

CULTURE, CULTURE LEARNING AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES: TOWARDS A PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to improve approaches to the learning and teaching of culture using new technologies by relating the key qualities and dimensions of the culture concept to elements within a pedagogical framework. In Part One, five facets of the culture concept are developed: culture as elemental; culture as relative; culture as group membership; culture as contested; and culture as individual (variable and multiple). Each perspective aims to provide a focus for thinking about culture, and thereby to provide a valid and useful point of departure for thinking about the practice of culture learning and teaching with new technologies. The referenced literature draws from a broad range of disciplines and definitions of culture. In Part Two, five projects are chosen to represent relevant technologies currently in use for culture learning: e-mail, chat, a discussion forum and a Web-based project. Each project is used to illustrate facets of the culture concept discussed in Part One with a view to identifying key elements within a pedagogical framework that can help us respond effectively to the challenge of culture learning and teaching utilising new technologies. Thus the goal is to align fundamental qualities of the culture concept with specific pedagogical designs, tasks and technologies.

INTRODUCTION

From the first attempts in the 19th century to pin down the notion of culture through to contemporary interpretations of the idea, culture as a concept has attracted numerous definitions and interpretations (Atkinson, 1999; Baldwin, Faulkner, Hecht & Lindsley, 2006; Geertz, 1973; Kramsch, 1998; Robins, 2005; Tyler, 1881; Wilson, 1935). The recent publication by Baldwin et al., *Redefining Culture*, presents over 300 definitions of culture from across the disciplines. For language learning and teaching, Omaggio Hadley (1993), Kramsch (1993) and Lo Bianco (2003) also provide definitions and valuable introductions set in an historical context. Collectively, these works give a sense of the breadth and depth of the topic and the range of definitions and interpretations that have been applied over time. These authors illustrate the multifaceted qualities of the culture concept as they discuss the relationship between culture and civilisation, culture as it relates to the exotic and to the ordinary, culture as a set of facts or an inventory, culture as a collection of practices, and culture as learned, transmitted, changing and multiple. Work to date has undoubtedly greatly enhanced our understandings of the culture concept, but, as Lo Bianco (2003, p. 11) observes, the concept of culture remains "complex and elusive" (see also Baldwin, Faulkner & Hecht, 2006).

The complexity and variation in our understanding of the culture concept has been echoed in the range of approaches, strategies and techniques that have been advocated for language and culture teaching (e.g., Byram, 1997; Furstenberg, Levet, English & Maillet, 2001; Kramsch & Andersen, 1999; Liddicoat & Crozet, 2000; Lo Bianco, 2003; Lo Bianco & Crozet, 2003; O'Dowd, 2003). These approaches, strategies and techniques have aimed to highlight points of focus for learners and teachers as they engage with a complex topic. They have included strategies to enable learners to become more objective about their own culture and heritage, more aware of cultural aspects that are "hidden" (Hall, 1966), lists of attributes said to be representative of a particular culture, tasks that are structured to help learners examine stereotypes,

and specific techniques and procedures to provide insight and perspective, among others. However, there remain areas which are not sufficiently drawn out across contexts, especially as far as the particular relationship between culture learning and teaching and the differential application of new technologies is concerned.

The purpose of this paper is not to re-present a history of how our understandings of culture have evolved and developed. Nor does it aim to provide the definitive interpretation of the culture concept. But it does consider again important qualities of the concept and, as a result, revisits some basic ideas or assumptions about the fundamental nature of culture. It does this by examining the idea of culture from five perspectives: culture as elemental; culture as relative; culture as group membership; culture as contested; and culture as individual (variable and multiple). Each section overlaps and builds upon the one before.¹ The premise is that the more we know about the culture concept itself, as an object or target for learning, the better equipped we will be to develop the pedagogical elements required for the successful practice of culture learning and teaching. The five facets of the culture concept developed in part one are used as a basis for the discussion of five culture learning projects in Part Two. These projects include e-mail (projects 1 and 2), chat (project 3), a discussion forum (project 4) and a Web-based project (project 5). The discussion in Part Two focuses primarily on identifying: well-founded pedagogical elements among the projects; possible explanations or reasons for problems, data or other phenomena evident in the projects; and key questions or problems for culture learning, from both the learner's and the teacher's point of view. More established, tried and tested technologies form the backbone of the discussion in this paper such as e-mail exchanges for culture learning (see Hertel, 2003; Itakura, 2004; Jogan, Heredia, & Aguilera, 2001). Space limitations do not permit an exploration of all new technologies or applications with potential for culture learning.²

The working definition of culture that will be used is provided by Kramsch. "In summary, culture can be defined as membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common imaginings" (1998, p. 10). Skelton and Allen add: "Moreover, any one individual's experience of culture will be affected by the multiple aspects of their identity—race, gender, sex, age, sexuality, class, caste position, religion, geography, and so forth—and it is likely to alter in various circumstances" (1999, p. 4). Thus, culture is both a manifestation of a group, or a community, and of an individual's experience within it, or apart from it. As a group, members engage with one another in a shared social space. A common social space need not mean a shared physical space, of course, as in the communities and cultures that have made a virtual space for themselves online. But culture is not just about the group. Recognising the perspective of the individual in relation to the group is key in developing a pedagogical approach.

PART ONE: WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT CULTURE

1. Culture as elemental

Our cultural orientation begins at birth. As we grow and learn our first language, we are acculturated into a particular way of life. It follows, therefore, that when a second language learner begins a new language, the learner is no more a "blank slate" culturally than they are linguistically. In the words of Savignon and Sysoyev (2002):

... learning of foreign culture does not start from "an absolute zero". By the time learners begin the study of a L2 context and its culture, they have already formed certain concepts, stereotypes, and expectations about L2 cultural realities. These expectations are not fixed and immutable. But they will influence the way learners comprehend and interpret a L2 culture (C2). (p. 510)

Two profound qualities of the culture concept are evident in such statements. Firstly, we may be largely unaware of our own cultural orientation, especially in its deeper aspects, such as those that influence

belief systems and values (see Bourdieu, 1971; Hall, 1966; Willis, 1979). Numerous authors over many years have made this observation, for example describing culture as invisible or silent (Furstenberg et al., 2001; Hall, 1959, 1966; Kramersch, 1993). Further, we may not be very successful when attempting to stand outside our own culture to reflect upon it, as Willis (1979) observes:

We are therefore most *deeply* embedded in our culture when we are at our most natural and spontaneous: if you like at our most work-a-day. As soon as we think, as soon as we see life as parts in a play, we are in a very important sense, already, one step away from our real and living culture. (p. 186)

Just how deep these core values reach can easily be overlooked or underestimated. As Lo Bianco (2003, p. 26) points out, culture is "always there", it is "omnipresent".

Secondly, our cultural orientation can be projected on to others. Omaggio Hadley (1993, p. 359, citing Galloway, 1992) emphasises how our cultural background shapes our "attitudes, emotions, beliefs, and values, and the concomitant dangers of projecting one's native frame of reference on that of the culture being studied...."

