

**MAKING SHORT FILMS IN FRENCH CLASS:  
THE ROLE OF COLLABORATIVE SHORT FILM PROJECTS IN SOCIAL  
COHESION AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN THE CORE FRENCH CLASSROOM**

by

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## Abstract

Based on the principles of social constructivism, multiliteracies and Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy concept of *dialogue*, I observed and reflected upon my current practices as a teacher of additional languages. The main purpose for this study was to examine the role of creating collaborative short films in social cohesion and student engagement in the Core French classroom. The study included one grade 10 Core French class who explored course content (television and film genres) by creating their own collaborative short films. The short film unit, including an optional show casing in the school theatre, took place over a span of 5 weeks. I collected data through a variety of forms: field notes, journal reflections, questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews. Once data were collected, I used an arts-based approach (screenplay writing) to both analyze and disseminate my findings. The research-based screenplay that I wrote is based on the data and I share this writing in the thesis along with an analysis of this artistic process which deconstructs the screenplay for the reader. I shared the screenplay with participants to seek further insights and feedback. My findings and discussions are largely based on understandings gleaned from the process of writing the screenplay.

## **Preface**

This thesis was approved by the University of British Columbia, Office of Research Services, Behavioural Research Ethics Board. The ethics approval certificate number is H12-00312.

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# Chapter 1 – Introduction

In this study I investigated my own pedagogical practices and the learning experiences of the students in the additional languages<sup>1</sup> classroom. Specifically, I questioned the role of collaborative short film projects on social cohesion and student engagement in the Core French classroom.

## 1.1. My Philosophical Positioning

A social constructivist (Vygotsky, 1978) holds that there is no way to ever know or tell the whole truth, that all individual beings hold their own truth and their own constructions of reality, and that together we socially construct this reality. Therefore as a researcher I am not setting out to know or show the truth, but rather to explore and question my humble construction of a moment in reality. As befits a social constructivist approach, to begin my study I must admit my own ontological and epistemological beliefs, my personal history, and my biases. Sommerville condenses this concept as one's *positionality*, in that as a researcher I inevitably “write from a particular embodied, material and temporal location, from my own particular histories.” (Sommerville, 2010, p. 328)

## 1.2. My Personal History

It's hard to believe that I am a teacher of both Spanish and French at the secondary level. I grew up in a small town in central Saskatchewan, so it was not surprising that I was a monolingual speaker of English until my early 20s. During high school, I studied French as an additional language. Yet, despite years of study, I was completely unable to engage in any kind

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<sup>1</sup> Additional language is a more appropriate term than second language for the target language in the modern language classroom, like Core French, because many students in our modern classrooms come to Core French already speaking more than one language.



of authentic communication using the target language. Like the majority of students, I left high school without an oral additional language competency (MacFarlane, 2001). At the time however, my true passion was theatre, and I eagerly anticipated the annual extra-curricular school play.

While studying at the University of Saskatchewan I clung to the wish to learn an additional language and studied both French and Spanish to little avail. The delivery of content at the undergraduate level was unbearably similar to the top down delivery I had experienced in high school and once again I failed to gain much from the experience. I did, however, thoroughly enjoy participating in the University and community theatre clubs at the time. Upon completing my Bachelor of Arts in English Literature with Honours, I decided it was time to invest in my other passion and to learn an additional language. I moved to Mexico.

I lived in Mexico for three and a half years teaching English Literature at the secondary level in a private preparatory school. Unfortunately, I found that I was not making much progress learning the language through the Spanish as additional language class I enrolled in. I found it very text based, and involved a great deal of reading beyond my level and endless translating exercises. Needless to say, I was frustrated and bored with the class. It didn't help that the majority of my time was spent with fellow ex-patriots speaking English. So, I decided it was time to try learning Spanish in a different way. If learning the language directly was not working, I would try learning it indirectly.

I enrolled in a local university for a diploma in cinema. The yearlong course began with an intensive study of film history and theory, and culminated in the creation of a collaborative short film. I was the only person in the class for whom Spanish was an additional language, so I

had my work cut out for me. During the first few months of the class, the readings were laborious, but I had sufficient background knowledge of the course content, so I persevered. By the end of the process, my Spanish skills had significantly improved. In working with Spanish towards a collaborative aesthetic goal, I was able to learn an additional language through doing something I loved. I wrote creatively in Spanish, and as the camera operator of our collaborative short film project, I had to work closely with the director in order to protect and capture his vision for the film. As my language competency grew, I continued to hone my skills by participating in community theatre clubs and classes, and even performed on stage in Spanish many times!

After my three and a half years in Mexico, I returned to Canada to get my Bachelor of Education at UBC. Immediately following, I was hired to teach Spanish and a single French 8 class. I was delighted to get to teach Spanish, but at the same time I was concerned about teaching the French 8 class, because I felt my French skills were far from satisfactory. As too frequently happens in the Vancouver area, there was no one else to teach the French class. Luckily I was blessed with a gracious group of grade 8s and two very supportive colleagues. I had such a positive experience teaching French that I was inspired to continue my own studies in the French language.

That summer I enrolled in an Intensive French language summer program through UBC à Québec. With the confidence I had gained by learning Spanish, my first additional language, I was ready for the next challenge. To this day I continue to work to improve my additional language skills and I have returned three times to study at a variety of summer intensive French programs offered at Université de Laval, Université de Montréal, and Université du Québec à

Montréal. I have even developed a love for Quebecois cinema and television which is now accessible to me. As I continue to pursue my love for learning additional languages through a variety of facets, this study is not only about how my students learn and engage with an additional language, but how I engage with my learning of additional languages as well.

### **1.3. My Professional History**

*The other day a French student of mine asked me what I would do if they all simply refused to do the cooperative activity I had assigned. As if I was expected to dole out some kind of external motivator? The rewards of good grades and the punishment of what, a phone call home? Failing the class? Social exclusion, go to the hallway!? Do students only recognize external motivators? I told him he had a choice as to how he would spend his time. That I have experienced great joy in my life through the additional languages I have learned, and that I could not understand why he would not want that skill for himself. He seemed surprised and pleased by the answer and returned to work. (journal, pre-study, April 6, 2012)*

Why do people want to learn additional languages? Before I can begin to motivate the students in my additional language classes, be it French or Spanish, I must ask this question. What motivates me to learn other languages? It certainly has helped me professionally being a teacher of both Spanish and French, but personally my drive to keep developing my skills comes from a deep rooted desire to experience the art: the literature and films of cultures with a language other than my own, to experience it without the filter of translation or subtitles. By and far my most motivating factor is the people I am able to interact with in French and Spanish - people who may or may not speak English - and our relationship is enriched by my ability to speak their mother tongue.

Students, however, do not necessarily arrive at my class with the same motivation to learn an additional language as I have. Some may have strong personal motivations, but many are less internally motivated than I would prefer. Admittedly, even though I love learning and

teaching additional languages, I have often felt that my classes could spiral into a routine, with too much textbook work, and not enough *panache*. As a result, I have turned to my experience in theatre and film to include drama-based strategies in my delivery of content in the additional language courses I teach. As my *pièce de résistance* I facilitate collaborative short film projects. I offered students my knowledge and passion for film production and believed that they would in turn lend their unique talents and work together in order to rise to the challenge before them. The challenge they faced was to collaboratively create a short film, worthy of an audience beyond the classroom. As a regular facilitator of collaborative short film projects, I was well aware of the inherent creative chaos, the mad house of making short films, which comes with such a project. Therefore, I had come to question the educational value of creating collaborative short films in an additional language class. Were we just having fun together? Through this study I questioned my assumption that making collaborative short films in French would provide a playful pedagogy that potentially creates a space for social cohesion and student engagement. I desired to foster a space where students could take ownership of their learning through democratic choice, learn and show knowledge through multiliterate and multimodal opportunities, and collaborate to work together towards a collective aesthetic goal.

***Research of the heart***

*I want to **teach in a way that shares power** more democratically with my students.  
I believe making these short films can be such a way.*

*(journal, April 29, 2012)*

#### **1.4. Overview of Study**

In this study I observed and reflected upon my current practices as a teacher of additional languages, based on the principles of social constructivism, multiliteracies and Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy concept of *dialogue*. Specifically, I examined the social cohesion and student

engagement in the Core French classroom where the participants created collaborative short films. The study included one grade 10 Core French<sup>2</sup> class who created their own collaborative short films as a way of exploring the course content (television and film genres). Although these short films are technically 5 – 7 minute digital videos, the term short film is intended to evoke the genre of story-telling common in short films: a small cast and a tight story line. I led the students through a short film that took place over a span of 5 weeks (four 40-minute sessions and three 80-minute sessions) during regularly scheduled class time. There was also one additional voluntary session over lunch hour in the fifth week for those students who wanted the opportunity to showcase their films to their peers and teachers. I collected data through a variety of forms: field notes, journal reflections, questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews. Once the data was collected I used an arts-based approach (screenplay writing) to both analyze and disseminate my findings. In this thesis I share the research-based screenplay that I wrote based on the data, along with an analysis of this artistic process that deconstructs the screenplay for the reader. To seek further insights and feedback, I shared the screenplay with participants. My findings and discussions are largely based on understandings gathered from the process of writing the screenplay.

#### **1.4.1. Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to observe and critically reflect upon my current teaching practices, specifically my facilitation of the creation of collaborative short film projects in the Core French classroom. I set out with these questions:

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<sup>2</sup> Core French is the provincial curriculum for delivery of French as an additional language.

1. What is the role of collaborative short films projects in **social cohesion** in the Core French classroom?
2. What is the role of collaborative short films projects in **student engagement** in the Core French classroom?

#### **1.4.2. Relevance of the Study**

This study is relevant to teachers of Core French and other additional languages. In Core French particularly, there have been concerns regarding student enrolment, which suggest dissatisfaction with the current conditions of the curriculum.

[S]tatistics show that students tend to drop out of core French<sup>3</sup> as soon as it is no longer a requirement after grade eight. Research published by the advocacy organization Canadian Parents for French (CPF) shows that only one in ten BC students who begin core French in grade five continue to study the language through grade 12. There are many reasons why students don't take French throughout their school career; one reason, according to CPF, is the quality of instruction in terms of methodology and competence<sup>4</sup>. (Barzilay, 2009, p. 8)

This study focuses on drama-based teaching methodologies and specifically the role of collaborative short film projects on social cohesion and student engagement - learning environment concerns which could reasonably affect a student's interest in a course. This study also contributes to the literature of second language acquisition, drama-based strategies applied in courses across the curriculum, multiliteracies, and arts-informed research. Finally, this study is personally relevant in that by inquiring into my pedagogical strategies, I continue to enhance my own teaching practices and the educational experience of the students in my classroom.

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<sup>3</sup> Core French was not capitalized in the quotation.

<sup>4</sup> linguistic competence

## Chapter 2 – Review of the Literature

### 2.1. Theoretical Framework: Social Constructivism

The theory framing my study is social constructivism. Guba and Lincoln (2005) describe social constructivism as a paradigm which is inherently subjective, in that each individual constructs his or her own reality and perception of reality based on his or her personal history and biased perspective. It also holds that, therefore, reality is not a fixed thing, but rather a process of perpetual construction and deconstruction. With each experience a person has, his or her perspective is altered. In addition, his or her presence alters the experience. In other words, my study of the role of collaborative short film projects on social cohesion and student engagement cannot be separated from the direct influence my very presence has on the case. After all, I am the one facilitating the process.

Within the realm of the social construction of reality resides the co-construction of knowledge. Through working together on collaborative short film projects in the Core French classroom, students are engaging in a process of co-construction of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Vygotsky (1978), language is best learned in a social context where students co-construct knowledge by building upon each other's strengths and background knowledge. In effect the collaborative group has more intelligence than the sum of its parts. Students also learn relationally, through learning together. In addition, by working together to create a collaborative short film, students create their own lists of vocabulary and grammatical constructions, relevant to their screenplay. As such the students learn in a space where they are able to take ownership of their language learning: by choosing what words they want to learn and say and the mode in which they want to show this learning.

## 2.2. Critical Pedagogy

If students are in a space where they are learning together, it follows that the teacher must consider the relationships in this space and continually question the social structure of the learning environment in order to ensure an optimal environment. According to Norton (1995), teaching towards this optimal social learning environment requires educators to be aware of the politics involved in the classroom, both in regards to content and social dynamics, and to encourage students to recognize socially unjust situations, engage in critical reflection and dialogue and act in a way which encourages social justice. Critical pedagogy “relies upon the combination of critical discourses with the commitment to transformative action and, therefore, claims that education should be embedded in social context and that its political nature should be explicitly recognized and endorsed” (Guilherme, 2002, p. 61). Therefore, teachers of additional language must consider how language, knowledge, and power interplay in education, and make pedagogical choices that serve an emancipatory function to their students (McLaren, 2003). The field of critical pedagogy is vast: it has given rise to many venues of analysis, some of which focus on certain groups of people, i.e., feminist and queer theory, and some focus on actions of oppression: such as the “Five Faces of Oppression” (Young, 1990). For the purposes of this paper, I focus on two concepts in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*: the concept of *dialogue* and collaboration: the concept of the teacher becoming a *student among students* (Freire, 1970). Reading Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and ruminating on the idea of dialogue gave me deep insight into my position in the classrooms I teach. Even this small critical lens brought me to recognise that, as Cummins, Early and Stille (2011) explain, education is never neutral and my very presence as a teacher in the room necessarily holds certain power constructs. Through inquiring into these concepts of *dialogue* and of being a *student among students*, I began to



problematize and deconstruct these power constructs in my classroom.

### **2.2.1. Dialogue**

According to Freire (1970) engaging in *dialogue* is the only way one can truly communicate, and communication is fundamental to education. The concept of dialogue moves far beyond two people talking to each other.

[D]ialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person's 'depositing' ideas in another, nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be 'consumed' by the discussants. Nor yet is it hostile, polemical argument between men who are committed neither to the naming of the world, nor to the search for truth, but rather to the imposition of their own truth. (Freire, 1970, p. 77)

Therefore, according to Freire (1970), engaging in dialogue implies a balancing of power between the participants. When power is imbalanced the interaction is a top down giving of instruction to the other, in other words only one party has the power to affect change – a change which is imposed upon the other. When engaging in dialogue both parties involved mutually trust that they each have something of equal value to contribute.

Faith in man is an a priori requirement for dialogue; the 'dialogical man' believes in other men even before he meets them face to face. His faith, however, is not naïve. The 'dialogical man' is critical and knows that although it is within the power of men to create and transform, in a concrete situation of alienation men may be impaired in the use of that power. (Freire, 1970, p. 79)

A person has the power to create and transform, but if the person is oppressed, this power will be impaired. When Freire wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), he was addressing the widespread illiteracy and blatant forms of oppression in his home country, Brazil. Applying

these ideas to the power dynamics within the additional languages classroom, I sought to question how dialogue contributes to social cohesion and student engagement during the creating of collaborative short films in French. According to Freire (1970), dialogue is necessary for communication which is, in turn, necessary for education. Therefore, in questioning my pedagogical practices, I had to be willing to question my ability to engage in dialogue with the students and their ability to engage in dialogue with each other. I asked myself two questions. First, how was I sharing power with them? And second, how was I withholding power from them? I acknowledged the ways in which the students had the power to choose: with whom they would work, the kind of short film they would make, the story they would tell, the roles and responsibilities they would undertake, and the vocabulary they would learn for their project. I also had to remind myself that the students were denied the power to choose the type of project as they were required to make a short film project, and they were denied the power to set the time frame. The students could have arranged an alternative project with their regular classroom teacher, but they would have had to approach her with an alternative suggestion, and as far as completing the project within the set time frame, many of the students completed the project after the deadline and the teacher did not penalize them for the lateness because there had been dialogue between the teacher and the students to agree on an extension.

Engaging in *dialogue* means that both parties involved have the potential to bring change to the situation, to transform, to co-construct their social reality.

