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# COMMUNICATIVE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH A COMPARATIVE LENS: A SNAPSHOT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES AND FRANCE

by
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A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford
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And to my parents, thank you for always being "for" me; your support is the essential foundation for all of my endeavors.

# ABSTRACT

HALLEY ANNE HARGRAVE:

Communicative Development through a Comparative Lens:
A Comparison of Foreign Language Education in the United States and France
(Under the direction of Dr. Olivier Tonnerre)

This thesis is an examination of external influences on the foreign language classroom. I evaluate national policy and legislature, textbooks, and national tests as possible determinants of foreign language teaching methods used in the United States and France. I chose to compare the American system to the French system as a result of the relative success of foreign language education in France and my ability to read policy and curriculum in French. By comparing the foreign language education systems in the two countries, I hope to determine what types of weaknesses in American foreign language instruction practices hinder language acquisition.

In evaluating the influence of national policy and legislature on foreign language education, I first examine the current political environment garnering attention for foreign language education policy from the governments in the United States and France. I then place foreign language instruction in the context of overall educational policies in the two countries by citing its inclusion in recent educational reforms. Additionally, both countries have published national standards or curriculum directives to guide the process of fostering communicative competence in the classroom, and I compare those publications in the final section of the chapter.

Because national standards do not provide a daily syllabus, textbook writers are charged with transforming the standards into daily classroom material. In the second chapter, I examine the coherence of communicative and cultural instruction in major textbooks with national standards and directives.

Though national standards and textbooks shape the syllabus of classroom learning, national testing dictates the requirements of student capabilities. The third chapter analyzes the efficacy of national tests in measuring the communicative competence standard in American and French foreign language policy.

The evaluation of these three external influences on classroom instruction reveals diverging ideologies concerning language instruction in American policy, textbooks, and national tests. Conversely, the methods and goals of foreign language education in France are essentially coherent across the three evaluated determinants for instruction. A more coordinated effort among influences on American foreign language education would perhaps produce a more standardized level of communicative competence among American foreign language students.

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## Introduction

"We are linguistically malnourished" says Paul Simon of Americans in his 1980 book *The Tongue-Tied American: Confronting the Foreign Language Crisis* (5). Nearly thirty years later, despite sporadic flurries of interest in bolstering foreign language education efforts, Simon's assessment remains true. Only half of American high school students study a foreign language (Draper and Hicks 1), and a faltering nine percent of Americans claim to speak a foreign language, according to the 2000 census. The education system receives the most attention and blame for the poor feeding of American students, but foreign language instruction methods remain largely unreformed. Having studied French for four years in public high school with very limited practical results, I count myself a product of the American ideology of foreign language instruction and understand the large numbers of American students who finish their secondary education with no communicative abilities in a language other than English. Though the global preponderance of English is often attributed with overriding any sense of American urgency to learn foreign languages, the fact remains that educational resources fail to both incite cultural awareness and provide tools for students to study language.

The percentage of Americans able to communicate in a foreign language appears especially poor in light of the fact that over fifty percent of Europeans reportedly speak at least one foreign language (European Commission 3). In France, all students begin study of their first foreign language in elementary school, and a second foreign language is added to the course of study in secondary school. In the last decade, French legislation has effectively changed to reflect the foreign language policy of the European Union, and language study remains at the center of attention in efforts to improve the educational system. Spending a semester abroad in France my junior year of college only confirmed the multilingual European stereotype; especially among French students around my own age, I unfailingly found my French inferior to my contemporaries' English.

As an aspiring foreign language teacher, I am intrigued by the structure of the two education systems which produce such profoundly different results. The following pages are a sketch of foreign language education in the United States and France, and the analysis stems largely from a comparison of instructional policies and practices. The juxtaposition of two models which espouse the same basic teaching ideology highlights the adaptation of language teaching theory in legislature and the differences in how legislature is reflected in both classroom teaching and standard evaluation.

Foreign language education theory is a constantly evolving field, and the currently widespread Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach is the culmination of research from the fields of linguistics, psychology, philosophy, sociology and educational research (Savignon, *Interpreting* 4). Because foreign language instruction ideology in both the United States and France is essentially based upon the theories of CLT, this thesis does not attempt to establish the efficacy of Communicative Language Teaching practices in relation to other teaching methodologies. Rather, each chapter seeks to investigate influences on instruction methods as they are employed in the classroom. The first chapter examines the governments' roles in developing and enforcing foreign language instruction policy, the second chapter analyzes textbooks which commonly provide syllabuses for daily instruction, and the third chapter assesses nationally-administered exams. The ideology of Communicative Language Teaching is of interest in the coherence with which the method is applied across each major area of influence on classroom instruction.

The first chapter begins by outlining the political influences which shape foreign language awareness in the United States and France. The differences in political attitudes regarding benefits for foreign language acquisition perhaps shape the prominence of foreign language instruction policies in legislature. Additionally, legislative policies emerge from a perceived need for foreign language education and therefore shape the goals of language instruction. The second section of the chapter places foreign language within the context of current laws regarding education on the national level in the United States and France. The placement of foreign language education in legislature further reveals the status of foreign language in national consciousness. Finally, the third section covers central pieces of literature published on a national level and sponsored by the government that propose specific teaching methods for individual classrooms. National standards are representative of the government's goals and vision for the process of foreign language education, and also establish a national theoretical approach to language education.

The second chapter shifts the focus from the theoretical structure of foreign language education in the United States and France to the practical implementation of national recommendations in the classroom. Textbooks are taken as representative of daily activity in the foreign language classroom since writers intend for the structure of the chapters to serve as the daily syllabus in classrooms in which the text is used. I selected popular American French textbooks published by established companies intended for use in secondary schools to compare to widely-used French English textbooks. While the focus of the thesis remains secondary education, some of the English textbooks are drawn from earlier grade levels since secondary learners in France are already well familiar with introductory elements of language usage. The two sections of the second chapter examine how the texts implement the communication and culture recommendations prioritized in the national standards.

The final chapter examines the evaluation of communicative abilities on the national level. Though the United States does not mandate a national examination on the same level as the French baccalauréat, many classrooms are structured to prepare students for the nationally-administered Advanced Placement Language exam. Through a discussion of testing validity, both national tests are assessed for their ability to "measure what they are supposed to measure" (communicative competence, in the case of CLT), with the implication that an invalid evaluation could drive classroom instruction to focus on skills not central to communicative competence as defined by the American and French governments.

Perceptions from both within and without the United States imply that all attempts at combating the linguistic famine are failing. Through an investigation into the influences on classroom practices and a comparison of each influence to a system which produces a far greater number of foreign language speakers, I hope to define weaknesses in American foreign language instruction and thereby pinpoint new areas of focus for legislators, textbook writers and teachers in the quest to more effectively provide American students with linguistic nourishment.

## I.1 Political Environments Shaping Foreign Language Education Awareness

Education produces individuals prepared to interact effectively and critically with the society in which they exist. The turn of the last century marked a surge in global interconnectivity, furthering the creation of an international society and increasing the number of individuals expected to function across cultural boundaries. In order to furnish citizens with the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute to global society, both the United States and France are in the process of redefining the role of foreign language instruction in relation to required educational standards. The economic climate driving the integration of foreign language curriculum to the core of national education standards is similar; global business demands that graduates possess a certain amount of cultural sensitivity to produce revenue across country borders. However, political foundations forming the base of new foreign language policy differ in the United States and France. Since 2001, the United States has operated in a "post 9/11" mindset. Because international awareness in the United States stems largely from terrorist attacks, literature critiquing foreign language policy often takes a defensive tone, decrying the importance of an international mindset in preserving national security. Conversely, international focus in education curriculum in France seems to develop in response to strictures developed by the European Union in an attempt to unify diverse people groups. Language education literature from the French viewpoint encourages instruction as a necessity for creating a place for French students in the global marketplace. Foreign language legislation in the United States develops as a facet of national security, while the necessity to forge international connection in order to compete globally drives policy change in France.

Historically, foreign language policy development in the United States has corresponded to events concerning national security, such as the National Defense Education Act of 1958 which responded in many ways to the launch of Sputnik in 1957 (JNCL/NCLIS 12). The Joint National Committee for Languages and National Council for Languages and International Studies (JNCL/NCLIS) notes in their report that although the United States government had initiated several investigative reports prior to September 11, 2001, the terrorist attacks acted as a catalyst for a series of foreign language policy reforms. "[E]very now and again, a major event occurs and serves to jump-start the policy process. The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, constituted such an event" (JNCL/NCLIS 7). In his article examining the possibility of national language educational policy in the United States, Richard Brecht notes that "[T]he ominous and continual threats of terrorism have had an effect on the American consciousness that speaking languages might be helpful in dealing with this 'Brave New World'" (Blake 247).

The tone of proposed and adopted foreign language policy in the years following September 11 directly speaks to the insecurity of the United States in its ability to communicate with the world outside the country borders. Representative Rush Holt (D-NJ) has introduced his National Security Language Act to Congress multiple times. In his keynote address at the National Language Conference in 2004, Holt compared the events of September 11 to the launch of Sputnik and declared that the United States must again address strengthening foreign language education in the interest of national security. The theme of Holt's address largely reflects a fear that ignorance of foreign language poses danger to the country. He states that, "Our national deficiency in the languages and cultures of critical areas around the world is compromising American security interests at home and abroad." The National Security Language Act also gives emphasis to "critical languages," a buzz term appearing in much American literature on foreign language since September 11 that refers to languages essential to national security interests that are not widely spoken or taught in the United States. In the same address at the National Language Conference, Holt warns that, "We need to improve the numbers in critical languages if we're going to make sure that America has the language professionals necessary to defend our national security and represent American interests abroad."

Though Congress has not made the National Security Language Act law, President Bush signed the similar National Security Language Initiative in 2006.

> This initiative represents recognition that foreign language skills are essential for engaging foreign governments and peoples, especially in critical world regions, and for promoting understanding, conveying respect for other cultures, and encouraging reform. These skills are also fundamental to the economic competitiveness and security interests of the nation. (U.S. Department of Education 1)

Though the initiative indicates multiple benefits for bolstered foreign language education in the United States, the very title of the initiative narrowly defines its primary purpose.

The diction surrounding foreign language policy in the United States, such as the term "critical languages," suggests that while the United States has interest in employing foreign language for business purposes and cultural connectivity, the significant element provoking interest in changing educational policy is the threat to national security. Critical sources often cite the events of 9/11 as a primary argument for augmenting educational efforts in foreign language. The Committee for Economic Development (CED), which has worked closely with the United States government in providing reports on the status of language education in the country, directly precedes its recommendations for foreign language policy change with a familiar reference to the crisis caused by international ignorance:

> When attacked by a terrorist movement from beyond our shores, as we were on September 11, 2001, we must resist the impulse to circle the wagons – to cut ourselves off from the rest of the world. In short, we must re-define, as each generation has done, what it means to be an educated American in a changing world. The educated American of the twenty-first century will need to be conversant with at least one language in addition to his or her native language. (CED 2)

Because current foreign language policy in the United States is largely a response to the threat of national security, the application of reforms and studies is significantly weakened as the memory of national crisis fades. The perspective of the laws and reforms seems nearly retrospective; the language draws upon fear and insecurity brought upon by past events to motivate change in order to prevent future disasters.

Even when the dialogue turns to the economic advantages of bilingualism, the documents proposing stronger foreign language instruction in the United States take a defensive stance. Because the United States has in the past boasted a dominant economy, critics emphasize the need to protect the position. In the report Education for Global Leadership released by the Committee for Economic Development, the writers propose that "Keeping America's economy competitive requires that we maintain our position as a leader in the global marketplace, obtain a foothold in important emerging markets, and compete successfully with countries that boast multilingual, multicultural, and highly skilled workforces" (CED 3). The emphasis in the economic advantage of multilingual citizens is not the establishment of connection, but rather the ability to "compete successfully" and "maintain our position" in the global market place.

Much of the foreign language policy in France emerges from the heightened emphasis on connectedness that the European Union promotes in an effort to build unification between the states. In 2003, the Commission of the European Communities (CEC) released a proposed action plan for the years 2004-2006 describing methods by which each member state of the European Union should build foreign language education to include mandatory instruction in two foreign languages for all students. In describing the purpose for increased educational emphasis on language, the report states that "Building a common home in which to live, work and trade together means acquiring the skills to communicate with one another effectively and to understand one another better. Learning and speaking other languages encourages us to become more open to others, their cultures and outlooks" (CEC 3). The language describing the primary goal of foreign language education is notably different from proposed action plans emerging in the last decade from the United States. Rather than focusing on maintaining a certain position of security in the world, the European Union is centered on building a strong community that will be competitive economically, and, to do so, the member states must identify with each other. The first step to unification is common understanding, and the European Union places foreign language instruction at the center of building connection between states.

François Grin, writing on behalf of the Haut Conseil d'Evaluation de l'Ecole, which was created in 2005 to consult the minister of education on the efficiency of programs and evaluations in public schools, theorizes that European Union proposals simply coincide with globalization, which is the true driving force behind the reorganization of foreign language education in France (Grin 14). He suggests that foreign language instruction is a type of "politique publique" [public policy] and proposes a structure for determining the value of foreign language instruction for the promotion of the French economy. Though Grin's report has a notably competitive tone in terms of foreign language instruction, the legislation emerging from the French government suggests that the policy changes are in fact largely based on recommendations proposed by the European Union. In the Bulletin Officiel n° 23 from 2006 which presents the plan for the renovation of foreign language instruction, the introduction directly states that the renovation is a response to the goal proposed by the European Commission in the Action Plan: "La présente circulaire a pour objet de présenter le plan de rénovation de l'enseignement des langues vivantes étrangères que le ministère met en place afin de répondre aux attentes maintes fois exprimées à cet égard ainsi qu'à l'objectif de maîtriser deux langues en plus de la langue maternelle fixé par l'Union européenne" [The current bill intends to present a plan for the renovation of foreign living language instruction that the minister is putting in place so as to respond to the expectations expressed many times in respect to the objective of mastering two languages in addition to the native language fixed by the European Union] (Ministère). Though multilingual citizens expand the competitive capacity of a country in a global economy, French legislation emerges directly from proposals outlined by the European Union.