The notion of projecting values and a frame of reference has been recognised in foreign language teaching, and perhaps most especially in teaching English as a foreign language. Notable in this respect is the special role and status of English as a global language. For example, Byram, Morgan and colleagues (1994, p. 15) list among the goals of foreign language teaching the development of "positive attitudes to foreign language learning and to speakers of foreign languages and a sympathetic approach to other cultures and civilisations." Graddol (2006, p. 66) says: "[English] is also the national language of some of the most free-market economies driving economic globalisation, and is often seen as representing particular cultural, economic, and even religious values." (see also Fishman, 1996). Along similar lines, Kramersch (1993) states:

Even as an international language, English instruction transmits such Anglo-Saxon values as efficiency, pragmatism, and individualism, that superimpose themselves on those of the learners' native culture. Foreign language instructors, on the other hand, who teach a second or a third foreign language to students in educational settings, generally transmit with that language a view of the world that mainly promotes the values and cultural assumptions of the L1 educational system. (p. 12)

For contemporary language education Lo Bianco speaks of the "humanising ideals of learning by opening up the minds of learners to difference and otherness", "more equal social outcomes from schooling" and "the combating of racism, prejudice and intolerance" (2003, p. 34). These goals go deep and are profoundly and genuinely felt. Yet they are, still, a manifestation of a particular cultural orientation, reflecting a particular system of beliefs and values. Significantly, of course, this is precisely the level at which culture operates—on our attitudes, emotions, beliefs and values. As Galloway (1992) says, "The complex systems of thought and behaviour that people create and perpetuate in and for association are subtle and profound, *so elementally forged as to be endowed by their bearers with the attributes of universal truth....*" (Galloway, p. 88). [Author's italics]

Clearly, the objectivity we seek will not be easily achieved. Here it is instructive to quote Patrikis (1988), again cited in Omaggio Hadley (1993, p. 368), who provides wise counsel:

For good or for bad, we all have biases. We see things in terms of what we know. Education, however, can turn a bias into a perspective that opens the eyes and allows understanding rather than into a blinder that restricts vision and ensures ignorance. Perhaps it is not possible to be fully and absolutely objective, but awareness of the problem can lead us to a kind of practical objectivity (p. 16)

Pedagogical approaches and techniques that help learners to reflect objectively on their own culture are especially important because language teachers and learners need to be sharply aware of their point of departure in culture learning. The importance of the learner gaining an objective viewpoint is also evident when roles for the learner as researcher, ethnographer or anthropologist in culture learning are recommended (e.g., Bateman, 2002; Dubreil, 2006; Liddicoat, 2000; O'Dowd, 2006; Roberts, Byram, Barro, Jordan & Street, 2001; Savignon & Sysoyev, 2002). It should be noted that more subjective elements belonging to the thinking subject rather than the object of thought are also implicated in any research on culture learning (see next section). As such any study of another culture requires a researcher to consider and declare his or her own position and frame of reference before proceeding.

2. Culture as relative

In addition to its elemental qualities, culture is, fundamentally, a relative concept, not an absolute one. Arguably, one culture can only be understood in terms of another (Moorjani & Field 1988; Tedlock, 1983). For the purposes of learning and teaching, the culture learner is almost inevitably drawn towards an approach which contrasts what "they" do with what "we" do, across a range of criteria. For example, in their book on teaching culture, Lo Bianco and Crozet (2003, p. 8, 40) frame the chapters around common themes or "axes" when discussing culture. The themes are explored in relation to Chinese, English, French, German, Italian and Japanese and include:

- 1) The importance placed on speaking in the functioning of the society (e.g., verbosity, topic choice).
- 2) Approaches to interpersonal relationships (e.g., terms of address, directness, face).
- 3) Approaches to understanding politeness (e.g., requests, invitations, apologising).
- 4) Level of ritualisation.
- 5) Expression of emotions and feelings.

Making generalisations is central in this approach: in other words the belief that what we do and what they do is common to all, across the two respective cultures being compared. Thus, when it comes to the chapter on Chinese, for example, the author makes generalisations about the topics that you may safely talk about (e.g., weather and food), and those you cannot (e.g., religion or politics). We are told that the "Chinese smile may have a variety of meanings." In fairness to the author, however, at the beginning of the chapter she says unambiguously, "China is a big country, so every attempt to describe it and its culture is fraught with the danger of generalisation." (Kaining, 2003, p. 53).³ But this does indicate the tension that surfaces when broad generalisations are made and considered against the likely prospect of individual variation. In many ways it is easy to criticise the broad generalisation, but not so easy to come up with a practical alternative.

Guest (2002, p. 154) identifies a number of problems associated with a contrastive approach in learning and teaching the second culture (C2), and a paraphrased list of the problems follows:

- 1) Oversimplification of the richness and variety within cultures leading to "caricature" rather than a deeper understanding.
- 2) Reducing cultural understanding to discrete declarative propositions about a culture.
- 3) Binary logic failing to reflect complex realities.
- 4) Reducing a culture to monolithic, static categories.
- 5) Encouraging stereotypes, "used to exacerbate adversity, and not to encourage mutual respect."
- 6) Detailing differences can lead to withdrawal of interest in another culture.

- 7) Increasingly cultural boundaries are becoming blurred and intermingled.

Instead of taking a contrastive analytical approach, Guest (2002) argues that we should:

...focus on the properties of individuals or character types rather than cultures at large. The linguistic dynamics should be adjusted according to the nature of the interaction (individual/small groups), and not in order to conform to an abstract, generalised, formula ('culture'). Thus, instead of an overtly cultural approach it would seem that the method more sympathetic to psychological or small-scale interactive models would ultimately be both more accurate and productive. (p. 157)

In essence Guest is recommending a move away from the learner as detached observer towards the learner as active participant in culture learning, and from a view of culture which is static and distant, to a view which is more dynamic and directly engaged. This level and kind of contact becomes more feasible and practical with new technologies, especially synchronous forms of communication such as chat.

3. Culture as group membership

Human beings live out their lives as members of groups. Early in life, the groups to which we belong are chosen for us; later in life we make more choices for ourselves. In our early years, our family, community, school and home country, with the corresponding beliefs, values and traditions, help create our primary cultural orientation. Then as we grow, work, travel, or learn another language, further layers or levels are added to the cultural mix that form an individual's cultural identity. For Lindsay, Robins and Terrell (1999):

Culture is everything you believe and everything you do that enables you to identify with people who are like you and that distinguishes you from people who differ from you. Culture is about groupness. A culture is a group of people identified by the shared history, values, and patterns of behaviour. (pp. 26-27)

A group perspective on culture draws attention to the idea of membership and community and leads to questions such as how people identify with groups, how others identify people with groups and how different groups relate and interact with one another (Baldwin, Faulkner, & Hecht, 2006, p. 17). "Individuals are keenly aware of the critical attributes of the group with which they identify," a perceptive observation made by Fortman and Giles (2006, p. 96). Generally, we know immediately whether we belong, whether we are insiders or outsiders, welcomed, resisted or even ostracised, in relation to a particular group.

