TWO TELECOLLABORATIVE CONTEXTS FOR WRITING IN A BEGINNER FSL UNIVERSITY PROGRAM: ACHIEVEMENT, PERCEPTIONS, AND IDENTITY

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Doctor of Philosophy, 2009
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Abstract

Face-to-face interaction with target language (TL) group members can provide the intensive
second language (L2) exposure required to enhance motivation; it improves attitudes towards L2
development, and promotes achievement (Freed, 1995; Warden, Lapkin, Swain, & Hart, 1995).
However, face-to-face interaction with TL group members is not always possible. This is
especially true for former core French (CF) students who have enrolled in beginner French as a
Second Language (FSL) courses at universities in predominantly Anglophone regions of Canada.
To address this issue, I designed a mixed-method case study to examine opportunities for
providing intensive FSL exposure and enhancing motivation for beginner FSL university
learners. The participants were 55 beginning learners of FSL studying at an Anglophone
university in Atlantic Canada. To examine intensive FSL exposure, I compared the overall
writing achievement over time of 2 groups interacting in a telecollaborative context: (a) a group
interacting with younger Francophone Acadians in another province; and (b) a group interacting
with classroom peers of similar L2 proficiency. To gain indepth insight into the effects of the
telecollaboration, I explored 4 learners’ L2 motivational self-system: (a) perceptions of their
prior and current language-learning experiences; and (b) how language-learner identity was
shaped by the experiences. The study is based on 5 data sources: writing samples, background
questionnaires, stimulated-recall interviews, language-learning autobiographies, and ongoing
observations. It is grounded in 5 bodies of knowledge: the Input-Interaction-Output hypothesis within a socio-cultural perspective (Block, 2003), current L2 writing theory, collaborative learning theory, telecollaborative research, and Dörnyei’s (2005) L2 Motivational Self-System Theory.

Quantitative comparison of overall writing achievement in the 2 telecollaborative writing contexts (using Mann-Whitney U tests) revealed that the comparison group performed better than the treatment group. Qualitative findings, however, demonstrated that the treatment group had more positive perceptions of their language-learning experiences with respect to L2 writing achievement at university, as well as more positive language-learner identities than did the comparison group. Further exploration of language-learner identities from an L2 motivational self-system perspective identified 3 identity shaping characteristics: evolution, demotivation and amotivation, and self-regulation.
Acknowledgements

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to my OISE/UT committee: Dr. Sharon Lapkin, my thesis supervisor, whose academic insights and constructive feedback have helped make this thesis possible. She has always been an excellent mentor for my academic, and sometimes personal, challenges. Your encouragement and unwavering support are deeply appreciated. My gratitude also goes to Dr. Alister Cumming, Dr. Jim Cummins, and Dr. Antoinette Gagne my thesis committee members, whose careful reading of the manuscript has been extremely helpful. All of them have served as experts in their respective fields and have always provided me ample motivation throughout my Ph.D. work at OISE/UT. I thank Dr. Joe Dicks, my external examiner, at the University of New Brunswick for providing meticulous feedback and suggestions for my research.

I also owe a great deal of gratitude to my colleagues in the Modern Language Centre at OISE/UT, all of whom contributed significant assistance, intellectual input, and friendship during this endeavor.

I am indebted to all the participants in my study. Especially, the beginner FSL university students, the partner school students, and the partner school teacher-Paulette LeBlanc. Your contribution and dedication to the L2 writing project was instrumental in making my research a reality.

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Warmest gratitude to Kim Batherson; a fellow Nova Scotian and truly wonderful person. Your spirit, positive energy, and constant encouragement inspired me to complete this challenge. Your time and effort during this project definitely earned you an honourary PhD.

Last, to my best friend and love of my life, my husband, Chris Judge. I thank you for your patience, understanding, and devotion. Your belief in me and your constant willingness to give of yourself has provided me the strength and motivation to achieve my goal. I thank you, most of all, for helping me see the world brighter than clear vision ever could.
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Dedication

In memory of my parents
Leonard B. and Mildred M. (Venedam) MacDonald

For providing the most significant contribution of all:
allowing me the opportunity to grow up with an appreciation
for education and a love of learning.

Thank you.
Chapter 1:  
Introduction

Research has shown that face-to-face interaction with members of the target language (TL) group can provide the intensive second language (L2) exposure required to enhance motivation and make L2 learning come alive; it improves attitudes towards L2 development, and enhances achievement (Freed, 1995; Lapkin, Hart, & Swain, 1995; MacFarlane, 2001; Warden et al., 1995). However, opportunities for face-to-face interaction with members of the TL group are not always available. The lack of opportunity for this positive language-learning experience is especially common among former core French (CF) students in Canada who want to continue their French language development after high school and (a) enrol in beginner French as a Second Language (FSL) courses at universities in predominantly Anglophone regions of Canada, regions that can be said to be similar to foreign language (FL) environments, which are known to be unconducive to face-to-face spoken interaction; and (b) do not have the opportunity to take part in exchanges with Francophone students studying English either in Canada or another, French-speaking, country.

Elementary and secondary FSL students in Canada also experience a lack of opportunity for contact with members of the TL group. In the past two decades, telecollaborative research has taken an interest in and provided possibilities as to how to address this population (Cummins & Sayers, 1995; Lawrence, 2002; MacDonald, 2003; Turnbull, Bell, & Lapkin, 2002; Sanaoui & Lapkin, 1992). However, there is still a paucity of research with respect to providing intensive FSL exposure to the TL group and enhancing motivation for beginner FSL university learners. Studies conducted at the university level have concentrated on intermediate and advanced classes.
In addition to population considerations, several of the face-to-face and telecollaborative studies have methodological limitations. For instance, some have focused on objective and quantitative measurements of learner attitudes (Lapkin et al., 1995), which have tended to provide snapshot views of FSL learners’ experiences at a certain point in time. Others have implemented qualitative approaches by including interviews and questionnaires to learn about FSL learners’ opinions of their French language-learning experiences (Lapkin et al., 1995; Sanaoui & Lapkin, 1992). All of these studies have been relatively short (3 months or less). More recently, Dörnyei (2001b) has pointed out that L2 motivation is a process that can change over time in contrast with variables such as intelligence or aptitude (Gardner & Smythe, 1975). I argue that, in order to understand how to provide opportunities for intensive FSL exposure to the TL group and enhance motivation, we need to examine beginner FSL university learners’ language-learning experiences, including achievement, from a wider, socio-historical, and developmental view, one that considers perceptions of their own, prior and current, French language-learning experiences and their identities as language learners. In essence, such analysis requires a self-system perspective. Although several European studies have been conducted in this vein, they are too specific to be generalizable to the unique Canadian language-learning context.

To address this issue, I designed a mixed-method case study that examine opportunities for providing intensive FSL exposure and enhancing motivation over an extended period of time, eight months. To accomplish this, I implemented telecollaboration and an L2 writing activity for beginner FSL learners at the university level who belong to one of the two groups above. Specifically, I investigated three issues: achievement, learners’ perceptions of prior and current language-learning experiences (including achievement), and how learners’ identities are shaped
by their perceptions. First, to examine intensive FSL exposure, I quantitatively and qualitatively compared the overall writing achievement over time of two groups interacting in a telecollaborative context: (a) a group interacting with younger Francophone Acadians in another province; and (b) a group interacting with classroom peers of similar L2 proficiency. Second, in order to gain indepth insight into the effects of the telecollaboration, insight that could not be obtained using only a quantitative orientation, I explored four learners’ L2 motivational self-system: (a) their perceptions of their prior and current language learning experiences; and (b) how their language-learner identity was shaped by the experiences.

For the purposes of this study, beginner FSL students at the university level are students who completed Grade 11 CF and then enrolled in the corresponding entry-level university French course, as defined by beginner or basic course descriptions from six French or Modern Language Departments in Anglophone regions of Atlantic Canada.

The remainder of this opening chapter is divided into five sections. The first section is a language-learning autobiography, which describes the background that gave rise to my interest in this topic, as well as my experiences and perceptions as both a language learner and an educator. This introduction, then, describes my experiences and perceptions not only to provide the context in which the research was conducted, but also the context in which the rationale for the study was formed. The second section describes the rationale for the study and its problem statement. The third section provides a statement of my theoretical orientations. The fourth section explains the purpose of the study and identifies its objectives based on three research questions. These three questions focus on writing achievement, learner perceptions and learner identity in relation to the modes of instruction compared– that is, telecollaborative L2 writing with TL speakers and telecollaborative L2 writing with university classmates learning French as their L2. The fifth
section provides my readers with a list of frequently used acronyms. The final section provides an overview of the thesis organization.

**A Language-Learning Autobiography: The Researcher’s Experiences and Perceptions**

I begin my story at the start of my formal education at the age of five. I start here because I can say with certainty that there was no one particular episode that my sparked interest in language and language learning, and consequently, my current research. Instead, there have been many events, both large and small, throughout my personal and professional life that have contributed to who I am, how I think, and what I do today as an educator and researcher.

Raised in an Acadian–Scottish family, I spent my primary years attending an elementary school located in a small Acadian community in northeastern Nova Scotia. At the time, most of the children in school understood French and spoke French at home or heard French spoken by parents and grandparents. At school, however, despite the fact that the majority of the student population was Acadian, my peers and I were educated in English with only 3 to 4 hours per week devoted to French language development. Given my Scottish background, very little French was spoken in my home. I listened to French Acadian conversations between my mother and her brothers and sisters, and I had a special stash of songs and phrases at my disposal. I also had the opportunity to take part in the annual French Acadian festivals and other displays of what Cummins and Danesi (1990) define as “celebratory multiculturalism” (p. 15). However, singing and reciting is not the same as real communication, nor is it conducive to forming a strong identity. I wanted and needed to be able to take part in the French language like my mother and my friends.
The goal to learn French stayed with me through high school and into my first year of university. Though teachers and professors were wonderfully dedicated, traditional teaching approaches, which place emphasis on concrete measurable outcomes, prevailed. Issues such as grades, marks, and successful completion of examinations and attainment of course credits was (and, to a large degree, still is) the most important priority for most students. After all, high marks and individual success are tickets to success in a market economy.

After many French classes, I enrolled in a 1-year French Immersion program in a predominantly French-speaking region of Atlantic Canada. I finally had the opportunity to indulge myself by learning the language that has directed, influenced, and helped form the person I am today. Never had I experienced such a feeling of accomplishment as I did during my first 4 months in the program. I could actually see and feel myself learning. I did not have to rely on tests and exams to gauge my progress and prove that I was putting my time and effort to good use. I was completely involved in my own learning. Such intensive exposure to the TL provided an L2 learning experience that did not end when I walked out of class at the end of the day.

**Responsible Learning and Self-Regulation**

Skills developed during the L2 learning process were often transferred to other areas of my personal and professional life. It was not long after beginning my teacher education program and spending time with education students talking about various educational issues and concerns of the time that I decided I wanted to teach languages. Given my positive experience learning French, I vowed that as an L2 teacher, I would do my best to provide my students with a similar language-learning environment.
After several teaching experiences at both the elementary and secondary levels, I began a position coordinating a Multimedia Language Centre at an Anglophone university in Atlantic Canada, which required me to instruct French labs for university students. In that role I promoted the potential for L2 learning via Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), which also included telecollaboration. This type of computer-mediated communication is a fast-paced and quickly changing field that requires constant attention in order to remain up to date. It requires that material and learning environment designers, along with instructors and students, work closely together to critically assess the effects of the technology, as well as the features that characterize a new type of literacy (Warschauer, 1999). Such critical assessment has to be based on an analysis of how specific pedagogical objectives are achieved through the design and an integration of instructional activities into telecollaborative environments. As well, the success of a telecollaborative environment requires open-minded teaching approaches and innovation.

**Rationale and Problem Statement**

Among the various language-learning environments I have experienced, I found that motivating beginner FSL development at a post-secondary institution located in a predominantly Anglophone community is the most challenging. The challenge stemmed from the fact that classes were composed of students from varying backgrounds. Classes were extremely heterogeneous and could consist of up to 60 students. Some students had few or no French role models, since education, in general, and language learning, in particular, took place in regions with characteristics similar to those of FL settings: the setting of millions of primary school, secondary school, university, and further education students around the world who rely on their time in classrooms to learn a language that is not the typical language of communication outside the classroom. Conditions in these different L2 contexts vary considerably with regard to
teacher-student ratios, the age of students, teacher preparation, intensity (hours per week), accommodation, technological backup, availability of teaching materials, and the relative importance of learning the L2. However, they all have in common the predominance of the classroom as a site of exposure to the TL. In the context of my teaching, it was important, therefore, that all students had access to an environment, which provided intensive exposure to French. Three contact hours per week in a classroom of 40 beginner level students, with emphasis placed on spoken French, was not effective. There was a need for a variety of authentic interactive communication opportunities.

Ideally, authentic interactive communication in the form of intensive exposure to the TL is necessary to enhance motivation and to make French come alive for FSL learners; to improve attitudes towards FSL, and to enhance achievement. Research studies show that one of the most effective ways to foster L2 development is through face-to-face verbal interaction with members of the TL group (e.g., Freed, 1995; Lapkin et al., 1995; MacFarlane, 2001; Warden et al., 1995). However, face-to-face interaction is not always possible, especially for the student population described above and those who do not have the opportunity to participate in exchange visits.

The question then became, is it possible to achieve positive attitudes and enhance achievement for all FSL students, including the majority who have no out-of-classroom contact with French? I argue that one way to foster such exchanges with TL groups is by integrating L2 writing activities with interactions in a telecollaborative environment.

Theoretical Orientations of the Researcher

This mixed-method case study was based on the Input-Interaction-Output (IIO) hypothesis within a socio-cultural perspective (Block, 2003), current L2 writing theory,
collaborative learning theory, telecollaborative research, and Dörnyei’s (2005) L2 motivational self-system theory (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 for complete details of these constructs).

I take the theoretical stance that social, historical, cultural, and contextual variables must be considered to explain variation in achievement among learners. Such variables are embodied in IIO research within a socio-cultural perspective, and imply a concern with prolonged, ecologically valid observation of human action within different time frames. The case study (Johnson, 1992) therefore figures as my primary second language acquisition (SLA) orientation for the organization and implementation of the study. In fact, major proponents of the IIO hypothesis within a socio-cultural perspective approach have urged researchers to develop "robust and detailed case studies documenting the activities of people on the periphery of linguistic communities of practice and how they gain or are denied (full) participation in these communities" (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001, p. 155).

My empirical objective was to determine the relationship between learner perceptions of their French learning experiences, identity as French language learners, and French writing achievement. In order to do so, I used a mixed-method research design using a variety of measures and broadly categorized as quantitative and qualitative, in order to maximize this study’s validity and reliability (Johnson, 1992). A quantitative approach proved advantageous in that it allowed formulation of the research problem in specific terms (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992). Both the independent and the dependent variables under investigation were clearly identified. The two groups, the group interacting telecollaboratively with a younger TL group in another province and the group interacting telecollaboratively with classroom peers of similar L2 proficiency, were the independent variables, while the L2 writing activity was the dependent variable.
Adding a qualitative approach provided a way to go beyond production data and describe, decode, and interpret the meanings of phenomena occurring in their normal social context; specifically, participants’ perceptions of their prior and current language-learning experiences provided for a holistic picture of a beginner FSL class at the university level. Qualitative research also offers the benefit of a flexible methodology, thus allowing for the discovery of new variables. For example, the ability to interact with the participants through interviews (Kirk & Miller, 1986) provided for revelations and clarifications about learner perceptions and identity shaping. Another benefit qualitative research offers is the possibility of thick description (Geertz, 1973) based on copious observations or interview notes. Detailed description was facilitated by having access to the participating beginner FSL class for 1 hour per week, i.e., during language labs. See Figure 1 for an illustration of the design of my study.

![Case Study Methodology Diagram]

*Figure 1. Illustration organizing this researcher’s orientations.*
Purpose of the Study: Research Questions and Objectives

The purpose of my study is threefold, described by three main research questions and corresponding objectives.

Research Questions

1. How does L2 writing achievement (i.e., as evidenced by the quality of the texts produced) for beginner FSL university learners telecollaborating with younger members of the TL in another province compare to that of beginner FSL university learners telecollaborating with classroom peers of similar language proficiency?

2. What are beginner FSL university learners’ perceptions of their prior and current French language learning experiences?

3. How is learner identity shaped by beginner FSL university learners’ perceptions of their prior and current French language learning experiences?

Objectives

1. To compare the writing achievements (i.e., as evidenced by the quality of the texts produced) of two groups of beginner FSL university learners working interactively in a telecollaborative context: one group interacting with younger members of the TL group in another province and another group interacting with classroom peers of similar language proficiency.

2. To investigate beginner FSL university learners’ perceptions of their prior and current French language learning experiences.
3. To explore how learner identity is shaped by beginner, FSL university learners’ perceptions of their prior and current French language learning experiences.

List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AT</td>
<td>Activity Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>CF</td>
<td>Core French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FL</td>
<td>Foreign Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSL</td>
<td>French as a Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIO model</td>
<td>Input-Interaction-Output model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IH</td>
<td>Interaction Hypothesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>First (usually dominant) language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td>Second language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCT</td>
<td>Socio-cultural Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLA</td>
<td>Second Language Acquisition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TL</td>
<td>Target language</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZPD</td>
<td>Zone of Proximal Development</td>
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Overview of Thesis Organization

This dissertation is organized into seven chapters. This first chapter provides an introduction to the study and sets the stage for the remaining chapters. Chapter 2 provides a rationale for the research in relation to my role as instructor to provide intensive exposure to the TL group and enhance motivation. Here, I review four main bodies of literature and research: the input-interaction-output hypothesis within a socio-cultural perspective, L2 writing theory, collaborative learning theory, and telecollaborative research. A review of earlier studies exposes
gaps in the literature. The rationale for the present research derives from consideration of how these gaps may relate to elements highlighted in studies of the four main bodies of literature and research reviewed. The third chapter discusses the theoretical framework I used to investigate beginner FSL university learners’ perceptions of their French language learning experiences and to explore language-learner identity shaped by these experiences: Dörnyei’s L2 motivational self-system theory. The fourth chapter describes the process used to research the above questions and meet the corresponding objectives. The details of the process are outlined in four sections: Research Design; Instruments (methods used to collect data on the products of L2 writing, as well as on learner perceptions, and the procedures followed to transcribe, code, rate, and analyze the data); Piloting; and Timeline. The fifth chapter describes the context, specifically the participants and settings. The sixth chapter presents the results and findings of the quantitative and qualitative analyses I conducted to investigate the three research questions. For the first research question, results from non-parametric and descriptive analyses are reported and summarized; then, findings of qualitative and interpretive analyses for all three research questions are presented. Finally, in Chapter 7, I discuss the findings of this research. Implications are outlined for educational practice, as well as for policy, the limitations of the study are discussed, and suggestions for further study are given.

Summary

In sum, the following chapters will demonstrate the significant contribution my study represents to both the fields of SLA, in general and to FSL in Canada, in particular. Contributions can be divided into five broad, and somewhat overlapping, categories:
1. Population: To my current knowledge, based on the information surveyed in the next two chapters, there have been very few, if any, studies examining how to provide intensive FSL exposure to the TL group and enhance motivation for beginner FSL learners at the post-secondary level in Canada. Research focusing on these issues has been conducted at the elementary and secondary school levels (Cummins & Sayers, 1995; Lawrence, 2002; MacDonald, 2003; Sanaoui & Lapkin, 1992; Turnbull et al., 2002), or with intermediate and advanced university classes.

2. FSL research methodology: Many of the studies focusing on providing intensive FSL exposure to members of the TL group and enhancing motivation have focused on quantitative measurements of FSL learner attitudes (Lapkin et al., 1995) providing snapshot views of their experiences, including achievement, at a certain point in time. Those that have implemented a qualitative approach (Lapkin et al., 1995; Sanaoui & Lapkin, 1992) to learn about FSL learners’ perceptions of their French language-learning experiences, have spanned a relatively short period of time. Psychometrically oriented and short studies can be deceiving. They imply that achievement, perceptions, as well as identities shaped by perceptions, are stable, internal variables (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005). Perceptions and identities shaping L2 or FL learning have not been explored adequately from the learners’ self-system perspective.

3. Beginner FSL university programs: When considering how to provide intensive FSL exposure to the TL group and enhance motivation for beginner FSL learners, emphasis has been placed on the priority of speech. Researchers and instructors have tended to neglect the role of L2 writing in L2 acquisition. It is important, therefore, to
further insight into the current research conducted on L2 writing for beginner FSL programs.

4. Telecollaborative L2 writing: Early Canadian studies aiming to provide intensive exposure to the TL group by means of telecollaborative L2 writing (Cummins & Sayers, 1995; Sanaoui & Lapkin, 1992), like their international counterparts, were primarily descriptive, focusing on the design and implementation aspects, or framed within a product-oriented paradigm (Chapelle, 2001; Warschauer & Kern, 2000). Despite the shift towards process-oriented research and a focus on the evolving social interactions in the context of computer use in recent years (Belz, 2002; Darhower, 2002; O’Rourke, 2005; Osuna, 2000; Thorne, 2003; Warschauer, 1999, 2005), few (if any) studies have explored telecollaborative L2 writing achievement with respect to learners’ perceptions of their language-learning experiences, and language-learner identity; that is, from an L2 motivational self-system perspective.

5. Generalizability of process-oriented L2 motivation research: Studies that have implemented a self-system approach to studying L2 motivation are too specific to allow for generalization to the unique Canadian language-learning context.

More broadly, my study investigated innovative pedagogical approaches to facilitating L2 acquisition. As a result, it may serve to enhance the professional development of L2 teachers and, in turn, the effective implementation of telecollaborative L2 writing within other L2 learning environments. I have accomplished this by implementing a mixed-method case study (Johnson, 1992) to examine, both quantitatively and qualitatively, telecollaborative L2 writing
achievement of beginner FSL university learners from an L2 motivational self-system perspective.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Based on the main objectives of my study, five bodies of knowledge (with some overlap) have been considered as background. They include: the input-interaction-output (IIO) model within a socio-cultural (SCT) perspective (Block, 2003), L2 writing, collaborative learning, telecollaboration, and Dörnyei’s (2005) L2 motivational self-system theory. As both instructor and researcher, I divided the five bodies of knowledge into two categories. The first category (Chapter 2) was reviewed to inform instruction. The second category (Chapter 3) was reviewed to frame and assist in the analysis of the findings. I point out issues arising from this background and discuss how I feel that my study contributes to the body of L2 learning literature and research.

Keeping in mind that the goal of a literature review is to classify and evaluate what scholars have discussed about a certain topic in the context of a guiding problem or issue to produce a conceptually informed synthesis of scholarly work, I have made conscious decisions about how I present the research on the five main bodies of literature listed above.

The following review is organized into four sections. The first three sections discuss the input-interaction-output model within a socio-cultural perspective, L2 writing theory, and collaborative learning theory. In these sections, I provide detailed discussions of theory and accounts of results of various empirical studies, and I make links between these and the main constructs inherent in my work. As well, I point out gaps and show how my study addresses them. The fourth section, titled Telecollaboration, asks the following question: Why use telecollaboration as a context for exploring L2 writing achievement, learners’ perceptions of
prior and current language learning experiences, and language-learner identity for two groups working collaboratively: one with younger members of the TL group, the other with peers of similar language proficiency? This question served as a means of presenting empirical research and evidence, (a) to support the link between telecollaboration and the three constructs discussed above, and (b) to point out gaps in the current literature and illustrate how my study addresses them.

The Input-Interaction-Output Model Within a Socio-Cultural Perspective

There have been many SLA theoretical frameworks developed over the past twenty years that could have been used to support the main L2 constructs investigated in this study. Traditionally, researchers base their studies on only one of these SLA theories. More recently, others have adopted a multi-issue and interdisciplinary theoretical approach. I align myself with the latter group. In doing so, I have opted to frame my work in the input-interaction-output model within a socio-cultural perspective; a variation of the input-interaction-output model proposed by such researchers as Long (1996), Gass (1988, 1997), and Gass and Selinker (1994, 2001), which combines the chain of input-interaction-output, the three main constructs inherent in any learning of an L2 in a classroom environment, with findings from cognitive psychology. To my mind, this model, which Block (2003) refers to as the IIO model, is the closest thing to the big theory that Long (1990, 1993) has often suggested that SLA should move towards.

Despite its seemingly all-encompassing nature, however, the IIO model shares the psycholinguistic bias that is typical of the field. It is for this reason that some researchers, in particular Firth and Wagner (1997), have suggested that SLA needs a more socially sensitive conceptual framework. In the following subsections, I review each of the psycholinguistic
constructs associated with this model and discuss the benefits of a more socially informed approach.

The IIO model has developed and become prominent in SLA research over the past two decades for two key reasons. First, there was the perceived need to work from Krashen’s (1985) Comprehensible Input Hypothesis towards something more complete and more empirically verifiable. There was at this time a growing belief that while comprehensible input is a necessary condition for language acquisition to take place, it is not on its own sufficient. What was needed was a theory of SLA that took into account, first, interaction (e.g., Long, 1981) and, later, output (e.g., Swain, 1985). Recently Swain (2006) has reconceptualized this construct as languaging – a crucial mediating psychological and cultural activity whereby learners articulate and transform their thinking into an artifactual form, making it available as a source of further reflection.

**Input**

Krashen (1985) argues that we acquire an L2 one way – by exposure to comprehensible input; the incremental development of acquisition is symbolized as $i \ (input) + 1$. This is similar to Lev Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Gredler, 1997; see the discussion on socio-cultural/activity theory below for more details). In other words, if the input contains forms and structures just beyond the learner’s current level of competence in the language, then both comprehension and acquisition will occur. To summarize his theory, Krashen states: “People acquire second languages when they obtain comprehensible input and when their affective filters are low enough to allow the input in” (Krashen, 1995, p. 101). In other words, L2 “acquisition” will occur in classes taught in the L2 if the student can understand what is going on in the class – i.e., when the input is comprehensible. Long (1985) supports his views with numerous...
observations of interactions between learners and native speakers (see Interaction below for details). Though he shares Krashen’s view that comprehensible input is necessary for language acquisition, he is more concerned with the question of “how” input is made comprehensible. In other words, “making comprehensible” is not equivalent to “dumbing-down” or simplifying linguistic forms. Rather, comprehensibility is achieved by providing the learner with an opportunity to interact with other speakers who will adapt what they are saying until the learner show signs of understanding. According to Long (1985), research indicates that native speakers consistently modify their speech while communicating with non-native speakers.

**Interaction**

Interaction was originally studied under the frame of the interaction hypothesis (IH), which examined how native speakers repair breakdowns in oral communication (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977), and drew on Hatch’s (1978) insight that learners learn an L2 through the process of interaction, rather than only manifesting what they have already learned in interaction (Ellis, 1999). The interaction hypothesis concerns itself with one particular kind of interaction – that which has been known as the negotiation of meaning. The negotiation of meaning takes place in conversational exchanges that occur when interlocutors seek to prevent a communication impasse or to remedy an actual impasse. Hatch’s claim was extended by other interactionists such as Long (1985, 1996), Pica (1987, 1996), and Gass (1988, 1997), who carried out extensive research to examine the role of interaction in L2 learning. In the mid-1980s, Long (1985) stretched this notion further and developed the initial version of the IH, which claims that the negotiation of meaning through interaction makes input comprehensible, that comprehensible input promotes acquisition, consequently, interactionally modified input (i.e., input which is made comprehensible due to the interactional modifications the participants in the conversation
engage in) is beneficial for acquisition. Here, the interaction is, for the most part, social and interpersonal interaction.

Although Long (1985) encouraged empirically based research to provide evidence for all three of these claims, the IH has been challenged extensively, especially with respect to the second and third assertion. With respect to the second, for example, Sharwood Smith (1986), and Faerch and Kasper (1986) have argued that it is not enough to say that comprehensible input promotes acquisition; rather, it is necessary to distinguish input processing for comprehension and input processing for language learning since learners can comprehend input by drawing on context and their schematic knowledge of the world. This results in successful comprehension, but not necessarily acquisition or learning. Concerning the third claim, that interactionally modified input is beneficial for acquisition, Krashen (1985) argued that simplified input that is not interactionally derived is also adequate. This gives support to the notion that premodified input (i.e., input which is linguistically modified before it is offered to the learner) is effective for promoting comprehension (Chaudron, 1988). Pica, Young, and Doughty (1987) investigated this issue in a study that compared learners’ comprehension of directions under three conditions: baseline, premodified, and interactionally modified. The researchers found that the learners comprehend the directions best under the interactionally modified condition, and least under the baseline condition, while the premodified input produces intermediate results. Other studies in this vein (Gass & Varonis, 1994; Loschky, 1994) have shown similar results, but have not been able to provide substantial support for the IH.

As the initial hypotheses (Long, 1985) have not been empirically confirmed, Long (1996) updated the IH to draw on the intrapersonal (cognitive) domain of interaction as well as the interpersonal (social). In the new version, he attended to more internal learner capacities –
learners’ focused attention, awareness, and cognitive processing. Long (1996) claimed that interactionally modified input facilitates language acquisition because it assists learners in noticing linguistic forms in the input, provides negative evidence, and finally, gives the learners opportunities to modify their output. In a sense, the updated version of the IH is in line with Swain’s original concept of the output hypothesis because the updated IH suggests that “‘pushing’ learners to produce output that is precise, coherent and appropriate can induce learners to engage in the kind of bottom-up processing necessary for extending interlanguage grammar” (Takashima & Ellis, 1999, p. 173). It is evident that comprehensible input is a significant component of L2 acquisition. More significant, however, is that when it is interactionally modified learners can notice linguistic forms, and are provided with negative evidence and opportunities to modify their output.

**Output**

Swain (1985) formulated the output hypothesis in response to some disappointing findings related to Canadian French immersion programs, that is, contra the expectation grounded in Krashen’s (1985) comprehensible input hypothesis, French immersion students were found to experience difficulties in accuracy despite their extensive exposure to comprehensible input in the classroom (Bibeau, 1984; Hammerly, 1982; Harley, 1984; Lyster, 1987). Swain (1995c) hypothesized that it is the act of producing language that pushes learners to move beyond the cognitive activity that occurs in comprehension and to engage in more complete grammar processing. The more mental effort learners put into the output process, the more they will be able to enhance their interlanguage skills. As such, under certain circumstances, the learner’s active participation in producing language (speaking or writing) constitutes to the
process of L2 learning (Swain, 2005). According to Swain (1995a), there are three functions of output:

1. The noticing or triggering function: the act of producing language that prompts the learner to recognize consciously what their linguistic problems are. This awareness triggers cognitive processes, either generating linguistic knowledge that is new to them, or consolidating their existing knowledge (Swain & Lapkin, 1995).

2. The hypothesis-testing function: the output enables the learners to try out their hypotheses of how to reproduce their intent either in oral or written form.

3. The meta-linguistic (reflective) function: the output provides the learners with an object to reflect on.

The output hypothesis proposes that producing language pushes the learner to go beyond semantic to syntactic processing of the TL structures. Thus, it is possible for meaning and form of language use to develop simultaneously.

As mentioned above, the IH draws on early work that examined how native speakers repair breakdowns in oral communication. Given the focus of my study herein – L2 writing achievement and learner perceptions – one could argue that the IH, which was originally developed as a means of explaining oral conversational interactions, can not account for what occurs during written interactions. However, at a time when electronic technologies supporting written communication are proliferating around the world, our traditional definition of conversation can no longer restrict itself to face-to-face, oral interactions. Research pertaining to online language learning conducted over the past two decades has used frameworks developed
from oral interaction to show how telecollaborative written conversations (either synchronous or asynchronous) provide a mechanism that can help learners achieve a higher level of metalinguistic awareness, intercultural learning, and literacy and identity (Belz, 2002, 2003; Blake, 2000; Cononelos & Oliva, 1993; Cummins & Sayers, 1995; Kern, 2000; Kitade, 2000; Kotter, 2003; Li & Cumming, 2001; Pellettieri, 2000; Sanaoui & Lapkin, 1992; Toyoda & Harrison, 2002; Warschauer, 1995, 1996b, 1999, 2000). Together these studies suggest that electronic communication has both complexified and problematized current notions of communication. Like Chapelle (2003) and Warschauer (1997), I argue that telecollaboration has changed communication dynamics so that online written conversation must be considered on a par with face-to-face conversation. In fact, this modern form of interaction offers learners opportunities to achieve awareness of language both semantically and syntactically. Swain’s output hypothesis, which speaks of output in terms of oral, private, as well as written speech (Swain, 1985), also supports this use of written communication under the IH. For a more indepth discussion of this theme, see the section on telecollaboration below.

_A More Socially Informed Approach_

As informative and comprehensive as the input-interaction-output model appears, it has its weaknesses. First, it tends to view humans in terms of a mind/body dualism, according to which there are two distinct human life systems. Second, the researchers of these cognitive perspectives and proponents of information processing harbour the need for experimental control and are unwilling to step out of the lab to see if the theories they have created are applicable to the classroom. Third, the dominant concern of the psycholinguistic stance is the aggregate or average human being. In general, cognitive psychology has been criticized for its pervasive tendency to research the human mind, not as a socio-historically situated individual
phenomenon, but as a general and quantifiable entity. It holds a view of mental processing that is systematic and mechanistic. Given this critique, there is clearly a whole range of issues in SLA that cognitive theory does not tell us anything about, including social context, and one must suspect that the social context in some way influences SLA. Research has, in fact, produced studies that have shown how linguistic and pragmatic competence, socio-cultural knowledge, and learner identity are shaped by novice–expert interaction in various contexts. Such research is by nature developmental and has the potential to produce more interesting results than most SLA research as currently conducted because it has as its defining principles the exploration of how language, identity, and cognition come together, and includes both psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic views of language behaviour. This research is consistent with recent attempts to frame acquisition according to theoretical constructs and research falling under the general rubrics of social theory; in particular, socio-cultural/activity (SCT/AT) theory.

In recent years, various proposals revolving around SCT and AT (Lantolf, 2000a) have become rivals to a cognitive/information processing approach to acquisition in SLA. Proponents of such proposals believe that mental processes are as social as they are individual and as external as they are internal, a view quite different from that traditionally envisaged by IIO researchers. Given this difference, how might one integrate views from cognitive psychology and socio-cultural approaches to mental processes to form a more ecologically sensitive model of acquisition in SLA? I address this question in the paragraphs below.

Socio-cultural/activity theory, deriving in part from the concepts of Vygotsky (1962, 1978), sheds light on a range of concepts not addressed by cognitive theory, since it illuminates the role of social interaction in creating an environment in which to learn language, learn about language, and learn through language. It does not necessarily contradict interactionist
approaches, but rather examines interaction within a broader social context. In Vygotsky’s view, all human learning and development is bound up in activity, by which he means purposeful actions mediated by various devices or tools (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1979). More specifically, in SCT, all forms of higher mental activity are said to be mediated by devices that intervene in the context of an interaction between human beings and the world of objects, events and behaviour. Such devices can be either physical or symbolic. Physical tools enable individuals, acting with others, to alter and shape their world. Similarly, there are symbolic tools, or what Vygotsky calls psychological tools, such as mnemonic devices, diagrams, maps, street signs and, above all, language, which serve as mediators of mental activity.

Another key concept in socio-historical development is the dichotomy of other-regulation/self-regulation. Other-regulation is appropriate mediation of language by a parent or teacher, usually captured in the metaphor of scaffolding. Scaffolding takes place in interactions involving two or more people in which at least one person acts as a mentor and the other(s) as a relative novice(s). The individual taking the mentoring role promotes the novice’s appropriation of new knowledge by co-constructing it with him or her through shared activity. All of this activity is said to take place in what is known as the ZPD, that is, the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under the guidance of another human being.

In its more recent formulation, AT (Thorne 2005) is defined in relation to the organization of practice. In any activity system, there exists a division of labour according to which certain roles are assigned or negotiated among the participants, and from which emerges the tacit or explicit rules that individuals and the community as a whole follow when interacting
with each other and with mediating artifacts. The “community of practice”, an affiliated term, is seen to emerge from this division of labour, and is, according to Wenger (1998), the prime context in which individuals can work out common sense through (continuous) mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire of communicative resources.

A crucial aspect of AT is its emphasis on history, that is, human behaviour is traced to its historical rather than biological sources, and the study of development is conceived as observation of genetic processes occurring over time. Although AT is interested in four historical domains, phylogenesis (the development of species), socio-cultural history (development of human cultures over time), ontogenesis (life history of individuals), and microgenesis (history of particular psychological functions over short periods of time), language development research focuses primarily on the latter two. Microgenetic study of language development closely examines the particular features of interactive settings as development takes place, whereas ontogenetic study is more longitudinal in scope, tracing changes as they occur over more extended periods of time.

Another key concept from AT is the developmental view of motive. From the perspective of AT, the meaning of human behaviour arises from a need directed toward an object. The projection from the object to the outcome of the behaviour is the motive. Motives are not always pre-established, but are dynamic and malleable, and may be formulated in the process of activity itself. Thus, in the case of language learning research, the practice of referring to participants as “learners” in all contexts and at all times can be misleading, as the motives of the individual participants may be subject to temporal or contextual shift. Lantolf and Genung (2002), for example, illustrate this with the case of a graduate student enrolled in a summer intensive Chinese course. Whereas the student entered the course as an experienced language learner with
the expectation that she would develop communicative competence in Chinese, institutional constraints on the quality of the instruction eventually led her to reformulate her motive to that of merely passing the course with an acceptable grade. The qualities of the language learning experience, in other words, may lead people to reformulate their motives for participation such that they refine, rework, or abandon their reasons for engagement in these activities.

Thus, in practice, socio-cultural research implies a concern with prolonged, ecologically valid observation of human action within different time frames. The case study therefore figures among the preferred methodologies. In fact, major proponents of the approach have urged researchers to develop “robust and detailed case studies documenting the activities of people on the periphery of linguistic communities of practice and how they gain or are denied (full) participation in these communities” (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001, p. 155). In the case under study here, I examined the activities of beginner FSL university learners as they negotiated access to interaction in French. For these learners, a population for which there is a paucity of socio-historically situated research, interaction is provided through a telecollaborative-mediated L2 writing exchange; one group including “expert” speakers of French and one group composed of peers of similar language proficiency. Exploring learners’ access to interaction in French provided information concerning learners’ perceptions of their current, as well as prior, language learning experience and ultimately identity shaping.

**L2 Writing Theory**

I have chosen to include a section discussing L2 writing because I believe it is important to justify my choice to implement an email writing activity as the basis for FSL learning in my study. There are two reasons. First, at a time when technology offers a wide variety of
communication options, email may seem simplistic. However, I believe email offers beginner L2 writers a language-level-appropriate medium in which to express themselves and practice the new language. A more detailed rationale for using this technology can be found in the section titled Telecollaboration below. A second reason, which I discuss here, is because I believe the role of written language in language learning has been neglected.

