Introducing self-directed learning in an innovation-friendly institutional context

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ABSTRACT: The setting of this experiment is that of the DEFLE, French Department for Foreign Students. It is an old department of the University of Nancy2, originally designed for the training of foreign students to prepare them to study a wide range of subjects. Studies of French as a Foreign Language (FFL) were organized exclusively in terms of classes (learning with a teacher), until the CRAPEL, through E. Carette, became head of the Department in 2003. She decided, with the CRAPEL researchers, to change the FFL training offer, introducing a part of self-directed learning sessions in students' timetable. This research aims at analysing the potential obstacles to the introduction of self-directed learning sessions in the DEFLE, through direct observation of classes and self-directed learning sessions, analysis of questionnaires and practice sheets filled in by students, of outcome sheets filled in by counsellors, and of a collective discussion on advisers' practices.
Key words: French as a Foreign Language, self-directed learning, adviser role.

RESUMEN: El marco de este experimento es el Departamento de Francés como Lengua Extranjera (DEFLE). Es un viejo departamento de la Universidad Nancy2 (Francia), diseñado originalmente para la formación de los estudiantes extranjeros para prepararles en sus estudios universitarios. Los estudios del francés como lengua extranjera (FFL en el texto) fueron organizados exclusivamente en términos de clases (aprender con un profesor), hasta el CRAPEL, con E. Carette, tomó la dirección del Departamento en 2003. Ella decidió, con los investigadores del CRAPEL, cambiar la oferta de la formación de FFL, introduciendo una parte de aprendizaje autodirigido en el horario de los estudiantes, utilizando el centro de recursos de la Universidad (CLYC). Esta investigación tiene como objetivo analizar los obstáculos potenciales a la introducción de una innovación como el aprendizaje autodirigido en el DEFLE, apoyándose sobre la observación directa de clases y del trabajo autodirigido, el análisis de cuestionarios, de evaluaciones suministradas por los estudiantes sobre sus maneras de aprender en el CLYC, de evaluaciones facilitadas por los asesores sobre sus maneras de asesorar, y de una discusión colectiva sobre las acciones de los asesores.
Palabras clave: el francés como lengua extranjera, el aprendizaje auto-dirigido, el rol del asesor.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper presents an experiment conducted by the CRAPEL (Centre de Recherches et d'Applications Pédagogiques En Langues) at the DEFLE (Département de Français Langue Etrangère, the department of French for foreign students (French as a foreign language, FFL henceforth) at the University of Nancy2. It is a well-established department of the University, originally designed for the training of foreign students to prepare them to study a wide range of subjects. Studies of FFL were organized exclusively in terms of classes (learning with a teacher), until a member of the CRAPEL became head of the DEFLE in 2003 and decided to change the FFL training offer, introducing a component of self-directed learning sessions in the students' timetable. The system proposed at the DEFLE is consequently an inheritance of the CRAPEL's research in self-directed learning (cf. bibliography), based on Holec's definition of autonomy as "a learner's ability to learn" (Holec 1988). Thus self-directed learning (SDL henceforth) includes not only learning a language but also learning how to learn.

The goal for this change was, and still is, to improve and diversify the training offer at the DEFLE: we know that learning in groups does not suit all students, that proficiency levels are various, and that some students need to work more on one skill, when others need more work on another skill. So we think that'"individual" work may be beneficial, and even the solution to heterogeneous needs, provided students know how to learn. We also know from the CRAPEL's long history of developing SDL that it is a slow process. So we decided to start to implement conditions for that development, and to observe how SDL would function in that specific environment, which differs from that of the CRAPEL.[1]

In this article, after a brief description of material resources and institutional context (part 2), we develop the specificity of the advisers involved in the project (part 3), describing how they were recruited and trained, and the means they use to accomplish their role. Then in part 4, we evaluate the strengths and limitations that we have identified at this stage of the experiment, and we present the results of an ongoing research. In the long term, we expect to ameliorate the training offer, learning from our first observation of how advisers help learners, and of how learners learn how to learn in the newly-created situation. This paper describes the first step in our inquiry.

2. INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The introduction of self-directed learning sessions was supported by the existence of a self-access center called the CLYC, which was created by the CRAPEL in 1973 as a "sound

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[1] During the last four years, our group has focused on adviser discourse, based on recordings of extensive collections of advising discussions in the CRAPEL system. Advising conditions were quite different from those at the DEFLE, an adviser spending on average 7 hours with each learner. We worked in detail on two collections of 10 and 12 advising discussions, and studied them from an interaction point of view (how each pair develops a specific "interactive story", how the learner integrates little by little the adviser's suggestions). Apart from that, we also made a comparison between teaching acts and advising acts, using recordings of teachers in class (Carette-Ivanisevic 1991). The results of this research were a better vision of what advising consists of and of the variety of ways to carry it out.

library" for EFL students and has progressively evolved into a resource center to promote the learning of 11 foreign languages for Nancy 2 University students. The CLYC is designed for the self-directed learning of written and listening comprehension, and of oral expression. It offers a video room with 28 video and DVD recorders /players on which students can work alone or in pairs. A multimedia room is equipped with 48 audio players on which students can work alone or in pairs, 16 computers allowing work on the Internet, with CD-ROMs and various kinds of software. A room for oral expression is equipped with a camera, which allows students to record their productions and self assess them, prepare exams, conferences, etc. A special "corner" is designed for meetings with advisers. Group discussions with native speakers are also proposed.

