

# Masters in ICT and Education

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Social Networking to Improve Conversation in Secondary
Modern Foreign Languages
The El Alsson French Connection – The 'FC'

Approximately, **6,273** words, (Minus Index, Figures, Appendix, References/Quotations)

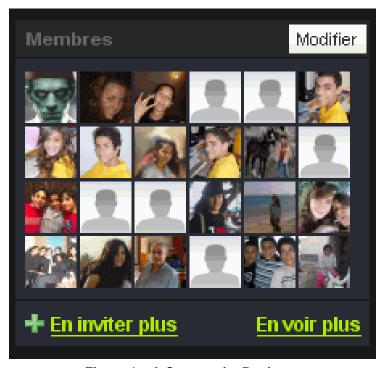
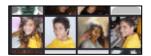


Figure 1 – A Community Begins...



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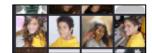


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# **Abbreviations**

- HoD Head of Department
- SMT Senior Management Team
- VLE/LMS Virtual Learning Environment/ Learning Management System
- OSN Online Social Network
- GCSE General Certificate of Secondary Education
- AS General Certificate Education Advanced Subsidiary Level
- KS3, KS4 and KS5 are stages of study in the British National Curriculum for 10-14, 14-16 and 16-18 year olds respectively
- Wi-Fi Wireless Fidelity giving the ability for computers to connect and transmit data wirelessly
- ICT Information Communication Technology
- MFL Modern Foreign Languages
- CMC Computer Mediated Communication
- L2 Second Language
- API Application Programming Interface which allows external programmers to add code to a different application
- DOPA Deleting Online Predators Act of 2006
- TES Times Educational Supplement
- SMS Short Message Service e.g. texting on a mobile phone
- RSS Really Simple Syndication, a way of automatically taking chunks of information and content from a site to another
- VoIP Voice over Internet Protocol is a system to allow phone conversations over the internet
- PLE Personal Learning Environment
- MySQL An open source relational database management system that uses Structured Query Language
- PHP Hypertext Preprocessor, a scripting language that connects databases dynamically to website pages
- FC French Connection name of the online social network created
- AJAX Asynchronous JavaScript and XML is a scripting language that enables highly interactive websites that often do not need to refresh their site pages for this interactivity
- TESOL Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages
- EABIS El Alsson British International School
- SEN Special Educational Needs





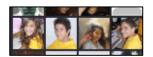
# 1 Abstract

The premise of this research after discussion with the MFL department at EABIS, Cairo was to explore ways of integrating ICT within L2 teaching that could promote conversation to maximise language practice using the target language of French.

The French department is very established within the school; with two teachers in the *British* Section for the last five years and two in the *American/National* Section. The department has been successful academically at *GCSE* and *AS* Level; with 100% A-C grades over the last two years and has grown in popularity with class sizes at KS4/5 rising steadily. The department has used little ICT due to the lack of resources available and a worry that a successful academic formula should not be changed. ICT around the school has improved with new dedicated ICT suites, Wi-Fi areas and use of online tools including a VLE within certain subjects; however the MFL department has remained traditional without the internet, relevant hardware or ICT integration.

The research investigated the teachers' views on ICT use within L2 teaching and explored a variety of ideas on how these might be implemented. The use of an OSN was chosen for the iniative and the general principles of integration were discussed leading to a scheme of work being produced and an OSN was created enabling teaching and learning outcomes to be practically examined.

In conclusion the research found that the use of social networking technologies within a language learning situation at secondary level has many



features that enable conversation in a L2. As one student pertinently said '...[i]t makes speaking French a habit and easy to learn." However teachers must include such technologies as an integral part of their teaching pedagogy to see real benefits in terms of L2 acquisition. The schools themselves must look to integrate online social tools throughout the curriculum for these tools to be naturally successful. The iniative encountered problems that in the future need careful thought including: - time of use; variety of groups used to create network; globalising the groups to enable real exchanges to happen and an in-depth social network analysis of the conversations that do occur in the L2, so as to diagnose benefits and student progression.

### 2 Research

After consultation with the MFL department, they answered a questionnaire on their views of ICT use within MFL teaching and discussed appropriate ICT tools and applications (Appendix 6.11) that might be used to enhance L2 acquisition within their class.

#### 2.1.1 Teachers Interview and Questionnaire

Initial discussion with the HoD indicated a willingness to experiment with technology; especially in finding ways that ICT could enhance practice of vocabulary and conversation outside the classroom. She expressed that the use of technology yielded one main promise, as a motivating force with students, but expressed deep reservations that ideas such as use of multimedia took time and



organisation which most stakeholders including the SMT and the school in general would not support sufficiently.

All teachers agreed that they would like to use ICT within lessons, seeing that '...students are keen to use ICT especially the Internet it is very motivating."

One teacher noted that the '...interactivity on a computer could be more attractive..." and so motivate more reluctant L2 learners by giving them personal attention and individual practice. The opinion that ICT was mainly an add-on for students, '...to catch up the level in an attractive way, ICT could help as support lessons could. But a special program should be recommended by the [ICT coordinator] for each student." This was agreed by most teachers who had used ICT solely as a bonus tool within their existing teaching practice.

Language lessons generally followed a traditional pedagogy, where the teacher acted as the focal point to promote conversations, which was admitted to lead to issues when '...students are more than 10, [as] it is really difficult to get them all involved in a conversation." The idea that technology could alleviate this issue of 'one-to-many' discussions was interesting to the teachers, as the idea of maximising practice is considered so important. To become fluent in a L2 a learner must move their language recall from declarative memory to procedural memory so that the speaking of a language becomes seemingly automatic:'The proceduralisation of linguistic knowledge is the most important factor in the development of fluency in...second language learners...'vi (Towell, 1996, quoted in Macedonia, 2005, pg136)



Within a secondary system however students will study up to 10 different subjects with French lessons accounting for only 200 minutes<sup>1</sup> a week. This contrasts with the most practical way of acquiring fluency in a L2 is to live and work/study in the respective country so that "....in an environment of total immersion 'language learning happens when you are doing something else." (Roe quoted in Brun, 2000, pg 261) Proceduralisation is difficult without this informal practice outside of a pressured classroom and so '.....learners fail to recall vocabulary, sentence formation takes too long...All this leads to inhibitions rather than speaking!" (Macedonia, 2005, pg135)

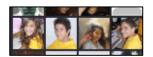
Concern was also shown for the oral and conversational aspect of their students' progression suggesting that '...some students would benefit from practicing using ICT tools."

It was interesting to note that when speaking to different teachers from the departments' three sections how they felt isolated from each other in terms of teaching and possibilities of group collaboration. It was acknowledged that '...older students helping younger students..." could motivate students and spread understanding around the department and also allowing collaboration between '...different classes at the same level could be interesting, to make them communicate." Ideas suggested that maybe this sort of cross-group interaction would be positive for students to participate in for homework to help language confidence and '...build steps for the next lesson."

Mixed with the positive nature of my discussion there was a level of sceptism about how much time such ICT initiatives took and so reduce 'real'

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> 200 minutes translates as:- 4\*50 minute periods for KS3 per week, 5\*50 minute periods for KS4 per week, and 6\*50 minutes of KS5 per week



language teaching. When taking students to one of the dedicated ICT suites to access the internet the process was time consuming both physically and in terms of organisation and so often only considered as a treat rather than as part of normal curricular activity.

All teachers when questioned focused on the '...lack of equipment...'\*iii within the department as a major problem, stating that '...students should have access to ICT and [the] 'net' in the MFL classrooms."\*IV Teachers also often lacked support but if technically supported the idea of students publishing and recording role-plays was considered an excellent idea.

One teacher expressed a simple sense of fear of using technology and even though eager to participate simply said: - 'I have always fought against the use of technology.\*\* It was obvious that a great deal of support would be needed to alleviate these fears related to time, teaching style, resources and organisation, if any iniative was to be a positive experience for teachers.

# 2.2 Developing the Idea

The main iniative limitation was time, as allowing for planning it could only last three weeks including implementation, due to a heavy workload at the end of the academic year. It was apparent that the teachers needed something that would work across a variety of groups, which would maximise oral/written conversation practice and would not impinge on end of year student examinations. Of all ideas one that could fulfill the above criteria and motivate students to communicate was to use an OSN. Social networking is one of many social computing tools that have developed over the last few years including: -



social bookmarks<sup>2</sup>, weblogs<sup>3</sup> and wikis<sup>4</sup> which allow all users to easily create, mix, comment, share and publish content. They can be described simply as "...the application of computer technology to facilitate collaboration." (Levitz. 2007, pg1) in intuitive and accessible ways.

After initial reservations, and only when the concepts of social networking were shown through a working prototype was the idea accepted. Its flexibility was important, allowing for as much conversation based activities as the MFL teachers decided to organise for independent practice and within lessons. Revision tasks, including the ability to record and embed role-play videos, for the end of the year examination was considered an advantage and would allow viewing from home. It was decided that three groups would be involved in the project; two from Year 9<sup>5</sup> and one from Year 10<sup>6</sup>.

### 2.2.1 Students Questionnaire

This questionnaire (Appendix6.12) was designed to discover students' understanding of social networking tools and how they viewed using an OSN for learning. Over 76% of students (Fig2) were part of an OSN, and most had settled on Facebook as their main networking tool. The speed of Facebook's growth around the school has been phenomenal; inline with recent statistics from technology site Valleywag that shows Facebook is now over 17 million users<sup>xvii</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> years old students on the first year of their GCSE course



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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Social bookmarking websites like del.icio.us encourage users to save and publish their bookmarks remotely for all to

share and search

3 Weblogs are primarily described as online journals or diaries whose entries are placed in date order; most services are free and have brought web publishing to the masses using applications like Blogger.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Wikis are simply websites that can be edited by anyone to allow the bringing together of knowledge through collaboration, most famously shown through Wikipedia.