**The Neglected Role of L2 Writing in Language Learning**

The majority of university course catalogues describe beginner or basic French language classes as an introduction to the basic language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. These descriptions are deceiving, I believe, for two reasons. First, they completely omit “viewing” as a skill, thus reducing language learning to traditional foundational literacy skills. Second, although “speaking” is usually listed at the end of the description, it is clearly given priority over the other skills, thus reducing language learning to an activity comprised of dialogically separate components rather than a socio-historically developing whole. Bias towards speech has been popular for decades, and has not altered with the decline of audiolingualism. For example, the natural approach to language teaching emphasizes “the ability to understand and speak” (Terrell, Egasse, & Andrade, 1990, p. xix). Communicative language teaching uses “class-room activities designed to get learners to speak and listen to each other” (Scrivenor, 1994, p. 62). Alternative methods such as Total Physical Response (TPR) use story-telling, not story-reading (Seely & Romijn, 1998). Few people have taken the view that writing should hold a significant role in L2 teaching, except, perhaps, for Krashen’s advocacy of free voluntary reading as a form of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1993). In 1984, Howatt (1984) pointed out, That spoken language is promoted more now than at any time since the Reform Movement, which seems as true two decades later.
The discussion is clouded by the gap between official language teaching methodology and the reality in the classroom. What relationships do the recommendations by methodologists and syllabuses, which are directed by external forces such as research, institutional demands, and societal beliefs as to the importance of the language being learned, have to what actually goes on in the classroom? That is to say, even if teachers are exhorted to use and place priority on the spoken language, do they really do so? If they do, is it practical to expect spoken language development in a classroom of forty or more students?

The bridge here is coursebooks, lab manuals, and complementary resources; which, by their very nature, take the form of the written word. Despite the apparent variety of these resources, the use of written language in beginner’s coursebooks is often deceiving. Cook (2005) shows how written language is handled in language teaching, how the role of written language subsumes that of spoken language. He argues convincingly that: (a) written scripts are primarily a way of teaching spoken language by providing a permanent record, not of teaching written language, (b) written language is often a device for explaining and giving instructions; a kind of meta-language of teaching, rather than a way in to writing itself, (c) written language within teaching activities is mostly a pretext for spoken exercises, involving uses of language not encountered outside textbooks, and (d) texts are mostly restricted to short quasi-factual biographies. There are some longer texts about interesting facts, again seldom text types that would occur outside a teaching context. These features seem typical of the type of written language to which most students in a beginner FSL university course are exposed. Though they may be interpreted differently by different teachers, there is no reason to think that the average beginning student will encounter a totally different range of written language than that represented by these resources. Is it surprising, therefore, that many teachers and learners still see
L2 writing as an exercise in perfecting grammar and vocabulary? Explicit instruction on the process of insightful writing is unusual in the beginner FSL university classroom. This is disconcerting given that Reichelt (1999) has found an increase in studies on L2 writing – other than English – since 1990. He has also noticed that many of the researchers consider themselves language teachers rather than writing teachers, thus supporting the notion that L2 writing is currently seen more as L2 instruction than writing instruction.

Atay and Kurt (2006) suggest that L2 writing should not be limited to controlled exercises. If it is, L2 writing at the university level will cause anxiety in students who are not used to this kind of writing. That is, students should be encouraged to express their ideas and knowledge in writing from the early stages of education (including pre-university). If L2 writing is to be a pleasant experience, it seems crucial to establish a learning environment where students can write in their L2 without embarrassment, where every student writer’s contribution is adequately valued and where self-confidence is built up. To this end, instructors need to offer more motivation and positive feedback and allow experimentation without evaluation.

The Nature of L2 Writing for Beginner L2 Learners

Although I argue for the importance of L2 writing for beginner FSL learners, I acknowledge that L2 writing is a challenging and complex process. While the first language (L1) writing process includes producing content, drafting ideas, revising, choosing appropriate vocabulary, and editing text (see section below for details on process writing), writing in an L2 involves all of these elements combined with L2 learning issues. In the case of lower L2 proficiency writers, these L2 issues can overwhelm the writing process, even to the point of a complete breakdown of the process (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). For this reason, L1 is often
used to drive L2 writing, although the amount of L1 used during L2 writing is not the same for all L2 writers. In general, proficient L2 learners do not depend heavily on the L1 to drive the writing process because they have a sufficient level of L2 automaticity and knowledge to think and plan in that language (Jones & Tetroe, 1987). However, lower L2 proficiency writers rely more heavily on their L1 during the writing process in order to sustain the process and prevent a complete breakdown in language (Cumming, 1989; Raimes, 1985; Uzawa & Cumming, 1989).

**Compensating Strategies**

Despite the importance of L2 writing for beginner FSL learners and the growing body of studies that have looked in detail at the composing process and strategies of L2 writers (Cumming, 2001), few have examined the transfer of L1 composing strategies and processes to the L2 writing process (see Kamimura, 1996). Some studies suggest that L2 writers faced with writing tasks requiring an L2 proficiency level above that of the writer do not transfer L1 strategies to the L2 writing process, even though the writer may have a multiplicity of strategies available when completing the same task in the L1. One implication is, then, that L2 writers faced with difficult writing tasks need to be taught compensating strategies that facilitate the transfer of L1 strategies to the L2 writing process.

**Definition.**

A compensating strategy is any strategy that breaks the writing task down to allow the L2 writer to focus on smaller chunks of the task and thus reduce the cognitive load.

**Translation.**

The most widely examined compensating strategy in the literature is translation, where lower L2 proficiency writers first write a draft in their L1 in order to solidify content and
organization before dealing with the L2 issues of translation and rhetorical style (Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; Cumming, 1989; Jones & Tetroe, 1987; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1994; Raimes, 1985; Uzawa & Cumming, 1989). This method of translation appears to appeal to some writers but not others, which suggests that only teaching translation as a compensating strategy may not be enough. Writers may need to be exposed to a variety of strategies so that they can select those that match their individual preferences and writing styles.

**L1 use and organization.**

In addition to translation, another compensating strategy that may be effective for some writers is using the L1 mainly during the brainstorming and idea organization stages of the writing process rather than writing a whole draft in the L1. Then, after all the ideas are on the page, with a general understanding of how they will be organized into the paper, writers can generate the actual text for the essay in the L2 while following the previously established sequence of ideas. This strategy may work well for writers whose L2 proficiency is not high enough to allow them to compose completely in the L2 but also not so low as to warrant writing a complete draft in the L1.

**Tolerance for error.**

A third compensating strategy that may be helpful for lower proficiency L2 writers is maintaining a high tolerance for error and ambiguity during the initial drafting stages. Being overly concerned with L2 surface-level accuracy can hinder focus on the deeper aspects of content and organization within the essays. Once halted, a significant amount of time is spent in trying to recover thoughts and continue writing. Lower L2 proficiency writers need to be taught that L2 errors in the initial stages of writing are not only acceptable but are expected. Undue concern over these micro-level language errors can result in macro-level problems and a product
that is not up to the standard that the writer is capable of. Writers need to recognize that in the writing process, numerous drafts allow first, idea generation, then idea manipulation and reformulation, and finally the chance to correct word choice, grammar, and spelling.

**Keeping the standard and lowering the standard.**

A fourth compensating strategy is pointed out in a study conducted by Uzawa and Cumming (1989). They observed two distinct strategies that helped sustain the writing process of their lower L2 proficiency subjects. One they termed “keeping the standard” and the other “lowering the standard”. Keeping the standard strategies were used in L2 writing in order to maintain the level of writing achieved in the L1. These were strategies such as taking more time, revising extensively, and seeking assistance. Lowering the standard strategies were used in order to complete the writing task within a reasonable amount of time and without excessive mental effort. These were strategies such as reducing information, simplifying syntax, substituting lexical items, and ignoring reader concerns. Some of the subjects in the study produced L2 papers that had less content than their L1 writing, but about equal quality to their L1 writing. Overall, the L1 aided in keeping the standard.

**L2 Writing Classroom Orientations**

Although to date there exists no extensive theory or empirically-grounded model of L2 writing (Cumming, 1998, 2001; Cumming & Riazi, 2000; Grabe, 2001; Silva, 1993), there is a growing body of research to be drawn upon to inform L2 writing in the L2 teaching and learning context. In a comprehensive review of the past two decades of this research, Cumming (2001) notes that it has focused on three areas: text features, composing processes, and context. To date,
research and, subsequently, teaching has treated these dimensions separately, though they are integrally related.

This section reviews some of the ways that writing is viewed, based on the three dimensions noted above, and the implications this has for teaching beginner L2 writing. Here, I explore some of the kinds of knowledge and skills involved in writing in order to become aware of some general principles for beginner L2 writing teaching through a critical analysis of the main classroom orientations.

As an FSL language teacher, one of my main responsibilities is conceptualizing, planning, and delivering instruction. In part, this is an application of practical professional knowledge, gained through hands-on classroom experience. It is also largely informed by my theories and beliefs about language learning, including writing. It is also informed by observations of how people learn to write, which, in turn, help me to reflect on assumptions and enable me to approach current teaching methods with an informed and critical eye.

A number of theories supporting teachers’ efforts to understand L2 writing for all languages have developed mostly due to the emergence of EFL/ESL writing as a distinctive area of scholarship in the 1980s. In most cases each has been enthusiastically taken up, translated into appropriate methodologies, and put to work in classrooms. Yet each also has typically been seen as another piece in the jigsaw, an additional perspective to illuminate what learners need to learn and what teachers need to provide for effective writing instruction. So, while often treated as historically evolving movements (e.g., Raimes, 1991), it would be wrong, as pointed out during the review of SLA theory in the previous subsection, to see each theory growing out of, and replacing, the last. They are more accurately seen as complementary and overlapping
perspectives, representing potentially compatible means of understanding the complex reality of writing. It is helpful, therefore, to understand these theories as curriculum options, each organizing L2 writing teaching around a different focus: language structures, text functions, themes or topics, creative expression, composing processes, content, genre, and contexts of writing.

Few teachers adopt and strictly follow just one of these orientations in their classrooms. Instead, they tend to adopt an eclectic range of methods that represent several perspectives, accommodating their practices to the constraints of their teaching situations and their beliefs about how students learn to write. Acknowledging that the “pure” application of a particular theory is quite rare, it is common for one to predominate in how teachers conceptualize their work and organize what they do in their classrooms (Cumming, 2003). So, therefore, it is helpful to examine each conception separately to discover more clearly what each tells us about writing and how it can support our teaching.

*Focus on text structures.*

One way to look at writing is to see it as marks on a page or a screen forming a coherent arrangement of words, clauses, and sentences, structured according to a system of rules. Conceptualizing L2 writing in this way directs attention to writing as a product and encourages a focus on formal text units or grammatical features of texts. In this view, learning to write in an FL or L2 mainly involves acquiring linguistic knowledge of vocabulary choices, syntactic patterns, and cohesive devices that comprise the essential building blocks of texts.

This orientation was born from the marriage of structural linguistics and the behaviourist learning theories of L2 teaching that were dominant in the 1960s (Silva, 1990). For many who
adopt this view, writing is regarded as an extension of grammar – a means of reinforcing language patterns through habit formation and of testing learners’ ability to produce well-formed sentences. For others, writing is the building of an intricate structure that can only be learned by developing the ability to manipulate lexis and grammar.

The structural orientation thus emphasizes writing as combinations of lexical and syntactic forms, and good writing as the demonstration of knowledge of these forms and of the rules used to create texts. Accuracy and clear exposition are considered the main criteria of good writing, while the actual communicative content, the meaning, is left to be dealt with later. Teaching writing predominantly involves developing learners’ skills in producing fixed patterns, and responding to writing is identifying and correcting problems in the student’s control of the language system. Many of these techniques are widely used today in writing classes at lower levels of language proficiency for building vocabulary, scaffolding writing development, and increasing the confidence of novice writers, who may also be novice L2 learners.

Although many beginner L2 students learn to write in this way, a structural orientation can create serious problems. One drawback is that formal patterns are often presented as short fragments that tend to be based on the intuitions of educational materials writers rather than the analysis of real texts derived from the learners’ own social and historical context. This not only hinders students from developing their writing beyond a few sentences, but can also mislead or confuse them when they have to write in other situations. Nor is it easy to see how a focus restricted to grammar can lead to better writing. Research has tried to measure improvements in students’ writing by noting increases in their use of formal features, such as relative clauses, or the “syntactic complexity” of their texts (e.g., Hunt, 1983). Syntactic complexity and grammatical accuracy, however, are not the only measures of writing improvement and may not
even be the best measures of good writing. Most teachers are familiar with students who can construct accurate sentences and yet are unable to produce appropriate written texts, indeed fewer errors in an essay may simply reveal a reluctance to take risks, rather than indicate progress.

More seriously, the goal of writing instruction can never be just training in explicitness and accuracy because written texts are always a response to a particular communicative setting. No feature can be a universal marker of good writing because the goodness of writing is always relative to context. Writers always draw on their knowledge of their readers and similar texts to decide both what to say and how to say it, aware that different forms express different relationships and meanings. Conversely, readers always draw on their linguistic and contextual assumptions to recover these meanings from texts; this is confirmed in the large literature on the role of knowledge-based inference in reading comprehension (e.g., Barnett, 1989).

For these reasons, few L2 writing teachers now judge writing merely by its surface form. But it is equally unhelpful to see language proficiency as irrelevant to learning to write. Control over surface features is crucial, and students need an understanding of how words, sentences, and larger discourse structures can shape and express the meanings they want to convey. Given this stance, therefore, it was important that the L2 writing activity designed for this study include formal elements of the entry-level FSL course, but that it also look beyond language structures to ensure that the students did not just know how to write grammatically correct texts, but also how to apply this knowledge for their particular purposes and contexts.
**Focus on writing functions.**

While L2 students obviously need an understanding of appropriate grammar and vocabulary when learning to write, writing is obviously not only these things. If language structures are to be part of a writing course, then we need principled reasons for choosing which patterns to teach and how these patterns can be used effectively. An important principle here is to relate structures to meanings, making language use a criterion for teaching materials. This introduces the idea that particular language forms perform certain communicative functions and that students can be taught the functions most relevant to their needs. Functions are the means for achieving the ends (or purposes) of writing. This orientation is sometimes labelled “current traditional rhetoric” or simply a “functional approach” and is influential where L2 students are being prepared for academic writing at college or university.

One aim of this focus is to help students to develop effective paragraphs through the use of topic sentences, supporting sentences, and transitions, and to develop different types of paragraphs. Students are guided to produce connected sentences according to prescribed formulas through activities that tend to focus on form and positively reinforce model writing patterns. As with sentence-level activities, composing exercises often include so-called free writing methods, which largely involve asking learners to reorder sentences in scrambled paragraphs, to select appropriate sentences to complete gapped paragraphs, and to write paragraphs from provided information.

Clearly, this orientation is heavily influenced by the structural model described above, as paragraphs are treated almost as syntactic units, like sentences, in which writers can fit particular functional units into given slots. From this it is a short step to applying the same principles to entire essays. Given this, it seems likely that the functional approach, used judiciously, could be
implemented with beginner L2 writers, not only with more advanced learners being prepared for academic writing. I emphasize that the functional approach be used judiciously, because an exclusive focus on form or function means that writing is detached from the practical purposes and personal experiences of the writer. Methods such as guided compositions are based on the assumption that texts are objects that can be taught independently of particular contexts, writers, or readers, and that by following certain rules, writers can fully represent their intended meanings. Writing, however, is more than a matter of arranging elements in the best order, and writing instruction is more than assisting learners to remember and execute these patterns. An awareness of this has led teachers to make efforts to introduce the writer into their models of writing and writing teaching.

**Focus on creative expression.**

The third teaching orientation takes the writer, rather than form, as the point of departure. Following L1 composition theorists such as Elbow (1998) and Murray (1985), many writing teachers from liberal arts backgrounds see their classroom goal as fostering L2 students’ expressive abilities, encouraging them to find their own voices to produce writing that is fresh, spontaneous, and meaningful to them. These classrooms are organized around students’ personal experiences and perceptions, and writing is considered a creative act of self-discovery. This can help generate self-awareness in L2 learners’, as well as awareness of social position and literate possibilities (Friere, 1974). It can also facilitate “clear thinking, effective relating, and satisfying self-expression” (Moffett, 1982, p. 235). Cumming (2003) remarks on a writing teacher in Japan who described his approach as one in which he tried to challenge the students to be creative in expressing themselves. Students learned to express their feelings and opinions so that others could understand what they thought and liked to do. The teacher commented that some students
presented potential employers with their poems as evidence of their writing skills learned in university.

From this perspective, writing is learned, not taught, so writing instruction is nondirective and personal. Writing is a way of sharing personal meanings and classes that implement this writing approach emphasize the power of the individual to construct his or her own views on a topic. Teachers see their role as simply to provide students with the space to make their own meanings within a positive and collaborative environment. Because writing is a developmental process, they try to avoid imposing their views by offering models or suggesting responses to topics beforehand. Instead, they seek to stimulate the writer’s ideas through pre-writing tasks, such as journal writing and parallel texts. Because writing is an act of discovering meaning, a willingness to engage with students’ assertions is crucial, and response is a central means to elicit and guide ideas (e.g., Straub, 2000). This orientation further urges teachers to respond to the ideas that learners produce rather than dwell on formal errors (Murray, 1985). Students have considerable opportunities for writing and exercises may focus on features such as style, wordiness, clichés, active versus passive voice, and so on. In contrast to the rigid practice of a more form-oriented approach, writers are urged to be creative and to take chances.

Expressivism is an important approach as it encourages writers to explore their perceptions of their lived experiences, engage with the ideas of others, and connect with readers. Yet it leans heavily on an asocial view of the writer, and its ideology of individualism may disadvantage L2 students from cultures that place a different value on self-expression. In addition, it may be difficult to extract clear principles from which to teach and evaluate “good writing” from the approach. It simply assumes that all writers have a similar innate creative potential and can learn to express themselves through writing if their originality and spontaneity
are allowed to flourish. Writing is seen as springing from self-discovery guided by topics of potential interest to writers and, as a result, the approach is likely to be most successful in the hands of teachers who themselves write creatively. Murray (1985), for instance, provides a good account of expressivist methods, but also suggests that the teacher’s own insights are part of the process.

So despite its influence in L1 writing classrooms, expressivism has been treated cautiously in L2 contexts. Although many L2 students have learned successfully through this approach, even beginner L2 writers who have had some exposure to it in classes that, for the most part, place emphasis on text structure and function, others may experience difficulties, as it tends to neglect the cultural backgrounds of learners, the social consequences of writing, and the purposes of communication.

Focus on composing processes.

Probably the model of writing processes most widely accepted by L2 writing teachers is the original planning-writing-reviewing framework established by Flower and Hayes (Flower, 1989; Flower & Hayes, 1981). This sees writing as a “non-linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to negotiate meaning” (Zamel, 1983, p. 165). Planning, drafting, revising, and editing do not occur in a neat linear sequence, but are recursive, interactive, and sometimes simultaneous, and all work can be reviewed, evaluated, and revised, even before any text has been produced at all. At any point the writer can jump backward or forward to any of these activities: returning to the library or Internet for more data, revising the plan to accommodate new ideas, or rewriting for readability after peer feedback.
This basic model of writing has been elaborated to further describe what goes on at each stage of the process and to integrate cognitive with social factors to play a more central role. (Flower, 1994). Building on this work, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) have argued that we need at least two process models to account for the differences in the complexity of the processing performed by skilled and novice writers. They label these as knowledge-telling and knowledge-transforming models. The first addresses the fact that novice writers plan less than experts, revise less often and less extensively, have more limited goals, and are mainly concerned with generating content. The latter shows how skilled writers use the writing activity to analyze problems, reflect on the job at hand, and set goals to actively rework thoughts to change both their text and ideas. For writing teachers the model helps explain the difficulties L2 students sometimes experience because of the complexity of a writing activity and a lack of topic knowledge. Its emphasis on reflective thought also stresses the need for students to participate in a variety of cognitively challenging writing activities to develop their skills, and the importance of feedback and revision in the process of transforming both content and expression. The question, in my mind, when implementing the process approach with L2 learners, especially beginners, is are we dealing with a writing issue or a language issue?

A significant number of L2 teachers, including myself, have adopted a process orientation to teaching writing, and the approach has had a major impact on writing research and teaching in North America. The teacher’s role is to guide students through the writing process, avoiding an emphasis on form until later stages to help them develop strategies for generating, drafting, and refining ideas. This is achieved through setting pre-writing activities intended to generate ideas about content and structure, encouraging brainstorming and outlining, requiring multiple drafts, giving extensive feedback, requesting text-level revisions, facilitating peer
responses, and delaying surface corrections until the final editing (Raimes, 1992). The teaching strategies developed to facilitate process goals have extended to most teaching contexts and there are few who have not employed teacher–student conferences, problem-based assignments, journal writing, group discussions, or portfolio assessments in their classes.

A priority of teachers of this orientation, therefore, is to develop their students’ meta-cognitive awareness of their processes, that is, their ability to reflect on the strategies they use to write in their L1. In addition to composing and revising strategies, such an orientation places great emphasis on responses to writing. A response is potentially one of the most influential texts in a process writing class, and the point at which the teacher’s intervention is most obvious and perhaps most crucial. Not only does this individual attention play an important part in motivating learners, it is also the point at which overt correction and explicit language teaching are most likely to occur. Response is crucial in assisting learners to move through the stages of the writing process, and various means of providing feedback are used, including teacher–student conferences, peer response, audio-taped feedback, and reformulation. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of error correction and grammar teaching in assisting learners to improve their writing remains controversial in this model (Ferris, 1997; Truscott, 1996).

Despite considerable research into writing processes, however, we still do not have a comprehensive idea of how learners go about a writing activity or how they learn to write. It is clear that cognition is a central element of the process, and researchers are now more aware of the complexity of planning and editing activities, the influence of activity in general, and the value of examining what writers actually do when they write. But although these understandings can contribute to the ways we teach, process models are hampered by small-scale, often contradictory studies and the difficulties of getting inside writers’ heads to discover unconscious
processing. They are currently unable to tell us why writers make certain choices or how they actually make the cognitive transition to a knowledge-transforming model, nor do they spell out what occurs in the intervening stages or whether the process is the same for all learners. While Berieter and Scardamalia’s idea of multiple processing models opens the door to a clearer understanding of the writing process, no complete model exists yet that allows us to predict the relative difficulty for students of particular writing activities or topics or their likely progress given certain kinds of instruction (Grabe, 2003). Using stimulated-recall interviews to provoke learners’ meta-cognitive awareness of their processes, that is, to encourage reflection on the strategies they use to write drafts and complete versions of collaborative writing compositions, my study contributes to this body of knowledge.

As with SLA theory, it is evident that an exclusive emphasis on psychological factors in writing will not provide the whole picture, either theoretically or pedagogically. Forces outside the individual that help guide the writer to define problems, frame solutions, and shape the text also need to be considered (Bizzell, 1992; Faigley, 1986). As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, each orientation illuminates just one aspect of writing; the process of writing is a rich amalgam of elements of which cognition is only one. Process approaches overemphasize “the cognitive relationship between the writer and the writer’s internal world” (Swales, 1990, p. 220), and as a result they fail to offer clear perspective on the social nature of writing or on the role of language and text structure in effective written communication. Encouraging students to make their own meanings and find their own text forms does not provide them with clear guidelines on how to construct the different kinds of texts they have to write.

I have devoted a great deal of attention to process teaching methods and the theories that underpin them as these represent the dominant approach in L2 writing teaching today. Once
again, however, it is necessary to look beyond a single approach. Process theories alone cannot help us to confidently advise students on their writing, and this is perhaps one reason why there is little evidence to show that process methods alone lead to significantly better writing. Quite simply, equipping novice writers with the strategies of good writers (whether L1 or L2) does not necessarily lead to improvement (Polio, 2001). Students not only need help in learning how to write, but also in understanding how texts are shaped by topic, audience, purpose, and cultural norms (Hyland, 2002). Studies show that such social factors can be incorporated into writing activities by concentrating on content.

**Focus on content.**

In addition to the process approach to writing, another way of conceptualizing L2 writing is with reference to substantive content: what students are required to write about. Typically this involves a set of themes or topics of interest that establish a coherent purpose for the writing activity or that set out the sequence of key areas of subject matter that students will address (see Mohan, 1986). Students will have some personal knowledge of these themes and will be able to write meaningfully about them. This is a popular organizing principle for L2 classes with a writing component and textbooks for students of all ages and abilities, including beginner L2 learners, and many teachers base their classes on topics students select themselves. In most cases such classes rarely focus exclusively on content and, in fact, represent interesting ways teachers can integrate and combine different conceptualizations of writing.

Themes and topics frequently form the basis of process activities, where writing activities are often organized around social issues such as culture, politics, pollution, relationships, stress, juvenile crime, smoking, and so on. L2 students may be disadvantaged in such classrooms as they do not typically have a strong familiarity with the language structures, the topics or the
types of texts they have to write. Given this caveat, my study examined how these integrated writing activities may be useful to beginner FSL learners at the university level and can be important in encouraging them to think about language learning in new ways by helping them acquire the appropriate cognitive schema and knowledge of topics and vocabulary they will need to create an effective text. Schema development exercises usually include reading for ideas in parallel texts, reacting to photographs, and various brainstorming activities to generate ideas for writing and organizing texts. This kind of activity is useful for building a list of issues, and also for identifying relationships between them and determining which aspects to write about.

Clearly content-oriented L2 writing activities can be tailored to students at different proficiency levels by varying the amount of information provided. Some researchers suggest that at lower or beginner levels, much of the content can be supplied in a scaffolding manner (either by the teacher, peers, mentors, or other sources) to reduce students’ difficulties in generating and organizing material, while at more advanced levels students are often required to collaborate in collecting and sharing information as a basis for their writing. Students may be asked to conduct research of some kind, either in the library, on the Internet, or through the use of interviews and questionnaires, so teachers may find themselves providing assistance with data collection techniques. It has been my experience that group work is frequently a key element of these classes, at both the advanced and beginner levels, and collaboration among students in generating ideas, collecting information, focusing priorities, and structuring their texts provides practical purposes for genuine communication.

A content orientation can also form the basis of writing activities that focus more on language structures and functions. Such activities help students to generate, develop, and organize their ideas on a given topic in ways similar to those discussed above for activities with
process leanings. Students are then typically presented with language structures and vocabulary items directly relevant to the topic, which they then practice through a series of exercises. There may follow an introduction to, and explanation of, the rhetorical patterns, which may be useful to students as a framework for expressing their ideas, developing learners’ awareness of function.

It should be clear that content-oriented methods tend to rely heavily on reading and exploit the close relationship between writing and reading in preparing to write.

Research suggests that L2 writing skills cannot be acquired successfully by practice in writing alone but also need to be supported with extensive reading (Krashen, 1993), a form of reading in which students typically select books from a wide variety of genres and language levels. Extensive reading is done for enjoyment and interest with minimal post-reading activities, such as compositions and book-reports.

Whether assigned or voluntary, reading has been shown to be a positive influence on composing skills at various stages of proficiency. This is because both processes involve the individual in constructing meaning through the application of complex cognitive and linguistic abilities that draw on problem-solving skills and the activation of existing knowledge of both structure and content (Carson & Leki, 1993; Grabe, 2001). Reading may yield new knowledge within a topic area for students, but more importantly it provides them with the rhetorical and structural knowledge they need to develop, modify, and activate schemata, which is invaluable when writing. In other words, extensive reading, although it places emphasis on maximizing input rather than output, can furnish a great deal of tacit knowledge of conventional features of written texts, including grammar, vocabulary, organizational patterns, interactional devices, and
so on. Therefore, what students read – particularly the relevance of the specific genres to which they are exposed – are important elements.

This last point draws attention to the fact that literacy acquisition rarely occurs in a vacuum; in other words, one does not set out to learn an L2 without a motive. Writing instruction is typically geared toward some end: students will employ their writing skills for various academic, professional, or social purposes. In fact, “content-based” has come to mean an approach that focuses on the requirements of particular subject areas. In other words, such approaches focus on the language, composing skills, and specific text conventions associated with a particular domain and its “content” or subject matter. In this way writing instruction seeks to motivate learners by focusing on contexts and content that are relevant and significant to them.

Such activities may place considerable emphasis on preparing students to engage effectively in their target academic or professional communities, and most involve collaboration with other students and/or subject teachers to draw on their specialist knowledge. However, although content provides one orientation for the class, teachers typically draw on structural, functional, or process methods in its delivery, and frequently draw on a genre focus to highlight the rhetorical structure of written texts.

**Focus on genre.**

Teachers who take a genre orientation to writing instruction look beyond subject content, composing processes, and textual forms to see writing as an attempt to communicate with readers. They are concerned with teaching learners how to use language patterns to create coherent, purposeful prose. The central belief here is that we don’t just write, we write something to achieve some purpose: it is a way of getting something done. To get things done, to tell a
story, request an overdraft, craft a love letter, describe a technical process, and so on, we follow certain social conventions for organizing messages because we want our readers to recognize our purpose. These abstract, socially recognized ways of using language for particular purposes are called genres.

In the classroom, genre teachers focus on texts, but this is not the narrow focus of a disembodied grammar. Instead, linguistic patterns are seen as pointing to contexts beyond the page, implying a range of social constraints and choices that operate on writers in a particular context. The writer is seen as having certain goals and intentions, certain relationships to his or her readers, and certain information to convey, and the forms of a text are resources used to accomplish these. In sum, the importance of a genre orientation is that it incorporates discourse and contextual aspects of language use that may be neglected when attending to structures, functions, or processes alone. This means that it can not only address the needs of L2 writers to compose texts for particular readers, but it can also draw the teacher into considering how texts actually work as communication.

Classroom perspectives on genre largely draw on the theory of systemic functional linguistics originally developed by Michael Halliday (e.g., Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Hasan, 1989). This theory addresses the relationship between language and its social functions and sets out to show how language is a system from which users make choices to express meanings. Halliday argues that we have developed very specific ways of using language to accomplish our goals, which means that texts are related to social contexts and to other texts. Broadly, when a set of texts share the same purpose, they will often share the same structure, and thus they belong to the same genre. So genres are resources for getting things done, and we all have a repertoire of
appropriate responses we can call on for recurring situations, from shopping lists to job applications.

Most simply, Martin (1992) defines a genre as a goal-oriented, staged social process. Genres are social processes because they arise from the interactions of the members of a culture; they are goal-oriented because they have evolved to achieve things; and staged because meanings are made in steps, and it usually takes writers more than one step to reach their goals. By setting out the stages, or moves, of valued genres, teachers can provide students with an explicit grammar of linguistic choices, both within and beyond the sentence, to produce texts that seem well-formed and appropriate to readers. All texts can therefore be described in terms of both form and function, that is, how their elements are organized for making meanings and the purposes these serve.

Writing instruction begins with the purposes for communicating, then moves to the stages of a text that can realize these purposes. Teachers can help students to distinguish between different genres and to use them more effectively through a careful study of their structures. Even people much younger than the participants in this study can distinguish the genres of texts by their structure.

In an L2 writing classroom, teachers following a genre orientation draw on the work of Vygotsky (1978) and its interpretation by Bruner (1986). This stresses the view that learning occurs best when learners engage in activities that are within their ZPD, the area between what they can do independently and what they can do with assistance (for details, refer to previous subsection). In this view, learning to write in an L2 evolves from interaction and activity
negotiation with a more knowledgeable person, and the teacher, peer, or mentor has a central role in scaffolding this development.

The method used to achieve this is a process of contextualizing, modeling, negotiating, and constructing, which is usually presented as a cycle. At the beginning of this learning cycle, as the learner gradually assimilates the activity demands and procedures for constructing the genre effectively, direct instruction is crucial. At this stage the mentor adopts a highly interventionist role, ensuring that students are able to understand and reproduce the typical rhetorical patterns they need to express their meanings. At later stages learners require more autonomy. Importantly, writing is the outcome of activity, rather than an activity itself. The classroom is characterized by talk, by many kinds of writing, and by the development of a meta-language by which students can describe and control the structural and grammatical features of the texts they write. Grammar is important, but presented as a way of giving learners the language they need to construct central genres and to reflect on how language is used to accomplish this.

Genre pedagogy is underpinned by the belief that learning should be based on explicit awareness of language, rather than through experiment and exploration, so teachers provide students with opportunities to develop their writing through analyzing “expert” texts. Working with genres is both what students actively do with language and how they come to understand the ways it works; however, this “reproductive” element has been criticized as running the risk of producing a static, decontextualized pedagogy. This is, of course, a danger for all pedagogies, but untrained or unimaginative teachers may fail to acknowledge variation and choice in writing and so neglect the important step of contextualizing the language with the result that genre models are presented as rigid templates and forms represented as linguistic abstractions. When
this happens, the explicit teaching of genres can impose restrictive formulae that can shackle creativity (Sawyer & Watson, 1987). Students might then regard genres as sets of rules or how-to-do lists.

There is therefore a tension between expression and repression in genre teaching that is not fully resolved. It is clear, however, that learners must know both how to employ conventional patterns and the circumstances in which they can change them as much as they need when drafting and editing their work. For teachers it is important to foster creativity while acknowledging the ways language is conventionally used to express meaning.

The different perspectives outlined above provided me with options, or complementary alternatives for designing the L2 writing activity in this study that have implications for teaching and learning.

Teachers frequently combine these orientations in imaginative and effective ways. Most commonly, however, they favour either a process or genre orientation and we should not gloss over the protracted – and often bitterly argued – debate between these two positions. This debate boils down to the relative merits of predominantly text-focused pedagogies, which emphasize the social nature of writing, and more writer-centered process methods, which stress its more cognitive aspects. By laying out the main attributes of these two orientations side-by-side, however, it can be seen how the strengths of one might complement the weaknesses of the other.

The conflict between process and product can only be damaging to classroom practice, and the two are more usefully seen as supplementing each other. Writing is a socio-cognitive activity that involves skills in planning and drafting as well as knowledge of language, contexts, and audiences. The methodology for implementing the L2 writing activity in my study took into
account, therefore, the importance of incorporating and extending the insights of the main orientations in the following ways: (1) respect students’ needs for relevant content through stimulating readings and source materials; (2) support genre pedagogy with strategies for planning, drafting, and revising texts; and (3) situate writing in a conception of audience and link it to broader social structures. In practice this means a synthesis to ensure that learners have an adequate understanding of the processes of text creation, the purposes of writing and how to accomplish these in effective ways through formal and rhetorical text choices, and the contexts within which texts are composed and read, and that give them meaning. While I have discussed processes and purposes already, it is worth considering context in a little more detail as it is central to understanding and teaching writing, as well as to the writing medium implemented in my study.

**Focus on context.**

The notion of context echoes the belief inherent in the genre orientation that writing does not take place outside particular communities, and that the genres we teach should be seen as responses to the purposes of those communities, whether professional, academic, or social (Bruffee, 1986). Skilled writers are able to create successful texts by accurately predicting readers’ background knowledge and anticipating what they are likely to expect from a particular piece of writing. In our own domains – our homes, workplaces, or classrooms – we are comfortable with the genres we use because we are familiar with them and have a good idea how to create texts that will connect with our readers. We are able to draw on a shared community schema to structure our writing so that our audience can process it easily. But this knowledge of readers and their needs may be lacking when we try to communicate in an unfamiliar situation, such as a new discipline or an L2, or using an untraditional medium.
Teachers in process classrooms, as mentioned earlier, try to bridge the gap between writer and reader by using pre-writing tasks that develop an understanding of vocabulary and topics. But schema knowledge is far richer than this and includes considerable knowledge of contexts, interpersonal relations, the roles of readers and writers, and how all these influence texts. We don’t only know what to write about and how to express ourselves, but what to include and leave out, how formal or informal we can be, and when it is appropriate to use the genre at all. Schemata, in other words, are culturally sensitive; they reflect the ways that members of different communities think. This means teachers should help learners develop these socio-cultural schemata by extending their knowledge of form, process, and content to the discourse communities within which they serve particular purposes.

The notion of discourse community is not entirely precise and tends to mean different things to different theorists. However, it tries to capture the idea of like-mindedness among writers and readers, sometimes called membership, which is essential for understanding the specialist background knowledge we use to encode and decode texts appropriately (e.g., Swales, 1990). It is a powerful concept joining writers, texts, and readers together, and suggests that an understanding of target communities is useful to those wishing to become members, including L2 learners. By understanding these communities and their writing, students are better able to “interpret, produce and critique the texts they have to write” (Johns, 1997, p. 19).

A synthesis of different writing orientations is, therefore, the result of taking the best of existing approaches and using them to more fully understand writing and learning to write. This suggests that, in the classroom, teachers should focus on increasing students’ experiences of texts and reader expectations, as well as providing them with an understanding of writing processes, language forms, and genres. Finally, it means that we need to be sensitive to the practices and
perceptions of writing that students bring to the classroom, based on their prior language-
leaning experiences, and build on these so that they come to see writing as relative to particular
groups and contexts. In this way students can understand the discourses in which they have to
write, while not devaluing those of their own cultures and communities.

While every act of writing is in a sense both personal and individual, it is also
interactional and social, expressing a culturally recognized purpose, reflecting a particular kind
of relationship, and acknowledging an engagement in a given community, which helps form a
sense of language-learner identity. This means that writing cannot be distilled down to a set of
cognitive or technical abilities or a system of rules, and that learning to write in an L2 is not
simply a matter of opportunities to compose and revise. Acknowledging this view, I draw on the
best of what these theories offer. These theories stress that L2 writers bring five kinds of
knowledge to the creation of effective texts, and these should be primary in teaching:

1. Content knowledge – of the ideas and concepts in the topic area the text will address,

2. System knowledge – of the syntax, lexis, and appropriate formal conventions needed,

3. Process knowledge – of how to prepare and carry out a writing activity,

4. Genre knowledge – of the communicative purposes of the genre and its value in
   particular contexts, and

The literature clearly provides a number of views of writing:

1. Composing is nonlinear and goal-driven. Therefore, students may benefit from having a range of planning, writing, and revising strategies to draw on.

2. Writing seeks to achieve purposes through socially recognized ways of using language called genres. Therefore, teachers should provide learners with a meta-language for identifying genres and their structures, through analysis of authentic texts and modeling genre stages.

3. Writing is a purposeful and communicative activity performed in response to other people and other texts. Therefore, writing activities should not simply emphasize formal accuracy and discrete aspects of language, but be situated in meaningful contexts with authentic purposes.

4. Writing is often structured according to the demands and expectations of target discourse communities. Therefore, teachers need to provide activities that encourage students to consider the reader’s perspective by incorporating a range of real and simulated audience sources.

5. Writing is differently endowed with authority and prestige, which sustain inequalities. Therefore, instruction should build on students’ own language abilities, backgrounds, and expectations of writing to help them see prestigious discourses simply as other ways of making meanings.
Given the significance of the concepts of purposeful action, mediation, other-regulation/self-regulation, scaffolding, and participation in dialogic interaction from Vygotsky’s view of human learning and development, as well as the role these concepts play in the L2 writing literature, I move to a review of the literature concerning collaborative learning theory. The objective of this section was twofold. First, I wanted to emphasize the role of collaboration in language learning and teaching. Second, I aimed to provide a theoretical basis to support the telecollaborative aspects of my research.

As illustrated in the first section, Vygotsky (1962) stressed that collaborative learning, either among students or between students and a teacher, is essential for assisting students in advancing through their ZPD. Two main perspectives have developed on how this is accomplished (Wertsch & Bivens, 1992); the modeling interpretation and the text-mediational interpretation.

**The Modeling Interpretation**

In the first of these, termed the modeling interpretation, "intermental functioning is viewed primarily in terms of how it can provide a model for tutees’ individual mental processes" (Wertsch & Bivens, 1992, p. 37). In one well-known study based on this interpretation, a teacher modeled for students an approach to leading a discussion on readings based on asking interpretive questions, which the students then successfully implemented in their own small groups (Palinscar & Brown, 1984). The modeling interpretation does "involve participation in dialogic interaction"; nevertheless, "the tendency to view the process involved in terms of
modeling means that the tutee often continues to be viewed as a passive recipient" (Wertsch & Bivens, 1992).