The DEFLE uses the CLYC for self-directed learning, and students are accompanied by the DEFLE advisers, who are the key to the whole project. The 230 DEFLE participants belong to 30 different nationalities and cultures, nearly 100% of whom learnt foreign languages exclusively by being taught. During the year 2004-2005, the DEFLE training offer included 16 hours of learning in the classroom, and 2 hours of self-directed learning (accompanied by an adviser). Apart from this, students can go to the CLYC on their own in addition to the organized sessions. Attendance at classes and self-directed learning sessions is checked by means of attendance lists, but total or partial absence results in no immediate sanction: the only consequence for overall low attendance rates is either to be refused re-admission to the DEFLE the semester or year after, or evidence of absence given to the immigration authorities who may deprive the students of their residence permit.

The CLYC sessions are included in the DEFLE program of study. Therefore the link between taught courses and work at the CLYC is institutionally established. Furthermore, there is always a two-hour class before the CLYC session, which was designed to allow advisers to prepare the students for their advising session (see example of timetable, appendix n° 1). The consequence of this situation is a close relationship between what is studied in class and what is worked on in the CLYC: at the very least, teachers make direct reference to what is available in the CLYC to work on, or they explain what kind of knowledge students might enhance there. At best, teachers show the students examples of learning activities and discuss their learning problems.

Teachers at the DEFLE are in a fairly uncomfortable situation: they are both teachers and advisers. More precisely, six teachers out of fourteen are both advisers and teachers. Eight are only teachers. Relationships between the CLYC and the DEFLE are informal: the head of the CLYC, and the head of the DEFLE know each other very well: they meet regularly and talk freely and easily about DEFLE groups' presence in the CLYC. The issues discussed are mainly linked with the resources available: quantity of documents and quality of cataloguing. Those DEFLE teachers who volunteer to be advisers have received training (see section 3. 2. below) and have visited the CLYC before they started to work with their students. The institutional context of our experiment is constituted of a research center, a resource center and a training center, whose heads and actors work in the same direction. This is the reason why it may be qualified as an innovation-friendly context.

3. ADVISERS

3.1. Recruitment of advisers

At the DEFLE, all the advisers were first recruited as teachers. They were then offered work as advisers and were free to accept it or not, knowing that they would earn the same amount of money for teaching an hour in class and for advising an hour at the CLYC. This was a decision taken by the head of department to give the same importance to both tasks and thus promote SDL, even though it may appear that the two roles do not involve the same tasks. At the moment, teachers working as advisers are all volunteers.

Teachers at the DEFLE are recruited on the basis of a university diploma: the Maîtrise FLE, which is a master's degree in the foreign language didactics. At the Nancy 2 University, this master's curriculum includes a 26-hour course in learner autonomy and self-directed learning, based on the concepts developed at the CRAPEL. This means that most teachers at the DEFLE have at least some idea of what SDL is about even if this knowledge is mainly theoretical at the time of their recruitment. After they are recruited they are given a more practical 20 hour training course (see 3.2.1. below). Teachers at the DEFLE may work part time or full time. There are no fulltime advisers because until now, the time dedicated to SDL in the curriculum has not justified the presence of fulltime advisers.

Taking into account that learner advising is a fairly new professional role in the field of education and language teaching, and that, at the moment, the DEFLE does not recruit candidates for the specific task of advising, we consider that on the whole this recruitment system works even though it may be improved.

This system guarantees the recruitment of teachers who are at least aware of the idea of independent learning, and who are at best convinced that independent learning works and is a good thing for learners, and who are happy to work in a context where they will be able - and even encouraged - to develop and perform this new role. However, the recruitment may still be improved in the future, for instance by choosing to recruit candidates who already have experience, or who overtly declare an interest in independent learning and advising.

3.2. Adviser training

The amounts and the kinds of training the teachers receive to develop advising skills are variable. The DEFLE teachers who volunteered as advisers were given a special post-recruitment 20 hour training course by the CRAPEL specialists that complements their 26 hours Master's degree course. Some of the teacher-advisers, involved in pursuing PhD studies have attended more classes (12 hours) on autonomous learning (see below 3.2.2) and, as part of their PhD studies, have participated in a research project on advising held at the CRAPEL (see below 3.2.3. and section 4.4 "Ongoing research").

3.2.1. Specific training

The training course at the CRAPEL was especially designed to give the advisers tools to begin advising (Bailly 1995). Two main aspects were developed during the training session: the nature of advice given to learners and the ways to deliver this advice.