<sup>14</sup> years old students, finishing the third year of their KS3 course - only some students would decide to continue their L2 studies next year



As primary research I joined Facebook, to see what were the main features used and how this network enabled successful (Fig3) communication was impressive to see how quickly a network of *friends*<sup>7</sup> grew both locally with current students and globally with past friends/students. Students were not only leaving messages but also asking studybased questions related to courses that I teach which showed that the

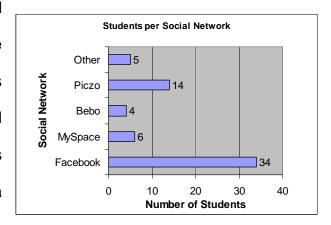


Figure 3 – Facebook comes out on top...



Figure 2 – Dr Tech's avatar....

network seemed appropriate for communication regarding work as well as for socialisation. This made me question how students would understand when '...it is appropriate to network for socialisation purposes and when to use social sharing for purposes of learning and work.'\* (Hooft, 2007, pg4) Would it be possible for students that logon to an OSN daily, to manage to use such a network for both learning and socialising:-

'Clearly lives that revolve around computers, where one's productivity and one's access to information are funneled through a single device that's always on, might find a more wired process of converting information to knowledge more convenient... (Stevens, 2006, pg7)

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> The term *friends* within a social network generally means acquaintances more than deeper connotations of the word



The main features<sup>8</sup> in Facebook were: - a chatter-wall for public conversations; a profile page with personal details; a photo-sharing and uploading tool; the ability to choose friends; the capacity to alter privacy permissions and a home-page with personalised layout.

students Not all were participating in an OSN, with 24% either deciding to not participate or their parents banning their use. Interestingly nine male compared to female two students were not participating, even though the male/female (Fig7) student ratio was even, suggesting the design of an OSN must be thought about carefully to ensure the tool facilitated learning for each gender. When asked about the definition of an OSN, students confused with were over 18% struggling to explain what a network does (Fig6), however one student understood the collaborative potential of a network where '... all year groups

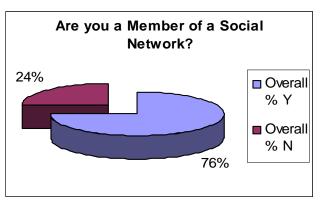


Figure 4 – Not everyone participates...

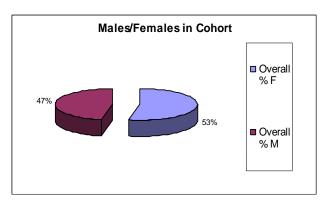


Figure 6 - Male, female ratio equal...

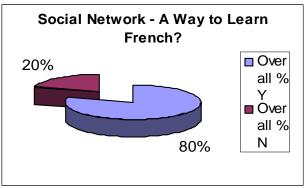


Figure 5 - Agreement it could work...

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Facebook's' tools continue to expand with a recent publication of their API which will lead to many more applications that could relate not only to socialising but learning and education



are involved and everyone would learn from each other. "xx

Students were less than ethusiastic about an OSN being used for homework but still 69% (Fig8) of students suggested that they would not mind. A more positive response of 80% (Fig5) suggested that students agreed that a social network would be a *fun* way to help to learn and converse in French. One student noted that '... [I]t helps us to use language more often. It would help us pronounce words." This correlation, between using technology and its fun motivational value is agreed by both students and teachers.

I had been surprised by the openness of students allowing me into their Facebook network, but the responses about homework may suggest that a students' attitude to a network being only for fun might inhibit its educational potential. Could it be invading their virtual space if it became part of school and learning as some college campus students have stated vigorously, and might this be a

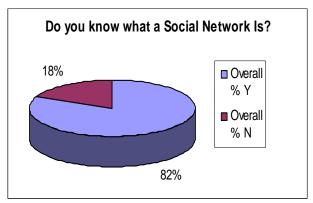


Figure 7 – A little confusing...

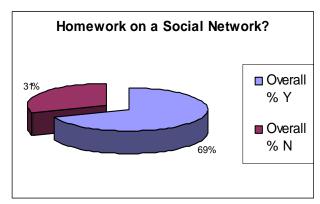
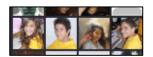


Figure 8 – Students kind of agreed...

reason to leave such a commercial network alone:-

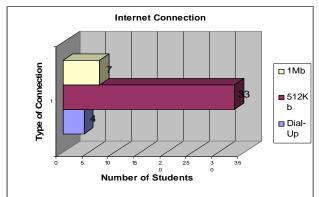
"Don't bother with IM or Facebook - that's our way to network. Leave us alone." (Student quoted in Berg, 2007, pg34)



Views on use of video technologies were again broadly positive with 69% suggesting they would like to use audio/video to help them learn with students realising the possibility of multimedia saying '… [w]e can watch what we do, and change our mistakes."

Finally an important question was to address the equality of access to the internet. Without a fast connection any use of multimedia or AJAX based networks would be difficult to support. Most students had ADSL Broadband,

while four had dial-up<sup>9</sup>, and only one (Fig9) had no connection at all. In discussion with this student it was because the family had values that disagreed with the free surfing of



the internet and email use. The Figure 9 - ADSL all the way...

speed issue needed to be considered especially as the schools' connection was only 512kb/s for over 100 computers. This might lead to problems if all students wanted to connect to content heavy sites as discussed. Further thought would need to be given to the schools internet filter which although not pervasive did ban such social sites as Flickr, Facebook and YouTube.

### 2.3 Literature Review

It was notable that many Web 2.0<sup>10</sup> applications use in education had received a great deal of academic review but social networking had received less

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Dial-Up connection via phone line would usually be a speed of 56kb/s

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Web 2.0 – There are many definitions, but in general it refers to the use of online tools that allow for participation and the users have ultimate control over content



consideration. Research that had been undertaken generally focused on future possibilities of the use of social networking from either a *'technocentric'\*xxiv'* (*Papert, 1987, pg2*) or opposite technophobic viewpoint. I therefore widened my research into five sections, to gain a greater overall understanding of networks/communities in education and L2 learning:-

- Online social networking rise
- Commercial networks in education
- Technology and social learning in a L2
- Multiliteracies and mediated public spaces
- Effective learning communities

### 2.3.1 The Rise of Online Social Networking

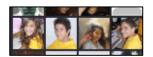
An online survey by the NSPCC<sup>11</sup> showing that 1071 out of 2053 UK children used a social networking website every day<sup>xxv</sup>. The survey found the two main reasons for young people to use social networking sites were '...making new friends (1824)...' and '...[c]onnecting to friends I already know (1630).' Other statistics suggest that even more than '...70% of online 16-24 year olds have used social networking sites, 'xxvi (Ofcom quoted in Twist, 2007, pg30) which correlates with our students' responses.

An OSN simply follows and organises what we as a gregarious species like to do, socialise and this is what attracts and pulls us in to these commercial networks. A network which is '...organised around passion, interest, family, curiosity, etc,' can allow us to '...come together, facilitated by technology,'xxvii

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El Alsson French Connection...

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> NSPCC – The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children



(Boyd, 2007, pg9). Facebook's marketing pushes this ideal saying it has '... developed technologies that facilitate the spread of information through social networks, allowing people to share information online the same way they do in the real world." (Facebook quoted in Thompson, 2007, pg1) To develop a social based website in which conversation is the main aim would seem an excellent proposal for learning French, the advantage being that it will promote conversation practice in an instinctive way that pulls students into a virtual social space, without seeming to be part of their learning.

#### 2.3.2 Social Networks in Education

El Alsson French Connection...

Social networking has met resistance from education and school authorities. Many schools have banned social websites including networks due to the dangers that have been associated with them. In the USA the DOPA act was passed which specifically targets and filters the use of these technologies within schools. New technologies always have dangers surrounding them but it is important to ask if education should teach their ethical and positive uses rather than making schools outdated simply ... by denying access in school to technologies that students find useful and meaningful."XXIX (Johnson, 2007, pg64) Kohman argues the main issue is not with the OSN itself but "...the amount of time that is actually used for school work as compared to personal use on the Internet,' (Kohman, 2006, pg2) and this should be within an educational remit to help students effectively organise their time. This assignments hypothesis is not to discuss these dangers, but to look productively at what positive effects could

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happen if schools try to '...implement these types of virtual communities in the curriculum.'\*xx (Kohman, 2006, pg7)

Some schools and educational establishments rather than '...missing an opportunity to capitalise on their students' involvement with these sites... '\*\*

(Thompson, 2007, pg2) have already decided to benefit from collaborative learning communities. These schools made the decision that '...[s]chools are by definition learning communities, \*\*

(Oren, 2000, pg145) that collaborate through face-2-face communication but are often '...place and time dependant. \*\*

2000, pg145) Within schools there are many pod-like classes working in isolation without the tools necessary to collaborate comprehensively across the many boundaries that exist of time, group, class, age, subject etc. Schools like the SLA 12 in Philadelphia are trying to integrate social tools within the curriculum so students '... are learning how to use social-networking tools to forge intellectual connections. \*\*

Connec

Schools that are defying the trend are interested to suggest that the '...conversational exchanges in which today's students have become so fluent outside class are the best way to deliver learning inside it.' (Andrews, 2007) A recent article agrees with this idea and led to our proposal of using an OSN within a MFL environment. The author discusses her worries about what her '...teenage daughter [is] doing at the computer four hours a day, every day, when she should be writing to her French exchange pal.' xxxvi (Sharmalast, 2006, pg1)

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Science Leadership Academy in Philadelphia



She argues however that such a traditional teacher-led exchange is cumbersome and her daughter has never been in touch with her associated pen-pal but using social technology is already conversing with other French students on MySpace. The immediacy of communication that students are now using means they '...will find their own way to international partnerships...' \*\*xxvii\* (Sharmalast, 2006, pg1)\* rather than wait for an artificially planned exchange. The recent Horizon report 13 goes further suggesting the educational possibilities are far reaching:-

'Students learning another language can join a community in that language, where they will be exposed to conversational and colloquial reading and writing, learn about daily life, and establish friendships with native speakers. 'XXXVIII (NMC, 2007, pg13)

As such an OSN can not only provide practice but will lead to contemporary ways of communicating within the language. The possibility of social networks within education is apparent but virtual communities are not new, so beyond the *technocentric* viewpoint can they actually help with students communicating and learning in a L2 at school?