Groups and cultures are distinguished from one another by a wide variety of means: geographical location, political persuasion, religion, clothing, food and so on. Cultures are also delimited by age (youth culture), profession (police culture), sports (skateboard culture) and technology (online/digital culture), among many others. Importantly, of course, for the topic in focus here, groups are also circumscribed and defined by the language they share. In this regard, the definition of culture introduced by Hymes (1974) is most relevant because of the particular way in which groupness is defined in relation to language:

Culture is understood as a "speech community": a group 'sharing knowledge of rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech'. Such sharing comprises knowledge of at least one form of speech and knowledge of its patterns of use. (p. 51)

Hymes' concept of speech community sets out a central role for speech—in the ways it connects and holds the members of the group together, and in the ways it works to sustain the group. The emphasis on the *conduct* and *interpretation* of speech foreground the ways in which language functions to create meanings in a particular context of use. This requires the learner to be skilled in pragmatics in order to be able to recognise contextual cues that overlay the meaning of what is actually said. This is especially challenging online where contextual cues are reduced or absent altogether. Knowledge of *patterns of use*

is also key. Thus, the definition by Hymes stretches well beyond simply a requirement for a shared linguistic code. Inherent in this definition also is culture as evolving and changing through interaction among participants.

Cultures operate on the basis of membership, realised through formal or informal means. As a general rule, individuals are not entirely free to move in and out of the group at will—though the mechanisms of regulation vary. Of course, language plays a key role in negotiating membership. Cultures as groups adopt particular practices and norms of behaviour, sometimes involving explicit or implicit rules and codes of conduct. One becomes a member of the culture not only by notionally agreeing to its practices, or simply by participating in them, but by being accepted by the membership. Gee (1996) and Rampton (1995) have looked closely at language use in this context, notably the ways in which language is used to cross boundaries and how it functions to include or exclude members of a group. Membership is not solely in the hands of the potential participant, it is also subject to the varied and subtle ways in which the group chooses to accept or reject members.

Group membership as a goal of culture learning poses particular questions for the language learner and the language teacher. As Guest (2002, p. 159) pointedly asks us: "Do members of the culture really want foreigners to master and display the internal nuances of that culture?" Alternatively, from the learner's point of view, even if it were achievable, what degree of acculturation is desirable? For example, Hinkel (1996) points out in her study that even though students recognised pragmalinguistic norms of the target culture, they were not always willing to follow them. These are searching questions for both the language learner and the language teacher. What we might wish of the culture learner is that they are in a position to make an informed decision according to their goals and their situation. Even then, however, the learner will not control how members of the target culture may respond and react: As Guest (2002) suggests, sometimes knowing too much can be as problematic as knowing too little.

Technology itself is cultural, of course. In his work on new technologies and youth culture Kellner (2002), for example, is concerned about access, new literacies and the role of the market and commercialisation in shaping youth culture (see also Beavis (1998) on game culture). With the advent of the Internet and the many forms of group that may be realised online, another dimension of groupness has become available. Online groups, and the "digital cultures" that result provide new venues for groups and communities to be created and maintained (see Kim, 2000). Online groups require us to revisit questions of identity, membership and community and the ways in which individuals become members of such groups, and how their messages contribute to the group's identity and culture. Matters of convention and behavioural norms in this environment are critical, as noted by Salmon (2004) when she discusses variations of *netiquette* for e-mail communication and group conferencing (see also Murphy & Levy, 2006). Issues of gatekeeping are also important in this setting and include consideration of the ways in which certain individuals achieve leadership status in their groups and influence the development and evolution of the group over time. The role and actions of the gatekeeper, or, in the online context, the moderator are critical too, as we will see in the discussion of the project by Hanna and de Nooy (2003).

4. Culture as contested

Culture is contested at many levels, both from without and within. Thus, cultures may be contested at the level of the nation state or beyond, for example when a "clash of cultures" is proclaimed in the media; or they may be contested at the level of the individual, when "culture shock" is experienced. That cultures are contested within the individual as well as on a broader scale should give us pause for thought.

When an individual learns another language, or moves to live in another country, culture may be contested within the individual, as differing belief systems, ideas and values meet head to head, and are compared and contrasted both consciously and subconsciously through feelings of disquiet and uncertainty. As we know culture shock is the term often used to describe the experience, an experience that may be more readily apparent initially, but which might linger on and remain contested and

sometimes unresolved within an individual for many years. This is one reason why learning a language can be such a profound (and worthwhile) experience, because one's core beliefs and values may be challenged, reoriented and reset.

Such everyday experiences are reflected in scholarly work where definitions of culture for the last 40 years or more have regularly included a sense in which culture was not simply echoed and transmitted, but contested and challenged. Thus, Giroux (1988, p. 97) defines culture "as a terrain of struggle," and Moon (2002, p. 15) as a "contested zone." Berger (1969, p. 6) argues that "Culture must be continually produced and reproduced... Its structures are, therefore, inherently precarious and predestined to change." Markus, Kitayama and Heiman (1996) reinforce these ideas:

Cultural influence does not just involve a straightforward transmission of the "way to be." If entering a conversation, it matters what the conversant brings to the conversation, and whether and how the cultural messages and imperatives are accepted, or rather resisted and contested. (p. 863)

Views of culture as contested have also emerged forcefully from such scholarly areas as critical pedagogy, critical theory and cultural studies, as well as postmodernist thought as it relates to culture. Postmodernist thought challenges conventional positions and interpretations and argues for "a radical undermining of any assumption about the stability of cultural meanings" (Barnard & Spencer 1996, p. 141). Writers also urge a move away from monolithic descriptions of culture towards a focus on the "borderlands" and, for students of culture, to adopt a more ethnographic, reflexive approach in the study of culture (e.g., Conquergood, 1991).

Such a perspective has also been highly visible in the literature on social linguistics and literacy, as for example in Gee's (1990) work on the inequitable distribution and maintenance of *dominant discourses* in schooling (see also Gee, 1993; Bourdieu, 1982). Giroux (1988) provides a good example from critical pedagogy where the term culture is used to refer to:

the representation of lived experiences, material artefacts, and practices forged within the unequal and dialectical relations that different groups establish in a given society at a particular historical point. In this case, culture is closely related to the dynamics of power and produces asymmetries in the ability of individuals and groups to define and achieve their goals. Furthermore culture is also an arena of struggle and contradiction, and there is no one culture in the homogeneous sense. On the contrary, there are dominant and subordinate cultures that express different interests and operate from different and unequal terrains of power. (p. 171)

The idea of culture as multiple and layered is evident in these discussions. A more nuanced view of culture is needed where the unit of analysis is not a single national culture, but "different classes and social groups" within a culture (Hall, 1996, p. 26; see also Gee & Crawford, 1998). Language interaction, of course, is central to how culture evolves between groups at all levels. This echoes Hall's view of communication as culture (Hall, 1959), and Geertz's (1973) notion that "social reality is under the constant process of construction through message exchange." This perspective is also consistent with Hymes's (1974) view of culture as speech community, described in the previous section.

