French Takes Over Your Mind: Private Speech and Making Sense in Immersion Programs

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ABSTRACT: In this article, the author describes her conceptual framework and approach to researching students' experiences of language learning in a high school (late partial) immersion setting. Data on learners' experiences of immersion learning have been collected using a wide repertoire of qualitative techniques. One of the key themes emerging from the analysis has been the students' attempts to make sense of what is going on in the classroom. Analysis of data collected over the years points to the importance to the students' learning of private speech (vocalized or sub-vocalized talking to oneself in French). Examples are presented and implications for teaching in immersion and other programs discussed.

RÉSUMÉ: Dans cet article, l'auteure apporte un cadre théorique et une approche pour l'examen des expériences d'étudiants dans l'apprentissage d'une langue seconde dans un contexte d'immersion tardive. Elle a utilisé diverses méthodes qualitatives pour cueillir les données sur les expériences des étudiants. L'un des thèmes émergeant de son étude est la tentative des étudiants de prendre conscience de ce qui se passe dans leurs classes. L'analyse des données indique l'importance pour les étudiants d'utiliser conversation privée (vocalisée ou non, soit se parler en français). L'auteure présente des exemples de la conversation privée et apporte une réflexion sur l'implication de son étude sur l'enseignement en immersion et dans d'autres programmes.

Introduction

In a 1993 article, John Schumann challenged the notion that hypotheses relating to second language acquisition could be "falsified." His article discussed the problems of using falsification as a strategy in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory construction and evaluation. He

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stated that "falsification is an attempt to close down or end consideration of a particular position" (p. 302). As an alternative to continuing with the notion of falsification, Schumann instead proposed "that perhaps a better strategy for theory construction and evaluation in SLA is exploration" (p. 303).

In this paper, I describe how we can try to explore learning from the learner's point of view. This approach draws on the fields of phenomenology, sociology, and ethnography, and the focus of many of my research projects has been on "describing and understanding experience in context, and on discerning the meaning of situations to the people living them" (Tardif & Weber, 1987, p. 3).

Most of the research about immersion programs concentrates on outcomes, on evaluating the foreign language proficiency, native language proficiency, and content area knowledge of immersion students and graduates. As noted by Weber and Tardif (1987) and Swain and Lapkin (1989), less has been written about the processes involved in the acquisition of the target language, and still less undertaken directly investigating "the use of language in contexts of situation" (Hymes. 1974, p. 3).

The challenge of this approach to research is to explore the processes which an individual lives through while participating in a language classroom, not from the point of view of the researcher, but from the point of view of those who participate in and construct the class.

The approach to research described here is aligned with the situational-interpretive paradigm (Aoki, 1979; Habermas, 1971) and reflects a "shift in our attitude toward our inner, subjective experience, affirming its importance and its validity" (Harman, 1985, p. 325). One of the aims of this approach toward research is to discover how learners experience and create the process of learning languages in particular classroom settings; to learn the "actors' 'definition of the situation'" (Schwartz, 1979, p. 48). A second aim is:

> Having accomplished this reconstruction of the other's reality, the researcher hopes to transcend this view, to see what the actor does *not* see – the formal features, process, patterns, or common denominators that characterize the actor's view and situation. This ... will allow the investigator ... to see what the actor and others in similar or different situations, holding similar or different definitions of the situations, have in common. (Schwartz, 1979, p. 48)

The questions guiding work carried out using this approach focus on the interrelations between learners and environments. The data needed to

answer these questions are collected in the situation as it was lived and experienced by the learners.

One of the main characteristics of this type of research is that the researcher relies on more than one instrument or technique. Researchers are encouraged to use "triangulation" (Wolcott, 1988, p. 192; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 283) to build validity into their work, by never relying on a single instrument, observation, or approach. As stated by Spradley (1979), when we merely observe behaviour without also treating people as informants, our knowledge of their culture becomes distorted, because we only use our view of their culture, rather than theirs. We may attach wrong meanings or significance to observed happenings. Particularly applicable to this research are the ideas of "construction of community" of Cicourel and Schutz. As stated by Cicourel:

> Members [of a society] are continually giving each other instructions (verbal and non-verbal cues and content) as to their intentions, social character, biographies and the like .... Members can be seen to be programming each other's activities as the scene unfolds. (1974, p. 58)

A similar view of an individual's active construction of his or her own world comes from Schutz (1970). In his view an individual constructs his or her life world with the help of others. The result of this joint construction is a social world which the individuals inhabit.