# 2.3.3 Modern Foreign Languages and Social Learning

The MFL department uses a social but teacher led style inherent to traditional methods of learning to communicate in a L2. However could this integrate with ideas of using an OSN, with its lack of teacher control and focus on student-to-student communication? Ideas of the importance of social and cultural aspects of education started with Vygotsky who states '... [e]very function in the

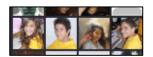
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> New Media Consortiums' yearly review of future technologies



child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level." (Vygotsky, 1978, p57) This was built upon by Krashen's idea of L2 acquisition in which importance is placed on the social aspect and the people around each learner who are close in their '...zone of proximal development...' (Vygotsky, 1978) will help to scaffold each others language learning:-

'[L]anguage acquisition takes place during human interaction in an environment of the foreign language when the learner receives language 'input' that is one step beyond his/her current stage of linguistic competence.' (Schütz, 2004)<sup>xl</sup>

This would support ideas of '... less structured and more natural, communicative and experiential approaches and points to the importance of early real-world human interaction in foreign language learning." (Schütz, 2004) Translating this practically into a classroom with KS3/4 students is however more challenging with issues of discipline, support and off-task behaviour being priorities. When informally observing French lessons most of the interaction followed this traditional teacher-to-learner model, mainly through questions and answers followed by a set of exercises to backup students' language acquisition. This limited the practice that any learner received and it makes perfect sense '...that learners' have more opportunities both to speak and to negotiate in peer interactive settings than they do in teacher fronted settings.' (Kitade, 2000, pg144) Promoting this learner-to-learner interaction in a way which maximises practice, within socially useful situations would be an excellent addition to their MFL lessons. With only one teacher in the classroom, the use of technology as a



tool which promotes conversation between peers could be a solution to both teacher workload and student independence. The extra time that students will receive through *peer-to-peer* conversation may yield other benefits such as supporting the weaker students and allowing those less confident in speaking to practice in their L2:-

'Students who are reticent in class may find an online discussion area the perfect place to discuss class topics. \*\(\text{\sigma}\) (Horton, 2000, pg1)

The teachers recognised these issues but reiterated their concerns that difficulties with time, class size, resources and monitoring *peer-to-peer* interaction would need considerable planning. If an OSN is linked with class based activities then it could be used as a means of bringing *peer-to-peer* conversation to a group or maybe more importantly a network of students outside the classroom. If the network built a body of knowledge that could be interacted with, it could also be monitored to assess specific learning objectives:-

'This conversation forms a rich tapestry of resources, dynamic and interconnected, created not only by experts, but by all members of the community, including learners.' (Downes, 2007, pg20)

The environment should promote 'natural communication' without pressure or perceived formal assessments '...in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding.\*\*

(Krashen quoted in Schütz, 2006)



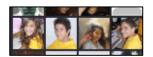
Within MFL teaching, practice through behaviourist <sup>14</sup> activities was considered a way to proceduralise a L2 but recently a stance has been taken in which '... learning by doing, and learning to meet the demands of doing in specific contexts, to solve immediate problems together, (Kramsch, 1999, pg13)<sup>x/v</sup> is considered most important. Participating in an OSN is very much a way of doing, a way of constructing so that the student can '... share what they are learning or to build something together online. <sup>x/v/i</sup> (Yalsa, 2006, pg2) Most social networks have a 'my profile' or 'my homepage' in which networkers add content, change themes and control their conversations. Beyond this, social networkers can add videos/photos, weblog posts, forum conversations which build into a repository of practice and understanding. It is important to realise however that building such a practical network of language learning cannot be disassociated from the technology itself and its complex forms of communication.

#### 2.3.4 Multiliteracies and the Wider Picture

Technology and language learning cannot be taken in isolation, but as cultural tools and integral parts of a society's communication; they can be seen as "...an extension of the environment in which we think and communicate," (Constanzo, 1992, pg21) where '... [a]II tools carry social meaning, reflecting social value and practices. KIVIII (Murray, 2000, pg 54) Technology has changed how society communicates and the complexity of this communication. Think of how a structured written formal letter has been superseded with communication through e-mail, SMS, VoIP and other CMC. Negotiating these complex media

<sup>14</sup> A style of learning which favours repetitive activities like drill and practice to train students

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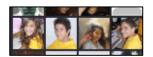


can be considered part of being literate in today's world. Warschauer discusses how in fact the nature of language teaching is changing, where a '...rapid diffusion of information and communication technology (ICT) is shifting the goal posts of what it means to be a competent language user. (Warschauer, 2002, pg5) The language skills needed are entangled with the changing skills that are necessary to be a citizen in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century where '...technology in TESOL is best understood not only as a tool for language learning, but also more broadly as a tool for individual and societal development. (Warschauer, 2002, pg1)

The use of an OSN is maybe part of these literacies that are needed in the global workplace, so as '.... e-mail has become an additional mode in people's linguistic repertoire," (Murray, 2000, pg54) online social networking and its complex modes of communication will do the same. Such sites as LinkedIn are social networks that link work associates around the world and have a particular set of social rules that can be difficult to negotiate in a correct manner:-

These broader competencies and aptitudes will increasingly become requirements on a par with socio-cultural and multi-plurilingualism to constitute more versatile language skills needed in an era of merging international economies and of information technology. (Brun, 2000, pg254)

In a professional network the communication will relate to the expectations that workers place upon it so '... [j]ust like journalists, participants in social network sites imagine their audience and speak according to the norms they perceive to be generally accepted.' (Boyd, 2007, pg3) In a virtual space these norms are difficult to understand so a conversation between students privately on their



chatterwall could use abbreviations and slang in their L2, as between friends this is a valid form of communication. Whereas communication by students in their profile, or postings to the front-page needs to change to a formal style both in grammar and vocabulary. These levels of audience within virtual spaces are confusing for almost all participants, as how many of them understand the privacy settings within their social networks.

The idea of mediated public spaces is in fact so new that students and teachers alike need to '...learn how to navigate this world with no walls. 'liii (Boyd, 2007, pg10) The fact that these spaces are so intangible can be a problem for students who do not understand the basic principles that underpin these networks: - Persistence of content in which whatever is placed online stays online; Searchability and the fact that whatever you do can be found; Replicability in that what you do can be copied and remixed and that there are Invisible audiences able to look in. Iiv The idea of using a social network for learning French will have many underlying educational reasons of which one will show students in a controlled way that what they publish online should take into account the above principles so that they can communicate not only in their L2 but also in an appropriate way.

# 2.3.5 Effective Virtual Learning Communities

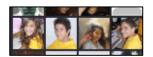
It is vital to understand why certain learning communities successfully flourish and promote learning and discussion and others fail. Significant research has centred on the fact that social networks deal with many voluntary users from different groups that form expansive networks. Siemens suggests '...[o]ur



education system is based on groups...but it should be based on networks. Groups don't scale, and the urge to focus and move a group forward in one direction results in marginalizing certain voices in order to pursue the "common good". (Siemens, 2006) This definition however leaves little for secondary education and the success of a social network for language acquisition. When planning the system we decided that if the network was only one group/class, the network and so conversation would suffer. So the decision to use three isolated groups/classes allowed for a greater network effect; in which students could choose their own friends and discussions.

Our learning community would also have limitations in participants being forced rather than voluntarily joining and being controlled to an extent by their administrators/teachers. The success of the network in fulfilling the MFL departments' objectives is most important and through careful observation it is hoped to see how these limitations related to control and group dynamics would affect its success.

It is important that we also differentiate between an OSN for *fun* and one in which learning *must* also take place. The parameters and needs might at first seem similar but need careful consideration. Oren considers that there are three main dimensions to mark a network as a successful learning community: - *Technological, Social* and *Pedagogical*. Ivi The community needs a space created by the technology in which the community'... visitors should feel as if she/he were "going inside" or "being there". Ivii (Oren, 2000, pg147) If students are pulled into the environment rather than being *pushed* to attend, the level of conversation



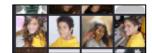
and use will feel more natural. For example a community should have '... specific private corners for individual activity..." (Oren, 2000, pg148) so that ideas of personal space and conversation can prosper. If students feel they belong to the network with sufficient features and virtual room to keep participants interested they will enthusiastically return time and again:-

'The feeling of being in a spacious place, which includes different 'attractions', is important for promoting frequent visits and social interaction." (Oren, 2000, pg148)

Socially the students should feel that their '... [m]embership in a community or network needs to mean something. (Cormier, 2007) Even though the social network they will be using is a required part of the course if students have specific roles and responsibilities they will feel a sense of duty to the network and community. Teachers must therefore not dominate but only guide the students to accommodate this.

We felt within our OSN that even though we would have to take the administrative role, that the rules of conversation and content building would be relaxed and focus on the one issue that all public conversation must be in the L2. Pedagogically it is important to follow '...pedagogic approaches which require that learners' e-learning systems be under the control of the learners themselves."

(Mark van Harmelen quoted in Downes, pg20) Students will have control over themeing, conversation, friends, content uploads and much more. The networks' success will depend on the frequency of visits that students make and this would rely on both the social, pedagogical and technological aspects of the network.



# 3 Implementation

# 3.1 Design Rationale

The scheme followed the ideas of Wengers' structure on how to build a successful 'community of practice lxii' following three stages: - community, domain and practical phase (Wenger quoted in Noakes, 2005, pg2.) The community phase would involve students familiarising themselves with the network by joining, socialising and navigating within it. The domain phase would allow the students to fulfill content/language vocabulary areas. The practical phase would then involve the free-flow of conversation prompted by teacher input, but also by set tasks to build areas of content.

scheme for the three weeks was left as flexible as possible. As suggested earlier student control of the OSN was important and it must not appear similar to the VLE<sup>15</sup> some students are using in which the teacher has absolute control and the students follow set path to prescribed content. As suggested by Downes this "...one size fits all

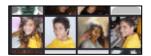


Figure 10 - The FC in all its glory...

approach characteristic of the LMS will not be sufficient to meet the varied needs

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<sup>15</sup> Students at the school that also took Business Studies or ICT would be using a Moodle VLE as a structured course guide and content repository



of the students. Ixiv (Downes, 2007, pg20) With argument all teachers agreed that this '...multi-faceted and chaotic...' (Siemens, 2006, pg1) lxv learning approach was the most shrewd for the open learning aims. Teachers however expressed reservations that students especially those with SEN would not succeed in helping each others language learning in such an open environment.