In order to develop their ability to analyze, understand and give appropriate answers to learners' requests or needs, the advisers were encouraged to practice this ability in group activities such as case-studies. These case-studies take the form of frequently asked questions from learners such as: "How can I use a subtitled video to improve my French?" or "How can I be sure that I am not making mistakes if I learn without the help of a teacher?" These case-studies provide a concrete way of activating some "learning to learn" concepts, which are elements of what we at the CRAPEL call "Language Culture" (*Culture langagière*) and "Learning Culture" (*Culture d'apprentissage*) (Holec 1990). These "cultures" can be described as a set of things to know (knowledge) and to know how to do (skills) in the fields of language and foreign language learning: for instance, knowing what it is to communicate in a foreign language, what learning is about or what acquisition is (for more details on the concepts that form those cultures, see appendix n° 2). Such knowledge and skills enable learners to make appropriate decisions about their learning process, for instance: how to define objectives, how to select appropriate materials and tasks, how to organize their work, how to assess their work and progress in the language.

The second aspect of the training provided concerns the way to interact with the learners. In order to develop their ability to interact usefully with learners, the advisers first watched and analysed various video extracts from advising sessions that took place at the CRAPEL over the last ten years which, in terms of the advising practice developed here, show that:

– advisers follow a specific pattern of interaction - a professional conversation - where both participants react to each others' talk, ask and answer questions, share the floor and are polite with one another;
– suggestions are given when needed and asked for by the learners;
– advisers suggest various learning materials and techniques;
– advisers provide verbal and practical arguments for or against those materials and techniques, so that learners can eventually decide on their own what they are going to do.

Having observed those aspects of the learning discussion, the advisers role-played similar situations, which they video-taped, then watched and analyzed (for more details, see Gremmo 1995, Ciekanski 2005, Bailly and Ciekanski 2005).

3.2.2. General training

The second type of training does not concern all the advisers of the DEFLE, but only those who are pursuing PhD studies after their master's degree. In the first year of their PhD curriculum they can follow a 12 hour course on autonomous learning. This course is not especially designed for the DEFLE advisers, but concerns all kinds of students in foreign language didactics, including total beginners in the field. For the DEFLE advisers, this course represents an opportunity to increase their knowledge by asking specific questions directly related to their professional practice.

3.2.3. Indirect training: research

All students in the first year of a PhD in foreign language didactics are required to do some research practice. These particular DEFLE "advisers-and-students" were invited to join an action-research team on advising at the CRAPEL (see part 4.4). This allowed them to benefit from a very special kind of training, being at the same time both subjects and researchers in an experiment.

Given that the implementing of self-directed learning in the DEFLE curriculum is quite recent, the frequency of training is still to be defined. Advisers asked for more training, especially those engaged in the research project, and had consequently become particularly aware of the fact that they needed further training.

A weekly pedagogical meeting at the DEFLE, led by the Head of Department, brings together all teachers in order to discuss and make decisions about the pedagogical organization, the objectives and contents of the classes, and the links to establish between teaching and developing SDL. Although this weekly meeting does not exclusively concern the advisers and self-directed learning, it still is a good way to promote SDL inside the Department and to keep both advisers and teachers up to date. We still have to find a way to make teachers and advisers reflect on their practice on a regular basis, as we have done in places other than the DEFLE where trainees were recommended to videotape their own advising sessions and work on them.

Ideally, adviser training would take the form of a research project which would give the advisers an opportunity to share their experiences and to think directly about their own practice. The practical modalities of this action-research training are still to be defined: should it be imposed on all advisers or reserved for those who are particularly interested and motivated? What kind of participation or amount of extra work can be asked of those advisers? The answer to the first question is probably that advisers should think about their practices and discuss them together. The answer to the second question depends on the "political" motivation of the decision makers. As long as the CRAPEL is involved in the DEFLE's management, thinking about practice will be part of the adviser's tasks and clearly stipulated as such in the work contract.

3.3. The Adviser's Role

In CRAPEL's view, the adviser's main aim is to help learners develop their learning ability. This objective can be reached by different means: first, through a particular type of verbal exchange centered on the learners' learning practices, which we at the CRAPEL call an "entretien de conseil" (Gremmo 1995, Carette and Castillo 2004, Ciekanski 2005, Bailly and Ciekanski 2005). In this paper, we will use the English phrase "learning discussion". Secondly, through designing and creating specific written tools, such as "learning support documents". Thirdly, through specific training sessions aimed at developing learning ability through particular materials and tasks.

3.3.1. The learning discussion

The learning discussion is, in our view, a key piece in the process of learning to learn which is undertaken by the learners. It helps them raise their consciousness about their

learning practices by having to reflect on them and to talk about them (mainly to describe and to assess them). It is also a key piece of the adviser's strategy to support self-directed learning and to help develop the learner's learning ability. In the DEFLE-CLYC context, the learning discussions between adviser and students are subject to special arrangements due to the fact that advisers deal with numerous groups of students. Those special arrangements are described in part 3.4.3 below.

3.3.2. The learning support documents

During their training, advisers learn that one of their tasks is to contribute to the production of learning support documents for the resource center (posters, flyers, activity sheets, transcriptions, explanations on the organization and use of the CLYC in various languages), and for the learners (aims sheets, assessment sheets, example activity sheets, advice sheets. See example of learning support document in appendix n° 3). These written documents are useful both to advisers and learners in that they can complement, and sometimes replace learning discussion. They also provide written records that learners can consult whenever they need to. In the DEFLE-CLYC context the production of such documents varies from adviser to adviser.