[T]rue dialogue cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking – thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and men and admits of no dichotomy between them – thinking which perceives reality as process, as transformation, rather than as a static entity – thinking which does not separate itself from action, but constantly immerses itself in temporality without fear of the risks involved. (Freire, 1970, p. 81)

During this research I not only inquired into the dialogic relationship between myself and the students but also into that relationship between myself and the other teacher. To that end I observed and reflected upon my relationship with the classroom teacher as fellow colleagues working together towards an effective pedagogical practice in Core French. Finally, I also observed and reflected upon the dialogic relationship between the students in the collaborative short film project groups and within the greater classroom: I examined the problematic moments: when dialogue was functional and when it was impaired.

“The interactions between educators, students and communities are never neutral; in varying degrees, they either reinforce coercive relations of power or promote collaborative relations of power” (Cummins, Early, & Stille, 2011). Therefore a classroom of students is not only affected by the obvious imbalanced power of the authority of the teacher, but also by the imbalanced power between peers relating to factors such as socio-economic status, race, gender, ability, and popularity.

A learner may be a highly motivated language learner, but may nevertheless have little investment in the language practices of a given classroom or community, which may, for example, be racist, sexist, elitist, or homophobic.” (Norton, in press, p. 4)

### **2.2.2. Student among students**

Through the dual role of facilitator/researcher I engaged in various forms of dialogue between myself and the students. These moments enabled me to contemplate the role of teacher and the potential to teach as a *student among students* (Freire, 1970). According to Freire, by becoming a *student among students*, “[t]he teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also

teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow” (1970, p. 67). In order to do my part in the fostering of this dialogical and educational space, I problematized the power I, as a teacher, often hold over my students as the gate keeper of grades. In this study I experienced working with students of whom I would not be grading the work. My position in the classroom was still one of power – I had designed the project, and I was collecting and analysing the data. However, in order to rectify some of the power balance, I had designed the collaborative short film projects as a means of giving choice, and therefore power, back to the students. I kept the parameters wide open. Students could create a movie about anything they wanted, whether a remake or an original script. Students chose their own groups for the project. Furthermore, each student could take on whatever role of the process he or she felt appropriate, be it: writer, director, actor, sound designer, editor, or any other facet they desired.

### **2.3. Multiliteracies**

Creating collaborative short film projects provides an opportunity for students to engage in course content through multiliteracies. Each student in the group engages in the project through multiliteracies – linguistic, audio, spatial, gestural and visual, kinaesthetic and relational such as interpersonal and intrapersonal (New London Group, 1996). The production of a collaborative short film requires activities such as writing, music, sound design, visual design, acting, directing, and editing. Most importantly, as students are collaborating they are constantly engaged in activities which require them to work relationally – both interpersonally and intrapersonally. When students utilise their multiliteracies, be it verbal, visual, aural, kinaesthetic, interpersonal or intrapersonal, “[m]eaning is made through all kind of signs – not just words” (Siegel, 2006, p. 65).

The scope of literacy pedagogy has moved, and continues to move beyond that of linguistic text into a space of multimodal texts (New London Group, 1996; Siegel, 2006; Eco, 1976). In a study done with a grade 9 Core French class, in which students engaged with course content through the creation of picture books and the dramatization of some of their created stories, Early and Yeung (2009) found the students to be highly engaged in the project.

“[T]he students both noted that the authenticity of the tasks and public audience encouraged students’ investment, as did the opportunity for the students to integrate their learning of French with their artistic talents, strengths and interests. It appeared as though the multimodal nature of the tasks offered something for everyone and provided multiple points of entry into the language, improving the chances of success in language learning that increased the desire to continue. (Early & Yeung, 2009, p. 318)

Early and Yeung (2009) caution, however, that it was not the individual factors that brought upon this engaged and invested learning environment, but rather the collection of all the elements together within a critical design. For his part, Cummins suggests that “[o]ptimal academic development within the interpersonal space of the learning community occurs only when there is both maximum cognitive engagement and maximum identity investment on the part of students” (2006, p. 55). Early and Yeung (2009) found that the picture book project and the subsequent dramatization for a public audience created an opportunity for optimal academic development.

## **2.4. Drama-based Pedagogical Strategies**

Drama-based educational strategies are the application of drama based activities across the curriculum in classrooms other than drama. Studies have shown that implementing drama-based educational strategies can enhance the additional language learner’s experience by

increasing linguistic competency (Bournot-Trites, Belliveau, Séror, & Spiliotopoulous, 2007; Braüer, 2002; Catterall, 2002; Dodson, 2002), and bolstering individual confidence while overcoming linguistic and cultural barriers to build community (Wager, Belliveau, Lea, & Beck, 2009). Drama-based educational strategies have also been found to potentially create authentic and contextualized communication experiences (Parsons, Schaffner, Little, & Felton, 1984; Stern, 1980).

Drama in the language classroom is ultimately indispensable because it gives learners the chance to use their own personalities. It draws upon students' abilities to imitate and express themselves, and if well handled, it should arouse interest and imagination. Drama encourages adoptability, fluency and communicative competence. It puts language into context and, by giving learners experience of success in real life situations, it should arm them with the confidence for tackling the world outside the classroom. (Davies, 1990, p. 97)

The field of drama in education has often been divided into two camps: on one end you have the aesthetic production-oriented focus and on the other side you have the process of engaging learners through dramatic activities across the curriculum with no production in mind (Heathcote, 1984). Scholars question this either/or dichotomy and call for strategies that include both the rich pedagogical, inclusive process and an ultimate aesthetic product to share (Jackson, 2005; Anderson, 2012). There is something truly powerful about being part of a collaborative aesthetic production and it is the act of sharing this production with a public that instils the necessary pressure (Mackenzie & Belliveau, 2011). Students working together to create an aesthetic production with an intended and very real audience must rise to the occasion: to work together, to navigate the cyclical create and critique process (Sullivan, 2010). In a study that looked at the use of drama with second language learners at the elementary level, Wager et al. found that it was the shared challenge and goal of a final production that really brought the group

together and motivated the students (Wager, Belliveau, Lea, & Beck, 2009). In a study which examined secondary students in a theatre class, Beare (2003) found that the collaborative play-creating process fostered optimal adolescent development. Kaczmarek and Riva (1996) describe optimal adolescent development as providing youth with the necessary protective factors required for growth during their adolescent years. Constructing a space that could potentially support optimal adolescent development was one of the main reasons I had come to practice drama-based educational strategies in my classrooms. Drama-based strategies have been to build a sense of community amongst the participants, when teamwork, creativity, and the exchange of ideas are fostered (Rohd, 1998).

The aforementioned research into drama-based pedagogical strategies have been mostly centered on activities such as role playing, improvisation, and collaborative play building with little evidence of research on the creation of collaborative short films and its effect on social cohesion and student engagement in the Core French classroom.

## Chapter 3 – Methodology

### 3.1. Site & Participants

The site and participants were chosen via convenience sampling (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). I worked with students who were in Core French at the Grade 10 level, as I felt that was the skill level that would be appropriate for the collaborative short film project as a means of learning in Core French. At this level students already know how to work in the basic verb tenses: present, past and future, have an intermediate level of vocabulary, and possess the skills to seek out new knowledge (use a dictionary) for themselves. After gaining support from the district and the principal to carry out my research at the site, I met with the teacher who was currently teaching two groups of French 10. The regular classroom teacher was Mrs. Knight<sup>5</sup>, with whom I had worked previously in the French department, so I knew that I had the opportunity to work with someone I had always found positive and open minded. Mrs. Knight approved in the fall of 2011, and we met regularly at lunch to discuss plans for my research with her students. Of the two grade 10 Core French groups, she invited me to work with the one which she felt had a more diverse demographic. There were 27 students whose ages ranged from 15 - 17 years old. Of the 27 students, two declined participation in the study, and as such their experiences were not documented in this study. Of the 25 students who agreed to participate in the study, ten were boys and fifteen were girls. The students' economic status was mostly middle class, with some lower, some higher. The students were of diverse ethnic identities: Canadian, Filipino, Persian, Korean, Chinese, Indian, First Nations, and Bajan. Many were children of immigrants whose parents speak a language other than English in their homes. One student in the class had difficulties reading and had a Special Education Assistant present to support his

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<sup>5</sup> All names are changed to pseudonyms for confidentiality



learning. Five students in the class had an A+ in the course and five students were at risk of failing the course. The remainder of the students were in the midrange of abilities and achievement in the course. It was this diverse range of student ability and background that led the classroom teacher to choose this group as a realistic representation of a regular Core French classroom in the local area<sup>6</sup>.

Working closely with Mrs. Knight, together we planned how best to integrate the collaborative short film projects into the regular class time (see timeline in appendix G). It ended up being more in class time than Mrs. Knight would have usually dedicated to a student film project as I was going to use some class time to teach students how to make a collaborative short film. This project was not going to be just another student film to show content. It was going to be about making an aesthetic product too. I adapted the instructions for the collaborative short film project from *Teaching the Screen* (Anderson & Jefferson, 2009). The students were given the following parameters in creating their films: 5 – 7 minutes in length, all dialogue to be delivered in the target language, French, and the film had to effectively represent a selected genre, for example an action film (the students were learning about genres concurrently in their regular French class). The entire process occurred within a five week inclusive timeframe from inception to post-reflection. For the first two weeks, I worked with the students for four 40-minute sessions on Tuesday and Thursday while they engaged in pre-production activities related to their short films. During the third week, I worked with students for two 80-minute sessions while they shot their short films. To give them time to edit, they had one week where we did not meet, as they requested. Finally, we viewed the films in the theatre on the final Monday, first

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<sup>6</sup> The descriptions of the participants are based upon observations and conversations with the students and the teacher. The scope of this study did not allow for more detailed data collection regarding the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the participants.

with a private audience during class and then open to the student body over lunch the same day. This was not Mrs. Knight's first time having her students create collaborative short films in her Core French class, but it was her first time giving so much focus to the aesthetic and collaborative aspects of the process, as such I adapted a rubric for assessment from *Teaching the Screen* (Anderson & Jefferson, 2009). Mrs. Knight and I worked closely together to ensure that the collaborative creation process I was facilitating would lead to short film projects which would be appropriate for assessment in the Core French 10 course, based upon the outcomes she was evaluating.

The space where I worked with the students was a classroom in a recently built high school. The classroom had a single door entering the room, and the entire south wall a bank of large windows. The students used tables and chairs, which were well suited to moving into various formations to facilitate group work. The school itself was surrounded by forests with large trees and lush undergrowth, and even a bridge which runs over a stream providing an excellent natural backdrop for the collaborative short film projects.

Throughout the study I worked with all students to facilitate their creation of collaborative short films, and I observed and collected data from all twenty five participants. However, at the stage of analysis, I found that I could not effectively present the stories of all twenty-five participants in the scope of a thesis. In considering what were the main issues: social cohesion and student engagement, I looked at all the individuals and how they worked together in their groups. There were six groups. Three of the groups had individuals within them who were not participating in the study (two groups had students in the class who had declined participation, and one group had a friend from another class, thus not part of the study). In order

to respect the privacy of those who were not participating in the study; I was unable to include these groups in the research-based screenplay as it was not feasible to write around a person in their group who was not a participant. One group of all girls collaborated to create an excellent remake of the movie “Ferris Buhler’s Day Off”, but I felt that focusing on this group which was ethnically and gender homogenous would not be representative. One other group of girls, had a group member who for personal reasons – unrelated to the class or project - dropped the class midway through the study. During the first few stages of analysis I re-read all of the participants questionnaires and listened to their focus groups in order to locate the central themes and experiences common throughout the class. In fact, my initial drafts of the research-based screenplay included more than one group. In the end, however, I found that I could only include one group if I wished to honour the aesthetics of my arts-based approach and to offer a close analysis of my findings.

Therefore, keeping in mind the overall themes that had emerged in the data - specifically problems of social cohesion, and high levels of student engagement - I selected one group to focus my findings. The group of students I chose to focus upon consisted of: Odette, Kiraly, Dikembé, Richard and Jamal. In the group, Odette was the only female and often expressed her need to be a strong leader in order to work with the boys. Dikembé was the only visible minority, being half Bajan. Kiraly is an elite volleyball player, Jamal is active in cadets and Richard tended to be the quieter one in the group, but was praised by his group mates for his ability to bring in outside friends to work as extras in their project. Their case stood out to me because they were all highly skilled in French and had chosen to work together in consideration of each person’s unique talents to lend to the collaborative effort. Yet, despite their intense engagement and choosing their own group, they faced problems of social cohesion. In many ways their

experience was representative of the class in general and by the same token their experience was unique. For example, the struggles to work collaboratively occurred within all groups. Conversely, Kiraly's strong personal connection to the film industry through his father was unique.

Therefore, this paper is limited by the fact that it explores the story of five rather than twenty-five participants. I chose depth over breadth. Nevertheless, the findings are based not just upon these five participants, but upon themes which resonated throughout the class in general.

### **3.2. Research-based art/ arts-based research**

I collected data through field notes, journal reflections, questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews. As is typical to qualitative research, data analysis was an ongoing process (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). In fact it began prior to entering the classroom with the conversations and co-constructing of the research with the teacher. Before entering the class on the first day, I addressed my own preconceptions, and admitted my own biases (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). As a drama-based practitioner and facilitator of collaborative short film projects, I entered with the bias that collaborative short film projects were a great pedagogical strategy. I reminded myself that sometimes there are troubles in group work - someone is left out or someone does not carry his/her weight. Observing and reflecting upon the navigation of these social waters would be informing for my research. Having acknowledged these preconceptions and biases, I was prepared to move forward with an open mind.

In order to establish *trustworthiness*, I strove to include a plethora of points of view through triangulation (Guba, 1981). I listened to my own voice, to the voices of the students and

to the voice of their regular teacher. I recorded my own observations via field notes, which proved more difficult than I expected as a participant in the research. I found it challenging to simultaneously facilitate the creation of collaborative short film projects and to observe and record my observations. As such, I supplemented my field notes by sitting down immediately after a session to journal the experience before the ephemeral experience evaporated. Some of my field notes were very detailed, including overheard quotes from the students or detailed descriptions of body language. Throughout the process I collected questionnaires from all the students. The questionnaires were short, and were meant to encourage them to reflect upon the process of making short films together, the trials and tribulations involved, and intended to give me an insight to their experience. During the process, I read the questionnaires immediately following the session, in order to prepare for the next session, expecting that their responses would guide me to better design the next session. I had begun with a bank of likely questions for the regular questionnaires in the form of Exit Slips<sup>7</sup> which I adjusted as I found new themes emerging. While collecting data, through field notes and exit slips, I sought emergent themes relating to social cohesion and student engagement. Throughout this process of data collection and analysis, I continually checked-in with myself as to whether the data collection techniques were appropriate for collecting the desired data and for filtering out data that were unrelated or extraneous. Sometimes I felt as if I were throwing out too wide a net to capture the data I was seeking. Sometimes I had to pull myself back from distracting tangents.

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<sup>7</sup> Exit Slips are short questionnaires sometimes used at the end of a class to encourage students to review the content learned during the class. To collect data for this study, I gave students Exit Slips which asked them reflective questions based on their learning experiences throughout the process. (See appendix I).

After the public showing in the theatre, I conducted two voluntary focus group interviews which were open to anyone in the study who wanted to participate. In order to be fully present during the interviews, I audio recorded these interviews so that I would not be distracted or distracting by taking notes. The interview was informal and I followed their lead as to what they felt was important to discuss from the experience of making collaborative short films. Four students from the class, including Kiraly, volunteered to participate for the first focus group interview. At the conclusion of the interview, Kiraly expressed that he had more he wished to share so we left the microphone running and I listened to him some more. The second focus group interview involved Odette and one other student from the class. “The goal of informal interviews [was] not to get answers to predetermined questions but rather to find out where the participants [were] coming from and what they [had] experienced” (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p. 371).

Finally, I interviewed Mrs. Knight to hear her personal observations and reflections on the role of collaborative short film projects on social cohesion and student engagement. Unexpectedly, Mrs. Knight had chosen to guide her students in her other classes through the same collaborative short film project during the time I worked with her class. This choice provided an unforeseen element of her feedback. Not only could she reflect on what she saw in her students during the study, but she also was able to experience firsthand facilitating this type of project.