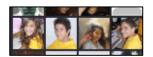
### 3.2 Social Network choice

#### 3.2.1 Features Needed

My research suggested that the OSN must be as flexible and fully featured as the commercial networks to motivate students, as well having the security/ online safety features that would be necessary for it to be accepted by school, parents and teachers. The teachers mentioned two additional features that they felt **must** be included for the OSN to fulfill their objectives: - all menus and communication to be in French and all teachers to be able to take an equal administrative role so as to spread the discussion workload. The choice of networking tool was from: - commercial networks, web-based private networks or an open-source server based network.

#### 3.2.1.1 Online Social Network Chosen

Ning is an online application created so that individual users can quickly build their OSN controlling all elements and features. Control of the network is based with the administrator setting up the site and allows for the network to be private and only joined through invitation. There are a few significant disadvantages in that the space for file upload is limited to 10Mb and unless you



take a monthly subscription your site will feature targeted advertisements<sup>16</sup>. The advantages are that it is reliable, easy to setup and is widget based so is uncomplicated for adding features *on-the-fly* such as RSS feeds. In fact by the time I had setup a prototype network<sup>17</sup> they had added language support and I had the ability to automatically change the menus over to French.

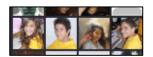
Elgg is described as an open-source PLE however it does not have the immediacy of networks like Facebook, or for that matter Ning. The application features a main weblog page, with facilities to link to a friend's personal pages that follow common domains of interest. Users have to serve their own Elgg application on a web-server running MySQL and PHP. This application shows promise but at the moment the difficulties of setup, lack of flexibility, no language support and a simple lack of themes and layout style led us to decide against this choice.

The final choice was a commercial network such as MySpace. The distinct advantage is that students are very familiar with these systems and have '...invested hours/years working on 'pimping out' their MySpace page, to consider trying another social networking site. 'IXVI' (Ning Forums, 2007) However the commercial nature of these sites hold distinct disadvantages related to personal privacy and the lack of needed control by an administrator/teacher within a school environment. There is no French based Facebook support and so no way to setup L2 menus even if a separate group was used for discussion in

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Ad-sense targeted advertisements are a way that Google provides contextual advertising so that they are based upon the words and content that is on the particular page or site

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> For teachers to understand the principles of social networking I produced a prototype environment using NING to show how it worked and the many features that could be used



French. This alongside the notion that a student could be sidetracked to chat with other friends led to its dismissal as an option. Ning was therefore chosen as the most appropriate, and the 'The El Alsson French Connection' or FC was created.

# 3.3 Final Integration of Features

Although the following list is almost conclusive, for the evaluation of the environment I will only concentrate on the features that enabled conversation within the network. All features were however integral to the success of the

network and without them it would not have functioned as evaluated: - video uploads <sup>(Fig11)</sup>, initial profile questions, menus in L2, RSS feeds, easy layout configuration, photo uploads, text boxes, chatterwalls and blog/forums. (See Appendix 6.1)



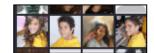
Figure 11 - Magnify video upload...

# 3.4 Scheme of Work - Aims and Learning Objectives

Each class had 4/6 lessons each week, of which two were based within an ICT suite. The following were the final aims and objectives agreed by the teachers and published to the students:-

#### Aims:-

 All students to improve their conversational French by formal writing on their profile in full sentences and through informal chatterwall conversation.



 All students to improve pronunciation and vocabulary practice via a video recorded role-play for the end of year oral examination.

### Objectives:-

- Complete and improve personal profile
- At least two discussions with friends
- Answer their class teachers introductory announcement/question
- Record or podcast a role-play and upload this to the FC.

#### 3.4.1 Week 1

The first week focused on orientation and *socialisation* within the FC. Each student was asked to check their e-mail, find their invitation and join<sup>18</sup> the network. Each student had to introduce themselves by answering the profile questions. For homework they had to reply to an initial weblog post from their

class teacher, and to write on two *friends*' chatterwalls. The lessons outside the suite were used to practice role-plays to be recorded as revision for their end of year examinations.

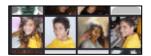
#### 3.4.2 Week 2

Students' conversations/role-plays related to their revision and *domain* would be videoed and



Figure 12 - Exploring privacy...

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Note a printed guide was also given in how to join the French Connection – see Appendix 6.16. Menus were left in English so students who found the L2 menus difficult could refer to this guide if necessary.



uploaded to Magnify/Splashcast, and embedded in the FC. Students were asked to logon to the FC and reply to any conversations taking place. Class teachers would check the profile answers, and all students would be asked to refine their profile questions. Homework was left open, although simple suggestions were made including uploading of French themed photographs.

#### 3.4.3 Week 3

The final *practical* week, was left free for students to continue conversations. However KS4 students would be asked to upload extracts to a forum regarding revision questions they were doing on the topic of holiday brochures.

### 4 Evaluation

#### 4.1.1 General Observations

Overall the social network was considered a success which I believe surprised teachers and students alike. The following evaluation looks at the iniative from various stakeholders' viewpoints to assess the learning outcomes and ways forward.



Figure 13 - The technophobe...

#### 4.1.2 Teachers Feedback

Teachers although initially sceptical found the social network motivated students to converse in French, even going as far as to say '...it's addictive. \*\*

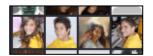
However at times the teachers found it difficult to fit this additional project/iniative



into their end of years' schemes of work. Pressures of exam preparation took precedence and rather than managing to integrate these together attempted to do both. The teachers were particularly reluctant to facilitate their lessons in the ICT suites, as this would disrupt their traditional class procedures. Most in-school contact with the OSN was during the groups corresponding time in ICT, which led to a lack of French support in the class when conversing on the social network.

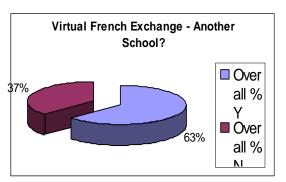
Students were initially confused by this integration of ICT and French but then to an extent showed independence and were able to *scaffold* each others vocabulary and spelling, seemingly self sufficient bringing text books and using online dictionaries. Ideas of following *Gladwells*" *diffusion model*<sup>[xviii]</sup> where students that were more confident in a range of literacy or technological skills would be able to accept responsibility and become a *bridge* to helping someone else's learning failed. If this had been organised and assessed the responsibilities could have led to many students being *pulled* into the environment feeling a greater sense of belonging and motivation.

Teachers due to the extra workload found it difficult to plan tasks that would link their schemes with the network itself and so objectives were not always achieved including the setting up of the brochure forum discussion. The main reason for the teachers' reticence was their lack of experience with technology integration and more time would need to spent in supporting them to reach'...the three C's - comfort, confidence, and creativity, 'Ixix' (Sessums, pg 2) so they could work confidently with such a different system as social networking.



The department was very keen to continue on the social network after the three weeks and thought as the students (Fig14) that ... more people all over the

world..." should be involved maybe as a virtual school exchange. This would link well with the problems associated with creating not a group but an open network of language learning which



could include first language French Figure 14 - A larger network...

speakers also. The very notion that a network could be created and thrive within such a restricted period was highly ambitious at best, most comments suggested the FC should have run for a year!

#### 4.1.3 Students Feedback

Students are not all 'digital natives' (Prensky, 2001), and many had problems using the FC to the extent that some simply said '...it's too complicated, make it simpler. 'Ixxii Problems ranged from not understanding how to

join and fill in the initial form and antispider code to more difficult issues related to confusing features like the weblog posts and chatterwalls. This might have again been due to the rushed nature of the iniative but also led to 22%

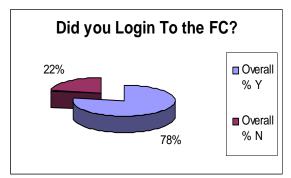
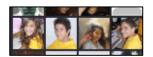


Figure 15 – Poor dropout rate...

of students (Fig 15) never actually joining. This is unacceptable even if they participated in other ways including uploading role-play videos, but in the future

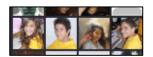


the environment would need analysis to see how it could be adapted to suit all students' needs along with better methods of introducing and training students.

Students once involved in the network showed enthusiasm for the environment saying that '... [i]t makes you get into French and be more fluent and better in typing, "Ixxiii] while others understood the social aspect of learning a language was important as '...[i]t gives you the chance to socialise with other people practicing. Ixxiv Student conversation was a little sporadic with female students the more active in conversations, enjoying the discussion and chatter around their photograph uploads. Teachers did note how the quieter female students accessed and conversed within the environment to a greater degree:-

"Some studies have shown that in written forms of computer-mediated communication...students produce a greater quantity of discourse than in an oral classroom" (Kern quoted in Hampel, 2004, pg 67)

One female student after writing a phrase in French even asked others '...to find out what it means.' (See Appendix 6.4) Other students were less active only becoming involved when prompted by their teachers to improve their profile statements. (See Appendix 6.5) Students found the freedom difficult and more structure would have helped so that less able students were not asking '...what do I say. dixxvi' Another reason for the sometimes stilted flow of conversation was the level of students' vocabulary/written skills especially in Year 9. If the class lessons had been fully integrated with the use of the social network then I believe the support would have helped the fluency and flow of conversation. At times even the menus in



French (Fig17) were confusing for students and all teachers agreed that the most appropriate level of students for this type of activity was from KS4 onwards.

Teachers and students were each confused by the level of French needed different spaces, within and more explanation of the different mediated areas must happen for students to understand when slang/informal chatter acceptable was and teachers understand that formal sentences and correct grammar might not be necessary all of the time. One objective was achieved, by all students that joined the

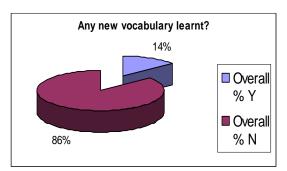


Figure 17 - Very few...