Because language instruction in the United States is largely motivated by national security and protecting economic superiority and language instruction in France centers on the principle of unification, specific languages best suit the needs of each country. François Grin notes in his report *L'ensignement des langues étrangères comme politique publique [Teaching foreign languages as public policy]:*

> Car bien en amont de la question du comment apparaissent les questions du quoi et du pourquoi : en l'occurrence, quelles langues étrangères enseigner, à qui ; en visant quels types et quels niveaux de compétence, en réponse à quelles motivations, et en visant quels usages ? Ce sont là des questions qui relèvent de ce qu'on appellerait, en économie de l'éducation, l'efficience externe. (10)
>
> [Because prior to the question of how appears the questions of for what reason and why: namely, which foreign languages to teach, to whom; aiming for what type and what levels of competence, in response to which motivations, aiming for which uses? These are some questions that rise to the surface in that which one refers to, in the economy of education, external performance.]

The comparison of French instruction in the United States and English instruction in France is therefore limited in its compatibility. Eurydice, a division of the European Commission that analyses the state of education in Europe notes in the report Foreign Language Learning : A European Priority that "whether chosen or mandatory, English is the dominant language studied in European Union member states" (Wastiau-Schlüter 3). Because the primary goal in France is to maximize connectivity through foreign language instruction, English instruction is at the forefront of foreign language discussion. In the *Rapport de la Commission du débat national sur l'avenir de l'école [Report from the Commission of the national discussion on the future of schooling]*, the commission acting on behalf of the Ministère de l'Education finds that "Ne pas être capable d'exprimer en anglais de communication internationale constitue désormais un handicap majeur, particulier dans le cadre de la construction européenne" [To not be able to communicate in the English of international communication is from now on a major handicap, in particular within the framework of the European construction] (Thélot 54) and therefore recommends that English be a mandatory subject area for all French students.

Conversely, French is far from the center of foreign language instruction promotion in the United States. The critical languages list, which includes languages necessary to both national security and economic development that are less frequently instructed in the United States, includes Arabic, Azerbaijani, Banla, Chinese, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Punjabi, Russian, Turkish and Urdu. As the United States shifts economic focus toward the East, the modern major European languages are seen more as areas of study in the humanities, and thus viewed as less important in practical terms. The bulk of national funding for increased language instruction is therefore directed towards the named "critical languages" which are seen as essential to promoting the functionality of the United States. Though the relevance of French instruction in the United States does not match the relevance of English instruction in France, in this study, the instruction of each language is viewed as if it were representative of foreign language teaching practices as a whole.

### I.2 Foreign Language Education in 21st Century Legislative Educational Reforms

The major educational reforms passed in the United States and France since the turn of the century reflect the rising emphasis on foreign language education. Both No Child Left Behind (2001) and La loi pour l'avenir de l'école [Law for the future of the school] (2005) cite foreign language as a central element to the curriculum for all students, but the structure of the two laws differs drastically in indicating how foreign language standards are to be met. In fact, the "accountability" emphasis of No Child Left

Behind in reading and mathematics cripples foreign language education in the United States. Conversely, the goals outlined in La loi pour l'avenir de l'école indicate concrete standards for foreign language education in French public schools.

In the General Provisions section of No Child Left Behind, the term "core academic subjects" is defined as "English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography" (Title IX Sec. 9101). Though the definition gives foreign languages equal academic footing with subjects emphasized across the United States, such as English and mathematics, the practice of foreign language instruction in the United States does not actually reflect equal rank. The federal government does not control instruction in American classrooms; rather, the individual states create concrete standards that match the recommendations of the government. The inclusion of foreign language as a core subject matter does not indicate a certain amount of instruction time, and the individual states are left to determine their own policy requirements for foreign language. No Child Left Behind does not indicate that states should give equal attention to the subjects deemed "core" by the bill.

The overarching goal of No Child Left Behind was to institute a system of accountability in all schools for the instruction in the classrooms. The bill mandates that all states create a system for giving schools "grades" based on the academic success of the students enrolled to maintain access to education funds from the federal government. The states measure academic success based on standardized tests which create an expectation of the performance level of students in each grade. No Child Left Behind gives particular emphasis to the improvement of reading and mathematics in American schools, and applies the policy of accountability to the two subjects above all others. In the struggle to meet concrete national standards in reading and mathematics, schools across the United States are relegating subjects not measured by the accountability standard to the bottom of the priority list. Foreign language education is weak by exclusion. Though No Child Left Behind does not directly indicate that foreign language should hold an inferior position in the American school system, the constraints placed on reading and mathematics performance require that the schools dedicate as much time as needed to measured subject areas to achieve the standard. Subject areas not measured by accountability such as music, art, and foreign language are quickly disappearing from the school day as teachers increase instruction time for subjects tested by the states.

Foreign language instruction appears in only one other section of No Child Left Behind. Title XX, Part D, Subpart 9, Sections 5491-5494 outlines the Foreign Language Assistance Program which details the Secretary of Education's ability to distribute federal grants to aid elementary and secondary schools with "innovative model programs" for improving or expanding foreign language instruction. The provisions and restrictions describing the distribution of federal aid indicate the type of foreign language education model that the federal government favors developing in schools. For example, Section 5493 lists the type of grant proposals that will receive special consideration for federal aid. The Secretary will give special consideration to programs that:

> (1) include intensive summer foreign language programs for professional development;
> (2) link nonnative English speakers in the community with the schools in order to promote two-way language learning;
> 3) promote the sequential study of a foreign language for students, beginning in elementary schools;
> (4) make effective use of technology, such as computer-assisted instruction, language laboratories, or distance learning, to promote foreign language study;

> (5) promote innovative activities, such as foreign language immersion, partial foreign language immersion, or content-based instruction

The standards for programs that receive federal aid indirectly provide an image for the types of program that the federal government wishes to institute across the country. Section 5492 indicates that the Secretary will support programs that "demonstrate approaches that can be disseminated and duplicated in other local educational agencies." The government sees a need for professional development for teachers of foreign languages, and places value on programs that utilize technology, immersion, and communication with native speakers as a part of a sequential approach to learning a language.

The French education reform passed in 2005, four years after No Child Left Behind, also indicates that foreign language instruction is essential for all students:"La maîtrise de la langue française et la connaissance de deux autres langues font partie des objectifs fondamentaux de l'enseignement" [Mastery of the French language and knowledge of two other languages make up part of the fundamental objectives of instruction] (Article L121-3). However, unlike No Child Left Behind, la Loi pour l'avenir de l'école enforces a type of accountability based on European Union standards. In 2001, the Council of Europe proposed a common system for assessing language level in Europe. The Common European Reference for Languages (CERL) includes six possible categories for language ability determined by a letter A, B or C and number one or two within that level. A-level speakers are described as "Basic," B-level as "Independent," and C-level as "Proficient." French education law applies these levels to foreign language education and mandates that "Les niveaux de competence en langues vivantes étrangères attendus sont fixes" (Article D312-16). By the end of elementary school, students are expected to speak their first foreign language at the level A1, which indicates that they are able to use simple phrases and interact with another person at a basic level in the language. By the time a student finishes the period of "scolarité obligatoire" [obligatory schooling], he should have reached the level B1 in the first foreign language, which indicates an ability to speak in most travel situations and to express in basic terms theoretical concepts such as hopes, dreams and goals. Additionally, the student is to speak a second foreign language at the level A2 and be able to hold basic conversation on familiar topics.

Using the CERL allows the French government to develop a unified approach to foreign language development across the country. "L'étalonnage fourni par le CERL permet d'élaborer des référentiels cohérents dans chaque niveau commun de l'échelle et aide les enseignants, les élèves, les concepteurs de cours et les organismes de certification à coordonner leurs efforts et à situer leurs production les unes par rapport aux autres" [The standardization furnished by CERL allows the construction of a coherent frame of reference for each level in the scale and helps teachers, students, course creators and certification organizations to coordinate their efforts and place their production in relationship to the others] (Article Annexe). The application of concrete standards allows the government to mandate a level of performance from all students, placing foreign language education under a system similar to the No Child Left Behind concept of accountability. Foreign language education is therefore afforded a position in France shared only by reading and mathematics in the United States.

The same education reform further specifies that "Les connaissances et compétences acquises en langues vivantes étrangères au cours de la scolarité font l'objet de certifications spécifiques" [The knowledge and competencies acquired in foreign living languages during schooling are the subject of specific certification] (Article D312-18). The articles concerning foreign language certification as an official indication of the abilities of the student take foreign language outside the classroom and into functional use. In the United States, the purpose of foreign language state requirements is to contribute to a holistic degree plan which includes basic instruction in all core subject areas. In France, though one purpose of the foreign language requirements is to contribute to the overall education of the student, foreign language certification separate from the degree makes foreign language education more practical. In addition to a basic diploma, graduates of required schooling in France are also able to present proof of a certain level of fluency in foreign language, a skill under increasing demand in the work force.

### I.3 The Communicative Goal in National Standards and Course Directives

Global interconnectivity influences not only the dedication to foreign language instruction in schools, but also the goal of foreign language acquisition. In response to the increased demand for cross-cultural interaction, the goal of foreign language instruction has expanded from simple grammar and vocabulary instruction to producing students who are able to functionally speak and communicate in a foreign language. In both the United States and France, national standards, controlled to differing extents by the governments, define an aim in foreign language instruction. Additionally, the directives provide general recommendations for the type of instruction that will best help students to achieve the named goal of foreign language instruction. Though at first glance the national goal for foreign language education in the United States and France seems similar in the aim for communication, the national standards espouse different views on the best method for obtaining the ability to communicate well in a language. According to the American national standards, effective communication is based largely on cultural and contextual correctness, while the French national standards retain the more traditional view on foreign language communication that grammatical correctness is most central to the ability to communicate.

Funded by the United States Department of Education, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages and three partner organizations developed the Standards for Foreign Language Learning in 1993. The publication represents a collection of content standards developed by a variety of professionals specializing in eleven languages for grades K-12 in foreign language education in the United States. Though the project was federally funded, the standards are not a curriculum guide, but should rather "be used in conjunction with state and local standards and curriculum frameworks to determine the best approaches and reasonable expectations for the students in individual districts and schools" (ACTFL, "Summary"). The standards have been widely accepted across the United States, and most states base their foreign language content standards on the ACTFL standards, which have been continually updated since 1993. The foundational philosophy governing the ACTFL standards is that foreign language not only involves "knowing how (grammar) to say what (vocabulary)" but "knowing how, when, and why to say what to whom" (ACTFL, "Summary"). In view of this philosophy, the national standards and the state standards modeled on them are based on the organizing principle of the five C's: Communication, Culture, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities (ACTFL, *Standards* 31).

The five C's qualify each of the elements that the ACTFL sees as essential to effective mastery of a foreign language as well as the value in learning a foreign language. *Communication* is "at the heart of second language study," and involves any form of interaction with the foreign language (from face-to-face conversation, to interaction across the centuries through literature). The ability to effectively communicate is based upon a knowledge and understanding of the *culture* from which the language emerges, and the ACTFL asserts that "students cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs." Additionally, the standards emphasize the value in the *connections* that students can gain new bodies of knowledge by understanding a second language. In turn, *comparisons* across cultures provide students not only with a foundation to understand the world outside their culture, but also a context within which to better understand their own culture. Finally, understanding a foreign language ultimately expands the *community* in which a student is able to participate. The Texas Framework for Languages Other Than English (LOTE) has adopted each of the five C's, but reorganized the model to indicate that acquisition of Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities depends on the central goal of Communication. The language learning model produced by the ACTFL and espoused by the majority of states emphasizes the relational and introspective value in foreign language education which depends completely on the ability to communicate in a culturally sound manner.

Within the frame of communication, the national and state standards emphasize oral communication above all other forms. Even the founding phrase "knowing how, when and why to say what to whom," indicates that the goal of foreign language instruction is the ability to "say," or to speak. Based on this ultimate goal, the standards indicate that the priority in the foreign language classroom should be oral communication rather than drilled vocabulary lists or critiques of written language usage:

> As opposed to long-held beliefs, we now know that students do not acquire communicative competence by learning the elements of the language system first. It is not the case that learners learn best by memorizing vocabulary items in isolation . . . We now know that even those students who learn grammar well . . . may be quite unable to understand the language when it is spoken to them . . . We now know that learners learn a language best when they are provided opportunities to use the target language to communicate in a wide range of activities (ACTFL, *Standards* 40-41)

The ACTFL therefore largely aims to teach foreign language through interpersonal communication rather than traditional writing-based instruction. The standards go so far as to say that "communicative competence" is not even based on studying the language system; instead, students are expected to gain mastery of the system by repeated usage of the language. "Generating utterances" is the core of developing communication strategies that lead to communicative competence. Students are encouraged to "learn by experimenting" and "learn from mistakes and try again" in actively using the language orally. The standards further name learning how to compensate for shortcomings in communicating effectively as a major strategy in communicative competence.

The Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century include a set of standards for each of the five C's. Developing competence in writing is notably absent from the standards in communication. The ACTFL standards define that as a part of the communication component of the curriculum:

1. Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.
2. Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.
3. Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics. (42-45)

Though the standards set an expectation for the ability of students to "understand and interpret written . . . language," understanding written language requires a significantly lower ability than producing writing samples in a foreign language. The absence of writing assessment is obvious again among the "sample progress indicators" for French language instruction, which define basic capabilities that students in grades four, eight, and twelve should have in the foreign language they study. Only in grade twelve do the progress indicators include "written exchanges" as a method for students to share opinions (ACTFL, *Standards* 207).