In the situational-interpretive paradigm, knowledge is seen to be *in* situations, and it is important to relate humanness to the social world. There are multiple ways of knowing, and reality is not so much"out there," but socially constructed (Jacknicke & Rowell, 1987). Explaining knowledge involves clarifying motives, common meanings, and authentic relationships (Aoki, 1979).

This type of research aims to gain access to the inside and to insiders. Within this paradigm, the reconstruction of the reality of another human being, group, or way of life is usually accepted as satisfactory knowledge in itself (Schwartz, 1979).

Other researchers note that, while not capable of delivering generalizations about learning, research conducted in this paradigm can yield insights which can "afford enlightened pedagogical actions" (Brown, 1987, p. 50). For example, van Manen writes that:

> Phenomenology does not offer us the possibility of effective theory with which we can now explain and/or control the world, but rather it offers us the possibility of plausible insight which brings us in more direct contact with the world. (1984, p. 1)

The situational-interpretive paradigm is appropriate for an exploration of learning as it places the lives of the learners into the central position

in their learning. Much of the information I have obtained from learners would not have been able to be accessed by other methods. For those of us working in this paradigm, the aim of our research is "to become intimately familiar with the setting in which the [learners] and the teacher interact, to situate the meanings [learners] attach to their experiences, and to capture these experiences as they unfold" (Tardif & Weber, 1987, p. 3).

In this paper, I discuss some of the results from research projects I conducted which aimed to investigate the processes that underlie the acquisition of French by students in a late immersion context in Queensland, Australia. As space is limited, I will focus on only *some* of the experiences of the French immersion students.

Method

Students from two late partial French immersion schools were involved in the studies reported on here. At both schools, approximately 50% of the day was devoted to French for the immersion students. Subjects taught in French were Maths, Science, French, and Social Science. The students had various names for the latter – Living in Society (LS), History or Geography – depending on the school and the grade level. Students at one school also took Physical Education theory in French. At both schools, students had started the immersion program *ab initio*, with little or no study of French occurring in the primary school. The first six weeks of the French immersion section of their high school timetable (except for Mathematics) was devoted to the intensive learning of French. After this initial period, lessons in the subject areas continued in French, in what was to become the normal pattern for the students' lives over the ensuing three years.

The students involved in the research study were in Years 8, 9, and 10,[1] with the bulk of the data coming from Year 9 students. They seemed to be most aware of their developing language proficiency, yet still able to reflect on what it had been like when they knew no French. Pseudonyms, most of which were chosen by the students, are used for the reporting of the results.

An ethnographic style of data collection was used for both projects. The first project involved non-participant observation and group interviews with students over the school year (late January to mid-December). The database consisted of field notes which were made during observations and full transcriptions of the interviews. Sections of some lessons were also taped and transcribed in full. The second study project, the full results of which are reported in de Courcy (2002),

involved a more complicated research design, involving ethnographic observations and interviews, video tapes of classroom interaction, stimulated recall interviews, paired interviews, and think aloud protocols of reading tasks over a two-year period. The database, once again, consisted mainly of transcriptions of interview and observation tapes. A description of the transcription conventions used in these studies can be found in Figure 1.

T:	Teacher
S:	Student
Ss:	Students
[no	
[she	said at same time, overlapping
/	no pause
our-	speaker stops suddenly
,	brief pause
-	longer pause
//	speaker interrupts
?	upward intonation
.	downward intonation
	MUST emphasis
[ ]	researcher's observation
( )	untranscribable
(call)	uncertain transcription
(4.0)	pause - approximate length in seconds

Figure 1. *From Atkinson and Drew (1979).*

For the analysis of such large amounts of data, I was guided by the principles outlined in Lincoln and Guba (1985), Miles and Huberman (1984), and Glaser and Strauss (1967). Data analysis was an iterative process, continuing throughout the studies, rather than being left until all the data were collected. Analysis was conducted after each stage of data collection and also again once a full set of data was available.

After transcription of the data and verification using member checks, an initial search for themes (Spradley, 1979) was made. The aim was to find common themes across the data provided by all learners if possible. Each theme was then sub-divided into several categories. The

transcripts were then read and re-read many times both during and after the period of data collection to check and cross-check the categories. Changes to and refinement of categories were made as data collection and analysis proceeded. Themes and categories which were emerging from the data were discussed with the informants during subsequent research stages.

In this paper, I discuss the main themes relating to the learners' experiences of the immersion context, *making sense* and *becoming bilingual*. The section on making sense of the classroom uses information from Year 9 students only. The section on becoming bilingual uses information from all of the students.

