

THE FOUR BASIC COGNITIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES

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Starting from the Barsch Test, we devised an eighty-question four-strategy test: visual, oral, written and tactile strategies, compatible with the four concepts of Lacan's square of the subject. Students are dominated by visual and oral strategies, whereas written and tactile strategies are deficient. More effective didactic strategies articulate several cognitive strategies: e.g. starting with visual elements, mediating them with oral commentary, and writing notes down. Students good at one or two of these can remediate the deficient strategy or strategies. The subject of the material has a motivating influence on students: the fifth cultural strategy we start considering.

Keywords: cognitive: visual, oral, written, tactile strategies; culture strategy; learner-centeredness.

In 1994, the AIPASDL (*Association Internationale de Psychomécanique, d'Anglais de Spécialité et de Didactique des Langues*) started its research on cognitive strategies with the Barsch Test that was available freely. We translated/adapted it into French, extended it and scrutinized every question (eighty in our version) for each one of them to be absolutely centered on only one strategy, which was not the case in Barsch's test. Then our first idea was that we could not accept only one linguistic strategy: we had to divide it into two strategies: oral and written language. But, though we were influenced by La Garanderie who puts forward two basic strategies: the auditory (hearing and speaking language) and the linguistic (reading and writing language) strategies, we tried to keep the linguistic unity by averaging the two oral and written strategies. But we very quickly realised we had to keep them separate, for practical and realistic reasons drawn from experience and observation (most children have great difficulties with written language, whereas, most of them have no difficulties at all to speak, even if their language is not standard or correct). Then, later on, we started thinking about the opposition between the two languages and realised that they were positioned on absolutely different levels of the mind, and in different, though overlapping, circuits in the brain. But more about that later. Hence we decided to have four strategies instead of three. The result was the following test.

1. AIPASDL VISUAL-LINGUISTIC-TACTILE TEST

QUESTION	presque toujours	souvent	parfois	rarement	presque jamais
1- J'aime travailler avec des graphiques des tableaux et des schémas.					
2- Je retiens facilement les explications que le maître donne en classe oralement					
3- Je comprends et suis facilement des instructions écrites					
4- J'appuie très fort sur mon stylo en écrivant.					
5- J'aime me servir d'outils manuels.					
6- J'aime prendre des notes pour les revoir ensuite.					
7- Je comprends un schéma quand on me donne une explication orale.					
8- J'essaie de me souvenir de quelque chose en me le représentant par une image dans ma tête.					
9- J'aime jouer avec les choses que j'ai dans mes poches.					
10- Je reconnais facilement deux sons identiques dans deux mots différents.					
11- Je lis régulièrement un journal ou un magazine pour avoir des informations.					
12- Pour retourner à un endroit où je ne suis allé qu'une ou peu de fois, je me repère grâce aux bâtiments, magasins, arbres, arrêts de bus, cabines téléphoniques, etc.					
13- J'aime trouver de la matière sur un sujet qui m'intéresse en consultant des livres ou des magazines.					
14- J'aime écouter des cours oraux et des cassettes pour apprendre.					
15- J'aime mâcher du chewing gum ou grignoter quelque chose en travaillant.					
16- Quand je consulte une BD pour la première fois je lis peu le texte.					
17- Dans une affiche je vois d'abord l'illustration.					
18- Je retiens d'abord l'orthographe d'un mot en l'épelant dans ma tête.					
19- J'aime discuter d'un sujet en classe ou avec mes parents.					
20- J'aime serrer la main de mes amis.					
21- J'aime caresser un chat ou un chien.					
22- Quand je consulte une BD pour la première fois je lis le texte avec soin pour comprendre.					
23- A la télé il m'arrive de voir les images sans écouter le son.					
24- J'aime lire les instructions d'un jeu ou d'une machine avant de m'en servir					
25- Je reconnais facilement les gens que j'ai rencontrés dans la rue.					
26- Dans une chanson j'aime comprendre ou répéter les paroles.					