3.3.3. The learning-to-learn sessions

In the CRAPEL's view, advisers are expected to be able to design and lead a learning-to-learn session (as described in Holec 1996) and/or to promote SDL during their classes through specific activities. In the experiment we are describing here, we observed a variety of practices, described in part 4.4.

3.4. Learning to learn

Advisers have several strategies available for promoting self-directed learning and knowledge about the learning process.

3.4.1. Overall presentation of SDL

According to the advisers we interviewed (see ongoing research description in 4.4), the best moment for promoting self-directed learning at the CLYC takes place at the very first class they have with their group of students. They mostly make a presentation and give explanations of what self-directed learning is, of what students are expected to do at the resource center, and of what kinds of documents may be found there.

3.4.2. Explicit information

Our observation of classes preceding the CLYC sessions suggested that in their teaching role, some advisers may be considered as indirectly promoting the learning-to-learn process. They do so by conducting language learning activities in ways that promote knowledge about the language learning process. For instance, they tend to train to each skill separately by

using specific tasks and documents; they make use of all types of documents that learners may easily find outside the classroom and at the CLYC; they try to make clear the goals, criteria and purpose of tasks. We consider that when teachers give clear information or explanations on their selection of objectives, materials, procedures and assessment criteria they, in fact, promote SDL. Learners who are taught this way can be expected to become more familiar with the decisions they will have to take in their autonomous learning.

3.4.3. *Learning discussions*

From our observation of CLYC sessions it appears clear that the advisers' discourse affects learners' behaviors up to a certain point. We thus suggest that any learning discussion between adviser and learner may result in a change in the ways students learn. To support this hypothesis, we should be able to find correlations between students' practices and advisers' talk. If learners follow the advisers' advice they should logically adopt appropriate learning practices. So it is through the observation of students' learning practices that we will try to assess the advisers' ability to promote the language learning process through the learning discussions at the CLYC.

As for advisers, it is most probable that through their interactions with learners, they will develop their ability in advising, or at least, their ability in identifying learners' needs and requirements as well as their own. Some of the problems they identified include: a need for more documents for the resource center; a need for more time to spend with each learner; a need for more or better arguments to promote self-directed learning and the knowledge of the language learning process. But the advisers' ability to develop learning skills is variable and, with beginners in FFL, it can also be greatly impeded by the language barrier.

So far, the development of students' ability to analyze tasks, to develop an action plan from their analysis, to monitor and evaluate as well as to identify and solve problems, is supposed to be taken care of by the advisers in the learning discussion. From what we could observe, advisers still need to increase the methodological part of their advising if they want to help the students efficiently on these points. Another way to bring students to reflect on those abilities is through summary sheets that they are asked to fill in each time they go to the resource center (see example in appendix n°4).

3.5. Interaction with learners

During a two-hour weekly session at the CLYC, for up to 25 students, there is really very little time for the adviser to spend with each learner. At the beginning of each session advisers may be requested by learners to help them find learning materials. After that, advisers mainly go from one learner to another checking if everything is all right, if they have work to do and if they know how to do it. Sometimes, some learners take advantage of the adviser arriving in their "learning zone" to establish eye contact and start asking a question. This question can lead to a longer interaction, even though this is not a very comfortable position for an extended learning discussion, with the learners sitting at a desk and having to raise their head, and the standing adviser leaning awkwardly over the learner.

We think that the time and space allowed for the learning discussion is not adequate, since we have not noticed more than slight changes in the learning practices. We assume that

with more time and comfort, learning discussions could be more efficient and we should be able to see more changes in learning practices.

We have not made statistical analyses of the number of times each student sees an adviser for a one-on-one discussion. But advisers tend to assert that they try to see each student at least once in every session at the CLYC, that is, once a week. In the current conditions, "to see" a student can merely be a glance at what they are doing or a quick question like "is everything alright?" or "do you need some help?", which may or may not lead to a more extended discussion. This situation will be improved next year by doubling the time the students work at the CLYC and by organizing regular meetings between learners and advisers through an appointment system.

4. EVALUATION OF ADVISING SERVICES

4.1. Strengths in promoting SDL, training advisers and providing workshops

Factors favouring the promotion of SDL at the DEFLE, training advisers and providing workshops include:

- CRAPEL's 35 years experience in successfully implementing self-directed learning in various academic contexts;
- the total support of the head of Department (one of the authors, who is also a member of the CRAPEL research team);
- the support of almost all the team of teachers, and the motivation and enthusiasm of some of the teachers who volunteered as advisers;
- the "self-direction culture" that is gaining ground in the community of teachers, trainers and learners;
- the open-mindedness and support of the head of the CLYC;
- the close links between the three University institutions involved in the project (CRAPEL-CLYC-DEFLE) which are all dedicated to promoting SDL, forming a whole and coherent community of practice (Wenger 1988/89) which enables autonomous language learning to take place;
- the CRAPEL's long experience in tutorials and workshops on learning to learn;
- the concepts developed by Henri Holec ("*culture langagière*" and "*culture d'apprentissage*") (Holec 1990);
- the learning-to-learn pedagogical activities developed through action-research (Holec 1996).