Making Sense of the Classroom

The principal language learning experience was, not surprisingly, making sense of the classroom. In making sense of what is going on in the classroom the immersion students report having passed through four phases. The first stage was a heavy reliance on translation of everything they heard or read into English, which I called *translation as a receptive strategy* stage. During the second stage, called the *key word* stage, learners latched onto key words and guessed at the meaning of the rest of the sentence.

The third stage which I identified had the learners *relaxing and getting the gist*. In the fourth and final stage, the learners seemed no longer aware that they were working in a second language, so I named it the *out of awareness* stage. The learners did not all go through these stages at the same time as the others in their class, nor did they all reach the final stage by the end of the period of data collection. However, this path to making sense did seem to be common for all of them.

I now describe these stages and strategies passed through on the way to making sense with illustrative quotes made by the learners during their interviews.

Translation as a Receptive Strategy

The first stage was what I classified in my analyses as *translation as a receptive strategy*. The fact that translation was the first strategy used by the learners to make sense of their situation may come as a surprise to the reader. The whole ethos of immersion education is that content is learned via the target language, without the use of translation to the learners' first language to assist understanding. Indeed, observations of these immersion classrooms revealed that translation into the mother tongue was generally avoided, and that there was an insistence by all

the participants on the maintenance of a second language context. Notwithstanding, for the Year 9 students, the previous year had been a fairly confusing time. In May (four months into the second year in immersion) John stated that during Year 8 he could not "*remember ever, you know, really understanding what [was] going on.*"

In her May interview, Helena admitted that in Year 8 she "*was basically translating everything.*" She went on, "*so I wasn't thinking in French ... the words were there and I'd translate them, so I was actually thinking in English.*" The other three students volunteered similar comments about how they used to make sense of what they read or listened to. John explained in an interview why this method was abandoned because it was too difficult:

> *It's hard to read in French when you don't understand what's going on in the book and you're just trying to piece together, translating into English every time in your mind and ... you're reading and then you go 'ah that means this and that means this' it's sort of hard to understand.*

From the learners' comments, it seems that translation of whole passages into English was usually abandoned as a strategy after about a year in immersion.

Using Key Words

The second stage in the development of the learners' techniques for making sense was the use of key words. What the students would do is listen or read for certain words which they recognized as being important in the sentence or paragraph. What are these *key words* and how do the students use them?

Peter said that the key words he listened for were "*the main operating – the main verbs in the sentence, things like that.*" Peter tended to translate what he saw as the key words into English so he could understand the rest of the sentence or paragraph. John explained in the December paired interview, held during the last week of Year 9, that when reading a difficult passage in French he would use the following technique:

> *Well I'd read it over first and then I don't understand a word of it so I have to go back ... the main thing is key words, that's how you find out what's going on ... in the sentence, and you know usually from the sentence before and the sentence be after [sic] you can work out what the middle is? [laughs] that's the only way I figure it out.*

However, in order to use the key words technique, the students needed to already know enough words in a sentence in order to guess at the meaning of the rest.

The learners often spoke about how they had to listen very hard and concentrate in order to make sense of what was going on. Helena said in October that *"if you miss one little thing the rest of the class is completely lost."* In May Peter had noted that *"sometimes if you just let your concentration slip for about a second or so you just about miss the whole thing."* Melissa and John also made comments about needing to concentrate very hard. This stage of using key words seems to have varied from one to several months for the learners involved.

Relax and get the Gist

In the next stage of making sense, the students reported that they were much more relaxed about the whole immersion experience. They had realized that it does not matter if one does not understand every single word, and that they could just relax and try to understand the gist of what they were listening to or reading. In this stage of learning, if learners heard or saw a word they did not know, rather than looking it up in the dictionary or asking their neighbour *"what does that mean?"* they felt comfortable enough with the process to just skip over what they did not understand and guess at the meaning from the context. This is different from the key word strategy in two respects – first, the students understood most of the sentence; there were just one or two words they did not know. Second, rather than translating the words they did not recognize, as in the key word strategy, they would ignore them and guess at the meaning from the context. Melissa described the process as follows:

> *When you're listening to the teacher most people they get what they can and if they don't understand it then, like, just forget it and work out what it is around it, you don't really ... pay much attention to the words.*

Out of Awareness Stage

When the learners had reached this final, *out of awareness stage*, they were not aware of any particular strategies being used to make sense of the input; they simply understand it. Not all of the learners in this study had reached this stage by the end of Year 9. John reported his excitement on the first occasion when things suddenly made sense. *"This year I read something and I understood it and I was – amazed ... oh it*

was great! I mean, yeah, you can understand something and, you know [laughs]." All the learners in the French group reached this stage, for at least some lessons, about two thirds of the way through Year 9 or earlier.