During the first week of June, 2012, I transcribed all the audio recorded data from the two focus group interviews and the interview with Mrs. Knight. I transcribed for content, and as I transcribed I inserted reflections related to emerging themes or personal anecdotes. Once the data

was transcribed, I analyzed all the data collected during this research. “The intent [was] not to create categories or themes but rather to better understand the data in context of the setting or situation” (Berg, 2004, p. 200). When I began to render the data collected into an aesthetic form (through screenwriting) new levels of insight were gained and the analysis seemed to be reaching the depth I was seeking.

I had been greatly inspired by the research-based theatre pieces I had read during my graduate studies (Beare & Belliveau, 2008; Goldstein, 2012; 2001; Saldaña, 2003), but I wanted to try something slightly different. I wanted to analyze and share some of my findings from the data in the form of a screenplay. I gathered their stories, and then in the retelling through screenwriting, I began to make sense of what was learned from the experience. I drew on my field notes, journals, questionnaires, focus group interviews with the students, and the interview with Mrs. Knight. In addition, as the students had given me their scripts from their own collaborative short films, I drew on these in order to bring in more of their voices. I understood the mechanics and the rules of screenplay writing. I needed a visual setting, rich characters, and a conflict. Also, writing for a short screenplay forced me to continue to ask myself analytical questions. Whose story was this? What was this story about? Why did it matter? What did it mean? Somerville defines story “as a basic unit of meaning making” (Sommerville, 2010, p. 336). In my search for the basic unit of meaning, the basic story of the research-based screenplay, I chose to tell the story from the perspective of one group: Odette, Kiraly, Dikembé, Richard and Jamal. This group’s experience drew my interest because they were creative and driven individuals, yet socially cohesive. I was particularly interested in the tension between Odette and Kiraly. Additionally, similar problems of social cohesion had arisen in other groups.

As both Odette and Kiraly had participated in the focus groups after the project was over, I was able to learn directly from them regarding their insights into their social cohesion breakdown.

I came to discover this central focus, Odette and Kiraly's power struggle, through early drafts in the screenwriting process. Writing the screenplay made it apparent what was relevant to the analysis and what was extraneous. The first thing I did was establish a risk-free writing process, a zero draft, which was never intended to see the light of day. It allowed me to write free of that invisible censorious audience (Leggo, 2008) that too often haunts my creative and my academic work. Bolstered by this non-judgemental space, I felt liberated to begin my analysis through engaging in the arts, and to enter a space for “evoking meanings, not denoting them” (Leavy, 2009, p. 14). In my process of creating art from the data, I became

*...one who shaped, who moulded and formed things from chaos and from nothing, who transmuted things from formlessness and shapelessness into that-which-was-not-real, but without which the real would have no meaning. (Gaiman, 1998, p. 86).*

Once the final draft of the screenplay was written - a process I describe in detail in the Findings section – I went back to the participants and performed member checking. As the screenplay focused on the five students, Odette, Kiraly, Dikembé, Richard, and Jamal, on the teacher, and on myself, I chose to meet with only those six individuals with the research-based screenplay draft. It was important to meet with these individuals separately, considering that the students who participated would recognise their own pseudonyms and that this story was largely focused on the general themes of the process illustrated through the individual experiences of this group.



## Chapter 4 – Analysis: The Screenplay

MISSION: MAYBE, IF WE FEEL LIKE IT<sup>8</sup>

### CAST LIST

KIRALY/ JASPAR  
ODETTE/ GIGI  
RICHARD/ MR. SMITH  
JAMAL/ MR. SMYTH  
DIKEMBÉ/ ZEKE  
MRS. GARCIA  
MRS. KNIGHT  
KIRALY'S FRIEND

### SCENE 1: "WHO'S DIRECTING THIS FILM?"

EXT. GRAVEL PIT - LATE AFTERNOON

Rain pours down, cutting small rivers in the gravel roads that lead over the grassy hills and into the gravel pit. A pile of discarded industrial equipment rests idly to one side. GIGI, early 20s, in a black satin fitted prom dress runs barefoot across the gravel pit. She is pursued by MR. SMITH and MR. SMYTH, suited, non-descript *Matrix*-style agents. Gigi manages to get a high ground position by clambering up one of the pieces of industrial equipment.

GIGI

*Dites-moi pourquoi je suis ici! Est-ce à cause de mon père, parce qu'il vous trouverez !*

MR. SMITH

*Bah! Ton père n'as pas le pouvoir. Nous sommes inaccessibles.*

GIGI

*Quelqu'un viendra pour moi. Je le sais!*

MR. SMYTH

*Ne misez pas sur elle. Tu es notre pour l'instant.*<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Focus group interview 1a p. 4, draft title of student film

<sup>9</sup> French dialogue is a direct quotation from the Student Script Draft 1: Turned in on Session #3, May 8, 2012

KIRALY (OFF CAMERA)

Cut!

ODETTE (GIGI)

Cut??? What do you mean cut? I'm the director!

KIRALY

I'm the D.O.P. and the shot wasn't working. I want to reshoot it, with the camera set up on the back of that truck. If I shoot you from an angle looking down, it will make you look more vulnerable.

ODETTE

Who's the fucking director here? Me! I told you what shot I wanted! You've wrecked three shots now calling cut in the middle of my scene!

KIRALY

Why can't you just listen to me? I've been around this industry for 15 years! I do know what I'm doing!<sup>10</sup> It's crunch time.

ODETTE

This is our last day to shoot this thing!

KIRALY

Yeah, well we wouldn't be in this position if someone hadn't gone on vacation the last three weekends in a row!<sup>11</sup>

ODETTE

What was I supposed to do!? It was with my family! And I wasn't the only one, what about when Dikembé, Richard and Jamal were gone for days on that school camping trip!<sup>12</sup>

KIRALY

Look, it's my dad who has been standing out in the rain waiting to set off the special effects and my mom's been waiting in the car for hours. I want to wrap this as much as you do...

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<sup>10</sup> Focus Group, 1a p.13

<sup>11</sup> Focus Group, 1a p.4

<sup>12</sup> Focus Group, 1a, p.5

ZOOM OUT to reveal Kiraly's dad standing in the rain in the background and his mom sitting in the car waiting.

CUT BACK TO Odette looks torn between wanting to lose it on Kiraly and feeling a little sympathetic toward the helpful parents.<sup>13</sup>

KIRALY

Just one more time, oh and this time we should set up some pyro technics going off behind you to make it look like you are being shot at.

Odette walks directly to Kiraly and grabs the sleeve of his coat and screams into it. Kiraly looks down at her as if she's crazy.

KIRALY

Drama queen.

## **SCENE 2: "ANOTHER BRICK IN THE WALL"**

EXT. AERIAL SHOT - MORNING

FIRST PERSON POINT OF VIEW SHOT. The camera moves through the forest, the morning light is soft grey and a gentle rain drifts down coating the world in a dusting of beaded water droplets. The camera stalks through the forest in a trudging sleepy manner.

The camera switches angles to reveal a trudging human walking through the forest. ZOOM OUT more trudging bodies come into view and make their way towards their final destination: high school (à la *Night of the Living Dead*, when you realize that the zombies below are actually the living people).

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAYS - MORNING.

The school is only about five years old. Large foyers with huge windows. Heavy wooden support beams crisscross the ceiling. As the students pour into the school, Pink Floyd's "Another Brick in The Wall (Part 2)"<sup>14</sup> plays over the intercom. The music is played a little too loudly and tends to distort unpleasantly.

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<sup>13</sup> Focus Group 2, p. 16

<sup>14</sup> (Waters, 1979)

INTERCOM

"We don't need no education  
We don't need no thought control"<sup>15</sup>

INT. MRS. GARCIA'S CLASSROOM

The walls are painted neutral tones of yellow and tan. The classroom has a bank of windows along one wall which let in the grey light typical of the area. Standard school fluorescent lights suspend from the ceiling. One wall is lined with book shelves which house beaten up paperback French dictionaries, brand new never-cracked *Bescherelles*, and student decorated folders stacked by grade. White boards cover the other two walls. Students practically sleepwalk in from the hallway through the open doorway in the one corner. They take their seats in the desks arranged in rows of two. The desks are small light four legged tables with metal and plastic blue stackable chairs. The teacher's desk surveys the room from the corner.

INTERCOM

"All in all you're just another brick in the wall-"<sup>16</sup>

The song is abruptly cut off and the student ANNOUNCERS #1 and #2 read out the daily announcements. They sound fresh and lively, but their speaking becomes a drone and is barely audible over the hustle and bustle of the students. No one pays attention to the announcements. Not even the teacher.

ANNOUNCER #1

Good morning Mountain View High. A few announcements from your friendly morning announcement team. I'm Buddy Loud Mouth...

ANNOUNCER #2

And I'm Diddly Do. First off a special congratulations goes to the junior boys' rugby team for their win over the Shoreline Eagles.

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<sup>15</sup> (Waters, 1979)

<sup>16</sup> (Waters, 1979)

ANNOUNCER #1

*And for your Fun Fact of the day: Statistics show that students tend to drop out of core French as soon as it is no longer a requirement after grade eight. Research published by the advocacy organization Canadian Parents for French (CPF) shows that only one in ten BC students who begin core French in grade five continue to study the language through grade 12.<sup>17</sup>*

ANNOUNCER #2

Why do you think that is?

ANNOUNCER #1

*There are many reasons why students don't take French throughout their school career; one reason, according to CPF, is the quality of instruction in terms of methodology and competence.<sup>18</sup>*

ANNOUNCER #2

I signed up for Foods instead for the cookies.

As the announcements go on the teacher, MRS. GARCIA, 31, mid length light brown hair, wears neutral tones with a bright green scarf hung around her neck, sits back in her chair behind her desk. She drinks her morning coffee and surveys her classroom. She looks tired.

MRS. GARCIA

We're starting a new chapter today. Open your books to page 167.

Mrs. Garcia presses play on the CD player on her desk. The CD plays a recording of the French vocabulary on the page.

WOMAN ON CD

Ecoutez et Répétez.

The students Listen and Repeat in a droning, uninspired way. They've been trained to be zombies. Some students follow along with the CD, some text on their cellphones, hidden oh so discreetly under their desktops, and one student listens to music on headphones plugged in under her hoodie.

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<sup>17</sup> (Barzilay, 2009, p. 8)

<sup>18</sup> (Barzilay, 2009, p. 8)

**SCENE 3: "AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT"<sup>19</sup>**

LATER

INT. HALLWAY

Mrs. Garcia walks out the door and into the hallway. She sticks her head in the open door of the classroom next to hers.

INT. MRS. KNIGHT'S CLASSROOM

This classroom is the mirror image of Mrs. Garcia's. In addition, every inch of space on the bulletin boards, the wall, above the bookshelves, the whiteboards, is plastered with student work from grades 8 to 12. Thirty two student desks draw a double horseshoe formation facing the front wall of whiteboards.

MRS. KNIGHT, a sporty woman in her late 20s with mid-length light blonde hair pulled back in a ponytail, is wrapping up a lesson. Mrs. Knight sits on a high stool in front of the whiteboard. She is going over the answers while the students correct their own work. The students are in Grade 10 in a Core French classroom between the ages of 15 and 16. There are 25 students, 10 boys and 15 girls. A plethora of cultural backgrounds: Caucasian, Filipino, Persian, Chinese, Korean, Indian, First Nations, Bajan.

Mrs. Garcia stands in the door waiting for Mrs. Knight to wrap up. Mrs. Knight notices Mrs. Garcia.

MRS. KNIGHT

Is it time?

MRS. GARCIA

Yup. My kids are ready for you to take over, they are finishing up some work on food vocabulary, they should take about 15 minutes more till they are ready to correct.

MRS. KNIGHT

*(Addressing the class)* Ok guys, Mrs. Garcia is going to work with you for the rest of the class on your

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<sup>19</sup> (Machnaughtan, 1971)

collaborative short French film project. Don't forget about your quiz tomorrow.

An infectious energy rushes through the classroom as the students instantly close up their books and move to sit with their groups. They move the desks and chairs to sit in tight formations together, drawing their chairs to face each other. Upon watching this transformation, Mrs. Garcia can't help but inhale some of the contagious energy. She circulates stopping at groups and asking after their progress.

ZOOM IN on one group of five students. ODETTE, the only female in the group is a voluptuous sturdy olive skinned girl with mid length auburn hair and hazel eyes, she is full of dramatic energy and with a very loud voice and raucous laugh. KIRALY is a very tall lean athletic type with short light blonde hair and light blue eyes. DIKEMBÉ is dark skinned of medium build with a chiseled bone structure, and a wide smile and bright brown eyes. RICHARD is tall with light skin and has a mop short light brown hair. JAMAL is fair skinned with short cropped dark brown hair and a stocky build. The five students sit in a comfortable circle tossing around brainstorm ideas about their movie

In the background, Mrs. Garcia has her back turned to the group as she kneels beside another group of students.

ODETTE

How about an action film? Something really campy. Like...

KIRALY

Mission Impossible.

JAMAL

Or Mission: Maybe, if we feel like it.

ODETTE

Yeah. Mission: Peut-être. Nice. (*Turning to Dikembé*). *I know this sounds really bad, but I want to give you a really stereotypical black action name.*<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Field notes observations Session #2, p 1 May 2, 2012

Mrs. Garcia stands up straight startled by the comment and cocks an ear to hear the rest of the conversation.

DIKEMBÉ

Oh yeah. Like what was that name I had in drama class?

RICHARD

Zeke!

Mrs. Garcia walks over and sits with the group. They look up at her laughing, knowing that she has overheard their conversation.

MRS. GARCIA

Dikembé, how do you feel about having a stereotypical name?

DIKEMBÉ

*I'm used to it. It happens.*<sup>21</sup>

ODETTE

(Moving on) As the female lead, *I need a ditsy name... Pussy Galore!*<sup>22</sup> Or Gigi!

Mrs. Garcia lets out a burst of breath and gets up from the group and walks away dramatically shaking her head for their benefit. The group laughs and continues intently planning their masterpiece.

RICHARD

I wanna play an Agent Smith guy. I wanna be a bad ass!

DIKEMBÉ

Our movie is going to be awesome!

KIRALY

For sure! That example student film she showed us was good enough. Sure, it had its moments. But ours is going to be pro.

JAMAL

Yeah, I mean after all, you guys got me.

They all laugh together.

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<sup>21</sup> Field notes observations Session #2, p 1 May 2, 2012

<sup>22</sup> Field notes observations Session #2, p 1 May 2, 2012



INTERCOM ANNOUNCEMENT

All the grade 10 classes, please carry your desks to the small gym in order to set up for parent teacher interviews.

A collection of disgruntled moans run through the class. The students look up a Mrs. Garcia, plaintively hoping they can keep working. Mrs. Garcia looks at the intercom like she can't believe it and shrugs acceptance in the direction of the students. As the students get up to head out, desks in hand we hear Odette's voice ring across the classroom.

**SCENE 4: "WHAT AM I SAYING?"**

INT. OFFICE BUILDING

ZEKE

*Alors... nous avons un plan?*

JASPAR

*Retrouver la fille. Tuer quelqu'un dans notre façon.*

ZEKE

*J'aime ça. Simple.*<sup>23</sup>

Zeke's cellphone rings the theme song of Mission Impossible. Zeke looks at his phone.

| INSERT Zeke's cell\_phone. A text from "WORK" reads *NOUS AVONS UN INFORMATEUR. IL EST UN MEMBRE D'UN GANG ASSOCIE À DOCTEUR DUMORT. LE RECONTRER À CETTE ADRESSE*<sup>24</sup> : 555 RUE CACHÉ.

ZEKE

*Ah bien. C'est comme ils pensent que nous ne pouvons pas trouver elle seul. Cochons.*<sup>25</sup> (Dropping character, Zeke becomes Dikembé as he looks off screen to Odette who stands beside Kiraly who is directing the shot.)  
What's "cochons"?