**The Text-Mediational Interpretation**

More interesting for understanding cooperative learning in the language classroom is the text-mediational interpretation of Vygotsky (as cited in Wertsch & Bivens, 1992). This interpretation de-emphasizes the tutor-tutee concept inherent in the modeling view, and instead focuses on how "all participants in intermental functioning are actively engaged in shaping this functioning" (p. 39). Texts then are not seen as conveyances of information, but rather as "thinking devices" used to collaboratively generate new meanings (Lotman, 1988).

The text-mediational perspective is strengthened by incorporating the views of Bakhtin (1986), one of Vygotsky’s Soviet contemporaries. Bakhtin and his circle sharply critiqued the view that language is either an abstract system of linguistic forms or an individual form of activity, positing instead that language is a continuous generative process implemented in the social-verbal interaction of speakers (Volosinov, 1973). For Bakhtin, all utterances (spoken or written) are filled with dialogic overtones, based on "echoes and reverberations of other utterances to which it is related by the communality" of communication. In this view, the unique language experience of each individual is shaped through constant interaction, and more focused interaction leads to higher forms of learning. "Words, intonations, and inner-word gestures that have undergone the experience of outward expression" acquire a high social polish and lustre by the effect of reactions and responses, resistance or support, on the part of a social audience (Volosinov, 1973). Accordingly, this intense social interaction is also where creative energies build up and, consequently, restructuring of ideological systems comes about.
The text-mediational interpretation of Vygotsky has been well developed by educators such as Bayer (1990) and Wells and Chang-Wells (1992). Bayer's model of collaborative-apprenticeship learning emphasizes the use of expressive talk, expressive writing, peer collaboration, and meaningful problem-solving activities. The teacher assists, not as a model but rather as a guide, as students collaborate to "make connections between new ideas...and prior knowledge", "use language as a tool for learning", and develop "language and thinking competencies" (p. 7). Her model bears some similarity to whole language approaches to education (Freeman & Freeman, 1992; Goodman & Goodman, 1981a; Goodman & Goodman, 1981b; Newman, 1985; Rigg, 1991). Wells and Chang-Wells describe learning as a semiotic apprenticeship based on the creation of a collaborative community of practice. They combine the systemic linguistic approach of Halliday (1978) with the semiotic mediation concept of Vygotsky in order to analyze how learners construct knowledge together and attain literate thinking through communication. This last concept builds on the work of researchers such as Bruner (1972), and Scribner and Cole (1981), who have previously investigated the relationship between texts, talk, and literate thinking. Wells and Chang-Wells examine in particular how learners talk and write about texts. As they point out, by making a record of text of thought available for reflection and revision, a written text can serve as a "cognitive amplifier" (Bruner, 1972), allowing the reader or writer to bootstrap his thinking in a more powerful manner than is normally possible in speech. Unfortunately, this opportunity for cognitive amplification is too often missed in school, as texts are engaged primarily in a performative mode (i.e., for reading aloud) or information mode (e.g., as a dictionary). Wells and Chang-Wells urge that texts be engaged in an epistemic mode, in other words, treated "not as a representation of meaning that is already decided, given, and self-evident, but as a tentative and provisional attempt on the part of
the writer to capture his or her current understanding ... so that it may provoke further attempts at understanding as the writer or the reader dialogues with the text in order to interpret its meaning" (pp. 139–140). When students attempt that interpretation by writing down their responses, they can capture those insights and perceived connections so that they can be returned to, critically examined, reconsidered, and perhaps made the basis for the construction of a further sustained text of one’s own.

By bridging together the concepts of expression, interaction, reflection, problem-solving, critical thinking, and literacy across various uses of talk, text, inquiry, and collaboration in the classroom, the text-mediational view of Vygotsky provides an extremely useful framework for understanding collaborative learning in the language classroom, in general, and collaborative L2 writing, in particular.

More recently collaborative learning has been researched and discussed by Merrill Swain, both individually (Swain, 1995b, 1997, 2000) and with Sharon Lapkin (Swain & Lapkin, 1998, 2001, 2002). In Swain’s work, the acquisition metaphor figures prominently, but constructs taken from SCT/AT, such as scaffolding and mediation, are also prominent. She has reconsidered her well-known work on output, calling into question the product-like connotations associated with it, and has added to her analytical framework a more process-like phenomenon that she terms “collaborative dialogue”. She defines collaborative dialogue as “dialogue in which speakers are engaged in problem solving and knowledge building” (Swain, 2000, p. 102), and she sees it, in a sense, as a step beyond output. In her earlier research, Swain (1985, 1993) makes the case for comprehensible output (see Output above) by arguing that the production of language by learners can be beneficial because it can work as input for individual learners and as a means to consciousness raising, hypothesis-testing, and reflection on language and language activity.
More recently, however, Swain (1995a, 1997, 2000) examines how output contributes to problem-solving and knowledge-building by two or more individuals. Crucially for Swain, acquisition is still the end-result of such interaction. She sums up her view as follows:

Collaborative dialogue is problem-solving and, hence, knowledge-building dialogue. When participants in an activity make a collaborative effort, their speaking (or writing) mediates this effort. As each participant speaks, their ‘saying’ becomes ‘what they said’, providing an object for reflection. Their ‘saying’ is cognitive activity, and ‘what is said’ is an outcome of that activity. Through saying and reflecting on what was said, new knowledge is constructed. (Swain, 2000, p. 113)

In their work, Swain and Lapkin (2002) have come to see production as a mediator not only of L2 learning in general but also of the all-important early process of comprehension. Following Wertsch and Stone (1985), they are interested in the phenomenon whereby language learners first produce appropriate language behaviour without recognizing its full significance to fully competent members of the TL culture, and then later, via mediated reflection, they develop a better understanding of what they have produced and why it is appropriate. They see their work as fundamentally different from that done by most IIO researchers:

In this paper, we ask a very specific question:

*How does language production mediate the process of comprehension?*

In asking this question, we are moving in a different direction from the research question posed by others, for example Gass (1997) and Long (1996), as to whether conversational moves such as comprehension checks and confirmation requests make input more comprehensible. Instead, we want here to demonstrate that at least some language learning proceeds from production to comprehension, rather than what is usually argued, from comprehension to production. (Swain & Lapkin, 2002, p. 5)

Swain and Lapkin go on to show how Anglophone learners of French in Ontario engage in such a process. They first showed learners a five-minute video-recorded lesson on pronominal verbs and then asked them to take notes while the instructor read a story to them twice. The
learners – some working in pairs, others working individually – were then asked to reconstruct the story. The reconstructed story was given to an adult native speaker of French who reformulated it, correcting inappropriate forms used by the learners. Two days later, the learners were given the corrected version along with their original stories and asked to talk their way through differences between the two versions. This session was video-recorded and two days later it was shown to the learners, who were asked to comment on the moments when differences were noticed. Interestingly, during some of these stimulated recalls the interviewer mediates the process of realization, that is, the moment when learners finally realize the significance of what they have produced. Thus, there are cases of learners producing, during the writing stage, perfectly appropriate French that they had heard from the instructor but had not really understood. By talking the writing process through with the interviewer, they come to understand and indeed learn, if we are to judge by rewritten stories produced four days after the simulated recall sessions. Swain and Lapkin, however, are cautious. They conclude:

We make no claim that all learning proceeds from production to comprehension; clearly this is not the case. However, we do wish to claim that one way in which language is acquired is through use: by producing language we can find out what it means, and of what it consists. (Swain & Lapkin, 2002, p. 26)

Swain and Lapkin have identified a phenomenon which is much like Krashen’s i + 1 principle in reverse: when individuals are grappling with new knowledge, they very often rise above themselves and, with the help of others, they produce at a level beyond what they are able to explain to interlocutors when asked. In information processing models of cognition, this might be seen as production based on previous subconscious learning (what Krashen calls acquisition); however, from a socio-cultural perspective, it would be viewed as appropriation of the words of others, and then outperforming current competence by operating in collaboration with others (who mediate the process, providing scaffolding) on the edge of the ZPD.
In addition to providing support for collaborative learning theory, Swain and Lapkin’s work is a clear example of how to marry the input-interaction-output model and social theory to provide a more ecologically sound and socially informed approached to SLA. It was by grounding my study in such a framework that I planned to encourage my beginner FSL university learners to work collaboratively and then via mediated reflection, to develop a better understanding of what they had produced and why it was appropriate, as well as to make meaningful connections between their L2 writing achievement and perceptions of their prior and current language-learning experiences.

**Telecollaboration**

Having reviewed the three bodies of knowledge in the sections above and situating them in the schema of my study, the question that remains is: Why use telecollaboration as a context for exploring how to provide intensive FSL exposure to members of the TL group and enhance motivation? I address this question by reviewing the literature pertaining to the relation between telecollaboration and the three concepts discussed in the previous sections.

**Telecollaboration and the IIO Model Within a Socio-Cultural Perspective**

Chapelle (1997) argues that although computer assisted language learning (CALL) (referred to in this study as telecollaboration) research understandably draws on theories from diverse disciplines, general theories from fields like psychology, computational linguistics, and educational technology will lack the specificity needed to design and improve CALL pedagogy. What we need, she argues, is to ground CALL in instructed SLA theories. At the time, Chapelle recommended the interactionist approach to SLA (see Pica, 1994) as a particularly productive basis for generating hypotheses, and discourse analysis as a primary research method to explore
what she considers two essential questions: "What kind of language does the learner engage in during a CALL activity?" and "How good is the language experience in CALL for L2 learning?" (p. 22). Chapelle acknowledges that these are not the only questions that one could ask about CALL, but she argues that real progress in CALL depends on it being informed by the questions and methods of instructed SLA researchers (p. 28).

Writing eight years later, Chapelle (2005) cites a substantial body of CALL research in the interactionist tradition and concludes that "the use of discourse and interactionist perspectives for the study of CALL has helped to place CALL research on more solid grounding relative to other areas of applied linguistics" (p. 63).

Though this is certainly true, Egbert and Petrie (2005), the editors of Chapelle’s (2005) chapter, argue that there is a need to re-enlarge the theoretical palette. Claiming that books currently used in CALL teacher education courses, focusing on such areas as telecollaboration, "generally address only one theoretical foundation (i.e., interactionist) or one research methodology (i.e., discourse analysis)" (p. ix), their goal is to present a variety of ways to think about and conduct research on computers and language learning. Egbert (2005) explains that multiple theoretical perspectives are particularly important in times of rapid change: (a) as social and cultural contexts of technology use expand; (b) as technologies diversify, both in terms of devices and in terms of modes of expression and interaction; and (c) as the goals, content, and structure of CALL pedagogy evolve.

For example, as discussed previously, one significant limitation of interactionist SLA theory is that it deals exclusively with linguistic dimensions and lacks provision for dealing with social and cultural dimensions of language learning. Clearly, other theoretical frameworks are
needed. Given that the telecollaborative mode allows language learners to interact and socialize with others through networking it can be studied from an IIO model within a socio-cultural perspective.

Socio-cultural theory, as reviewed above, like interactionist SLA, emphasizes the importance of learner interaction, but it is interested less in negotiation-evoked adjustments in input than in the social and cultural context of learner activity, learners’ agency in collaboratively co-constructing meanings (as well as their own roles), and the importance of mediation by tools and signs. O’Rourke (2005) points out that features of computer-mediated environments are not fixed "givens", but are often negotiated, sometimes subverted, by their users (p. 434), and, thus many telecollaborative studies, from a conventional interactionist view, appear overly reductionist. Socio-cultural theory, in conjunction with interactionist approaches, has grounded a considerable number of computer-mediated communication studies (e.g., Belz, 2002; Cummins & Sayers, 1995; Darhower, 2002; O’Rourke, 2005; Osuna, 2000; Sanaoui & Lapkin, 1992; Thorne, 2003; Warschauer, 1999, 2005). These studies, using an online exchange with institutions in different countries (i.e., Canada, Germany, France, and the US), reveal that learners’ social identity, economic values, language achievement, and electronic literacy contribute to the application of networked settings and the development of language. However, despite the shift towards process-oriented research and a focus on the evolving social interactions in the context of computer use in recent years, few (if any) studies have explored telecollaborative L2 writing achievement with respect to learners’ perceptions of their language-learning experiences, and language-learner identity over an extended period of time; that is, from an L2 motivational self-system perspective. By focusing on two Canadian educational institutions (a university and a public school), my study attempts an eight-month investigation of
learners’ L2 writing achievement, learners’ perceptions concerning their FSL experiences, and language-learner identity with respect to the unique Canadian language-learning context.

In considering this issue, it is important to bear in mind that SLA is itself informed by a rich variety of theoretical frameworks and has consistently resisted a single overarching theory (Kramsch, 2000). Maintaining theoretical grounding in SLA is imperative, but this grounding need not mean privileging any single paradigm.

**Telecollaboration, L2 Writing, and Collaborative Learning**

There are two modes of telecollaborative communication available: Synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous is communication in real-time while asynchronous is communication in delayed-time. The mode preferred by beginner language learners carrying out writing activities, as suggested by studies, is asynchronous. One of the most commonly used modes of asynchronous communication is email, the mode used in this study. The rationale for this preference is that the nonsynchronicity of the communication means that a text can be composed and edited prior to transmission at a leisurely pace, and then edited by the recipient, thus creating a context for the co-construction of text. This tends to mean more reflective and considered responses and greater participation by less proficient students. Topics change less rapidly and contributions do not rush past in an incoherent sequence so responses are typically more thoughtful, more carefully edited, and more closely reflect conventions of written communication.

Despite the proliferation of digital media, email, as text files that can be read, saved, edited, and forwarded to other users, and is likely to be familiar to many students. It is a useful tool for writing instruction as it allows teachers to set up both classroom collaborative
interactions and long-distance exchanges, encouraging students to focus on fluency and meaning while writing for a real audience and purpose. Within a single class, most information gap activities can be accomplished by email, encouraging written accuracy and clarity of expression. Another reason for using email for beginner L2 writing is that email, as a text-based communication, is unable to take advantage of certain other aspects of human interaction, such as nonverbal cues (e.g., gestures and facial expressions) and situational clues (e.g., time). This mode of telecollaboration relies heavily on writing and reading skills, thus, learners may need more time to process input and output (Abrams, 2003), and they may pay more attention to aspects of the discourse on the screen than they would (or could) in synchronous exchanges (Warschauer, 1996a).

In addition to the convenience of the asynchronous telecollaborative mode of communication, the actual procedures and thought processes involved in producing written output in such an environment may have important implications for language learning. Learners are growing up web literate, and are producing more and more of their writings in a virtual environment. Educators therefore need to be aware of the possible consequences of this mode in which learners write in a fluid environment and are able to access many sources, revise, update, and revise again, while all the time needing to avoid plagiarism. In a virtual environment, the finished product is less final than the handwritten text of earlier times. This lack of finality and “closure” to the product forces the students to engage actively with writing as a process because as "a way of thinking; it can actually help them with ideas, with organization, and with their thought processes" (Belisle, 1996, p. 10). Perhaps the most important question that needs to be answered is: What can telecollaborative writing tools do that pen and paper cannot achieve? Research has shown that the computer does offer a superior environment for L2 composition
(Pennington, 1996). For example, it has been shown that word-processing software can simplify editing and thus permit students to concentrate on, and obtain a firmer understanding of, the subparts of a text’s structure as they construct the text in its entirety (Otlowski, 1998). Moreover, telecollaborative environments can enhance students’ writing quality (Sullivan & Pratt, 1996). Other researchers have also reported that editing and working with onscreen texts has many linguistic benefits for learners, such as the acquisition of better rhetorical, lexical, and syntactical skills in the L2. Indeed, one eminent researcher has found that such onscreen editing and subsequent printed output of essay and report writing helps learners to acquire and produce correct and appropriate use of the L2 and thus remains essential in the development of certain grammatical features (Ellis, 1994).

In addition to offering linguistic benefits, telecollaborative writing tools are beneficial because they can support interactivity in a constructivist learning environment. Sullivan and Pratt (1996), for example, found that a computer-assisted classroom is more student-centered than the traditional oral classroom. Blended learning, on the other hand, can also support an interactive constructivist approach to writing by facilitating learning between learners (Canapero, 2004; Felix, 2002). “Blended learning” refers to "a combination of face-to-face and computer-assisted learning in a single teaching and learning environment," wherein the most important goal is "to find the most effective and efficient combination of the two modes of learning for the individual learning subjects, contexts and objectives" (Neumeier, 2005, p. 164). An example of a simple blended-learning activity is one in which students are set the goal of producing a project on a specific topic. Students negotiate the subthemes and their particular roles in the “division of labour” with the teacher and work both collaboratively and individually on their contributions to the project. In researching their own parts, students can use all resources available to them, from
printed to web sources, and deliver the written product in a virtual format. In short, working with their peers and their teacher in a telecollaborative environment, students research the content, communicate throughout the project, and construct their own content collaboratively, both online and offline. Such participatory interaction (Warschauer, 1997) via telecollaboration provides an increased opportunity for modifying input from a real audience for L2 writing activities, as well as the potential for modified output. For instance, writers are encouraged to experiment with ideas and with language because of the risk-free social access afforded by electronic connectivity (Pennington, 2003). Due to the relatively “clueless environment” (Spears & Lea, 1992) of a telecollaborative network, which makes it necessary to invoke the context of the speech event more explicitly than would be required in face-to-face communication, coupled with the anonymity and ease of communication in this medium, telecollaboration may promote a more focused use of language, and a content-rich and more individual and creative form of writing. A study conducted by Esling (1991) of ESL learners exchanging information via email in Canada provides evidence for this notion. It was found that in the initial exchanges between participants, information about the local setting, which would be taken for granted and thus left unsaid in face-to-face communication was explicitly described using focused language.

At the same time, telecollaboration brings writers together to share knowledge and produce collaborative work. Telecollaborative learning environments also seem to have a positive influence on motivation and help beginner language learners to create an individual voice, gain a sense of empowerment, and negotiate an identity as an L2 learner, while gaining a critical understanding of, not only each others’ culture, but their own identities (Cummins, 2001; Cummins & Sayers, 1995). Within this framework, Cummins defines empowerment as “the collaborative creation of power”:
Students whose schooling experiences reflect collaborative relations of power develop the ability, confidence and motivation to succeed academically. They participate competently in instruction as a result of having developed a secure sense of identity and the knowledge that their voices will be heard and respected within the classroom. (Cummins, 2001, p. 16)

**Summary**

The literature reviewed in this chapter was used to inform instruction during the course of my study. It gave direction about how to provide intensive FSL exposure to members of the TL group and enhance motivation. Clearly, the SLA literature supports a socio-historical and developmental orientation to researching and instructing language processes. During this review, however, several key gaps in the literature were revealed. These gaps pertain to the populations researched to date, methodological issues, beginner FSL programs, telecollaborative L2 writing, and generalizability of findings.

First, to my current knowledge, based on the information surveyed, there have been very few (if any, face-to-face or telecollaborative) studies examining how to provide intensive FSL exposure to the TL group and enhance motivation for beginner FSL learners at the post-secondary level in Canada. Telecollaborative research focusing on these issues, has been conducted at the elementary and secondary school levels or with more advanced university classes. Second, many of the face-to-face and telecollaborative studies have focused on quantitative measurements of FSL learner attitudes providing snapshot views of their experiences, including achievement, at a certain point in time. Those that have implemented a qualitative element to learn about FSL learners’ perceptions of their French language-learning experiences, have spanned a relatively short period. Psychometrically oriented and short studies may be deceiving. They imply that perceptions, as well as identities shaped by perceptions, are
stable, internal variables. For this reason, perceptions and identity shaping L2 or FL learning have not been explored adequately. Third, when considering how to provide intensive FSL exposure to the TL group and enhance motivation for beginner FSL learners, researchers and instructors have tended to neglect the role of L2 writing in SLA. It is important, therefore, to gain further insight into the current research conducted on L2 writing for beginner FSL programs. Fourth, early Canadian studies aiming to provide intensive exposure to the TL group and enhance motivation by means of telecollaborative L2 writing, like their international counterparts, are primarily descriptive, focusing on the design and implementation aspects, or framed within a product-oriented paradigm. Despite the shift towards process-oriented research and a focus on the evolving social interactions in the context of computer use in recent years, few (if any) studies have explored telecollaborative L2 writing achievement from a self-system perspective; with respect to learners’ perceptions of their language-learning experiences, and language-learner identity. Finally, studies that have implemented a self-system approach are too specific to allow for generalization to the unique Canadian language-learning context.

The second point requires special attention since it is related to how I framed and analyzed the data. The important relationship between SLA and L2 motivation is undisputed. However, the literature review exposed a controversy between the research orientations adopted by these two fields. For example, SLA research favors a socio-historical and developmental orientation to analyzing language processes. However, L2 motivation research has followed a product-oriented approach. In my view, addressing beginner FSL university learners’ L2 writing achievement requires more than an analysis (quantitative or qualitative) from the researcher’s perspective. An understanding of beginner FSL university learners’ L2 writing achievement requires researching language-learner motivation using an indepth analysis from a wider, socio-
historical, and evolutionary perspective; one that includes learners’ perceptions of their
glanguage-learning experiences and their identity as language learners. A detailed discussion of
how this can be accomplished using Dörnyei’s L2 motivational self-system theory, including an
explanation for its relevance to my research, is given in Chapter 3.
Chapter 3:  
The L2 Motivational Self-System

In a perfect world, we might hear the following: Most learners are eager to learn an L2 because they are driven by their inborn curiosity to explore the world and the learning experience is, therefore, a constant source of intrinsic pleasure for them. As much as every educator would like to believe this to be true, reality, however, rarely lives up to these ideals. Dörnyei (2001a) points out that if students could freely choose what to do, academic learning for many would most likely feature low on their agenda.

It is important, therefore, as the literature review in Chapter 2 illustrated, for researchers and instructors to understand how to provide opportunities for intensive exposure to the TL group and enhance motivation; a requisite that research has shown to be necessary to improve attitudes towards L2 development and enhance achievement. The importance relationship between SLA and L2 motivation is undisputed. Controversy arises, however, between the research orientations adopted by these two fields. For instance, SLA research favoring a socio-historical and developmental or evolutionary orientation to analyzing language processes is largely incompatible with the primarily product-oriented approach adopted by early L2 motivation research. Given this, research involving aspects of L2 motivation, such as my study, should include an evolutionary examination of learners’ language-learning experiences, as well as their language-learner identities. Such research can provide richer findings than traditional L2 motivation research based on quantitative results and qualitative findings derived from the researcher’s perspective. I argue that Dörnyei’s (2005) L2 motivational self-system can help accomplish this and I have chosen to implement it as the analytical framework that can best
illuminate the relationship between telecollaborative L2 writing achievement and L2 motivation from the learners’ perspective.

The remainder of this chapter discusses the L2 motivational self-system and its relevance to my study. First, I briefly outline the relationship between motivation and SLA. Next, I detail some empirical studies of motivational evolution; studies that view L2 motivation with a temporal progression, similar to my own. I then discuss three conceptual issues arising from the empirical studies that I believe have particular significance to my work. Next, I discuss reframing L2 motivation as part of the self-system. This discussion includes the need to reinterpret Gardner’s notion of integrativeness, the concept of possible and ideal selves, and the educational relevance of the possible self (ideal and ought-to selves). Finally, I outline Dörnyei’s L2 motivational self-system.

**Motivation and SLA**

Most researchers agree that motivation is of great importance in SLA and, as a result, motivation research has received much attention in the past decade. The trend towards motivational theories related to classroom learning has generated interest among language teachers and researchers of L2 since there is a consensus that motivation provides the primary impetus to L2 learning and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process; indeed, all the other factors involved in SLA presuppose motivation to some extent. Without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals, and neither are appropriate curricula and good teaching enough on their own to ensure student achievement. On the other hand, high motivation can make up for considerable deficiencies both in one’s language aptitude and learning conditions. Rather, the
difference is that of the perceived need for additional languages, or the learners’ perception of the value of the additional language. There is a practical need for additional languages, and languages are taught with this practical use in mind.

Although the importance of motivation is widely recognized, as documented by the past 30 years of L2 motivational research, its meaning is elusive. The new theory presented by Dörnyei (2005), the L2 motivational self-system, is, I believe, broad in its scope. That is, it places emphasis on the learners’ perception of their L2 learning experiences and identities as language learners, yet is compatible with the major findings of past research in the field. It does not claim to provide a comprehensive answer to all the outstanding questions. Just as motivation is a dynamic, ever-changing process, research into it should also evolve over time. After all, motivation concerns the fundamental question of why people think and behave as they do, and we should never assume that we know the full answer. This notion is further enforced by MacIntyre, MacKinnon, and Clément (2009) as they remind us that we should not fall for the all too human inclination towards extreme reactions. More precisely, we should not “throw out the baby with the bath water”.

**Empirical Studies of Motivational Evolution**

Of the three phases of L2 motivational research (for discussions of the history of L2 motivational research, see Dörnyei, 2005), the process-oriented conception of L2 motivation is a novel research paradigm that most closely aligns itself with the process-oriented approach presently advocated by SLA. At the moment, however, few of its tenets have been explicitly tested in L2 contexts. This does not mean, however, that motivational changes have not been documented in the past; they have, particularly the frequent phenomenon that motivation loses its
intensity in school contexts over sustained periods. Koizumi and Matsuo (1993), for example, examined attitudinal and motivational changes of 296 Japanese Grade 7 students learning English and reported a definite decrease over a period of 7 months. After this period student motivation appeared to stabilize as learners started to develop more realistic goals. Tachibana, Matsukawa, and Zhong (1996) studied 801 Chinese and Japanese pupils and also found that the students’ interest in learning English declined from junior to high school both in Japan and in China. Gardner, Masgoret, Tennant and Mihic (2004) observed motivational changes over a period of 1 year in Canadian university students learning French, and found a general tendency for the scores on the measures of language attitudes and motivation to decrease from the fall to the spring. Interestingly, situation-specific motives such as attitudes toward the learning situation displayed almost twice as big a change as more generalized motives such as integrativeness. In their Israeli study, Inbar, Donitsa-Schmidt and Shohamy (2001) found a consistent and significant small drop in motivation for all groups in all motivational dimensions. Finally, two separate studies, by Chambers (1999) and Williams, Burden and Lanvers (2002), found that the motivation of British L2 language learners declined between Grade 7 and Grade 9. Chambers summarized this as follows:

Year 7 pupils are looking forward with enthusiasm to learning their subject. ... The scene is set for a very positive start. Two years later, the picture is not quite so encouraging. It seems that pupils’ expectations are not matched by the reality. The honeymoon is over. The enthusiasm is on the wane. Pupils appear disgruntled. Something has gone wrong. (Chambers, 1999, p. 81)

Another study documenting motivational change was conducted by MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, and Donovan (2002). Their study concerned the effects of sex and age on willingness to communicate (WTC), anxiety, perceived competence, and L2 motivation among 268 junior high French immersion students in Atlantic Canada. It was found that students’ L2 WTC,
perceived competence, and frequency of communication of French increased from Grade 7 to Grade 8, and was maintained between Grades 8 and 9, despite a drop in motivation between Grades 7 and 8 and a steady level of anxiety across the three grades. The researchers suggest that a reduction in anxiety might be necessary to produce continuing gains in WTC, given the tendency for anxiety to be negatively correlated with WTC in the L2 (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000). Anxiety reduction might conceivably lead to further increases in perceived competence as well, given that those high in communication anxiety might be prone to underestimate their communicative competence MacIntyre, Noels, & Clément, 1997); a phenomenon that has been observed among university students.

Recently, there have been a few data-based studies specifically addressing aspects of motivational change from a process-oriented paradigm. In a qualitative study, Ushioda (2001) interviewed 20 Irish young adult learners of French twice, with an interval of 16 months between the two sessions. The researcher’s main interest was not so much to examine the magnitude but rather the quality of the motivational evolution. The interview data reveal definite changes in the students’ thinking over time, particularly with regard to the goal-orientation aspect of their motivation: Over the 16-month period the learners appeared to have developed a clearer definition of their L2 personal goals.

The changing nature of L2 motivation has also been documented in studies focusing on longer periods of time in the learners' lifespan (e.g., Lim, 2002; Shedivy, 2004). The most systematic study of this sort to date has been carried out by Shoaib and Dörnyei (2005), who conducted qualitative interviews with 25 language learners to identify different motivational influences and various temporal patterns over a period of approximately 20 years. Based on the learners’ personal histories, they discovered a number of salient recurring temporal patterns and
motivational transformation episodes in the learners’ lives that resulted in profound restructuring of their motivational dispositions. Six such motivation-specific temporal themes were identified:

1. maturation and gradually increasing interest,
2. standstill period,
3. moving into a new life phase,
4. internalizing external goals and imported visions,
5. relationship with a significant other, and
6. time spent in the L2 environment.

Thus, while empirical results are still scarce, I believe the available evidence indicates that examining the temporal or evolutionary progression of L2 motivation is a potentially fruitful research direction and the case studies of four sub-set participants from my study provided further evidence to significantly enrich our understanding of the motivational evolution of FSL learning in the unique Canadian context.

**Conceptual Issues**

The study of L2 motivation has made considerable progress since the 1960s, adopting new research paradigms and approaches. Three conceptual developments that, I believe, have a bearing on my research were addressed. They include: (a) motivation and group dynamics, (b) demotivation, and (c) motivational self-regulation.
Motivation and Group Dynamics

Group dynamics is a thriving interdisciplinary field in the social sciences, focusing on understanding the behaviour of humans in various small group contexts such as sports teams, business committees, psychotherapy groups, or political task forces. Because contemporary education typically takes place in groups of various sizes, the principles of group dynamics are highly relevant to the study of institutional teaching and learning, including my study. This has been recognized by several recent publications in the L2 field that examined classroom life and processes from a group perspective (e.g., Dörnyei, 1997, 2007; Dörnyei & Malderez, 1997, 1999; Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003; Ehrman & Dörnyei, 1998; Senior, 1997, 2002; Ushioda, 2003). It becomes clear from these analyses that the motivation of individual learners is significantly affected by the various groupings they are part of, as Ushioda (2003, p. 93) concludes, "The social unit of the classroom is clearly instrumental in developing and supporting the motivation of the individual." This social influence is well illustrated by everyday statements such as someone “got into bad company” or “you simply cannot teach in this class.”

Given the salient impact of learner groups on the members’ learning behaviour, in a recent summary Dörnyei (2007) argues that to create a motivating classroom environment group issues need to be taken into account just as much as more traditional motivational factors. It is my belief that group influences are a major aspect of the L2 motivation complex and the notion of group norm is in many ways the group equivalent of individual student motivation. Group norms refer to the overt and covert rules and routines that help to prevent chaos in the group and allow everybody to go about their business as effectively as possible. They range from explicitly imposed school regulations to spontaneously and unconsciously evolved routines resulting from the copying of behaviours of an influential member or the leader, which are then solidified into
unofficial but powerful norms of classroom existence. A negative example of such covert norms is the norm of mediocrity, which refers to the peer pressure put on students in many schools not to excel or else they may be called names such as “nerd”, “swot”, or “brain”, and so on.

Given the multiple learner groupings in my study (context, age, and language proficiency related), my study considered the influence of group dynamics on learners’ perceptions of prior and current language-learner experiences and identity shaping. For a more detailed analysis of the motivational impact of the social group, refer to Dörnyei (2001c).

**Demotivation**

Although there are both positive and negative forces exerting their influence on ongoing student behaviours, past motivation research has typically overlooked the negative motives and conceptualized motivation as a kind of inducement, that is, as a force whose strength ranges on a continuum from zero to strong. This, however, is not in accordance with students’ and teachers’ classroom experience, which suggests that motivational influences that de-energize action (Dörnyei, 2001c) are rather common. Drawing on the lessons of a large-scale longitudinal classroom investigation, Ushioda (2003) analyzed this dark side of student motivation as follows:

The inevitable problems in classroom motivation arise when there is not a happy fusion between internal and external forces but a negative tension, where the latter dominate at the expense of the former. In other words, individual motivation becomes controlled, suppressed or distorted by external forces. As argued below, this may happen through negative influences in the classroom social dynamic, or through regulating forces in the educational system. ... Collective motivation can all too easily become collective demotivation, boredom, or at the far end of the spectrum, collective dissatisfaction or rebellion, often in the form of classroom counter-cultures defined by rejection of educational goals and values. (pp. 93 – 94)
Dörnyei (2001c) defines “demotivation” as "specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioural intention or an ongoing action" (p. 143). Being demotivated does not necessarily mean that all the positive influences that originally made up the motivational basis of a behaviour have been annulled; rather, it is the resultant force that has been dampened by a strong negative component, while some other positive motives may still remain operational. This has been illustrated by Nikolov’s (2001) study of demotivated language learners. She found that although the learners in her sample all considered themselves unsuccessful, their attitudes toward knowing languages were positive. In this study the decisive force was related to negative language-learning experiences associated with the language classroom.

A review of the scarce literature on demotivation in the L2 field and in education in general reveals that the phenomenon is rather salient in learning environments and that teachers have a considerable responsibility in this respect: The majority of demotivational factors identified in past research arise out of aspects of classroom existence owned by, or under the control of, the teacher (see Dörnyei, 2001c).

Motivational Self-Regulation

When we view motivation as a dynamic, continuously changing, and evolving result of a variety of internal and external forces, it becomes clear that the internal monitoring, filtering, and processing mechanisms that learners employ will have an important role in shaping the motivational outcome. It makes a great difference, for example, whether someone consciously plays down any negative influences and focuses instead on forward-pointing and controllable aspects, thereby putting things in a positive light, or dwells on negative experiences without
making an effort to move on. There is an important recent shift in educational psychology which has highlighted the importance of learner self-regulation, integrating the learners’ proactive involvement in controlling the various facets of their learning in a broad and unified framework. The important point for my study is that self-regulation has been conceptualized to also include motivational self-regulation as well as the cognitive and meta-cognitive components.

The study of this motivational self-regulatory process goes back to Heckhausen and Kuhl’s Action Control Theory (e.g., Heckhausen, 1991; Heckhausen & Kuhl, 1985; Kuhl & Beckmann, 1994), which formed the basis of the Dörnyei-Otto process model of motivation. As Pintrich (1999) points out, the renewed focus on the whole person and how he or she controls his or her own motivation, emotions, behaviour (including choice, effort, and persistence), and environment, has been a welcome addition to research on academic self-regulation. Corno (2000) expresses a similar view, namely that volitional control over sustaining motivation and implementing goals is "critically important in education, not only as means to goals but as goals in themselves" (p. 659).

The basic assumption underlying the notion of motivational self-regulation is that students who are able to maintain their motivation and keep themselves on-task in the face of competing demands and attractions learn better than students who are less skilled at regulating their motivation. Learning, as Wolters (2003) pointed out, requires effort, and academic tasks are fraught with obstacles that are likely to interfere with the students’ initial motivational state; therefore their ability to remain in control of their attitudinal/motivational disposition should be seen as an important determinant of self-regulated learning and achievement. In addition to this consideration, Ushioda (2003) argues that a further function of motivational self-regulation is to help learners to step outside certain maladaptive motivational belief systems and engage in
constructive and effective thinking to regulate their motivation. In order for this to happen, learners must be brought to view their motivation as "emanating from within themselves, and thus to view themselves as agents of their own motivation and their own learning" (p. 98).

Reframing L2 Motivation as Part of the Self-System

Having highlighted three conceptual themes, in this section I would like to present Dörnyei’s new conceptualization of L2 motivation, one that re-orient the concept in relation to a theory of self and identity. Along with many other L2 researchers, I believe, and have illustrated, that an L2/FL is more than a mere communication code that can be learned as other academic subjects are; instead, it is also part of the individual’s personal core, or self, involves most mental activities and forms an important part of one’s identity. Thus, I am interested in paradigms that approach motivation from a whole-person perspective and, therefore, challenge the nature of Gardner’s well-established notion of integrativeness; a major concept in his theory of L2 acquisition (2001). Although my data does not address integrativeness, I believe it is essential to discuss this idea in order to underscore the necessity to re-orient the concept of L2 motivation in relation to a theory of self and identity.

For instance, although Gardner’s conceptualization of integrativeness makes sense in the multicultural context of Montreal, in which it originated, making it relevant to other Canadian learning environments that are significantly different from this context (because, e.g., there is no real contact with L2 speakers available for the learners) has not always been straightforward. Thus, a broader interpretation of the notion than was originally offered by Gardner is needed. The new paradigm Dörnyei proposes builds on the robust body of past research but reinterprets the concept so that it goes beyond the literal meaning of the verb integrate.
Empirical results concerning various dimensions of L2 motivation have been relatively consistent with regard to identifying the range of factors that play a decisive role in a learner’s motivational disposition, but the relationships between the key components described in the various studies have differed significantly, with the result that there is no obvious big picture. The specific trigger for the proposed construct was provided by empirical research conducted by Dörnyei and Csizer (e.g., Dörnyei & Csizer, 2002; Csizer & Dörnyei, 2005), in which they submitted the data obtained from a large-scale motivation survey conducted in Hungary to a range of complex multivariate statistical procedures. Structural equation modeling revealed a consistent relationship in the data set between the key variables of integrativeness, instrumentality, attitudes toward L2 speakers, and learning behaviour measures, and the emerging theoretical framework described below is an attempt to accommodate their findings.

To set the stage for his new theory, Dörnyei first presents evidence to support the case that the classic concepts of integrativeness and integrative motivation need to be reinterpreted. Then he goes on to describe research in personality psychology concerning possible and ideal selves, which forms the theoretical basis of the new model. Finally, Dörnyei puts the pieces together in an extended motivation theory, the L2 motivational self-system.

**The Need to Reinterpret Integrativeness**

If we look at the L2 motivation literature carefully, we find a certain amount of ambivalence about Gardner’s notion of *integrativeness* and the *integrative motive*, which sometimes amounts to a kind of love-hate relationship in researchers outside Gardner’s Canadian circle. The concept is certainly an enigma. It is without any doubt the most researched and most talked about notion in L2 motivation studies and yet it has no obvious equivalent in any other
approaches in mainstream motivational and educational psychology. Partly for this reason and partly because the actual empirical findings do not always fit Gardner’s original interpretation of the notion, several scholars in the past have questioned the validity and relevance of integrativeness. For example, a Canadian research team consisting of prominent motivational psychologists has stated:

> Although it was originally suggested that the desire for contact and identification with members of the L2 group [i.e., integrative orientation] would be critical for L2 acquisition, it would now appear that it is not fundamental to the motivational process, but has relevance only in specific socio-cultural contexts. Rather, four other orientations may be seen to sustain motivation. (Noels, Pelletier, Clément, & Villerand, 2000, p. 60)

The four orientations – or learning goals – the researchers advocate are travel, friendship, knowledge, and instrumental orientation, which echo the findings of Clément and Kruidenier’s (1983) seminal paper in the early 1980s that was the first Canadian challenge to the integrative construct proposed by Gardner.

Other scholars arrived at a similarly critical perspective on different bases. For example, investigating language learning in Japan, McClelland (2000) called for a definition of integrativeness that focuses on "integration with the global community rather than assimilation with native speakers" (p. 109), highlighting a "need to reappraise Gardner’s concept of integrativeness to fit a perception of English as an international language" (p. 109).