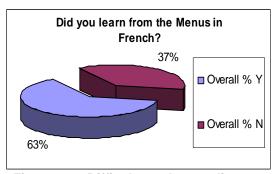
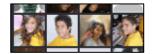


Figure 16 - Difficulty understanding...

network, in answering their profile questions and teachers were pleased with the way they could assess differentiated outcomes for their students. (See Appendix 6.7)

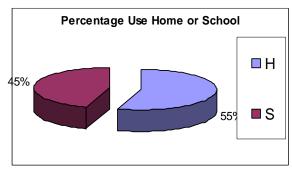
Many students commented a feature that would have been useful was a '... [t]ranslator, because if you don't understand certain words; "lxxviii this would be easy to implement. However the teachers are reticent to show this sort of tool to their students, and maybe an ethical and technical discussion about how to introduce the imperfect technology of translation into classrooms would have been beneficial. Students felt they had not learnt much vocabulary (Fig16), or found it difficult due to lack of fixed traditional lesson aims to ascertain what they had



learnt with only two commenting on vocabulary acquired:- 'Mes amis and I can't remember others' xxviii

#### 4.1.4 Technical and Resource Issues

There were many technical problems of which the speed of connection was the main, especially when trying to access from school and led to 55% of students only using the



retwork from home <sup>(Fig18)</sup>. There were also problems with the level of plug-ins used within the NING application including Flash Player 9 and Java, which many browsers had not been updated for.

One teacher was concerned that the advertisements targeted by Google on the FC might cause problems due to inappropriate content. Issues of ethical use and equality were also raised with the student with no e-mail address and highlights the need for either a school e-mail provision or that the NING invitation system be simplified.

The typing of accents over French letters (See Appendix 6.8) was considered another serious language learning issue by teachers. The only solution was to produce a tutorial that was printed and added as attachment to the network. However many students did not see this in time and teachers found this



Figure 19 – Accent Problems



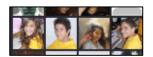
frustrating when looking at assessing the more formal discussions and personal profiles.

Resource issues can always be improved, if the MFL department had even limited Internet access within their classrooms, I know the teachers would have more readily integrated the OSN within their teaching practice. All teachers still expressed after the iniative that the time spent interacting on the network was extra work for them and wondered in the long term if it the network was feasible and is so would SMT acknowledge this additional effort.

### 4.1.5 Pedagogical Issues

The most difficult issue was the contradictions in teaching styles that has been commented upon throughout. I feel reticent to comment further as I am not a L2 teacher, and will never profess to be so. However the teachers within the MFL department were willing to alter their teaching practice when they received the support, time and resources needed. The idea of *multiliteracies* was new to the teachers who focused on the traditional grammar aspect of communication in the social network, which students appreciated: - '[m]me. Saida corrected my profile info, enabling me to learn from my mistakes 'Ixxix (See Appendix 6.2) However I wonder if a more far reaching cross-curricular view of languages and multiliterate forms of communication would also be a way to approach language learning within such an environment.

On reflection the lack of influence given by the MFL department to the discussion on the social network (e.g. it was not part of any final examination



grade) meant that especially the more reluctant learners made the decision not to take part and in effect limited its' success. Over a longer period of time with set assessed activities this could easily be rectified.

# **5 Future Thoughts and Conclusions**

The width and sweeping intensity of such an iniative was going to be difficult to implement given many of the factors discussed throughout the paper. The use of social tools is something that is difficult to do within a traditional school and department. Such an iniative might work better in a school much more receptive to such ideas so that it can '...be integrated into every part of school life so that the curriculum and the learner's needs drive technology, not the reverse. (Sessums, 2006)

Teachers and students were confused even with the aims and objectives of the network in terms of learning, and so it was difficult to assess individual students' levels of progression within this short initiative. Future research must focus on a more focused social network analysis, to see if there are actual benefits and progression in terms of students' language fluency. It is easy to fall into the trap of using a social tool in a very open and abstract way, when the organisation of aims and objectives needs to be defined with great clarity. Within these defined goals the pedagogical style has to lead to a full integration of technology with other subjects and domains, with a focus on collaborative learning styles so that technology and ICT is not used as a *bolt on* but rather as an integral part of their language learning:-



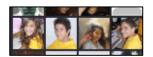
'Until the pedagogical methods that uniquely take advantage of a technology's pedagogical affordances to achieve content- specific learning objectives are identified, it will not be possible to prepare teachers to make affective use of current and emerging technologies. (Schrum, 2007, pg460)



# 6 Appendix

#### 6.1 Online Social Network Features Needed

- Video Uploads An initial set of videos were uploaded or linked via YouTube to provide additional stimulus to the pupils. All videos were either in French or had French themes. Students could then add and upload their own videos.
- Initial Profile Questions After registration from an invite sent out by the administrator the students were requested by the network to fill-in questions about themselves in their L2. These could be updated and changed at anytime and formed the main left hand column of their profile page.
- Menus and language were all in French This also included any emails that were sent out regarding communication, for example updates on their chatterwall.
- RSS feed widget It is important that the content on the social network that did not come from student or teacher conversation was authentic French news stories and information. To make sure that the '...content is real, authentic and always up-to-date, 'lxxxii' (Brun, 2000, pg256) it was easy to choose an RSS feed and then link this with one of the widget blocks. Feeds used included Mot du Jour and French Newspapers.
- Theme and layout The theme was designed to link with other web-tools
   that I have designed for the school and to be accessed with a similar



URL<sup>19</sup> so that students used to these other tools would take to this network quickly. It must be noted the theme was designed for the main page to reflect the modern styling's of a social network page in MySpace. However as stated earlier each students' homepage theme and colours could be changed by themselves.

- Photo Uploads A major feature of most commercial social networks, and as with the videos an initial set of French photos was uploaded.
- Splashcast Video Feed linked to separate account at Magnify These were integral to the OSN and the main feature that would pull students into using it. Videos here could either be students' vodcasts, ones from YouTube along with the ability to introduce podcasts via RSS feed. The Magnify sharing system was also used as this was available outside of Ning which was password protected and by invitation only, so that other students or parents could view the videos taken of French conversations.
- Chatterwall Similar in style to Facebook's with all communication shown between users.
- Blog Posts Students could write dated entries onto their blog page, and decide whether they wanted these featured on the main page.
- Domain forums Threaded discussion forums that could be setup by administrators to discuss particular language vocabulary or content.

-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> The URL consisted of my ConstructICT domain name – http://constructict.ning.com



#### 6.2 Conversation Screenshots A - Formal Conversation Between

#### Students and Teacher

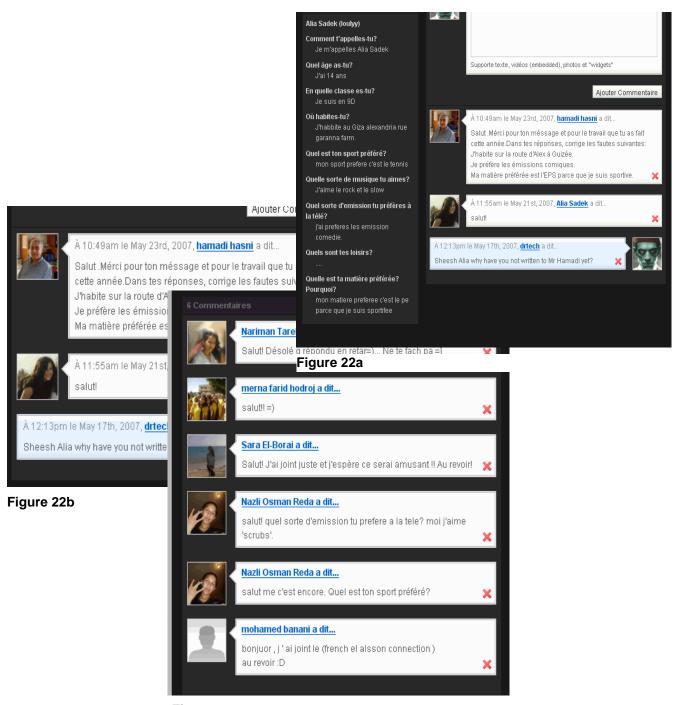
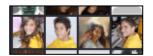