In language teaching, a view of culture as contested also requires us to consider the role of the *native speaker* and the *mother tongue*, especially in the context of world Englishes and the idea of native speaker as representative or expert (see Graddol, 2006; Kramsch, 1998; Rampton, 1990; Timmis, 2002). According to Graddol (2006, p. 114): "In the new, rapidly emerging climate, native speakers may ... be seen as bringing with them cultural baggage in which learners wanting to use English primarily as an international language are not interested...." Here we encounter the prospect of learning the language

without certain facets of the culture that are normally regarded as associated with it. In this example, as in many settings and at many levels, culture is contested.

5. Culture as individual (variable and multiple)

Recent psychological research has shown that perspectives on one's own culture vary from individual to individual (Robins, 2005; Terracciano et al., 2005). Culture is a variable concept and understandings of ostensibly the same culture will differ from one person to the next. Consequently, how that culture is represented and understood by others will differ.

Freadman acutely observes that our knowledge of, "...what we call our 'own' culture is incomplete and fragmentary, that it is traversed by ignorance, that it is imperfectly owned" (2004, p. 16). In the context of language and culture learning, this means that the teacher's and learner's understanding of their own culture (C1) will inevitably be an individual interpretation, modified by such factors as world knowledge, experience living abroad, political awareness and so forth. Thus, when an individual is in a position to represent their own culture, either as a language teacher or learner, their interpretation will be subjective and personal. In addition, new cultural understandings that arise from cultural contact and exchange will similarly be subject to individual interpretation.

The variability of culture makes it difficult to package for others, especially for the language teacher (or textbook writer) who may wish to give a fair and balanced representation of the C2 to the learner. Whatever the teaching materials or resources used, the individual teacher will likely have their own opinion on the accuracy, legitimacy and balance of the claims or views that are presented.

If we can say nothing with any certainty about cultures as a whole and have to rely on helping the learner develop individual perceptions, then the individual is going to acquire a very incomplete and idiosyncratic view of the C2. Lo Bianco captures the nature of this problem clearly and succinctly: "We must account both for patterns and for variation, we cannot collapse patterns into an endless slide of differences. On the other hand we cannot deny variation" (2003, p. 5).

Clearly there is a tension between using broad-based norms and individual (co)constructions in culture learning. Fortunately, Kramsch (1993) provides one way out of this conundrum in making an analogy between language learning and culture learning, and in emphasising the importance of context. She says:

Given that language teachers have to teach both a normative linguistic system and its variable instances of use, attention to context calls for a type of pedagogy that fosters both direct and indirect ways of transmitting knowledge, that values not only facts but relations between facts, that encourages diversity of experience and reflection on that diversity. (p. 11)

Thus, culture learners require multiple and diverse opportunities for direct and indirect contact with the C2. Modes of learning also need to allow for thoughtful reflection to gradually build an understanding of the target culture as well as more direct engagement where learners are encouraged to develop the ability to recognise salient features of the context which influence meaning within a single cultural exchange.

The online environment adds further layers of complexity to the culture concept. Regular participation in online cultures simultaneously dilutes and expands our individual cultural orientation and mix. Overseas travel can also exert the same effect. Our cultural profile is not static and grows and develops through such cross-cultural experiences. In more general terms, any cultural understanding that arises from an exchange or interaction will be subject to the perspective and frame of reference of the individual observer or participant. Interpretation will depend upon the individual's cultural and language background, and their knowledge and experience of their own and other cultures and the world around them. What one learner will come to understand or learn when observing or engaging in a cultural exchange, another may not.

This paper has argued that the culture concept is complex and multifaceted, and that these facets and qualities need to be recognised and understood in order to successfully develop elements of a pedagogy, approach or methodology for culture learning and teaching. The special qualities of the culture concept point to a pedagogical framework involving new technologies that also has special features. The discussion so far, on the five facets of the culture concept and the implications for teaching, may be summarised as follows:

- 1) Culture as elemental
 - We are deeply embedded in our own culture.
 - We have to learn about our own culture first to better understand our frame of reference.
 - Aim at "practical objectivity" and reflection, with the learner as researcher.
- 2) Culture as relative
 - A contrastive approach is unavoidable, but problematic.
 - Generalisations have some value, as long as they are not considered absolute.
 - Small scale interactive models/methods are helpful.
 - Aim at direct engagement to develop a more nuanced perspective.
- 3) Culture as group membership
 - Membership of groups is layered and multiple.
 - Membership is regulated formally and informally.
 - Aim at raising awareness of the cultural groups we belong to and how language is used to negotiate and sustain membership.
- 4) Culture as contested
 - Culture is contested at many levels.
 - Culture is contested through multiple language interactions.
 - Aim at raising awareness, identifying points of contestation and managing differences.
- 5) Culture as individual (variable and multiple)
 - Cultural knowledge varies from person to person and operates at many levels.
 - Students and teachers are selective in how they represent their culture.
 - Aim at sharing individual experiences and building upon them.

This paper proceeds by reviewing five projects chosen to represent a range of pedagogical frameworks and technologies currently in use for culture learning. They include e-mail (projects 1 and 2), chat (project 3), a discussion forum (project 4) and a Web-based project (project 5). A commentary on each project is then provided. The five facets of the culture concept described in Part One are not employed as a prescription to evaluate each project. Instead, they are used as a frame of reference or guide to help shed light on a variety of phenomena arising during the course of each project. In this way, the discussion seeks to: highlight pedagogical elements that were theoretically well founded; connect specific pedagogical elements of the projects with particular facets of the culture concept; suggest possible explanations or reasons for problems, data or other phenomena; and, identify key questions or problems for culture learning (including some possible solutions) from the perspective of the learner and the teacher.

PART TWO: EXAMPLES AND DISCUSSION

1. E-mail: A-B-C

The Australia-Brazil-Collaboration (A-B-C) project conducted in late 2001 used e-mail to facilitate an online culture learning experience between 24 English language teachers at The Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) in Belo Horizonte, Brazil and 12 language teachers (various L1s) at Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia. The goal of the project was to facilitate culture learning among the participants in both directions and to evaluate the pedagogical framework and specific tasks. The basic task design and sequencing was based on O'Dowd (2001). The majority of participants were non-native speakers of English, although many were at a high level of proficiency. The partners did not know each other prior to their first online communication.