Based on a recent qualitative study in Indonesia, Lamb (2004) drew a similar conclusion:

> Moreover, we have seen that an integrative and instrumental orientation are difficult to distinguish as separate concepts. Meeting with westerners, using computers, understanding pop songs, studying and traveling abroad, pursuing a desirable career, all these aspirations are associated with each other and with English as an integral part of the globalization processes that are transforming their society and will profoundly affect their own lives. (p. 15)
Finally, in an article describing an investigation into the existence of integrative motivation in Taiwan, Warden and Lin (2000) report that they did not succeed in identifying such motive; as they summarize, "This preliminary study has discerned the existence of two motivational groups and two temporal orientations in the Taiwanese EFL environment. An integrative motivational group is notably absent" (p. 544). This result, in fact, is not unique, as several studies in the past, particularly in FL learning situations, failed to detect motive that could be labelled as integrative in Gardner’s original sense. In light of these findings and because the Hungarian data does not confirm the existence of integrativeness as it is traditionally understood either, Dörnyei and Csizer (2002) conclude:

Although further research is needed to justify any alternative interpretation, we believe that rather than viewing Integrativeness as a classic and therefore ‘untouchable’ concept, scholars need to seek potential new conceptualizations and interpretations that extend or elaborate on the meaning of the term without contradicting the large body of relevant empirical data accumulated during the past four decades. (p. 456)

Given the above, an integrative motivational orientation is a positive interpersonal or affective disposition toward the L2 community and a desire for affiliation with its members. It implies an openness to, and respect for, the other cultural group and its way of life: in the extreme, it might involve complete identification with the community and possibly even withdrawal from one’s original group. Thus, a core aspect of the integrative disposition is some sort of a psychological and emotional identification. According to Gardner (2001), this identification is with the L2 community (i.e., identifying with the speakers of the TL), but Dörnyei argued over a decade ago (1990) that in the absence of a salient L2 group in the learners’ environment (as is often the case in L2/FL-learning contexts, such as the case of the beginner FSL learners in my study) the identification can be with the cultural and intellectual values associated with the language, as well as to the actual L2.
Dörnyei (2005) suggests that we can get an even more coherent picture if we leave the term “integrative” completely behind and focus more on the identification aspects and on the learner’s self-concept. An important theoretical strand in personality psychology that has elaborated on possible and ideal selves appears to be particularly relevant to my work.

**Possible and Ideal Selves**

Personality psychology has made considerable progress in understanding the structural basis of individual differences, and there have been substantial advances in the efforts to chart the major and stable personality dimensions. These advances, according to Cantor (1990), have paved the way for paying more attention to questions about how individual differences are translated into behavioural characteristics, examining the "‘doing’ sides of personality" (p. 735). Thus, over the past 20 years self theorists have become increasingly interested in the active, dynamic nature of the self-system. As Markus and Ruvolo (1989) summarize, the traditionally static concept of self-representation has gradually been replaced with a self-system that mediates and controls ongoing behaviour, and various mechanisms, including self-regulation already described, have been put forward to link the self with action. As a result, recent dynamic representations of the self-system place the self right at the heart of motivation and action, creating an intriguing interface between personality and motivational psychology.

Possible selves can offer a powerful, and at the same time a versatile, motivational self-mechanism, representing individuals’ ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming. As Markus and Nurius (1986) describe in their seminal paper that introduced the concept:

The possible selves that are hoped for might include the successful self, the creative self, the rich self, the thin self, or the loved and admired self, whereas the
dreaded possible selves could be the alone self, the depressed self, the incompetent self, the alcoholic self, the unemployed self, or the bag lady self. (p. 954)

**Educational Relevance of the Possible Self: The Ideal and the Ought-to Self**

The educational relevance of possible selves has been documented by a number of studies (e.g., Oyserman, Terry, & Bybee, 2002; Oyserman, Bybee, Terry, & Hart-Johnson, 2004; Yowell, 2002). They can act as academic self-guides, and for this purpose, the concept of one type of possible self, the ideal self, is particularly useful. It was introduced by Higgins (1987) to refer to the representation of the attributes that someone would ideally like to possess (i.e., representation of hopes, aspirations, or wishes). Higgins also mentions another self-guide that has particular relevance to future behaviour strivings, the ought self, which refers to the self possessing the attributes that one believes one ought to possess (i.e., a representation of someone’s sense of duty, obligations, or responsibilities) and which therefore may have little in common with the ideal self. The motivational aspect of these self-guides is explained by Higgins’s (1987) self-discrepancy theory, postulating that people are motivated to reach a condition where their self-concept matches their personally relevant self-guides. In other words, motivation in this sense involves the desire to reduce the discrepancy between one’s actual and ideal or ought selves.

Although ideal and ought selves are similar to each other in that they are both related to the attainment of a desired end-state, Higgins (1998) emphasizes that the predilections associated with the two different types of future selves are motivationally distinct from each other: Ideal self-guides have a promotion focus, concerned with hopes, aspirations, advancements, growth, and accomplishments; whereas ought self-guides have a prevention focus, regulating the absence or presence of negative outcomes, and are concerned with safety, responsibilities, and
obligations. This distinction, Higgins adds, is in line with the age-old motivational principle that people approach pleasure and avoid pain.

Although the concept of ideal self may be useful when conceptualizing academic motivation, it should be noted that the ideal self theory is far from complete. Nasby (1997) points out, for example, that there is still not an accurate description of the actual structures (e.g., associative networks, frames, lists of behaviours, propositions, prototypes) that describe the ideal self, even though different structures would entail different information-processing and self-directive properties. Neither is it clear how one’s ideal self, which serves as a positive reference point, is related to the aspirations that others have for one. Higgins (1996) suggests that, to begin with, ideal self representations typically involve the standpoint of others and the person’s own distinct standpoint develops only gradually.

Higgins (1987, 1996) emphasizes that there are several types of self-representations beyond the ideal and ought self concepts and that not everyone is expected to possess a developed ideal and ought self-guide. This lack of desired self-guides would, then, explain the absence of sufficient motivation in many people, a claim that is also related to Markus and Nurius’s (1986) argument that aspirations will only be effective in motivating behaviour if they have been elaborated into a specific possible self in the working self concept.

Thus, while the ideal L2 self perspective provides a good fit to the motivational data accumulated in the past, and does not contradict the traditional conceptualizations of L2 motivation, it presents a broader frame of reference with increased capacity for explanatory power: Integrativeness seen as ideal L2 self can be used to explain the motivational set-up in diverse learning contexts even if they offer little or no contact with L2 speakers (e.g., in typical
FL-learning situations where the L2 is primarily a school language, such as in the context of my study). That is, the ideal L2 self perspective offers a paradigm that can explain the integrativeness enigma that has emerged from various data-based studies (reviewed above).

The L2 Motivational Self-System

The ideal L2 self perspective is linked to two important recent conceptualizations of L2 motivation, that of Noels (2003) and of Ushioda (2001). It appears that the various models converge in a broad pattern of three main dimensions of L2 motivation, and when this pattern is compared with Gardner’s original theoretical model striking similarities are found. Dörnyei has labelled the emerging new motivation construct, to be described below, the L2 motivational self-system.

Based on her systematic research program to examine the relevance of self-determination theory to L2 learning, Noels (2003) suggested a larger motivation construct made up of three interrelated types of orientations:

1. intrinsic reasons inherent in the language-learning process,
2. extrinsic reasons for language learning, and
3. integrative reasons.

Using qualitative rather than quantitative methods, Ushioda (2001) has identified a more complex construct which, however, is conceptually related to the one offered by Noels. Her findings pointed to eight motivational dimensions, which can be grouped in three broad clusters which correspond closely to Noels’ framework: The first cluster concerns the actual learning process (subsuming the following components: language-related enjoyment, positive learning
history, and personal satisfaction); the second cluster corresponds to the dimension that Ushioda labelled external pressures/incentives; the third cluster is made up of four constituents, forming a broad integrative dimension: personal goals, desired levels of L2 competence (consisting of language-intrinsic goals), academic interest (which had the greatest contribution from interest in French literature), and feelings about French-speaking countries or people.

In an attempt to synthesize these two paradigms with his own research findings, Dörnyei has proposed a new L2 motivational self-system, which is a broad construct of L2 motivation, made up of three dimensions:

1. The **Ideal L2 Self**, referring to the L2-specific facet of one’s ideal self: If the person we would like to become speaks an L2, the ideal L2 self is a powerful motivator to learn the L2 because of the basic desire to reduce the discrepancy between our actual and ideal selves. This dimension is related to Noels’ integrative category and Ushioda’s third cluster.

2. The **Ought-to L2 Self**, referring to the attributes that one believes one ought to possess (i.e., various duties, obligations, or responsibilities) in order to avoid possible negative outcomes. This dimension corresponds on the one hand to Higgins’ ought self and thus the more extrinsic types of instrumental motives, and on the other hand to the extrinsic constituents in both Noels’ and Ushioda’s taxonomies.

3. The **L2 Learning Experience**, which concerns situation-specific motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience. Although Csizer and Dörnyei’s (2005) study only concerned general (i.e., non-situation-specific) motives and therefore did not offer information about this dimension, past research conducted in
the spirit of the situated approach has provided ample evidence of the pervasive influence of executive motives on the immediate learning environment and experience. This dimension corresponds to Noels’ intrinsic category and the first cluster formed of Ushioda’s motivational facets.

Ushioda (2001) summarized her findings as follows: "We can classify all the factors in each language learner’s motivational configuration as either causal (deriving from the continuum of L2-learning and L2-related experience to date) or teleological (directed toward short-term or long-term goals and future perspectives)" (p. 107). This summary fits the proposed construct closely, because the ideal and the ought-to L2 selves are by definition teleological as they concern imagined future end-states, and the L2 learning experience component is the causal dimension. It is interesting that Ushioda found that the future-oriented dimension of motivational goals or incentives and the past- or present-oriented perception of the learning experience are in a complementary relationship. In her study, students with positive learning experiences tended to emphasize intrinsic motivational factors whereas participants with less illustrious learning histories tended to define their motivation principally in terms of particular personal goals or career plans. This would suggest that there may be two potentially successful motivational routes for language learners, either fuelled by the positive experiences of their learning reality or by their visions for the future.

Finally, when comparing the system to Gardner’s integrative motive, at first sight there may seem to be little resemblance. But if we take into account that the motivation subcomponent is associated to a considerable degree with motivated behavioural measures, and that Gardner has recently attached a possible instrumental motive to the motivation subcomponent, we find striking similarities: The model suggests, in effect, that motivated behaviour (i.e., the motivation
subcomponent) is determined by three major motivational dimensions: integrativeness, instrumentality, and the attitudes toward the learning situation, which corresponds closely with the proposed L2 motivational self-system.

**Summary**

Despite the interdependence between the fields of SLA and L2 motivation, past literature revealed a discrepancy between orientations used to research the two. In order to adequately investigate beginner FSL university learners’ motivation: perceptions of their prior and current French language-learning experiences and examine their language-learner identities, I argue that a socio-historical and evolutionary orientation must be implemented. Dörnyei’s (2005) L2 motivational self-system, in my opinion, can accomplish this, and I have rationalized my argument in this chapter. Whereas the meaning of motivation, according to past research in the field, which has been mostly product-oriented, is stable and unchanging, the L2 motivational self-system views motivation as dynamic and changing. It places emphasis on the learners’ perception of their L2 learning experiences and identity as language learners, yet it is compatible with the major findings of past research in the field and does not contradict the traditional conceptualizations of L2 motivation. Rather, it presents a broader frame of reference with increased capacity for explanatory power: Integrativeness seen as ideal L2 self can be used to explain L2 motivation in diverse learning contexts, such as the learning context of beginner FSL university learners in English-dominant Canada, a context which resembles typical FL-like situations where the L2 is primarily a school language.
Chapter 4:  
Methods:  
Objectives and Elements of the Design

As stated initially in Chapter 1, my study has three main research questions:

1. How does L2 writing achievement (i.e., as evidenced by the quality of the texts produced) for beginner FSL university learners telecollaborating with younger members of the TL in another province compare to that of beginner FSL university learners telecollaborating with classroom peers of similar language proficiency?

2. What are beginner FSL university learners’ perceptions of their prior and current French language-learning experiences?

3. How is learner identity of beginner FSL university learners shaped by their perceptions of their prior and current French language-learning experiences?

Based on the three research questions, this study has three objectives:

1. To compare the writing achievement (as evidenced by the quality of the texts produced) of two groups of beginner FSL university learners working interactively in a telecollaborative context: one group interacting with younger members of the TL in another province and the other interacting with classroom peers of similar language proficiency.

2. To investigate beginner FSL university learners’ perceptions of their prior and current French language-learning experiences.
3. To explore the learner identity of beginner, FSL university learners as shaped by their perceptions of their prior and current French language-learning experiences.

This chapter describes the process used to research the above questions and meet the objectives. The details of this process are outlined in the following four sections: Research Design, Instruments, Piloting, and Timeline. Given the importance and complexity of the study context, a full account of the participant population and the setting is provided in Chapter 5.

**Research Design**

*Case Study Methodology*

My mixed-method research implemented a case study methodology (Johnson, 1992), which drew on a variety of traditional data gathering methods (text or production data, background questionnaires, stimulated-recall interviews, language-learning autobiographies, and ongoing observations from my study journal). Of the five data collection methods, the text data and the ongoing observations gathered data that was interpreted from the researcher’s view. On the other hand, the remaining three methods provided information from the students’ perspective. Since my mixed-method case study focused primarily on gathering and interpreting data from the language learners’ perspective, it can be said to have a phenomenological flavour.

Epistemologically, phenomenology, located within the Weberian tradition (Collins, 1986), is based in a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity, and emphasizes the importance of personal interpretations of human interaction (Bogdan & Bilken, 1998; Geertz, 1973). Phenomenological researchers attempt to understand the meaning of events and interactions of ordinary people in particular situations. As such, phenomenological methods were particularly effective at bringing to the fore the subjective language-learning experiences and
perceptions of the participants, and therefore at challenging structural or normative assumptions. Adding an interpretive dimension to phenomenological research, enabling it to be used as the basis for practical theory, allows it to inform, support, or challenge policy and action. It allows for the consideration of social, historical, cultural, and contextual variables necessary to explain variation in achievement among learners. Such variables are embodied in all forms of ILO research within a socio-cultural perspective and imply a concern with prolonged, ecologically valid explorations of human action within different time frames. In itself, case study methodology with a phenomenological flavor allows for a powerful understanding of language-learning experiences. Specifically, it provided insights into the effects of working interactively in a telecollaborative context (i.e., email) with younger members of the TL group, on L2 writing achievement and learner perceptions of beginner FSL learners at the university level, as compared to learners working interactively in a telecollaborative environment with peers of similar language proficiency. At the same time, it helped cut through the clutter of taken-for-granted assumptions and conventional wisdom.

I used both quantitative and qualitative approaches to address the first question, i.e., by collecting and analyzing text, also known as production data (learners’ writing samples) and by analyzing ongoing observations from the study journal. To explore the second and third questions, I used a qualitative approach and implemented such methods as background questionnaires, stimulated-recall interviews, and language-learning autobiographies.

**Participant Recruitment, Selection, and Assignment**

Over the course of eight months (fall and winter terms – September 2004 to April 2005), I taught and researched two parallel forms of the same beginner FSL language lab component at
an Anglophone university in Atlantic Canada. Each form implemented the same language lab activities, which included an L2 writing activity (a narrative I designed for this study), that was carried out in a telecollaborative context. The parallel forms differed in that the group members of one form interacted telecollaboratively with younger members of the TL group, from a partner class in another Atlantic province, and the group members of the other form interacted telecollaboratively with classroom peers of similar language proficiency.

Since the first objective of the study aimed to compare the effects of interacting in a telecollaborative context on L2 writing achievement, I opted to label the two groups mentioned above as (a) treatment group (group working telecollaboratively with younger members of the TL group) and (b) comparison group (group working telecollaboratively with classroom peers of similar language proficiency) as a way of accounting for L2 writing improvement between the two groups over time. Without a comparison group, L2 writing improvement could be interpreted as being the result of practice instead of the intervention (presence or absence of telecollaborative L2 writing with younger members of the TL group).
Participants were selected through non-random selection ($N=87$); the total number of students originally enrolled in two sections of the entry-level course were officially recruited to participate in the study. All 87 students provided consent (see Appendix A for all consent forms). Treatment and comparison groups were created through random assignment, which was carried out as follows. From the original language lab population ($N=87$), I randomly selected two groups (Group A and Group B). Group A ($n=25$) served to make up one half the treatment group. Each member of Group A was paired to work collaboratively with a younger TL speaker from a partner class in another Atlantic province, thus forming the treatment group ($n=25$ pairs). Group B ($n=62$), served to make up pairs for the comparison group and was further divided into two groups, creating Group C and Group D ($n=31$ each). Members of group C were paired to work collaboratively with a classroom peer of similar language proficiency from group D, thus forming the comparison group ($n=31$ pairs). See Figure 2.

*Figure 2. Description of treatment and comparison group formation.*
Since the second and third objectives of the study aimed to gain indepth insight into learner perceptions of their prior and current FSL learning experiences, as well as identity shaped by their experiences, I opted to select a sub-set of two participants from each group (treatment and comparison) to write language-learning autobiographies and to take part in stimulated-recall interviews. I selected the sub-set participants based on their course grade at the mid-point of the study (December 2004). Selecting sub-set participants at the mid-point of the study ensured that they had several months experience to draw on from the course and as members of the L2 writing activity. This selection time also ensured that participants would have ample time to reflect on their FSL learning experiences and write a language-learning autobiography before the end of the study (April, 2005). I used grades to select a strong FSL participant (student with the highest grade) and a weak FSL participant (student with the lowest grade) from each of the treatment and comparison groups. I used this selection procedure because research has demonstrated that investigating individual learner differences (attributes such as language aptitude, age, and motivation) and their extremes within groups provides for rich and potentially useful information about L2 processes, particularly L2 learning in instructional contexts. Such investigations may also allow instructors and researchers to extend the pattern of results found from one population to another (Dörnyei, 2005).

**Data Collection**

At the time of enrolment, all students were required to take a placement test to ensure entry-level course eligibility. The results of the placement test also served as a pre-test to establish students’ beginner level FSL status, a necessary requisite for participation in this study (see section below titled “Instruments” for details and Appendix H for an example).
The first objective of the study was to compare the writing achievement (i.e., as evidenced by the quality of the texts produced) of two groups of beginner FSL university learners working interactively in a telecollaborative context: one group working with younger members of the TL in another province and another group working with classroom peers of similar language proficiency. Based on the objectives of the entry-level course, I developed an L2 writing activity (see section “Instruments” for a description and Appendix I for an example) and used it as a means to collect participants’ L2 writing samples or production data. Given the original number of pairs in both the treatment and comparison groups, an original L2 writing sample size of 56 was expected. The sample size was reduced, however, from 56 to 31, due to reasons that fell into the following categories: enrolment fluctuations: course dropped and/or new arrivals, missing data: submitted sample did not take the form of a narrative, and missing data: sample was not submitted. See Table 1 for an account of these numbers.

Table 1
Recruited Sample Size and Final Sample Size with Reasons for Sample Size Reduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number in original sample</th>
<th>Number reduced due to enrolment fluctuation: course dropped/new arrivals</th>
<th>Missing data: submitted sample did not take form of a narrative</th>
<th>Missing data: sample was not submitted</th>
<th>Final number in sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both groups of students began the writing activity in October 2004 (Week 3 of the fall term) and completed the activity in mid-April 2005. For details of how the L2 writing activity
was integrated in the language lab component and how the telecollaborative process was carried out, see Chapter 5.

The second and third objectives of this study sought to explore beginner university FSL learners’ perceptions of their prior and current FSL learning experiences, as well as how their identity was shaped by these perceptions. Data to examine these objectives were collected through a triangulation of methods: background questionnaires, stimulated-recall interviews, language-learning autobiographies, and ongoing observations from the study journal. A summary of the data collection is presented in Table 2.
## Table 2

### Summary of Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Means of data collection</th>
<th>Timing of collection</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French placement test</td>
<td>Treatment and Comparison group members from participating university: September 2004</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background questionnaire</td>
<td>Treatment and Comparison group members from participating university: September 2004</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2 writing activity</td>
<td>Treatment and Comparison group pairs: October 2004–April 2005</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing observations (the study journal)</td>
<td>Instructor–researcher: September 2004–April 2005</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language-learning autobiographies</td>
<td>Treatment and Comparison group members from participating university: September 2004–April 2005</td>
<td>4: Treatment (2), Comparison (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulated-recall interviews</td>
<td>Treatment and Comparison group members from participating university: April 2005</td>
<td>4: Treatment (2), Comparison (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Instruments

In this section I describe the instruments used in the data gathering stages of this study.

The quantitative instruments are described first, followed by a description of the qualitative instruments.
Quantitative Instruments

French placement test.

This test was administered during the first class of the fall term 2004, to all language students who had not previously taken a French course at university. Since the French course involved in this study is a first-year, beginner level course, all students in this course were required to take the test to verify that they were, in fact, beginner learners and enrolled in the appropriate course. In sum, this placement test was chosen to serve as a pre-test to measure the participants’ French proficiency before beginning the L2 writing activity and to ascertain that the FSL students were appropriately categorized as beginners as defined by the university. The final composition of the L2 writing activity served as a post-test instrument demonstrating improvement over time. The test was developed by the participating Modern Language Department and had proven to adequately measure FSL proficiency for the purposes of course placement. See Appendix H for a more complete description and sample of the test.

Background questionnaire.

All beginner FSL university students in both groups responded to a background questionnaire (see Appendix J for Questionnaire and Appendix K for Follow-up questions). The questionnaire, completed in September 2004, gathered basic demographic information data such as: age, gender, program and major, academic year, class and lab schedule, reason for taking the class, and desired achievement. In addition, the questionnaire included questions pertaining to educational and professional background, language background, computer background, and L1 writing background. Specifically, it focused on education level completed to date, work experience, L1 language, additional languages, self-assessment of language proficiency, and previous FSL learning experience; previous experience with computers, self-assessment of
computer skills and abilities, and experience with computers for formal education; and self-assessment of L1 writing abilities and previous L1 writing instruction.

The goal of the background questionnaire was four-fold:

1. to confirm the beginner level FSL status of the participants, as measured by the placement test,

2. to explore the participants’ computer and writing background, in order to verify their ability to complete the activity,

3. to provide an initial view of the participants’ prior FSL learning experiences, thus providing me with appropriate information to develop guidelines for the participant autobiographies, and

4. to provide information to help me refine and expand the stimulated-recall interview questions.

I developed the questionnaire while keeping in mind both the advantages and the shortcomings of using a questionnaire as a research instrument. To maximize the construction of a careful and creative instrument that would motivate the participants to give truthful and thoughtful responses and that would be processed in a meaningful way, I implemented the following steps advocated by Dörnyei (2003):

1. decide on the general features of the questionnaire such as the format (length, time for completion, layout) and the main parts,

2. write effective items/questions and draw a question pool,
3. select and sequence the items,

4. write appropriate examples and instructions, and

5. pilot the questionnaire and conduct item analysis

**L2 writing activity.**

I developed the L2 writing activity with the aim of creating a classroom activity that was pedagogically valuable and suited to the themes of a beginner FSL integrated skills class that was focused on French Canadian and Acadian culture. The activity was also designed to enable the learners to provide and receive scaffolded interactional feedback in response to communication problems, including negotiating, recasting, and providing feedback for, and any other forms deemed appropriate. The L2 writing activity was a two-way information exchange via email. The activity was divided into two parts:

Part 1 was titled “Introduction” and lasted four to six weeks. The objectives of Part 1 were for the learners to:

1. Review email skills and become familiar with the International keyboard for French accent use, as well as, electronic French writing resources (in-house and on-line),

2. Make contact with and introduce themselves in French to their partner using email,

3. Write two short emails in French describing themselves and asking questions of their partner using appropriate structure for an informal or social correspondence (e.g., date, greeting or salutation, body, and closing expression), and
4. Set the stage for Part 2.

Learners were provided with instructions and details as to how to proceed.

Part 2 was titled “Writing Project” and lasted ten to twelve weeks. The objectives of Part 2 were for the learners to:

1. Interact telecollaboratively by email to select a topic and to co-construct a narrative composition, and

2. Develop a narrative composition using a process approach; the process of revising and editing to produce several drafts before arriving at a final version.

Learners were provided with instructions and details as to how to proceed. They were also provided with evaluation criteria and a list of topics corresponding to the L2 writing project theme.

The L2 writing activity (Parts 1 and 2) was designed to question some of the assumptions underlying contemporary adult beginners’ coursebooks, such as the one selected for use in this beginner level FSL course, *En bon termes* (Parmentier & Potvin, 2003), and suggest some alternatives, building partly on the proposals for linking course materials to SLA research in Cook (1998). Much of my thinking here was shaped by three apparently innocuous assumptions about language teaching materials for adults:

1. Adult students have adult minds and interests. Most adult coursebooks cater to people who do not think, speak, learn or behave in the same ways as children. Sometimes it may be possible for them to pretend to be children for the purposes of a particular exercise or activity. But this pretence can never be more than temporary; the adult
2. Second language learners are people in their own right. L2 learners are not just monolingual native speakers with an additional language, but people with new strengths and abilities. They not only speak their L2 differently from monolinguals, but also their L1; they think in different ways from monolinguals; they use the L2 for their own purposes – for business, for travelling, for reading poetry, for negotiation, for studying, or for many other reasons – negotiating through an L2, translating from one language to another, code-switching from one language to another. The growing evidence for these statements is presented in Cook (2005). Few students need to pass for natives, apart from professional spies; they are instead mediators between two cultures and two languages.

3. Language teaching has been held back by unquestioning acceptance of traditional nineteenth century principles.

Twentieth century language teaching was largely heir to the New Reform method of the 1880s (Howatt, 1984). The principles of the priority of speech and the avoidance of the L1 have been handed down virtually unquestioned through the mainstream teaching tradition from situational, to audio-lingual, to communicative, to task-based methods. These principles are not particularly justified by current ideas about how people learn an L2. As a result, I was compelled to evaluate these principles rather than incorporate them unquestioningly in the beginner FSL lab component.

In sum, the purpose of the L2 writing activity was threefold:
1. the rating scores provided for a quantitative comparison between the two groups: the treatment and the comparison groups,

2. the activity provided a stimulus for the stimulated-recall interviews, and

3. the activity challenged assumptions about the ways in which language should be taught, about the students themselves, and their perceptions about the goals for learning a language.

**Quantitative data analysis.**

The data obtained from the placement test, the scores, served to determine the FSL participants level of proficiency and eligibility for enrolment in the entry-level course, including this study. The placement test scores and course level range are not presented.

The data from the background questionnaires were analyzed descriptively in order to provide more depth of description of the participants, as well as to verify participants’ skills and prior learning experiences (language and other).

The L2 writing activity ratings provided for a quantitative comparison between the two groups: the treatment and the comparison groups. Inter-rater reliability was determined by three raters who rated 31 writing samples that took the form of a narrative composition. The raters used a modified version of the *ESL Composition Profile* (Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hartfiel, & Hughey, 1981). Although known for its use as an ESL (English as a Second Language) composition profile typically used with intermediate and advanced language learners, I decided to implement it to rate beginner FSL compositions for a couple of reasons: (a) it is extremely well-known as an analytic rating scheme for assessing adult L2 writing and (b) it has been
widely tested, documented, and used in published studies. Of the original number of writing samples (N=56), 15 writing samples took a form other than a narrative composition (e.g., a poem or an interview) and therefore could not be scored using the profile: this included 11 writing samples from the treatment group and 4 writing samples from the comparison group. The profile was modified because the scales were messy. That is, each criterion had a range and it was not clear what each point in the range signified. It was more practical and easier to achieve reliability with a more transparent scale.

The three raters (two raters and myself) had a combined total of 27 years experience teaching FSL: the first taught CF in several Ontario secondary schools for 10 years, the second has been teaching both immersion and CF in a different Ontario secondary school for 7 years, and I had experience teaching in Atlantic Canada; CF and immersion at the secondary school level for 2 years, as well as CF at the university level for 8 years.

The writing samples were rated for content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics, the five dimensions of the ESL Composition Profile. Content refers to the quality of the ideas expressed in a composition. Organization involves the quality of the structure, coherence and cohesion of the writing sample. The vocabulary criteria refer to the sophistication and range of lexical items. Language use criteria include syntactic complexity, agreement issues, word order, use of ‘function’ words (e.g., prepositions), and so on. Finally, mechanics involve the mastery of conventions such as punctuation, spelling and paragraphing.

The original ESL Composition Profile had weighted scores, giving a higher percentage to content and organization than to the other dimensions. I used a 5-point scale (0 to 4) – roughly poor (0), fair (1), average (2), good (3) and excellent (4) – to rate each dimension.
All writing samples were rated by the three raters. At the first meeting of the two Ontario raters, several writing samples were selected randomly and each was discussed until a consensus had been reached on a rating for each dimension. Then the raters scored each writing sample independently. The third rater rated each sample independently of the other two. At 5 ratings per rater, there were 155 scores in all. In only 9 cases were the ratings more than one scale point apart. Appendix L provides samples of beginner FSL university learners’ L2 writing, and Appendix M provides the ratings for all samples, for all three raters.

The measure used to assess inter-rater reliability is Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient. This coefficient is used when examining ratings assigned by more than two raters (Crocker & Algina, 1986). Using the ratings of three raters provides better estimates of examinees’ abilities than using only two raters. An Alpha coefficient equal to or higher than .80 is conventionally regarded as an indication of acceptable inter-rater agreement. Some references indicate that even an alpha of .70 is acceptable in performance rating (Barrett, 2001), while others require an alpha of .90, particularly for objective tests, as in the case of multiple-choice. An alpha of .80 or higher means that it is acceptable to use the average of rating across all raters to obtain a better (e.g., more reliable) estimate of an examinee/student writing ability.

After establishing inter-rater reliability, I averaged the scores assigned by the three raters for each rating criterion for each writing sample and then ran analyses on the average scores. To compare whether the difference between the two participant groups, in terms of each rating criterion, was statistically significant, I ran a two-tailed Mann-Whitney U test using SPSS on each criterion, with group as independent variable and criterion as dependent variable.

Mann-Whitney U test is a non-parametric equivalent of t-test for comparing the medians of two independent groups and determining whether there is a difference between the two.
Significance of difference between groups was determined by looking at Z and p values in the output file. In general, if the observed z value did not equal or exceed the critical z value of 1.96 ($p \leq .05$ critical z value for a two-tailed test), then I assumed that the null hypothesis was correct and that there was no difference between groups. If the z value, however, exceeded 1.96 then there was evidence to reject the null hypothesis.

**Qualitative Instruments**

*Ongoing observations (the study journal).*

As Adler and Adler (1994, p. 377) state, observation is “most likely to be used in conjunction with others [methods], such as questionnaires, experimental design, and interviewing.” In this regard, the ongoing observations supplemented my knowledge and understanding of the influence of the language lab component, specifically, the L2 writing activity, on the participants’ perceptions of their current language-learning experience.

As both instructor and researcher, I decided not to implement a pre-constructed, standardized observation template (e.g., profile, chart, scheme), one that requires the observer to view and code each lesson in real time by filling-in blanks or checking off corresponding descriptors. Such an observation template would have been inconvenient and disruptive to my role as instructor, as I would have had to stop interacting with students to fill-in blanks and check off appropriate descriptors. It would have also been disruptive and, perhaps, intimidating to students, as they would have been aware of my actions, which, in turn, may have influenced their behaviour and hence the data. Instead, I chose a more open-ended format that took the form of a journal. In addition to allowing for thick, detailed description, and, therefore, a better understanding of the language lab context; specifically, the L2 writing activity, the journal also
offered a framework for refining the stimulated-recall interviews, thus eliciting from the participants perceptions of their current language-learning experience. The journal was divided into two sections. The first section was devoted to observation of the students in the language lab component, while the second section contained notes concerning interaction, communication and decision-making with others involved in the study, the community of practice, mainly the participating instructors and the partner school teacher. In the first section, titled “Language lab observations”, I wrote a two-page journal entry once a week, each Friday afternoon, for twenty weeks. My observations in the first section of the journal are guided by Denzin’s (1989) six criteria: (a) interaction, (b) routines, (c) rituals, (d) temporal elements, (e) interpretations, and (f) social organization. In order not to constrain any novel findings, I did not make my observation criteria any more specific. In the second section, titled “Communications”, I kept track of all interaction, written and verbal communication, and decision-making with the participating instructors and the partner teacher.

**Language-learning autobiographies.**

As Steinman (2004) points out, language autobiographies have been variously termed language narratives, life histories, language memoirs, autoethnographies, life narratives, and testimonies. The autobiography can provide an emic perspective (the writers’ subjective, reconstructed account of past experiences). Whereas my ongoing observations provided an outsider’s (my own) view of phenomena, the autobiography provides an insider’s (the participant’s) perception.

Language-learning autobiographies were collected from a subset of the treatment and comparison groups; two from each group, for a total of four autobiographies. Through writing autobiographies, the participants had an opportunity to recollect their prior FSL learning
experiences. Because I wanted to understand their prior experiences with language learning, I instructed them to write about their FSL learning history since early childhood, and to describe how their prior experiences had influenced perceptions of their current L2 learning context. Although the length of the autobiography was set by the participants, I set a minimum of two full, single-sided, letter-size pages, typed. I collected the autobiographies towards the end of the entry-level course (winter term), in April 2005, before I conducted the stimulated-recall interviews.

*Stimulated-recall interviews.*

As a number of researchers have pointed out, interaction and collaboration are dynamic constructs shaped by participants’ expectations, experiences, and beliefs about the communication and their interlocutor (Lantolf, 2000b). Utilizing introspective methods can allow researchers and instructors to go beyond production data, such as that data provided by the L2 writing samples collected in this study, and gain a deeper understanding of the interaction or collaboration from learner’s perspectives, shedding light on the complex role it might play in the L2 production and development process. Taking these points into consideration, I conducted stimulated-recall interviews at the end of the winter term, April 2005, immediately after the completion of the L2 writing activity. I conducted four stimulated-recall interviews; two with members of the treatment group and two with members of the comparison group. The students interviewed were the same students who participated in the language-learning autobiography activity. Each interview session lasted approximately 1 hour, took place in a quiet, comfortable, brightly lit office, and was audio-recorded. The stimulated-recall interview procedure was designed to elicit the learners’ perceptions about their current language-learning experience; that is, to uncover information about their perceptions at the time they were taking part in the L2
writing activity. The stimulated-recall interview procedure, outlined by Gass and Mackey (2000), was carried out as follows. Each interview was conducted immediately after completion of the L2 writing activity, within 24 to 48 hours as required by stimulated-recall procedure. Learners were provided with a draft and the final copy of their L2 writing product. They were asked to review these documents, introspect about them, and describe their thoughts at the time they were interacting telecollaboratively. In order to further stimulate recall, I asked questions that were guided by a semi-structured interview format (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002) to facilitate consistent analysis. In applying the interview template, I heeded suggestions received during the focus group session and I used additional probes. Each participant was encouraged to introduce and explore other topics related to the core questions in the interview template. Depending on the participants’ interests, responses, and curiosity, I asked new additional questions.

Immediately after each interview, I transcribed the audio recording and emailed the transcript to the participant, asking them to confirm its correctness and highlight parts that did not fully reflect what they wanted to express in the interview. I added their clarifications at the bottom of their respective transcripts. For an example of the stimulated-recall interview protocol, see Appendix N.

Given the unique context of my study, it is necessary to clarify a couple of points related to temporal relationship to action (how immediate/delayed the retrospection was) and participation in questions/recall interactions (who took part in the stimulus episodes and who interacted with participants).

Although the L2 writing activity (which involved the writing of several drafts before completing the final version) took place over an extended period of time (8 months), the stimulated-recall interviews only covered the time span between the last draft and the final
version (approximately 2 to 3 weeks). Also, the stimulated-recall interview took place no more than 24 to 48 hours after the final version was completed, as suggested by stimulated-recall procedure. Minimizing the time between the completion of the final version and the stimulated-recall interview assured, as much as possible, that participants accurately recalled what they thought or what they did as they progressed from the final draft to the final version. To some degree, the prompts not only served to stimulate recall about what participants thought and did during the time span between final draft and final version, but to provide reminders to other earlier events. Given that the participants took part in the L2 writing activity for an 8-month period and that a considerable amount of time and effort were invested in the project, it is not surprising that the prompts stimulated memories from early on.

The second and third objectives of the study were to investigate participants’ perceptions and identities of their own FSL learning experiences. This required that I interview individual participants, not both members of the pair.

**Qualitative data analysis.**

Texts in a single study may represent a variety of different types of occurrences of communicative language (Palmquist, 1990). In order to interpret the raw qualitative data, I conducted content analyses on the ongoing observations from my study journal, the language-learning autobiographies, and the stimulated-recall interviews throughout the qualitative data collection process.

I decided to implement content analysis methodology for several reasons:

1. it looks directly at communication via texts and transcripts, therefore getting at the central aspect of social interaction,
2. it can allow for both quantitative and qualitative operations,
3. it can provide valuable historical and cultural insights over time,

4. it allows a closeness to text that can alternate between specific and relationships,

5. it is an unobtrusive means of analyzing interaction, and

6. it can provide insights into complex human thoughts.

To conduct a content analysis on any such text, the text is coded, or broken down, into manageable categories on a variety of levels; word, word sense, phrase, sentence, or theme. The process of coding is basically one of selective reduction. By reducing the text to categories consisting of a word, set of words or phrases, the researcher can focus on, and code for, specific words or patterns that are indicative of the research questions. The categories are then examined using one of content analysis' basic methods: conceptual analysis or relational analysis.

I focused on concepts, rather than simply words, and on semantic relationships, in order to explore the texts’ linguistic, affective, cognitive, social, cultural and historical significance. In other words, I was not interested in only quantifying these words, but in examining how they were related.

In conceptual analysis, the researcher simply wants to examine presence with respect to his/her research question. A concept is chosen for examination, and the analysis involves quantifying and tallying its presence, which may be explicit or implicit. For example, in my study, was there a stronger presence of positive or negative words used with respect to prior or current language learning experiences and identities shaped by the experiences?

Relational analysis, like conceptual analysis, begins with the act of identifying concepts present in a given text or set of texts. However, relational analysis seeks to go beyond presence by exploring the relationships between the concepts identified. In other words, the focus of
relational analysis is to look for semantic, or meaningful, relationships (Palmquist, Carley, & Dale, 1997). Individual concepts, in and of themselves, are viewed as having no inherent meaning. Rather, meaning is a product of the relationships among concepts in a text. Carley & Palmquist (1992) asserts that concepts are ideational kernels, which can be thought of as symbols that acquire meaning through their connections to other symbols.

I made my coding choices with respect to the eight-category coding steps indicated by Carley & Palmquist (1992). They include:

1. Decide the level of analysis.
2. Decide how many concepts to code for.
3. Decide whether to code for existence or frequency of a concept.
4. Decide on how to distinguish among concepts.
5. Develop rules for coding the texts.
6. Decide what to do with "irrelevant" information.
7. Code the texts.
8. Analyze the results.

Issues of reliability and validity were addressed by adopting the iterative and cyclical process advocated by Miles and Huberman (1994). With respect to reliability, I conducted multiple content analyses on the texts throughout the data collection process to maximize reproducibility or consistent re-coding of the text data. Concerning validity, I maximized the correspondence of the categories to the conclusion. The validity of categories in implicit concept analysis was achieved by utilizing multiple classifiers to arrive at a specific definition of the category. For example, I analyzed for the occurrence of the concept category “perceptions”. Using multiple
classifiers, I broadened the concept category to include synonyms such as “view”, “opinion”, “thought”, and “belief”. Categories and classifiers were determined using a linguistic dictionary.