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<sup>23</sup> French dialogue is a direct quotation from the Student Script Draft 1: Turned in on Session #3, May 8, 2012

<sup>24</sup> French text is a direct quotation from the Student Script Draft 1: Turned in on Session #3, May 8, 2012

<sup>25</sup> French dialogue is a direct quotation from the Student Script Draft 1: Turned in on Session #3, May 8, 2012

ODETTE

It means you should have read your script and prepared ahead of time!<sup>26</sup> Geez! It means: Pigs. You're mad at your bosses because they don't believe you can get the job done on your own.

DIKEMBÉ

Oh.

ODETTE

(Trying to soften the edge of the awkward moment) *Working in French is such a pain, there's all those stupid conjugations...when you try to speak it there's always like an accent on the last e or whatever and you're like, 'just shut up.'* Just why do you have to be so complicated? <sup>27</sup>

KIRALY

This project would be so much better if we could just make it in English with French subtitles. <sup>28</sup>

CUT TO Richard and Jamal standing off to the side. Jamal flips through the rest of the script.

JAMAL

I have no more lines! I hate you all! <sup>29</sup>

RICHARD

You got more lines than I did. I got totally screwed. <sup>30</sup>

DIKEMBÉ

What are you whining about? They cut my whole parkour scene!

CUT TO Odette and Kiraly.

ODETTE

*Don't fucking say anything that sounds like "I'm busy all week" Cause I will slap you.* <sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Focus Group 2, p.9

<sup>27</sup> Focus Group 2, p.14

<sup>28</sup> Focus Interview 1a

<sup>29</sup> Field notes, Session #3, p. 4 May 8, 2012

<sup>30</sup> Field notes, Session #3, p. 4 May 8, 2012

<sup>31</sup> Field notes observations Session #2, p 1 May 2, 2012

ZOOM OUT the argument snowballs out of control with everyone yelling incoherently at everyone else. Pointing fingers. Laying blame.

**SCENE 5: "11<sup>th</sup> HOUR EDITTING"**

INT. KIRALY'S BASEMENT LIVING ROOM NIGHT

Kiraly and a friend hunch together over a couple of computer laptops. On one laptop they are editing the film "Mission: P-E" On the other computer Kiraly is playing a first person shooter videogame. All around them are scattered emptied soft drink cans. Kiraly pushes back from the desk and gives his head a shake trying to refocus on the screen in front of him. He holds out his hand which is trembling slightly due to the late hours and massive consumption of sugar and caffeine combined with hours of staring at the computer screen. His friend holds out his hand too which is trembling as well. They both laugh slightly hysterically. It's been a long night and they still have work to do.

KIRALY

Man, the sound in this scene is totally screwed.  
There's too much wind...

KIRALY'S FRIEND

Whatever man, we're running out of time, just throw in some electronic music to cover it up.

KIRALY

This isn't *just like a classroom movie where you know, it's one camera, one angle, running around outside of the school.*<sup>32</sup> We're showing this in the theatre! This has to be professional, you know with *1080p Blue Ray quality*<sup>33</sup> I want people to say "That was absolutely amazing."<sup>34</sup> Oh my god. It's 4:23 am! We have only 6 hours until we have to turn this in! And these plot holes are killing me!

Kiraly pulls his cell phone out of his back pocket.

INSERT Kiraly calls Odette on his cell phone.

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<sup>32</sup> Focus Group 1a, p. 7

<sup>33</sup> Focus Group 1a, p.9

<sup>34</sup> Focus Group 1b, p. 19

EXT. NIGHT - ODETTE'S HOUSE

All the lights are out at Odette's house. A soft breeze blows through the trees in the front yard. The dog sleeps soundly in his dog house. The phone rings disturbing the peaceful scene. The dog wakes up and begins to bark. Lights turn on in various bedroom windows.

INT. ODETTE'S BEDROOM

ODETTE

Kiraly! Are you kidding me!? It's 4:30 in the morning! You woke up my parents! (Listens to Kiraly on the phone) There are plot holes because you spent all our time on your stupid special effects. That's your fucking problem! You're the Editor! It's your fucking job! I did my job already. I wrote the script by myself. In French!

Odette hits the end call button with excessive force and sets her phone to silent.

## **SCENE 6: "SHOWTIME"**

INT. THEATRE

The theatre is a studio style space, with a bank of cushioned seats facing a huge lowered projector screen. The audience is made up of the students who made the short films and other invited guest students. Mrs. Garcia stands in front of a laptop which is hooked up to the projector. Students run up to her to hand in their projects on memory sticks and take their places in the theatre seats. The lights are lowered. A hum of anticipation vibrates through the crowd.

ODETTE

Did Kiraly turn in our film?

MRS. GARCIA

No. It seems he bit off more than he could chew. He shot the project in HD and didn't consider the fact that he'd have to render the film and turn it in in a file format that could run on a computer here at school.

ODETTE

I'm going to kill him!

Odette storms out of the theatre. The double swinging doors crash shut behind her. Mrs. Knight sensing something amiss walks up to Mrs. Garcia.

MRS. GARCIA

I can't believe how few kids handed in their projects on time! I'm so disappointed that I'm having a hard time putting on a good face for those students who did finish their work on time.

MRS. KNIGHT

I know. It's so disappointing.

MRS. GARCIA

Do you think they learned anything from this project?

MRS. KNIGHT

*I don't know how much French [they got] out of it, but I think it [got] them excited about a project in French.*<sup>35</sup>

Mrs. Garcia looks out at the students sitting in the seats. Eager faces looking at her expectantly waiting for her to project their creations, the creations of their friends and classmates. Mrs. Garcia puts her game face on. The show must go on.

MRS. GARCIA

It's show time.

The lights are lowered to black. OVER THE SHOULDER shot of the screen, with the students silhouetted in relief before it. Eager faces turned up to the screen. The projector comes on. A black and white familiar symbol arises animating a countdown. 3-2-1. A wild cheer erupts from the student audience.

## **SCENE 7: "ANGER MANAGEMENT"**

THE NEXT DAY

INT. MRS. GARCIA'S CLASSROOM

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with Mrs. K. p. 19

Odette knocks on the door. Mrs. Garcia waves her in. Odette takes a seat. She obviously wants to talk, to debrief.

MRS. GARCIA

Odette! I wanted to tell you: Great job on the project! It's too bad we didn't get to watch it in the theatre, but I'm glad we all got to see it in class anyway.

ODETTE

*I thought it was pretty good, it was better than I expected it to be actually.<sup>36</sup>*  
*I'm just glad it's over. I don't have to be beaten on anymore. Nobody's gonna beat on me and I'm not gonna beat on anybody and I'm not gonna feel like a horrible person for yelling at people.<sup>37</sup>*

MRS. GARCIA

You guys did have some... er... personality clashes. Tough to have more than one Alpha type in a group, isn't it?

ODETTE

*(laughing) Yeah. And it just, I don't know we're both really bossy and it didn't work.<sup>38</sup> I think it's because it's like looking in a mirror and you hate that. Everybody hates that, like when you know somebody who's the same as you. It's like, 'Arrg!'<sup>39</sup>*

MRS. GARCIA

So what did you get out of this experience?

ODETTE

*Anger Management.<sup>40</sup> (laughs.) Cause I have a feeling that if I'm ever on a real set that something like that is gonna happen and there are always gonna be clashing personalities no matter where I go and I've learned to deal with it. No matter how annoying it might be.<sup>41</sup>*

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<sup>36</sup> Focus Group 2, p. 3

<sup>37</sup> Focus Group 2, p. 5

<sup>38</sup> Focus Group 2, p. 4

<sup>39</sup> Focus Group 2, p. 12

<sup>40</sup> Focus Group 2, p. 3

<sup>41</sup> Focus Group 2, p. 6

## Chapter 5 – Findings: Constructing & Deconstructing

### 5.1. Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to observe and critically reflect upon my current teaching practices, specifically my facilitation of the creation of collaborative short film projects in the Core French classroom. I set out to ask the questions:

1. What is the role of collaborative short films projects in **social cohesion** in the Core French classroom?
2. What is the role of collaborative short films projects in **student engagement** in the Core French classroom?

### 5.2. Constructing

*The world rarely shrieks its meaning to you. It whispers, in private languages and obscure modalities, in arcane and quixotic imagery, through symbol systems in which every element has multiple meanings determined by juxtaposition.*

*“How does anyone learn to read?” she thought. How did I?*  
(Maguire, 2011, p. 75)

By rendering data into art in order to evoke meaning, I faced the tensions of presenting something authentic to stay true to the research, and something aesthetic to create art (Jackson, 2005). Writing the screenplay forced me to wade through the moments, which in my initial recollections remained rigidly sequential. When I first began to write I found myself writing a long list that included every single moment of the process. I had to continually remind myself that “because a play is life - with all the boring parts taken out - and one of the playwright's functions is to use an economy of words to tell a story, the verbatim transcript is reduced to the

'juicy stuff' for 'dramatic impact'" (Saldaña, 2003, p. 224). Using art, specifically writing a screenplay to show my analysis of data allowed me a space to show my findings rather than to only tell them. The struggle to make understanding implicit rather than explicit is humbling.

Writing a screenplay, as opposed to creating a completed short film, has certain gains and losses. Obviously, the advantage of writing a short film which will never be produced means that budget is not an issue and that the message is accessible through a text-based format which lends itself to the structure of a traditional Master's thesis. The screenplay is a narrative form with certain registers and codes that are used to convey meaning. However, the disadvantage is that submitting a screenplay instead of a short film results in a loss of visual impact, music, timing, acting, and the juxtaposition of the signs.

The constraints of a short film screenplay, and the need to somehow encapsulate "what happened" and "why does it matter" in a limited number of pages, forced me to find the focus that is difficult to capture in a qualitative study of human behaviour and feelings. I had to repeatedly tighten it up and consider timing. For the sake of comprehensibility and to facilitate envisioning the imagined short film, some camera instructions are given. These camera instructions became a key representation of my gaze. What was I looking at? What was in the frame? What was in focus? What was not?

I had considered creating composite characters in order to focus on the themes that had emerged during the analysis, but upon reflection I decided that composite characters would detract from the authenticity of the story (Sallis, 2010). I blended verbatim data with paraphrased dialogue. The trouble with verbatim data, especially when it comes from writing (as in the case of students' responses to questionnaires) is that it does not sound like the way a



person speaks. The phrasing is at times too long and too formal. For example, in response to the question “Of the various roles you could have during the making of the collaborative short film project, which one do you think you would be best suited for? Why?” Odette wrote, “I am, and have always been, an actor. I love to be dramatic in front of people and the camera. I am experienced in this field and will work to find my character and her intentions” (Odette, Exit Slip #1). Although this statement is rich in meaning it would not aesthetically fit into the dialogue of the research-based screenplay as natural sounding speech. Therefore, Odette’s statement informs the construction of the character, though the verbatim line itself would not be used in the screenplay. Additionally, verbatim data collected from the focus group and interviews were problematic because of the presence of filler words. For example, in Focus Group 2, Odette spoke at length in reflection of her struggles to work with Kiraly and the others in her group. In a small excerpt from this focus group, she said:

Because I was the director I would always get blamed for everything, like oh we didn’t get this location because you didn’t do this and well actually I did and technically it’s not my fault it’s his fault because he didn’t do what I asked him to. And but you know what let’s not take the blame and blame it on anybody but oh no we’re gonna blame it on me because it’s all my fault and well... (Focus Group 2, p. 3)

In the case of using verbatim data from focus groups and interviews, I found that I often had to cut out the filler words and repetition and splice together the message, which made me question if it was still verbatim. To that end, I often chose to let the message inform the writing via character development and story. However, I did find that some verbatim data was so salient that it was necessary to leave it intact. For example, later in the interview Odette eloquently explains her own intrapersonal and interpersonal learning, “I

think it's because it's like looking in a mirror and you hate that. Everybody hates that, like when you know somebody who's the same as you" (Focus Group 2, p. 12).

To support the aesthetics of the research-based screenplay, I wove verbatim data in with paraphrased dialogue based on student accounts of their experiences. I indicated the verbatim lines with italics. I debated whether I should even include this discrepancy for fear that it will devalue the words which are not verbatim. The non-verbatim dialogue was based on stories the students had told me about the process of making the collaborative short films, and what happened when I was not around to observe (for instance when they filmed on a weekend). In these scenes, I also included verbatim bits of dialogue collected in class or during the focus group interviews. The main purpose for this was to avoid a screenplay about a group of students *talking about* making a short film and to rather show students *making* a short film.

### **5.3. Deconstructing**

In this section, I deconstruct each scene of my research-based screenplay to further expand upon the analysis I engaged in during the process of my arts-based analysis and to explicate my intentions behind each scene.

#### **5.3.1. Scene 1: "Who's Directing this Film?"**

The screenplay opens up *in media res*<sup>42</sup>, in order to jump right into the story and make it clear who and what this story was about: a group of students struggling to work together to create a collaborative short film for their French class. I use dialogue from their original

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<sup>42</sup> *In media res* is a common film and theatre technique in which the action begins in the middle of the story in order to grab the audience's interest. The term originates from Greek literary history.

collaborative short film script as an anchor for my research-based screenplay. Throughout my research-based screenplay I switch back and forth between what made it onto the screen and what happened behind the scenes. By fusing these two components, I explore the elements of both the process and the product.

Throughout the process, Kiraly expressed a deep personal connection to the collaborative short film project because his father, a special effects professional for the local film industry, helped them with their film. Kiraly explained that having his father help work with them made him feel a strong sense of accountability. As producer for their film, Kiraly created call sheets, one-liners, and shoot plans that were of a level far beyond expected for a high school project. This direct personal connection to the film industry is not a rare occurrence in the Greater Vancouver area. As such collaborative short film projects have the added engaging factor of being a place-based pedagogy (Sommerville, 2010).

I have facilitated many collaborative short film projects in additional language classrooms as a drama-based educational strategy intended to give students the power to choose to learn language through utilizing their multiliterate strengths. In setting up the project, I had suggested the major roles involved in creating a collaborative short film such as writer, director, actor, sound designer and editor. Students were free to choose additional responsibilities that they felt were necessary to the success of their project: i.e., special effects. The intention was such that the writer would create a French script, the director would interpret the script and envision the short film, the actors would read, speak and listen in French, the sound designer would have to listen and select appropriate music or effects to enrich the product, and finally the editor would listen again and again to French in order to cut the scenes together and add English

subtitles. The intention of the English subtitles was to render the student films accessible to the entire student body, and therefore enable a public showing in the theatre. Despite their intense engagement, or perhaps because of it, Odette and Kiraly argued frequently about who had the power to make artistic choices about who was directing their short film.

In the spirit of democratic education, the students had chosen their own groups with whom to work and they had also divided the roles and responsibilities amongst themselves as they saw fit. However, the students, even these highly engaged students had trouble respecting roles and responsibilities, and struggled with cross-over of roles and over stepping of boundaries. These infractions of role caused social discord and individual frustration. As my study was to examine the role of collaborative short film projects in social cohesion and student engagement, I intervened less than I usually would as a teacher in order to observe how these students would navigate and negotiate this troubling space. I also chose to observe and refrain from intervening because, when I discussed these issues with the regular classroom teacher, she told me that she usually just lets the students work out their organisation issues themselves. In my effort to explore what happens in a Core French classroom when students engage in collaborative short film projects, I had to remind myself that my job as researcher was to observe the social cohesion and not to interfere and attempt to fix the students' social interactions.

### **5.3.2. Scene 2: “Another Brick in the Wall”**

Scene 2: “Another Brick in the Wall” provided exposition. I set the scene to give the story a clear context. I compressed time and created a scene of myself teaching in an uninspired way to show why I had chosen to explore other pedagogical practices like drama-based strategies in my Core French class. I juxtapose Pink Floyd’s song “Another Brick in the Wall” with the

visual of the students trudging into class to show how I imagine the students sometimes feel when school is filled with uninspiring routine and rote based learning. To support this statement, the daily morning announcement provided a means of inserting the fact that was the main basis for my research - that the majority of students do not choose to study French through to grade 12 (Barzilay, 2009).