In the Anglais edition from the série Accompagnement des programmes published by the Ministre de la Jeunesse, de l'Education nationale et de la Recherche Direction de l'enseignement scolaire, traditional grammatical instruction remains an integral part of the curriculum. Similarly to the American national standards, the série Accompagnement proposes a set of national guidelines for English instruction rather than setting a list of standards that every language classroom must meet. In the avant-propos to the guide, the place of communication in the classroom is defined in terms of its relationship to traditional instruction:

> La difficulté majeure pour des élèves francophones étudiant l'anglais est indubitablement la langue orale : il ne s'agit pas de minimiser la place de l'écrit mais d'accorder, dans l'apprentissage, le plus de place et d'importance possible aux activités orales. Il ne s'agit pas non plus d'opposer l'approche communicative à l'étude de la grammaire : il n'est pas possible de bien pratiquer l'anglais, à l'oral comme à l'écrit, sans maîtriser la syntaxe anglaise et sans avoir des connaissances lexicales. (5)

> [The major difficulty for francophone students studying English is undoubtedly oral speech: the goal is not to minimize the place of writing, but to grant, in training, the most important place possible to oral activities. Neither is the goal to match the communicative approach against grammar study: it is not possible to practice English well, either orally or in writing, without mastering English syntax and without having lexical knowledge.]

The French guide for English instruction differs drastically from the ACTFL standards in that oral expression and communication is described as a necessary component to a foreign language class rather than as a means to learn a language. The communicative approach is not to replace the traditional approach to grammar instruction; the guide indicates that a functional understanding of grammar provides the necessary foundation to oral communication.

The practice of using oral communication in the French foreign language classroom is also notably much more contrived than in the American classroom. While the ACTFL standards encourage speaking for the sake of simply learning how to talk, despite the possibility for error, the *Anglais* guide defines the goal of oral communication "d'exprimer une pensée pertinente, réfléchie et nuancée" [to express a relevant, reflected and nuanced thought] (12). In order to develop such oral contributions in the classroom, the guide further suggests that at the beginning of the year, the teacher invite the students "à préparer ponctuellement leurs interventions à l'écrit, puis, dans un deuxième temps, à s'exprimer à partir de notes" [to occasionally prepare their speech in writing, then, at another time, to express themselves using notes] (13). By suggesting that students learn to speak based on writing, the French guide places oral expression at the opposite end of the language learning continuum than the ACTFL standards. Rather than using oral communication as the foundation for language learning, the guide indicates that oral expression is the ultimate sign of maturity in a language. Though oral expression is a useful to "sensibiliser les élèves à la créativité de la langue et de les inciter à apprendre des mots, des expressions ou des énoncés préformés" [To make students aware of the creativity of language and to encourage them to learn words, expressions, or preformed statements] (12), oral expression remains a tool for deepening a foundation already solid in grammar and vocabulary.

Despite this major difference, the French guide for English instruction and the ACTFL standards do share the conviction that students are not able to communicate properly without a cultural understanding that accompanies the language. The guide states that "compétences culturelles et linguistiques se trouvent étroitement imbriquées et impliquées dans le processus d'apprentissage" [cultural and linguistic competencies are tightly interlaced and involved in the training process] (7). The guides further recognizes that "Le programme culturel constitue le cadre dans lequel le professeur placera l'étude de la langue" [The cultural syllabus is the framework in which the teacher will place language study] (5). *Anglais* also declares that the instructor must also invoke the four principles of the "vivre ensemble" [living together] ideology: mémoire, échanges, liens social, et création [memory, exchanges, social ties and creation] (Anglais 7). The four principles bear a strong resemblance to the connections and comparisons principles described in the ACTFL standards, and the idea of community has a counterpart in the very notion of "vivre ensemble."

Discrepancies exist between French and American national standards concerning the foundations of effective communication in a foreign language; however, the similar goal of communicative competence expressed in both texts unifies the standards under the same theoretical approach to language teaching. In the past several decades, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has risen to prominence as the primary approach for teaching functional proficiency in foreign language education. CLT is generally characterized as a response to the Audio-Lingual Method (A-LM), popular in the 1940s and 1950s, which regarded second language acquisition as a type of habit formation and relied heavily on audio repetition drills in instruction (Savignon, *Theory* 20). Conversely, the communicative approach highlights spontaneous communicative competence as the primary goal for second language learners.

"Communicative competence" is more a term with an extensive history of theoretical development than a concrete concept. Noam Chomsky originally defined "competence" within the field of linguistics in the 1960s as the capacity of a speaker to generate grammatical sentences according to linguistic rules (Canale and Swain 3). In the 1970s, Dell Hymes expanded Chomsky's concept of "competence" to an idea of "communicative competence;" for a speaker to have communicative competence, he must have contextual or sociolinguistic competence in addition to grammatical competence. In their 1980 article "Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Testing," Canale and Swain define *grammatical competence* as "knowledge of lexical items and of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics and phonology," *sociolinguistic competence* as knowledge of both sociocultural rules and the rules of discourse which are essential to understanding an utterance within a given social context, and *strategic competence* as the ability to use "verbal and non-verbal communication strategies . . . to compensate for breakdowns in communication" (29 – 30). Canale and Swain further define a communicative approach to language teaching as one which embodies each of the three competencies to achieve the overall goal of communicative competence (6).

Several general traits characterize a communicative approach to language learning in the classroom. First, instruction focuses on elements of sociolinguistic and strategic competence as well as grammatical competence. Second, CLT emphasizes functional language use through meaningful activities and points to the communicative possibilities of linguistic forms rather than focusing on the forms themselves. In the practice of communication, fluency may take precedence over accuracy so that learners focus on the goal of relaying meaning in communication rather than simply understanding grammatical rules. Finally, a Communicative Language Teaching approach provides students ample opportunity to practice producing and receiving language in unrehearsed contexts (Brown 245). Despite general agreement on these basic classroom strategies for developing communicative competence, practical application of Communicative Language Teaching varies widely since CLT is largely defined in terms of the goal of communicative competence rather than a specific method for language acquisition.

## II.1 Communicative Language Teaching in Textbook Syllabuses

The ACTFL standards view communication as a method for achieving competency in a language, while the French directives for English instruction treat effective communication as an additional goal in foreign language instruction. French and American national standards promote communicative competence, but national standards are general guidelines which articulate principles and goals in education and do not aim to provide teachers with detailed structure for daily classroom interaction. Rather, in order to develop a syllabus of content and presentation for use in the classroom, teachers commonly rely on textbooks. Due to the ambiguity of communication as both a method and a goal, American textbooks seem to depart from the language learning strategies described in national standards. By adopting the goal of communicative competence, textbook writers are able to apply the communicative language from national standards to materials which may not reflect the communicative instruction methods recommended by the national standards. In other words, the loosely defined nature of CLT allows textbook writers room for interpretation in creating syllabuses which perhaps match national standards in name, but not in spirit. Conversely, French English textbooks more closely match teaching methods described in national directives, likely due to the explicit recommendations for practical foreign language instruction offered by the text.

In the United States, the possibility of diverging from the ACTFL national standards and the accompanying state curriculum frameworks is especially large because of the ambiguity of communication as both a *goal* and a *method.* The language in the national standards clearly indicates that communication should be a *method* for foreign language acquisition: "Communication is the vehicle students use to become linguistically proficient" (Texas Education Agency 34). According to Sandra Savignon in her book *Communicative Competence: Theory and Classroom Practice*, this type of learning is meant to guide students "from meaning to surface structure" (24). The initial focus is not grammar, but rather meaning, and the student in time achieves a functional or structural understanding of the language through the experience of using the language.

> There is a French proverb that says the same thing: C'est en forgeant que l'on devient forgeron. Just as one learns to be a blacksmith by being a blacksmith, one learns to communicate by communicating. Or, to put it differently, one develops skills by using skills. It is only when we have an incentive to communicate and the experience of communication that structures are acquired. In this sense, then, one might speak of going from communicative competence to linguistic competence. (Savignon, *Theory* 30)

State curriculum frameworks based on the American national standards indicate that communicative competence is embodied by mastery of types of communication rather than mastery of the elements of language used in communication. The general recommendations for language teaching strategies involve helping students to learn language by providing opportunities to "generate utterances" and neglect to articulate any particular method for instructing linguistic tools to help students begin to speak. Textbook writers are therefore left with a large amount of liberty in deciding how foreign language instruction looks in the classroom as they take the responsibility for devising a method by which students have the tools to begin speaking. In focusing on the linguistic tools necessary to speak, however, textbooks use communication as a *goal*, rather than a method; American French textbooks consequently do not reflect the instruction strategies detailed in the national standards.

In the introduction to the Teacher's Edition of *Bien Dit!*, the high school French textbook series published by Holt, Paul Sandrock notes that "Textbook writers and materials providers are also responding to the shift brought about by the standards, providing an organization, creating a context, and modeling the kind of instruction that leads students to successfully demonstrate the communication strategies envisioned in our standards" (DeMado et al. T57). The phrase "demonstate communication strategies" is indicative of the attitude of the textbook writers that communicative competence is a sign of linguistic proficiency rather than a tool for learning a foreign language. The introduction to the textbook further classifies the ACTFL standards' definition of communication as a goal by stating that "Standards provide the ends; teachers use textbooks and materials to help students practice the means" (T57). In view of this interpretation, *Bien Dit!* only gives opportunities to practice communication as the culmination of a lesson in vocabulary and grammar. Similarly, the Glencoe-McGraw Hill introductory French textbook *Bon Voyage!* notes in the Teacher's Edition that "The focus of the text is to provide students with the skills they need to create language for communication" (Lutz and Schmitt T54). *Bon Voyage!* further defines the skills that contribute to the ability to communicate: "To [communicate] [students] must have the lexicon (words) needed to convey the information, the ability to put the words together correctly into coherent utterances (structure), and some awareness of the customs or mores of those with whom they are communicating" (T31). *Bon Voyage!* and *Bien Dit!* are similarly structured in creating a foundation of tools for communication and then moving the student to progressively more independent levels of expression. In other words, neither textbook actually uses communication to teach French, but rather treats communication as the best way to measure mastery of vocabulary and grammar.

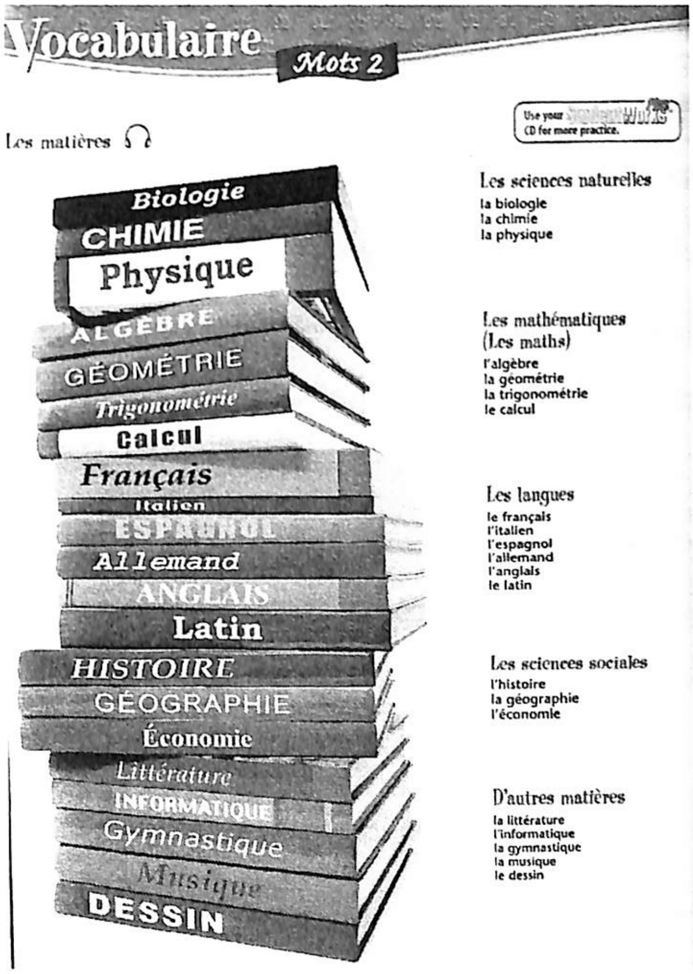
*Bon Voyage!* and *Bien Dit!* follow the same basic structure in guiding students to communicative competence. The textbooks first present vocabulary in topical form, placing the words next to pictures that define meaning. Vocabulary is introduced in a purely presentational manner; the pages containing the words do not require the student to perform any task. The questions on the following pages generally require the student to demonstrate first that they understand the meaning of the word. After several basic activities designed to familiarize the students with the new words, more complex activities demand that the students synthesize the new vocabulary with their knowledge base by writing sentences or participating in oral activities using the vocabulary. The books are designed to lead students from structured practice to open ended communication (DeMado et al. T6). After the vocabulary lesson, the books present rules for French grammar. "The grammar point is always related to the topic or situation of the chapter, thus enabling students to put the specific words for the topic into meaningful sentences" (Lutz and Schmitt T33). Though the textbook generally uses vocabulary from the chapter to give examples in the grammar lesson, the lesson is taught under a grammatical label (i.e. direct object pronouns), and the students first practice the concept in basic exercises before they are eventually presented with a situation in which to use the grammatical concept independently. The chapter culminates with a broader communication exercise which requires the student to synthesize their lexical and structural knowledge to complete an activity. Both textbooks also conclude each chapter with a cultural lesson often unrelated to the material covered in the chapter.