I acknowledge the challengeable nature of conclusions reached by this method’s inferential procedures. However, I am confident that the conclusions follow from the data and not some other phenomenon.

**Piloting**

The background questionnaire, the L2 writing activity, and the stimulated-recall interview questions were piloted prior to their use in this research (Johnson, 1992). In addition to piloting the instruments, I used a focus group of students for four purposes:

1. to allow the students the opportunity to express their opinions about the questionnaire,
2. to confirm the appropriateness of the L2 writing activity for beginner FSL university students,
3. to expand and refine my interview questions, and
4. to make visible issues of which I was unaware.

The instruments were piloted at a different university in Atlantic Canada; one with a modern language/French department and an entry-level (beginner or basic) French course representative of the participating university. It had, for example, a similar size and program offering, as well as similar enrolment criteria and student population. The pilot took place with an intact class of FSL participants enrolled in an entry-level French course during an 8-week, intensive, intersession term, May–June 2004. Ten FSL students in this course were recruited to
participate in the pilot. This pilot testing revealed some difficulty in the format of the questionnaire for the language reporting section. These sections were reformatted.

Similarly, I piloted the L2 writing activity with the same group of ten FSL students at the same time of year. The ten students were paired to work collaboratively in five pairs whose members were of similar language proficiency. However, while the aim of the piloting was to determine the appropriateness of the L2 writing activity for beginner FSL university students, and since the 8-week, intensive, intersession course had limited time to devote to this pilot, the L2 writing activity did not take place in a telecollaborative context or with members of the TL group. This pilot group’s writing samples \(n=5\) were rated for content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics, the five dimensions of the ESL Composition Profile by Jacobs et al. (1981), the profile used in the main study. According to a qualitative analysis of the raw scores for the five dimensions, as well as the mean of these dimensions for each sample, the entry-level FSL university students were able to compose a piece of writing that rated “fair” on the Jacobs et al. scale. Since students in an 8-week intensive course, which did not allow for the time necessary to devote adequate attention to the L2 writing process, were able to complete the L2 writing activity, I determined that it was appropriate for students enrolled in an 8-month course.

In view of the lack of qualitative research on former CF students enrolled in beginner FSL courses at the university level, I conducted focus group interviews to help me expand and refine my stimulated-recall interview protocol before conducting the individual interviews. The participants of the focus groups were five entry-level FSL students recruited from the intact 8-week, intensive, intersession course. The focus group session was audio-recorded. A content analysis of the transcribed data shed light on the necessity to add probes in order to verify
comprehension by the FSL participants and to encourage longer responses. I therefore included additional probes for the questions.

**Timeline**

This study had nine phases as summarized in Table 3. These included:

1. **Phase 1**: At the end of the winter term in May 2004, prior to the study, the background questionnaire, the L2 writing activity, and the stimulated-recall interview questions were piloted with an entry-level French class of FSL students taking part in an 8-week, intensive, intersession term, May–June 2004.

2. **Phase 2**: Focus group interviews were conducted in May of 2004 with the same group of FSL students who participated in Phase 1.

3. **Phase 3**: All beginner FSL students enrolled in the entry-level course and corresponding language lab component completed the French placement test in September 2004.

4. **Phase 4**: In September 2004, beginner FSL language lab students completed the background questionnaire.

5. **Phase 5**: Beginner FSL students, in both the treatment and comparison groups, began and completed the L2 writing activity (October 2004 to April 2005).

6. **Phase 6**: Ongoing observations of the learning context was documented in a study journal once weekly, from September 2004 to April 2005. Such observations served to provide greater depth of description and to provide a basis for comparison with
students’ previous language-learning experiences as reported in the background questionnaire.

7. Phase 7: Participant autobiographies were collected from a subset of the treatment and comparison groups; two students from each group, for a total of four autobiographies, which added further depth of description and evidence of participants’ perceptions of their prior language-learning experiences.

8. Phase 8: Stimulated-recall interviews were conducted with a subset of the treatment and comparison groups; two participants from each group, for a total of four interviews.

9. Phase 9: Data analysis took place during the last phase. Findings were reported and thesis writing begun.
Table 3

*Summary of Timeline and Data Collection*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>September 2004</td>
<td>Piloting of instruments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>September 2004</td>
<td>Focus group interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3</td>
<td>September, 2004</td>
<td>All beginner FSL students enrolled in entry-level course and corresponding language lab component completed French placement test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 4</td>
<td>September 2004</td>
<td>Beginner FSL language lab students completed background questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 5</td>
<td>October 2004 to April 2005</td>
<td>Beginner FSL students completed L2 writing activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 6</td>
<td>September 2004 to April 2005</td>
<td>Ongoing observations of learning context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 7</td>
<td>April 2005</td>
<td>Participant autobiographies with subset of Treatment and Comparison groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 8</td>
<td>April 2005</td>
<td>Stimulated-recall interviews with subset of Treatment and Comparison groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 9</td>
<td>May 2005 to May 2009</td>
<td>Analysis and write-up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary**

This chapter described both the quantitative and the qualitative research methods used in this mixed-method case study. The placement test, the L2 writing activity, and the background questionnaire were described. Similarly, the qualitative instruments: the language-learning
autobiographies, the observations recorded in the study journal, and the stimulated-recall
interviews were outlined. A detailed description of the context, including the participants (the
participating university, the participating modern language/French department, including the
entry-level course and the instructors who taught each section, the participating beginner FSL
university students, the partner school and teacher, and the partner students) and the setting is
presented in Chapter 5.
Chapter 5: Participants and Context

This chapter, describing the participants and context of the research, is divided into six sections. The first section discusses the participating university and reasons for its choice. The second section details the participating modern language department, specifically the entry-level course taught in this study and the instructors who facilitated the two sections. In the third section, I illustrate the participating beginner FSL university students using the information provided in the background questionnaire. In the fourth section, I describe the partner school and teacher. In the fifth section, the partner school students are discussed. Lastly, in the sixth section, I provide a detailed account of the beginner FSL learning context.

Participating University

Data collection occurred in a small (population 4,200), primarily undergraduate, liberal arts, Anglophone University situated in a predominantly English-speaking province of Atlantic Canada. I selected this university for three reasons:

1. Inquiry showed that it offered a modern language department and entry-level (beginner/basic) French courses representative of other Atlantic Canadian universities of its size and program offering, as well as similar enrollment criteria.

2. The Modern Language Department had a language lab-Multimedia Language Centre (MLC) that provided the resources conducive to examine the use of telecollaboration and an L2 writing activity to provide intensive exposure and enhance motivation for beginner FSL learners at the university level who have not
had the opportunity to participate in face-to-face spoken exchanges nationally or in study abroad programs.

3. As coordinator of the MLC at this university and instructor of the compulsory language lab component for the entry-level course, I had access to beginner FSL students for 8 months (an acceptable time frame for carrying out case study methodology, i.e., an indepth, longitudinal examination of an instance or event).

In order to obtain permission to conduct research at this university, an ethical review was submitted and approved before start of data collection.

**Participating Modern Language Department**

The participating department offers programs in French, German, and Spanish. The French program offers major, advanced major, and honours degrees. A large number of students enrolled in the French program, however, are enrolled in entry-level (beginner or basic) courses and are made up of former CF students whose intentions are not necessarily to obtain a French degree, but rather, who wish to continue their French language development while earning credits towards another degree.

**Entry-Level Course**

The entry-level course for the student population examined in this study is designed as the course for students who have completed at least Grade 11 French or equivalent (as defined by six modern language or French departments in the region). It should be noted that although students must meet the Grade 11 eligibility criteria and write a placement test before entry to the course, the department reserves the right to make final decisions and may make special
allowances. This course is an intensive review of the basic structures of the French language. Instruction consists of 3 hours of class per week and 1 hour of compulsory language lab time per week. This entry-level course cannot be used as credit toward a major, advanced major, or honours degree. However, it may be used toward a minor in French, as part of a pair or as an elective.

Two sections of this entry-level course were offered during the 2004-2005 academic year when the study was conducted. A different instructor taught each section. Materials and resources, such as texts, workbooks, films, web-sites, and CD-ROMs were selected or developed by the course and lab instructors (For more information concerning this course in terms of the learning context, see section in this chapter titled Beginner FSL Learning Context). Permission to conduct research with this department and to approach the entry-level course instructors for their participation was obtained before start of data collection.

**Instructors**

Two instructors each taught one section of the entry-level course. Both participated fully in the study, providing consent, distributing background questionnaires, and maintaining weekly contact with the language lab instructor-researcher to plan and develop language lab activities relating to course objectives, as well as details of the telecollaborative L2 writing activity carried out in this study. The two instructors were Anglophone: one completed doctoral studies at an Anglophone university in Canada, the other at a Francophone university in France. Both had native-like proficiency, a variety of teaching experiences, spent considerable time in Francophone environments, and were credited with numerous research and publishing accomplishments.
**Participating Beginner FSL University Students**

Information in this section was obtained from the participant background questionnaire (see Appendix J for details). Fifty-five beginner FSL university students participated in this study; 36 (65%) female and 19 (35%) male. The majority of participants fell in the 17 to 19-year-old age range ($n=32$ or 59%). The next largest age group was 20 to 30-years-old ($n=21$ or 39%). Only 2 or 4% of participants were over 30-years-old. An overwhelming majority of participants (54, or 98%) indicated that high school was their level of education upon enrolling in the entry-level course. The remaining 1 (2%) had attended another community college or university.

Of the total number of participants, 26 (47%) were first-year students, 15 (27%) were second-year students, 6 (11%) were third-year students, 6 (11%) were fourth-year, and only 2 (4%) identified themselves as being in an additional year. The majority of students were enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts (BA) program ($n=34$, or 62%). The remaining participants were Bachelor of Science (BSc) students ($n=16$, or 29%) and Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) students ($n=5$, or 9%). Given that the majority of participants were first- and second-year students (73% total) who had yet to declare a major, and that a large number of participants (62%) were enrolled in a BA program, the door remained open for a number of participants to select French (a) as their major field of study; (b) as a minor; (c) as an elective - pair in conjunction with other programs. Participants took the entry-level course for a variety of reasons. For example, 15 (28%) indicated they took the course for self-improvement, 7 (12%) reported professional reasons for taking the course, course credit was named by 15 (28%), other reasons were named by 2 (3%) participants, and 16 (29%) reported a combination of reasons for taking the course.
All participants (N=55 or 100%) reported English as their L1 and French as their L2. Interestingly, 13 (24%) said they knew an additional language. Examples of the additional languages were: Arabic, Gaelic, German, Latin, and Spanish. All participants began their French studies in Grade 4 CF programs in the following provinces: New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, and Quebec. When asked about their perceptions concerning their level of French proficiency after, at least, 6 years of CF, 27 (49%) indicated they were at a beginner level, 27 (49%) reported being at an intermediate level, and 1 (2%) actually claimed to have an advanced level of French proficiency.

Participants’ general opinion of their CF studies in elementary school was that it was positive. Although some participants reported ambivalence, none reported negative feelings. Descriptions of participants’ academic development is reported in such anecdotes as: “We learned basic words, the alphabet and numbers.” and “We mostly learned basic terms, verbs, sang songs and played games.” In terms of perceptions, most participants expressed that they enjoyed CF in elementary school. Comments include: “Liked it and had fun.” And “I thought it was an excellent experience.”

Core French, in most Canadian provinces, is obligatory to Grade 9. Of the 55 participants, 33 (60%) took CF to Grade 12. Many of the participants express a shift in perception towards CF during high school in terms of academic development. Comments identifying the shift are: “We spent a lot of time reading, speaking and doing work to help our understanding.”; “French in high school was mostly grammar.”; “I remember spending time working on verb tenses and sentence structure.” In terms of perceptions, participants reported more negative thoughts than in elementary school. For instance, “Didn’t like it, hard to understand the work.”; “Core is a waste of time, personally. It is grammar only. Students going
through core are not able to actually hold conversations. All they can do is conjugate verbs.” “It was tedious and boring.” However, there were some participants who shared more positive comments. An example of a positive high school CF experience is “developed an appreciation for the language, wider range of communication skills that helped broaden my outlook.”

A large majority of the participants ($n=52$ or 95%) had experience with computers, while only 3 (5%) categorized themselves as not having any experience with computers. When asked whether participants had used technology in formal learning, 35 (64%) said yes and 20 (36%) indicated no.

The participants categorized their L1 ability as follows: Excellent, 26 (47%); Good, 23 (42%); Satisfactory, 4 (7%); Poor, 2 (4%).

Participants categorized their cultural awareness as: Excellent 2 (4%); Good 17 (31%); Satisfactory 28 (51%); Poor 8 (14%).

**Partner School and Teacher**

**Partner School**

The partner school was one of five schools administered by a French language School Board in Atlantic Canada. This school board offers three programs: a French first language program, a French immersion program, and a CF program. As a French first language school, the partner school’s program is intended for:

1. a child of a person who is eligible under Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and
2. a child of a person of Acadian or Francophone roots who wants his or her child to develop an Acadian and Francophone identity through the acquisition of the French language and the Acadian and Francophone culture.

The goals of the French first language schools’ Programme are: to develop a high proficiency in the French and English languages, both spoken and written; to develop a positive attitude towards the French language; to develop a positive attitude towards and a sense of belonging to the Acadian and Francophone culture and community; to raise student awareness and appreciation of Canada’s bilingual and multicultural nature; and to promote the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes in all disciplines taught in French. The school offers a homogeneous Francophone environment. The French language is used as the language of instruction from Grade 1 to Grade 12. Extracurricular activities (sports, music, step-dancing, and clubs) are also conducted in French. English is introduced in Grade 4. Given the predominantly English environment in the surrounding area, students acquire the English language naturally through TV, radio, movies, and other social means. The French first language school offers academic programmes that are equivalent to those taught in English schools. French and English programmes are developed by the provincial Department of Education and therefore meet provincial standards. At the end of Grade 12, successful students receive the provincial high school diploma. Upon graduation, students have the choice to pursue postsecondary education in either language.

The French first language school promotes an environment where language and culture are interwoven. It is a place where a strong emphasis is placed on academic excellence and where every effort is made for the preservation and growth of the French language and culture. As the popularity of the French first language program attracts students from outside the district
boundary, busing is provided. Given that the French first language school is located in a school community center, this makes it the focal point of the Acadian and Francophone population who uses the premises for all sorts of family and community social and cultural activities and events. This, in turn, leads to a better sense of belonging among young and old, and contributes to a better appreciation of one's own language and a greater pride of one's own heritage. Permission to conduct research with the school was obtained before start of data collection.

**Partner Teacher**

The teacher was employed by the French language school board and was a member of the provincial Teachers’ Federation. In addition, and before beginning her employment with the board, she qualified for and obtained a teaching license from the provincial Department of Education. The partner teacher was an Acadian whose L1 is French and L2 English. Having grown-up in an Acadian community and surrounded by a large French speaking family, she understood and spoke French since childhood. She completed her elementary and secondary education in a French first language school. Upon graduating from high school, she attended a French university where she earned a combined BA in French and BEd in elementary education. She had a total of 15 years teaching in a French first language school at both the elementary and secondary levels. The fall of 2004 marked her sixth year teaching Grade 7 social studies. See section titled Partner School Students for an explanation for age difference between partner school students and beginner FSL university students. Permission to conduct research with the teacher was obtained before start of data collection.
**Partner School Students**

The Grade 7 partner school social studies class consisted of 25 students, 15 males and 10 females (12 to 13-year-olds). Of the 25 students, 16 students (64%) were from a French L1 background, i.e., a home in which both parents understood and spoke French and where French was the language of communication. The remaining 9 (36%) came from English L1 homes, where only one parent understood and spoke French and where, therefore, English was spoken on a daily basis. All students had attended the French first language school since Grade 1, making this their seventh year at the school. Twenty-two of the students (88%) were from the region administered by the French first language school board and only 3 (12%) had to be bussed from their hometown to the partner school (about 20 km). Of 50 parents, 39 parents (78%) received education in French and 11 (22%) were from an English speaking background. Although each student had slightly different French language proficiency due to individual characteristics and family environments, including French versus English influences, as illustrated in the above discussion, all were able to speak and write at a level appropriate for their grade (Personal correspondence, partner teacher, September 2004). This level of proficiency allowed students to communicate fully with a French L1 speaker from the community or with someone from a different French speaking region, which qualified them as language mentors (despite the age difference) for the participating beginner FSL university students. In turn, the beginner FSL university students served as mentors for the partner school students for writing and content related issues. In the context of this study, the age difference between the much younger partner school students and the adult beginner FSL university students was advantageous, as each group scaffolded the progress of the other. Partner school students provided consent and their parents provided assent before start of data collection.
Beginner FSL Learning Context

This section is divided into three sub-sections. The first sub-section describes the entry-level course and the compulsory language lab component, including the schedule and objectives, with examples of corresponding activities. Given the significance of the role of the compulsory language lab component in the entry-level course, and particularly in this study, the second and third sub-sections are noteworthy. The second sub-section outlines the MLC, the rationale for its conception, the physical layout, and the available resources. The third sub-section details the L2 writing project and the telecollaborative process carried out for this study.

Entry-Level Course and Lab Component

Description.

The entry-level course described above was offered in two sections and a different instructor taught each section. One section consisted of 42 students, the other 45 students, for a total enrollment of 87 students. This entry-level course is designed as the course for students who have completed at least Grade 11 French or equivalent (as defined by six modern language or French departments in the region). All students were required to complete a placement test (described in Chapter 4) to ensure course eligibility. The objective of this entry-level course was to provide beginner FSL learners with an intensive review of the basic structures of the French language. The principal resource material (text, lab manual, web-sites, and CD-ROMs) used to help meet the objective was selected by the course instructors and was part of the resource package titled En bons termes (Parmentier & Potvin, 2003). Since this resource material was created by accomplished educators and authors, published by a reputable publisher, and implemented widely in many post-secondary institutions, it was not necessary to pilot it before use. Although these resources did not require piloting, I argue that they, like many course
materials for adult language learners, do not necessarily cater to the needs and interests of adults, do not respect the unique identity of L2 learners, and emphasize the principles of the priority of speaking and the avoidance of the L1. The course was an 8-month (September 2004 to April 2005), six-credit course that consisted of 3 hours of class time and 1 compulsory hour of language lab time per week for a total of 4 hours of instruction.

**Schedule, objectives, and activities.**

The 3-hour per week class time was scheduled as either 1-hour sessions, three times each week, or 1 1/2-hour sessions, twice a week. The schedule was decided between the instructor and students, depending on course timetable and preference. During the 3-hour per week class time, the course instructor met with a class of 40 students minimum and facilitated the following activities: lectures, class discussions, individual in-class assignments, small group work, correction and feedback sessions, as well as tests and exams.

During the compulsory 1-hour per week language lab component, the lab instructor met with a small group of students (10 maximum). The lab instructor began the 1-hour session by facilitating a mini-lesson, which usually lasted 15 minutes. The objectives of the mini-lesson were to covered topics, language skills, and knowledge that students from both course sections and their course instructor identified as troublesome and required review. The remaining 45 minutes were occupied with supplementary activities. The objectives of the supplementary activities were to promote both individual work and interaction among peers of similar language proficiency, and, in turn, to develop the skills and knowledge addressed in the mini-lessons. Interaction encouraged students to collaborate together, to make connections between new ideas and prior knowledge, to use language as a tool for learning, and to develop language and thinking competencies. Working in this manner, the students took part in what Swain has termed
collaborative dialogue, which is as dialogue in which speakers are engaged in problem solving and knowledge building (Swain, 2000). Supplementary activities were created and developed by the lab instructor in conjunction with the course instructor and based on the *En bons termes* (Parmentier & Potvin, 2003) resource material, as well as other pertinent resources.

Compulsory 1-hour per week language lab sessions, for this particular course, were scheduled each weekday morning between 8:15 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. (i.e., 8:15 a.m. to 9:15 a.m., 9:15 a.m. to 10:15 a.m., and 10:15 a.m. to 11:15 a.m.). There were 2 to 3 lab sessions each day, for an average of 12 each week. Students chose a compulsory 1-hour per week lab time that suited their course timetable and held that time for the academic year. This meant students from the two course sections, taught by two different instructors presenting the course with a slightly different focus, shared lab times. For the most part this arrangement did not adversely affect student progress, as mini-lessons and supplementary activities prepared by the lab instructor covered topics, language skills, and knowledge that students from both course sections and their course instructor identified as troublesome and required review. In addition to compulsory language lab sessions, open lab sessions, also known as Drop-in sessions that did not require a reserved time, were scheduled during weekday afternoons, from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., for students who wished to spend extra time preparing assignments, practicing skills, doing research for class, and obtaining supplementary assistance in preparation for tests/exams. Open lab sessions, supervised by student language monitors, were scheduled during evenings and weekends.
MLC

**Rationale.**

The Multimedia Language Centre (MLC) was conceived to replace the original psycholinguistic (cognitive and information processing) based, also known as the practice and drill based, audio-lingual lab of the 1970s and 1980s, with something more interactive and socially informed. Acknowledging the contributions of the psycholinguistic approach, but recognizing that linguistic and pragmatic competence and socio-cultural knowledge are shaped by novice-expert interaction in various social contexts, the MLC was an attempt to integrate views from cognitive psychology and more socially informed approaches to mental processes to form a more ecologically sensitive model for language learning.

The MLC is a study centre available to all language students of the department. The Centre is designed to be a dynamic and interactive environment that assists and supports L2 learning. Specifically, the Centre’s objective is to promote the development of the skills essential for the learning of an L2: reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing. By means of multimedia technology and language resources, students have the opportunity to develop each of the language skills in a social environment. Given the theoretical perspective outlined in the previous paragraph, such an environment, which provides exposure to an L2, was deemed necessary in order to supplement class time. Three contact hours per week in the classroom, among a heterogeneous group as large as 40 to 50 students, were not enough. These were only a starting point. Hence the necessity for a multimedia and language resource centre, where students are provided with a variety of carefully chosen materials,
Access to communication technologies and well constructed socially informed activities, which can make L2 learning a reality and, as a result, are an essential complement to achievement in the classroom.

**Physical layout.**

The MLC was composed of two spaces: the MLC Language Lab and the MLC Resource Room. The MLC Language Lab, the space of interest during this study, consisted of a 5m by 9m space, was brightly lit with large windows, and featured interesting early 1900s architecture. As a multimedia computer language lab, it was originally installed with a Tandberg Prisma, Teleste Open System in 1997 and was updated to the present Tanberg ICM system in 2003. The system was a 10-position PC lab (for students) with a master communication station (for instructor). Each multimedia student station was complete with a DIVACE DUO Virtual Recorder (which could be used separately, or as an integrated part of the Tanberg ICM Lab), up to date L2 educational software, Internet, and email access. The system also had a remote control screen transfer system, which allows the instructor to monitor, to access, or to provide access to others to all student monitors, keyboards and mice. It also allows the instructor to show composite video from a VCR/DVD player directly to all of the students in the classroom. The 10 student workstations were arranged in a U-shape, at the head of which, was the master workstation. The master workstation, used by the instructor, served as the communication centre and allowed for interaction (oral, written, and visual) between lab instructor and student(s) and individual or groups of students. This type of grouping options encouraged both individual and collaborative work among language learners of similar language proficiency.

The second space of the MLC, adjacent to the language lab, was the MLC Resource Room. This space was an environment for students to view videos (VHS and DVD) and listen to
audio-cassettes, books on cassette and CD-ROMs. It was also a study and meeting centre where language students could prepare assignments, study and conduct research using the available resource books, dictionaries, grammars, novels, and other.

**Resources.**

The MLC also consisted of a broad selection of video and audio resources, such as VHS and DVD), books on cassette/CDs, other audio cassettes and L2 educational software. These were also available to the community at large and particularly to L2 teachers.

**Implementation of L2 Writing Project**

**Description.**

The overall objective of the language lab component was to allow the students to practice and reinforce language skills and knowledge introduced by the instructor in class. Although activities prepared by the lab instructor encouraged interaction and collaboration among students with similar language proficiency, there was little opportunity for language learners to take part in face-to-face interaction with members of the TL group, which research recommends as being a necessary requisite for enhancing motivation and promoting L2 development. The purpose of the telecollaborative L2 writing activity, which began in September, 2004 and completed in April, 2005, was to promote interaction between beginner FSL learners and members of the TL group, to gather information regarding beginner FSL learners’ overall L2 writing achievement and, at the same time, to challenge assumptions about the ways in which language should be taught, about the students themselves, and their perceptions about learning a language. The L2 writing activity took place in a telecollaborative context with beginner FSL learners.
collaborating either with a) a younger member of the TL group from another province, or b) a peer of similar L2 proficiency, over the 8-month period.

**Realization.**

Once students were enrolled in the entry-level course, had completed the placement test to ensure course eligibility, and had chosen a lab time, language lab sessions began. During the first language lab session (Week 1), which took place during the first week of regular scheduled university classes in September 2004, students were provided a language lab outline detailing such information as instructor contact information, language lab description, required resources, objectives, assignments and evaluation criteria. The outline was provided and discussed in order to give students a clear picture of the role of the language lab component and clarify expectations concerning assignments and evaluations. The L2 writing project was introduced at this time and students were provided with a handout detailing Part 1 and 2 of the project (see Appendix I for details). This document was read and discussed thoroughly. The lab instructor explained that all students would take part in the project, but only those that provided consent would have their work analyzed for research purposes, have the possibility of being asked to write a language-learning autobiography, and take part in a stimulated-recall interview. Students were provided with information letters and consent forms, which were read and discussed in detail. Students were given an opportunity, at this point, to ask questions about the L2 writing activity and the research.

During the second lab (Week 2), students were provided with the name and email address of their partner. At this time, students learned whether they were partnered with a younger member of the TL group (treatment group) or with a local peer of similar language proficiency (comparison group). During this lab session, students also began preparing for the first email
exchange. Students were introduced to and provided an opportunity to become accustomed to the language resources, the steps involved in process writing, the parts of an informal or social email, and introductory French grammar, vocabulary, and expressions that coincided with elements taught in class and that were appropriate for beginner FSL learner email exchanges. Language elements were introduced and practiced using a variety of multimedia activities. With preliminary grammar, vocabulary, and expressions at their disposal, as well as access to a variety of in-house and online dictionaries, thesauruses, spell checkers, and other language resources students were encouraged to contact their partner.

During the third lab session (Week 3) students drafted and re-drafted, with feedback from the instructors and classmates, a first email that they exchanged with their partner. The fourth lab session (Week 4) was reserved for either working on language lab related activities based on course work, while waiting for an email response (for members of the treatment group), or preparing responses to emails received (for members of the comparison group). By the fifth week (Week 5), all students sent and received an email, introducing themselves to and learning about their partners. The remainder of the fifth and sixth week (Week 5 and 6) were devoted to sending one additional email focused on getting acquainted and learning as much about each other as possible. This “getting acquainted” phase required students to used detailed description, which encouraged them to expand their vocabulary and use of expressions to paint a picture of themselves, their likes and dislikes, and other self-information. It should be noted that “getting acquainted” did not end at Week 6. As students continued to work together, they continued to learn more about each other, not only personally, but as language learners and collaborative workers.
The seventh week (Week 7) served as the official starting point for the L2 writing project. Here, partners exchanged email correspondence to choose topics based on the L2 writing project theme (see Appendix I). While emails were being exchanged, students were further instructed in the steps involved in process writing

**Plan modification 1:** Accommodations were made with regard to learners’ preference of genre. Although the project required learners to work collaboratively to co-construct a narrative, some learners expressed their desire to present their work in a different genre, such as a poem or an interview. The rationale for their request was that they had developed personal interests and skills for writing poetry or conducting interviews, and felt they would be able to express themselves clearer in a genre they were more comfortable engaging in and were more familiar with. Acknowledging the role of motivation in L2 learning and the potential benefits that could be gleaned from the wealth of information and skills the beginner FSL learners brought to the course, I agreed to this request. The accommodation, however, resulted in evaluation complications, which are reported and discussed in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7.

For the next five weeks (Weeks 8 to 12) students exchanged emails with their partners and worked collaboratively drafting, editing, and revising their writing. Language sessions were scheduled so that the first 15 minutes were reserved for mini lessons. The last 45 minutes were allotted to completion of activities as a means to practice the topic introduced during the first 15 minutes. The last 45 minutes were also used to review trouble points (from previous labs or class) and to request feedback concerning the L2 writing project. That is, students were encouraged to use both lab time and time out of lab to develop the L2 writing project and they were encouraged to take advantage of as many
resources as possible, such as in-house and online, the instructor, more advanced language learners, and their L1.

**Plan modification 2:** The L2 writing project was scheduled to end originally at the 12th week (Week 12), which coincided with the end of the first term of classes in December 2004. However, at students’ requests, the L2 writing project continued for an additional 6 weeks during the second term, January 2005. The L2 writing project, due to cancelled labs, storm days, Winter Break, and holidays, was officially complete by Week 20. Reasons for students’ requests for an extension varied. For example, some students lost time due to illness, the writing process took more time than expected, although L2 writing was a challenge, students found themselves enjoying the process of working with their partner and seeing something develop, and students expressed a certain amount of investment in the project and wanted more time to “complete the job right.” I acknowledge that students will always request more time to complete an assignment for a myriad of reasons such as missed labs, illness, and assignment difficulty. However, I made a conscious decision to extend the submission date for the L2 writing project. It was apparent from student drafts that improvement was taking place. For instance, at the beginning of the L2 writing project in September 2004, students were at a beginner FSL level, based on the placement test, students had never taken part in such a French writing endeavor, more did they see themselves capable of attempting such an activity. By December 2004, students had created a piece of L2 writing, they were enjoying working collaboratively to create a written piece of L2 writing, they clearly recognized their accomplishment and wanted more time to “polish” their creation, and the L2 writing project, at this point, blended well with the language lab routine. To deny the request for
an extension would have been like saying to students that they were incapable or that I had set them up for failure. Obviously, with more time to research, edit, and revise, students could experience success.

At the end of the 20th week (Week 20), the L2 writing projects were collected. Submissions were evaluated using the evaluation profile adopted for this beginner level FSL language lab (see Appendix I for details). Evaluations were conducted by a lab assistant. For purposes of my study, L2 writing projects were evaluated by three experienced FSL instructors using a modified version of the *ESL Composition Profile* (Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hartfiel, & Hughey, 1981).
Chapter 6: Results and Findings

In this chapter, I report the results and findings of the research in three sections. In the first section, I present the quantitative and qualitative data from the L2 writing project, in response to the first research question, which provides a comparison of the writing achievement (i.e., as evidenced by the quality of the texts produced) between the two groups of participants (treatment and comparison). The second and third sections respond to the second and third research questions respectively and describes the qualitative findings, from the ongoing observations, language-learning autobiographies, and stimulated-recall interviews, which explore four beginner FSL university learners’ perceptions of their prior and current French language-learning experiences and the learner identity shaped by such perceptions.

Results and Findings: Question 1

The first research question relates to the comparison of L2 writing achievement between the treatment group (beginner FSL university learners interacting telecollaboratively with younger members of the TL group) and the comparison group (beginner FSL university learners interacting telecollaboratively with peers of similar language proficiency): What are the effects, on the L2 writing achievement (i.e., as evidenced by the quality of the texts produced) of two groups of beginner FSL university learners working interactively in a telecollaborative context: one group interacting with younger members of the TL in another province and another group interacting with classroom peers of similar language proficiency? In answer to this question, I first present the quantitative results of analyses on the scores of the L2 writing project and then
present the qualitative findings of analyses on the ongoing observations from the study journal to provide an overall account of the telecollaborative L2 writing process.

**Inter-rater Reliability**

Table 4 presents inter-rater reliability; the agreement between the raters. The means for each rating criterion does not differ significantly across raters. The largest difference is between the means for raters 1 and 2 for language. However, this difference is very small (.23 on a 4-point scale).

Table 4 shows that the inter-rater reliability as measured by Cronbach’s Alpha was between .79, for vocabulary, and .90, for content. With one exception, the coefficients are above the acceptable cut-off of .80. It is interesting to note, however, that raters tended to agree more in their ratings of content and mechanics than in terms of their ratings of vocabulary, organization, and language use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Language use</th>
<th>Mechanics</th>
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<td>.81</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>.85</td>
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</table>

**Descriptive statistics**

I first averaged the scores assigned by the three raters for each rating criterion for each writing sample and then ran analyses on the averaged scores. Table 5 reports the descriptive statistics for each group for each rating criterion.
Table 5

*Descriptive Statistics: data based on scores from a 5-point scale (0 to 4)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average content</th>
<th>Average organization</th>
<th>Average vocabulary</th>
<th>Average language use</th>
<th>Average mechanics</th>
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Group comparisons

To compare whether the difference between the two participant groups, in terms of each of the rating criteria, was statistically significant, I ran a two-tailed Mann-Whitney U test using SPSS on each criterion, with group as independent variable and criterion as dependent variable. Results are presented in Table 6.

Only the difference in terms of content was statistically significant (e.g., $p < .05$, see row in boldface in Table 6). The difference favors the comparison group and suggests that the comparison group performed better than the treatment group (see rows in boldface in Table 5 for content). Difference between the organization and language scores approached statistical significance ($p = .051$ and .052, respectively (see rows in boldface in Table 5). Again, in both cases the comparison group performed better (as indicated in rows in boldface in Table 5). There were no significant differences between the two groups in terms of vocabulary and mechanics scores (e.g., $p > .05$ in Table 6). Whereas the comparison group performed slightly better than the treatment group on vocabulary, the treatment group performed somewhat (but not significantly) better than the comparison group on mechanics (see rows in boldface in Table 5).

The main reason for these small differences and the difference in favor of the comparison group is most likely the small sample size of the treatment group.

Table 6
Group Comparisons

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In the next sections, I went beyond production data to challenge structural or normative assumptions. Adding a qualitative or an interpretive dimension to my case study, allowed it to inform, support or challenge policy and action. It allowed for the consideration of social, historical, cultural and contextual variables, which I believe were necessary to explain variation in beginner FSL university language learners’ L2 writing achievement and other language-learning experiences, over time. A clearer understanding of beginner FSL university learners’ perceptions of their language-learning experiences leads to a better understanding of learners’ identity; ideal and ought-to self, which, in turn, illuminates the influences underlying beginner FSL university learners’ motivation to learn French.

**Telecollaborative L2 Writing Process**

Referring to Denzin’s (1989) six criteria: (a) interaction, (b) routines, (c) rituals, (d) temporal elements, (e) interpretations, and (f) social organization, I was able to observe, in real-time, participants’ behaviours and qualitatively analyze for composing processes and strategies. The following descriptions highlight the main features of each group’s (treatment and comparison) French writing processes and strategies. They also compare and contrast those processes and strategies for similarities and differences. First, I describe the L2 writing processes as I randomly observed individual participants during their language lab sessions. These observations are derived from visual observations of participants’ interactions with other
members of the lab sessions and routines for composing L2 drafts, as well as conversations with and questions from the participants. Then, I describe the L2 writing process as I observed the similarities and differences of the two groups in the two telecollaborative contexts.

Both groups took part in a pre-writing activity. The pre-writing activity consisted of introductory emails between partners, during which time partners exchanged preliminary information about themselves; their hobbies, their likes, and their interests. At this time, partners also shared ideas about the L2 writing activity and commented on topics within the assigned theme that they wanted to explore. This pre-writing activity was Part 1 of the L2 writing activity and was titled “Introduction”. Although partners exchanged emails written completely in French, brainstorming for ideas took place in English, which formed a mixture of words, phrases, and sentences. However, an even balance of all three were not used. Instead, individual words and some phrases seemed to dominate. Part of each beginner FSL participant’s idea generation for their French writing was finding the French that best expressed their ideas. This was evidenced by the numerous revisions made to the words, phrases, and sentences before participants began composing their emails.

While composing Part 2 of the L2 writing activity, the main portion of the activity that lasted ten to twelve weeks, participants would usually re-read what they had just written, sometimes evaluating it before continuing on with the next sentence. Re-reading their last sentence gave participants a new idea or direction that pushed them to write the next sentence.

Being unable to think of the right word mid-sentence also caused participants to re-read what they had written, occasionally make revisions, and rehearse words to match the idea. Likewise, running out of ideas mid-sentence would cause participants to re-read, make revisions, and then rehearse an idea to complete the sentence. Sometimes writing halted when participants
realized a certain grammatical structure of the sentence made it difficult to finish their idea, so they deleted it and re-read the sentence without it. At this point participants decided on a more appropriate grammatical structure.

The examples mentioned here are only samples of three cycles that were observed to recur throughout the participants’ French writing. Nevertheless, these patterns demonstrate a consistent and recursive composing process while participants were drafting and established re-reading as a key strategy within that composing process.

As a whole, members of both groups (treatment and comparison) appeared to employ similar French writing processes with respect to the focus placed on text form and function. In other words, both groups shared similar understanding of the syntax, lexis, and appropriate formal conventions needed (system knowledge) and of how to prepare and carry out a process-oriented writing activity (process knowledge). This is further evidenced by the quantitative data showing similar writing sample scores for both groups. However, this is where the similarities end. Attention to and understanding of expression, content, and genre, were clearly influenced by the specific telecollaborative L2 writing context.

For instance, the treatment group demonstrated a higher attendance rate than the comparison group. Also, treatment group members attended language lab sessions with more enthusiasm towards the L2 writing activity. Telecollaborating with members of the TL group provided the treatment group members with a stronger sense of engagement in the activity and with their partners. Interacting with TL group members appeared to give the treatment group members an opportunity to develop a better understanding of context knowledge and cultural preferences; audience, demands, and expectations of the target discourse community. First-hand
interaction with TL group members created an authentic situation, which aided in generating genuine interest in content knowledge of the ideas and concepts in the topic area that the L2 writing activity addressed.

Treatment group members also demonstrated more willingness to express themselves and take chances. This quality was reflected in 11 writing samples from the treatment group that were written in a genre other than a narrative, compared to only 4 from the comparison group. In turn, this quality illustrates the treatment group’s clearer vision of the overall goals of the L2 writing activity.

**Findings: Question 2**

The second research question relates to beginner FSL university learners’ perceptions of their language-learning experiences. To investigate this question, I analyzed the questionnaires, ongoing observations in the study journal, language-learning autobiographies, and stimulated-recall interviews for four participants: two participants from the treatment group and two participants from the comparison group. In order to report a developmental portrait of each learner’s perceptions of their language-learning experiences, from the earliest memories to the present, I incorporated findings from the data collection instruments as appropriate and not in isolation.

**Treatment Group Perceptions of French Language-Learning Experiences**

The treatment group consisted originally of 25 beginner FSL learners at the university level. These learners were paired with 25 Francophone Acadian Grade 7 students from a French L1 school in Atlantic Canada. Due to a variety of reasons (see Chapter 4 for details) the original group, and subsequent writing sample size, was reduced from 25 to 7. From the sample size of 7,
I selected a sub-set of two members of the treatment group to write language-learning autobiographies and take part in stimulated-recall interviews. I also did an indepth interpretation of their background questionnaires, for which I asked a variety of follow-up questions (see Appendix K for follow-up questions). When necessary to clarify and provide additional information concerning the language-learning context, I have introduced comments from my ongoing observations in the study journal. The two participants were Chloe and Alex (pseudonyms). Both were former CF students, began their French language learning in Grade 4, and each had 8 years of CF education. Chloe and Alex were selected based on their course grades at the mid-point of the course; Chloe and Alex were chosen because course grades identified them as having the lowest and the highest grades of the treatment group, respectively.