### **5.3.3. Scene 3: “And Now for Something Completely Different”**

The uninspired routine of Scene 2: “Another Brick in the Wall” is made more evident through juxtaposition with the vigour of Scene 3: “And Now for Something Completely Different.” For the purposes of the short film, time is compressed to show how the students’ enthusiastic energy while engaging in the creation of collaborative short films directly affected me. Upon entering the classroom the students’ enthusiasm and energy absolutely invigorated me. This became more evident as the project progressed throughout the month, the energy I gained from working with these student spilled into my other classes and into my relationships in the staffroom and probably my personal life too. At the time I only felt it, and it had no name. Upon analysis I realised that this moment was an example of social constructivism-in-action and the synergetic effect of positive collaboration.

This scene shows the students working together to plan and produce their short film. Collaborative short film projects are conducive to social learning in a language classroom and it holds such a range of roles to perform in which to engage in the process. To begin with, there are the verbal activities which engage the student in the language through script writing, line memorization, adding subtitles, and acting. Creating collaborative short films in the core French classroom also provide a venue to explore additional language course content through multiple

literacies (Early & Yeung, 2009). Beyond the verbal modes, collaboratively creating short films requires students to engage in multiliterate activities such as editing, directing, embodiment through acting, music, sound effects, and camera work. With technological advances, film making has become more accessible. Many students now have access to equipment such as digital video cameras and computers, and some students have knowledge of basic editing programs: such as iMovie or Windows Media Movie Maker.

Scene 3 also shows that the study involved a whole class, not select students who had been removed for an extra project. As such, I was faced with the regular chaos of an everyday typical classroom. Working in a regular public school classroom, we were faced with many interruptions. In the first week, the students were asked to pick up their desks and carry them to the small gym to set up for parent teacher interviews. Amazingly, when they returned, they sat back down in their chairs, without desks, and continued working. In the end, I decided not to include this moment in the scene, as I had chosen a moment better suited for a logical transition. This moment does, however, highlight the level of engagement and commitment in the students, regarding the project. During the second week of the process, the time that was allotted for rehearsal, many students were absent for three days on a school camping trip. In Odette's group of five, three students were absent for two of our sessions. The most exciting interruption of all was a cougar being spotted in the vicinity of the school, a week prior to the commencement of the shooting of the short films. Students were strongly cautioned to be careful around school property. I had originally included this in the screenplay, but then, as nothing happened with the cougar, I was left with the dilemma of Chekov's gun – If you show a gun in the first act, it better go off in the second (Gurliand, 1904).

Although I worked with a whole class through the study, for the purposes of this paper I focused on a single group. The camera zooming in on Odette's group represents how my gaze zoomed in on them through the process. Throughout the entire process, I felt drawn to their experience. They had all chosen to work together, and from the beginning, they were intensely engaged in the creative process. However, as the month unfolded, their social dynamics began to unravel. The group members expressed that this social breakdown was largely a result of a lack of mutual trust and a crossing over of roles and responsibilities. In other words lack of mutual trust results in a lack of effective dialogue.

As a participant researcher, sometimes I was the teacher facilitating the collaborative film making project, organizing, encouraging, guiding, and moving from one group to the next. An interesting challenge that I often face as a teacher is that students do not wish to share the process of their creative work with me. They prefer to surprise me with the polished final product. I often have to encourage them that it is beneficial to show me the messy steps along the way. To that end, I strive to decentralize my role in the process. I encourage my students to not think of me as the "audience" for whom the product is intended (although, admittedly, at the end of the day I am the one who grades it), but rather to create their work for the public audience to whom they later showcase it. I also want them to feel that I am helping them get to that point. My experience working with students creating collaborative short films that I was not going to grade was a new one.

My position as a researcher in the classroom forced me to speak less and listen more. This is something I do not do as often as I would like when I am the regular classroom teacher. Listening, without immediately intervening in problematic moments, allowed me to take more

time to observe. From day one I noticed a significant amount of stereotyping occurring in the classroom. Cummins, Early, and Stille (2011) explain that education is never neutral and that all educational practices either reinforce or subvert power relations in the broader sense. This classroom, which on the whole appeared positive and inclusive, was not only affected by the imbalanced power of the authority of the teacher, but also by the imbalanced power between peers, based on socio-economic status, race, gender, ability, popularity, etc. These observations brought to mind Norton's (in press; 1995) concept of *investment*. Although a student may be a highly motivated learner, if he or she perceives a classroom community that is troubled by marginalization or oppression, he or she will have a very low level of *investment* in learning the additional language (Norton, in press; 1995).

In observing these moments and letting them play out before intervening, I experienced many moments of tension between being a teacher and being a researcher. I wanted to intervene, I wanted to observe and I also wanted to let them negotiate their own conflicts. I often face this struggle as a teacher who wants to give her students the space they need to learn from their own mistakes. Yet, it became intensified as I took on the researcher role. I found myself holding back a little longer, waiting to see where a conversation would go instead of nipping it in the bud, as I usually would have. For example, when I heard Odette tell Dikembé that she wanted to give him a stereotypical black action character name, I was caught in the tension between the teacher who intervenes and the researcher who observes. As it turned out, Odette also wanted a stereotypical female action character name for herself. Later, it became apparent that they wanted to use stereotypes to satirise the action film genre.

*Group work – collaborative projects are potentially a way of teaching with social justice, but it's not enough. The teacher has to do something more to teach with*



*social justice as classrooms are full of imbalances of power, ingrained racism, sexism and too often internalized stereotypes (Freire, 1970). How can one teacher possibly unravel it? When is it a teachable moment? When do you have to let them negotiate that territory for themselves? When is it time to intervene?*  
(journal, May 3)

As a middle class educated Caucasian female, I sometimes struggle with how to deal with moments of stereotyping, and how to talk about it with the students in my class who are of visible minority. I often question, who am I to speak to this person about racism? I fear to patronize. I met with Dikembé to share this scene with him and to ask him how he felt about it being included. I was concerned that he might find it embarrassing or too personal. He informed me that it was an accurate representation of the moment and that it should stay in the screenplay.

I entered the field believing that the collaborative act of creating short films together would by its nature build community. The students had after all chosen their own groups and studies had shown the power of a collective aesthetic goal to build community amongst learners (Beare, 2003; Wager, Belliveau, Lea, & Beck, 2009) . However, in this case, the collective aesthetic goal was not enough to bring the group together. In order to create a safe learning environment, one must first foster a sense of belonging among students (Cummins, Early, & Stille, 2011). The teacher still has to act as the facilitator in the situation and guide towards choices which are more socially just, and the best way is to lead by example. Explicit intervention had to occur, prior to setting them free to explore, or did it? Was not the struggle valuable? Many students, including Odette, spoke to the value of the project in that they learned about working in groups. Partly this was due to their participation in the study and their daily reflections on the process recorded in the Questionnaire: Exit Slips. Facilitating collaborative short film projects in the additional languages classroom potentially promotes *optimal adolescent*

*development*, but that does not mean the students will be socially cohesive. It means rather that the adolescents have the opportunity to experience interpersonal and intrapersonal learning while more than likely encountering some challenges.

#### **5.3.4. Scene 4: “What am I saying?”**

As these students shot their entire short film out of class time, all the scenes of actual shooting are constructed from my interpretation as based on my observations of how they worked together in class, and their reflective comments they gave me through the questionnaires and through the focus group interviews. This scene in particular is constructed from moments I overheard in class, and for aesthetic purposes, I set these moments during the shooting process rather than during the planning process. Rather than writing a scene of the students sitting around in the classroom *talking about* making a short film, I wanted to recreate a scene of them *making* a short film.

For example, the moment when Dikembé/ Zeke drops character and asks “What’s *cochons?*” actually occurred during class while they were reading the script in class. This moment was representative of many other overheard moments of the co-construction of knowledge. When I shared the research-based screenplay with my participants, I explained to Dikembé that I knew that he is too professional of an actor to ever break character during a scene, but that I really wanted to show the moment of Odette teaching him a new word. Through social constructivism, collaborative short film projects provide a platform for students to socially construct their own knowledge, to gain a sense of ownership of the target language, and to connect with their learning process intellectually, interpersonally and intrapersonally.

### **5.3.5. Scene 5: “11<sup>th</sup> Hour Editing”**

Many students cited the major stressor of this project as not having enough time. Under this pressure, Kiraly and Odette struggled with roles and responsibilities, which led to the social breakdown in this group. However, in the focus group interview, Kiraly expressed how the pressure of showing the product to a public audience pushed the group together and kept them cooperating, even when they were faced with difficult personality and role clashes. Kiraly and Odette both spoke of how not respecting the boundaries of each other’s roles and responsibilities was greatly responsible for the social breakdown of their group. On the other hand, group members not being accountable for their responsibilities was also problematic at times.

### **5.3.6. Scene 6: “Showtime”**

During this study I observed the role of collaborative short film projects in student engagement in the Core French class. I found that the projects provided an excellent space where students had a wide range of multiliterate and multimodal options with which to engage with the target language. The students chose a variety of avenues, besides acting in the film. Each student also engaged with the project according to their own interests and skills. Odette wrote and directed the original screenplay, Dikembé choreographed parkour<sup>43</sup> scenes within the action sequences of the film, Kiraly designed and operated the shots and edited the final product, Richard found other friends to play extras in the film, and Jamal arranged costumes.

Sometimes facilitating the collaborative short film projects felt like I was teaching French on the sly. In teaching them about how to make a short film, I taught them French vocabulary

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<sup>43</sup> Parkour or freerunning is the sport of running from point A to point B in the most direct line possible engaging with obstacles head on as they come.

relating to film terminology. I provided them with a one page sheet of Film vocabulary which they could use to assist their writing, as many students would not even know the proper terms for various roles and activities in film production in English (see appendix F). The students wrote the dialogue of the short films in French, and were encouraged to make use of available resources such as online translators to facilitate their writing. The students also had to write in French about their experience, first collectively to write the Group Pitch, and then individually to write about their specific roles and responsibilities pertaining to the collaborative short film production. Writing about what they really did using the target language, created a space to communicate authentically, to use French to send a meaningful message.

How much French was actually spoken in the classroom during our sessions? Not as much as I had hoped. When asked how much they felt their French had improved as a result of participating in the collaborative short film projects, their answers varied. In the final questionnaire, I asked, “Do you feel your French improved as a result of making a short film in French? Explain.” Here are the answers of Odette, Kiraly, Dikembé, Richard and Jamal.

- *Yes, my writing in contexts of specific times has improved as well as my infinitives.(Odette)*
- *Yes, mainly because I was doing subtitles and responsible for plot hole filling.(Kiraly)*
- *I felt it helped my pronunciation and flow when speaking. [It] also help[ed] with the liaisons between words.(Dikembé)*
- *Yes because I got to speak [French] with a fun and interesting purpose.(Richard)*
- *Not really it was [too] rushed so [instead] of [interpreting] we just memorized the lines.(Jamal)*

Jamal’s answer reminded me that sometimes even at an advanced level of additional language learning, students who share a similar first language will sometimes opt to plan and work in the first language, even though the point of the activity is to work collaboratively with the target

language. Jamal's answer was echoed in the responses from other students within the other groups in the class. I realized that I needed to rethink how to facilitate these projects as a means of exploring the course content if my primary goal is language learning. For the sake of this study however, my primary goal was to create a learning community which fostered optimal adolescent development, which is discussed further in the next section.

It was surprising for me when the group did not make the deadline to show their collaborative short film project in the theatre. In fact, half of the groups did not show their films in the theatre that day. Two were not done in time, and one did not want to show theirs publicly. It was a somewhat anti-climactic to showcase only three of the films that day, and I did have a moment of having to pull myself together to celebrate the success of those students who had completed their projects. All groups submitted their projects by the end of that week. Mrs. Knight and I deliberated over setting up another showcase date in the theatre for the late projects. We were torn between wishing to remain consistent and to give the students who had missed the deadline a second chance. In the end, Mrs. Knight accepted the late projects without grade penalty, but the late projects were not showcased in the theatre. In retrospect, it would have been better if the public showing had been separated from the class deadline. For example, if it had been scheduled for the week after the projects were due in class, it could have acted more as a celebration of the work rather than as the *end* of the project. It is a question of extrinsic versus intrinsic motivation. Catching myself dangling a carrot before students, I am humbly reminded that "[t]he teacher must attend to her own empathy development and guide through example, seeing the world through her students eyes." (Stout, 1999, p. 24).

Engaging in creating the original screenplay based on my research was a reality check for me as to what an onerous task creative writing can be. I have gained a greater respect and appreciation for creative writing - a task which I frequently assign to my students. Writing my own screenplay has made me more sympathetic towards my students' struggles when I ask them to work creatively. Furthermore, I was writing my screenplay in my mother tongue not an additional language.

### **5.3.7. Scene 7: "Anger Management"**

In writing the research based screenplay "Mission: Maybe if we feel like it," the ending was the most challenging. Aesthetically a short film should have one main character, one main relationship, and one journey. At the end of that journey, the main character must be changed as a result of his/her experience in the film (Goldstein, 2012). As a researcher, I am bounded by the authenticity of the experience. Did Odette change? She expressed profound insight into the experience of working with others. She spoke even of looking into a mirror of reflecting upon herself. How could I include the significant insight that had occurred during the process of creating a collaborative short film?

In the final scene I have her come to my classroom to speak about her experience. This scene is representative of the debriefing effect of the focus group interviews. I end the scene with Odette's comment about learning anger management and leave my imagined audience with the questions of how to solve the issues of social cohesion breakdown that can occur even in what was intended as a social cohesion bolstering project. Odette and I also discussed what she felt could have potentially helped scaffold her group's collaborative community. Although it is not

included in the screenplay, the following quote informs my findings regarding social cohesion as well as interpersonal and intrapersonal learning.

*We didn't really have time to bond as a group first, we just kind of like, 'Here, do this.' And then everybody got their jobs and was all stressing out about their jobs instead of actually building that sense of community first. So it would have been I guess really important to be able to work in a group and be successful and to actually trust each other and be able to like, 'Oh I know that you're not gonna do this, so I will take on that job instead of you totally failing at it.' ... Well in drama we always do like those, really stupid but they really work trust exercises... where you like, talk about yourselves and like what you're afraid of and well trust circles and stuff. And it's really dumb at the time, but afterwards you're like, oh, I actually know these people and I actually kind of feel safe with them. And I actually know that shit's gonna get done... And it also helps people like build communication, so like, you talk about stuff that doesn't matter about the project, or just about yourselves, then obviously you're gonna talk about the project and actually communicate to each other how it's going. (Odette, Focus Group 2, p.12-13).*

It was humbling to hear that I had missed some vital steps in the process. This was one of the surprising findings of my study. In this particular case, a common collective aesthetic goal was not enough to create a functional learning community. In fact, without the intentional scaffolding of trust activities, the social structure cracked under pressure. The students were able to complete the project, but they struggled interpersonally and intrapersonally in the process. In retrospect, however, because my primary focus was on the concept of dialogue, I let the students engage with these struggles on their own terms, and I trusted them to find their own solutions. This trust that they would learn from their own struggles is where optimal adolescent development occurred. When asked what they learned, many students involved in the project expressed to me that the most valuable thing they learned was how to work with others. For example, one student, Juan who was in another group, stated, “What I really learned was like, sort of a life lesson, like how you deal with people. Like people are very busy and you gotta find a way like to make the

schedule work with everyone.” (Juan, Focus Group 1, p. 10). Perhaps the most telling moment of the study was Odette’s comment that her conflict with Kiraly was in a way a conflict with herself. As she said in the focus group interview, “I think it’s because it’s like looking in a mirror and you hate that. Everybody hates that, like when you know somebody who’s the same as you. It’s like, ‘Arrg!’” (focus group).