QUESTION	presque toujours	souvent	parfois	rarement	presque jamais
27- J'aime relire mes notes de cours pour les apprendre et je le fais avec soin. membres de ma famille.					
29- Je me répète souvent dans ma tête les choses que je veux apprendre.					
30- Je remplis facilement des formulaires.					
31- Pour apprendre un mot j'ai besoin de voir l'objet ou son image.					
32- Je me souviens de comment mes amis sont habillés.					
33- Il m'arrive d'écouter le son de la télé sans regarder les images.					
34- J'aime quand le professeur fait un schéma pour expliquer quelque chose.					
35- Quand on me demande de signer un document, je le lis avec attention.					
36- J'aime écouter la radio ou un walkman.					
37- Si je suis un garçon, j'embrasse les filles le matin. Si je suis une fille, j'embrasse les garçons et mes amies le matin.					
38- J'aime pratiquer des sports de combat ou des sports d'équipe.					
39- J'aide mes parents ou mes amis à remplir des papiers administratifs.					
40- J'aime toucher ce que je vois dans les supermarchés et dans les lieux publics.					
41- Dans ma chambre j'aime avoir des images ou des affiches aux murs.					
42- Je joue avec mes stylos pendant les cours.					
43- J'aime quand quelqu'un qui me parle met sa main sur mon épaule.					
44- Quand je passe dans un lieu public, je collecte les brochures et tracts disponibles et je les lis ensuite.					
45- J'écoute la radio ou des cassettes en travaillant.					
46- Je lis les annonces que je vois dans la rue ou dans les lieux publics.					
47- J'aime m'asseoir dans des fauteuils profonds et confortables.					
48- Je regarde la télé en travaillant.					
49- J'aime les livres et les magazines qui ont beaucoup d'images.					
50- J'aime parler avec des amis, mes parents ou les gens que je rencontre.					
51- Je préfère pour aller chez mes amis pour la première fois qu'ils me l'expliquent oralement.					
52- J'aime lire des livres sans images.					
53- Je choisis un vêtement en touchant le tissu.					
54- Lorsque je dois acheter un nouveau produit dont j'ai vu la publicité, je me souviens de son emballage et de sa forme.					

QUESTION	presque toujours	souvent	parfois	rarement	presque jamais
55- Je comprends bien un schéma quand j'ai une explication écrite.					
56- Dès les premières notes ou les premiers mots je peux reconnaître une pub à la télé.					
57- Je choisis mes cahiers en veillant que leur papier soit de bonne qualité.					
58- Lorsque je suis présenté à une personne inconnue, je suis plus facilement capable ensuite de la décrire que de retrouver son nom.					
59- Ce qui me plaît le plus dans un clip vidéo, c'est la musique et les paroles.					
60- Je trouve plus facilement un CD dans un magasin grâce à la couleur et au dessin de sa pochette.					
61- J'aime bien essayer mes stylos avant de les acheter.					
62- Je reconnais une série à la télé rien qu'en entendant la musique.					
63- Lorsque je dois acheter un nouveau produit dont j'ai vu la publicité, je me souviens plus facilement de son nom si je l'ai vu écrit.					
64- Je lis attentivement les paroles des chansons.					
65- Je préfère que mes amis me fassent un plan pour aller chez eux la première fois.					
66- Dès les premières images je peux reconnaître une pub à la télé.					
67- Je retiens facilement les noms des personnes ou des lieux que j'entends.					
68- J'aime bien jouer avec mes mèches de cheveux.					
69- Ce qui me plaît le plus dans les clips vidéos, ce sont les images et les effets spéciaux.					
70- J'aime bien utiliser du bain moussant.					
71- Je me souviens mieux d'une histoire drôle si je la lis.					
72- Lorsque j'utilise un nouvel appareil audio-visuel, je comprends comment il fonctionne grâce aux symboles sur les touches.					
73- Je me souviens mieux d'une histoire drôle si on me la raconte ou si je l'entends à la radio.					
74- J'aime bien mettre les mains dans la terre lorsque je jardine.					
75- Les légendes sous les graphiques, les schémas et les photos m'aident beaucoup à comprendre.					
76- J'aime bien faire les tests dans les magazines.					
77- Je peux reconnaître certaines personnes au bruit de leurs pas.					
78- Je préfère faire les pâtes de gâteaux à la main plutôt qu'au mixer.					
79- J'aime bien téléphoner à mes amis.					
80- Je retiens facilement les noms de personnes et de lieux lorsque je les vois écrits.					