In light of definitions presented in Sandra Savignon's chapter entitled "Interpretations of Communicative Competence," this type of instruction is actually opposite in execution from the instruction outlined by the ACTFL national standards. Rather than taking "meaning to surface structure", the organization of American French textbooks takes the much more traditional approach of taking "surface structure to meaning" (*Theory* 25). In this type of language learning, the student moves from production in drills and activities which focus on accuracy to simulated communicative practice which employs the previously drilled structures. Language teaching which moves from structure to meaning generally relies on traditional methods for language instruction, teaching vocabulary and grammar through repetition and drill, and then simply adds communicative exercises to the end of the lesson to provide the student with spontaneous practice using the material taught in the main part of the lesson. In essence, the French textbooks do not provide a syllabus for classroom instruction that matches the vision described in the ACTFL national standards and state curriculum frameworks. The presentational methods in *Bon Voyage!* and *Bien Dit!* follow dated paradigms of language instruction which perhaps hinder their efficacy in aiding students to achieve the relatively new goal of communicative competence.

The presentation of grammar for example in both *Bon Voyage!* and *Bien Dit!* follows the traditional structural syllabus, which teaches grammar by defining rules and grammatical categories, rather than a modern syllabus more conducive to communication. Though the CLT approach does not define a particular method for teaching grammar, the notional-functional syllabus is more frequently associated with a method for grammar instruction that transitions well into communicative competence.

"By focusing on the communicative needs of the learner, the notional-functional approach to syllabus development has the virtue of highlighting the uses to which language is put rather than the grammatical categories that are used to describe it" (Savignon, *Theory* 141). A notional-functional syllabus therefore teaches grammar by presenting functional usage of a structure rather than defining rules with grammatical labels. For example, instead of teaching conjugation rules of the imperative case, a notional-functional approach teaches the use of the particular structure in issuing commands. *Bon Voyage!* and *Bien Dit!* attempt to create relevance in grammar presentation by instead using a situational syllabus, which organizes language samples into a situation or setting. However, as Savignon points out, providing a situational pretext for structural grammar instruction may not adapt well into communicative competence since the situations are noticeably contrived and therefore false. "The more one tries to interpret the transaction, the clearer it becomes that it is, in fact, not discourse at all but an illustration . . . That is to say, an attempt has been made to put a verb conjugation in a "meaningful context" (Savignon, *Theory* 34). She further says that "In addition to providing lots of examples of silly or meaningless discourse, grammar-based textbooks often pursue a paradigm for the sake of completeness, regardless of its usefulness of the communicative needs of the learner" (34), citing the relative uselessness of drilling a complete conjugation of a verb such as "to die," which is not often employed in the first person. The grammar presentations in *Bon Voyage!* and *Bien Dit!* are not inherently "communicative" since structures are not presented under functional communication labels but rather in traditional grammatical categories. The situational syllabus exemplifies uses of the grammar within contrived situations but does not directly correlate the lesson to a communicative purpose.

The presentation of vocabulary in *Bon Voyage!* and *Bien Dit!* is also based on memorization and drill within a situational syllabus. In each chapter, the textbooks writers present vocabulary in list form, organized by theme and defined by accompanying pictures.



Vocabulaire Mots 2

Les matières

Use your StudentWorks CD for more practice.

Les sciences naturelles
la biologie
la chimie
la physique

Les mathématiques
(Les maths)
l'algèbre
la géométrie
la trigonométrie
le calcul

Les langues
le français
l'italien
l'espagnol
l'allemand
l'anglais
le latin

Les sciences sociales
l'histoire
la géographie
l'économie

D'autres matières
la littérature
l'informatique
la gymnastique
la musique
le dessin

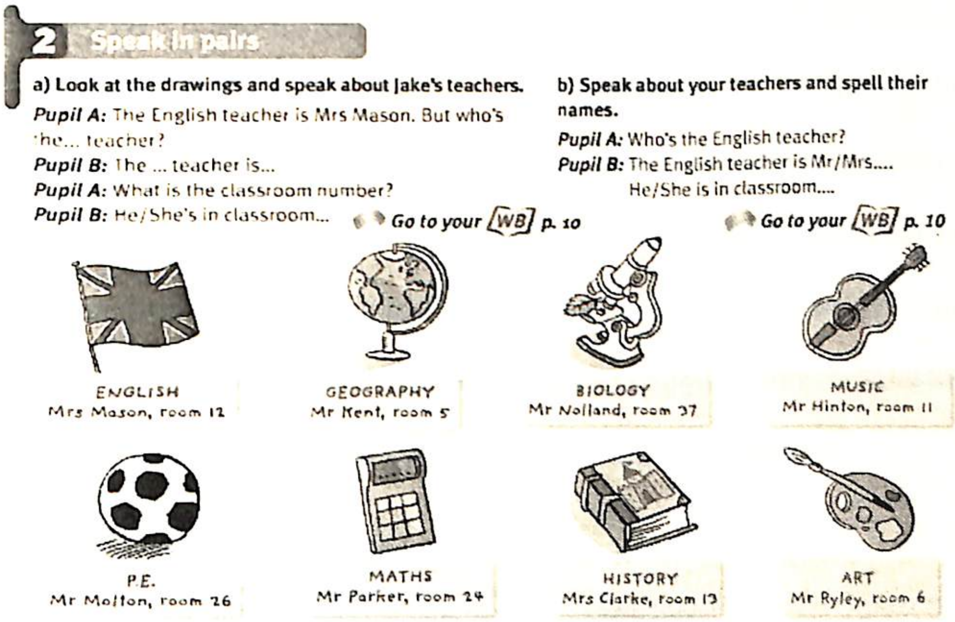
Biologie
CHIMIE
Physique
ALGÈBRE
GÉOMÉTRIE
Trigonométrie
Calcul
Français
Italien
ESPAGNOL
Allemand
ANGLAIS
Latin
HISTOIRE
GÉOGRAPHIE
Économie
Littérature
INFORMATIQUE
Gymnastique
Musique
DESSIN

Fig. 1 School subject vocabulary (Lutz and Schmitt 54)

For example, in the second chapter of *Bon Voyage!*, "Les cours et les profs," the student is introduced to a list of school subjects in the vocabulary section (Fig. 1). After the student has presumably spent time memorizing the words, s/he then completes exercises on the following page. The first exercise, "Sciences ou langues?," is a simple true or false activity which tests comprehension of the vocabulary ("Vrai ou Faux? 3. Le calcul est une langue" [True or False? 3. Calculus is a language]). The exercises progress to allow students to practice using the vocabulary while further establishing meaning through personal response questions ("Tu es très fort(e) en quelle matière?" [In which subjects are you strong?]). After two more drill exercises, the students are to then use the vocabulary to practice "spontaneous" conversation according to a communicative activity directed by the book ("Comment est la classe? With a classmate, look at the illustration. Take turns asking each other questions about it. Use the following question words: qui, où, quel cours, à quelle heure, comment"). The communicative activity is not meant to help the students learn the vocabulary, but is rather the final step in exhibiting functional understanding of the vocabulary. Communication is the goal of learning the list of words rather than a method for memorizing vocabulary.

While the teacher may choose to complete the drill exercises orally, the structure of the exercises would also allow the teacher to have the students write responses to the drill questions. The lesson therefore provides very little possibility for building oral communicative competence through practice and fails to articulate a larger purpose in vocabulary acquisition for the student. Because the vocabulary lesson does not present the student with a relevant situation in which they would need to orally express information regarding school subjects, the student may well lose the goal of learning vocabulary for communication in the need to learn vocabulary for the sake of exhibiting understanding in the book exercises.

An entry-level French English textbook published by Nathan, *Join the Team!*, presents the same school subject vocabulary, but pairs the introduction of the words with an oral exercise. With vocabulary presentations in *Join the Team!* the student is always required to use the words orally in structured role plays in order to learn the words (Fig. 2). *Join the Team!* introduces students to school subject vocabulary through a structured communicative activity.



**2 Speak in pairs**

**a) Look at the drawings and speak about Jake's teachers.**
***Pupil A:*** The English teacher is Mrs Mason. But who's the... teacher?
***Pupil B:*** The ... teacher is...
***Pupil A:*** What is the classroom number?
***Pupil B:*** He/She's in classroom...
*Go to your WB p. 10*

**b) Speak about your teachers and spell their names.**
***Pupil A:*** Who's the English teacher?
***Pupil B:*** The English teacher is Mr/Mrs....
He/She is in classroom....
*Go to your WB p. 10*

ENGLISH
Mrs Mason, room 12

GEOGRAPHY
Mr Kent, room 5

BIOLOGY
Mr Nolland, room 37

MUSIC
Mr Hinton, room 11

P.E.
Mr Molton, room 26

MATHS
Mr Parker, room 24

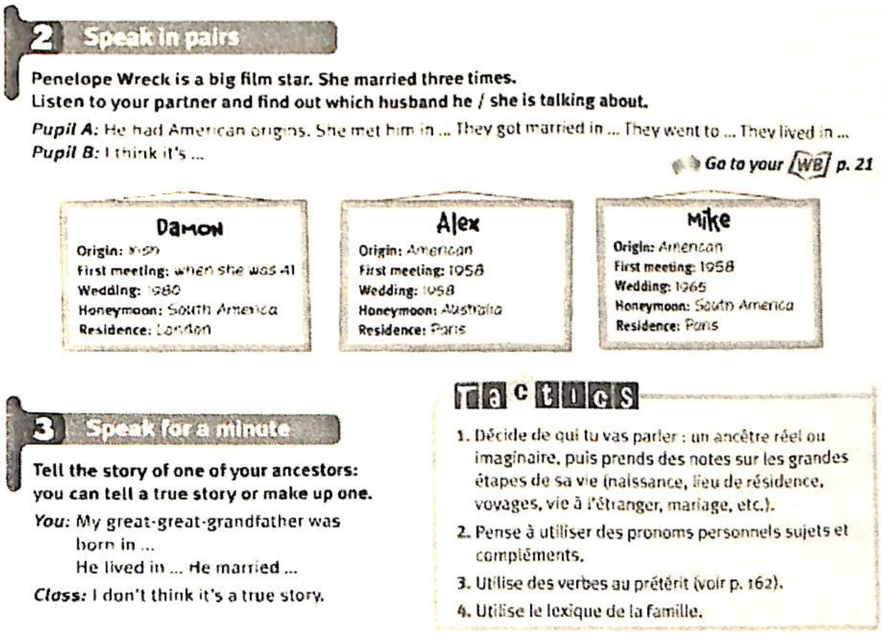
HISTORY
Mrs Clarke, room 13

ART
Mr Ryley, room 6

Fig. 2 School subject vocabulary (Gernigon, *6e* 22*)*

The oral exercises in the *Join the Team!* vocabulary presentations could be classified as a response to the theory in the directives the "prise de parole" should be carefully reasoned and in lower levels might rely on prior preparation (Ministère, *Anglais* 12). *Anglais* does not suggest, as do the ACTFL standards, that communicative practice is a method for acquiring language, but rather labels communication, particularly oral communication, as a goal which requires further attention and practice than traditionally allotted. In response to national directives shaped by European Union standards, *Join the Team!* places "l'expression orale au centre de l'apprentissage" [oral expression at the center of training] (Gernigon, *6e* 3), but rather than emphasizing spontaneous production, communicative practice is guided by structured sentences. *Join the Team!* uses contrived oral practice to aid the learning of vocabulary, syntax, and grammar, which *Anglais* maintains are the foundations of effective communication (5).

Though the *Anglais* recognizes that functional communication is the goal of language teaching, the manifestations of the directives in *Join the Team!* and other English[1] textbooks are often more reminiscent of the Audio-Lingual Method than of Communicative Language Teaching. *Anglais* cites memorization as a formative aspect of communicative capacity, indicating the memorization of "indices" is both a useful base for spontaneous production and essential for comprehension (11). The "communicative" practice in *Join the Team!* serves a dual role in both giving students material to practice oral expression and providing repetitive practice of correct structure.



**2 Speak in pairs**

**Penelope Wreck is a big film star. She married three times.**
**Listen to your partner and find out which husband he / she is talking about.**

***Pupil A:*** He had American origins. She met him in ... They got married in ... They went to ... They lived in ...
***Pupil B:*** I think it's ...

***Go to your WB p. 21***

**Damon**
**Origin:** Irish
**First meeting:** when she was 41
**Wedding:** 1980
**Honeymoon:** South America
**Residence:** London

**Alex**
**Origin:** American
**First meeting:** 1958
**Wedding:** 1958
**Honeymoon:** Australia
**Residence:** Paris

**Mike**
**Origin:** American
**First meeting:** 1958
**Wedding:** 1965
**Honeymoon:** South America
**Residence:** Paris

**3 Speak for a minute**

**Tell the story of one of your ancestors:**
**you can tell a true story or make up one.**

***You:*** My great-great-grandfather was born in ...
He lived in ... He married ...
***Class:*** I don't think it's a true story.

**Tactics**

1. Décide de qui tu vas parler : un ancêtre réel ou imaginaire, puis prends des notes sur les grandes étapes de sa vie (naissance, lieu de résidence, voyages, vie à l'étranger, mariage, etc.).
2. Pense à utiliser des pronoms personnels sujets et compléments.
3. Utilise des verbes au prétérit (voir p. 162).
4. Utilise le lexique de la famille.

(Fig. 3, Gernigon, *5e* 28)

In the exercise involving Penelope Wreck (Fig. 3), the students recite the provided text (Speak in pairs) before attempting to employ the similar structures in a more spontaneous activity (Speak for a minute). During the first exercise, the student presumably internalizes the personal pronouns and preterite structure that the book asks him or her to use in the second, spontaneous exercise. This type of language habit formation through drill and substitution is foundational to the theory of A-LM.[ii] Alice Omaggio states in her explanations for the characteristics of effective Communicative Language Teaching that "methods that emphasize memorization or that severely limit personal expression in the early stages of instruction are not as easily adaptable to proficiency goals as those that encourage more creative language use" (45). By relying on pre-formed sentences to build communicative proficiency, introductory-level English textbooks slide somewhat back into a theory deemed ineffective for training in practical, spontaneous communicative situations.