Our long-term goal is to see all learners learning to learn, rather than repeating old and mechanical learning habits, inherited while they were or are being taught a language and which may turn out to be inefficient in the context of SDL. We evaluate their progress in learning to learn on a regular basis: weekly observations and weekly outcome sheets (example in appendix n°4) provide clues to figuring out what aspects of SDL seem to appear in learning behaviors. The criteria for this evaluation are of both a practical and a verbal nature. The practical criteria are for instance: do learners have an objective for the CLYC sessions? Do

the documents and the tasks selected by the learners match their objectives? Do students accomplish tasks which meet their objectives and fit the selected documents? The verbal criteria are for instance: do learners show some skill in using learning culture words like 'listening comprehension' or 'oral expression' or 'exercise' or 'transcription'? Does what they say match what they do (practical criteria)? Can they describe accurately what they do and explain why they do what they do?

We evaluated the learners' attitudes towards the resource center and the advising service at the end of the semester by means of a questionnaire with questions on the resources and the adviser's role (see appendix n°5). The results are presented in part 4.4.

4.2. Limitations

There are a number of obstacles of various kinds to promoting SDL. Promoting SDL is easier to do in the learner's native tongue, which is a very difficult thing to do in the context of the DEFLE, where learners come from many different countries and speak many different languages. Until they have acquired sufficient ability in French, advising sessions with them may not be very successful. We have considered the possibility of advising in English, as some of the advisers would be competent enough in this language, but very few students are able to have a learning discussion in English.

Another limitation concerns the attitudes and expectations of both learners and advisers: the way they see their own role and each other's roles; what they expect one from another (for instance, advisers expect learners to try new ways of learning and learners expect advisers to give them answers); learners' beliefs about how language and language learning work may facilitate or impede the development of their capacity to learn and to learn how to learn. Different learning cultures may result in different views about teaching and learning and the advisers and learners may have to negotiate an agreement on learning practices.

The DEFLE experiment being quite recent, we have not had time to identify all the obstacles or to provide solutions for the ones we have identified. But we are working on several changes to the system which should result in fewer obstacles, such as translating all written documents about the CLYC, about learning-to-learn and about advising services into the languages of the students, and pairing a beginner and an advanced learner sharing the same mother tongue for learning discussions with the adviser.

4.3. Improvements

There is room for improvement in our attempts to introduce SDL, the most important of which is directed towards our students. Until now, approximately a quarter of the students thought that working in the CLYC was less valuable than working in class. This attitude is due to their beliefs about learning: they love "good teachers", i.e. teachers who are lively, who give homework and correct every production; they believe that efficient work is work with a teacher; they do not want to work "alone". Their attitude is also linked with the proportional amount of time spent in class and in the CLYC. Only two hours per week were given over to work in the CLYC, which probably contributed to a perception that this kind of work was less important. Next year, two two-hour sessions will be programmed every week.

A second improvement is the organization of classes on self-directed learning at the beginning of the semester. They will aim to give students ideas about thinking behind SDL, as well as concrete suggestions about how to work in the CLYC, how to choose documents and activities, how to evaluate themselves, how to benefit from pair learning.

Another improvement will consist in completely separating the roles of teacher and adviser. Until now, the same person would teach a group for six to eight hours, and then change into an adviser for the same group for a two-hour session every week. Students therefore had difficulty understanding the role of adviser, and tended to address the adviser as they would address a teacher. For example, they requested correction and evaluation, or asked the "teacher" to choose documents and activities for them to work on. In 2006, to avoid this problem of role identification, teachers will only advise groups of students that they do not teach.

4.4. Ongoing research

The authors have settled on a research project to observe the way advisers carry out their role: how they talk about learner self-management, how they help students choose documents and activities, what kind of help they give them, which problems are solved. As described above, SDL represents a new approach, an innovation especially for students, as most of the teachers had had training in autonomy. This is why this research project aims at answering two questions in particular:

– firstly, what specific pedagogical actions do teachers undertake, during classes and during self-directed learning sessions, in order to help students accept this new approach to learning?
– secondly, what are the consequences of teachers' behavior on students' behaviors, attitudes and representations about learning?

Thus during the spring of 2005, we decided to observe teachers' and students' actual behavior and to analyze what they think, to try and find out what they believe they "should" do, i.e. what we taught them to do, what they actually do, and what they think they actually do. This would lead us to a better understanding of the advisers' behavior in that particular environment, as well as students' reactions. In the long run, the study aims to improve adviser training and self-directed learning in the DEFLE.

Our research has a number of characteristics, including:

1) The research team composition: two senior lecturers (CRAPEL researchers, the authors of the present article); two teachers / advisers at the DEFLE, who are also Master's students, one "teacher only" at the DEFLE, and a Master's student.
2) Frequent interactions between reflection and observation.
3) A research methodology based on five different data sources.

It is based on the observation of five groups of students and five teachers/ advisers, over a four-month period. We collected:

– 65 questionnaires (example in appendix n°5) filled in by students about their previous language learning conditions and experiences, and about their language learning experience at the CLYC. These questionnaires revealed the individual's project, their degree of dependence on the adviser, their attitude towards CLYC sessions, their actual behavior (for example, do they attend the CLYC outside the programmed sessions?).