We planned to grade this test in a very simple way: five answers possible, graded from 1 to 5, from right to left, and then totalling the columns and then using the following grid.

2. VISUAL-LINGUISTIC-TACTILE TEST: GRADING GRID

VISUAL		LINGUISTIC		WRITTEN		TACTILE	
		ORAL					
Nº	POINTS	Nº	POINTS	Nº	POINTS	Nº	POINTS
1	...	2	...	3	...	4	...
8	...	7	...	6	...	5	...
12	...	10	...	11	...	9	...
16	...	14	...	13	...	15	...
17	...	18	...	22	...	20	...
23	...	19	...	24	...	21	...
25	...	26	...	27	...	28	...
31	...	29	...	30	...	37	...
32	...	33	...	35	...	38	...
34	...	36	...	39	...	40	...
41	...	45	...	44	...	42	...
48	...	50	...	46	...	43	...
49	...	51	...	52	...	47	...
54	...	56	...	55	...	53	...
58	...	59	...	63	...	57	...
60	...	62	...	64	...	61	...
65	...	67	...	71	...	68	...
66	...	73	...	75	...	70	...
69	...	77	...	76	...	74	...
72	...	79	...	80	...	78	...
TOTALS							
VISUAL PREFEREN- CE SCORE A = ...		ORAL PREFEREN- CE SCORE B = ...		WRITTEN PREFEREN- CE SCORE C = ...		TACTILE PREFER- ENCE SCORE D = ...	
%							
Basic Coefficient: (A + B + C + D) = E							
Visual Preference (A : E) x 100 = ... %		Oral Preference (B : E) x 100 = ... %		Written Preference (C : E) x 100 = ... %		Tactile Preference (D : E) x 100 = ... %	

But we very fast understood that the simple percentages were not able to really show the differences between the four strategies. So we had to invent some mathematical way to calculate and amplify these very narrow differences. So we came to the following calculation-grid.

3. VISUAL-LINGUISTIC-TACTILE TEST: DIFFERENTIAL CALCULATION GRID

First untreated percentages

Visual (V):%

Oral Language (LO):%

Written Language (LE):%

Tactile (T):%

Then the deficits and “*surficits*”, deciding that the norm was 25% for each, which maybe criticizable.

Visual: $\Delta V = \text{real percentage} - 25\% = \dots\dots\dots$

Oral Language: $\Delta LO = \text{real percentage} - 25\% = \dots\dots\dots$

Written Language: $\Delta LE = \text{real percentage} - 25\% = \dots\dots\dots$

Tactile: $\Delta T = \text{real percentage} - 25\% = \dots\dots\dots$

And finally the relative differential values:

Visual: $\Delta\Delta V = (\Delta V - \Delta LO) + (\Delta V - \Delta LE) + (\Delta V - \Delta T) = \dots\dots\dots$

Oral Language: $\Delta\Delta LO = (\Delta LO - \Delta V) + (\Delta LO - \Delta LE) + (\Delta LO - \Delta T) = \dots\dots\dots$

Written Language: $\Delta\Delta LE = (\Delta LE - \Delta V) + (\Delta LE - \Delta LO) + (\Delta LE - \Delta T) = \dots\dots\dots$

Tactile: $\Delta\Delta T = (\Delta T - \Delta V) + (\Delta T - \Delta LO) + (\Delta T - \Delta LE) = \dots\dots\dots$

This brought us to very sharp differences that clearly showed the individual spectrum of any learner. And then we started using the test in classes.