The task design and sequencing provided for analysis and reflection through a linked series of culture and language activities. The Brazilian participants first discussed their own culture as they thought it might be perceived overseas. Such an activity allowed students to recognise variation among individual viewpoints on the C1 within the class. It also began the process of distancing from the C1 and facilitated the objectivity required of a cultural orientation. Perspectives on the C1 were contrasted in class before the C1 and the C2 were contrasted online. Further work offline and online describing their image of the respective cultures were helpful in differentiating personal opinions and viewpoints with what was believed to be widely-held views of their country/culture. The tasks progressively allowed for clarification and refinement of cultural understandings, as evident in the examples below.

The e-mails also raised questions about the value of a generalisation (culture as relative), and the desirability and extent to which learners might choose to adopt the norms and practices of another culture. An example is helpful. Many Brazilian participants gave their age at the start of their first contact e-mails to their Australian partners. This response was natural and spontaneous (culture as elemental). Many younger and older people comfortably followed this pattern, as in these examples:

Well, my name is ---. I am 23 years old and got graduated in English last year. I work as an English teacher in an extension course at UFMG and I am also a tutor in an especialization course for English teachers. (B.2.1 - first e-mail)

I don't know if I have already told you, but I am 23 years old and I'm preparing to do master next year. (B.2.2 - second e-mail)

I'd like to introduce myself first. I am ---, 39 years old, married and an air traffic controller manager. (B.7)⁴

Telling a stranger your age so early in a conversation is common practice in Brazil. My Brazilian students tell me that it helps communicate the "phase of life" you are in and thereby helps them know you. However, telling strangers your age at this early stage in Australia would be considered very unusual.

This raises an interesting point for the language teacher faced with the prospect of teaching a generalisation about a cultural norm. For instance, if teaching Portuguese and discussing Brazilian culture, what would we recommend as best practice? The teacher basically has three alternatives: say it is customary to tell people your age when you meet them in Brazil; advise against this practice when using the second language because it may appear odd or unusual; or leave it to the individual once they are made aware of the cultural norms. This point was discussed earlier when culture and groups were discussed, and relates to the extent to which learners adopt specific cultural practices (see Guest, 2002).

This example neatly exposes the limits of a generalisation and, paradoxically, its value, as well as the importance of the particular circumstances of use or context. In this study, not all Brazilian participants gave their age in their introductory e-mails. Although the question was not asked, perhaps those who have traveled to other countries (with more exposure to other cultures), and who realised that this was not

necessarily the norm in other cultures declined to introduce themselves in this way (see also Ware & Kramsch, 2005, p. 193).

The first contact e-mails also demonstrated well the participants' desire to correct possible over-generalisations about the C1 and to provide a more refined, differentiated viewpoint. At the same time, participants also regularly began with very positive, sweeping generalisations about their partner's culture (C2) while tending to downplay or be very modest about their own. This pattern was noticeable on both sides of the exchange, although only the Brazilian participants are quoted here. The following two e-mails are typical:

To begin with, it [Belo Horizonte] is located in a state considered to be very conservative, we have no beaches whatsoever, we are friendly, but not as outgoing as people from Rio, just to mention a few differences. (B.1)

I imagine Australia as that wonderful country with beautiful people and beautiful landscapes, not many economical or political problems, in short, very different from Brazil. How much of this is true in your view? (B.1)

Further examples amply illustrate students being selective in the way they choose to represent their own culture. The following examples demonstrate this aspect. They also show how stereotypes can be useful in providing a point of departure for further comment and discussion, where members of a culture can subsequently modify, amend and refine understandings, thus giving a much more nuanced representation of their culture to their partners over time.

We would like to know what people around the world might think about Brazil. It was funny to see so much samba, soccer, and Rio de Janeiro in the pictures. It was funny because not everyone in Brazil likes samba, and some people, in spite of enjoying it can't dance it very well. And not every man in Brazil has a way with soccer. (B.3.1)

There are about 1,300,000 people in Belém. Population is growing fast, which is a problem, since we lack key things such as employment, housing, sanitation resources etc. Our people are originally the result of a mix of three races: Native Americans, Africans, and Portuguese. Our culture is a reflection of this mosaic. The food, for example, is fantastic. We also have such a great variety of fruits that many Brazilians don't get to know all of them. (B.3.3)

In reviewing the e-mail transcripts for this project, the range of content was striking. After the initial e-mails, partners pursued a wide variety of mutual interests and topics. From the Brazilians, topics included geography, paralanguage and kinesics, food, transportation, employment, animals, music, sports, weather, movies, actors, pop stars and much more. Such a range is consistent with our earlier discussion on our cultural understandings being individual (variable and multiple) and fragmented. Therefore, methodologically, it would be advantageous to have a collective de-briefing session among the group of e-mail partners as a whole to discuss the various topics and themes identified by individuals, pairs and small groups. When e-mail texts are brought together and viewed as a collection of cultural exchanges, a very rich resource of cultural data becomes available for in-class group discussion.

2. E-mail: O'Dowd (2003)

The O'Dowd (2003) study followed an e-mail exchange involving five pairs of students located in Spain and the UK over a 1-year period. O'Dowd sought to identify the particular characteristics of an exchange that led to intercultural learning, in particular what led some network exchanges to fail while others succeeded (see also O'Dowd, 2006).

When students begin a collaborative exchange via e-mail, they are very much working with a blank canvas. However careful a teacher's preparation, no social convention dictates how a one-to-one

relationship between partners via e-mail might proceed and evolve. O'Dowd's (2003) study tends to suggest there are hits and misses: sometimes the collaborative exchange led to frustration, when partners felt their views were not heard or understood; in other instances, the exchange worked well and progressed successfully. Importantly, the results are very difficult to predict at the outset, even when a series of culture-learning tasks have been carefully constructed beforehand, because of variation in goals and motivations from individual to individual.

Looking at some of the examples of cross-cultural e-mail interactions in O'Dowd's study, the reader can readily observe evidence of culture being contested. Even in a preparatory in-class e-mail discussion among students, prior to the international exchange, there was an "attitude of frustration and annoyance" about how students believed their own culture to be perceived and represented by others abroad. In class efforts were also made to rationalise or explain what were considered to be national traits or behaviours. Then in the intercultural e-mail exchange proper, perhaps not surprisingly, there were a number of examples of students in their pairs "correcting misrepresentations", "fighting" stereotypes, as well as efforts to convince partners of the "rightness" of a viewpoint (O'Dowd, 2003, p. 124; see also Itakura, 2004).

O'Dowd goes on to detail one case where an e-mail partnership failed because one of the exchange students presented an outspoken position on regional nationalism forcefully in an introductory e-mail. While this may be considered a more exceptional example, this instance clearly conveys the fact that cultural allegiances run deep; in other words, they are not only contested, but they are elemental. The corresponding partner of this student commented afterwards that the e-mail exchange was not a success because of a failure to complete certain tasks, among other difficulties. The task may have been the problem, but only in the sense that it triggered deep currents of cultural allegiance. If students are asked to represent themselves and their culture, is it any wonder that they speak from the heart? Equally, if these beliefs or values are challenged or contested, it is likely that the discussion will be heated and that the intercultural e-mail exchange may fail.