### **5.3.8. Member checking**

I met with Mrs. Knight, Odette, Kiraly, Dikembé, Richard and Jamal on September 6, 2012 to read my screenplay together. I was so nervous to meet with them. How would they respond? Would they see their own truths in it? I also realized how intimately some of my truths were shown in the screenplay, in particular, my doubts, frustrations, and joys that I had experienced working with them. I felt so vulnerable but I trusted them to be empathetic and open minded. We read it out loud with each person reading his or her lines. There was laughter and blushing. I gave them the chance to let me know if there were any changes or cuts they wanted to make. I asked them if they felt the screenplay was a valid representation of their experience. Odette said it was “valid,” and Jamal added that it was “too valid.” Dikembé asked me “How do you know all this? Were you spying on us?” I reminded them of my data collection strategies. I asked them how they felt about having a screenplay written about them and they answered that they loved it and wanted to know if we could really make the film of the research-based screenplay. I told them, I would like to, but that I had to draw the line somewhere in this meta-creative process.

After the member checking, I felt positively invigorated from seeing how my research-based screenplay was accepted as a representation of their truths. They enjoyed their character



descriptions, although there was a lot of laughter at the words *voluptuous* and *chiseled bone structure*. In addition, some technical corrections were requested by Kiraly regarding the terminology used and Odette asked that I change the words “f’n” back to “fucking” so that it read better. Interestingly they were not sure who it was that had come up with the idea for their short film to be “Mission: Peut-Être” and agreed that the scene in my screenplay effectively represented that it had been a group effort. Odette spoke also of how reading the screenplay together made her feel angry again at the struggles she had faced but also immensely relieved that it was over. Mrs. Knight teased them about what would they do this year now that they are in grade 11 French. Sharing my research-based screenplay with the participants who had inspired me was a vital part of my study (Sallis, 2010). Knowing that I would share the interpretive work with them reminded me to remain faithful to the authenticity of the story. Upon sharing my research-based screenplay with them and receiving their feedback and acknowledgement of its authenticity reinforced my arts-informed analysis.

## **Chapter 6 – Implications, Conclusions, and Limitations**

### **6.1. Discussion**

This research is significant to me in that, through engaging in the process, I have had the humbling experience of reflecting on my own teaching practices which can always benefit from critical reflection, and the empowering experience of appreciating what I am doing that works. In examining the role of collaborative short film projects on social cohesion, I found that a common collective aesthetic goal was not enough to create a functional learning community, in fact without the intentional scaffolding of trust activities, and community being built over the social structure cracked under pressure. Some students struggled interpersonally and intrapersonally to complete their collaborative short film project. Surprisingly, the data collection method I employed of routinely asking the students to reflect upon their experience creating collaborative short films had the added benefit of drawing the students' attention to their own group dynamics, and resulted in profound interpersonal and intrapersonal learning experiences.

In examining the role of collaborative short film project on student engagement, I found that the freedom of choice to engage in the projects through multiliteracies and multimodalities, and the incentive of going public with the final product created an environment of highly engaged students. On the other hand, the extrinsic incentive of the public showing with the strict deadline resulted in challenges regarding social cohesion.

### **6.2. Conclusions**

When I move beyond the data, I am led to the conclusion that indirect learning – to learn through another interest – can be a powerful pedagogy. It is not just making short films, but

learning through doing what a person is passionate about that is powerful. Making collaborative short film projects are one viable option in that they provide a range of literacies and modes in which to work and learn.

A significant part of my learning during this experience was what it meant to work with students as a *student among students* (Freire, 1970). Working with the students, I faced and embraced the challenge of working with a room full of individuals: boys and girls of diverse ethnic backgrounds, economic status and academic ability. My reflections have extended beyond that of how I work with students into the realm of how I work with my colleagues. Upon reflection, my collaborative working relationship with Mrs. Knight was valuable to my understanding of what I was asking my students to do. *Dialogue* emerged as inherent to the collaborative process. I have studied my craft and “to study a practice is... to study self: a study of self-in-relation to other” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 14) I strive to teach with an eye to critical pedagogy and to engage in *dialogue* with my colleagues and my students. I continually question my power and my authority in the classroom. I am currently a member of Teachers for Social Justice in the Spanish Language Classroom, and through my discussions with like-minded democratic educators, I have learned to unlearn my assumptions about the student - teacher relationship and the value of grades in education. I recognize that as long as I, the teacher, have the power of grades held above students, democracy and critical pedagogy is never fully attainable. Yet, working within the existing system, I seek moments of democracy. Collaborative short film projects have the potential to create such moments, because when students participate in these projects, they engage in the work through their own literacies and interests and they interact socially with each other, and in doing so learn about how to be a member of a community.

In retrospect, referring to myself as Mrs. Garcia, and not as Erin, within the screenplay reinforced my sense of separation from the students. In my attempts to enter into dialogue with students, I constantly struggle with how much of my own power I am willing to let go, and how much faith in them I am brave enough to exercise. I cannot claim that I always teach with dialogue, but I continue to strive for it, and in catching moments of falter such as this one, I get a little bit closer.

Unexpectedly, the questionnaires provided some of the most valuable learning moments for the students. The reflective questions regarding students' trials and tribulations in their collaborative groups required them to continually reflect on their process. This, then, lent to their learning gained from this experience, which included how to work with others and how to work with themselves. Students may not have had fully functional communities in their collaborative groups, but the act of striving together and reflecting on the process led them to gain deep interpersonal and intrapersonal learning. I am not sure how much actual French they learned in the process of making collaborative short films, but I met my "internal goal of improving the students' minds within a humanitarian education." (Cook, 2005, p. 55) To this end, according to Stout (1999), regular exposure to art fosters an empathetic interest in the viewpoints of others.

After spending months reading and listening to the stories told by the main characters of my research-based screenplay, I could not agree more with Stout in her assertion that engaging with art fosters an empathetic interest in another person's point of view. Rendering the verbatim data into an interpretive screenplay, I had to think about the stories of Mrs. Knight, Odette, Kiraly, Dikembé, Richard and Jamal in a different light. I had to consider each of their

perspectives, and to remember that even if I was going to frame the story with Odette as the protagonist, I had to honour the points of view of the other off-camera characters. Kiraly was not an antagonist. The pressure of trying to create something meaningful in a limited amount of time was the antagonist, and in a way, Odette was both the protagonist and the antagonist, in that she had to learn about herself in order to learn about how to work with others.

### **6.3. Recommendations**

Through this study I have barely begun to scratch the surface of a critical pedagogical study about the social dynamics and student engagement in an additional languages classroom engaged in collaborative short film projects. This experience has demanded that I continue to listen for problematic moments, and the experience of member checking has empowered me to discuss these issues with my students. As a privileged middle class educated Caucasian Canadian woman, I have often struggled with issues of privilege and power. This study has reminded me of the importance of listening to a student and telling him or her: *I hear you, I see your struggles, and I know it is not easy. I am aware.*

I would like to bring more critical pedagogy into the additional languages classroom, by facilitating collaborative short film projects about relevant social justice issues connected to the cultures who speak the additional language. For future research, I suggest inquiring into the questions:

- Who does creating collaborative short films include? Who does it exclude?
- Whose voices are heard? Whose are silenced?
- How can collaborative short film projects be used to teach *about* social justice and *with* social justice in the classroom (Benson, 2011).

#### 6.4. Limitations of the Study

As a teacher in the district where I conducted my research, the regular classroom teacher and some of the students in the class were familiar with me. This familiarity lent to the authenticity of the context of a typical Core French classroom. As a teacher and adult, my view from the sidelines was as close as I could get as a participant, as I could never truly become one of the teenaged students. This type of participant-observation also has drawbacks, which include a loss of objectivity. I could not help but feel part of the community being observed. Additionally, it was a challenge facilitating a collaborative short film project - and the creative chaos which that space engenders – while simultaneously collecting data during the process.

In order to work with students whom I would not hold the power of grading, I had to conduct my research in the classroom of another teacher. Working in another teacher's classroom meant that I could only remain there for a limited period of time. This situation detracted from the authenticity of the everyday classroom setting. Nevertheless, this very limitation brought me closer to being a *student among students*.

Methodologically, I wrote a research-based screenplay and due to time limits was unable to actually produce a film out of the screenplay. Writing the screenplay provided rich insight into the creative process the students went through during the writing stage of their process. When I met with the students and we read the play together, I also gained insight into the vulnerability and the exultation of going public with one's creative work. Collaborating with the classroom teacher gave me some insight into the collaborative experiences of the students. However, had I actually created a collaborative short film using the research-based screenplay, I would have

come to even deeper empathetic understandings of the students' collaborative and creative experiences.

Finally, focusing upon the experience of five out of twenty-five participants might be viewed as problematic. However, the issues of intrapersonal and interpersonal learning and engagement discerned from the five individuals resonated throughout the class of twenty-five. Therefore, rather than give a broad and perhaps more superficial version of the students' similar experiences, I chose to illustrate a closer analysis through the experience of one group of five individuals.

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## Appendices

### A. District Consent Letter

#### **The role of collaborative short film projects on social cohesion and student engagement in the Core French classroom**

Dear <District Superintendent>

Following your conversation with Erin Garcia Castillo, I am providing further written information, along with a formal consent form, regarding the study that we wish to conduct in your school district beginning in May 2012. As discussed, we are studying the possible benefits of collaborative short film projects to address social cohesion and student engagement in the Core French classroom. We want to know whether students working collaboratively to create a short film in Core French will support social cohesion and encourage student engagement in the Core French classroom at the secondary level.

This is an invitation for one class within your school district to participate in the creation of collaborative short film projects for five weeks beginning in May 2012. During the five weeks, this class will be involved in eight 40 minute sessions and two 80 minute sessions during regular class time where students will engage with the course content through the creation of collaborative short film projects. Students will also have the opportunity to showcase their collaborative film projects in the theatre during one lunch hour. These activities, led by Erin Garcia Castillo, a graduate student from the University of British Columbia and a teacher in the <School District>, will focus on building an effective learning environment through social cohesion, and empowering the students to engage with the course content with initiative and accountability.

Any information pertaining to the students will be kept strictly confidential, and records will be kept in locked locations at the University of British Columbia under the supervision of the project's principal investigator. All information that we collect for this study will be used for research and educational purposes only. Erin Garcia Castillo will be conducting this research for her Master's thesis.

We are seeking your consent for this project. If you would like to have further information about any part of this project, or have any questions about it, please call me at <phone number> or email me at <email> I will do my best to answer your questions. If you have any concerns about the treatment or rights of research participants, you may contact the Director of Research Services at the University of British Columbia at <phone number>.

Thank you for your interest and kind cooperation.

Dr. George Belliveau  
Associate Professor, Language & Literacy Education

For the research team: Erin Garcia Castillo, Graduate Student

## CONSENT FORM

I \_\_\_\_\_ (your name) give permission / do not give permission (**please circle one**) for our district to participate in the study, *The role of collaborative short film projects on social cohesion and student engagement in the Core French classroom*.

If permission is given, as circled above, I consent to have my district included in any presentation or publication arising from this study. I understand that no information that reveals the identity of the district, the school or the students will be given.

I have kept a copy of this letter for my own records.

Superintendent's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

### B. Principal Consent Letter

#### **The role of collaborative short film projects on social cohesion and student engagement in the Core French classroom**

Dear <Principal>:

Following your conversation with Erin Garcia Castillo, I am providing further written information, along with a formal consent form, regarding the study that we wish to conduct in your school beginning in May 2012. As discussed, we are studying the possible benefits of collaborative short film projects to address social cohesion and student engagement in the Core French classroom. We want to know whether students working collaboratively to create a short film in Core French will support social cohesion and encourage student engagement in the Core French classroom at the secondary level.

This is an invitation for one of your Core French classes to participate in the creation of collaborative short film projects for five weeks beginning in May 2012. During the five weeks, this class will be involved in eight 40 minute sessions and two 80 minute sessions during regular class time where students will engage with the content of the course through the creation of collaborative short film projects. Students will also have the opportunity to showcase their collaborative film projects in the theatre during one lunch hour. These activities, led by Erin Garcia Castillo, a graduate student from the University of British Columbia and a teacher in the <School District>, will focus on building an effective learning environment through social cohesion and empowering the students to engage with the course content with

initiative and accountability.

Any information pertaining to the students will be kept strictly confidential, and records will be kept in locked locations at the University of British Columbia under the supervision of the project's principal investigator. All information that we collect for this study will be used for research and educational purposes only. Erin Garcia Castillo will be conducting this research for her Master's thesis.

We are seeking your consent for this project. The <School Board> has given permission for this project to be carried out in your school. If you would like to have further information about any part of this project, or if you have any questions about it, please call me at <phone number> or email me at <email> I will do my best to answer your questions. If you have any concerns about the treatment or rights of research participants, you may contact the Director of Research Services at the University of British Columbia at <phone number>.

Thank you for your interest and kind cooperation.

Dr. George Belliveau  
Professor, Language & Literacy Education

For the research team: Erin Garcia Castillo, Graduate Student

### CONSENT FORM

I \_\_\_\_\_ (your name) give permission / do not give permission (**please circle one**) for my school, <school's name> to participate in the study: ***The role of collaborative short film projects on social cohesion and student engagement in the Core French classroom.***

If permission is given, as circled above, I consent to have my school included in any presentation or publication arising from this study. I understand that no information that reveals the identity of the district, the school or the students will be given.

I have kept a copy of this letter for my own records.

Principal's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

### **C. Teacher Consent Letter**

#### **The role of collaborative short film projects on social cohesion and student engagement in the Core French classroom**

Dear <teacher's name>:

Following your conversation with Erin Garcia Castillo in February 2012, I am providing further written information, along with a formal consent form regarding the study that we wish to conduct in your school district beginning in May 2012. As discussed, we are studying the possible benefits of collaborative short film projects to address social cohesion and student engagement in the Core French classroom. We want to know whether students working collaboratively to create a short film in Core French will support social cohesion and encourage student engagement in the Core French classroom at the secondary level.

This is an invitation for your class to participate in the creation of collaborative short film projects for five weeks, beginning in May 2012. During the five weeks, your class will be involved in eight 40 minute sessions and two 80 minute sessions during regular class time where students will engage with the content of the course through the creation of collaborative short film projects. Students will also have the opportunity to showcase their collaborative film projects in the theatre during one lunch hour. These activities, led by Erin Garcia Castillo, a graduate student from the University of British Columbia and a teacher in the <School District>, will focus on building an effective learning environment through social cohesion and empowering the students to engage with the course content with initiative and accountability. At the end of the unit of study, you will be invited to participate in a 30 minute unscripted open-ended interview to share your reflections on the broader impact of the study on social cohesion and student engagement in your classroom. This interview will be audio recorded.

Any information pertaining to the students will be kept strictly confidential, and records will be kept in locked locations at the University of British Columbia under the supervision of the project's principal investigator. All information that we collect for this study will be used for research and educational purposes only. Erin Garcia Castillo will be conducting this research for her Master's thesis.

We are seeking your consent for this project. The <School Board> has given permission for this project to be carried out in your school. If you would like to have further information about any part of this project, or if you have any questions about it, please call me at <phone number> or email me at <email> I will do my best to answer your questions. If you have any concerns about the treatment or rights of research participants, you may contact the Director of Research Services at the University of British Columbia at <phone number>.

Thank you for your interest and kind cooperation.

Dr. George Belliveau  
Professor, Language & Literacy Education

## CONSENT FORM

I \_\_\_\_\_ (your name) give permission / do not give permission (**please circle one**) for my Core French 10 class, at <school's name> to participate in the study, ***The role of collaborative short film projects on social cohesion and student engagement in the Core French classroom.***

If permission is given, as circled above, I consent to have my class included in any presentation or publication arising from this study. I understand that no information that reveals the identity of the district, the school or the students will be given.

I consent/ do not consent (**please circle one**) to participate in participate in a 30 minute unscripted open-ended interview to share my reflections on the broader impact of the study on social cohesion and student engagement in my classroom. I understand that this interview will be audio recorded.

I have kept a copy of this letter for my own records.