Figure 22c



#### 6.3 Conversation Screenshots B - Informal Chatter Between

# Participants Using Visual Leads

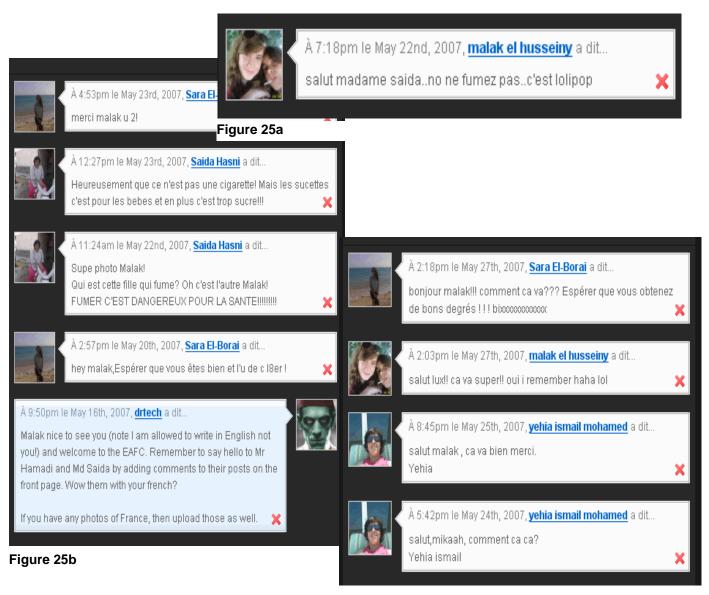


Figure 25c



# 6.4 Conversation Screenshots C - New Vocabulary and Student Challenges

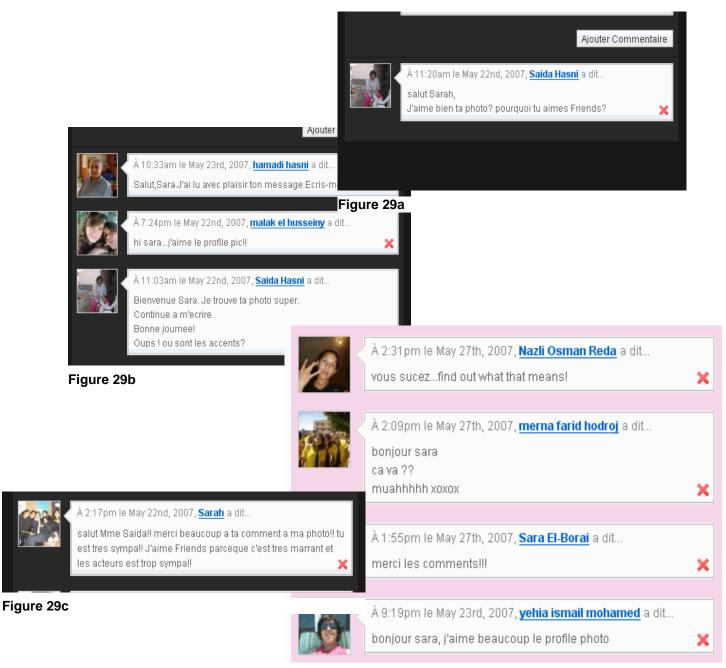
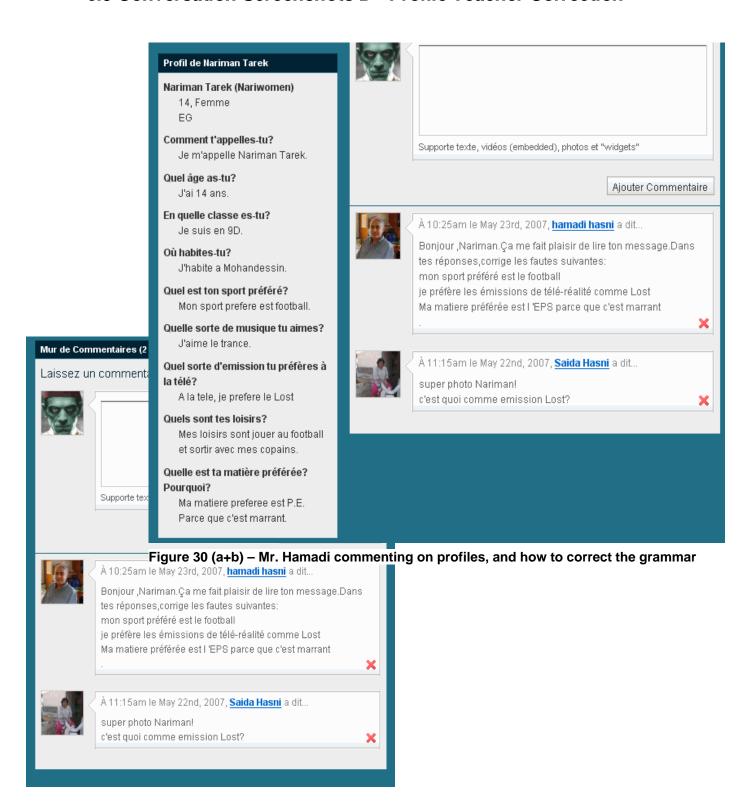


Figure 29d



#### 6.5 Conversation Screenshots D - Profile Teacher Correction





# 6.6 Video page, Comments in French and Splashcast



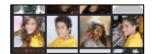
Figure 34d - Splashcast Video Show - Including Podcasts and Role-Plays



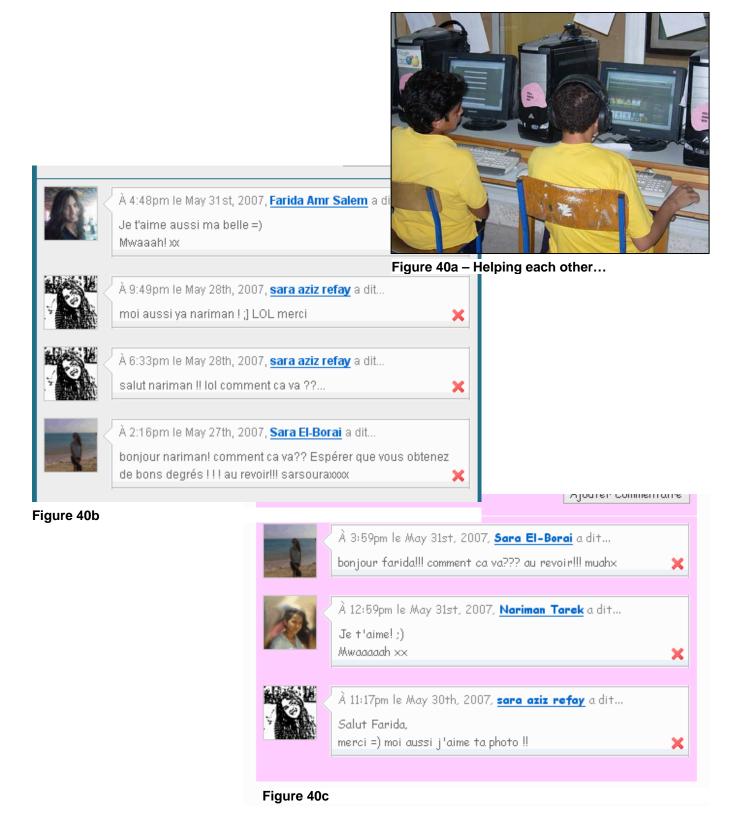
# 6.7 Conversation Screenshots E - Formal Mediated Space on FC

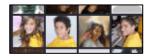


Figure 37c



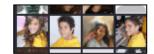
# 6.8 Conversation Screenshots F - Student Scaffolding



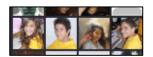


# 6.9 British Section Questionnaire - Mme. Saida

				fl all	M
	<u>itergrat</u>	ion o	f ICT to	bromofo	1/4
	lan	guag	e lear	ing	
alleviate the motivating to less marking on planning a tool can make You will need and add a control of the motivate of the motivation o	end of term nig o do? It might ev g) aswell as clas , or trouble in de	whtmare and wen break asswork. Meveloping the interesting so for each would like	into ideas for lore than anyth and delivering and useful for the lore than anyth and delivering in and useful for the lore than anyth and the lore than anyth and the lore than anyth anyt	nent. Hopefully it dents something a nomework (which ring it is not meant. Hopefully the use or students and teation across the boe last column. Ple	little more might need to be light e of ICT as achers too. ox like this,
Example question	¥es	No	Comment here	blah blah	
Overtions					
Questions	through the agree wit	h in this		Add Comments if nece	ssary
Do you think ICT could be used to I your teaching in the MFL Department?	through the agree with columnelp the test	e box you h in this	HOW? AS S Use ICT.	hidents as	e heen b
1) Do you think ICT could be used to I your teaching in the MFL Department's so explain how? 2) How have you use ICT this year with your MFL lessons Please explain how and list any websior resources that	through the agree with columnels and the second sec	e box you th in this	HOW AS S USE ICT. IS VERY HW.	hodents are exercisely in motivating when the contracting of the contr	e heen to heret it
1) Do you think ICT could be used to I your teaching in the MFL Department so explain how?  How have you use ICT this year with your MFL lessons Please explain how and list any websi	through the agree with columnels he less that the second he less that the seco	e box you h in this nn	HOW AS S USE JECT. IS VERY HW. BBC by TVS most	hodents are exercisely in motivating when the contracting of the contr	e heen to heret it

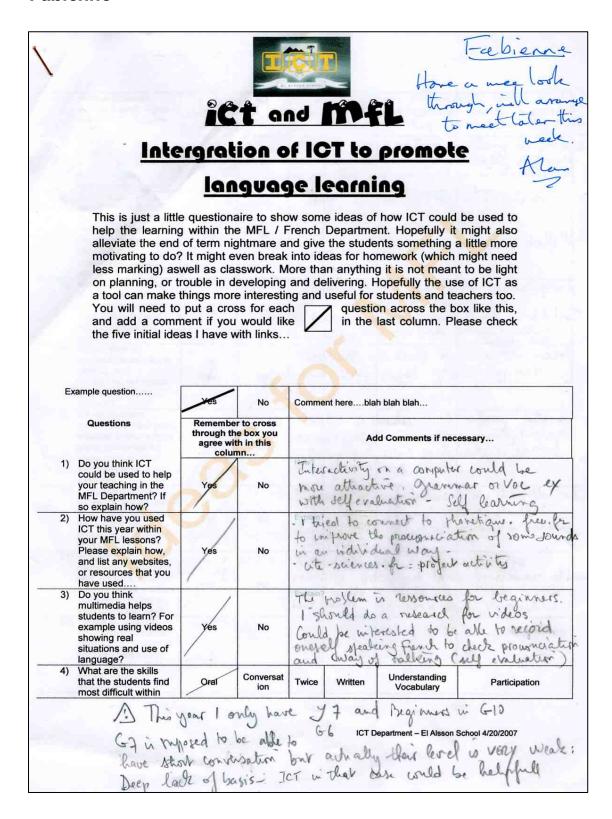


French lessons? Please explain – you are the MFL experts	Some Using I	shiden CT800	hs a	wo.	rld benefi	-from	prochsing
not me!  5) In a classroom situation is it difficult to get all students to participate in conversation	yes	No	L	ck (	of time		
6) If yes to the above, would it be helpful for students to be able to practice written and oral work away from the classroom in a lesson pressured situation?	Yes	No	5				
7) Would students from different year groups and classes benefit from practicing and learning with each other?	Yes	No		Olde Youg	s student	s helpu	4
8) Would Year 10 students benefit from helping, and discussing in French with lower school student?	Yes	No					
9) Would students benefit from their work whether oral or written being published in some form or other – for example on a website?	Yes	No		Def:	ntely		
10) Does the use of ICT worry you – if so can you explain why (and yes I know the problems at EI Alsson School)?	Yes	No		Lack	of equ	pneut	
11) What sort of homework is set for MFL lessons, does the homework enable students to practice their language use?	yes -= sh	No ould		CW is hyped learning	- 4m 60	has to d be vo- writing-	be cab grammar
12) Please write down any other comments here – after looking at the few ideas I have for ICT and the MFL departments' collaboration	Shide	nd offi hth fo nds sta	ee v	No speci	cus do	propules	Her net
	d ere	- a pr	oble	ICT D	Department – El Alsson	School 4/20/2007 When	



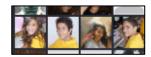
#### 6.10 American and National Section Questionnaire - Ms.