– 900 "practice" sheets describing what happened during CLYC sessions, completed by students after every session (example in appendix n°4). These have a double goal. First, in terms of training: students are led to think about their learning activities according to certain given criteria. Second, in terms of information: advisers keep a record of learners' activities, and use the information given to manage resources and prepare advice. Researchers have been using these sheets to observe if there is any development of the terms with which students describe their learning practices.

– 60 observation reports: data were gathered during the classes preceding CLYC sessions, giving information about teacher talk on SDL subjects; other data were gathered during CLYC sessions, giving information about advisers' and students' practices.

– 60 outcome sheets, filled in by advisers. The sheets reflect advisers' attitudes towards advising in the CLYC, and their vision of the adviser's role. We are aware that their knowledge of the CRAPEL's definition of autonomy may have influenced the way they describe their activities, but observations permit us to measure this distortion effect.

– A collective discussion, during which each adviser was asked a specific, individual question about a particular behavior or attitude. The questions asked were based on the results of observation. Then every adviser gave their opinion about the question their colleague was asked. Discussions were filmed, and lasted around ninety minutes. They have not yet been transcribed, but they will enable the researchers to analyze advisers' representations about their role. As they have to react spontaneously to questions, they are less able to control what they say, so their real beliefs emerge.

The results presented below are based on half of the sheets (some of them were returned late to the research team, and one of our advisers seems to be reluctant to give us his students' sheets and his own sheets).

Question 1: What specific pedagogical actions do teachers undertake, during classes and during self-directed learning sessions, in order to help students accept this new approach to learning?

We observed a variety of practices, during classes and at the CLYC:

1. During classes: all advisers talked about SDL, but they did so in different ways:

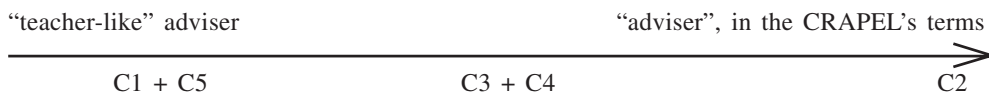| |
|---|
| C1: did not talk systematically about SDL. At the beginning of the semester, she[2] used to spend 15 minutes to talk about the following CLYC session, with the help of the students' sheets, but explained that this practice "was abandoned" (as if she felt she was not responsible for that situation). |
| C2: used to try to show students lots of different activities and examples, using a great variety of documents.She gave them ideas about what to do with what kind of document. |
| C3: talked systematically about the following CLYC session, for about 20 minutes, using the students' sheets. She tried to change moments (at the beginning of the class, during and at the end of the class), and change from public to private individual interaction, because she felt the students becoming tired of waiting for their turn to speak. |
| C4: talked in a very imprecise way, i.e. "Have you thought about the next CLYC session?" By doing this she encouraged students to anticipate their work in the CLYC. |
| C5: made frequent reference to the CLYC, most often in a kind of "you can listen to that document again at the CLYC" statement. This attitude is not to be called SDL, it is just a link between two learning settings, but "governed" by the teacher. It just contributed to the acceptance of CLYC sessions, but not to students' comprehension of learning to learn. |

2. Practices at the CLYC

We observed from all our evidence that advisers do not all understand their role in the same way. We tried to summarize their specificity in these terms:

C1: "controller" style. She wants to induce students to change documents when she thinks they are "bad" for learners, using terms like "keeping order", "I compel them to change". She likes to work with one or two learners, "even if that's not really autonomy", wants them "to be usefully and judiciously busy"; she makes them write down a summary of the films they had watched, strongly reproached an absence, and "had a very persuasive anti-DVD talk".
C2: "pure advising" style. She likes to help learners, give them advice, personal contact is crucial; it is essential to her that the aim of SDL is understood (she proposed this as a discussion subject with learners, which she recorded, and she gave the tape to the learners).
C3: "I'd like to, but I have no time" style. She likes to help learners, but thinks she does not have enough time to do it (which is true, as she spends much time talking to learners as a native speaker would do in an everyday conversation). She finds other problems

[2] To preserve their anonymity, advisers are all referred to as "she", although some advisers were men.

impeding her from advising: lack of a shared language (which she partially solves by using more advanced learners as interpreters), student fatigue when she spends time during class talking with them about their work in the CLYC (which she solves by speaking to each student individually while the group is working silently on a text).

C4: "I do not want to be overwhelmed" style. She wants to pay equal attention to all students, and thus refuses to allow a few to take up all of her attention with technical problems. She sends them over to CLYC staff. She wants everybody to know what they're going to do, and when asked for advice, gives concrete suggestions, explaining in detail what students can do.

C5: "controller, document provider" style. She does not seem to like to take students to the CLYC, she has the idea that a adviser, like a medical doctor, must be able to prescribe a document or a learning activity at the exact moment when the student is suffering from a lack of language, and as a consequence, suffers herself from the lack of those very specific resources. Even as an "adviser", she explains grammatical mistakes, and says things like "I'll prepare something for you", or "I've got a document for you". Students usually wait until she gets out of the room to leave the CLYC (in other groups, students leave when they judge it is time to go). She finds there are not enough documents in the CLYC, which she reports in written statements like "many requests could not be satisfied today".