The advocacy or defence of social and cultural identity is often overlooked in reports on research in culture learning which sometimes tend to suggest that a straightforward, evenly balanced intercultural e-mail exchange is the norm. The O'Dowd study clearly shows that students have personal goals that can make their presence felt. From the student's perspective, the goal may not be language or culture learning *per se*, but to inform, explain and convince their partner of a particular viewpoint concerning their social and cultural identity; in other words, to *project* their own cultural orientation onto others.

Setting up such technology-mediated, online partnerships therefore involves risk, for both learners and teachers (Belz, 2005; Stockwell & Levy, 2001; Ware & Kramsch, 2005; see also Paige, 1993). Belz (2005) describes two categories of risk, as follows:

For learners, there is the risk of retreating within the self, reinforcing stereotypes and myths and even creating new, more negative stereotypes when confronted with the unknown... For teachers, there are considerable administrative, logistical, technological and pedagogical risks—the least of which is not the enormous personal risk that teachers in telecollaboration take upon themselves when young adults blame them because they did not 'make' their partner participate or because they did not 'tell' their partner to behave in a way that was acceptable to them. (p. 27)

Ware and Kramsch (2005) also speak of the risks involved and provide a perceptive, extended discussion relating to a cross-cultural (mis)communication between learners of German in the United States and learners of English in Germany: they include important and poignant considerations for language teachers, notably in helping students to take an *intercultural stance* and a *decentred perspective* during their interactions if they are to prove more reliably successful. The importance of teacher preparation and guidance for students is made clear as is the quest for greater objectivity on the C1 and the C2. In their

study, Ware and Kramersch (2005) mark the origins of the problem in uncertainty, about the genre of the online activity and the identity of the native speaker partner, and the need for the student to draw meaning from a text without context and the physical evidence provided by proxemics, kinetics and other paralinguistic features (see Tang, 2006). Yet, at the same time, Ware and Kramersch (2005) emphasise the value of these encounters and that with suitable preparation and debriefing by teachers and students they can lead to insights most difficult to attain by any other means.

3. Chat: Toyoda and Harrison (2002)

The asynchronous nature of e-mail helps provide valuable opportunities for reflection and representation of cultural understandings. The learner has the time to consider features of their own cultural background and those of their partner, and the time to think about how best to represent their own understanding of the C1. In contrast, a synchronous connection such as chat relies on short, spontaneous responses promoting active culture learning (Toyoda & Harrison, 2002; see also Tudini, 2003). Handling culture "on the fly" is critical if the language learner is to be culturally competent. But being able to notice salient features of the context, especially online with reduced cues, is a complex skill that requires much practice. Here a study by Toyoda and Harrison (2002) involving a series of chat conversations between students and native speakers of Japanese is used as an example of culture learning, though culture learning was not the focus in this study.

The influence of cultural differences contributing to a communication problem can be recognised in many of the example data extracts of native speaker (NS) – non-native speaker (NNS) conversations in this study, even though they were not categorised as such. The reason lies in the centrality of cultural norms and conventions for deriving meaning from context (culture as group membership). In the discussion earlier in part one, Hymes (1974) noted the importance of understanding the rules of conduct and interpretation of speech. Kramersch amplifies this point in citing Saville-Troike (1989):

That meaningful context is critical to language learning has been widely recognised. There has not been adequate recognition, however, that this context includes understanding of culturally defined aspects of the communicative event, such as role relationships and norms of interpretations, of holistic scripts for the negotiation of meanings, as well as observable aspects of the setting. (Saville-Troike, 1989, p. 258)

Interaction is dependent on the context and the way this context is perceived by the participants. And the two participants might see the context quite differently.... (Kramersch, 1993, p. 11)

The critical importance of cultural understanding for language learners when they attempt to derive meaning from context *in each communicative event* has been underestimated. Similarly, the corollary that each participant in the event might interpret the context differently has not been sufficiently recognised. Specifically differences between the NS and NNS in interpreting the context led to communication problems in many of the examples in Toyoda and Harrison's study. The chat environment itself adds another layer of complexity for participants in their efforts to draw meaning from the context.

Interpreting contextual meaning successfully is made more demanding in chat conversation because native speakers frequently produce incomplete or abbreviated sentences. Toyoda and Harrison (2002) provide several examples of abbreviated sentences in their Table 12. The communication difficulty in this example arises because of different interpretations of the noun *toka* which has a number of meanings depending upon the context. At key points in the conversation the NS and the NNS interpret the meaning of the word differently. All the examples at the discourse level involve a failure by the NNS to derive meaning from context successfully, to respond in ways that conform to NS conventions and expectations, that is, *norms of interpretation*. This was discussed extensively earlier under culture as group membership (Hymes, 1974).

Further complications in deriving contextual meaning arise because of the distinctive features of chat, such as the strictly linear and discrete ordering and presentation of turns, and the lack of non-verbal cues (e.g., eye-contact, facial expressions, body language). In chat, participants are working in a reduced or diminished context without the richness of a face-to-face conversation and the many clues that are readily available to derive meaning from context (Toyoda & Harrison, 2002, p. 93). These authors note the value of a relatively closed chat environment with a maximum of three participants in each "communication zone" (Toyoda & Harrison, 2002, pp. 85, 94, 97). Problems are compounded in more open chat environments, especially with the multiple overlapping of turns and threads, and the difficulty of following—and therefore deriving contextual meaning—from a single thread (see Negretti, 1999). A learner's access to digital cultures is largely determined by their ability to manage the special modes of interaction that predominate in the online environment.

Helping learners to derive meaning from a better cultural understanding of the context can be approached directly and indirectly through learner action and reflection (Levy & Kennedy, 2004). The NS-NNS chat conversations themselves provide for culture learning in action. In addition, reflective culture learning can be greatly supported by the selective use of learner logs (Toyoda & Harrison, 2002, p. 83, 95). The selective use of logs can help the learner and focus on contextual aspects of a particular communicative event echoing Guest's (2002) point earlier about an approach to teaching culture that features "small-scale interactive models." Although overall culture learning was not the focus of Toyoda and Harrison's paper, it is instructive to look at the data extracts and discussion from this perspective. Arguably, all language interactions between native speakers and non-native speakers have a cultural dimension even though it may not be foregrounded.

4. Discussion forum: Hanna and de Nooy (2003)

The examples of e-mail and chat use for language learning described in this paper so far generally aim to invoke cultural representation and (co-)construction within small, discrete groups of individuals, usually with a language learner partnered with another learner or a native speaker. In these settings, language learners in their pairs or small groups are relatively free to express their views and opinions as they wish. The learning environments and tasks involved are intended to support the language learner, in the sense that learners are somewhat protected in an environment that is designed to be sympathetic to the non-native speaker—although still subject to the willingness of the individual learner to complete the tasks. These kinds of learning environment are intended to serve a pedagogic function. The same cannot be said for an Internet discussion forum intended solely for native speakers. Such Internet forums are not designed or intended for language learners. Their role is not pedagogic, but truly authentic. These forums bring with them a set of cultural norms and expected behaviours. Authentic discussion forums are especially demanding for non-native speakers because concessions are not made for the language learner.