#### **Fabienne**





				The same of the sa
	French lessons? Please explain – you are the MFL experts not me!	00001	UA W	Sujort lessons could. Prot- a sprial be recommended by the teacher for each
5)	In a classroom situation is it difficult to get all students to participate in conversation	Yes	No	For a conversation as long as student are more than 10 it is realised if with to get them all involved in a conversation.
6)	If yes to the above, would it be helpful for students to be able to practice written and oral work away from the classroom in a lesson pressured situation?	Yes	No	txit writer work - focus on oral work
7)	Would students from different year groups and classes benefit from practicing and learning with each other?	Yes	No	Different year morphy for psychological reason 1 den't thenke so. Different clanes - same level could be inventing to make them communicating.
8)	Would Year 10 students benefit from helping, and discussing in French with lower school student?	Yes	No	and same level yes - who not
9)	Would students benefit from their work whether oral or written being published in some form or other – for example on a website?	Yes	No	Could be really motivating like a new sluter on a community website (rold be intrected to be alle to record once of speaking
10	) Does the use of ICT worry you – if so can you explain why (and yes I know the problems at El Alsson School)?	Yes	No	The case of any technical plo I'm structed need help. Cannot downe structed through real Tex pojet without a training before.
	) What sort of homework is set for MFL lessons, does the homework enable students to practice their language use?	yes	No	however or are furdamental to nemonse voic and bank grammar at he to be occastly to build gnother steps for the Level lenon. Pott Ho = oral. No practice
12	) Please write down any other comments here – after looking at the few ideas I have for ICT and the MFL departments' collaboration			



# 6.11 Initial Ideas for Tools and Application Integration

**sketchy** \*deas - Have a look, I will explain and show you in meeting....

#### idea 1 - the french connection

A social network - similar to that of Facebook and MySpace - which would enable students to post to forums in French, upload or discuss photos and videos, send messages to each other, blog / post comments about work homework. Unlike the above examples though this would be closed only for students in the school, and could use probably 2 or 3 classes. Students could react to videos, photos, podcasts or posts with comments and discussions.....

Teachers would moderate, and rules would have to be discussed first with guidelines of only using French for public posts and



French for public posts and discussions....In ICT lessons and hopefully with GCSE students' gone students could be introduced to the Social Network and be shown how to upload, post etc etc. Initial questions could be asked in French on logging in for the first time....to provide an introductory lesson to practice French. Students could be asked to record oral work, and practice with which other students have to comment upon.

Setup Technical – Using NING a Web 2.0 service, already setup an example at www.constructict.ning.com

Problems – Adverts, Will it work, What will it allow to practice, YouTube filtered in school, Complex, Lab time needed.....Structured tasks needed in relation to use, Abuse of the network – French not used?

**Learning Benefits** – Conversation, written French, motivation to use should follow quickly as Social Networking all the rage, use of original materials for listening and comprehension...

#### idea 2 - youtube - bonjour...videos and role-plays

Students use simple webcams to record and publish videos showing role-plays, these could be placed onto a blog or similar.....Am I bovvered -

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p62jW71zGKo

Setup Technical – Webcams needed, time for students to practice roles – will not involve many students...

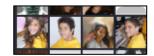
Problems – Security, identity of students on web, Filtering of

Learning Benefits – Practicing conversational, publishing work a motivation...



idea 3 — rodcasting a go-go

Blog is bette : now confidential



Students each produce a podcast, probably in pairs practicing a particular role-play or task. The podcasts are recorded with Mics freely available in school, the blog is accessible to anyone, and students can comment upon each others work.

Setup Technical - Blogs easy to setup, and can be run by teachers as well as myself in Admin role. See example already running at www.constructict.com/studentblog Or a MFL one at http://mfle.typepad.com/tgs2/

Problems - Not many, easily scalable...easy to setup immediate results

Learning Benefits - Practicing conversational, publishing work a motivation....



# idea 4 - go googly in paris

to plactice what

A Google Earth Webquest.....students are given a worksheet in which they have to solve a number of clues....

Setup Technical - Google Earth takes a great deal of bandwidth, would need to setup KMZ file on all...only appropriate for small group - could be good Year 10's maybe...You need GE to view...

http://services.google.com/earth/kmz/EiffelTower.kmz

Problems - See Above...Bandwidth at school, complexity of setting up....but then it will run....

Learning Benefits - Information literacy, authentic materials will motivate students, learning new vocabulary....



# – powerpoint interactive

Simple PowerPoint presentations that use the interactive whiteboard facility and allow students and teacher to interact using sound, and movement... See examples in PPT sent...

Setup Technical - No worries will need access to a lab, and interactive whiteboard...but easy enough... Problems - See Above...time to alter setup examples related to SoW

Learning Benefits - Motivational starter activities?



Thank you very much for completing the questionnaire - this will help me to discuss ideas that we could use. I would suggest that we try these ideas after the Year 11, and 12 groups are on study leave.

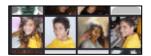
publisher already proposed this Rived of Work theek

Starter

ICT Department - El Alsson School 4/20/2007

I have to check the generics from a sperific french publisher who

proposes work sheets for web activities.



#### 6.12 Students Questionnaire



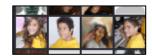
# social networks

Student Questionaire

You are going to be using a Social Network like *MySpace* and *Facebook* to publish and practice your French language and lessons over the next few weeks. This questionaire is here to ask you if you understand and use Social Networks and whether you think it would be helpful to use it in a lesson like French or if you think social networking should just be for FUN!

You will need to put a cross for each and add a comment in the last column..... question across the box like this,

Examp box	ole questionCross in the next ses the closest answer OKAY!		No	Comment he	ereblah blah bla	ah			
	Questions	through th agree wi	er to cross ne box you th in this mn	Add Comments if necessary					
1)	Do you know what a social network is? If yes please describe in the comments box.	Yes	No	Explain?					
2)	Are you a member of a social network?	Yes	No						
3)	Which social networks do you belong to? Cross each one	MySpace	Facebook	Piczo	Bebo	Other			
4)	If you answered other to question 3, please write the other social networks you belong to?	Add networks	here:						
5)	How many friends do you have on your social networks? (Approximately)	None	0-10	11-50	50-100	100 or above			



Can you explain why you like using a social network? (e.g. to communicate, to meet people, to chat with friends)	Explain?			
<ol> <li>List what you favourite features of the social networks you belong to are?</li> <li>E.g. photo uploads, avatars, 'poke'</li> </ol>	Which featur	e5?		
Do you think using a social network as a way to learn and practice French is a good idea?	Yes	No	If YES explain why?	
9) Do you think that recording audio and video of yourself and friends in French and then publishing to a social website would help you learn?	Yes	No	If YES explain why?	
10) Do you think seeing real videos of French speakers can help you learn the language?	Yes	No	If YES explain why?	
Do you have an internet enabled computer at home?	Yes	No	),	
12) What internet connection do you have at home?	None	Dial-Up (slow)	ADSL (Medium- 512Kb)	Super-Fast (Above 512 Kb)
13) Is homework set for French lessons? If yes what sort of homework is set, comment if it is fun and what would be better?	Yes	No	Add comments here:	
14) Would you like homework that involved using a social network on a website?	Yes	No	Adds comments here	
15) Have you been to France on holiday? If so say where	Yes	No	Say where?	
16) If you answered yes to the above question. Do you have photos of your travels in France?	Yes	No		
17) Do you use or watch YouTube videos? If yes explain what this service does?	Yes	No	Explain what YouTub	e is?



## 6.13 Students Instructions for Joining Social Network

DISTRUCTIONS - Follow the basic instructions to see how the French Connection works! It has many of the same features as Facebook or MySpace. So make sure you use them to make the French Connection your OWN learning French space. You will be using and doing work related to this social network in both ICT and French! TO Go to the site type in the following:-

## MOD. DAILY. TOITOURTRUOD

ITEP 1 - YOUR IMVITATIOM - Dr Tech or your

French teacher will send you an invitation through your email, so make sure your email does work and you check it! The invitation will look like the screenshot below. All you will need to do is click on the link:-



#### drtech has invited you to join The Alsson French Connection...!

Joindre El Alsson French Connection...! Click here to join The Alsson French Connection...!

#### About The Alsson French Connection...

El Alsson French Connection - Le réseau éducatif pour améliorer votre français

You received this invitation from a member of The Alsson French Connection... which is powered by Ning. If you do not wish to receive invitations from The Alsson French Connection..., please send us an email at privacy@ning.com.



You will see a screen in which you have to

You will see a screen in which you have to choose your online screen name, full name and input a password. Make sure it is a password that you can remember.

There is a security code you have to follow, and then you must upload a photo which will represent you within the social network. See mine above

...Choose a fun but polite photo...

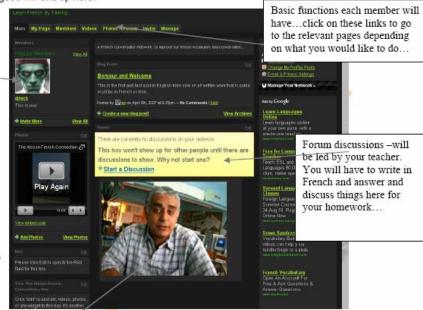


# Iter 2 - The Homepage

This is where everyone's work and networking comes together. Videos you post or photos or writing that is good will end up here:-

Photo you upload....and pictures of all other members...

> Feeds of information from French websites...automatic ally sent here. Your French teacher might ask you to read an article and comment upon it...