Despite several traits of the Audio-Lingual Method in French textbooks, the overall approach to foreign language instruction in France remains communicative. Even in lower levels, French English textbooks incorporate direct grammatical explanations, which would be absent in A-LM materials (Omaggio 61). The *Join the Team!* series does not rely on repetition for the understanding of linguistic tools and provides traditional categorical grammar lessons in conjunction with communicative practice. As textbooks become more advanced, the repetition of pre-formed sentences disappears from the syllabus, following the method described in *Anglais* by which students eventually should have the tools and confidence to independently generate correct oral expressions.

Advanced textbooks, such as *Broad Ways*, an English textbook series published by Nathan, seek to "Créer des situations permettant aux élèves de communiquer et leur donner les moyens, les méthodes et le désir de communiquer" [Create situations allowing students to communicate and give them the means, the methods and the desire to communicate] (Guary et al., *Professeur* 6). The focus of advanced textbooks is the practice of using English; *Broad Ways* supplements series of activities designed to practice English with extra vocabulary and grammar explanations to bolster the capacity of the student to use the language. The textbook follows a Communicative Language Teaching syllabus through the goal to "Aider l'élève à produire, à l'écrit comme à l'oral, signifie lui fournir les moyens nécessaires à cette production et implique donc . . . anticiper ses besoins en lui fournissant des aides permanentes" [To help the student to produce, in writing as well as orally, means giving him the necessary means to produce and thus involves . . . anticipating his needs and furnishing relevant aids] (7). Similarly, the advanced series *Projects*, published by Didier, views the foreign language textbook as "un outil permettant de donner du sens à la communication en classe d'anglais" [a facilitating tool to give meaning to communication in English class] (Basty et al., *Professeur* 6).

As the theory of second language acquisition continues to develop, textbooks may often fall behind current theory in structure and organization. Sandra Savignon notes:

> Since labels can be misleading, it is important in evaluating materials to distinguish between what a textbook says it does and what is does. In L2 teaching materials, as in other marketing ventures, the bandwagon phenomenon is familiar. It leads to the promotion of a certain image as fashionable, an image that most materials, new or revised, then try to emulate. Such materials seek to reflect the new image yet not stray too far from the familiar, the tried and the true to which classroom teachers have become accustomed. (*Theory*, 144)

Though standards and directives issued by the government are relatively easily rewritten to respond to new language teaching theories, classroom practice is much more difficult to alter. Textbook materials, which perhaps most directly control classroom practice since they provide a daily teaching syllabus, are expensive to produce, and both textbook writers and teachers require extensive training in order to use a method to which they were unexposed in their own education.

### II.2 Cultural Education through Textbook Syllabuses

In Communicative Language Teaching, cultural education is central to a syllabus because "Culture is recognized as instrumental in shaping speakers' communicative competence, in both their first and subsequent languages" (Savignon, *Interpreting* 6). Sociolinguistic competence, generally regarded as an essential component of communicative competence (Canale and Swain 30), relies on an understanding of "appropriateness" within a given society; therefore, foreign language instruction must incorporate lessons meant to educate students about societies in which the language of study is natively spoken. Alice Omaggio notes that the emphasis on communication goals has produced a shift in focus of cultural education from "formal aspects of a civilization to an emphasis on anthropological or sociological concerns" (363). The Texas curriculum framework acknowledges the importance of sociological elements in foreign language study: "Cultural behavior is a vital component of communication . . . [For example,] unexpected behavior can cause one to misinterpret someone else's meaning" (46). Similarly, the introduction to *Broad Ways*, the high school English instruction series published by Nathan, indicates "On ne saurait communiquer sans connaître la contexte dans lequel l'autre vit, le pays et la civilisation de celui-ci" (*Professeur* 8). Sociological and anthropological culture is often referred to as "little c" culture, or everything in human life, as opposed to "big C" Culture, which presents the best in human life (Omaggio 363).[iii]

The benefit of cultural education is two-fold: in addition to developing communicative competence, French and American materials also both foster the idea that "Learning about and understanding cultures increases student motivation to learn the language" (Texas Education Agency 46) since cultural presentations place language within a real-world context. Emphasis in foreign language education on communication requires that the student feel compelled to both frequently practice using the language of study and eventually employ the language in interaction with native speakers. *Bien Dit!*, the Holt French textbook series, claims that "thematic contexts provide a reason and motivation for using the language" (T6). Similarly, *Anglais* says of cultural education; "il s'agit d'éveiller chez l'élève la curiosité pour les faits culturels et le désir de les comprendre, et de s'exprimer dans la langue étudiée" [This consists in stimulating curiosity in the student concerning cultural facts and the desire to understand them, and express himself in the studied language] (7). By introducing language as a relevant component of world culture, textbook publishers intend to incite interest and motivation from students to learn a language in order to connect with a society different from their own.

In light of an increased emphasis on cultural education, American and French textbooks provide a cultural syllabus for the classroom in conjunction with a syllabus developing linguistic competence. Through specific vocabulary acquisition, topical reading excerpts or direct culture lessons, the foreign language textbook both teaches culture in conjunction with language and validates the significance of a language by placing it within a real-world context. In practical form, however, American and French culture lessons are very different in textbooks. Though the materials express similar goals for cultural instruction, the difference in the manifestation of cultural lessons is perhaps due to a slight difference in the role of culture in instruction as defined by the national standards. The Avant-Propos to the *Anglais* edition of the série Accompagnement des programmes notes that "Le programme culturel constitue le cadre dans lequel le professeur placera l'étude de la langue" [The cultural syllabus is the framework in which the teacher places language study] (5). In other words, French materials use culture as a frame for the presentation of language. In textbooks, the language taught in a particular section often emerges from an authentic cultural document or concept; culture is a means for relevant language presentation. Conversely, an education in culture is a stated goal as well as a means according to the ACTFL standards. The fact that "Culture", one of the Five C's, is a goal of foreign language instruction in American ideology alters the incorporation of culture into textbook chapters. In the Teacher's Edition, the Glencoe McGraw Hill publication *Bon Voyage!* says of the textbook organization that "Every chapter has a culture base. The culture base is *embedded* in the communicative topic" (T40; my italics). American textbooks present basic vocabulary relevant to students and then deliberately inject the lesson with French cultural references rather than attempting to pull vocabulary from an authentic element of culture.

The accompanying pedagogical guide for the instruction of English in France presents sample lesson plans for teachers establishing the use of "contenu culturel" [cultural content] as a tool for building language presentations (Ministère, *Anglais* 28). The guide shows how an ideal lesson draws from several authentic documents unified by a basic theme to accomplish all three objectives of an English lesson. For example, *Anglais* proposes a series of documents concerning unemployment during the Great Depression, and shows how instructors may accomplish an:

> -Objectif culturel : donner à voir une réalité économique et sociale à travers les yeux d'un écrivain, amener à comparer passé/présent.
> -Objectifs linguistiques : lexicaux (le travail, l'apparence physique, la pauvreté), phonologique (« o » dans work and job par exemple), grammaticaux (repérage et valeur du présent et du passé dans la structuration du passage).
> -Objectif méthodologique : mettre en place des stratégies de repérage et de lecture pour mener à la construction du sens. (29)
>
> [-Cultural objective: help to see an economic and social reality through the eyes of a writer, bring to compare the past/present
> -Linguistic objectives: lexical (work, physical appearance, poverty), phonological ("o" in work and job for example), grammatical (location and value of the past and present in the composition of the passage).
> -Methodological objective: put in place strategies of location and reading to lead to the construction of meaning.]

According to *Anglais*, the instructor may meaningfully employ documents in language instruction as well as cultural instruction through a process of "repérage" [location]; students deepen their understanding of grammar and vocabulary by taking particular note of how linguistic elements are employed in authentic documents. The cultural lesson therefore becomes more than a simple presentation intended to deepen the students' understanding of a historical event, but becomes the "cadre" [frame] for English instruction. *Anglais* proposes that this type of instruction is the only method by which a student may learn to fully understand the use of English: "Dans une perspective culturelle comme celle qui est proposée en seconde, le lexique prend un relief tout particulier ; d'autre part, parce qu'il est la trace dans le langage des relations entre l'homme et le monde et d'autre part, parce qu'il est le marquer des spécificités anglophones" [In the cultural perspective such as the one proposed for secondary school, the vocabulary takes a unique position; on one hand, because it is the path in the language of relationships between man and the world and on the other hand, because it is the marker of Anglophone specificities] (15). The guide further notes that words such as "suburb" or "skyscraper" have cultural connotations essential for understanding that cannot be effectively taught separate from a cultural presentation. The guide demands throughout that teachers present language to high school students as it emerges from authentic cultural sources.

French high school English textbooks effectively espouse the ideology proposed in the *Anglais* standards for education. The English education series published by Didier, *Projects*, explains the format of the book in the introduction to the teacher's manual:

> *Projects* repose sur une conception large de la culture, dans les supports (de dessins humoristiques aux textes littéraires en passant par des articles de journaux, des autobiographies, des témoignages des personnes dont la postérité n'a pas retenu le nom, reflet authentique et non « fictionnalisé » de leur perception d'une époque) et dans les sujets traités (de la culture dite « populaire » à l'histoire du monde anglophone). (Basty et al., *Guide* 7)
>
> [Projects rests on a wide idea of culture, in the aids (from humorous drawings to literary texts, passing through newspaper articles, autobiographies, testimonies from people whose names are no longer remembered, authentic and non "fictionalized" reflections on their perception of an era) and the subjects treated (from culture called "popular" to the history of the Anglophone world).]

The book draws from authentic historical and contemporary documents, including cartoons, film excerpts, first-person accounts of historical events, excerpts from literature and news articles to establish a cultural frame for a student to both analyze the English language and practice using the langue through a series of communicative "projects".

Each source is "non 'fictionnalisé'"; the cultural excerpts are not fabricated to meet the needs of the textbook writers in teaching a particular subject, but rather chosen according to theme so that the students may work with the text to see English in context. The authors may draw the student's attention to a particular set of vocabulary or the usage of a particular grammatical form, but only as the vocabulary and grammar naturally appears in the selected text.

Conversely, American high school French textbooks tend to place vocabulary and grammar lessons into synthesized French cultural frames in the body of the lesson, and then conclude each chapter with a cultural lesson, often only distantly related to any material covered in the chapter lessons. Paraphrasing from a presentation by Vicki Galloway, Alice Omaggio states that the treatment of cultural material in textbooks can often be described by one of four categories:

> 1. The Frankenstein Approach: A taco from here, a flamenco dancer from there, a gaucho from here, a bullfight from there
> 2. The 4-F Approach: Folk dances, festivals, fairs and food
> 3. The Tour-Guide Approach: The identification of monuments, rivers, and cities
> 4. The "By-the-Way" Approach: Sporadic lectures or bits of behavior selected indiscriminately to emphasize sharp contrasts (362)

Within the body of the lesson, the culture notes often fall into the "By-the-Way" category of culture presentations. In Holt's *Bien Dit!*, new vocabulary is presented in isolation, but often accompanied by photographs of theoretically Francophone students or cultural objects. The exercises following the vocabulary test only for understanding of the words, but in an effort to create cultural significance, the authors include a box to the side of the exercise with a culture note drawing from the lesson words. For example, the phrase "écouter la musique" [to listen to music] is presented in "Qu'est-ce qui te plait" [What do you like], a chapter on "likes and dislikes," and to the side of an exercise in which the phrase is used, a box entitled "Flash culture" explains:

> French music is very diverse, ranging from classic singers like Edith Piaf and Charles Trenet to rock singers like Alain Souchon, Axelle Red and Pascal Obispo. Rap and **Raï**, a kind of music from North Africa, are very popular among French teens. The law requires that at least 40% of the music played by radio stations be French. On June 21, you will find people playing music on the streets all over France to celebrate the **Fête de la musique**. (42)

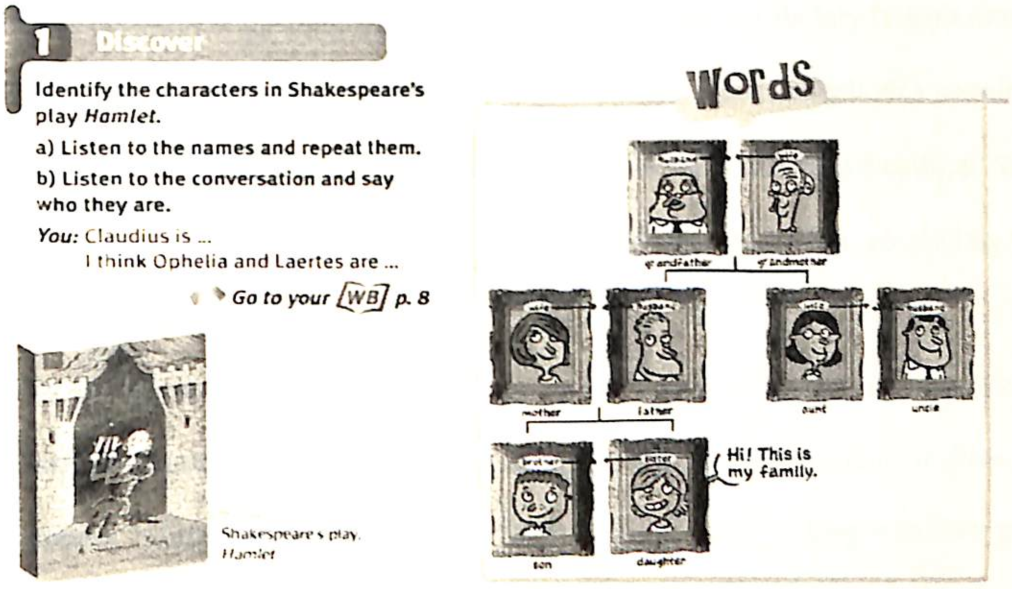
Rather than including an authentic cultural source in the presentation of vocabulary in the lesson, the authors paraphrase an amalgam of cultural facts concerning a vocabulary word and mark the lesson in the teacher's manual as a fulfillment of the "Culture" requirement of the ACTFL standards. The note highlights differences in American and French music, and the note makes no mention of the many artists which both American and French students would find familiar. The note also uses the "4-F Approach," drawing an abstract connection at the end of the note to the "Fête de la musique" [Festival of music].