Hanna and de Nooy (2003) provide a good example.⁵ They describe a project whereby four anglophone students of French post messages to a forum run by the French newspaper *Le Monde*. What is so striking in this study is that a student who wrote in English, and not French, was welcomed into the forum while others who wrote in French were apparently discouraged. The two students that were accepted focused on the declared topic and expressed their interest and willingness to take part in the discussion; the two students that were discouraged approached forum participants as language learners with a personal request to practise their French. As Hanna and de Nooy (2003, p. 77) observe, the primary function of the forum is not to teach French, but to provide a venue for vigorous discussion and debate. As a result, an ability to engage in a particular cultural practice proved more important than linguistic training, or indeed an ability to speak French. If non-native speakers wish to participate, they have to accept the terms and conditions of membership.

The terms and conditions are set by the official moderator of the forum, as well as by other "unofficial" moderators/participants in the group (Hanna & de Nooy, 2003, p. 72). In this way, an authentic Internet

forum exposes students to the ways in which cultural groups establish and maintain their membership through acceptance and non-acceptance, and through the influence of privileged individuals within the group, for example the moderator, or "older" members who for various reasons have acquired status within the group. In a discussion group, acceptance is made visible by enthusiastic or encouraging responses to posts, while non-acceptance may be visible or invisible, either through explicit negative responses or, sadly for the language learner, no response at all. Again, as Hanna and de Nooy (2003, p. 72) note, "In a forum where this policing of appropriate behaviour is carried out with a minimum of congeniality, moderation can function as a kind of *initiation* or indeed *informal teaching*." [Author's italics]

Preparation for encounters of this kind in Internet forums is clearly essential. Hanna and de Nooy (2003, p. 71) emphasise the importance of appropriate task design, training, awareness-raising and preparation. Active participation within these groups is highly demanding and probably should be limited to the more advanced students. In any case, careful student preparation and rehearsal is needed. This could be achieved by enabling learners to rehearse in specially constructed learning environments which parallel the cultural practices of the real forum, and which essentially play by the same rules, but which support lower proficiency level learners. In fact, there is no reason why learners at a lower level of proficiency might not be included in discussion groups with a pedagogical focus on culture learning. The important point is to expose learners to a moderated environment which requires participants to conform to, or least be able to work within, certain rules and cultural practices. Often the degree to which one has to conform is not predictable in advance; sometimes the culture learner can only discover they have crossed some invisible line by the reactions conveyed by other members of the group. What this example clearly demonstrates is that in real world cultures participants are not "protected" in ways that they might come to expect in educational learning environments. In this case, the moderator was not a sympathetic language teacher and learners were exposed to a harsher reality.

5. Web-based project: Furstenberg et al. (2001)

In the last example here, Furstenberg, Levet, English and Maillet (2001) describe a web-based, cross-cultural, curricular initiative entitled *Cultura*. This project involves a very detailed and carefully devised "methodology" or "mode of learning" for culture learning. The focus in this example is on how the web is used to foster cross-cultural understanding between American and French students (see also Levet & Waryn, 2006). The project is especially noteworthy for its detailed pedagogical framework.

At the heart of the approach are four progressive stages. In stage 1, three types of questionnaires are distributed to both groups of students; the answers provided in the students' native language are then collated and posted on the Internet side by side. The survey questions are deceptively simple: Through word association, sentence completions and reactions to situations, students provide a substantial corpus of rich data for analysis. In stage 2, students analyse the data in a researcher role, first individually, and then collectively in their respective classes. At this stage, they identify patterns, connections and contradictions in the data, and write down their observations and comments. In stage 3, the students begin to communicate their reactions and observations to their counterparts in a forum that is accessible to all participants. At this stage, the postings are not anonymous and so a personal reaction to specific comments is possible; however, the asynchronous form of communication allows plenty of time for reflection. Finally, in stage 4, students broaden their field of view and analyse a greater range of documents representing both cultures.

It is noteworthy that the language chosen for the forums is the native language; the target language is reserved for classwork. As with other aspects of this project, the decisions concerning occasions for the use of the L1 and the L2 are well-reasoned and deliberate. The L1 is used when expression of "cultural nuances" is a priority as in the questionnaires and the forums (Levet & Waryn, 2006, p. 98); the L2 is used "exclusively for in-class and writing activities" (Bauer, deBenedette, Furstenberg, Levet, & Waryn,

2006, p. 35). The choice of the L1 for much of the work in the shared C1-C2 spaces emphasises the importance of representing one's own culture and one's relation to it as accurately as possible. Thus, there is more likelihood that discussion will centre upon culture differences rather than inadequacies with the target language.

Cultura is exceptional for the ways in which its structure, content, tasks, strategies and techniques are designed to account for many of the facets of the culture concept, as described in the first part of this paper. The learning partnership is at once reciprocal, interactive and constructed suggesting at the outset that partners will learn about each other in ways that are respected, equitable and balanced. The stages and sequencing are central to the approach. Importantly, one-to-one contact with partners is delayed. At first, contact with the target culture is indirect and anonymous rather than individual and personal. Not only do these strategies allow one-to-one e-mail exchanges that may lead to tension to be postponed—to counter the potential problems of culture as contested—they also promote a data driven approach that enhances the students' research skills and objectivity which, in turn, helps them respond to the elemental qualities of the culture concept. Collated responses to the three questionnaire tasks in stage 1 further support and complement this approach while at the same time generating valuable data. Data is aggregated and analysed as a set, with names removed, again directing student's attention to patterns and trends rather than individual responses. Strategies and techniques are therefore in place to protect or insulate the individual student during the initial stages of the project. By the time students engage directly in one-to-one interactions with their counterparts in the forum, they have been given a prolonged opportunity to reflect on a wide range of responses collectively and individually and begun to form their own considered opinions. They are more deeply sensitised and aware of not only their own opinion on a variety of cultural matters, but the range of opinions that particular issues or topics might generate. Considered use is also made of the learners' native language and target language. As a result learners are far more likely to avoid simple generalisations, or to derive too much from one-off instances of the kind that might normally lead them to jump to conclusions prematurely. Yet more techniques, such as the daily log, help the individual student to formulate and refine their ideas in a process that is recognised as gradual and evolving. Using a mix of strategies, techniques and technologies, allows for progressive, incremental engagement with a second culture.