In May, Peter reported that "*I understand more French now. And I don't have to translate as much because I can understand more and more straight off.*" Melissa noticed a difference between her learning strategies in Year 8 and Year 9. "*I used to – like, couldn't live without my dictionary ... but now it's so much easier to, like, read it in French and understand it IN French instead of translating everything even in your head. You just live in French and it's so much easier, much quicker!*" By May, Helena had also found that "*I don't have to translate much, so I can think in French and like I can just write straight back in French most of the time.*"

In summary, clear stages were identified in relation to making sense of input in the classroom:

(1) translation of everything into English;
(2) translation/recognition of key words and guessing at the rest;
(3) ignoring unknown words and relying on the context to understand the gist; and
(4) understanding most things without being aware of any particular strategies.

These French immersion learners seemed to have all reached four stages by the end of Year 9, their second year in immersion.

One of the ways in which the students made sense of their situation was by the use of internalized and egocentric speech *in the foreign language*, and this will be discussed in the next section.

Private Speech – French Takes Over Your Mind

For students in immersion programs, the situation is very real, and very earnest. It is necessary to make sense of the input in order to understand the content of the lessons, and if students do not understand the content of the lessons they will not be successful in the tests. In the Queensland junior high schools where the data were collected, there is a system of continuous school-based assessment, where work is tested at regular intervals, and where every piece of assessment can count towards the Junior Certificate, awarded at the end of Year 10. The immersion students involved in this study *had to* understand the French in order to pass Junior. As Jenny of Year 8 said, "*you might know one part really well, but you've got to learn EVERYTHING really well.*"

As recognized by the students, and discussed in the previous section, translation slows down their learning; the strategy of using translation as a receptive tool is not suited to an immersion situation where one

needs to relax and get the gist. In order to operate *in* the second language they needed to internalize their means of expressing in the second language. This was not just practicing or manipulating form, but *being* in another language.

This use of private speech was first noted in the classroom observations in the third month of the first study. Up until then, observations had concentrated on what was said out loud. When the focus shifted away from what could be *heard* to what could be *seen*, the classroom took on a different aspect.

What had previously seemed (to the ear) to be rows of students listening attentively but passively to what the teacher was saying was transformed into a group of students participating actively, but silently, in the lesson. The extract below is an illustration of what often happens when the teacher asks a question:

Year 9 Science

Teacher: *Avec un front froid et une pression basse, quel temps?*
Student 1: [to self] *Il fait froid.*
Student 2: [to self] *nuages ... poussent.*

Even though only one student answered one of the teacher's questions out loud in French, there were at least two others answering privately in French. Some students also practiced silently in French before they gave their answer out loud, like this:

Student: [to self] *cent quatre-vingt divisé par trois.*
[then she gave her answer out loud]

These are some reasons given by the students for using private speech in this way:

Alex, Year 8: *You say it in your mind because you're afraid to say it out loud because it might be wrong.*

Year 8 Students

Researcher: *And why do you do that? [say it in your head]*
Kerry: *Just to get practice.*

DJ: *To understand what the question says.*

Kerry: *Like, if you get it right, and someone else has answered it right, and you've already said that in your mind, you think, 'oh, gee I'm good!'*

Researcher: *So when you say it to yourself rather than out loud, why do you do that?*

Roger: *So that I'm not doing it for the teacher, I'm doing it for myself, so I'm learning.*

To summarize, the students gave four main reasons for answering silently rather than out loud:

(1) For positive reinforcement of one's own answer;
(2) To avoid losing face by calling out a potentially wrong answer;
(3) To make sense of the question itself;
(4) To get more practice in using the language.

Teachers are not often aware that students are answering to themselves, and can wrongly accuse students of not participating. I noted myself, after stepping out of the observer's role to take a class for one lesson, because the teacher had lost her voice, that the classroom appears very different to someone teaching the class than it does to an uninvolved observer. One is only really aware of those students who bid for one's attention, and not of the others who may be participating silently.