We may place our advisers on a continuum, ranging from the nearest to the farthest from our definition of the adviser's role (as briefly described in part 3.3., more details in the references mentioned). This definition functions as a sort of "norm", on which the CRAPEL's training courses are based, and to which we refer in our attempt to describe our advisers.

"teacher-like" adviser   "adviser", in the CRAPEL's terms

$$\text{C1 + C5} \qquad\qquad\qquad \text{C3 + C4} \qquad\qquad\qquad \text{C2} \longrightarrow$$

C1 and C5 have in common that they think that "clients must be satisfied", which allows them to act differently from how they know they should, according to the "norm", arguing that, to satisfy students' expectations, they "have to" correct mistakes and provide documents.

C3 and C4 try to perform the adviser's role in conformity with the "norm", by distributing learning support documents, and by giving explicit answers to learners. Still, they face difficulties in making their role clear, in disturbing students while they are working (for example to ask them what they are doing, why they are doing it this way, etc.). They feel uncomfortable with the gap between what they are asked to do, i.e. what we taught them about advising, and what they feel they actually can do (in such a system as that of the DEFLE/ CLYC).

C2 is the one who best matches our definition of the adviser's role. She does not want to correct productions, accepts the consequences of such behavior (she says that students do not think she is a good teacher - and they are right, she does not act as a teacher, she is a good adviser!). Moreover, this adviser had only a few hours per week at the DEFLE in 2004-2005, which was also a source of difficulty for her and for the students (lack of contact time).

Question 2: What are the consequences of teachers' behavior on students' behaviors, attitudes, representations / ideas about learning?

We analyzed only the responses of the students who were regular enough to give us consistent information about their working practices, in 4 groups out of 5. Our first results concern:

  – their attitudes to working at the CLYC;
  – their behavior (attendance in addition to programmed sessions);
  – the variety of documents used;
  – the variety and quality of criteria used to analyze their CLYC experiment.

	C1	C2	C3	C4
Total nº of regular students	7	9	8	15
Attitude towards working at the CLYC	6 like 1 does not like	8 like 1 does not like	5 like 1 + or – 2 do not like	13 like 2 do not like
Behavior : nº of learners who attend the CLYC outside	5	3	3	8
Variety of documents/ activities used	Fairly wide variety	Wide variety	Fairly wide variety	Little variety
Criteria used to talk about working in the CLYC	New concepts of how to learn ; many different ways of working ; great amount of documents	Lots of different means to learn	Very few criteria	Lots of documents (possibility to find them); different ways of working

This experiment has shown that the learners involved did not greatly develop much ability to set goals and to select tasks according to these goals, which is not surprising given the little time really dedicated to SDL in class and at the CLYC. While we were observing the learners at the resource center, we saw them doing various things, but, if we rely on the comparison between their assessment sheets and their practice, we cannot be certain that they all knew why they were doing the things they were doing. Some of them do not seem to make a clear difference between listening comprehension and oral expression; many of them keep doing the same activities for weeks; various learners carry out very high cost activities (time and energy consuming) for apparently very little reward (e.g. copying all the French sub-titles of a video into a note-book before translating them and memorizing parts of them); some of them do not know how to use language textbooks or dictionaries. Most of them rely on the advisers to assess their work, lacking the confidence to carry out their self-assessment. Nonetheless, we expect that they will progressively adopt new behaviors, even though they did not get much help during the advising sessions we observed.

What we learnt from this initial research can be summarized as follows:

– Advisers' talk does influence students' behaviors: for example we observed that an anti-DVD discourse results in a deserted video room after a few weeks (but students do come back later). We assume that any talk about how to learn or about the language, may influence students' thoughts in the same way.
– Our research tools are efficient: it is necessary to gather data using a variety of tools, some of which rely on subjects' well-thought-out reports, others on spontaneous talk, others on direct observation, and to interrelate results.
– We must select fewer subjects to observe, and be careful to gain real support from our advisers in the observation project.
– We could add to our research procedure a discussion with students about their practices, to complete the information taken from their "practice sheets".

5. CONCLUSION

We intend to introduce some changes in our student training:

– at the beginning of the term, a two-hour class specifically devoted to learning to learn (reflection on objectives, on material and human means, on learning activities, on evaluation);
– four hours' work in the CLYC (instead of two);
– ten to twenty minute regular appointments arranged between students and advisers during CLYC sessions;
– organization of tandems between students who are competent in French and non-competent students.

Thus we expect the setting to be more favorable to SDL. We intend to pursue the research undertaken in order to get more precise information on the nature of arguments used by advisers, their effects on students' attitudes, representations and behaviors towards SDL, and the effect of institutional decisions on the way SDL is implemented.

