFR is to feature the following: everyday living, living conditions, interpersonal relations, values, beliefs and attitudes, body language, social conventions and ritual behaviour. In "usual" language teaching programmes, these themes are generally covered separately. On the contrary, in a GS like *L'Immeuble,* each teaching sequence transmits to participants both cultural references and Know-How. In addition, a GS gives opportunities to contextualise non-verbal competence that is equally part of sociocultural codes.

7.   CHALLENGES TO BE ADDRESSED

The first legitimate question to be addressed before implementing a Global Simulation as a course is to study its feasibility as regards: curriculum and syllabus (usually concurrent to the teaching institution), defined topics, progression, regulations, duration, and required assessment. In some cases, a teacher might also consider that the Global Simulation is not compatible with the population. Reasons can be diverse; cultural background, learners' age and learners' objectives. This decision depends on the teacher's knowledge, experience and will. Clearly, Section III on teachers' roles proved that Global Simulation challenges teachers' multifunctional skills, and therefore, the teacher should self-assess his/her capacity to endorse all these roles.

7.1   Teachers' and learners' prejudices towards Global Simulation

Any new and/or innovative mode of instruction might be problematic to introduce both for teachers and learners. Indeed, change is always a challenge in whatever field and needs a certain time for adaptation. The first barrier concerns prejudices against an unconventional pedagogical activity, implying drama, games, redefining relationships between teacher-learners and learner-learner, and giving learners more freedom in the language use, the decision making and the autonomy of communication than in usual FL teaching practice. The first person to be convinced by the pedagogical interest of Global Simulation must be the teacher.

For some teachers and learners, a game-like activity is considered "not serious". Silva (2008, p.27) warns teachers that other people will certainly judge this teaching activity as discrediting teacher's legitimacy. Parents might also manifest some worries about the practice. Some teachers might also be scared by the 'unknown' factor. Even if most of the Global Simulation procedure is planned, its concept obviously gives a bigger

space to spontaneity and unknown factors. Learners' productions or reactions cannot be fully predictable; they can only be directed towards an expected task achievement. This type of activity requires quick reflexes and an open mind from the teacher. A Global Simulation technique will definitely cause shifts in the teacher's traditional teaching comfort zone.

7.2   Preparation Implications

In a polemical article dating from 1973, Debyser condemned the fact that FFL textbooks had become a huge market, and that teachers relied too much on textbooks for programming their lesson plans. Debyser warned that basic principles of the communicative approach were slowly disappearing (CIEP, p.25). He contended that textbooks were only facilitating the teachers' task to plan his/her language teaching progression but that they partly failed to reach the communicative approach objectives; for instance in terms of providing platforms for learners' creativity. Therefore, he recommended the introduction of simulation activities in FL classrooms.

Indeed, simulations incontestably invite learners to use a more practical, authentic and creative language that some textbooks might also do. On the other hand, simulations and especially global simulations are so flexible, open to improvisation and by definition on-going, that they require huger preparation and more decision making from the teacher than in textbooks. Admittedly, published Global Simulation can guide teachers in their pre management phase, but they do not provide a detailed studied progression and some documents need to be updated. The teacher is also assigned to prepare the class space, equipment and pedagogical material. Activity after Global Simulation has hence more preparation implications for teachers.

7.3   Oral Management

As game-masters, teachers have to monitor and distribute oral speech during the Global Simulation sequences. As mentioned above, this duty is facilitated by Global Simulation rules. In this type of pedagogical activity, Silva (2008, p.30) argues that learners should be allowed to use their mother tongue when they prepare their interaction. Silva notes that teachers often feel helpless when learners resort to their mother tongue, perceiving it as a "slip-up". According to Silva, this situation should not been received as a negative consequence because it shows that learners are implicated in the activity (when of course the topic discussed is in relation to the activity). Learners' reaction is an instinctive response to a need to communicate when frustrated by their limited FL knowledge. Ultimately, teachers can decide on forbidding the use of mother tongues.

A game-like activity is also affecting by the nuisance of noise, especially with GS as learners are mainly working in groups. Similarly to the mother tongue use issue, the teacher can add rules and codes to monitor this extra noise; signs, eye contact with the

group or with individuals. With time and use, participants generally self-manage the noise.