Teacher's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

### D. Parental Consent Letter

#### CONSENT FORM

#### **The role of collaborative short film projects on social cohesion and student engagement in the Core French classroom**

Dear Parent or Guardian:

I am writing to request your permission for your son or daughter to participate in this study entitled: ***The role of collaborative short film projects on social cohesion and student engagement in the Core French classroom.*** On the last two pages, you will find the statement of informed consent to be signed by you and sent back to your school, indicating whether or not you wish your child to participate in the project. The second copy is for you to keep. Before you sign, here is some information about the study.

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. George Belliveau <phone number and email> Associate Professor in the Department of Language and Literacy Education, Faculty of Education.

**Investigator:** Erin Garcia Castillo <phone number and email> graduate student in the Department of Language and Literacy Education, Faculty of Education. Erin Garcia Castillo is conducting this research for her Master's thesis.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of the study is to examine how making collaborative short films in Core French at the secondary level might impact 1) social cohesion and 2) student engagement.

**Study Procedures:**

The design of this study will include one Core French class at the grade 10 level. The students will explore course content by creating collaborative short films. The unit of study will focus on leisure activities, and television and film genres. The film unit will take place over a span of 5 weeks (eight 40 minute sessions and two 80 minute sessions) during regularly scheduled class time. There will be one voluntary session over lunch hour in the fifth week for those students who would like the opportunity to showcase their film for other students and teachers in the school.

All students will create a collaborative short film in French to explore relevant course content. The short film will be evaluated by the regular classroom teacher but will not be collected as data for the research. At the end of each session students will fill out Exit Slips, mini-questionnaires, reflecting on their learning experiences during that particular session on topics covering. Each Exit Slip will take about 5 minutes to complete. These Exit Slips will be collected as data for the research but will not be assessed as classwork by the regular classroom teacher. After the unit of study is complete, some students, selected at random, will be invited to participate in a focus group interview to reflect on their experiences of the process of creating their collaborative short films. These focus groups interviews will consist of six students and will take 30 minutes. The focus groups will be audio recorded and collected for data purposes only.

The students who do not want to participate in the study will still have the opportunity to collaboratively create a collaborative short film as it is a class activity. For students who do not want to participate in the study, the questionnaire and composition will be a learning experience but will not be used in the study.

**Use of the Student Collaborative Short Films:** The films the students make are for class purposes only. Students' faces will be visible in the films. However, if a student chooses, his/her face would not appear on film, for example, if he/she participates as director or camera operator. Students will have the opportunity to show their films publicly in the theatre during one lunch hour. The audience of this showing will consist of students and teachers at <school's name>. Parents are welcome to attend as well. These films will NOT be collected as data for this research.

**Confidentiality:**



The individual results of the students will not be shared with the school and will not be available to anyone without your written consent. All data will be placed in a locked filing cabinet in Dr. Belliveau's office and on Erin Garcia Castillo's password protected computer in a file which is password protected and encrypted. All data will be stored for 5 years. After the storage period, all data will be destroyed. Participants will not be identified in reports of the completed study.

**Your child will choose a pseudonym and the pseudonym will be used in the analysis. No specific child will be referred to by name or identified in any way in the report of the results.** General results will be given to the schools and will be available to parents or guardians for consultation.

**Contact for information about the study:**

If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Dr. George Belliveau <phone number and email> or Erin Garcia Castillo <phone number and email>

**Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:**

You or your child may refuse participation in this project or withdraw during the project without any consequence to your child's academic standing. Your participation and that of your child is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time, even after signing this consent form. Refusing to participate or withdrawal will not jeopardize your child's education. If you give your consent for your child's participation we will still obtain his or her assent before proceeding to any evaluation. This request of assent will consist of a letter similar to this one explaining the project to your child. If your child wishes to participate in the study, he or she will sign one copy of the letter. The regular classroom teacher will also provide oral explanations if needed.

If you have any concerns about your child's treatment or rights as a research subject you may contact Dr. George Belliveau <phone number> or the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at <phone number>.

**Consent:**

On the next page, you will find the statement of informed consent to be signed by you and sent back to your school, whether or not you wish your child to participate in the project. The second copy is for you to keep.

Thank you for your participation in this study.

George Belliveau, Ph.D  
Associate Professor, Language & Literacy Education

**Statement of Informed Consent (copy to sign)**

**Title of the project:** *The role of collaborative short film projects on social cohesion and student engagement in the Core French classroom*

**Researchers:** Dr. George Belliveau and Erin Garcia Castillo, University of British Columbia

**Please fill out the information below.**

**Be sure to keep p. 1 and 2 for your own records and return a signed copy of page 3 (Statement of Informed Consent) to the office of your school by next day, or as soon as possible.**

---

I have read and understand the attached letter regarding the project entitled: *The role of collaborative short film projects on social cohesion and student engagement in the Core French classroom*. I have kept copies of both the letter describing the project and a permission form (Statement of Informed Consent).

'I consent / I do not consent (**please circle one**) to my child's participation in this study.'

---

Printed name of the child

---

Parent or Guardian Signature

Date

---

Printed name of the parent or guardian signing above.

**Statement of Informed Consent (copy to keep)**

**Title of the project:** *The role of collaborative short film projects on social cohesion and student engagement in the Core French classroom*

**Researchers:** Dr. George Belliveau and Erin Garcia Castillo, University of British Columbia

**Please fill out the information below.**

**Be sure to keep p. 1 and 2 for your own records and to return a signed copy of page 3 (Statement of Informed Consent) to the office of your school by next day, or as soon as possible.**

---

I have read and understand the attached letter regarding the project entitled: *The role of collaborative short film projects on social cohesion and student engagement in the Core*

**French classroom.** I have kept copies of both the letter describing the project, and a permission form (Statement of Informed Consent).

I consent / I do not consent (**please circle one**) to my child's participation in this study.'

---

Printed name of the child

---

Parent or Guardian Signature

Date

---

Printed name of the parent or guardian signing above.

## **E. Student Assent Letter**

### **ASSENT FORM**

#### **The role of collaborative short film projects on social cohesion and student engagement in the Core French classroom**

Dear Student,

**Project Title:** *The role of collaborative short film projects on social cohesion and student engagement in the Core French classroom.*

We (Dr. George Belliveau and Erin Garcia Castillo) are researchers at the University of British Columbia in the Faculty of Education, Department of Language and Literacy Education. We are conducting a research project on the role of collaborative short film projects on social cohesion and student engagement in the Core French classroom. The purpose of this project is to examine how making a collaborative short film in Core French secondary classrooms might impact 1) social cohesion within the classroom and 2) student engagement.

Our study will include one intact Core French class at the grade 10 level. The unit of study will focus on leisure activities, and television and film genres. During the five weeks, your class will be involved in eight 40 minute sessions and two 80 minute sessions during regular class time where you will engage with the content of the course through the creation of a collaborative short film project. Should you choose to, you will also have the opportunity to showcase your collaborative film project in the theatre during one lunch hour.

The final product of your short film will be assessed by your regular classroom teacher but will not be included in the research. At the end of each session you will fill out Exit Slips, mini-questionnaires, reflecting on your learning experiences during that particular session. Each Exit Slip will take about 5 minutes to complete. These Exit Slips will be collected as data for the

research but will not be assessed as classwork by your regular classroom teacher. After the unit of study is complete, some students, selected at random, will be invited to participate in a focus group interviews to reflect on their experiences of the process of creating their collaborative short films. These focus group interviews will consist of six students, and will take 30 minutes. The focus groups will be audio recorded and collected for data purposes only.

If you do not wish to participate in the study, you will still have the opportunity to collaboratively create a short film as it is a class activity. For students who do not wish to participate in the study, the questionnaire and composition will be a learning experience, but it will not be used in the study.

The data collected for this study will be used for a Master's thesis. It may also be used in a report to be published in an appropriate academic journal and presented at a conference. Your identity will be kept confidential during this process. You will be assigned a code number and the code numbers will be used in the analysis. No specific student will be referred to by name or identified in any way in the report of the results.

Only the researchers (Dr. George Belliveau and Erin Garcia Castillo) will have access to the raw data. Your teacher will have a copy of your compositions as in-class work that could be used for assessment like any other work you do in class. The information gathered in this study will in no way be used to harm or misrepresent you. **If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the two copies of this document and return only one of them to your teacher (Keep the other copy for your own records).**

Should you agree to participate in this project, you have the right to refuse to be involved or to withdraw at any time. Such withdrawal or refusal to be involved will not jeopardize you in any way. You do not waive any of your legal rights by signing the assent form.

If you have any questions concerning any aspect of this project, the procedures to be used, or the nature of your involvement, please contact me, [George Belliveau, <phone number>]. If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research participant, please telephone the Office of Research Services at University of British Columbia, at <phone number>.

Sincerely,

George Belliveau, PhD.  
Professor, Language & Literacy Education

Name of student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

(Print your name, write the date and sign above)

## F. Film Vocabulary

### Le Vocabulaire du film

le film	film, movie
le cinéma	movie theater
<b>Genres</b>	
la comédie	comedy
le documentaire	documentary
le drame	drama
le film d'action	action movie
le film d'aventures	adventure
la science-fiction	science fiction
le western	western
<b>Acteurs</b>	
<b>Cast</b>	
un acteur / une actrice	actor / actress
la distribution	cast list
un(e) figurant(e)	extra
le premier rôle	male lead, leading actor
le premier rôle féminin	female lead, leading actress
la vedette	star
<b>Équipe</b>	
<b>Crew</b>	
le / la bruiteur / bruiteuse	sound-effects engineer
le caméraman, cadreur	camera operator
le directeur de la photo(graphie)	cinematographer, director of photography
le / la maquilleur / maquilleuse	make-up artist
le / la monteur / monteuse	editor
le / la producteur / productrice	producer
le / la réalisateur / réalisatrice	director
le scénariste	screenwriter
<b>Scènes et Plans</b>	
<b>Scenes and Shots</b>	
le cadre	frame
dans le champ	in shot
hors champ	off-camera
le panoramique	panning
un plan rapproché / serré	close up
<b>Verbes</b>	
<b>Verbs</b>	
bruiter	to add sound effects
cadrer	to frame a shot
couper	to cut
diriger	to direct
interpréter	to perform, act
monter	to edit
produire	to produce
tourner (un film, une scène)	to film, shoot (a movie, scene)
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	
l'angle de vues	shooting angle
les aspects	points of view/ perspectives
la bande sonore	soundtrack
le bruitage	sound effects
le découpage	story board
l'éclairage	lighting
le métrage	length
le montage	editing
le scénario	screenplay
sous-titré	subtitled

## G. Collaborative Film Project Time Line

PRE-PRODUCTION	
Class	Tasks
week 1	
#1	<b>Introduction (40 minutes)</b> A. Questionnaire B. Discuss project <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Requirements               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) 5-7 minute film</li> <li>b) French (memorized, not read)</li> <li>c) Subtitles</li> <li>d) Original or Adaptation</li> <li>e) in a genre style</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Roles and Responsibilities               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Writer</li> <li>b) Director</li> <li>c) Cameraman/woman (DOP)</li> <li>d) Actors</li> <li>e) Editor</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Film genres               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) comedy</li> <li>b) l'amour</li> <li>c) adventure</li> <li>d) sci-fi</li> </ol> </li> </ol> C. Pre-Production/ Production/ and Post-Production <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Time Frame</li> </ol> D. Form groups E. Brainstorm ideas <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Choose roles</li> <li>2. Choose genre</li> </ol> Choose original or adaptation
#2	<b>Collaborative Script Writing (40 minutes)</b> A. Discuss: B. Theme <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Story arch</li> <li>2. Situation, incident, problem, resolution</li> </ol> show script format
week 2	
#3	<b>First Rehearsal (40 minutes)</b> <b>– Table read the script</b> Individual Roles and Responsibilities A. Actors <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. memorize lines</li> <li>2. character biography</li> </ol> B. Director <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. theme</li> </ol>

	2. vision 3. plan locations C. Design: Collect necessary (set, props, costumes) (*this role could be delegated to Editor or Sound as well) D. DOP (cameraman/woman) 1. plan shots 2. decoupage vs. coverage 3. shots: master shots, full, mid, close-up, insert 4. angles: at eyelevel, from below and above story board (in collaboration with Director & Writer) E. Sound F. Editor
#4	<b>Planning the shoot</b> ( <i>40 minutes</i> ) A. Plan shoot schedule B. Check locations C. Check costumes & props Rehearsal
<b>PRODUCTION</b>	
week 3	
#5	Filming ( <i>80 minutes</i> ) Shoot
#6	Filming ( <i>80 minutes</i> ) Shoot
<b>POST-PRODUCTION</b>	
week 4	
#7 and #8	Editing: First Cut ( <i>40 minutes</i> ) A. Edit a rough cut, put the scenes in the order you want them. Don't add any sounds or subtitles until you've completed this rough cut Add subtitles, sounds and credits <i>*Note: Students chose to not use class time for editing</i>
<b>EXHIBITION</b>	
week 5	
#9	Public Exhibition (for only those groups who want to exhibit their short film): Show films in the theatre. Invite all your friends and teachers! In class you will fill out a reflection on what it was like making the short films and showing them to your peers
#10	Post Project Reflection: Focus Groups Meet with Mrs. Garcia to talk about your experience. Give feedback: What worked? What didn't work?

## **H. Collaborative Film Project Student Instructions and Assessment**

### **COLLABORATIVE SHORT FILM PROJECT**

#### **OUTCOMES**

In Core French 10, students learn about past-times and film and television genres. To support the learning of the content students will create a Collaborative Short Film Project.

The student:

- uses filmmaking skills to communicate a story in a specific genre
- uses knowledge and experience of film genres to support the development of their own films
- cooperates in the development of the film project
- reflects on the development of the film making process
- collaborates respectfully with others in the project
- values and understands the film aesthetic
- engages an audience through an understanding of filmmaking
- appreciates the processes of filmmaking
- synthesizes, organizes and analyses knowledge, experience and opinion in coherent, informed oral and written responses (in French, using relevant vocabulary and grammar learned to date)
- understands the different roles and responsibilities involved in the filmmaking process
- works effectively in their specific role in the development of the film while supporting the overall directorial vision of the film

#### **CONTENT**

Filmmaking is a cooperative art form. In this collaborative project, students will develop an original short film (five to seven minutes). All students are expected to negotiate and discuss the project to develop a coherent and effective short film. Each collaborative film project will have a minimum of three and a maximum of six students taking on different roles. Each student will take on at least one of the following roles in the development of the short film:

- director
- sound designer/ sound effects and soundtrack
- director of photography (DOP)/ camera operator
- designer: sets, props and costumes
- editor
- actors

All groups will be assessed in the process of developing their film on three occasions:

- pre-production: Group Pitch (10pts)
- production: Individual Paragraph (20 pts)
- post-production: Individual contribution (50 pts) & Final Product (20 pts)

In addition, all groups will submit a completed short film that is five to seven minutes long, including opening titles and credits.



## ASSESSMENT

The project will be an original film that:

- is completely in French (using grammar and vocabulary learned to date)
- is a complete narrative that creates dramatic meaning and engagement for an audience
- is effectively representative of the selected genre
- allows each member of the team to contribute to the finished film
- is five to seven minutes in length

## ASSESSMENT

Task	Description	Points
Pre-production pitch	Written in French by the Group The whole group describes in detail the idea for their film	/10
Production portfolio	Written In French by the Individual Each student produces a portfolio describing the process of developing their film, focusing on their specific role.	/20
Film: individual role	Each student is assessed on how his or her role contributes to the effectiveness of the final cut of the film. For example, if you are an editor, successful editing choices, subtitles, etc.  The bulk of your individual evaluation will be based on your spoken French: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• pronunciation</li><li>• memorized lines as opposed to reading off a card</li><li>• spoken French sounds like authentic communication</li><li>• using grammar and vocabulary reflective of grade level</li></ul>	/50
Film	The completed film is assessed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sound quality</li><li>• Editing quality</li><li>• Representative of genre</li><li>• Subtitles</li></ul>	/20

The use of materials such as a French dictionary, a *Bescherelle* and even online translators is encouraged to support the writing of the script. However, students are not to write a script in English and then simply run it through a translator. Doing so will result in a script that does not reflect appropriate use of French vocabulary and grammar learned to date and would be counterproductive to the learning process. The teacher will facilitate and support the development of each film project as required.