The Glencoe McGraw Hill series *Bon Voyage!* presents cultural information at the end of chapters in sections entitled "Lectures culturelles" [Cultural readings]. The lesson is intended to bolster students' cultural awareness, and draws only loosely from the material introduced in the chapter. At the conclusion of the chapter entitled "Les loisirs culturels" [Cultural pastimes], the cultural lesson includes information on and pictures of the buildings that house museums, the ballet, the opera, and theater in Paris (450 – 451). The "tour guide" lesson of Paris does not draw from any authentic sources, but is instead written in simple French. In the introduction to the Teacher's Edition, the writers explain that "The Lecture culturelle is easy for students to read because it is a recombination of language students already know. . . The only thing that ever makes a reading difficult for students is that it contains French that they do not know. This is something we have avoided in *Bon Voyage!*" (T41). In order to fit the language to student understanding, the textbooks writers have composed cultural lessons that fit within a frame of vocabulary and grammar the students already know. Cultural understanding is the goal of the lesson, contrary to French ideology which instead uses cultural as a vehicle for linguistic development.

As a part of a Communicative Language Teaching approach "Opportunities must be provided for students to practice using language in a range of contexts likely to be encountered in the target culture" (Omaggio 44). In an effort to provide students with the tools to use language in situations in which they would be likely to be involved, common introductory-level concepts

> are basic travel and survival needs (food, clothing, hotel accommodations, transportation, and the like), handling daily social encounters appropriately, and coping with school- or work-related situations. Students should also be taught to handle simple question-and-answer situations and discuss or write about concrete topics such as their own background, family, and interests. (Omaggio 45)

Textbook writers seek to provide students information that would be relevant for them to use in an authentic communicative situation. Novice-level textbooks therefore face the challenge of introducing vocabulary and concepts that are relevant and personal to the students but at the same time provide a cultural image behind the language studied. As the writers of *Bon Voyage!* note, a beginning student may be unable to read an authentic document, but French English textbooks still use cultural references to introduce basic concepts to a much deeper extent than do their American counterparts. For example, in a lesson introducing vocabulary necessary to talk about family, *Join the Team!* uses the play Hamlet to teach the relationships between family members (Fig. 4)



**1 Discover**

**Identify the characters in Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*.**

**a) Listen to the names and repeat them.**

**b) Listen to the conversation and say who they are.**

*You:* Claudius is ...
I think Ophelia and Laertes are ...

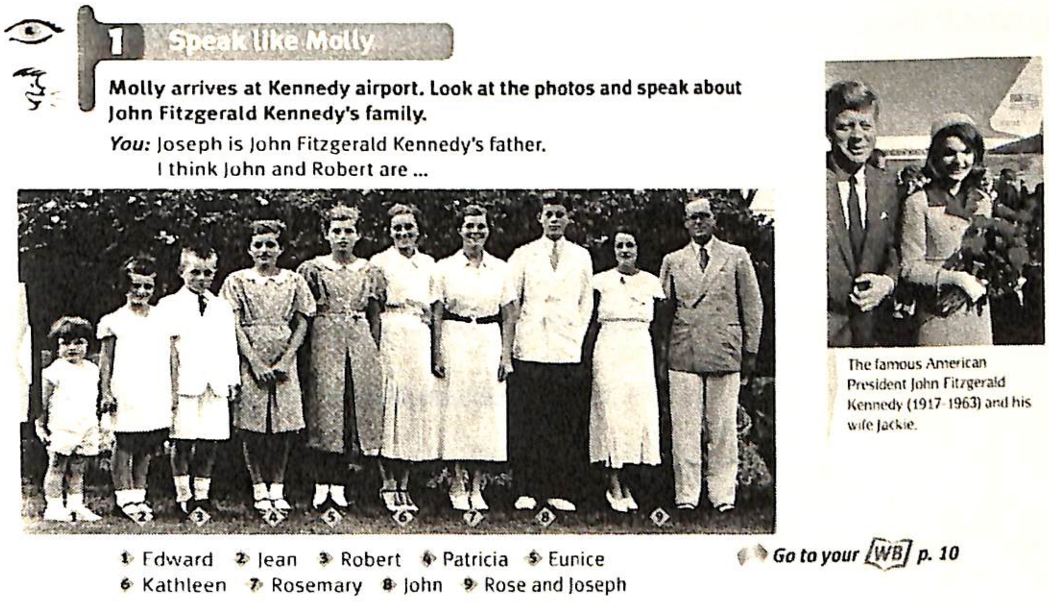
*Go to your* WB *p. 8*

Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*

Words
husband
wife
grandfather
grandmother
wife
husband
wife
husband
mother
father
aunt
uncle
brother
sister
Hi! This is my family.
son
daughter

(Fig. 4, Gernigon, *5e* 19)

After the introduction of family vocabulary, the oral exercise on the following page asks students to employ the words in talking about the Kennedy family, pulling from the dialogue at the beginning of the chapter which concerns an American and French family who meet in JFK airport in New York City (Fig. 5).



**1 Speak like Molly**

**Molly arrives at Kennedy airport. Look at the photos and speak about John Fitzgerald Kennedy's family.**

*You:* Joseph is John Fitzgerald Kennedy's father.
I think John and Robert are ...

1 Edward 2 Jean 3 Robert 4 Patricia 5 Eunice
6 Kathleen 7 Rosemary 8 John 9 Rose and Joseph

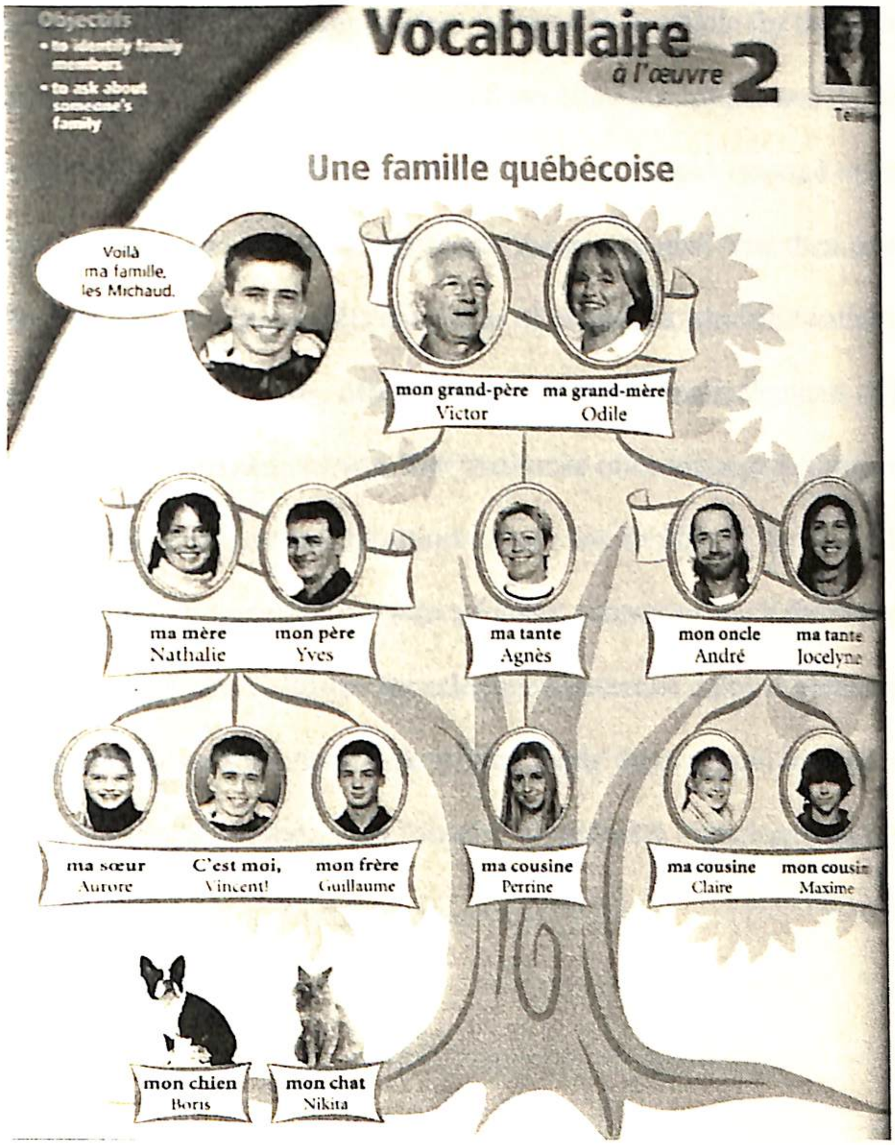
The famous American President John Fitzgerald Kennedy (1917-1963) and his wife Jackie.

*Go to your* WB *p. 10*

(Fig. 5, Gernigon, *5e* 20)

Though the documents in the chapter are not authentic, the vocabulary lessons draw from authentic cultural fixtures in English-speaking countries, referencing both a popular literary source and an important historical figure. *Join the Team!* uses a cultural "cadre" even in the most basic lessons to simultaneously introduce students to vocabulary and culture.

The authenticity of the sources in the family lesson in the introductory Join the Team! sharply contrasts with the fictional family in the vocabulary lesson in *Bien Dit!*, which presents "Une famille québécoise" [A Quebecois family] along with their portraits in a family tree (Fig. 6). Though the family members have French names, the pictures tied to the lesson could otherwise be of any other family. Instead of using an authentic cultural reference to a famous French-speaking family, the textbook writers have simply introduced the vocabulary and then artificially placed the pictured family in a French-speaking context. The vocabulary practice following the lesson draws from another fictional family tree and then asks the students to talk about their own family. Only at the end of the chapter do the writers include cultural addenda; in the optional "Lecture et ecriture" [Reading and writing] section a poem by Pierre Lozère, "Toute la famille" [All the family] utilizes family vocabulary, and in the Revision section, students may write a narrative in response to a painting depicting a family, "Le traditionnel gateau des Rois" [The traditional king cake]. Any realistic references to French culture are separate from the introduction of linguistic elements in the text.



Objectifs
- to identify family members
- to ask about someone's family

Vocabulaire à l'œuvre 2

Une famille québécoise

Voilà ma famille, les Michaud.

mon grand-père Victor
ma grand-mère Odile

ma mère Nathalie
mon père Yves
ma tante Agnès
mon oncle André
ma tante Jocelyne

ma sœur Aurore
C'est moi, Vincent!
mon frère Guillaume
ma cousine Perrine
ma cousine Claire
mon cousin Maxime

mon chien Boris
mon chat Nikita

(Fig. 6, *Bien Dit!* 90)

Because cultural information is relegated to end sections or teacher notes in introductory American French textbooks, the culture seems nearly synthesized, contrived to seem relevant to the student and to the lesson. In the attempt to motivate students, American textbooks units use culture to validate the importance and relevance of French to the students' personal lives rather than employing authentic elements to draw students into culture objectively, separate from their personal interaction with French culture. The curriculum framework asserts that "Acquiring languages other than English becomes more relevant and engaging to students when it serves as a vehicle for the development of ideas and acquisition of information on topics from other disciplines and the student's personal interests" (Texas Education Agency 52). The textbooks respond to the national standards by building units around an assumed "student interest" and then inserting culture into their interests. The results are series of textbooks which essentially insert French culture into language units, often by showing how certain elements of French culture contrast with American culture. The textbooks often attempt to create relevance for students by teaching words and situations which are familiar to the students' own culture and then inserting the situation into a French context to teach the students differences between the two cultures. By relegating authentic cultural elements to the end of chapters in optional sections, textbook writers imply that Cultural lessons are secondary to the language lessons only loosely infused with French culture presented at the body of the chapters.

## III.1 The Role of National Testing in the United States and France

Though national standards and textbooks shape the syllabus of classroom learning, national testing dictates the requirements of student capabilities and provides a method for evaluating the efficacy of foreign language instruction theories applied in the classroom. While the goal of education extends far beyond producing students capable of achieving high test scores, performance on tests should reflect the capacity of students to apply knowledge gained in education. Sandra Savignon notes that "Although there is a theoretical difference between competence and performance, only performance is observable and therefore provides the basis for making inferences about a person's underlying competence" (*Theory* 254). In the case of foreign language education, testing provides a setting in which a student is required to "perform" as an exhibition of underlying communicative competence.

Though progressive testing is an integral element of a classroom syllabus, nationally-administered tests are available in both the United States and France as a type of "capstone test" of the communicative competence gained in secondary foreign language educational settings. In order to obtain a Diplôme du Baccalauréat Général, a certification for the completion of secondary studies that allows for admission into a university in France, French students must pass a series of subject tests, including a test in at least one "langue vivante" [living language]. A widely offered foreign language test in the United States is the Advanced Placement exam administered by the College Board. Advanced Placement tests do not influence the graduation status of an American student, but rather function as a nationalized standard for qualifying students for college credit in a particular subject before completing any coursework at a university. Though the purpose of the baccalauréat, and the Advanced Placement tests varies significantly, both exams essentially reflect achievement of an individual student within a national, standardized framework. Because each test also acts as the "capstone" of competency gained in secondary education, the format of the exams has bearing on teaching methods in the classroom as teachers work to provide students with the tools to succeed on the bac or the AP test. Nationally-administered tests therefore widely influence instruction practice just as do national standards, though the bearing of the baccalauréat and the Advanced Placement test on classroom education differs according to the relative importance of the tests within the French and American education systems, respectively.