**Chloe’s prior and current French language-learning experiences.**

Chloe was an 18-year-old female. She had recently graduated from high school and was in her first year of university. She was enrolled in the Arts program, but had not yet selected a major. Chloe did express, however, her desire to become a teacher. It was professional purposes that Chloe names as one of her reasons for taking the course. Based on her questionnaire, she also wished “To gain a better understanding of the grammar of French and how to speak it a little better.” Chloe did not have experience with any languages other than French. When asked about her perception of her level of French proficiency in the four main language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking), Chloe’s view was that she was at a beginner to intermediate level. Based on the French Placement Test results (Chloe received 13 points out of a possible 50 points, placing her at a beginner level), I argue that Chloe’s response is more a subjective reflection of the level she believes she should be after 8 years of French study (Grade 4 to 11), rather than an objective one. Chloe’s responses to the follow-up questions for the language
portion of her questionnaire provides evidence for her actual proficiency level. For instance, she notes that she could only understand the gist of a conversation.

Chloe began CF in Grade 4, a decision strongly influenced by her parents. She was not sure why her parents decided on a CF program. However, she did point out that her brother and sisters took CF as well. She explains “I learned about basic words in French, first numbers and letters, then words like professions, fruits, vegetables, and animals, etc. I learned this by practice. We played games, sang songs, and things like that”. Her perceptions of her French language-learning experience in elementary are positive and are corroborated by comments such as “I liked elementary French, I enjoyed it”. She elaborates on these perceptions of her French language-learning experiences in her language-learning autobiography:

French was fun in elementary school. I remember my classmates and I getting excited when we knew we were having French class. We couldn’t wait for the French teacher to arrive. Although I enjoyed my classroom teacher and my regular subjects, French class was something different; something to look forward too. The French teacher always had new and interesting games, songs or little projects for us. Elementary school was a long time ago, so I can’t speak for my friends, but the things I learned in French class made me feel special. I would go home and teach my mother new words, or how to tell someone her name in French. I thought that if I worked really hard at it that someday, I would be able to know French as well as my cousin who was in an immersion program or the French people on TV.

Not only did Chloe perceive French in a positive light as an interesting and enjoyable school subject, she held it in high esteem as a communication tool that she could bring home and teach to her mother; someone whose usual role was to introduce Chloe to new things.
Chloe’s perceptions of her French language-learning experiences in high school, Grade 7 to 11 are not as positive, however. Her opinion of her high school French language experience is described in her language-learning autobiography in the following passage:

In high school, we did more reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Overall, it was not as interesting as in elementary school. French in high school was more about memorizing vocabulary and learning grammar. We worked in small groups to practice speaking. For example, we prepared skits that we acted out in front of the class and we prepared phone conversations that we acted out with toy phones. A lot of our time was spent working on exercise sheets and correcting homework from the day before. We were given tests, every week or so, where we had to read and answer questions or listen to a conversation or story and answer questions. I was a good student and did well. My marks were usually in the low 80s. I liked French, but I didn’t like high school French as much as I did in elementary.

Chloe also shares that she decided to drop French in Grade 12 because at that point she perceived her required subjects to be more important and did not want to overload her schedule. She planned to go to university and wanted to graduate from high school with good marks.

As part of her first year university course selection, Chloe decided to take French. This choice reflects her overall positive French experience in school and resulting desire to continue her French language development. According to Chloe’s language-learning autobiography, she enjoyed French in university, but perceived her language-learning experience differently than in the past:

When the course began, I was sceptical. I was willing to try the course because I really do enjoy French and was brought up to understand how important it is to be bilingual in Canada. But, I didn’t want to take a class that was like my high school courses. I knew I wouldn’t learn to communicate in French by completing work
sheets and studying grammar. I plan to be a teacher and French is required for the Education Program. I need to be able to communicate. This French course is different from my French courses in the past. In class, we learn grammar and vocabulary and in language lab we get the chance to put what we learn in class into practice. The writing project is one of the ways we do this and I think its great. It’s the first time I ever had the chance to communicate in French with a Francophone. I certainly have never written a composition in French. I am really pleased with myself that I was able to complete the assignment. After all, it wasn’t a matter of just filling in blanks. My partner and I had to put a lot of time and effort into this project. It took cooperation.

Chloe’s positive opinion of her current French language-learning experience was elaborated in detail during her stimulated-recall interview, where she explained the process she carried out to complete the assignment:

24 K: How did your specific email writing context with a French partner help or not help to make your text easier to read?

25 C: It made it easier to read because by working in email the text developed naturally. I think by sending emails and sharing information about the topic the outline kind of planned itself for us. Then the essay just kind of flowed from there, which made it easy to read. My partner sent information about our topic and I wrote up my part. We just kept sending the draft back and forth until the text was clear. I think that it’s really clear. We didn’t go into great detail; that’s why I think it’s clear. We just wanted to say what needed to be said. We were talking about acadian instruments, so we just elaborated a bit but we didn’t go into great detail.

26 K: Did you refer to specific steps to write this text, from beginning to end?

27 C: Yeah. Because, first we had knowledge of it (the theme) and then we were informed about the topics. I sent him an email and asked him to choose a topics
He told me which one he wanted and then I sent him some questions about the topics. I needed to gather information. He sent back some answers. I took his information and wrote something up. I sent him what I wrote and he responded to it.

28 K: And then once he responded to it, what did you do?

29 C: Well, I put it together and wrote it.

30 K: So you just wrote it and wrote up your final product?

31 C: No, I wrote up a draft and then I got it corrected and then rewrote it and sent it on.

32 K: And how many drafts? An approximate number?

33 C: Two or three.

34 K: And then the final product.

35 C: I did two drafts and used one.

36 K: In your opinion, if you take a look at your final product, does it differ from the previous draft?

37 C: The previous drafts, as in rough drafts? As in the whole thing?

38 K: Yes.

39 C: It differs a bit but it’s not a huge difference. Just in grammar and mistakes; the content doesn’t differ a lot.

Chloe’s French language-learning experiences over the years have clearly influenced her perception of the French language, as well as the French culture. It appears that her perception of her awareness of French culture in Canada changed from the time she completed the background
questionnaire in September 2004 and the time of her stimulated-recall interview in March 2005. Based on her background questionnaire and her eight years as a CF learner, Chloe believes she had good awareness and understanding of the French culture in Canada”. However, her stimulated-recall interview 7 months later, after completing the L2 writing activity, reveals something different:

58 K: Before beginning this project, how much did you know, or what did you know about French Canadian culture and the Francophones in Canada?

59 C: Really not very much.

60 K: No?

61 C: No.

62 K: OK. This is almost the same question. Before beginning this project, how much did you know, what did you know about the Acadians and the Acadian culture?

63 C: Not too much. I just knew that they were French and they lived in Nova Scotia, PEI, and New Brunswick.

64 K: Okay. How did you learn about that? So what did you know, how did you learn it? Did you learn it through travel, through family, or from school?

65 C: From school, from family, I guess. And traveling.

66 K: Where did you travel?

67 C: Basically Nova Scotia.

68 K: What have you learned about French Canadian culture; specifically the Acadian culture, having worked with your partner for the project?
69 C: Our topic was music, I learned about Acadian instruments and traditional Acadian songs. I heard about the Acadian folk band “Barachois” for the first time. Also, I learned about the importance of Acadian kitchen parties. During these get togethers people play the instruments and sing the songs from the old days.

Chloe’s background questionnaire also revealed that she viewed her L1 writing ability to be good and attributes this to “good English teachers in high school”.

**Alex’s prior and current French language-learning experiences.**

Alex was a 22-year-old fourth year Chemistry honours student, who had graduated from high school with honours and several scholarships. Due to his high achieving status, Alex planned to continue graduate studies in Chemistry after university graduation and had earned a scholarship towards this goal. Alex reported on his background questionnaire that he decided to take the entry-level French course for self improvement and as a course credit to round out his course requirements in his final year. Alex shared that he hoped “To improve French communication skills, mostly speaking and extend vocabulary, so that I can use French in my work some day. I’m still not sure exactly what I’ll end up doing, but many scientific fields today require international communication. I think being able to communicate in French will open some doors for me.” Like Chloe, Alex perceived his French proficiency to be at an intermediate level and I argue that his perception is based on the same rationale as Chloe’s. That is, his perception of his French proficiency level was a subjective one based on 8 years of CF (his placement test score, 18 points out of 50 points, placed him at a beginner level). Alex began his French language-learning experience in Grade 4, when his parents enrolled him in CF in Nova Scotia. Alex shared his perceptions of this early French language-learning experiences in his language-learning autobiography:
All my brothers and sisters took core French. I guess my parents decided core French was more convenient since it would have been too far for us to bus to the nearest immersion program.

In response to the question on his background questionnaire about what he remembers learning and how, Alex mentioned “Simple vocabulary and expressions in writing and speaking. We played games and sang songs. I remember playing BINGO to help learn numbers”. Alex enjoyed a positive French language-learning experience in elementary school and his perception of his experience is illustrated in another selection from his language-learning autobiography:

It was fun to learn simple vocabulary and phrases in French. The French teacher came to our classroom a couple of times a week, depending on the timetable. French class in elementary school was always a good time. It was a break from our regular routine. I still remember a Christmas song we learned in Grade 5. We had such fun learning it. Our classroom teacher let us sing it as one of the songs for our Christmas concert. Enjoying French so much in elementary school made me want to take French in high school.

A variation of Alex’s positive French language-learning experience in elementary school continued in high school, Grades 7 to 11. It was, however, a different kind of experience for him. Alex reported on his background questionnaire that CF in high school consisted of much the same content as in elementary school, with emphasis on “more advanced vocabulary, more advanced verb tenses, and complete sentence structures”. He commented that “Since French was not required after Grade 9; I was able to relax and enjoy it a little more. I guess it had to do with knowing that the choice to take French was my own”. A more detailed explanation of Alex’s high school French language-learning experience is elaborated in an excerpt from his language-learning autobiography:
French in high school was, for the most part, a positive experience. I did well and earned good marks. The content was similar to what I remember learning in elementary school. It was more advanced and we practiced speaking and listening by skits and small group conversations, instead of through games. We did very little reading and writing except for what was involved in short class assignments, homework and tests. But, it wasn’t one of my favourite subjects. I didn’t have to take French after Grade 9, but I decided to continue for a couple of years. I had taken it for all those years and it is, after all, good to have.

In his fourth and final year of his undergraduate degree, Alex decided to take a French course. He describes this decision and his perceptions of his current French language-learning experience in another language-learning autobiography excerpt:

When I made my course selection for my final year, I admit that my main reason for taking a French class was to earn a credit. I needed an elective to complete my course requirements. I’ve always liked French and was quite sure I’d enjoy this course. I will say, though, that learning French in this course has been different than what I’ve experienced up to now. For example, French in elementary and high school never gave me the chance to communicate with a Francophone. The only French speaking person I remember having contact with in school was my teachers. The problem with that was that there was only ever one of them for about twenty-five or more of us. I always earned good marks, but I honestly can’t say I learned a lot. My French class, this year, was different. I was partnered with an Acadian French student. We were given a theme and asked to write an essay together on a topic that interested us. At first, the assignment intimidated me. After all, I had never wrote more than a paragraph in French and my partner knew French much better than I did. But, once we started and realized we had lots of time to work on it, I realized we could do it. It took a lot of effort, but it turned out pretty good. I’m quite proud of myself.
Alex’s description of his current language-learning experience is clearly one in which he feels a sense of accomplishment and pride. In a couple of lines from his stimulated-recall interview, Alex underscores the importance of the collaborative effort, between him and his partner, for the success of the project. He places special emphasis on their unique roles. For instance, he perceived himself as the older mentor who had more experience writing and his partner, who was eight years younger and had much more French language experience, served as language mentor. Alex comments on how he strived to represent his partner and how his younger Acadian partner pushed him to use more complex language:

57 A: …when I received responses from him, I wanted to write back to him in that way, which was more complex. Even though he is younger he uses much more complex structure in his sentences.

58 K: How did your specific writing context help or hinder the accuracy of your writing, in terms of grammar, the precision and not necessarily the complexity of it?

59 A: Since I tried to used complicated grammar, it might be less accurate because I really didn’t know how to use it properly. so it (the writing context) made me want to put that kind of writing out there. But, I don’t think it was perfect.

60 K: What can you say about your perceptions of your writing accuracy as time went on?

61A: As time went on I think it improved. I noticed that he would write something different and I would try to catch on to that. Or, I would notice something different in class and I would pick up on the other mistakes that I did. So, it definitely improved.
62 K: How did your writing context help or hinder the complexity of your writing in terms of meaning? How did it influence the message that you were trying to convey in your essay?

63 A: Since in my case he was the message I was trying to convey, him and his father, they were my story. so it definitely helped. But, I find that I am always limited using French. At the same time, if I was to compare it (writing telecollaboratively to a French speaker) to speaking to someone in my class, then that (my context) would actually have helped it (the meaning). I was motivated to represent him. Getting first hand information from him and his father and being able to take my time writing definitely helped.

64 K: How did your writing context help or not help the accuracy of your writing in terms of the precision in getting your message across?

65 A: Since I was able to speak to someone who actually knew the story I had in mind, it meant it (the information) was precise and since I got feedback from him, that meant it was a more accurate story.

Having experienced 8 years of positive French language-learning in public school, Alex has the opinion that his cultural awareness and understanding of the French culture in Canada was good. He explains that “I took French for 8 years and, overall, I liked it. In addition to school, I learned about French people and the French culture from TV and radio. I also lived not far from an Acadian community”. An extract from his stimulated-recall interview indicated how his current French language-learning experience added to his cultural awareness and understanding:

112 K: Having completed the project, what is your opinion of your cultural awareness and understanding of French and Acadian culture in Canada?
A: I think it’s improved. I always thought I had a good awareness. I mean, I took French since Grade 4, I saw some French TV and French was always available on the radio. I lived not far from an Acadian community, so I met French people every so often. But, I never spoke with anyone. I was aware and understood the importance of knowing French. After all, it’s one of Canada’s two official languages. But it’s like admiring something from afar. You can see it, but not really touch it. The writing project was a different experience altogether. For the first time, I was able to communicate an work to create something with a Francophone. It might only be two pages and it took a long time to complete, but I know now I can do it.

According to information elicited from his background questionnaire, Alex believes he has good processing, email, and Internet skills. To this point, Alex has used computers for formal learning, but not for language learning. For example, he used graphing programs in chemistry lab. Alex also perceives his L1 writing ability to be good and attributes this to “Good high school English courses in Grades 11 and 12. The university English course I took in my first year had a good essay component”.

Comparison Group Perceptions of French Language-Learning Experiences

The comparison group consisted originally of 62 beginner FSL learners at the university level. These learners were divided into two groups, to form groups A and B. Members of group A were paired with members of group B, to form 31 pairs of similar French language proficiency. Due to a variety of reasons (see Chapter 4 for details) the original group, and subsequent writing sample size, was reduced from 31 to 24. From the sample size of 24, I selected a sub-set of two members of the comparison group to write language-learning autobiographies and take part in stimulated-recall interviews. I also did an indepth interpretation of their background questionnaires, for which I asked a series of follow-up questions (see
Appendix K for follow-up questions). When necessary to clarify and provide additional information concerning the language-learning context, I have introduced comments from my ongoing observations in the study journal. The two participants were Beth and Liam (pseudonyms). Both were former CF students, began their French language learning in Grade 4, and had 9 and 6 years of CF education, respectively. Beth and Liam were selected based on their course grades at the mid-point of the course; Beth and Liam were chosen because course grades identified them as having the lowest and the highest grades of the comparison group, respectively.

**Beth’s prior and current French language-learning experiences.**

Beth was an 18-year-old female. She had recently graduated from high school and was just beginning her first year in the Arts program, but had not yet declared a major. Beth cited self improvement and course credit as her reasons for taking the entry-level French course. According to her background questionnaire, Beth hoped “To improve French communication and comprehension skills”. French was Beth’s L2 and she did not have experience with any other languages. She perceived her French language proficiency to be at an intermediate level. Similar to Chloe and Alex, of the treatment group, Beth’s perception of her French proficiency level is more a reflection of what she thought it should be after studying French for 9 years, rather than an objective assessment of her actual level (Beth received 19 points out of a possible 50 on her placement test, which placed her at a beginner level).

Beth began her French language education in Grade 4 when she enrolled in the CF program in Prince Edward Island. She indicated that this decision was influenced by her parents, though she was not sure of their exact reason for choosing CF. Beth reported that CF from
Grades 4 to 6 consisted of “Basic French sayings and terms”. Beth’s overall perception of elementary CF were positive, as her language-learning autobiography describes:

I liked French in Grades 4, 5, and 6. The French teacher came to our class and I remember having fun. I think I liked it because it was a break from our daily routine. French in elementary wasn’t difficult. Mostly, we learned the alphabet, numbers, days of the week, months of the year, names of animals, foods, and other simple vocabulary for naming things. I remember learning how to ask someone their name and give someone my name if asked. The best part about French in elementary school was that it didn’t seem like work. Our French teacher always brought interesting games to class and taught French with songs and rhymes. In Grade 6, we took a trip to a nearby Acadian community to hear a concert.

Beth’s positive French language-learning experiences continued throughout high school CF, in Grades 7 to 12. She remembers learning similar content, but in a different way, as she did in elementary school, with more emphasis on verbal skills and grammar. French classes were larger and although she did some group work, much of the time was spent listening to the teacher or a recording. Although her high school experience remained positive, Beth notes, in her language-learning autobiography, that the reason for liking high school French had more to do with a three -month exchange to Quebec, than it did with her learning in the classroom:

I enjoyed French in high school, as well. I’ve always liked it and even though it wasn’t compulsory after Grade 9, I decided to continue and took French up to Grade 12. I think the reason for liking French had to do with the fact that I’m from PEI and there are several French Acadian communities on the Island. I was exposed to the culture at a young age. I knew what French was and who the people were. I remember when I was about 9 going to a concert with my family. One of the bands was from a nearby Acadian community. In my case, it would have been impossible to be so close to French and not develop an interest in it. I
have to admit, though, that despite my interest in the French language and culture, I did not have as much interest in it during high school as I did in elementary school. There wasn’t enough speaking and writing, in my opinion. We spent most of the time listening to what the teacher was saying. Maybe that’s why my understanding is better than my speaking and writing. The best part of French in high school was Grade 11. For 3 months I took part in an exchange to Quebec. It was awesome.

Beth elaborates on her positive exchange experience in her stimulated-recall interview:

78 B: When I was in Grade 11, I did a Quebec exchange for 3 months and I lived in Granby Quebec. So, I had a student live with me in the fall and I lived there with her family in the winter. So, I knew a fair bit about French culture from there. Also, I’m from PEI and there’s a strong Acadian culture in some parts of PEI. So, I knew a fair bit before but nothing historical, really.

Beth reported on her background questionnaire that she believes she has excellent processing, email, and Internet skills, but that she had never used computers for formal learning. In the section of the background questionnaire focusing on L1 writing ability, Beth reported that she had “Excellent L1 writing abilities, which is probably because all three high school English teachers focused on writing”.

Beth’s decision to take a French class in her first year university is a reflection of her positive language-learning experiences to that point. Her close proximity and experiences interacting with members of the TL group helped Beth develop an awareness and understanding of the French culture in Canada. These prior experiences clearly influenced the way she engaged in the L2 writing project. An example of the relationship between Beth’s prior and current language-learning experiences is illustrated in the following stimulated-recall interview citation:
15 K: Looking at one of your draft and the final version, could you please explain your initial purpose or objectives for writing? What did you want to discuss? What did you want to describe?

16B: In the paper we decided to describe the history of different French recipes and where they came from and where their names came from. Specifically, like, in the Acadian culture there are recipes that have words that are very….I don’t know how you’d say it. They use these words that are just specific to the Acadian culture and their recipes that are very specific to the Acadian culture. So we kind of focused on that. We used that to describe how these recipes are still used today and how they are kind of a culinary time capsule to reflect on the past.

17 K: That’s a very interesting concept. Could you take me through the process? Let’s go back to when the project began in October, 2004, and bring me through the steps as to how you and your partner decided on your topic and ended up to where you are, right now, today.

18 B: My partner was very interested in doing something based on food, like specific Acadian recipes. Like general food from the past or something like that. I was more interested in words that are specific to the Acadian culture; there are a lot of words that are in Acadian French that aren’t in other forms of French. So we kind of combined that and found specific recipes and we were actually fairly successful in finding a lot of these. So that’s where it came from. We kind of combined our ideas and researched it and found out that there was enough information to be able to write a paper on it.

Beth also commented that she was very pleased with her achievement:

25 K: Although it was challenging, how do you perceive this language-learning experience?

26 B: I think it was a really good experience. Especially, like, I had never produced a written paper or anything like that in French. So, this was another step
for me. To put together more than just a couple of sentences. Or, more than just writing in a test. Like, I had to use everything that I had learned before to write this paper.

**Liam’s prior and current French language-learning experiences.**

Liam was a 31-year-old male who had graduated from high school a decade before enrolling in the entry-level French course and who had been away from formal education since that time. Liam was a first year student enrolled in the Arts program with plans to earn his Bachelor of Arts. Like Chloe, from the treatment group, and Beth, he had not yet selected a major. Liam expressed that his reason for taking the entry-level French course was self improvement and to earn a course credit. When asked what he hoped to achieve by taking the course, he shared simply that he wanted to improve French skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Liam has a Spanish background and grew up listening to and speaking a little Spanish with parents and other relatives. As a result, he considers Spanish his L2 and perceives his proficiency level in this language as intermediate. He views French as his L3 since his first real exposure to the French language was in elementary school. Despite 6 years in a CF program, Liam perceives his proficiency level to be beginner. This is an accurate self-assessment since Liam’s received 12 points out of a possible 50 points on his placement test, which put him at a beginner level. Liam began his French language education in Grade 4, when his parents enrolled him in a CF program in Ontario. When asked about his French academic development in elementary school, Liam was not specific; he did not report what he learned and how he learned it. Examples of comments from his background questionnaire are: “Didn’t like to learn French. Nothing was retained or learned. I did not at all understand anything. but now things are different”. Liam’s general opinion of CF in elementary school is that “It was a chore”. Evidence
to support Liam’s negative perceptions of his French language-learning experiences in elementary school are given in his language-learning autobiography:

I remember French class in elementary school. It’s clear in my mind. But, I have to say that I didn’t enjoy it all that much. My classmates seemed to really get involved. For some reason, I just couldn’t get into it. It wasn’t relevant.

Unfortunately, Liam’s view of his French language-learning experiences did not improve in high school, as the following language-learning autobiography passage indicates:

If I have to give an honest answer, I have to say that I really didn’t like French any better in high school than I did in elementary school. I can’t explain why. Only that nothing I learned stayed with me. Since it didn’t stay with me, French never became useful. For example, in elementary school I learn to add and subtract. More advanced math was added in high school. By the time I graduated, I was able to balance my checkbook. It hasn’t been the same for me with French. I don’t feel I accomplished much after all those years. That’s why I decided to drop French after Grade 9.

After more than 13 years away from a formal French language-learning context, Liam decided to enrol in an entry-level French course. Selections from his stimulated-recall interviews reveal a pendulum swing in Liam’s perceptions of French language learning:

15 K: Looking at your final product, what was your initial reason for writing this essay?

16 L: I wanted to explain the, more or less, dream of the early Acadian life and their love for the land, their culture and people and community. There is much history about the exodus of the Acadian people and there is regret and remorse on how they were mistreated in those times. I didn’t want to touch on that because I wouldn’t understand that sort of thing because I’m not Acadian, myself. I wanted to bring in the color and the celebration of the culture.
17 K: Very interesting. So, having completed the writing assignment, are you satisfied with your final essay?

18 L: I’m satisfied with it, yes. I tried to use the appropriate verb tenses which I’ve learned in French class. I didn’t want to deviate out, like deviate outside of the main tenses. I wanted to use something I was comfortable with. My friend that went over my paper said, “Why don’t you use this tense?” and I said “I can’t use that tense.” I normally stuck with the passé compose and also a bit of the future, because these were the tenses we were learning in class. I tried to stick to the more popular tenses of which we’ve learned.

23 K: What were your perceptions of learning French in a telecollaborative context?

24 L: Well, I found it a challenge, a bit frustrating. When I would get a message back or even if I had to send one out, I would have to write it out and make sure that it said what I wanted it to say. I would say it was a rather lengthy process; that’s probably why it was so strenuous. I, myself, have to correspond in French, not just only read my partner’s messages, but communicate a reply to him. That was a challenge. Now, it is part of the process and I realize it is necessary, in order to work in another language, to give the student exposure. I prefer to work alone, but I see, in the long run, that it will benefit me. If I’m working in another language, I’m going to have to be able to think and reply in that language. So, it is a necessity.

34 K: Did your writing context help or hinder the quality of your essay?

35 L: I think, in grammar, there is always room for improvement and I don’t think….I don’t think it hindered me; it more or less pushed me. I wanted to make sure that I was using the appropriate grammar and vocabulary. I remember in the past that I’ve used the wrong word and, of course, one word can throw off an entire sentence. I think it challenged me. It helped me to push myself.
Although Liam admits the L2 writing project was, at times, “frustrating” and “strenuous”, the above selections reflect an awareness of the French Acadian culture as he describes his reason for writing his essay. Liam also shows an understanding and an appreciation for the learning process and his degree of achievement.

**Overall interpretation.**

An initial interpretation of the language-learning perceptions for Chloe, Alex, Beth, and Liam, indicate that the two treatment group members and the two comparison group members all experienced positive FSL learning (with respect to overall L2 writing achievement. However, a closer look at these two groups reveals an additional finding. The treatment group members expressed more satisfaction with their FSL learning experience related to the context. That is, they acknowledged and understood the role played by their TL partners in their achievement and newly developed identities as language learners.

A closer and more indepth consideration of the four participants’ perceptions also illuminates how FSL learners’ perceptions of what constitutes improvement, success, and achievement is different than that of teachers, researchers, and theorists. For example, Chloe comments that she was pleased with her L2 writing. She elaborates that she and her partner did not go into much detail, but that their L2 writing is clear. For Chloe, achievement is defined by the clarity of the message, which is accomplished through simplicity.

In Alex’s case, he was clearly engaged in his effort to represent his Acadian partner and was motivated to meet his partner’s standard. Though his L2 writing may not have been perfectly accurate, Alex welcomed the opportunity to “put it out there.” According to his own perception, attempting to meet his partner’s standard was his definition of achievement.
Beth, on the other hand, was not as engaged as Chloe and Alex. Although she was a highly motivated learner in her own right and her natural curiosity directed the manner in which she approached the L2 writing project with her partner of similar language proficiency, she did not express the same commitment and investment in the project as the two treatment group members. Beth’s context influenced her perception of her language-learning experiences and, in turn her perception of what constituted achievement. Beth was more concerned with writing a good paper and completing the assignment.

Liam, like Beth, was more concerned with completing the assignment. Although there seems to be a pendulum swing in Liam’s perception about learning French from elementary and high school to his enrolment in the entry-level course, this change in perception may have more to do with age and maturity, rather than the relationship with his partner of similar language proficiency. At first glance, Liam seems to have experienced a certain amount of investment in the project. For instance, he clearly and creatively articulates what he wanted to accomplish with his writing and how he wanted to accomplish it. However, his positive perception does not appear to have a link with his partner, as did the positive perceptions experienced by Chloe and Alex. Liam expresses that “There is much history about the exodus of the Acadian people and there is regret and remorse on how they were mistreated in those times. I didn’t want to touch on that because I wouldn’t understand that sort of thing because I’m not Acadian, myself”. I argue that interaction with a TL group member could have helped Liam understand, from an insiders point of view, how the Acadians were treated. Such an experience could have allowed Liam to approach the L2 writing activity with more engagement and deliver his account of “the color and celebration of the culture” with a more personal flavor instead of as an historical report.
Findings: Question 3

The third research question relates to beginner FSL university learners’ identities shaped by perceptions of their French language-learning experiences. To explore this question, I analyzed the L2 motivational self-systems for the 4 sub-set participants discussed in the findings for Question 2. Here, I consider the interplay between ideal self, ought-to-self, and beginner FSL university learners’ perceptions of their prior and current French learning experiences.

Evolution of beginner FSL university learners’ L2 motivational self-system.

Language is not like other school subjects. It is dynamic and is influenced by a wide range of socio-cultural diverse factors. Learning French involves an alteration in self-image, the adoption of new social and cultural behaviours and ways of being, and therefore has a significant impact on the social nature of the learner. Such a wide variety of factors dramatically influences the learner’s motivation to learn French. L2 motivation is, therefore, a dynamic, ever-changing process that involves understanding why people think and behave the way they do. The dynamic character and temporal variation of motivation are inherent in the L2 motivational self-system and are clearly illustrated in the evolution of Chloe’s ideal- and ought-to-self. The ongoing changes of motivation over time are evidenced in her French language-learning experiences from Grade 4 to the current entry-level university course. Chloe’s motivation ebbs and flows thru diverse phases; from ideal L2 self, to ought-to L2 self, and back to ideal L2 self.

Chloe begins her French language-learning experience in a Grade 4, CF program. During the 3 years of elementary CF, her experiences are positive and are corroborated by comments such as “I liked elementary French, I enjoyed it”. In addition, Chloe comments that learning French “made me feel special”, that she was developing a knowledge that allowed her to “go
home and teach my mother new words or how to tell someone her name in French” and that she hoped to be able to speak French as well as “the French people on TV”. This is a typical instance of expressing ideal L2 self in that Chloe is promotion focused. She is concerned with hopes, aspirations, advancements, growth, and accomplishments. Her positive perception can be linked to comments such as “French class was something different; something to look forward to. The French teacher always had new and interesting games, songs or little projects for us”.

In high school, however, Chloe’s French language-learning experience seems to shift. As she remarks, “In high school, we did more reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Overall, it was not as interesting as in elementary school. French in high school was more about memorizing vocabulary and learning grammar”. Chloe’s perceptions of her high school French language-learning experience revolves around doing the work and receiving good marks. Although her self-identity as a French learner acknowledges her dissatisfaction with high school French compared to her elementary days, her perceptions clearly reflect her sense of responsibility as to what it meant to be a good French student:

A lot of our time was spent working on exercise sheets and correcting homework from the day before. We were given tests, every week or so, where we had to read and answer questions or listen to a conversation or story and answer questions. I was a good student and did well. My marks were usually in the low 80s. I liked French, but I didn’t like high school French as much as I did in elementary.

Chloe demonstrates typical ought-to-self attributes in high school; those attributes that one believes one ought to possess and that represent a sense of duty, obligation, or responsibility. Her ought-to L2 self bears little resemblance to the desires and wishes of her elementary school ideal L2 self.
Another shift takes place in Chloe’s French language-learning history. After high school, she enrolled in an entry-level university course. Her initial perception of the course was cautious. She liked French, but did not want a repeat of high school. Based on her prior French language-learning experience, she understandably transfers her ought-to L2 self to her new university context. At this point in Chloe’s French education, her ought-to L2 self is also influenced by her knowledge that French is necessary for future job prospects. For instance, Chloe shares that “I plan to be a teacher and French is required for the Education program”.

As time goes on, however, another shift occurs in Chloe’s L2 motivational self-system. Her ought-to L2 self generated in high school reverts to her elementary school ideal L2 self. Chloe’s re-discovered ideal L2 self is evidenced in passages such as:

We learn grammar and vocabulary and in language lab we get the chance to put what we learn in class into practice. The writing project is one of the ways we do this and I think it’s great. It’s the first time I ever had the chance to communicate in French with a Francophone. I certainly have never written a composition in French. I am really pleased with myself that I was able to complete the assignment.

Chloe’s ideal L2 self is not only grounded in her language achievement, she also demonstrates a new awareness and understanding of the Acadian culture that she may not have developed without the close contact with her Acadian writing partner. An example of her newly acquired cultural awareness and understanding comes from a larger selection of her stimulated-recall interview detailed in my analysis of research question two:

68 K: What have you learned about French Canadian culture; specifically the Acadian culture, having worked with your partner for the project?
69 C: Our topic was music, I learned about Acadian instruments and traditional Acadian songs. I heard about the Acadian folk band “Barachois” for the first time. Also, I learned about the importance of Acadian kitchen parties. During these get togethers people play the instruments and sing the songs from the old days.

Chloe’s L2 motivational self-system is unique for her particular socio-cultural context, but from a broader perspective, it is not unique. Reviewing the prior and current French language-learning experiences for the 3 other sub-set participants (regardless of group) reveals similar evolutions in their L2 motivation. Although there is a myriad of variables at work here, it is clear that those related to the language course influence the participants’ motivation, indicating that classroom L2 learning motivation is not a static construct as often measured in a quantitative manner, but a compound and relative phenomenon situated in various resources in a dynamic classroom context. Learners are sensitive to the quality of the French language-learning experience. In Chloe’s case, situation-specific motives related to the L2 writing activity overrode her ought-to L2 self from high school and allowed her to develop an ideal L2 self; one which allowed her to claim ownership of a positive French language-learner identity.

Demotivation and amotivation: Precursors to ought-to self

My analysis of one participant’s French language-learning history from Grade 4 to the current entry-level university French course illustrated the dynamic nature of motivation. Chloe’s French language-learning history revealed an L2 motivational self-system dominated by an ought-to-self. Of her 9 years as a French language learner (8 years of public school and 1 year as a university student), her 5 years of high school correspond to her ought-to self. It was also during this period that Chloe decided to drop French in high school. The trend is similar for two of the other participants: Alex and Liam.
Alex, a 22-year-old in his final year of honours chemistry describes his high school French language learning in a very practical, but unenthusiastic way:

French in high school was, for the most part, a positive experience. I did well and earned good marks. The content was similar to what I remember learning in elementary school. It was more advanced and we practiced speaking and listening by skits and small group conversations, instead of through games…But, it wasn’t one of my favourite subjects. I didn’t have to take French after Grade 9, but I decided to continue for a couple of years. I had taken it for all those years and it is, after all, good to have.

Alex’s comments represent a shift from an enjoyable elementary school ideal L2 self to a high school ought-to L2 self, which places emphasis on his sense of duty to do well and obligation to continue learning French.

Although there are both positive and negative forces exerting their influence on ongoing student behaviors, past motivation research has typically overlooked the negative motives and conceptualized motivation as a kind of inducement, that is, as a force whose strength ranges on a continuum from zero to strong. This, however, is not in accordance with Chloe’s and Alex’s classroom experiences, which suggest that motivational influences that de-energize action are rather common. Ushioda (1996) comments on this side of motivation as one in which individual motivation becomes controlled, suppressed or distorted by external forces. This may have happened through negative influences in Chloe’s and Alex’s classroom social dynamic, or through regulating forces in the educational system. Dörnyei (2001c) defined demotivation as "specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioral intention or an ongoing action" (p. 143). Based on this definition, being demotivated does not necessarily mean that all the positive influences that originally made up the motivational basis of Chloe’s
and Alex’s elementary school ideal L2 self were annulled. Rather, it is only the force of the influence over time that has been dampened by a strong negative component, resulting in a shift to an ought-to L2 self, which include other positive motives that are still operational. For instance, although Chloe’s and Alex’s perceptions of their French language-learning experiences were redirected from those of hope and accomplishment to responsibility and obligation, their perceptions toward knowing French remained positive. In this study the decisive force was related to negative language-learning experiences associated with the language classroom.

A review of the scarce literature on demotivation in the L2 field and in education in general (Chambers, 1993, Oxford, 1998) reveals that the phenomenon is rather salient in learning environments and that teachers have a considerable responsibility in this respect. The majority of demotivation identified in past research concern some aspects of classroom existence owned by, or under the control of, the teacher (see Dörnyei, 2001c).

Liam’s high school situation is somewhat similar to Chloe and Alex. But unlike his peers, Liam never experienced positive French language learning before enrolling in the entry-level course. Comments from his background questionnaire are: “Didn’t like to learn French. Nothing was retained or learned. I did not at all understand anything. But, now things are different”. Liam’s general opinion of CF in elementary school is that “It was a chore”. By the time Liam reached high school (Grade 7), he still did not like French, but was resigned to the fact that he had to take the subject until Grade 9:

nothing I learned stayed with me. Since it didn’t stay with me, French never became useful… I don’t feel I accomplished much after all those years. That’s why I decided to drop French after Grade 9.
While *demotivation* is a gradual decrease in motivation, Liam seems to have experienced *amotivation*, which is the lack of motivation (Dörnyei, 2001c, 2005). Liam’s dislike of French in elementary school quickly became ambivalence, resulting in an ought-to L2 self from the beginning of his CF experience in Grade 4 to the end of his high school CF class in Grade 9. During this time, Liam did not identify himself as a French language learner with hopes and aspirations, but as one who was obligated and who planned to quit at the earliest convenience.

**Motivational self-regulation as a mechanism for developing ideal L2 self**

After referring to the evolution of the L2 motivational self-systems for Chloe, Alex, Beth, and Liam, it is apparent that French language-learner identity fluctuates in varying degrees over the years. Obviously, it is more beneficial for language learners to experience periods of ideal L2 self than periods of ought-to L2 self. Analysis of all 4 participants’ language-learning autobiographies, and stimulated-recall interviews provides evidence as to how motivational self-regulation can serve as a mechanism for developing ideal L2 self.

As the findings show, Chloe, Alex, Beth, and Liam, despite their individual L2 motivational self-systems from elementary school to enrollment in the entry-level university French course, all demonstrated motivational self-regulation during their participation in the L2 writing project. In other words, they were able to maintain their motivation and keep themselves on-track in the face of competing demands and attractions. Learning, as Wolters (2003) pointed out, is an effortful process and academic activities are fraught with obstacles that are likely to interfere with the students' initial motivational state; therefore their ability to remain in control of their motivational disposition should be seen as an important determinant of self-regulated learning and achievement. In addition to this consideration, Ushioda (2003) argued that a further
function of motivational self-regulation is to help learners to step outside certain negative perceptions of their language-learning context and engage in constructive and effective thinking to regulate their motivation. In order for this to happen, learners must be brought to view their motivation as emanating from within themselves, and thus to view themselves as agents of their own motivation and their own learning. To illustrate the role played by motivational self-regulation in developing ideal L2 self, I use examples from Alex’s (treatment group) and Beth’s (comparison group) L2 motivational self-systems.

Alex’s use of motivational self-regulation as a mechanism for developing ideal L2 self.

When Alex first enrolled in the entry-level French course, he was still experiencing the ought-to L2 self developed in high school, a time during which, he did not possess strong motivational self-regulation. As a selection from his language-learning autobiography indicates, Alex was not able to remain in control of his motivational disposition. The teacher was the focus of the class and all French interaction occurred through this one individual:

When I made my course selection for my final year, I admit that my main reason for taking a French class was to earn a credit. I needed an elective to complete my course requirements. I’ve always liked French and was quite sure I’d enjoy this course. I will say, though, that learning French in this course has been different than what I’ve experienced up to now. For example, French in elementary and high school never gave me the chance to communicate with a Francophone. The only French speaking person I remember having contact with in school was my teachers. The problem with that was that there was only ever one of them for about 25 or more of us.