Filmmaking is an essentially collaborative endeavour, and this assignment values process and product in the production of this film.

\*The Collaborative Film Project is adapted from Anderson & Jefferson (2009).

## I. Questionnaires: Exit Slips

Below is sample of the format I used for the Questionnaires.

EXIT SLIP: Session #1: Introduction	
Pseudonym: _____	Date: May 1, 2012
1. Of the various roles you could have during the making of the collaborative short film project, which one do you think you would be best suited for? Why?	
_____	
_____	
_____	
2. Of the various roles you could have during the making of the collaborative short film project, which one would you find the most challenging? Why?	
_____	
_____	
_____	

## J. Field notes and Questionnaires

The following is a sample of the field notes, questionnaires and journal reflections relevant to the analysis of this study.

Session #1: Introduction

May 1, 2012

*Time felt very tight, but I felt like it was the sense time constraint that made the session feel so effective and on task, and gave it a sense of urgency. (journal)*

On May 1, 2012, I met with the students for the first time for Session #1: introduction. I introduced myself and explained my dual role as researcher/ facilitator to them, I explained that I would be guiding them through the process of making a collaborative short film in French while collecting data about the experience via: field notes, observations, questionnaires and voluntary focus group interviews at the end. I reminded them that I would not be collecting and grading their work, they would submit their projects to their regular teacher, Mrs. Knight. I explained that Mrs. Knight and I had worked together to lay out the requirements, deadlines and assessment rubrics, to ensure that I would be guiding them towards a successful end product. As Mrs. Knight had already explained the project to them, prior to my meeting with them and distributed and collected the parental consent and student assent forms, my explanation was mostly review for them.

I then went over the requirements of the project: 5 -7 minutes in length, memorized French dialogue, with English subtitles. The students had the choice of whether to adapt an existent movie that they liked or to write their own original screenplay. As they were studying film and

television genres, I also stipulated that the short film they created should fit within a student chosen genre. This parameter was intended to guide the students to create a cohesive short film and also to give them an authentic context in which to engage with the course content.

After reviewing the requirements, I went on to describe the various roles and responsibilities involved in film production, specifically: Writer, Director, Camera Operator/ Director of Photography, Actor and Editor. I encouraged the students to divide the jobs up according to their interests and talents.

I briefly outlined the major stages of film production: pre-production, production, and post-production and the specific activities that take place during each one. We also went over the Timeline which Mrs. Knight and I had co-planned, and although the students felt it was tight, they thought it was reasonable.

As the students had previously organized themselves into groups, I set them to the task of brainstorming ideas for the project: selecting roles and responsibilities, choosing a genre, and deciding whether to create an adaptation or an original work.

As I only had 40 minutes to work with them, I steamrolled through the material in order to spend as little time talking at them as possible. As it was they only had about 20 minutes to work after I was done my spiel.

*On power in the classroom. Despite all my best intentions to give the projects to them, I sat at the front of the room and spoke at them. I even sat up high on a stool, speaking down on them from above. In my mind I justified these choices because we had to go over the project requirements quickly so that they could start working together, and I didn't trust them to read through the instructions. I promised them this would be the only session that I would talk at them so much. I stressed that I would not be marking these projects, but that they should think of me as a producer. They should show me the messy bits, the process, as I would help them get to that awesome finished project that they would submit to their teacher for grades. Even just now, that word "submit" troubles me for the power connotations it holds. I was excited as a teacher to be able to teach without the responsibility of assigning grades at the end. In fact, maybe this is my favourite part of this project. To teach without giving grades. (journal)*

In the last five minutes of class, I handed out my first questionnaire for them, Exit Slip #1: Introduction. Here are the responses to the question "Of the various roles you could have during the making of the collaborative short film project, which one do you think you would be best suited for? Why?"

- *I am, and have always been, an actor. I love to be dramatic in front of people and the camera. I am experienced in this field and will work to find my character and her intentions. (Odette)*

- *Sound effects/ SPFX<sup>44</sup> and Stunts Coordinator. I plan to pull in outside assistance for legitimate special effect in combination with Dikembé's stunts for our short films. Since I have access to proper equipment I can also do sound effects.(Kiraly)*
- *I'd be best suited for an actor and stunt man. I've been in quite a few different drama classes, and I do Parkour<sup>45</sup> which really prepared me for stunts. (Dikembé)*
- *I believe I would be best suited for setting up scene and acting because I have good perspective skills and like to show off. (Richard)*
- *Camera- - steady hands, good with cameras/ Actor – good actor/ funny (Jamal)*

*Post observation: reading the exit slips (05/01)*

*Multiliteracies appear to already be making an appearance, as I had hoped and expected, students are making choices about what role they are choosing to claim for their participation in the group project... Is Identity related to the literacies we excel at?... Personal Connections (journal)*

## Session #8 Semi-public Exhibition

May 28

*Only 3/6 groups showed up with the project ready to go! I feel really disappointed that only half managed to meet the deadline. Even the group that seemed to be excelling above the others did not have a video to play and spent the class running around trying to get the copy from their friend's computer onto a drive or a drop box that they could play at school.*

...

*It reminds me a little of the story of the three bears. Some groups were too cold, some groups were too hot (tried too much), some were just right.*

*I have to remind myself to pay attention and celebrate the projects that were completed ... and not just be disappointed in those groups who didn't rise to the occasion.(journal)*

## The final Questionnaire: Exit Slip #8 Semi Public Exhibition

Did you enjoy working in groups to make a short film in French? Why or why not?

- *NO. I despised being bossed around by tall pompous idiots and then get blamed for everything. I need everything to be perfect but that means doing all the work. And in this group delegation just failed.(Odette)*
- *It was fun to work with friends, but difficult due to schedule and personalities.(Kiraly)*
- *There was good and bad. Good was it can be fun, but the bad is that some work is left to one person which can cause problems.(Dikembé)*

---

<sup>44</sup> SPFX = Special Effects

<sup>45</sup> Parkour or freerunning is the sport of running from point A to point B in the most direct line possible engaging with obstacles head on as they come.

- *I enjoyed the result but the making of it was a bit stressful. I do believe that if we picked an easy project, it would be fun all around.*(Richard)
- *Yes good [experience] teamwork was key but you can't do things by yourself even if you try.*(Jamal)

Do you feel your French improved as a result of making a short film in French? Explain.

- *Yes, my writing in contexts of specific times has improved as well as my infinitives.*(Odette)
- *Yes, mainly because I was doing subtitles and responsible for plot hole filling.*(Kiralay)
- *I felt it helped my pronunciation and flow when speaking. [It] also help[ed] with the liaisons between words.*(Dikembé)
- *Yes because I got to speak [French] with a fun and interesting purpose.*(Richard)
- *Not really it was [too] rushed so [instead] of [interpreting] we just memorized the lines.*(Jamal)

How did the idea of presenting your short film in the theatre for a public audience affect your participation and effort in the project?

- *Meh. I'm used to performing, so I was fine with it.*(Odette)
- *I strived to make it the best I possibly could.*(Kiralay)
- *It made me want to do a good job and have a good movie to present.*(Dikembé)
- *Yes, I was more motivated to do the film because of the pressure and impact it had on me and others.* (Richard)
- *Not really I always try to do good.*(Jamal)

Throughout the project, you answered various reflective questions about your experience making these short films. What did you learn from taking part in this reflective activity?

- *Reflection made me look at how I was treated and treating the people I worked with. It made me realize I hate group projects.*(Odette)
- *I was able to rant and reflect more.*(Kiralay)
- *I learned how to recall minor details in the issues we had.*(Dikembé)
- *I learned how to [interpret] my thoughts and feelings towards French.* (Richard)
- *people should listen before making questions and should leave more time to be with the groups.*(Jamal)

How did you feel about being the subject of a study?

- *Being a guinea pig is nothing now. I try my mom's cooking every night!*(Odette)
- *I am indifferent, although I am happy to do so.*(Kiralay)
- *It felt the same as any other project I've done. It didn't drastically change my view on it.* (Dikembé)
- *I enjoyed in because I think that I am the most Awesome person in the world and not enough people know it.* (Richard)
- *thought nothing of it.*(Jamal)

## K. Focus Group Interview 1 Sample

The following is an excerpt from Focus Group Interview 1 which occurred Thursday, May 31, 2012. All names, except my own, have been changed to relevant pseudonyms.

Garcia: ...How'd you guys choose Mission Impossible?

Kiraly: We weren't really sure. We were thinking of. Because of soon as we had the movie, Dikembé and I, because we're always sitting beside each other (*meaning in class*) we started throwing around some ideas. We wanted some kind of action uh with stunts or whatever. I knew I could have special effects done. So we thought of some kind of action movie, chase scene, whatever. And uh Mission Impossible came from there, which we renamed Mission: Maybe, if we feel like it which got shortened but...

Garcia: Yeah. Um Kiraly, you were mentioning that you had some problems in your group part way through. What were those problems?

Kiraly: Uhhh. How much time do we have?... It was pretty bad because trying to get everyone in the same place at the same time, because everyone's busy. Um, it wasn't so much that people were busy but people just decided to vacation. Odette vacationed for two or three weekends in a row which was insane because they were three filming weekends. Uh which is why I set everything up like I did in my binder. With shooting schedules and one liners and all that. Because I knew that we had to get everything done in one day with my dad. Effects wise. Which we finally managed to do on his day off. Which was the holiday Monday. And because we had everything set up properly we were able to shoot. We had to end it all early. So we had to cut a scene. And I wanted it done one way. And Odette wouldn't have it. Even though that she was director. I was D.O. P. (Director of Photography) and location. So it should have been done my way.

Garcia: What was this conflict? What did you want?

Kiraly: Um. She didn't want to cut scenes, which we had to do because we ran out of time. Cause it left. Well I knew it would leave a plot hole that we could fill in. Um but she wouldn't shoot the shots I asked her to. as D.O.P., she wouldn't shoot them properly. She wanted to shoot them as a director not as a camera person. But, um, and then we had to adjust some lines and move lines because we cut scenes. Which... She wrote it, but I had kind of vision of what we were cutting and how we could still fill it in with plot. And she wouldn't have it.

## L. Focus Group Interview 2 Sample

The following is an excerpt from Focus Group Interview 2 which occurred Friday, June, 2012. All names, except my own, have been changed to relevant pseudonyms.

Odette: I was so happy when ours was done. I actually like, [a friend of mine] and Kiraly stayed up like all weekend for 32 hours. (*laughing, Jill laughs with her*) And I didn't have to be there, I was so happy.

Garcia: Cause you weren't involved in the editing.

Odette: No god, and I loved it. I was like, I, I told them that if they needed me to be there that I could be. And then they never called me and I was so happy.

Garcia: And what'd you think of your finished product?

Odette: I thought it was pretty good, it was better that I expected it to be actually.

*Jill laughs.*

Odette: (*continued*) I was expecting like oh you've been up for 32 hours, it's, the editing it's gonna be kind of crappy, but it was good.

Garcia: Mm-hm. What'd you get out of the experience?

Odette: Umm. mmmm. Anger management.

*Odette and Jill laugh.*

Odette : It's true.

Jill: I can picture that with Kiraly.

Odetter: No now I know that when I have to work with infuriating people I just scream into their coats and be fine.

*Jill continues to laugh.*

Odette: It's what I did. I got pissed and Kiraly and I grabbed his sleeve and screamed into it and kind of freaked out a little bit, but it was ok.

Garcia: Oh, while he was wearing it?

Odette laughs and nods.

Garcia: why did you guys, why did you have such a personality clash? What happened there?

Odette: Oh god, we're both...

Jill: They're both very strong personalities.

Garcia: So it was like two alpha animals in the pack.

Odette: (*laughing*) yeah. And it just, I don't know we're both really bossy and it didn't work (*Announcement interruption cut*)

Garcia: Yeah cause you guys, you started out... how would you say the experience started out? Like I want you to... tell me the story of you guys making a movie.

Odette: hmmm.

*Jill laughs.*

Odette: Ok. It started with me writing the entire script by myself. Not pleased with that. Um and then everybody started like splitting into their own: like who would do effects, and Jamal did the costumes, and Richard didn't do much of anything (*Jill laughs*) and that was ok because we didn't want him to.

Jill: He'd probably mess it up.

*Jill and Odette laugh.*

Odette: No, he did do the extras which was good. And then once we started filming it was just like ... Arrggg! all the time. (*laughs*) and it was painful and annoying and I thought I was gonna kill somebody, but I didn't.

Garcia: What made it so painful and annoying?

Odette: Because I was the director I would always get blamed for everything, like oh we didn't get this location because you didn't do this. and well actually I did and technically it's not my fault it's his fault because he didn't do what I asked him to. And but you know what let's not take the blame and blame it on anybody but oh no we're gonna blame it on me because it's all my fault and well... (*laughs a little*)

*Jill laughs (a little nervously?)*

Garcia: And then when you finished it... like how'd you feel when it was done?

Odette: I was so ecstatic.

*Jill laughs.*

Odette: Like I was like, 'I don't have to be beaten on anymore. Nobody's gonna beat on me and I'm not gonna beat on anybody and I'm not gonna feel like a horrible person for yelling at people.

## **M. Interview with Mrs. Knight Sample**

The following is an excerpt from my interview with Mrs. Knight which occurred Mon, June 4, 2012. All names, except my own, have been changed to relevant pseudonyms.

G: I like your idea of, 'Ok Google Translate is out there, let's learn how to use it as an effective tool,'

K: - use it. mm-hm

G: And that could be definitely something like we as language teacher colleagues could look at of, 'This exists we can't pretend it's not out there. So what does that mean to how we look at their work now?'

K: I think so and like when it comes to their previous assignment which was much smaller and it was just make a, make a poster for a new product, they knew that they'd get a better mark if they kept it simple in French that we knew than the complicated incorrect Google Translate.

*Both laugh.*

G: And you said that your grade 12s – noticed that.

K: (overlapping) which the grade 12s they can notice that they've used the wrong words and that it makes no sense grammatically.

G: Yeah.

K: Um... but yeah, I don't know. In the spirit of having them improve their learning in French.

G: Well yeah, cause I just asked myself, I mean, we put so much work into organizing these projects. They're a lot of work for the teacher to organize.

K: Mmm

G: Like you must have felt that way when you were running it for your other classes. That it takes quite a bit of organization.

K: It does yeah, and you gotta deal with all the individual things that come up.

G: And the personality conflicts that come up in groups.

K: Yeah.

G: And not getting stuff and yeah there's a lot of um guidance -

K: Yeah.

G: Or whatever that occurs and so one of the things I'm looking at for doing this research is: Is there a point in doing this? Or are we just making more work for ourselves? ... Are they getting anything out of it.

K: I don't know how much French they're getting out of it, but I think it gets them excited about a project in French, which for the first three and a bit months they were not very excited some of them about French.

G: Did you notice a difference when we were doing the project?

K: When they were doing the project? Yeah they would actually work on it, whereas if it was an assignment to make a poster they'd all just sit back and wait...

G: Mmm.

K: And who knows when they did it, but they were much more motivated to work on it. I thought. It's fun for them. It gets them at least speaking French. Whether they know what they're saying or not.

*Both laugh.*

G: Yeah.



K: They're speaking it.

G: That's definitely given me something next time I do these... I'm gonna do it differently cause something, something's still missing –

K: Yeah –

G:-In their process to... If they're speaking lines without thinking about what those lines mean, something's still missing. Then maybe like you said just dedicating a little bit more time to doing that plan, and writing together and rehearsing together a bit more.

K: The more time I spent, the more time you can spend with the group in the pre-production time, it will be more beneficial.

G: mm-hm

K: Like when I would just let them be on their own... that's when they just get into the English writing with the bad translated version.