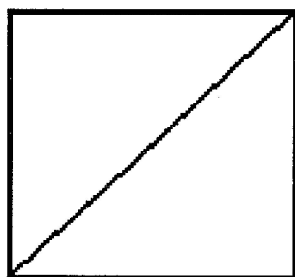
4. THE VALUE OF EACH STRATEGY

We connected the four strategies to the “carré de Lacan”.

Idéal du Moi
Phallus
Langue orale

L'autre
Les besoins
Tactile

Moi
Plaisir
Visuel



L'Autre
L'Autorité
Langue écrite

The Visual strategy is connected to pleasure, enjoyment, games, playing, the way the subject sees himself in his present existence. It corresponds to Lacan's “Moi”, but also, partially, to the deep drives of Lacan's “autre”, as much as sight has to do with impulses and voyeuristic pleasure or displeasure. But note the impulse is not in seeing, in sight, in the eye, but the eye is the way that

impulse connects with the world, realises itself, comes out of its shell. It is not the pleasure of seeing, but the pleasure of seeing something that moves some deep and ark impulse. Hence the direct connection between Lacan's "Moi" and "autre" realized on the diagram by the oblique catty-corner line. This "Moi" is of course egocentric, and oral language is egocentric too: it is the realm of the "I" or "me". It is also the direct way to impose oneself onto another person. It can be a tool of power.

The Written Language strategy definitely has to do with the "Autre", i.e. Authority, because it is the language of school, the language of knowledge, the language of what is imposed onto you, the language of discipline: spelling, syntax, grammar, correctness, the language of the Law and the State, and anything that pretends to have some authority over the individual, to dictate him what he has to do and think. And this "dictation" is in writ, of course, gathered and kept in some books, even if the society the individual is living in does not have books or even "written language". Then it is entrusted to the memory of some people who will keep that law the way it has always been, perfect, pure, unchanging, hence getting away, year after year, from the real oral language the people speak. It is **written oral language**. Note the language of the radio, or television, or the cinema, or drama is just the same, written oral language, out of time, that is to say an oral language that abides by some rules that are stricter than in any oral communication, hence make this oral language a coded medium, hence a written language. For a very long period of time, in our western world, at least the European side of it, Latin was this written language, purely oral for most people who could not read or write it, and yet knowingly repeated the formulae of all religious services or court procedures. Note French played that role in England in the Middle Ages after the Norman conquest, and some remnants of it are still used.

The Oral Language strategy is, according to Piaget and Vygotski, egocentric. It is the language through which the subject builds himself and especially builds his "Idéal du Moi", the way he sees himself in the future, outside himself, the model he will try to concentrate on and realise. It is a constructive language for the individual. Any school system that does not start from the real oral language of the learner is negating his fundamental identity and "Idéal du Moi". That is the reason, and the only reason, why our schools in France produce illiteracy. If we impose, from the very start of schooling, the standard language of knowledge, what some call "national French", we are deculturizing the vast majority of our kids who cannot project their first "Idéal du Moi" into the school system because their "Idéal du Moi" does not correspond to the school's language. We come here to the conclusion that we must teach kids to read and write their own oral languages. And that is the drama of the normative and homogenizing school system. We cannot find in one class two kids who have the same initial personal oral language. So, we should teach them to use their oral languages, to write them, to read them, to mix them freely. We do not do that and try to impose an abstract written language that the pupils are forced to use even orally. We give too much value to the "Autre" and not enough to the "Moi" and the "Idéal du Moi". In other words we produce either deculturized kids or perfectly schizophrenic people. And mind you, we drag that along to the top of the top of the hierarchy. It is a fatal criticism in a PhD presentation to be accused of writing the way you speak. That is a crime against the University, the State, the Fatherland, the Republic, and I do not want to know what else. Any person from an English speaking background cannot understand that linguistic dictatorship, because it is a dictatorship. Not because the language has rules, but because this "national French" is imposed as the only acceptable medium in life, though it is not, though no one, not even the most cultivated and learned university professor or poet speaks it in private, in the deeper and deepest depth of his mind. He writes it and speaks it in public, for sure, but that is about all. In France, at the present moment, we are willfully, though unconsciously, producing masses and masses of perfectly illiterate people.