However, Alex’s L2 motivational self-system evolved from an ought-to L2 self to an ideal L2 self as the L2 writing project progressed, a period that also corresponds with his ability
to better control his motivational disposition. In the following passage from his language-
learning autobiography, Alex comments on how the idea of participating in the L2 writing 
project was intimidating when it was first introduced, but that once he realized what he and his 
partner were requested to do, he realized it was doable; that the ball was in his court:

I was partnered with an Acadian French student. We were given a theme and 
asked to write an essay together on a topic that interested us. At first, the 
assignment intimidated me. After all, I had never wrote [sic] more than a 
paragraph in French and my partner knew French much better than I did. But, 
once we started and realized we had lots of time to work on it, I realized we could 
do it. It took a lot of effort, but it turned out pretty good.

I argue that Alex was able to create and maintain motivational self-regulation because the 
L2 writing project provided him the opportunity to develop aspirations and think about a 
potential accomplishment. In addition, Alex was, for the first time, provided with a French 
educational interaction with a French individual and he was asked to write a whole composition 
in French. This was, in essence, the first time Alex had been given the message that he was 
capable of communicating with a member of the TL group, or that he was capable of writing in 
French. The L2 writing project served as the context in which Alex was permitted to develop a 
strong motivational self-regulation. The L2 writing project helped Alex to step outside certain 
negative perceptions of his language-learning context and engage in constructive and effective 
thinking to regulate his motivation. In order for this to happen, Alex needed to be given the 
opportunity to view his motivation as emanating from within himself. Ultimately, as the 
following excerpt from his stimulated-recall interview illustrates, Alex was able to view himself 
as an agent of his own motivation and his own French language learning:
57 A: …when I received responses from him, I wanted to write back to him in that way, which was more complex. Even though he is younger he uses much more complex structure in his sentences.

58 K: How did your specific writing context help or hinder the accuracy of your writing, in terms of grammar, the precision and not necessarily the complexity of it?

59 A: Since I tried to use complicated grammar, it might be less accurate because I really didn’t know how to use it properly. so it (the writing context) made me want to put that kind of writing out there. But, I don’t think it was perfect.

60 K: What can you say about your perceptions of your writing accuracy as time went on?

61A: As time went on I think it improved. I noticed that he would write something different and I would try to catch on to that. Or, I would notice something different in class and I would pick up on the other mistakes that I did. So, it definitely improved.

62 K: How did your writing context help or hinder the complexity of your writing in terms of meaning? How did it influence the message that you were trying to convey in your essay?

63 A: Since in my case he was the message I was trying to convey, him and his father, they were my story. so it definitely helped. But, I find that I am always limited using French. At the same time, if I was to compare it (writing telecollaboratively to a French speaker) to speaking to someone in my class, then that (my context) would actually have help it (the meaning). I was motivated to represent him. Getting first hand information from him and his father and being able to take my time writing definitely helped.
Alex emphasizes the importance of the collaborative effort, between him and his partner, for the success of the project. He places special emphasis on their unique roles. For instance, he perceived himself as the older mentor who had more experience writing and his partner, who was eight years younger and had much more French language experience, served as language mentor. Alex comments on how he aspires to represent his partner and how his younger Acadian partner pushed him to use more complex language. Alex’s experiences are a typical example of establishing and maintaining motivational self-regulation, an essential determinant for ideal L2 self and L2 achievement.

**Beth’s use of motivational self-regulation as a mechanism for developing ideal L2 self.**

When Beth first enrolled in the entry-level French course, like Alex, she was still experiencing the ought-to L2 self developed in her high school classroom life, a time during which, she did not possess strong motivational self-regulation. As a selection from her language-learning autobiography indicates, Beth was not able to remain in control of her motivational disposition. The teacher was the focus of the class and all French interaction occurred through this individual:

I have to admit, though, that despite my interest in the French language and culture, I did not have as much interest in it during high school as I did in elementary school. There wasn’t enough speaking and writing, in my opinion. We spent most of the time listening to what the teacher was saying. Maybe that’s why my understanding is better than my speaking and writing. The best part of French in high school was Grade 11. For 3 months I took part in an exchange to Quebec. It was awesome.
Although Beth lived different French language-learning experiences than Alex, her L2 motivational self-system evolved, in a similar way as his, from an ought-to L2 self to an ideal L2 self as the L2 writing project progressed, a period that also corresponds with her ability to better control her motivational disposition. It is obvious that her close proximity and experiences interacting with members of the TL group, while living near an Acadian community and during her Grade 11 exchange to Quebec, helped Beth develop an awareness and understanding of the French culture in Canada. These prior experiences clearly influenced her sense of motivational self-regulation and, as a result, the way she engaged in the L2 writing project. An example of the relationship between Beth’s prior and current language-learning experiences is illustrated in the following stimulated-recall interview citation:

15 K: Looking at one of your draft and the final version, could you please explain your initial purpose or objectives for writing? What did you want to discuss? What did you want to describe?

16B: In the paper we decided to describe the history of different French recipes and where they came from and where their names came from. Specifically, like, in the Acadian culture there are recipes that have words that are very….I don’t know how you’d say it. They use these words that are just specific to the Acadian culture and their recipes that are very specific to the Acadian culture. So we kind of focused on that. We used that to describe how these recipes are still used today and how they are kind of a culinary time capsule to reflect on the past.

17 K: That’s a very interesting concept. Could you take me through the process? Let’s go back to when the project began in October, 2004, and bring me through the steps as to how you and your partner decided on your topic and ended up to where you are, right now, today.
18 B: My partner was very interested in doing something based on food, like specific Acadian recipes. Like general food from the past or something like that. I was more interested in words that are specific to the Acadian culture; there are a lot of words that are in Acadian French that aren’t in other forms of French. So we kind of combined that and found specific recipes and we were actually fairly successful in finding a lot of these. So that’s where it came from. We kind of combined our ideas and researched it and found out that there was enough information to be able to write a paper on it.

I argue that Beth was able to create and maintain motivational self-regulation because the L2 writing project provided her the opportunity, to some degree, to recapture the genuine feeling of learning that came with her prior French language-learning experiences. This was, in essence, the first time Beth had been given the message, in a classroom context, that she was capable of written communication in French. The L2 writing project served as the context in which Beth was permitted to develop a strong motivational self-regulation; it allowed her (and her partner) to have control over such decisions as what to write about, how to carry out the writing process, and how to bring together several ideas to form an interesting piece of writing. The L2 writing project helped Beth to step outside certain negative perceptions of her language-learning context and engage in constructive and effective thinking to regulate her motivation. In order for this to happen, Beth needed to be given the opportunity to view her motivation as emanating from within herself. Beth’s experiences are a typical example of establishing and maintaining motivational self-regulation, an essential determinant for ideal L2 self and L2 achievement.

At the same time, I point out that Beth’s sense of motivational self-regulation, as positive as it was, was not developed out of the same feelings of investment as Alex’s. Although she clearly engaged in the L2 writing project, Beth perceived the activity as a class assignment that
she was required to complete. Such perceptions are illustrated by her comment that “We kind of combined our ideas and researched it and found out that there was enough information to be able to write a paper on it”. Since she viewed the activity as obligatory, she did not form the same sense of achievement or language-learner identity as her counterpart.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I reported the results and findings of the research in three sections. In the first section, I presented the quantitative and qualitative data from the L2 writing project, in response to the first research question, which provides a comparison of the writing achievement (i.e., as evidenced by the quality of the texts produced) between the two groups of participants (treatment and comparison).

Comparison of the two groups using Mann-Whitney U tests indicated that the overall quality of the L2 narrative writing of beginner FSL university learners telecollaborating with peers of similar language proficiency is better than that of beginner FSL university learners telecollaborating with younger members of the TL group in another Atlantic province. However, these results were generated using widely uneven data and do not take into consideration 15 writing samples (11 samples from the treatment group and 4 samples from the comparison group) that took a form other than a narrative, such as a poem or interview.

A qualitative analysis, based on data from the ongoing observations in the study journal, of the telecollaborative L2 writing process revealed that overall the two groups shared similar L2 writing processes with respect to system and process knowledge. However, the treatment group clearly demonstrated a better understanding of expression, content, and genre that can be
attributed to their specific telecollaborative L2 writing context with a younger member of the TL group.

The second and third sections, which respond to the second and third research questions, went beyond production data to describe the qualitative findings, from the questionnaires, the ongoing observations in the study journal, the language-learning autobiographies, and the stimulated-recall interviews. The objectives of the second and third research questions were to investigate four beginner FSL university learners’ perceptions of their prior and current French language-learning experiences and their identities shaped by the experiences. The data gathered in this section provided explanations for variation in learners’ L2 writing achievement that could not be accounted for using only quantitative analysis.

The investigation revealed that the two treatment group participants and one comparison group participant lived positive elementary French language-learning experiences, which in turn resulted in the development of positive language-learner identities or ideal L2 selves. One comparison group participant expressed ambivalent perceptions of his elementary language-learning experiences, which influenced the development of an ambivalent language-learner identity or ought-to L2 self. This participant’s ambivalent perceptions of his language-learning experiences and language-learner identity continued through high school. The two treatment group participants and one of the comparison group participants expressed less positive language-learning experiences and language-learner identities at the secondary level, than they did in elementary school, resulting in ought to L2 selves. However, at the university level, the two treatment group participants experienced more positive French language-learning experiences and language-learner identities than the two comparison group participants. These positive French language-learning experiences and language-learner identities are attributed to
the telecollaborative L2 writing project with younger Francophone Acadians in another Atlantic province.

An exploration of beginner FSL learners' identities shaped by perceptions of their prior and current language-learning experiences from an L2 motivational self-system perspective, allowed me to consider the interplay between ideal self, ought-to-self, and beginner FSL university learners’ perceptions of their French learning experiences. Three interesting and potentially useful factors explaining how beginner FSL university learners’ identity are shaped by perceptions of prior and current French language-learning experiences were identified. The factors include: (1) Evolution: the path of beginner FSL university learners’ motivational self-systems, (2) Demotivation and Amotivation: precursors to ought-to self, and (3) Motivational Self-Regulation: a mechanism for developing ideal L2 self.
Chapter 7:  
Discussion and Conclusion: 
Lessons Learned

This chapter attempts to pull together all the results and findings into a coherent picture of how my research evolved for this thesis. Here, I describe the study’s successes, as well as the limitations and shortcomings, both in implementation and outcomes. Specifically, this chapter summarizes and interprets the study’s findings according to the research questions. First, I review the background to the study. Second, I review the L2 writing achievement of beginner FSL university learners. Third, I discuss the perceptions of beginner FSL university learners’ prior and current French language-learning experiences. Fourth, I discuss the identity shaping of beginner FSL university learners based on their prior and current French language-learning experiences. Fifth, I examine the study’s limitations. Sixth, I discuss future research directions. Finally, I offer a concluding comment.

Background to the Study

It is widely accepted that intensive exposure to the TL group enhances motivation, which, in turn, improves attitudes and enhances achievement. However, intensive exposure to the TL group is not always possible, especially for former CF students in Canada who want to continue their French language development after high school and (a) enrol in beginner FSL courses at universities in predominantly Anglophone regions of Canada, regions that can be said to be similar to FL environments, which are known to be unconducive to face-to-face spoken interaction; and (b) do not have the opportunity to take part in exchanges with Francophone students studying English either in Canada or other, French-speaking, countries.
To address this issue, I designed a mixed method case study that examined opportunities for providing intensive FSL exposure and enhancing motivation over an extended period of time: 8 months. To accomplish this, I implemented telecollaboration and an L2 writing activity for beginner FSL learners at the university level who belong to one or both of the two groups above. Specifically, I investigated three issues: achievement, learners’ perceptions of prior and current language-learning experiences (including achievement), and how learners’ identities are shaped by their perceptions.

The three research questions were:

1. How does L2 writing achievement (i.e., as evidenced by the quality of the texts produced) for beginner FSL university learners telecollaborating with younger members of the TL group in another province compare to that of beginner FSL university learners telecollaborating with classroom peers of similar language proficiency?

2. What are beginner FSL university learners’ perceptions of their prior and current French language-learning experiences?

3. How is learner identity shaped by beginner FSL university learners’ perceptions of their prior and current French language-learning experiences?
L2 Writing Achievement of Beginner FSL University Learners

The quantitative data from the L2 writing project, in response to the first research question, provided a comparison of the writing achievement (i.e., as evidenced by the quality of the texts produced) between the two groups of participants (treatment and comparison) and was analyzed using non-parametric statistics. Results indicated that the overall quality of the L2 narrative writing of beginner FSL university learners telecollaborating with peers of similar language proficiency was better than that of beginner FSL university learners telecollaborating with younger members of the TL group in another Atlantic province.

According to the Mann-Whitney U test, of the five measures of writing quality, only the difference in the content rating was statistically significant. The difference favors the comparison group and suggests that the comparison group performed better than the treatment group. This result concerning the quality of the ideas expressed may be related to the age similarity of the members of the comparison group; a quality that may account for more mature and indepth expression of ideas. There were no significant differences between the two groups in terms of organization, language, vocabulary, and mechanics scores. This is rather surprising given that the treatment group should have been able to take advantage of their younger partners’, presumably, more syntactically and morphologically correct models. This result may be due to the still immature and on-going writing development of the younger members of the treatment group.

However, these results were based on comparing groups of unequal size and do not take into consideration 15 L2 writing samples (11 samples from the treatment group and 4 samples from the comparison group) that took a form other than a narrative, such as a poem or an
interview. Inappropriate samples reduced the size of the treatment group from 25 to 7 and reduced the size of the comparison group from 28 to 24.

By omitting 15 writing samples, in essence, the writing achievement of 15 beginner FSL university learners was discounted. The question then becomes, what is the role of writing in FSL learning? To only learn different genres of writing in French, or to learn to express oneself in written French?

This situation is a good example of how L2 writing data arising from conventional descriptive and narrative writing activities, assessed using prescribed rating schemes, can limit our view of students’ abilities. According to Atay and Kurt (2006), students should be motivated to express their ideas and knowledge in writing from the early stages of L2 education (including pre-university). If L2 writing is to be a pleasant experience, it seems crucial to establish a learning environment where students can write in their L2 without embarrassment, where every student writer’s contribution is adequately valued and where self-confidence is built up. Beginner FSL university learners’ writing is more than a combination of component parts. If we restrict learners to descriptive, narrative, or even expository writing, especially when their L2 writing needs do not involve genres usually required for academic writing we miss a complete range of possibilities. Restricting learners to only three forms of writing does not allow them to take advantage of their strengths and achieve their full potential. For example, as adult beginner FSL learners, the participants in my study came to the course with a wealth of interests and abilities that they demonstrated with their non-conforming FSL writing.

Given my argument, one may ask why I did not use a rating profile that would accommodate different types of genres. For instructional purposes, I did, in fact, implement a
rating profile that assessed the quality of beginner FSL learners’ writing regardless of genres (see Appendix I for details of this profile). Using this profile, I was able to evaluate learners’ skills in the craft of writing. With the aim of motivating beginner L2 writing, this profile considered, in addition to the conventional dimensions (content, organization, language, vocabulary, and mechanics), skills such as: formulating original ideas, writing in a manner that draws the reader in and makes one want to read more, and forming a connection with the audience through expression of the self. My criteria for assessing learners’ L2 writing focused on examining creative abilities and skills in the craft of writing.

For research purposes, however, I decided to retain my original plan and implement the modified version of the Jacobs et al. (1981) ESL Composition Profile, even after it was clear that the writing samples included a variety of genres, because I wanted to illustrate the neglected role of L2 writing in beginner L2 learning. Research has consistently documented that in the case of lower L2 proficiency writers, L2 issues can overwhelm the writing process, even to the point of a complete breakdown (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). I do not dispute the validity of this research. I do argue, however, that context and situational variables play an important part in determining what low proficiency learners can write. If we are assessing them based on the same expectations, standards, or normative assumptions that we use to assess intermediate and advanced L2 learners who write for academic purposes, then it is not surprising that beginner L2 writers fall short. If, on the other hand, we respect beginner L2 learners’ perceptions (views, opinions, thoughts, and attitudes) about the language and what they are capable of doing with it based on prior experience as language learners, we can create a situation where we allow this population to develop a sense of motivational self-regulation and write according to their own interests and abilities. Because emphasis has been conventionally placed on what beginner FSL
writers can not do instead of what they can do, appropriate profiles for rating beginner FSL learners’ writing samples consisting of a variety of genres do not exist at the research level.

The qualitative data from the L2 writing project provided an interpretive comparison of the writing process, which in turn, provided a broader and more holistic view of L2 writing achievement of the two groups of participants. Findings indicated that members of both groups appeared to employ similar French writing processes with respect to the focus placed on text form and function. In other words, both groups shared similar understanding of the syntax, lexis, and appropriate formal conventions needed (system knowledge) and of how to prepare and carry out a process-oriented writing activity (process knowledge). This is further evidenced by the quantitative data showing similar writing sample scores and results indicating no significant difference for these dimensions for both groups. This finding may be related to similar class and language lab instruction and the variety of strategies used.

There were three cycles that were observed to recur throughout the participants’ French writing. The cycles were completing a sentence, searching for a word to more clearly express an idea, and not knowing how to complete a thought. Though not exhaustive, these patterns, nevertheless, demonstrate a consistent and recursive composing process while participants were drafting and established re-reading as a key strategy within that composing process. Although the patterns and cycles of composing while drafting French writing were more broken, fragmented, and perforated with challenges than would be expected from their L1 English writing, patterns existed. Clearly, participants’ French writing was interrupted by language concerns, whether spelling, grammar, word choice, or doubt about the meaning conveyed by language. However, The struggle of putting their ideas into coherent French did not completely breakdown (Bereiter
Scardamalia, 1987) the smooth, reciprocal cycle of writing which is so readily expected with low proficiency L2 writers.

Several other strategies can explain why there was not a complete break down in the telecollaborative French writing process for the beginner level FSL students in this study. The first strategy may be the introduction of a flexible time allotted for completion of the activity (Uzawa & Cumming, 1989). Second, writing down ideas or brainstorming in English while they emerged, allowed participants to gather enough ideas to translate into French and drive the writing process (Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; Cumming, 1989; Jones & Tetroe, 1987; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1994). Third, writing collaboratively provided an object for reflection for participants to use re-reading to mediate their French writing (Swain, 2000). Fourth, participants were able to maintain a high tolerance for error and ambiguity during the initial drafting stages. Fifth, participants took advantage of numerous resources, such as dictionaries, thesauruses, websites, and feedback from peers and instructors.

Telecollaborative French writing, in particular, had a significant influence on the achievement of both groups. This finding can be supported by the IIO model within a SCT perspective (Block, 2003) and the concept of collaborative dialogue advocated by Swain and Lapkin (2002). For instance, the L2 writing activity served as the device to mediate the higher mental activity required of the participants in this study. The higher mental activity was regulated by the concept of other-regulation/self-regulation, usually captured in the metaphor of scaffolding. In the case of this study, scaffolding took place in interactions involving (a) a younger TL group member and a beginner FSL university participant, and (b) a beginner FSL university participant and a peer of similar language proficiency. Each member of a pair acted as
a mentor and a relative novice, depending on individual needs. The individual taking the mentoring role promoted the novice’s appropriation of new knowledge (whether language or culture related) by co-constructing it with him or her through shared activity. All of the activity took place in what is known as the ZPD, that is, the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under the guidance of another human being. The division of labour (the decision as to who was the mentor or the relative novice and how the work was to be divided) can be viewed in relation to the organization of practice (Thorne, 2005). Collaborating in this way provided the participants with a means to engage in mediated reflection, to develop a better understanding of what they had produced and why it was appropriate, as well as to make meaningful connections between their L2 writing achievement and perceptions of their prior and current language-learning experiences (Swain & Lapkin, 2002).

The concept of other-regulation/self-regulation or scaffolding may also account for why participants identified as strong FSL participants (students with the highest grade) and as weak FSL participants (students with the lowest grade) from each of the treatment and comparison groups showed similar French writing scores. This finding with respect to extremes in aptitude provides for rich and potentially useful information about L2 processes that may allow instructors and researchers to extend the pattern of results found from one population to another.

Although there are similarities between the two groups with respect to French writing processes and achievement, there are also interesting differences. The type of telecollaborative context played an important role in the French writing process and achievement of the treatment
group. For instance, attention to and understanding of expression, content, and genre, were clearly influenced by interacting with members of the TL group.

The treatment group demonstrated a higher attendance rate than the comparison group. Also, treatment group members attended language lab sessions with more enthusiasm towards the L2 writing activity. Telecollaborating with members of the TL group provided the treatment group members with a stronger sense of engagement in the activity and with their partners. Interacting with TL group members appeared to give the treatment group members an opportunity to develop a better understanding of context knowledge and cultural preferences; audience, demands, and expectations of the target discourse community. First-hand interaction with TL group members created an authentic situation, which aided in generating genuine interest in content knowledge of the ideas and concepts in the topic area that the L2 writing activity addressed. In essence, treatment group members were able to develop an individual voice, gain a sense of empowerment, and negotiate an identity as an L2 learner, while gaining a critical understanding of, not only each others’ culture, but their own identities (Cummins, 2001; Cummins & Sayers, 1995).

Treatment group members also demonstrated more willingness to express themselves and take chances. This quality was reflected in 11 writing samples from the treatment group taking a genre other than a narrative, compared to only 4 from the comparison group. Although there may be other reasons, this quality may illustrate the treatment group’s clearer vision of the overall goals of the L2 writing activity.
Perceptions of Prior and Current French Learning Experiences

The objectives of the second and third research questions were to investigate four beginner FSL university learners’ perceptions of their prior and current French language-learning experiences and their identities shaped by the experiences. The data gathered in this section, from the background questionnaire, the ongoing observations in the study journal, the language-learning autobiographies, and the stimulated-recall interviews, provided explanations for variation in learners’ L2 writing achievement that could not be accounted for using only quantitative and qualitative data interpreted from the researcher’s view.

In short, the investigation revealed that the two treatment group participants and one comparison group participant lived positive elementary French language-learning experiences, which in turn resulted in the development of positive language-learner identities or ideal L2 selves. One comparison group participant expressed ambivalent perceptions of his elementary language-learning experiences, which influenced the development of an ambivalent language-learner identity or ought-to L2 self. This participant’s ambivalent perceptions of his language-learning experiences and language-learner identity continued through high school. However, the two treatment group participants and the one comparison group participant expressed less positive language-learning experiences and language-learner identities at the secondary level, than they did in elementary school, resulting in ought-to L2 selves. More succinctly, participants who experienced positive language-learning also developed positive language-learner identities corresponding to ideal L2 selves and those that experienced less positive or ambivalent perceptions towards their language-learning also developed less positive or ambivalent language-learner identities corresponding to ought-to L2 selves. At the university level, the two treatment group participants expressed more positive French language-learning experiences and language-
learner identities than the two comparison group participants. I believe, these positive French language-learning experiences and language-learner identities are attributed to the telecollaborative L2 writing project with younger Francophone Acadians in another Atlantic province.

Although both the treatment group and the comparison group members expressed positive perceptions concerning the quality of their French writing, the two treatment group members expressed a stronger sense of motivation and investment in their work; they perceived the experience as a process that allowed them to take part in a genuine French exchange that was motivating; meaningful and engaging. Such an experience translated into a more satisfying sense of achievement and language-learner identity; or ideal L2 self.

The two comparison group members, on the other hand, expressed their positive university French experience in comparison with their high school experience, which was acceptable, but not ideal. They were satisfied to be given the opportunity to take part in a productive activity. At the same time, however, they perceived the activity as a class assignment that they were required to complete. Since they viewed the activity as obligatory, they did not form the same sense of achievement or language-learner identity as their counterparts.

It is surprising that feelings of anxiety or reticence did not emerge, especially with treatment group members and their interactions with younger more proficient learners. Research in this field clearly shows that language learners confronted with situations where they have to interact with more proficient learners experience certain levels of anxiety. This communication anxiety might influence learners to underestimate their communicative competence, which may negatively influence WTC in the L2. Such a negative correlation between communication
anxiety and WTC in the L2 may seriously inhibit achievement. (MacIntyre, Noels, & Clément, 1997).

Another reason why feelings of anxiety were not explicitly expressed may be the genuine interest or lack of apathy in the L2 writing activity with the younger more proficient members. The telecollaborative L2 writing context may also account for why learners’ from both the treatment and the comparison group did not share feelings of inadequacy. Perceptions of communicative competence in the L2 affect learners’ competence relative to more competent and less anxious learners (MacIntyre, Noels, & Clément, 1997). Since email is a nonsynchronous mode of communication, a text can be composed and edited prior to transmission at a leisurely pace, and then edited by the recipient, thus creating a context for the co-construction of text. This tends to mean more reflective and considered responses and greater participation by less proficient students. Topics change less rapidly and contributions do not rush past in an incoherent sequence so responses are typically more thoughtful, more carefully edited, and more closely reflect conventions of written communication. Language learners who have control over their learning and who do not feel rushed may experience less anxiety.

As this section shows, the point of research is not always to document objective truth, as quantitative analysis claims to do or to rely on qualitative interpretation from only the researcher’s point of view. Information deriving from these sources is valuable, but to present a more complete picture of learners’ motivation and subsequent achievement, we need to examine learners’ subjective realities. As Riley (1997) points out, it is learners’ subjective realities, or perceptions, that will exert the greatest influence on their learning.
Identity Shaped by Prior and Current French Learning Experiences

An exploration of beginner FSL university learners, identities shaped by perceptions of their prior and current language-learning experiences from an L2 motivational self-system perspective allowed a consideration of the interplay between ideal self, ought-to self, and beginner FSL university learners’ perceptions of their French learning experiences. Three interesting and potentially useful factors explaining how beginner FSL university learners’ identity are shaped by perceptions of prior and current French language-learning experiences were identified. The factors include: (1) Evolution: the path of beginner FSL university learners’ motivational self-systems, (2) Demotivation and Amotivation: precursors to ought-to self, and (3) Motivational Self-Regulation: a mechanism for developing ideal L2 self.

Limitations of the Study

In this section, I consider the shortcomings and limitations of this study in terms of its design and the instruments used.

One limitation concerns the quantitative component of my study and refers to the small number of participants that limits the validity and generalizability of the findings. Given the limited number of participants and the restriction of the data collection to one participant university and one partner school, it is not possible to make generalizations about the quality of beginner FSL university learners’ telecollaborative L2 writing in other universities in Canada. A greater number of participants would also allow for more powerful analyses.

The qualitative component of my study, though it does not seek to generalize, holds a couple of limitations, as well. For instance, restricting my area of focus to the beginner FSL university learners for the interviews confined my discussion to the beginner FSL university
learners’ perceptions of language-learning experiences. I would have gained a wider understanding if I had also interviewed the younger Grade 7 partner school participants.

My description of beginner FSL university learners’ perceptions of their prior and current language experiences and their identities as language learners was also restricted to information provided by the learners themselves, which at first glance seems logical since only the learners could provide an accurate account of their language-learning experiences. It would have proved beneficial to interview other individuals involved in beginner FSL university learners’ language development: the department chair, and the entry-level course instructors to include and compare their views on the suitability of telecollaborative L2 writing as a means of providing intensive exposure to the TL group and enhancing motivation.

In regard to the instruments used, the ESL Composition Profile (Jacobs et al., 1981) allowed me to rate the L2 writing samples with the confidence that it was extremely well-established as an analytic rating scheme for assessing adult writing and that it has been widely tested, documented, and used in published studies. In spite of this tried and true rating tool, it proved unsatisfactory for rating beginner FSL university learners’ telecollaborative L2 writing. For example, the five dimensions of the profile did not allow the flexibility required to rate writing samples other than a narrative. In the future, a rating profile capable of rating a variety of genres would allow for inclusion of all learners’ writings, thus providing a more accurate comparison of the quality of beginner FSL university learners’ telecollaborative writing.

**Future Research Directions**

It is important to conduct similar research with other beginner FSL university learners at other universities across Canada. Such research would help to determine whether the treatment
group’s successful telecollaborative L2 writing achievement, based on their perceptions of their language-learning experiences and their identity as language learners that I documented, would be corroborated with more rigorous tests and generalize beyond the setting of one university and one partner school.

**Concluding Comment**

This study shows that beginner FSL university learners (those interacting with younger members of the TL group and those working with peers of similar FSL proficiency) can experience positive FSL learning through telecollaborative L2 writing activities. Specifically, the study illustrates that telecollaborative L2 writing activities with younger members of the TL group can provide this population, for whom there is a paucity of research, with the French language exposure necessary to enhance motivation and improve attitudes and achievement. Qualitative findings revealed that if adult low proficiency L2 learners are provided the opportunity to write, they can do so with success, contrary to the perceptions of many instructors, researchers, and theorists. In doing so, this population of French language learners can develop positive perceptions of their abilities to achieve and positive identities as language learners.

Since research concerning beginner FSL university learners in Canada is scarce, this study aimed to explore and investigate beginner FSL university learners’ perceptions of their language-learning experiences and their identities as language learners in varied contexts; prior and current. More broadly, this study went beyond production data to challenge structural or normative assumptions. Focusing on beginner FSL university learners’ perceptions of their own learning, shows how FSL learners can help inform, support or challenge policy and action. This investigation allowed for the consideration of social, historical, cultural and contextual variables,
which I believe are necessary to explain variation in beginner FSL university language learners’
L2 writing achievement and other language-learning experiences.
References


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Appendix A

Participant Administration Consent Form

PARTICIPANT ADMINISTRATION CONSENT FORM

I have read the Administration Information Letter, dated August 24, 2004 for the EdD thesis research study conducted by Kimberly A. MacDonald. I agree _____, do not agree _____ (please check one) to allow the research study TWO TELECOLLABORATIVE CONTEXTS FOR WRITING IN A BEGINNER, UNIVERSITY FSL PROGRAM: ACHIEVEMENT AND LEARNER PERCEPTIONS to be conducted at and have instructors and students recruited from the Modern Languages Department of __________ University.

Name (Print): ________________________________

Signature: ________________________________

Date: ________________________________
Appendix B
Participant Instructor Consent Form

TWO TELECOLLABORATIVE CONTEXTS FOR WRITING IN A BEGINNER, UNIVERSITY FSL PROGRAM: ACHIEVEMENT AND LEARNER PERCEPTIONS

PARTICIPANT INSTRUCTOR CONSENT FORM

I, _________________________, agree to take part in a study of the effects of electronic interaction on second language writing performance of university, beginner level French-as-a-Second-Language learners, conducted by Kimberly A. MacDonald, doctoral student at the ________________________________University.

I understand that, as a participant in the study, I will be working co-operatively, over the duration of four months (September-December, 2004), with the researcher in a teaching partnership. I understand that I will be asked to agree to devote two writing activities of my currently implemented language lab curriculum to the study, in which one group of students will take part in an interactive Internet based-computer assisted language-learning (email) exchange with Francophone Acadian students in eastern Canada, while a second group will work in a face-to-face interactive environment with classroom peers of similar language proficiency. I understand that the total number of participants will be approximately 25-30 students. I understand that both groups will complete the same two writing activities. I understand that assignment of lab sections to these two groups (treatment and comparison) will be made randomly. I understand that the two writing activities will be part of the students’ regular language lab work. I understand that both forms of the two language lab writing activities will be taught by the researcher/lab instructor. I understand that students will be asked to complete a pre-study background questionnaire and take part in a pre-study interview, both of which are part of the regular curriculum requirements. I understand that students will also be asked to take part in four post-
activity interviews, for which they may volunteer at the time of consent. I understand that of those students that volunteer for the post-activity interviews, twelve will be selected to take part. I understand that the interviews will be audio-taped. I understand that participants may decline to answer any questionnaire or interview question. I understand that all writing samples, questionnaires and interviews will be analyzed by the researcher.

By participating in this research, I understand that I will be providing researchers and other education professionals with a better understanding of interaction, Internet based-computer assisted language learning, second language writing, as well as design and development of learning environments for beginner second language learners at the post-secondary level. Second, I understand that students in my beginner level French-as-a-Second-Language class will have the opportunity to take part in either an interactive, Internet based-computer assisted language-learning exchange with junior high, Francophone Acadian students in eastern Canada, or a face-to-face interactive environment with classroom peers of similar language proficiency. Third, I understand that because the study involves an older group mentoring a group of younger learners, my students can provide a motivating and self-esteem building opportunity for young Francophone Acadians to realize the potential they have as bilingual Canadians. Third, I understand that all my students will have the occasion to, not only learn and practice the target language in question, but learn about the richness of the Acadian history and culture, past and present. To this end, I understand that participation in this study may serve to provide Anglophone Canadians with a better appreciation for Acadian heritage, as well as strengthen the linguistic and cultural identities of both participating groups. Finally, I understand that if I participate, I will be provided with a copy of a summary report of the thesis study.
I understand that participation in this study is completely voluntary; I will not be obligated to participate. I understand that I may withdraw at any time, for any reason, if I wish. I understand that all information about individuals will remain fully confidential. When the research findings for the thesis study are reported, I understand that any information that might identify me, my university, department, and students will be concealed, using pseudonyms (false names). As a result, I understand that no information from the study will adversely affect my present or future employment. I understand that consent forms, as well as all raw data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in a secure location. I understand that only the thesis supervisor and the administrative assistant of the participating university French Department will have access to information during the study. I understand that the researcher and I will not have access to the consent forms during the study. As a result, we will not know who has decided to participate/not participate. Given this, I understand that no information from the study will adversely affect students’ present or future grades and/or educational situations. I understand that as researcher/lab instructor, the researcher will further guard student confidentiality by having a grader assess student work for academic purposes and will not have access to grades until the end of the study. I understand that all consent forms and raw data will be destroyed systematically by shredding five years after the research is complete. I understand that data collected from students who withdraw part way through the study will not be analyzed and will be destroyed using the same aforementioned shredding technique. I understand that the results of the study will be written up in the form of a thesis, but may also be published as a journal article and/or conference proceeding.
I understand what this study involves and agree to participate. I have been given a copy of the instructor participant information letter and this consent form for my records.

___________________________
Name (Print)

___________________________    ________________________
Signature        Date

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact the researcher or thesis supervisor

Sincerely,

Name: Kimberly A. MacDonald     Name: ___________________
Researcher/EdD Candidate     Thesis Supervisor
Phone: (902) 867-2437 or (902) 863-4713   Phone: ___________________
Email: kamacdonald@oise.utoronto.ca   Email: ___________________
   kmacdona@stfx.ca
Appendix C
Participant Student Consent Form

TWO TELECOLLABORATIVE CONTEXTS FOR WRITING IN A BEGINNER, UNIVERSITY FSL PROGRAM: ACHIEVEMENT AND LEARNER PERCEPTIONS

PARTICIPANT STUDENT CONSENT FORM

I, _________________________, agree to take part in a study of the effects of electronic interaction on second language writing performance of university, beginner French-as-a-Second-Language learners, conducted by Kimberly A. MacDonald, doctoral student at the _________________________ University.

I understand that during a four month period (September-December, 2004), I will be asked to take part in either a collaborative Internet based-computer assisted language-learning (email) exchange with junior high Francophone Acadians in eastern Canada, or a face-to-face interactive environment with classroom peers of similar language proficiency, during which I will complete two writing activities. I understand that my lab section assignment to one of these two groups will be made randomly. I understand that the total number of participants will be approximately 25-30 students. I understand that the two writing activities will be part of my regular language lab work and they will be taught by the researcher/ lab instructor. I understand that I will be asked to complete a pre-study background questionnaire and take part in a pre-study interview that will be part of the regular curriculum requirements. I understand that I will also be asked to take part in four post-activity interviews, for which I may volunteer at the time of consent. I understand that of those students that volunteer for the post-activity interviews, twelve will be selected to take part. I understand that interviews will be audio-taped. I understand that I may decline to answer any questionnaire and/or interview questions. I understand that all writing samples, questionnaires and interviews will be analyzed by the researcher.
By participating in this research, I understand that I will be providing researchers and other education professionals with a better understanding of interaction, Internet based-computer assisted language learning, second language writing, as well as design and development of learning environments for beginner second language learners at the post-secondary level.

Second, I understand that I will have the opportunity to take part in either an interactive, Internet based-computer assisted language-learning exchange with junior high, Francophone Acadian students in eastern Canada, or a face-to-face interactive environment with classroom peers of similar language proficiency. I understand that because this study involves an older group mentoring a group of younger learners, it can provide a motivating and self-esteem building opportunity for young Francophone Acadians to realize the potential they have as bilingual Canadians. I understand that I will have the occasion to, not only learn and practice the target language in question, but learn about the richness of the Acadian history and culture, past and present. To this end, I understand that participation in this study may serve to provide Anglophone Canadians with a better appreciation for Acadian heritage, as well as strengthen the linguistic and cultural identities of both participating groups. Finally, I understand that if I participate, I will be offered a summary report of the results of the thesis research.

I understand that participation in this study is completely voluntary; I will not be obligated to participate. I understand that if I agree to participate, I may withdraw at any time, for any reason, if I wish. I understand that at any time during the study, I may refuse to complete an activity. I understand that all information about individuals will remain fully confidential. I understand that when the research findings for the thesis are reported, all information that might identify me, my
university, and my instructor will be concealed using pseudonyms (false names). I understand that consent forms, as well as all raw data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in a secure location. I understand that only the thesis supervisor and the administrative assistant of the participating university French Department will have access to information during the study. I understand that my instructor and the researcher will not have access to the consent forms. As a result, I understand that they will not know who has decided to participate/not participate. Given this, no information from the study will adversely affect my present or future grades and/or educational situations. I understand that as researcher/lab instructor, the researcher will further guard my confidentiality by having a grader assess all my work for academic purposes. I understand that the researcher/lab instructor will not have access to grades until the end of the study. I understand that all consent forms and raw data will be destroyed systematically by shredding five years after the research is complete. I understand that should I decide to withdraw part way through the study, the data collected to that point will not be analyzed and will be destroyed using the same aforementioned shredding technique. I understand that the results of the study will be written up in the form of a thesis, but may also be published as a journal article and/or conference proceeding.
I understand what this study involves and agree to participate. I have been given a copy of the student participant information letter and this consent form.

___________________________
Name (Print)

___________________________    ________________________
Signature        Date

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact the researcher or thesis supervisor.

Sincerely,

Name: Kimberly A. MacDonald   Name: ______________________
Researcher/EdD Candidate    Thesis Supervisor
Phone: (902) 867-2437 or (902) 863-4713   Phone: _____________________
Email: kamacdonald@oise.utoronto.ca   Email: _____________________
kmacdona@stfx.ca

I agree _____, do not agree _____ (please check one) to volunteer to take part in four post-activity interviews.
PARTNER ADMINISTRATION CONSENT FORM

I have read the Administration Information Letter, dated August 20, 2004, for the EdD thesis research study conducted by Kimberly A. MacDonald. I agree _____, do not agree _____ (please check one) to allow the research study TWO TELECOLLABORATIVE CONTEXTS FOR WRITING IN A BEGINNER, UNIVERSITY FSL PROGRAM: ACHIEVEMENT AND LEARNER PERCEPTIONS to be conducted at and have instructors and students recruited from ________________.

Name (Please Print): __________________________________________________________

Signature: __________________________________________________________________

Date: __________________________________________________________________
TWO TELECOLLABORATIVE CONTEXTS FOR WRITING IN A BEGINNER, UNIVERSITY FSL PROGRAM: ACHIEVEMENT AND LEARNER PERCEPTIONS

PARTNER TEACHER CONSENT FORM

I, ________________________, agree to take part in a study of the effects of electronic interaction on second language writing performance of university, beginner level French-as-a-Second-Language learners, conducted by Kimberly A. MacDonald, doctoral student at the ________________________ University.