The baccalauréat was created in March of 1808 to "sanctionne le fin des études secondaires et ouvre l'accès à l'enseignement supérieur" (Ministère, "Histoire"). The baccalauréat général still serves the original stated purpose in France today, but the bac has been diversified into three separate testing batteries correlating to three tracks of secondary study. Since 1993, students have been able to take the baccalauréat général ES (économique et social), L (littéraire), or S (scientifique). The labels indicate an emphasis in a particular area of study, but the testing battery is cross-disciplinary. Though the weight of the foreign language test differs in the calculation of the final grade, each testing battery requires students to take one written foreign language exam.

According to the website of the Ministère de l'éducation nationale, approximately 420,000 students sat for the baccalauréat général in 2006, indicating that the same number of students took a test in a langue vivante. The foreign language test has a differing weight in the ES, L, and S tracks of study, but in all cases, the test is part of a calculation to determine if a student receives a "diplôme du baccalauréat general." The diploma both marks the end of secondary studies for a French student and allows the student access into higher education institutions. Though failing an individual test does not directly result in failure to receive the diploma, each test score contributes to an overall score determining whether the student will be allowed to exit high school and begin college studies.

Due to both the large number of students who take the tests for the baccalauréat general and the importance of the tests in terminating secondary studies, the test has a sweeping influence on attitudes surrounding foreign language education in France. In the introduction to the teacher's manual of the *Broad Ways* English series, the editors explain that of two major guiding principles in the organization of the textbook, one is "Préparer les élèves aux épreuves écrites et orales du baccalauréat" [To prepare students for the written and oral baccalaureat tests] (6). Though passing the baccalauréat is not the stated goal of foreign language education in France from the perspective of either the government or the textbook materials, the editors of *Broad Ways* note that classroom teachers possibly "subissent la pression et / ou l'inertie des élèves qui souhaitent une préparation étroitement associée aux exigences de l'examen" [submit to the pressure and/or apathy of students wishing a preparation closely associated with the demands of the test] (6). Because students must pass a foreign language test to exit secondary studies, the pressure surrounding the bac is enormous, and passing the test potentially rises above communicative competence as a goal in the minds of both students and teachers.

The Advanced Placement foreign language tests offered by the College Board in the United States do not have any bearing on the graduation status of students who take the examination. The AP text was born in the decade following the World War II as a response to the conviction that "secondary schools and colleges [should] work together to avoid repetition in course work at the high school and college levels and to allow motivated students to work at the height of their capabilities and advance as quickly as possible" (College Board, "History"). Since the late 1950s, students have been able to gain college credit for high scores on Advanced Placement exams, indicating that the material tested on the AP exam is representative of college level curricula. In order to prepare students to take an Advanced Placement exam, teachers participate in the College Board training and may follow recommended course outlines written by the College Board. The Advanced Placement tests are the product of an effort to coordinate college and high school curricula, and the test writers therefore intend for teachers to follow a particular curriculum in preparing students for the test. Although a student need not have followed an Advanced Placement course to be eligible to take a test, the majority of students sitting for an AP exam have taken preparatory classes.

Because students are not required to produce Advanced Placement test scores to either graduate from high school or enter college, the test is taken by far fewer students than take the baccalauréat. In 2009, approximately 21,000 students took the French Language AP test (College Board, "Distributions"). Though the numbers indicate a far lesser influence of the Advanced Placement test on classroom practice than have the langues vivantes sections of the baccalauréat, the curriculum published by the College Board has a direct influence on classroom practice. Additionally, just as a student who chooses to take the AP exam need not have been enrolled in a preparatory course, students enrolled in high school AP classes are not required to take the exam at the end of the course. A greater number of students than take the test are therefore instructed using Advanced Placement course curricula. The extensive teacher training offered by the College Board and increasing popularity of Advanced Placement course offerings in American high schools elevates the AP test to an influential level in foreign language instruction.

The nature of the baccalauréat and the Advanced Placement exam to an extent makes achievement on a test a goal as well as a means for exhibiting communicative competence; the goal of success on a national test may therefore displace the overall goal of "communicative competence" in classroom instruction. If the testing format does not require the student to exhibit communicative competence, the writers of nationally-administered tests risk compromising the goals defined in national standards as teachers concentrate on producing student success within the format of a test. Because the bac has greater importance in the context of the French education system than does the AP test in the American system, and because a far greater number of students sits for the bac d'anglais than the French Language AP test, the French baccalauréat has a greater influence on the format of classroom instruction.

## III.2 Construct Validity of National Tests

*Les enseignants (et concepteurs de manuels) sont confrontés au paradoxe des nouveaux programmes, directives et modalités du baccalauréat : la communication reste une priorité alors que l'évaluation institutionnelle porte essentiellement sur l'écrit. (Guary et al.,* Professeur *6).*

*[The teachers (and creators of textbooks) are confronted with the paradox of new programs, guidelines and terms of the baccalaureate: communication remains a priority even though institutional evaluation essentially rests on writing.]*

In her book *Communicative Competence: Theory and Classroom Practice*, Sandra Savignon defines a valid test as one which is constructed to "measure what it is supposed to measure and nothing else" (236). She then further defines five types of validity[iv] which contribute to the relevancy of a test; Savignon dedicates the majority of her discussion of validity to *construct validity*, which she says is the most difficult type of validity to create in a testing situation. If a test exhibits construct validity,

> The test is an accurate reflection of an underlying theory of what it is supposed to measure. The question in this case is neither "How well does this test measure the attainment of course objectives?" nor "How well does this test predict performance on other tests?" but rather "What do scores on this test mean?" and "What is the nature of the trait it is intended to measure?" (236)

In other words, construct validity concerns how well a test functions as a measure of theoretical application rather than a measure of isolated task completion. The implication of construct validity in testing is that if a test allows students to exemplify a capacity to apply a particular theory in class, the test score would be representative of the students' ability to apply the theory outside the classroom.

According to both American and French educational standards, the underlying theory of foreign language education is communicative competence. The goal in teaching foreign language is to produce a student who is able to communicate meaningfully through an understanding of grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic elements of the foreign language. With communicative competence as a clearly defined underlying theory in foreign language education, nationally-administered tests in both France and the

United States, to varying degrees, fail to exhibit construct validity. The organization of the tests and the format of questions do not consistently represent tasks defined as indicative of communicative competence, and the test scores therefore do not represent the capacity of a student to apply the theory in foreign language communication outside the classroom. Savignon notes that "though language teaching programs have begun to reflect a more communicative, functional view of their goals, language tests in the main have not significantly changed to keep pace with these developments" (Savignon, *Theory* 238). Because both the baccalaureate and the Advanced Placement test have weaknesses in evaluating communicative competence, the principle nationally-administered tests in France and the United States do not necessarily measure the efficacy of communicative language teaching at the classroom level.

Both the Advanced Placement French Language exam and the baccalauréat d'anglais are defined as proficiency tests, rather than achievement tests. Achievement tests are administered on the classroom level to measure mastery of a particular subject, while proficiency tests are described as "summative evaluation measures" that "characterize the language abilities of individuals at a given point in time without regard to a specific course of instruction" (Omaggio 312). The AP test and the bac are intended as final measures of overall linguistic competencies gained in secondary instruction and do not necessarily test a particular set of skills. While "proficiency" is a disputed term, just as is "communicative competence", according to Alice Omaggio, a definition of proficiency includes "specification about the levels of competence attained in terms of the functions performed, the contexts in which the language user can function, and the accuracy with which the language is used" (8). Sandra Savignon takes the definition one step further and declares that "Language proficiency is communicative competence and should be defined and evaluated as such" (*Theory* 246). If a measure of proficiency is also a measure of communicative competence, then proficiency tests should be designed with the assessment of communicative competence as the primary objective. Following Savignon's assertion, students should only be deemed "proficient" in a foreign language if they exhibit communicative competence through performance on examinations such as the AP test and the bac, which are designed to measure the "summation" of ability rather than specific skill mastery.

If "communicative competence" is to be defined through Canale and Swain's proposed summation of grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic competencies, then a proficiency test measuring for communicative competence should test each of the individual competencies (Brown 265). In addition to exhibiting the various competencies necessary for effective communication, a communicative test also should evaluate the ability of a student to employ the skills in realistic situations: "Communicative testing must be devoted not only to what the learner knows about the second language and about how to use it (competence) but also to what extent the learner is able to actually demonstrate this knowledge in a meaningful communicative situation (performance)" (Canale and Swain 34). In order to realistically evaluate communicative abilities, a communicative test should create a context in which language usage is as authentic as possible (Brown 265). If performance on a valid test is to both reflect underlying competency and suggest performance capabilities outside the classroom, a communicative test should target competencies through genuine communicative structures reflective of situations in which the learner would be required to use a foreign language.

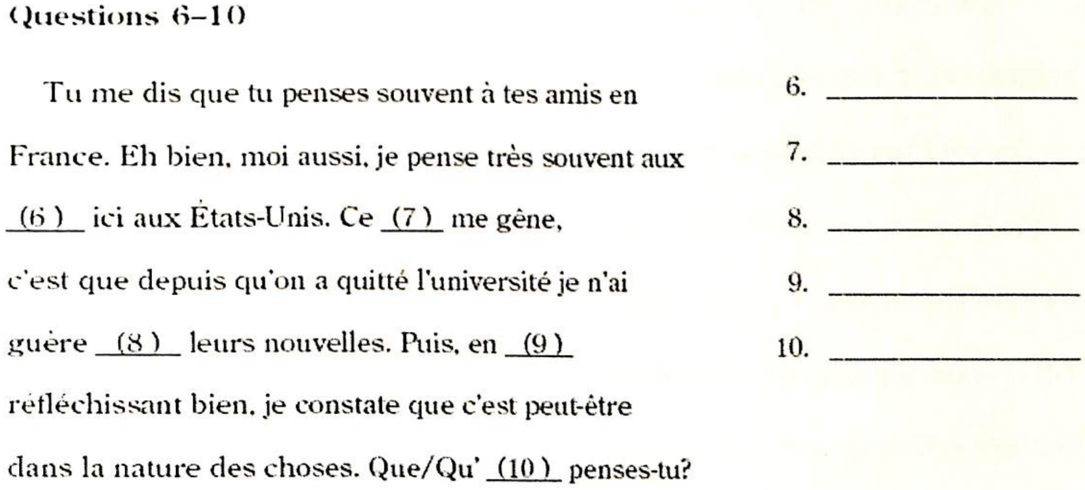
The Advanced Placement French Language exam requires students to "have competence in listening, reading, speaking, and writing" (College Board, *Course Description* 1) and the test is itself divided into four sections evaluating each of the skills. In order to prepare students for the test, the test writers suggest that the structure of an Advanced Placement course: "The course seeks to develop language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) that can be used in various activities and disciplines rather than to cover any specific body of subject matter" (College Board, *Course Description* 4). The introductory text to the AP French language exam suggests that in order to prepare their students for the test, teachers should devote class time to developing each of the four skills. This directive is, however, distinctly opposite from the language of the ACTFL standards, which the writers claim has "broadened the content range of language learning by venturing well beyond the traditional four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing . . ." (Phillips and Terry 3). The national standards extend a definition of effective language teaching to encompass cultural sensitivities and critical evaluations of language function; in the vision of the national standards, such awareness is not considered supplemental instruction, but rather essential to achieving communicative goals. Conversely, the suggested outline for a preparatory course for the AP exam addresses only basic linguistic concerns, suggesting the levels at which students should be able to apply language rather than suggesting the ways in which students should be able to use language in context. Students in an AP course should develop

> the ability to understand spoken French in various contexts; a French vocabulary sufficiently ample for reading newspaper and magazine articles, literary texts, and other nontechnical writings without dependence on a dictionary; and the ability to express themselves coherently, resourcefully, and with reasonable fluency and accuracy in both written and spoken French. (College Board, *Course Description* 4)

A skilled student in the eyes of the College Board has the linguistic capacity to understand French, read French, and speak in French; the course outline does not address culturally sound communicative practices (sociolinguistic competence) or the skills for closing deficiency gaps in communication (strategic competence). The AP testing format is therefore decidedly one-dimensional in view of theories of communicative competence as well as the ACTFL standards, envisioned to teach multi-level competencies in the foreign language classroom. Though the test makers add that "Course content can reflect intellectual interests shared by the students and teacher (the arts, current events, literature, sports, etc.)" and that "Materials might well include audio and video recordings, films, newspapers, and magazines" (College Board, *Course Description* 4), the implication of the course is that such materials bolster linguistic capacity and not that they contribute to an overall communicative competence through cultural understanding.

As suggested by the course outline, the AP French language exam tests only linguistic capacity. In the first section of the test, Listening, students are to listen to exchanges in French and then respond to multiple choice questions testing understanding of the dialogues (College Board, *Course Description* 5). The second section, Reading, is similarly structured; multiple choice questions intended to verify understanding follow short, authentic reading passages. The evaluation of listening and reading does not require students to engage or interpret the passages for any other reason but to identify a correct response (which given the multiple choice format could conceivably be done through recognition rather than actual understanding). The AP test therefore does not make any connection to the practicality of an ability to understand spoken or written French; in any "authentic" situation, a student would have to respond to spoken French, which would require a series of skills far beyond simple understanding of the language. "Listening" and "Reading" as tested in the AP format are isolated skills, rather than skills necessary for communication, and the testing format is therefore not reflective of any communicative competence outside the classroom.

Two separate sections make up the Writing portion of the Advanced Placement exam. The first is a format known as cloze structure, which is intended to test linguistic knowledge by requiring that students fill deletions in a passage (Fig. 4).