7.3   Inappropriate behaviour

This aspect is certainly more challenging and needs some attention. Like any dramatization exercise, learners, absorbed by their fictional characters, might fail to control their behaviour and feelings. Even if rare, this type of situation must be quickly identified and resolved by the teacher. The difficulty lies in how to handle those who drift away from the topic, especially when in front of the whole class.

Teachers who practised Global Simulation reported that these situations are sometimes managed among learners; teachers can count on the group influence. This reaction can be explained by the nature of the Global Simulation activity; in *L'Immeuble*, learner-residents belong to a community, and in the FFL class learners are part of a project-based activity. Instinctively, they solve their relationships within the group. If one learner is inclined to disturb the progression of the activity, the group naturally intervenes as it enjoys progressing in and completing the Global Simulation tasks. Nevertheless, these matters are partially relative to any language class management though slightly more intense in a Global Simulation. Therefore, an experienced teacher should find ways to softly work them out. Eventually, the temporary or definite sanction would be to exclude a learner from the activity.

7.4   Assessment

Regarding assessment, teachers are often dependent on their internal assessment regulations. Each teacher must first investigate the chances of compatibility between the school's requirements in terms of FL teaching content and conduct, and the Global Simulation requirements. By describing the Global Simulation design, the author proved that Global Simulation is a flexible pedagogical technique that can and should be adapted to the public and the school environment. A Global Simulation sequence can include different teaching-learning phases balancing written and oral skills. If necessary, the teacher can decide on making pauses in the simulation programme in order to provide a specific linguistic explanation or focus on an exercise. If successfully organized, implemented and monitored by the teacher, a Global Simulation teaching technique has the advantage of testing all competences and pedagogical activities as suggested by the CEFR, especially learners' communicative skills.

A Global Simulation by definition encourages formative assessment. By constantly experiencing situations by themselves and being exposed to tasks mixing individual and collaborative performances, learners acquire diverse strategic learning skills and gain in autonomy. By assigning different roles and functions to learners, teachers can influence individual formative assessment in a *continuum.* Teachers are able to follow and assess

the learner's progress - what the CEFR refers to as "the continuous process that entails collecting information on the learner's strengths and weaknesses" (The European Council, 2000, p.141) -, and to adapt their teaching content to the needs. In a GS class, learners can be individually and collectively observed and evaluated. The teacher can easily use this information to address tailored objectives to each learner and he/she has an opportunity to guide him/her to optimal progresses.

Moreover, in a Global Simulation activity, multidirectional interactions continually occur between teacher, learners, groups and class. This variety of interactions answers the CRFR's general principle of diversifying assessment typology. These different tasks require different evaluations; assessments are all represented and self-assessment is promoted. Debriefing sessions planned in a Global Simulation structure give a favourable platform for learners to assess themselves and evaluate the efficiency of the entire activity.

8. CONCLUSION

Simulations and game-like activities in FL teaching practice are recognized as positive didactic features in FL learning. Their authentic and communicative approach answer the communicative and learner-centred notions intended in the current FL teaching approach. The aim of providing learners with a "useful and practical" language and of providing them with tools to communicate seems to be realised by the Global Simulation teaching technique. It develops learners' interaction skills, self-assessment skills, collective work, decision making, creativity, autonomy and accountability.

But for language teachers, Global Simulation are more challenging pedagogical activities to monitor and insert in a classic curriculum. They are much more flexible and unpredictable if compared to other FL material like textbooks. They are, therefore, rarely chosen as the only mode of instruction of a course but give very positive results as a complementary and interdisciplinary language project. FL teachers implementing Global Simulation must present multifunctional teaching abilities and must be willing to work in a different manner. The workload implied in a Global Simulation certainly remains heavier than with a textbook-based progression. Since each Global Simulation sequence process is not totally predictable, the teacher needs to archive and update it.

Indeed, a Global Simulation technique may be a rewarding language activity for those who believe in communicative language teaching approach and in learner-centred pedagogy. Research has proved that a Global Simulation teaching technique is simultaneously an effective and enjoyable teaching-learning activity for learners, teachers and the group class. In Anglophone countries, where it is challenging for learners to practice and contextualise FFL and culture, a Global Simulation technique is a creative teaching alternative which prepares learners to employ a useful language,

which teaches them how to react in French daily life situations, express themselves and their personalities in a FL, manage collective work and issues, and last but not least, how to train their imagination and creativity through FL learning.

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