Significantly, *Cultura* contains mechanisms which effectively insulate the student from direct, person-to-person contact with C2 partners initially (the e-mail projects did this also, but in a less coherent and structured way). Implicitly, the methodology contains an approach to risk management, enabling us to locate, perhaps for the first time, a practical solution to the problems of risk in culture learning and teaching, as discussed by Paige (1993) and Belz (2005) earlier. While it has long been recognised that culture is contested, and that teaching culture may involve risk, it is only in exceptional projects like this one that efforts have been made to build these understandings into a pedagogical framework. This framework actually allows culture to be contested within a safe, carefully managed learning environment. The authors of this framework have been able to transform an understanding of a facet of the culture concept, culture as contested, into an imaginative and workable pedagogy which fully utilises the options available with new technologies.

CONCLUSION

We have now reached a point where the strands of this paper may be brought together thus linking the five facets of the culture concept presented in Part One with the exemplar projects and the corresponding pedagogical techniques and strategies described in Part Two. [Table 1](#) brings the elements together. Each project is categorised in broad terms according to its primary areas of focus by selecting from the five facets of the culture concept (column 2). It is assumed that all five facets of the culture concept are probably present in some form in each project, but that certain facets may be foregrounded as a result of the participants, and the technologies and pedagogical techniques and strategies in use.

Table 1 shows the multiple ways in which the projects respond to particular facets of the culture concept. The wide variety and range of techniques and strategies is exceptional, reflecting perhaps the complexity of the culture concept, its unique attributes as an object for learning—especially in the way the subject and the object are intertwined—and the care with which it needs to be managed in the language classroom if culture learning is to be successful.

Table 1 (Part 1). A Pedagogical Framework for Culture Learning

Exemplar projects	Primary foci <i>Culture as:</i>	Technologies, pedagogical techniques & strategies
E-mail: Project 1	Elemental Relative Individual	Asynchronous communication Task & activity sequencing, reflect on C1 before C2 <i>In-class</i> activities before <i>between-class</i> activities Explore stereotypes Compare & contrast C1 & C2 Discuss emerging patterns Question & explore generalisations Individual interpretation & representation Knowledge pooling through cross-group debriefing sessions Incremental refinement of understandings of C2
E-mail: Project 2	Elemental Contested Individual Group membership	As above, plus: Long term collaboration Groups we belong to, groups we do not Challenge the comfort zone relative to NS norms Reflect on how we can present ourselves & our culture to our partners Discuss the <i>intercultural stance & the decentred perspective</i>
Chat: Project 3	Elemental Relative Individual	Synchronous communication <i>Small-scale interactive models</i> , for example, individual & small group examination of carefully selected extracts from learner logs Explore NS <i>norms of interpretation</i> in relation to specific <i>communicative events</i> Language, context & use, for example, pragmatics Value of relatively closed chat environment
Discussion forum: Project 4	Group membership Contested	Discuss L2 NS groups Insider/outsider perspectives Group creation, maintenance & regulation, offline & online Group moderation, gatekeepers etc. Norms & expectations; variation & conformity Pedagogical contexts vs authentic contexts NNS requirements & rehearsal with a view to NS group "membership"

Table 1 (Part 2). A Pedagogical Framework for Culture Learning

Exemplar projects	Primary foci <i>Culture as:</i>	Technologies, pedagogical techniques & strategies
Web-based project: Project 5	Elemental	Semester long project Collective, reciprocal learning partnership Asynchronous forums Student as researcher, ethnographer: data driven Data collection: Questionnaires, surveys, polls Comparative analysis of collated responses: out-of-class, individual activities followed by in-class, group activities
	Relative	Comparative approach Reflect on how common words express the culture, for example, <i>home</i> Compare a word with its translation, for example, <i>freedom</i> (L1 vs L2) Observe & extract patterns in the data Weigh the general against the particular Examine similarities & differences, in-class & between-class
	Contested	Aggregated data first, 1-1 contact second Anonymous before personal L1 for out-of-class questionnaires & online forums L2 for in-class tasks & writing activities Techniques to neutralise/moderate risk
	Individual (variable & multiple)	Personal diary Formulate hypotheses, Q & A, verification/revision Expand to include multiple people, documents, voices etc.

All the projects, bar the chat project, in their pedagogies and technologies demonstrated a reflection first approach, especially in the ways *in-class* work tended to precede *between-class* work, and offline activities generally preceded online activities. In the chat project, the reflective work came afterwards through discussion of the log. Still, as a general principle, one would expect the use of asynchronous technologies to precede synchronous in culture learning. Direct contact introduces a high level of risk for the learner, and perhaps for the teacher as well, in terms of the potential for misunderstanding or disagreement. However, it still has an important role to play. Synchronous communication is potentially useful in providing a real-time interactive environment to help learners become more aware of how meaning is derived from context, moment by moment, during each communicative event. Reflection alone is not enough. Students also need to "read" how culture is communicated through language, and how to recognise norms of interpretation and patterns of use. Overall, culture learning will derive from interactive exchanges that allow for action and reflection that encourage a "dialogue" in the learner's mind between the broader generalisation and individual instance.

Undoubtedly, with a concept as complex and multifaceted as culture, further work needs to be completed to clarify, order and prioritise the dimensions of the concept. A robust, but flexible, pedagogical framework is required that is theoretically well-founded. Such a framework also needs to be practical, not oversimplified so as to underplay the importance of key facets of the culture concept, nor so complicated that it cannot be readily translated into effective strategies and techniques in the classroom.⁶ It is hoped that the framework presented here goes some way toward meeting these goals.

NOTES

1. For the purposes of the discussion it is helpful to dissect culture into various parts, but the underlying assumption is still that the culture concept is essentially holistic in nature (see Tang, 2006).
2. Note that a number of emerging applications may also prove valuable for culture learning; for example web logs or blogs, wikis and podcasting (Ducate & Lomicka, 2005; Murray & Hourigan, 2006). Such applications will continue to evolve to match the multimodal, collaborative, social environments made possible by the functionality of Web 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2005). Note also that blogging, for example, remains a form of asynchronous communication between members of a virtual discussion group so much of the present discussion remains relevant (see sections relating to e-mail and discussion forums).
3. On the basis of a rich description, Tang (2006) provides a valuable examination of Chinese behavioural culture.
4. The keycodes refer to the Brazilian participants in the study and were developed to indicate the keycode of the participant (e.g., B.2) and the particular email message (e.g., B.3.2 refers to the second email message from participant 3).
5. Thorne (2006) has also provided a commentary on the Hanna & de Nooy (2003) study and Furstenberg et al. (2001). The perspective in this paper has raised different points and care has been taken not to repeat the key points raised by Thorne.
6. The degree of specificity chosen for defining the culture concept is a key issue. Frameworks and models vary widely in their form and in the number of their constituents and include, among many: the two broad concepts of "Big C" and "little c" cultures; the "Three Ps" (perspectives, products and practices) for foreign language learning as advocated by the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* in the US (see Tang, 2006); the six principles for a revised view of TESOL and culture (Atkinson, 1999); and the series of models constructed by Hecht, Baldwin & Faulkner (2006, p. 64) for defining culture that "present visual representations of the relationships between and among the [7] themes."

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