I made notes during observation of examples of the type of situation described here by one of the students:

Charlene, Year 8: *Sometimes I know an answer and I'll say it in my head ... but somebody that is really good ... will yell it out before you've had a chance and then the teacher thinks that you're not participating because you're not answering any questions, but you are!*

However, as stated above, the use of private speech in the classroom extends further than merely answering questions privately and practicing. Students also give themselves instructions, as in the example below:

Year 9 girl, Science: *Alors, je fais samedi.*
[telling herself which day she has to write a weather report]

They also give themselves verbal pats on the back, as in this example:

Year 8 Mathematics

Girl: [to self] *La réponse est bonne.*
Boy: *C'est fini.* [to self on finishing the exercise]

Sometimes students also have a joke to themselves in French, about something the teacher has said, as in the example below:

Year 9 Science

Teacher: *Le gel, qu'est-ce que c'est?*
Boy: [to self] *C'est pour les cheveux!* [chuckles at his pun on *gel* (frost/hair gel)]

Even outside the context of the immersion classroom, students cannot stop from talking to themselves in French. Many of the students reported that French just took over their minds and kept popping out when they least expected it. Some kept up an almost continuous conversation with themselves in the second language. Sometimes, like the girls in the extracts below, students are conscious of doing this:

Year 9 students

Amanda: *It's just like, you're trying to say something about the netball game to yourself and it comes out in French, and you think 'what is this?' it just comes ... like in Grade Eight when you're really new to it, it just, once you know a bit, it just keeps on popping into your mind.*
Caroline: *Working out in your mind because you've done so much of it, and like, trying to figure it out.*
Helena: *Sometimes if I'm um thinking something then I'll like – for some reason I'll just like translate it in my head, like I'll translate whatever I just thought or whatever, I sometimes do that.*

However, most of the time, students are not consciously aware of the fact that their internal conversations are proceeding in French. Students generally become aware of this phenomenon by accident, when they go to speak or write in English and the wrong language comes out. The extract below shows the students discussing this phenomenon with the researcher:

Year 10 students

Nicole: *Yeah, I find myself just coming out and saying things; like I asked a friend who's not in immersion the other day – I said «Quelle heure est-il?» instead of 'what time is it? You just get used to it. You say «oui» or «non» to people in shops and you go, 'hang on here!'*

It was interesting to note that the students do not see this as thinking in French, as revealed in their answer to my next question:

Year 10 students

Researcher: *Are there lots of times when you find that you're thinking in French when you're not in the classroom?*

John: *No*

Dominique: *You don't think in French; I just come out and say it without meaning to.*

Even when students make a conscious effort *not* to speak French, it is so much a part of them that they cannot avoid its use, as this student explains:

Year 8 student

Max: *There was one stage where I picked up the phone and I was about to say «Bonjour» into it, and like, we had a weekend off once where [our teacher] said 'No French' and I kept on ... like a word would be said or something and I'd think*

of it in French ... so I'm going, 'get this out of my brain!'

As Melissa (Year 9) said in one of her interviews, she would not be aware of thinking in French because *"I wouldn't realize it because I was thinking it."* Then, her next sentence indicated that she must think in French sometimes because *"you don't realize that you're speaking it until someone goes – 'what?' so you don't really realize that you're thinking [in French]."*

During a paired interview two Year 9 boys were asked about talking to themselves in French, and provided more examples:

Peter:	*Once I played basketball in the back yard and just commentated on the game in French*
Researcher:	*mm mm?*
Peter:	*But that's about it.*
Researcher:	*Yeah. And what have you done, John?*
John:	*What you just said? Basically. Can't remember when, but you know, I know exact – sort of moments when you've done it like you know. When you're, trying to learn a bit and you just sort of, think of it in French instead of English.*

Discussion

The most important language learning experience discussed by the students was the process of making sense of input. All the learners seemed to follow a similar pattern of development, though not all had reached the final stage observed by the end of their second school year in late partial immersion. The pattern was that learners started by trying to translate everything they heard. Then they would focus on key words. Next they would relax and try to understand to gist of the input. The final stage was an *out of awareness* understanding of the input.

As noted in the section on translation as a receptive strategy, translation was officially frowned on by the teaching staff in these programs, and, as discussed in Chapter 3 of de Courcy (2002), not even encouraged by the students. However, the first stage they all went through, usually silently, in their heads, was that of using translation of what they were hearing into their first language as a means of understanding it. Teachers in bilingual settings, who share a common language with the students they are teaching, have been observed to

check their students' understanding of words by having them translate them into the other language (Hornberger, 1990, p. 224) and teachers in the programs I researched have also been observed to do this occasionally in the interests of efficiency.