**Questions 6–10**

Tu me dis que tu penses souvent à tes amis en France. Eh bien, moi aussi, je pense très souvent aux __(6)__ ici aux États-Unis. Ce __(7)__ me gêne, c'est que depuis qu'on a quitté l'université je n'ai guère __(8)__ leurs nouvelles. Puis, en __(9)__ réfléchissant bien, je constate que c'est peut-être dans la nature des choses. Que/Qu' __(10)__ penses-tu?

6. ______________
7. ______________
8. ______________
9. ______________
10. ______________

(Fig. 7, College Board, *Course Description* 18)

Cloze structure is in fact a proposed solution to the difficulty of testing communicative competence. "The ability to supply appropriate words in blanks requires a number of abilities that lie at the very heart of competence in a language: knowledge of vocabulary, grammatical structure, and discourse structure, reading skills and strategies, and an internalized 'expectancy' grammar" (Brown 262-63). A cloze passage from the Advanced Placement test does indeed test a high level of *linguistic competence*, and, as Brown suggests, the cloze format requires a certain degree of *strategic competence* to determine the type of language gap in the passage. Cloze structure testing is, however, a highly unrealistic scenario and works against the goal of communicative testing to simulate "authentic situations." Cloze structure is perhaps a good measure of certain elements of communicative competence, but the structure seems distant from language usage in context.

The second Writing section and the Speaking section of the AP test are the most production-oriented elements of the exam. In the second Writing section, a student is to produce a written composition, which is marked chiefly for linguistic competence. According to the scoring guidelines for the 2009 French Language exam, a composition that "demonstrates excellence," or "strong control," is characterized by an "Ease of expression marked by a good sense of idiomatic French, clarity of organization [and] accuracy and variety in vocabulary, grammar, and syntax, with a few errors" (College Board, "Scoring" 3). Linguistic features are therefore the primary deciding factor in the score, although the guidelines note that "thorough and creative development of the topic may compensate for more language problems than this category normally allows" (3). The composition topic draws from the opinion of the student (i.e. "A l'école et dans les autres aspects de votre vie, quelle est l'importance de "l'esprit d'équipe"? Préférez-vous le travail en groupe ou le travail individuel ? Pourquoi ? Discutez en vous servant d'exemples précis" [At school and in the other aspects of your life, what is the importance of "team spirit"? Do you prefer group work or individual work? Why? Discuss using specific examples] (College Board, *Course Description* 21).

Similarly, in the Speaking section, according to the scoring guidelines, "very good or superior communicative skills" are characterized by "A well-developed and appropriate answer characterized by the correct use of a variety of syntactic structures, broad use of vocabulary, sustained presentation and connection of ideas, [and] easily comprehensible pronunciation" (College Board, "Scoring" 4). The speaking prompts are a series of pictures which the student must describe and two open ended opinion questions, all of which require one minute and thirty second answers. Rather than asking the students to engage in realistic situations, the Advanced Placement exam provides writing and speaking prompts so that the scorers may evaluate the students' extended use of linguistic features. According to the Canale and Swain definition of communicative competence, the Advanced Placement French Language exam only narrowly evaluates linguistic competence, and does not evaluate communicative skills in authentic language situations.

Despite the French government's ubiquitous emphasis on improving oral skills in foreign language communication, the mandatory langue vivante test in the baccalauréat testing battery for L, ES, and S is exclusively a written test. According to the Bulletin Officiel n°23 du 7 juin 2001, "L'épreuve a pour objectif l'évaluation de l'aptitude à la compréhension de la langue écrite et l'évaluation de l'aptitude à l'expression écrite" [The goal of the test is evaluation of the ability to understand written language and the evaluation of the capacity of written expression]. The three-hour written English test includes a text under seventy lines in length drawn from either a literary work or press piece which is followed by a series of around ten open-response questions. The questions are meant to measure comprehension of the text "aussi bien sur le sens explicite du texte que sur sa signification profonde ou implicite" [as much on the explicit meaning of the text as its implicit significance]. In addition to the open response questions, the test includes a "personal expression question" which may be related or unrelated to the text printed at the beginning of the test. Similarly to the Advanced Placement test composition, the 250-word responses are marked according to "la correction et . . . la richesse de la langue" [the correctness and . . . the richness of the language]. Though the written bac d'anglais perhaps provides a greater possibility for the students to exhibit comprehension skills since the response questions are open-ended instead of multiple choice, the two components of the mandatory written test are both written and scored as are the Reading and Writing sections of the Advanced Placement test. The baccalauréat therefore provides little room for a student to exhibit any competence other than linguistic.

The oral test of the bac d'anglais is mandatory only for students following the literature track (L). For S and ES students, the test is one on a list from which the student must choose several to complete their own testing battery. The oral exam, which lasts twenty minutes, takes place in the form of a discussion with an examiner. For the first section of the oral exam, the examiner chooses a literary work from a list of pieces that the student has already studied in class. After briefly preparing, the student gives a presentation on a section of the work and then participates in a brief conversation with the examiner. Though the student is familiar with the work which is discussed in the first part of the exam, the scoring guidelines specify that "En aucun cas le candidat ne doit réciter une présentation, un résumé ou une analyse appris par cœur" [The student may not under any circumstances recite a presentation, summary or an analysis learned by heart]. The second part of the test is intended to measure the capacity of the student to interact spontaneously with the examiner, drawing from a document which they have not studied in class. According to BO n°31 du 30 août 2001, "l'épreuve se déroule dans un climat de bienveillance . . . [L'examinateur] module ses exigences selon le rang de la langue et veille à ce qu'il y ait cohérence entre son mode d'évaluation et l'enseignement suivi par le candidat" [The exam takes place in an atmosphere of kindness . . . The examiner adjusts his demands according to the language level makes sure that there is coherence between his evaluation method and the student's instruction]. In other words, the exam should take place as would a real conversation, with the examiner adjusting to communicate with a student on a level which he is able to participate in the discussion. Though the candidate's oral presentations are largely marked for characteristics of linguistic competence, the nature of an active conversation with another human being allows the examiner to in essence grade the student for his sociolinguistic competence as well. In the dynamic question and answer format of the test, the examiner is able to check both for appropriateness of responses and spontaneous usage of the rules of discourse, which according to Canale and Swain are the main components of sociolinguistic competence (30).

In her assessment of effective evaluation, Sandra Savignon says that "The validity of a test is the extent to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure and nothing else" (*Theory* 236). In light of the goals of foreign language education in the United States and France as outlined in the ACTFL national standards and the Anglais curriculum directives, a valid test should measure the ability of a student to use a language communicatively in authentic situations. The Advanced Placement French Language exam essentially fails to measure any element of communication other than linguistic accuracy, and is furthermore organized according to an outdated definition of foreign language capabilities (Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking) according to the vision of the national standards. While the oral section of the baccalauréat d'anglais approaches a measure of communicative abilities in authentic situations, the section of the test is not obligatory for all students. Just as the Advanced Placement exam remains rooted in traditional measures of accuracy, the mandatory written bac fails to examine the communicative abilities of students.

The danger of invalid nationally-administered tests lies in the fact that in order to insure student success on graded material, teachers and textbook writers cater lesson plans to teach testing skills rather than communicative competence. Since the baccalauréat is a high stakes, universally administered test, the potential of the test to drive instruction is especially great. As the authors state in the introduction to the *Broad Ways* manual, teachers and textbook writers are faced with the difficulty of teaching oral communicative proficiency in face of a test which remains based on writing skills. Since the oral bac d'anglais remains elective for a large number of students, the goal of oral communicative proficiency placed at the forefront of recommendations in the Anglais directives is not evaluated at the end of instruction. Without a mandatory measure of the efficacy of communicative teaching strategies, teachers and students may be tempted to direct efforts towards success on the written evaluation which does not reflect modern foreign language teaching ideology. Though the Advanced Placement language exams are not obligatory for foreign language students in the United States, the teacher training and extensive course outlines that accompany the test also endanger the advancement of teaching ideology beyond the antiquated "four basic skills" of Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking. If assessment of foreign language skill remains outdated in evaluation methods, the tests may undermine the implementation of teaching practices as teachers over-rehearse basic testing skills in the classroom to ensure the success of their students on graded material with implications for their students' futures.

## Conclusion

> *Central to CLT is the understanding of language learning as both an educational and a political issue. Language teaching is inextricably linked with language policy. Viewed from a multicultural intranational as well as international perspective, diverse sociopolitical contexts mandate not only a diverse set of language-learning goals but a diverse set of teaching strategies. Program design and implementation depend on negotiation between policy makers, linguists, researchers, and teachers. Evaluation of program success requires a similar collaborative effort. (Savignon,* Interpreting*, 4)*

While national standards in the United States have adopted the ideology of Communicative Language Teaching, the theoretical design of the proficiency-oriented foreign language classroom lacks practical tools for implementation. Though ACTFL provides recommendations for the process of instruction, American French textbooks, which provide the principle syllabus for daily course structure, apply the language of the national standards to out-dated, non-communicative lesson plans. Additionally, communicative competence as a whole remains unevaluated on a national level in the United States; the Advanced Placement exam follows a structure directly deemed inefficient by the writers of the ACTFL standards.

Though language teaching in the United States is described as "communicative," teachers do not have the tool of a reformed curriculum readily available to use. Though a teacher is obviously not constrained to structure lessons as the textbooks suggest, the modification of material to fit recommendations of CLT requires a thorough training in ideology. Teachers without extensive knowledge of the theoretical framework behind communicative competence could easily believe that textbooks provide a base for the teaching practices defined by the ACTFL standards since the language from the standards is assigned to the format of the books. As Savignon suggests, effective implementation of new teaching practices requires the participation of every level in the education process; to her list of "policy makers, linguists, researchers, and teachers," I would add textbook writers, or other entities responsible for providing syllabus materials for the classroom. If all levels are not coordinated, effective foreign language education would require another level to compensate for any disparities. If textbook writers do not translate the work of policy makers and researchers into usable instruction material, an enormous burden falls on the classroom teacher to adapt inadequate materials to a communicative curriculum. If the teacher lacks knowledge of CLT ideology or the motivation to independently modify provided syllabuses, the theories promoted by governmental standards are never used practically in the classroom.

In her article "National Standards and the Diffusion of Innovation: Language Teaching in the United States," Ana Schwartz proposes that "The decentralized system of education poses fundamental obstacles for true and meaningful implementation of the [ACTFL] standards" (Savignon, *Interpreting*, 112). A comparison of foreign language education in the United States and France does imply that a decentralized system may indeed be a major culprit in the lack of cohesion of American teaching standards and the structure of classroom syllabuses. In France, where the national government directly controls education, teaching materials espouse the ideology of language instruction published in the national directives for *Anglais*. Furthermore, an oral evaluation which perhaps measures communicative competence as effectively as is possible in a simulated environment is available to students. In fact, the only major disjuncture between foreign language legislature, teaching materials, and evaluation in France is that the oral baccalauréat d'anglais is not obligatory for all students. Were the oral test to become mandatory, foreign language teaching practices in France would exhibit consistency on every level from governmental recommendations to methodology in the individual classroom.

Though centralization of the American educational system seems an impractical recommendation, the accountability clauses of No Child Left Behind have proved through reform of reading and mathematics education that the government is capable of affecting educational reform on a national level, even through a decentralized system. Foreign language education reform in the United States would require greater coordination of policy, teaching methodologies and evaluation. As no accountability currently exists for how the ACTFL standards are used in the classroom and no evaluation exists to monitor the capacity of graduating students to use foreign language communicatively, the American foreign language classroom remains undirected and uncontrolled. Americans remain "linguistically malnourished" as the proposals for establishing communicative competence never reach the mouths of potential foreign language speakers.

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[i] The Nathan series *English Adventure*, intended for use at the beginning of English language learning at the elementary level, memorization of structure from recorded presentations forms the entire base of language learning. "La mémorisation de quelques éléments linguistiques permet à l'élève de s'exprimer simplement, en s'écartant de la répétition" (*Adventure*, Professeur, 5). The series relies upon the capacity of young children to internalize language structure without grammatical explanation to teach English through interactive singing and dialogues. Because the French system requires language education to begin in elementary school, most students begin learning a foreign language through memorization rather than through explanation as do American high school students beginning study in a language.

[ii] In conjunction with memorization, French language learning methods also privilege phonetic practice: "[Le professeur] pourra les entraîner à développer leurs capacités de mémorisation, tout en travaillant la précision phonologique, en faisant apprendre de courtes récitations" (*Anglais* 13). Beginning at the middle school level, French English textbooks present the International Phonetic Alphabet and employ the symbols in frequent pronunciation exercises. The national directives maintain that "l'intonation et le rythme jouent un rôle capital dans la transmission du message (*Anglais* 13), and textbooks respond by incorporating frequent pronunciation excercises as foundations for effective communication. As with memorization, frequent, repetitive phonetic practice is much more a characteristic of A-LM than CLT (Omaggio 60)

[iii] Though CLT emphasizes education in "little c" culture, "big C" Culture retains a prominent place in both American and French instruction materials. The ACTFL standards name the study of a culture's "products", including art and music, a central component to a cultural education. As the introduction to the Teacher's Edition of *Trésors du Temps* notes, "An overview of milestone events of the past both distant and recent, will provide students with a better understanding of the culture they have been exposed to in their previous French classes. We have focused on those events that have left a lasting mark on today's consciousness and language" (Trésors, Teacher, 2). Historical culture and the "big C" Culture of the best of human achievement in the arts is therefore seen as a type of foundation for better understanding the development of "little c" culture.

[iv] *Face validity* concerns whether or not a test is perceived to be an accurate measure of knowledge; *content validity* is based on the relevancy of testing items as samples of a larger concept; *predictive validity* measures the accuracy of the test in predicting outcomes in subsequent situations; and *concurrent validity* justifies a test as valid in terms of the results in comparison to other concurrent tasks.