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APPENDIX N°1
Institutional link between class and SDL in the CLYC: an example
of a student timetable (year 2004-2005)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8 to 9		*Class* (Pat)		*Class* (Pat)	
9 to 10		*Class* (Pat)		*Class* (Pat)	
10-11	*Class* (Paul)	*Class* (Pat)		*Class* (Pat)	
11-12	*Class* (Paul)	*Class* (Pat)			
12-13				*Class* (Chris)	*Class* (Chris)
13-14	CLYC (Paul)			*Class* (Chris)	*Class* (Chris)
14-15	CLYC (Paul)				*Class* (Chris)
15-16					
16-17					*Class* (Paul)
17-18					*Class* (Paul)

APPENDIX N° 2
List of learning to learn concepts

Learning to learn concepts

"Linguistic culture"

- A language is also a culture : to communicate people use culturally implicit elements (shared knowledge)
- As a non-native speaker compensation strategies are all the more useful
- Understanding and speaking are not translating
- For oral comprehension:
  – you do not necessarily listen to everything
  – the way you listen and what you listen to depends on your objectives and your reasons for listening
- For written comprehension:
  – you do not read all the texts in the same way
  – the way you read depends on your objective for reading and your reasons for reading
- For oral expression:
  – you cannot say anything to anyone, anywhere, anytime and anyhow
  – you do not speak as you write
  – to be correct and to be appropriate are different things
- For written expression:
  – a text is not a series of sentences
  – what you write and how you write depends on your objectives and the person you are writing to

"Learning culture"

- Learning is defining objectives, choosing appropriate material and tasks, organizing work and assessing the process and the results
- There are different ways to learn and different learning styles
- Learning is constructing rules
- Mistakes are inevitable and can be positive
- Learning and acquisition are different activities and processes
- Memorizing is not learning by heart
- Self-directed learning means knowing how to use didactic material, authentic documents, native speakers and no documents at all

APPENDIX N°3
An example of learning support document

Using a DVD to improve your French

DVD with subtitles

1.
   – watch the DVD with the sound OFF and use the subtitles to try and predict what is being said (using a dictionary if necessary). You can choose to read subtitles in French or in another language you are more familiar with.
   – then listen to the video with the sound on, checking what you predicted against the actual text

2.
   – first watch the document with the sound and subtitles
   – then watch it again, this time without the subtitles, trying to reconstruct what is being said

3.
   – watch the DVD without the subtitles, and try to understand what is being said
   – write a short summary, and make a detailed transcript of a passage
   – check your work by watching the DVD with the subtitles

4.
   – watch the first minutes with subtitles (to grasp the situation)
   – then hide the subtitles
   – if you lose track, watch the subtitles again.

APPENDIX N°4
An example of a weekly outcome sheet

Nom, prénom :

Date : 29 / 03 / 2005

A22

FICHE DE BILAN DE SEANCE AU CLYC

1. - **Qu'avez-vous fait aujourd'hui ?** Quel(s) document(s) avez-vous utilisé(s) [K7 vidéo, DVD, CDRom, méthode de français… ? Donnez le titre et la cote du document si possible]

    DVD méthode de Americain.

    titre est "le client"

   - Avec qui avez-vous travaillé ?

    seule

   - Quels compétence(s) et exercice(s) avez-vous travaillés ?.(compréhension orale, compréhension écrite, expression orale, expression écrite, compétence grammaticale, phonétique…)

    J'ai cherché qqc conversation est différent, oral et sous-titre.

2. **Comment s'est passé cette séance ?** Avez-vous rencontré des problèmes en faisant vos exercices ? Êtes-vous satisfait(e) de cette séance ? Pensez-vous que cela vous a été utile ?

    Moi, cet aide très important, prononciation et expression.

3. **Que voulez-vous faire la prochaine fois ?** La même chose ? une autre activité ? Voulez-vous travailler quelque chose en particulier ? (compréhension orale, compréhension écrite, expression orale, expression écrite, vocabulaire spécifique, point précis de grammaire…)
   Voulez-vous travailler sur un support en particulier ? (K7 audio, DVD, CDRom, texte écrit…)

    la même chose, je voudrais continuer ce travaillé.

    MERCI !

APPENDIX N°5
A questionnaire filled in by a student

Nom, prénom :

Date : 29 / 03 / 2005   A22

FICHE DE BILAN DE SEANCE AU CLYC

1. - **Qu'avez-vous fait aujourd'hui ?** Quel(s) document(s) avez-vous utilisé(s) [K7 vidéo, DVD, CDRom, méthode de français… ? Donnez le titre et la cote du document si possible]

   DVD méthode de Americain.

   titre est "le client"

- Avec qui avez-vous travaillé ?

   seule

- Quels compétence(s) et exercice(s) avez-vous travaillés ?.(compréhension orale, compréhension écrite, expression orale, expression écrite, compétence grammaticale, phonétique…)

   J'ai cherché qqc conversation est différent, oral et sous-titre.

2. **Comment s'est passé cette séance ?** Avez-vous rencontré des problèmes en faisant vos exercices ? Êtes-vous satisfait(e) de cette séance ? Pensez-vous que cela vous a été utile ?   Moi, cet aide très important, prononciation et expression.

3. **Que voulez-vous faire la prochaine fois ?** La même chose ? une autre activité ?
Voulez-vous travailler quelque chose en particulier ? (compréhension orale, compréhension écrite, expression orale, expression écrite, vocabulaire spécifique, point précis de grammaire…)
Voulez-vous travailler sur un support en particulier ? (K7 audio, DVD, CDRom, texte écrit…)   la même chose, je voudrais continuer ce travaillé.

MERCI !