However, it is not often acknowledged that, even though the *teachers* in immersion programs do not usually translate, the *students* certainly do. Researchers such as Cohen (1994, 1998) and Kern (1994) are also finding the use of large amounts of translation as a receptive strategy by the immersion and other foreign language students with whom they work. Cohen noted that one of the skills immersion students develop is that of being extremely rapid mental translators (personal communication, July 1996).

Readers will have realized that the key word stage also involved translation on the part of the learners, though of individual words that were seen as important to aid understanding of the whole, rather than the exhausting process of translating *everything*. An interesting topic for future explorations in immersion programs would be how students identify what are the key words that need to be decoded in order for them to understand. What is it about an individual word in a flow of talk that students think they can identify as being key.

Similarly, once students relax and get the gist, *which* gist is it that they get? Is it the same gist that the teacher was aiming for them to understand? Or have they relaxed too far and developed incorrect understandings of the content delivered via the target language? Some answers to these questions can be found through error or miscue analysis or test item difficulty analysis, as we did in our work in children's understandings of word problems in mathematics tests in a French partial immersion program in Melbourne (de Courcy & Burston, 2000), but the area is worthy of further exploration using a variety of approaches.

I believe it is important for immersion teachers and students to be aware of what these students have experienced, so that all can have some insight into the process of learning in immersion. It is particularly important for students to see how necessary it is to abandon the translation stages as quickly as possible if they wish to reach the relax and get the gist or the out of awareness stages.

Also revealed was the students' use of private speech. Vygotsky (1962) states that there are four stages in the development of speech. The first is the "primitive or natural stage" (p. 46) which corresponds to "pre-intellectual speech and pre-verbal thought." The second stage he calls "naive psychology," and during this phase the child uses correct

grammatical forms without really understanding the reasons for them. The third phase is that where the child "uses external aids for the solution of internal problems" (p. 47). In this stage we see the child counting on fingers and talking to him or herself out loud; so-called "egocentric speech."

Interesting research into the role of private speech in the acquisition of a second language by primary school *children* was conducted by Saville-Troike (1987). However, the studies reported in the current paper have revealed that, even for *adolescents*, internalized speech plays a crucial role in language acquisition. It should be noted that the immersion students involved in the research reported here have passed through the egocentric stage of linguistic development in their first language and would no longer be expected to use vocalised private speech. They have reached Vygotsky's fourth stage, which has the most relevance for this research and is called the "ingrowth stage." As Vygotsky states:

> The external operation turns inward and undergoes a profound change in the process. The child begins to count in his head, to use 'logical memory,' that is, to operate with inherent relationships and inner signs. In speech development this is the final stage of inner, soundless speech. There remains a constant interaction between outer and inner operations, one form effortlessly and frequently changing into the other and back again. Inner speech may come very close in form to outer speech or even become exactly like it when it serves as a preparation for external speech. (1962, p. 47)

It is in this turning inwards that students start to make sense of the new language; the internalising is a signal that they are starting to make sense of the world through the new language; it becomes part of their way of being in the world.

This internal speech as reported by the students is much more than just rehearsal, or practicing form (Chapman Parr & Krashen, 1986). The students talk to themselves about whatever activity they are engaged in, they have conversations with imaginary people, they create new sentences, and tell jokes to themselves. The internal conversation that people constantly carry out in their heads goes on in French for these immersion students. It is more than just getting more input – it is a non-threatening way of producing output and a way of making sense of what is happening to them in the classroom.

However, private speech is not just used by children. John-Steiner (1992) researched the use of private speech among adults and found that adults use thinking out loud for a variety of purposes. Examples given are self-regulation, labeling, procedural, planning, and

generative/creative purposes. Frawley and Lantolf (1985) found that adults learning a second language were notable users of thinking aloud for self-regulation. This is a fertile ground for further exploration of students' experiences of becoming bilingual and the history of research using sociocultural theory and the most recent developments are described by Lantolf (2000), who is currently using innovative techniques to explore the use of (vocalised) private speech by adult foreign language learners.

During discussion of these issues, it has become apparent that all the learners do not approach each task or experience in the same way. Research implications are that there is still much to be learned about what goes on in immersion classrooms. Much could also be learned about learning processes in regular, non-immersion classrooms through explorations following the framework used for this study.

NOTES

1. In Australia, official documents use the term "Year" rather than "grade," and this convention will be followed by the author in this paper. However, the *students* sometimes use the term "grade."

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