I understand that, as a participant in the study, I will be working co-operatively, over the duration of four months (September-December, 2004), with the researcher in a teaching partnership. Specifically, I will devote two writing activities of my currently implemented curriculum to an interactive Internet based-computer assisted language-learning (email) exchange that will take place between my students (25-30) and university, beginner level French-as-a-Second-Language students.

I understand that by participating in this research I will be contributing to a knowledge base that will help both researchers and educational professionals generate a better understanding of interaction, Internet based-computer assisted language learning, second language writing, as well as design and development of learning environments for beginner second language learners at the post-secondary level. I also understand that this study concerns research on innovative pedagogical approaches related to second language acquisition. To this end, it may serve to enhance the professional development of second language teachers and, in turn, the effective implementation of Internet based-computer assisted language learning within second language-learning environments. Second, I understand that by participating, I will be providing my
students with the opportunity to share French target language knowledge with university, beginner level French-as-a-Second-Language students and that, as a younger group mentoring a group of older language learners, this study can provide a motivating and self-esteem building opportunity for young Francophone Acadians to realize the potential they have as bilingual Canadians. Third, I understand that my students and I will have the occasion to educate Anglophone Canadians on the richness of the Acadian history and culture, past and present. To this end, participation in this study may serve to strengthen both the linguistic and cultural identity of young Francophone Acadians. Finally, upon completion of the study, I will be offered a summary report of the results of the thesis research.

I understand that I am under no obligation to agree to participate in this study. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time. I understand that given the objective of this study; to learn more about the effects of electronic interaction on second language writing performance of university, beginner level French-as-a-Second-Language students, no data will be collected or analyzed from me or my students. My role is strictly participatory. Any information I provide will be kept confidential. I understand that when the thesis research findings are reported, all information that might identify me, my school and my students will be concealed using pseudonyms (false names). As a result, no information from the study will adversely affect my present or future employment. I understand that consent forms will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in a secure location. I understand that only the thesis supervisor and the administrative assistant of the participating university Modern Languages Department will have access to this information during the study. I understand that the researcher will obtain this information after the study is over. I understand that all information will be destroyed systemically by shredding
five years after the research is complete. I understand that the results of the study will be written up in the form of a thesis, but may also be published as a journal article and/or conference proceeding.

I understand what this study involves and agree to participate. I have been given a copy of the teacher participant information letter and this consent form for my records.

______________________________________
Name (Please Print)

______________________________________    ________________________
Signature        Date

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact the researcher or thesis supervisor

Sincerely,

Name: Kimberly A. MacDonald
Researcher/EdD Candidate
Phone: (902) 867-2437
Email: kamacdonald@oise.utoronto.ca

Name: ______________________
Thesis Supervisor
Phone: ______________________
Email: ______________________
Appendix F
Partner Student Consent Form

TWO TELECOLLABORATIVE CONTEXTS FOR WRITING IN A BEGINNER, UNIVERSITY FSL PROGRAM: ACHIEVEMENT AND LEARNER PERCEPTIONS

PARTNER STUDENT CONSENT FORM

I, _________________________, agree to take part in a study of the effects of electronic interaction on second language writing performance of university, beginner French-as-a-Second-Language learners, conducted by Kimberly A. MacDonald, a doctoral student at the ______________________ University.

I understand that, as a participant in the study (of a total of 25-30), I will be asked to take part in a collaborative Internet based-computer assisted language-learning (email) exchange with university, beginner level French-as-a-Second-Language students, during which I will complete two writing activities. I understand that the two writing activities will be part of my regular class work. I understand that the research will take place over a period of four months (September-December, 2004).

I understand that by participating in this research, I will be helping both researchers and education professionals to better understand the effects of interaction, Internet based-computer assisted language learning, second language writing, as well as design and development of learning environments for beginner second language learners at the university level. I understand that I will also be provided with the opportunity to share French target language knowledge with university, beginner level French-as-a-Second-Language students. I understand that because this study involves a younger group mentoring a group of older language learners, this study can
provide a motivating and self-esteem building opportunity for young Francophone Acadians to realize the potential we have as bilingual Canadians. I understand that I will have the occasion to educate Anglophone Canadians on the richness of the Acadian history and culture, past and present. To this end, participation in this study may serve to strengthen both the linguistic and cultural identity of young Francophone Acadians. Finally, upon completion of the study, I understand that I will be offered a summary report of the results of the thesis research.

I understand that if I participate, I may withdraw from the study at any time. Given the objective of this study; to learn more about the effects of electronic interaction on second language writing performance of university, beginner level French-as-a-Second-Language students, no data will be collected or analyzed from me. I understand that my role is strictly participatory. I understand that any information I provide will remain confidential. I understand that when the thesis research findings are reported, my name, the name of my school and my teacher will be concealed using pseudonyms (false names). As a result, I understand that no information from the study will adversely affect my present or future grades or educational situation. I understand that consent forms will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in a secure location. I understand that only the thesis supervisor and the administrative assistant at the participating university Modern Languages Department will have access to this information. I understand that the researcher will obtain the information after the study is over. I understand that all information will be destroyed systemically by shredding five years after the research is complete. I understand that the results of the study will be written up in the form of a thesis, but may also be published as a journal article and/or conference proceeding.
I understand what this study involves and agree to participate. I have been given a copy of the student participant information letter and this consent form.

___________________________
Name (Print)

___________________________    ________________________
Signature        Date

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact the researcher or thesis supervisor.

Name: Kimberly A. MacDonald
Researcher/EdD Candidate
Phone: (902) 867-2437
Email: kamacdonald@oise.utoronto.ca

Name: ______________________
Thesis Supervisor
Phone: ______________________
Email: ______________________
Appendix G
Parental Assent Form

TWO TELECOLLABORATIVE CONTEXTS FOR WRITING IN A BEGINNER, UNIVERSITY FSL PROGRAM: ACHIEVEMENT AND LEARNER PERCEPTIONS

PARENTAL ASSENT FORM

I, _________________________, give my child, _________________________, permission to take part in a study of the effects of electronic interaction on second language writing performance of university, beginner level French-as-a-Second-Language learners, conducted by Kimberly A. MacDonald, a doctoral student at the _______________________ University.

I understand that, as a participant in the study (of a total of 25-30), he/she will be asked to take part in a collaborative Internet based-computer assisted language-learning (email) exchange with university, beginner level French-as-a-Second-Language students, during which he/she will complete two writing activities. I understand that the two writing activities will be part of his/her regular class work. I understand that the research will take place over a period of four months (September-December, 2004).

I understand that by participating in this research, he/she will be helping both researchers and education professionals to better understand the effects of interaction, Internet based-computer assisted language learning, second language writing, as well as design and development of learning environments for beginner second language learners at the university level. I understand that he/she will also be provided with the opportunity to share French target language knowledge with university, beginner level French-as-a-Second-Language students. I understand that because this study involves a younger group mentoring a group of older language learners, it can provide a motivating and self-esteem building opportunity for young Francophone Acadians to realize
the potential they have as bilingual Canadians. I understand that he/she will have the occasion to educate Anglophone Canadians on the richness of the Acadian history and culture, past and present. To this end, participation in this study may serve to strengthen both the linguistic and cultural identity of young Francophone Acadians. Finally, upon completion of the study, I understand that he/she will be offered a summary report of the results of the thesis research.

I understand that if he/she participates, he/she may withdraw from the study at any time. Given the objective of this study; to learn more about the effects of electronic interaction on second language writing performance of university, beginner level French-as-a-Second-Language students, no data will be collected or analyzed from my child. I understand that his/her role is strictly participatory. I understand that all information he/she provides will remain confidential. I understand that when the thesis research findings are reported, his/her name, the name of his/her school and his/her teacher will be concealed using pseudonyms (false names). As a result, no information from the study will adversely affect his/her present or future grades or educational situation. I understand the consent/assent forms will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in a secure location. I understand that only the thesis supervisor and the administrative assistant of the participating university Modern Languages Department will have access to this information. I understand that the researcher will obtain access after the study is over. I understand that all information will be destroyed systemically by shredding five years after the research is complete. I understand that the results of the study will be written up in the form of a thesis, but may also be published as a journal article and/or conference proceeding.
I understand what this study involves and agree to give my child permission to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of the student participant information letter, student participant consent form and this assent form.

____________________________________
Name (Print)

____________________________________    ________________________
Signature        Date

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact the researcher or thesis supervisor

Name: Kimberly A. MacDonald                   Name: _______________________
Researcher/EdD Candidate                        Thesis Supervisor
Phone: (902) 867-2437                             Phone Number: _______________________
Email: kamacdonald@oise.utoronto.ca              Email: _______________________

Appendix H
Sample Placement Test

Test Description

The placement test consisted of three parts that comprised a total of 50 questions, each of which had a value of one point. All questions asked the test taker to choose the appropriate response from the choices provided (i.e., a, b, c, or d). The three parts included: Part A-Comprehension, Part B-Grammar, and Part C-Oral Comprehension.

Part A-Comprehension was made up of twenty questions. The twenty questions were subdivided into Sections I and II. Section I was composed of twelve questions and/or short phrases, and required the test taker to answer a question, complete a phrase, or select a phrase with a similar meaning to the one provided. Section II contained two short texts. The first speaks of the history of the French presence in Canada and the second describes winter festivals in France and other Francophone countries. Each text required the test taker to answer four comprehension questions.

Part B-Grammar consisted of fifteen fill-in-the-blank grammar questions. See sample placement test below for example.

Part C-Oral Comprehension made up the last 15 questions and required the test taker to listen attentively to a recorded story, which was read three times. It was recommended that the test taker listen to the story twice before attempting to answer the comprehension questions.

The total time for completion of the placement test was one hour. The test taker answered all questions on a computer card that was assessed electronically.
Sample Placement Test

PARTIE A: Compréhension (20 points)

I. Fill in the appropriate letter on your computer card. 1 point each.

1. Je ne peux pas déjeuner avec toi dans un restaurant
   a) faute d'argent    c) de bon appétit
   b) grâce à une bourse   d) à la bonne heure

2. Le brouillard était si épais que l'on
   a) n'entendait rien    c) n'écoutait rien
   b) ne voyait rien    d) ne voulait rien

3. Jean et Jeanne sont de bons amis et leur amitié est si évidente qu'elle
   a) passe inaperçue    c) saute aux yeux
   b) est discutale    d) ne se voit guère

II. Read the following texts and answer the questions by filling in the appropriate letter on your computer card. 1 point each.

Malheureusement la rivalité franco-anglaise menace la colonie. En 1713, les Anglais occupent l'Acadie (aujourd'hui le Nouveau-Brunswick et la Nouvelle-Écosse) et déportent un grand nombre de colons français (les Acadiens ou «Cajuns») en Louisiane et en Nouvelle-Angleterre. En 1763, le Canada devient une colonie anglaise. Malgré les événements, les colons français restent fidèles à leurs traditions. Même dans leur pays d'adoption, ils veulent maintenir leur langue et leurs coutumes.

4. Un autre nom pour le Canada est
   a) la région du Saint-Laurent
   b) l'Acadie
   c) la Nouvelle-Angleterre
   d) la Nouvelle-France

5. Le fondateur de Québec est
   a) inconnu
   b) Samuel de Champlain
   c) Louis Saint-Laurent
   d) Jacques Cartier

6. Les Anglais
   a) arrivent de Nouvelle-Angleterre
   b) ont expulsé des habitants
   c) deviennent très prospères
   d) restent fidèles à leurs traditions

PARTIE B: Grammaire (15 points)

Do not write on this page. Answer by filling in the appropriate letter on your computer card.

7. Si tu étais intelligent, tu_________ ce soir.
   a) allerais
   b) iras
   c) irais
   d) vas

8. Quand nous étions jeunes, nous_________ tous les soirs.
   a) étudiions
   b) avons étudié
   c) étudierons
   d) étudions
9. Où sont les fleurs? 
   Je les________ à la poubelle hier.

   a) jetterai
   b) ai jeté
   c) ont jetées
   d) ai jetées

PARTIE C: Oral comprehension (15 points)

Listen attentively to the recorded story. It will be read three times. After the second reading answer the following (15) questions using the computer cards to record your answers. The correct answer will be a,b,c,d etc. Use pencil only. During the third and final reading check your answers carefully.

Vocabulaire: butin = loot, booty ; balance = scales (weight) ; partager = to share.

10. Combien de chats y a-t-il dans ce conte?

   a) 1
   b) 2
   c) 3
   d) 4

11. De quelle couleur sont-ils?

   a) noirs
   b) blancs
   c) noir et blanc
   d) l'un noir, l'autre blanc

12. Qu'est-ce que les chats ont trouvé?
Les chats ont trouvé:

   a) Un morceau de fromage
   b) Une souris
   c) Un oiseau
   d) Un morceau de viande
Appendix I
L2 Writing Activity

Part 1: Introductions

Duration: 4 to 6 weeks

Objectives—some objectives for completing Part 1 are:

1. To review email skills and to become familiar with the International keyboard for French accent use, as well as, electronic French writing resources (in-house and on-line).
2. To make contact with and to introduce yourself in French to your partner using email.
3. To write two short emails in French describing yourselves and asking questions of your partner.
4. To write two short emails in French using appropriate structure for an informal or social correspondence (e.g. date, greeting/salutation, body, and closing expression).
5. To set the stage for Part 2.

Instructions and Details:

Hello everyone,

Hope all is well. You have all been provided with the name and email address of your writing partner. Part 1 of our Writing Project has very specific objectives, as well as, very specific instructions and details. Before beginning, we will spend some time reviewing email skills and becoming familiar with the International keyboard, as well as, electronic French writing resources that can be found both in the lab and on-line.

Once we have these skills and knowledge down pat, we will begin corresponding with our partner. You will be required to send your partner two short emails written in French. The purpose of the emails are to make contact with and to introduce yourselves. You will do this by providing descriptions of yourselves…your name, age, where you live, what you are studying, likes, dislikes, and any other information you would like to share. You will also be required to ask questions of your partner, in an attempt to elicit information about them. Your emails must take the appropriate structure of an informal or social piece of correspondence. In other words, it must include the following: the appropriate structure for writing the date in French, a greeting or salutation, a body, and a closing expression.

These initial emails will set the stage for the rest of the project. The more you know about your partner, the better you will be able to collaborate during Part 2.

If you have any questions, please contact me.

Bonne chance,
Kim
Part 2: Writing Project

Duration: 10 to 12 weeks

Objectives—some objectives for completing Part 2 are:

1. To interact telecollaboratively by email to select a topic and to co-construct a narrative composition
2. To develop a narrative composition using a process approach; the process of revising and editing to produce several drafts before arriving at a final version

Instructions and Details:

Hello everyone,

Hope all is well.

The first six weeks of our “Writing Project” have gone by. We have introduced ourselves and touched base with our writing partners. Everyone should have received and sent back two messages. We are now going to move on to Part 2 of our writing Project.

Part 1 was an introduction session. I gave specific details as to how many emails to send back and forth, the format of each correspondence, and the procedure to follow (i.e. CC to me, etc.).

Part 2 will require you and your partner to:

1. choose a topic from a list provided (see below for details concerning theme and topics)
2. decide among yourselves how you will develop it. What is your plan and how will you carry it out? Some questions to consider are: How will you divide the work? What will your deadlines be for getting back to each other in a timely manner? Who will act as spokes person to correspond with me, so as to avoid duplicate questions and requests for feedback? How will you develop your ideas…where will you obtain accurate information? How will you organize your composition? What will you do to ensure accurate language use, appropriate vocabulary use, and punctuation use? The creative part is up to you and your partner.
3. write multiple drafts by revising and editing
4. send drafts to me for feedback and suggestions on language related issues, as well as content. However, you are expected to consult with your partner and use the grammar/vocabulary/expressions you cover in class/lab as a model to help you communicate as accurately and comprehensibly as possible.
5. submit a final and polished piece of work by the last week of the course. The final product should be 1.5 to 2, double spaced pages.

Notes:
Unlike Part 1, I will not pre-determine how many correspondences/drafts will take place. I am predicting two or three minimum. This will depend on time and participation.
- Each draft should be an improvement on the previous draft. Be sure to take advantage of suggestions and incorporate ideas touched on in class/lab. Use the electronic French-English dictionary, as well as other language resources in the lab or on-line.
- Writing pieces may include images/photos/etc.
- Choose one or two topics from the list below and suggest these as possible subjects to your partner.
- Ask him/her to choose one and also ask if they have any ideas as to how they would like to develop the topic. For example, ask them if they have any special knowledge or background about the issue. If neither of you have specific knowledge of the Acadians, but a certain topic interests you, such as “Music”, then you will be required to do a bit of research.
- When you receive your partner’s response, the two of you can begin the first draft, which will incorporate a collaboration of your ideas, knowledge, and background.
- Once you have a first draft, even if it is a rough outline…introduction, body and conclusion….I ask you and your partner to send it to me for feedback. I will reply with comments asap.
- Remember, only CC me drafts…not every piece of correspondence with your partner.

If you have any questions about how to proceed, please feel free to contact me, or ask in lab.

Bonne chance à tous!!!!!
Kim

Evaluation:
Your work will be evaluated using the following categories and criteria.

1. Language – grammar, spelling, and punctuation
2. Vocabulary – choice of words (sophistication and range)
3. Organization – cohesion, logical links between ideas, sentences, and parts of speech to form a unified whole – intro, body, and conclusion
4. Content – interest, richness, and effectiveness of information, creativity, and originality
5. Comprehensibility and communicability – understanding and ability to convey a message (writing in a manner that draws the reader in, makes one want to read more, and forming a connection with the audience)

The above criteria will be evaluated on a 4 point scale:

1 – Beginning
2 – Developing
3 – Accomplished
4 – Exemplary

Theme and topics:
When learning a second language, it is only logical to spend time concentrating on and learning about the culture of the people who speak the language. Given the region of Canada, in which we live and learn, we will focus on the French Acadian culture of the Atlantic provinces. Another reason for dedicating our “Writing Project” to the Acadian culture is the historical significance of this moment in time. This past year was the celebration of “Le 3e Congrès mondial acadien 2004/The 3rd World Acadian Congress 2004”; a celebration of the recognition of 400 years of the founding of the Acadians in 1604, in Grand Pré, Nova Scotia. For many Acadians, a new chapter has begun. Reminiscing about the past and dreaming of visions of the future, have prompted the question: what does it mean to be an Acadian today: 2004-2005?

Topics for our project will then include writing about the past and/or the present of:

1. School
2. Community
3. Work
4. Homes and family
5. Music
6. Food
7. Dress
8. Way of life: farming/fishing vs. a technological economy
9. Language
10. Other

Note:

If you and your partner would prefer to write about another topic, other than the topics suggested, please let me know. I would like to hear your ideas.
Appendix J
FSL Student Background Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions. Provide as much detail as possible. Your input is appreciated.

Part A: General Information

1. Name: First _____________________ Last: _____________________________
Pseudonym: ______________________

2. Contact Information: Phone Nos. ________________________________
E-mail: ______________________________

3. Gender: Male ____ Female _____

4. Age: 17 to 19 ___ 20 to 30 ___ 31 to 36 ___ 37 to 45 ___ 46 to 55 ___
over 55 ___

5. Program and Major: ____________________________________________

6. Academic Year (i.e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, etc.): __________________________

7. Schedule of Class and Lab: ________________________________________

8. What are your reasons for taking this class/lab? (check one of the options provided)
   a) Self-improvement ________
   b) Professional reasons (Please specify) __________
   c) Course credit __________________________
   d) Other (Please describe) __________________________

9. What do you hope to achieve in this class/lab? (i.e. gain a better understanding of the structure of the French language, improve French communication skills-speaking and writing, improve French comprehension skills-listening and reading, gain an awareness/appreciation of the French culture, etc.)
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
Part B: Educational/Professional Background and Experience

10. Please indicate your level of education before enrolling in your current program:

   High School _____ Community College _____ University _____

   Diploma/Degree major: ___________________

11. Please describe any work experience you have had in the last 5 years:

   __________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

Part C: Language Background, Experience and Perceptions

12. What is your first language? __________________________

    a) What other language(s) do you speak? __________________________
    b) What other language(s) do you write? __________________________
    c) What other language(s) do you read? __________________________
    d) What other language(s) do you understand? ____________________

13. What level would you categorize your ability in these languages?
    a) Language 1 (Please specify)____________________
       Beginner_____ Intermediate_____ Advanced_____
    b) Language 2 (Please specify)____________________
       Beginner_____ Intermediate_____ Advanced_____
    c) Language 3 (Please specify)____________________
       Beginner_____ Intermediate_____ Advanced_____ 

14. a) Do you have previous experience learning French: Yes _____ No _____
    b) In elementary school? Yes _____ No _____
       If so, during which grades? (From Grade X to Grade Y)

       If so, what type of program? (Core French (including extended and intensive) or Immersion)

       If so, from which province?
       If so, briefly describe this experience.
       i) In terms of your academic development (what you learned and how)
ii) In terms of your perceptions and attitudes, etc.

____________________________________________________________
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Part D: Computer Background and Experience

15. Do you have previous experience with computers? Yes____ No____

a) If so, please describe. For example: Word processing, Internet, Email, Web page creation, other.

____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________

b) If so, how would you categorize your skills and abilities?

i) Word Processing: Excellent__ Good__ Satisfactory__ Poor__

ii) Internet/Email: Excellent__ Good__ Satisfactory__ Poor__

iii) Web page creation: Excellent__ Good__ Satisfactory__ Poor__

iv) Other: Excellent__ Good__ Satisfactory__ Poor__
c) If so, have you ever used computers for formal learning (ex: language learning, on-line course learning, collaborative project work, as an added component to coursework, etc)?
Yes____  No_____

If so, please describe

i) In terms of your academic development (what you learned and how)
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

ii) In terms of your perceptions and attitudes, etc.
__________________________________________________________________
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Part E: Writing Background and Experience

16.  How would you categorize your first language writing ability?

Excellent____ Good_____ Satisfactory_____ Poor_____

17.  What type of first language writing instruction have you had in high school/college/university?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Part F: Cultural Awareness Background and Experience

18.  How would you categorize your awareness/understanding of the French culture in Canada?

Excellent____ Good_____ Satisfactory_____ Poor_____

Explain and provide details:
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Thank You
Appendix K

Follow up Questions

1. a) What influence did your parents have on making the decisions about which French programs you chose?
   i) in elementary school (a lot, not much, none at all) ________________
   ii) in high school (a lot, not much, none at all) ____________________

b) Was your choice of program in elementary school influenced by:
   teachers? ______________, friends? ____________, others? ____________

c) Who influenced your French choices in high school? _______________

2. a) How did you and your peers view French courses in elementary school? (Prompts: something you had to take, something you wanted to take, elitist, boring, difficult, etc.)
   ___________________________________________________________________

b) Do you think that the perception was the same for core French as for extended or immersion French in elementary school?
   ___________________________________________________________________

c) How did you and your peers view taking French courses in high school? (Prompts: something you had to take, something you wanted to take, elitist, boring, difficult, etc.)
   ___________________________________________________________________

d) Do you think that the perception in high school was the same for core French as for extended or immersion French in high school?
   ___________________________________________________________________

3. Did your high school encourage you to take core French courses? ______________
   If yes) why did you take them or not take them?
   ___________________________________________________________________

4. Would you have liked to take more core French courses in high school if that had been possible for you?
   ___________________________________________________________________
   Why or why not? (Too difficult, boring, not learning anything, timetable difficulties, didn’t like teachers, etc.)
   ___________________________________________________________________

5. Was any assistance offered to you to continue taking core French in high school?
   (If no) Would you have been interested in continuing if help had been offered?
   ___________________________________________________________________

6. a) If your marks in high school French were poor, did you feel that your marks would have been better if help had been offered? ________________________

b) Where would you have gone for extra help (prompts: peers, teachers, tutors, home, etc.)? ________________________
7. How well did you do in your French classes – poor marks (below 70) ___, average marks (70-79) ___, high marks (80+) ___?

8. a) What did you like most about your core French classes in elementary school?
__________________________________________________________________
b) What did you like least about your core French classes in elementary school?
__________________________________________________________________
c) What did you like most about your core French classes in high school?
__________________________________________________________________
d) What did you like least about your core French classes in secondary school?
__________________________________________________________________

9. a) Are you able to take part in an ordinary conversation with Francophone peers?
__________________________________________________________________
b) Are you only able to understand the gist of a conversation among Francophones?
__________________________________________________________________
c) Are you able to understand sales clerks?
__________________________________________________________________
d) Make and understand telephone inquiries in French, etc.?
__________________________________________________________________

10. a) How well do you think you could cope in a Francophone setting such as Quebec or Paris?
Hardly understand a word ___ Just get by ____ generally, no problems ____
b) What would be your most difficult language problems in one of these settings?
Understanding? _____ Speaking (vocabulary)? _____ Reading? ______
(a lot, not much, not at all)
c) Could you:
Order a meal? __________
Rent a hotel room? ______
Ask for directions? ______
Look for a summer job from want ads? ______
d) How well would you be able to read and understand a French-language newspaper or popular magazine?
(Prompts: not at all ______, just the gist of news items and captions under photos _____,
most of the news and features ______, no problems at all in understanding everything ______)

11. Do you feel that your French courses will help you find employment later on? Why or why not?
__________________________________________________________________
Appendix L
Beginner FSL University Student L2 Writing Samples

Chloe’s L2 Writing Sample

Sample Number: 2459 (Treatment group)

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Les Instruments dans la culture Acadienne

Les instruments qui sont utilisés dans la culture des Acadiens sont vraiment différents en comparaison des instruments qui sont utilisés dans la musique non-acadienne. Dans la musique non-acadienne il y a des instruments comme, la guitare électrique, et les tambours. Mais, les instruments très populaires dans la musique acadienne sont le violon, la guitare, les cuillères, la guinbarbe, la scie, et le pied.

Le violon est un instrument à corde qui accompagne la gigue. Le violon est aussi l’instrument qui est la voix première dans la chanson traditionnelle. La guitare est un instrument qui accompagne le piano, et la gigue. Les cuillerées sont un instrument métal ou bois, qui sont frappés sur les jambes au rythme de la musique! La guinbarbe et un instrument qui est joué avec la bouche. La scie est un instrument qui est joué avec un archet de violon, mais ce n’est pas le même instrument du violon. Et finalement un instrument qui est très important est le pied des personnes dans le groupe. Les personnes utilisent leurs pieds pour maintenir le rythme. Et aussi, dans les certains groupes, chaque personne a un bloc qui est fabriqué de bois et ils utilisent le bloc pour un instrument. Ils frappent leurs mains et leurs pieds sur le bloc.
Dans la culture Acadien quand il y a une fête, les instruments qui sont utilisent le plus sont le violon, la guitare, la musique à bouche, les cuillères, et le banjo.

Dans le passé, les personnes n’achetaient pas les instruments. Il était fabriqué à la main, et ces instruments étaient en meilleure qualité que ceux d’aujourd’hui. Beaucoup du musiciens préfèrent les vieux instruments car le son est plus riche à cause de l’âge du bois de l’instrument.

Les personnes apprennent joués ces instruments par regardent de leurs grands-parents.

Dans la culture Acadien, les instruments de musique sont joués avec de « joies de vivre ». La musique ne peuvent pas s’empêcher de taper du pied avec le rythme de la musique.

Référence:


L’Écoles Acadiennes: Le Passé, Le Présent, L’Avenir

L'École Régionale Évangéline est ouverte à 1960. C'est la première École Régionale à l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard. Il y a quelles queues différences entre deux générations que sont des étudiants qui sont étudiants passés ou présents de cette école. Joey Arsenault et un étudiant présent à cette école et son père, M. Arsenault, est attendu cette école pendant son enfance. Les deux sont Acadiennes, ils ont la même école, ils parlent français, mais il y a des différences entre le deux, et entre le deux et l’étudiant de l’avenir.

Le Passé

M. Arsenault est allé à l’Ecole Évangéline pendant son enfance. Son professeur parlait tous les temps en français. Il ne parlait jamais en anglais. La religion Catholique était importante pour les acadiens était enseignée à l’école et les élèves ont des cours à l'extérieur de l'école.

Le Présent

M. Arsenault dit que L'École Régionale Évangéline aujourd'hui a des différences que l’école que il se souvient. Aujourd’hui, l’école est plus grande et il y a plus des élèves que quand il a l'attendu. Aussi, les professeurs du présent n’enseignent pas la religion à l'école, mais il y a des choses traditionnelles mais pas comme dans le passé.
Joey Arsenault va à l’école Évangéline aujourd’hui. Ses professeurs parlent tous les temps en français sauf le cours d’anglais. Ils parlent tous les temps en français car la langue maternelle des professeurs est le français. Des fois il y a des cours de danse et toutes sortes de d’ateliers qui se présente à l’école. Il pense qu’il peut apprendre de notre culture Acadiennes.

* L’Avenir *

M. Arsenault pense que les écoles Acadiennes vont encore exister car plus d’emplois demandent des employés bilingues. Il pense que les traditions vont continuer, car il y a une nouvelle génération des enfants, qui apprenant à jouer du violon ou danser une gigue Acadienne.

Je pense que, à Ile du Prince Édouard, les écoles Acadiennes sont plus grandes et ces écoles essayent de mettre la culture Acadienne dans l’école. Par exemple, le premier homme dit qu’il y a beaucoup des jeunes qui apprennent à jouer du violon ou danser la gigue dans le style Acadienne. De plus, le jeune homme dit qu’il y a des cours de danses qui sont présents dans l’école. Il y a beaucoup des choses que les étudiants font aujourd’hui qu’aide les étudiants de garder sa culture Acadienne.

Les écoles à Ile du Prince Édouard choisissent d’aider les gens des communautés Acadiennes à pratiquent sa culture par apprendre les étudiants dans ces écoles la culture Acadienne dans la forme de les cours, les sports, et les autres choses hors du programme.

La Commission scolaire de langue française de l’Ile du Prince Édouard dit que en plus d’une école régulière, une école française de l’Ile du Prince Édouard est une institution qui la langue et la culture sont entrelacées.

Aussi, il y a les autres groupes qui aident les étudiants français à Ile du Prince Édouard d’apprendre leur culture Acadienne. Par exemple, la Fédération des parents de l’Île-du-Prince-
Édouard représente les parents qui ont les étudiants qui ont l’éducation en français langue. La première objective de la Fédération est "promouvoir l’éducation et les cultures acadienne et Francophone, en travaillant pour la mise sur pied et le développement d’institutions préscolaire et scolaire de français langue première à l’Île du Prince Édouard".


Beth’s L2 Writing Sample

Sample Number: 2497 (Comparison group)

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Mots et Récettes de la Nourriture Acadienne

Les acadiens aujourd’hui parlent un patois avec beaucoup de mots qui ne sont plus dans le Français standard ou Français Québécois. Dans les vieilles recettes acadiennes beaucoup des mots originaux sont écrit.

Un hon exemple de ce genre de mot c’est bargou, le mot acadien veut dire porridge bargou qui est un porridge granuleux et see. Bargou était produit en bouillant des grains complets, en les séchant et en écrasant les grains. C’est encore exploité dans l’Île de la Madeleine. Bargou était né du bargoo, lequel est le jargon pour le porridge gruau utilisée par la navale Britannique au cours du dix-huitième siècle.

Les acadiens combinent sens de l’humour et hérésie dans les recettes populaires. Trois exemples sont pets de sceur, bourriques de soeurs ou trous de soeur. Les acadiens ont utilisé ces noms dans l’histoire pour les recettes parce que c’est une façon relativement innocente d’exprimer l’aversion envers l’église. Pets de soeur était une pâtisserie du dessert semblable aux rouleaux de cannelle. Trous de soeur était semblable au beignet, avec du pain fait maison. Cislette était un autre dessert traditionnel acadien, cette recette était faite avec pore et mélasses. Cislette dit littéralement petit burin, la raison est inconnue mais l’hypothèse est que le pore
ressemble a du bois écaillé. La sauce est faite de pore frit, cuit dans sa graisse. Quand le pore est cuit, on le retire et on ajoute la mélasse au reste de graisse restant dans la poêle. La mélasse est échauffée jusqu’à ébullition, et ensuite fit avec les restes de pore. Un autre terme pour cette sauce est « bourdonime » qui vient du mot « bourdonner » qui est le bruit que font les abeilles lorsqu’elles volent. Ce son est proche de celui que font les ingrédients lorsqu’ils cuisent.

Les crêpes a la neige ont été inventées par les acadiens lorsque les ufs se sont mis à manquer. Us sont fais d’une neige compacte, servie avec des morceaux de sucre d’érable. C’est une tradition de servir ces desserts le 2 Février pour la fête de la Chandeleur. Pour cette occasion, des surprises sont souvent cachées à l’intérieur. Si un penny est trouvé, cela signifie fortune, tin armeau signifie manage. Si deux boutons sont trouvés alors cela peu signifier beaucoup d’enfants.

“Galette au petit-lard de loup mann” est le terme donné à la recette originale acadienne “graisse de phoque biscuits”. Galette est le mot pour biscuit en acadien. Par exemple, galette au sucre signifie ‘sucre biscuit’. Un loup mann se traduit par phoque et est le vieux terme français acadien pour harpe phoque. Petit-lard est la graisse des petites baleines. Pour faire ces galettes, la graisse de la baleine est coupée en fine lamelle et est déposée dans l’eau bouillante une bonne heure. Une fois que la graisse est drainée, les ingrédients pour la galette sont mixés (farine, lait, oeufs, levure, sel, et une giclée de vinaigre). On prends la patte, la malaxe, la roule à l’aide d’un rouleau à pâtisserie puis on la dépose dans le four une demi heure (four à 200°C).

Finalement, tétines de souris sont traduites littéralement de tétons de souris. Les acadiens les appellent tétons de souris a cause des petites balles qui se rassemblent stir la tige. Ellçs sont ramassées quand les plantes sont jeunes et sont mangées fralches.
Ces mots et recettes Acadiens sont restés dans la culture Acadienne depuis leur commencement. Ils s’agissent comme une capsule de temps culinaire de la culture Acadienne du passé au présent. Nous espérons que ces aspects uniques de cette culture continuera pendant les générations.
La culture Acadien à mon Avis

J’aimerais première expliquer que je ne suis pas Acadien. À mon avis les acadiens sont créatifs et très romantique. Mon perspectif ne présent pas la cruelty et le suffrance des Acadiens. La perspective que j’ai choisie est très magnifique, j’aimerais explorer la culture Acadien. Une culture que j’ai eue la chance a célébré. Désolé si tu trouve mon recherche offensive.

Les français sont première arrivés, sur les bateaux en 1604 à Port Royal (maintenant sait reconnu -Annapolis Royal) l’ établissement existe toujours. Les Acadiens du passe, et du présent on beaucoup de courage entre leur communauté. Quand les jeunes on leur mariage dans leur communanté acadien travaillent ensemble comme un communanté à déchirer le terrain et bâtir une maison nouvelle pour chaque couple. C’est d’abord une bonne occasion pour le travail, la célébration et le manger. La musique est très spéciale pour tout le monde. Ce fête n’a jamais accompli sont music, le violon, l’instrument de la bouche et des cuillères. La famille acadienne sont d’habitudes grande parce que ils ont dû travailler de la terrain, ils ont bâti leur bateaux, et la chose un piège la vie de mer. Les femmes ont fait tapis et le vieilli ont raconté. Les Mi’kmaq du passé en aider les acadiens avec la provision de médicament naturel.

Un représentation du drapeau acadien:
Bleu- ciel/océan/mer Paix

Rouge- courage, la sang, sufferance

Blanc- le lis, pureté

Jaune- l’étoile or, la Virgin Marie “Stella Maris”

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## Appendix M

### Sample Scores for All Raters

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Appendix N
Stimulated-Recall Interview Protocol

This interview aims to collect data concerning students’ perceptions, attitudes, and thoughts of L2 writing in two telecollaborative contexts. Focus is placed on gaining insight into students’ subjective perceptions and interpretations of the text they produce, and the composing processes they use to produce the text in their respective context. Keeping in mind that semi-structured interviews often begin with initial core questions followed by probes, the core questions used during this interview are provided below, followed by some possible probes.

I want to thank you for taking part in this interview. You have been provided with a copy of one of your drafts and a copy of your final product. Please take a minute to review these documents, before we begin. You can refer to them anytime during our session.

Initial question:

1. Could you take a moment to think back to when you began the writing activity and summarize the process you and your partner used to decide on what to write, how to write it and how you arrived to what you have in front of you today? We will discuss the fine details as our interview proceeds.
   (Probe: Was your partner a French language speaker or another French student from this course?)
   (Probe: What was your purpose or objective for writing this particular piece)?
   (Probe: How many drafts would you say you produced before you came up with your final product?)

Perceptions, attitudes, and thoughts concerning final product:

2. How do you feel about your final version, in terms of content or the quality of your ideas, after completing the process you described, including the X versions?

3. How do you feel about the way it’s written in terms of organization or the quality of the structure of your composition?

4. What is your opinion as to the way it’s written in terms of Grammar or the complexity and accuracy of agreement issues, word order, use of ‘function’ words?

5. What is your opinion concerning vocabulary or the sophistication and range of words you used?

6. How do you feel about the way it’s written in terms of mechanics or the conventions such as punctuation, spelling, paragraphing?
7. Given your level of French when you began the writing activity in September, are you satisfied with the overall quality of your composition? (Probe: Why or why not)

Perceptions, attitudes, and thoughts concerning composing process in respective context:

8. Was collaborating with your partner by email a positive or a negative language-learning experience for you? (Probe: Were you comfortable using e-mail to write in this way?) (Probe: Did collaborating with your partner by email help or hinder your writing process?)

9. Did your writing context, writing with your partner via e-mail, help or hinder your writing process, in terms of Content? (Probe: In your opinion, what was it about writing in e-mail that helped or hindered the quality of your content?) (Probe: What tools did you use? What strategies did you use?)

10. How did your writing context, writing with your partner via e-mail, help or hinder your writing process, in terms of organization? (Same probes as in question 9)

11. How did your writing context, writing with your partner via e-mail, help or hinder your writing process, in terms of vocabulary? (Same probes as in question 9)

12. How did your writing context, writing with your partner via e-mail, help or hinder your writing process, in terms of grammar? (Same probes as in question 9)

13. How did your writing context, writing with your partner via e-mail, help or hinder your writing process, in terms of mechanics? (Same probes as in question 9)

14. What language did you and your partner write in? (Probe: Did you think in English and write in French? Did you think in English, write in English and then translate to French? Or, did you think in French and write in French?)

15. Did you take advantage of this specific e-mail writing situation to write outside of lab time?

16. How many hours did you spend working on this project per week?

17. Did you and your partner contact each other using another medium?

18. Did you ever take part in collaborative e-mail projects before this one?
19. Before this project, how much did you know about French Canadian culture? French Acadian culture?
(Probe: How did you obtain this knowledge? home/school/friends/etc)

20. Based on what you learned from this project, what do you think it means to be an Acadian in the year 2005?

21. Based on your language-learning experiences during this L2 writing activity, what suggestions and recommendations would you provide to those planning future projects?
(Probe: how would you improve the overall learning context? the collaboration process? The writing process?)
(Probe: What would you include next time that was not included during this project?)
(Probe: What would you exclude next time that was part of the project this time?)

22. Do you feel that your Core French program in secondary school prepared you adequately for this or another university/college core French course? _____ Why or why not?
(Probe: do you understand lectures/seminars given in French? Are you able to respond to questions in French? Are you able to read French texts without having to look up the majority of words in a dictionary?)

Thank-you, very much!