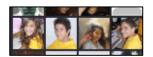


# Itep B - IPLASH-Gast Videos and the Questions...

During the next three weeks while you are using this social network, you will each be asked to record a video or podcast of a French conversation...these will be easily viewed from this Splash-Cast television show.....just click on the top and you can choose any video.....

YOU WILL HAVE TO ANSWER THESE... Introductory questions to form your profile.....obviously these are in French...remember you will be graded on this so answer in sentences! TRY to answer better than I DID!





# Iter 4 - Photos and Interaction

You will be asked to upload photos that have a French theme. These can be holiday photos or Photos of interesting French people or Architecture. Your French teachers will ask you to do a

different upload each week...there are already some there uploaded by Dr Tech. You can rate everyone's photos and the best will go on the home page.

Slideshow player will show photos in a continuous show...both here and also on the Homepage

Upload photos here to the gallery...everyone can do this. They can be either personal or public...just as in Facebook



# Step 5 - Video Page and Uploads



As with the photos you can upload or use YouTube and Google videos here. Dr Tech will be moderating these as with the photos – so make sure they are related to French. This could include football, fashion or cartoons but they must have a French theme. Again your French teacher might ask you to discuss and describe a video here.

Videos can be embedded from YouTube and Google....obviously they must be of a French nature.



# Itep 6 — Change how your $^{q}$ My= page' Looky...

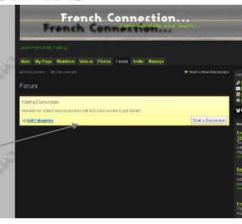


Iter 7 - Main Forum and

DISCUSSIOM...

On a social network it is important that there is a lot of discussion. ON THIS SOCIAL NETWORK it is important that there is a lot of FRENCH DISCUSSION. The more you show the French teacher your skills in writing French, good vocabulary and ideas the better grade you will get...

This is a discussion forum. Your teacher might start off a French discussion. If you join in and post a reply this will go to your grade...





# Itep 8 - The Chatter-Wall

This is very similar to the chatterwalls in FACEBOOK. You can chat to your friend here - that is the ones you have invited.

Your chatter-wall is your main private area. So use this to practice your French and correct each other. You can write in English here as well, if you are trying to find something out.



# ...and Beyond...

So that is your introduction. Any problems or questions please email Dr Tech – aperkins@alsson.com

Remember to respect each other when you are using the French Connection Social Network. The more you contribute in FRENCH the better grade you will receive at the end of the year in French.

Make sure your Browser is up to date with the latest Flash Player – Download from here <a href="http://www.adobe.com/products/flashplayer/">http://www.adobe.com/products/flashplayer/</a> otherwise you will not be able to view all the videos.

If you cannot access the site from home, then come to Lab 3 at break times. Or of course during your ICT and French lessons...

This is the web address. Do not use www just type in the following:-

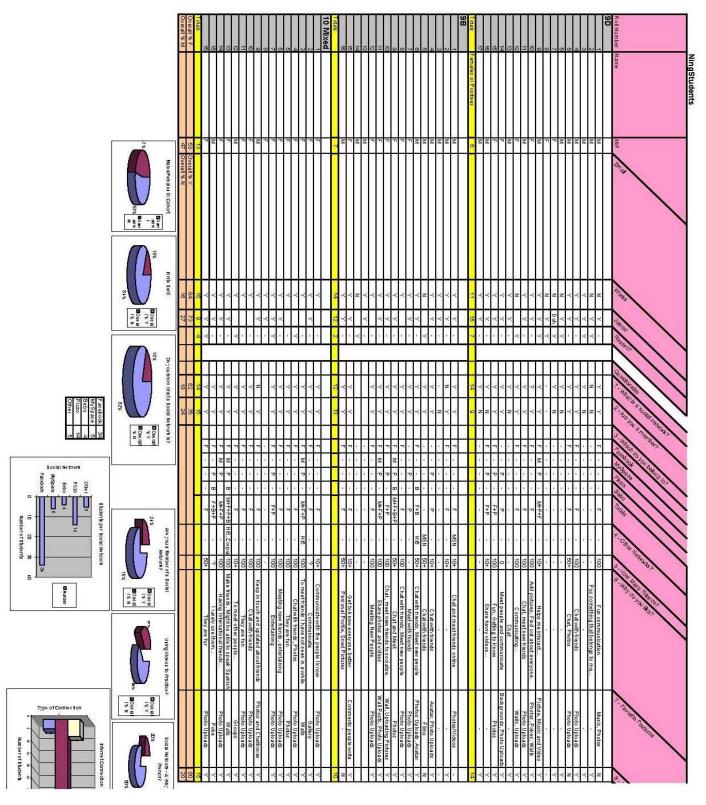
GONSTRUCTICT. WING. GOM



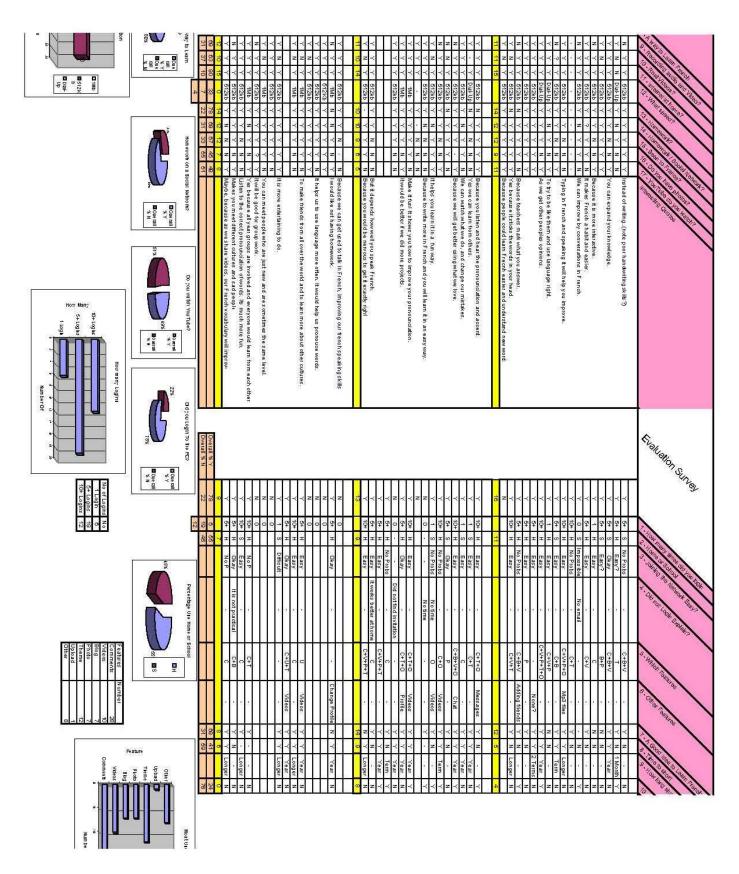


# 6.14 Student Questionnaire Answers and Statistics

Note: Please zoom in to read statistics - (Student names removed)

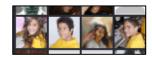








Mott Used Feature :	les is	* *   & *.	* * * *		Is an how I looked and sounded  It helped me in the pronounciation Its easy and I prefer to use a computer.	The accent of speaking, spelling mistakes less  I know what mistakes I do  Made me speak more fluently  Good for revision	Reading others	Pronounciation Improved from my mistakes	
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Any new occabulary learnth  14.8  Overall  378,  8 N		More People Easie' to Logon Don't like emails Speak in English a little	More features Make it ongoingnot shut down English under the French	Complicated Linking	Chatting Online We can make comments in English to! Use a bitmose english Try to make it international	More Speed  Make it simples, too complicated.  Speak, and Chatin English  Games	Not really sorry ) No kidding Hearned a lot	English translator  Too many people*  More people use it, like 9A and 9C  More schools invalue and more videos  More schools invalue and more videos  More schools more videos  More schools sharing Include English to make it easier Marbe cames	
Virtual Pencit Exchange - Another School?  School?  All % Y All % N		More people all over the world involved' To try writing in French and see if Md Saldawould correct anything!	It was only two weeks and at exam times!  Md Salda corrected my profile info, enabling me to learn from my mistakes!  Make it ongoing and not shut it down!	You don't learn a language in 3 weeks!	Improve your writing and speaking we needed more time to get used to it.' Yes but there are many I'm not sure of the spelling	Made me speak more fluently! I liked it cause it is simple:			Contraction of the second



## 6.15 Participating Students and Teachers

Thanks must go to the following students, teachers and El Alsson British International School for all the support and help to bring this iniative and research together:-

- 9C Hassan, Omar, Gamal, Mostafa, Zeyad, Sherif, Hager, Nariman,
   Zeyad, Shadden, Mahmoud, Malak, Mohamed, Sara, Alia, Ahmed, Omar
- 9B -Yehia, Omar, Abdel, Mohamed, Abdel, Mostafa, Sawson, Farida,
   Merna, Sara, Malak, Zeina, Ali, Abdallah, Nazli, Omar
- Year 10 Option Salma, Noha, Aisha, Noreen, Nesma, Habiba, Leena,
   Shorouk, Aly, Nadine, Angy, Ahmed El, Nada, Sara, Omar, Shahd
- Mr. Hamadi Hasni British Section
- Mme. Saida Hasni British Section (HoD)
- Ms. Fabienne Rodriguez American and National Section
- Ms. N. Ismail –American Section (Co-ordinator)
- El Alsson British International School Senior Management Team



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<sup>&</sup>lt;a href="http://snipurl.com/vance2006antwerp">http://snipurl.com/vance2006antwerp</a> and you can view the video of its delivery at URL: <a href="http://blip.tv/file/62861">http://blip.tv/file/62861</a> (Last accessed 12 July 2007)

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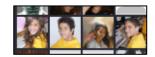
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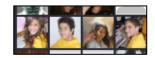


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- 8&q=cache:GV6P4LvZWa8J:www.eden.rutgers.edu/~skofman/myspace.doc+myspace> (Last accessed 12 July 2007)
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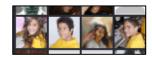
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