The Tactile strategy is difficult to define and to grasp in the French school system. Yet it is essential. It has to do with the three senses that do not process language: touch, taste and smell. These senses are directly and nearly essentially connected to the drives of the subject, the “autre”, the “tripe” as Roland Barthes used to call it. But this level is essential in the maturation process of any kid. It is through contact with other people that he builds his sense of reality, and his position in this reality. Sight and hearing are naturally accepted. But, in the French education system at least, we forget the immense role of touching and being touched, of smelling and being smelled, of tasting and being tasted (the latest book by Claude Olivenstein on *La Bouche* says great things on the subject). That is the direct physical contact any young subject needs to position himself in society, not only, though it is important, seeing and hearing, especially language. In the judeo-christian tradition we tend to refuse the “autre”, the level of drives, emotions, instincts, etc. The present campaign in France, and more widely in Europe, against what they call paedophilia is having negative sides: physical contact, and even physical close-coming (“rapprochement corporel”, in French in the text) is becoming something evil, despicable, that has to be rejected. The result is that kids are lost in an artificial language and the refusal of any physical or emotional contact. Instead of defining limits, clear lines between what is necessary for the maturation of kids and what is criminal, we just throw away, the bath water, the baby along with it and the bathtub too as well. Some go as far as steam rolling the bathroom: they want sex to be outlawed for people under eighteen, considering that, since a person under eighteen cannot sign a commercial contract in France, he cannot in any way discriminate between what is good or bad, and hence cannot in any way be held responsible for his sexual activities. Thus we must ban these. And the circle has been squared, and square it is, politically correct some would say. And there is no smile behind that squaring. We will have, if this folly goes on too long, to reinvent the wheel.

5. THE RESULTS.

We have already given the calculations.

So far we have the results of three different groups of students from different schools in France, different regions, and even public and private schools. The first group is composed of 75 students from one “collège”, i.e. 12 to 17 year olds (close to junior high school). They show an advantage in Visual and Oral Language, and a disadvantage in Written Language and Tactile, respectively: +2.9, +3.7, -1.1 and - 5.5. The second group is composed of 82 BTS students (vocational college students two years after the “baccalauréat”, some kind of State University). They show an advantage in Visual, Oral Language and Written Language, and a disadvantage in Tactile, respectively: +3.2, +6.3, +0.1 and -9.5. The third group is composed of 155 vocational high school students (“lycée professionnel”). They show an advantage in Visual and Oral language, and a disadvantage in Written Language and Tactile, respectively: +3.9, +5.7, -3.4 and -6.9. Globally this sample of 312 students from 12 to 22 years of age show an advantage in Visual and Oral Language, and a disadvantage in Written Language and Tactile, respectively: +3.5, +5.3, -1.9 and -6.9. A full analysis of these results has been published in *Rule Syntactica* n° 11 and 12 (some results are still pending for publication).

The visual advantage at all levels is the result of the fundamental role of sight in the process of an individual establishing contact with the world, especially nowadays with the role of télévision, videos and computers (multimedia). We must note that many people are afraid of this visual society we are coming into. Note this visual society is also a society where publishing has never been so

important. Magazines, books, all kinds of forms and print-outs and anything you can imagine. And we cannot deal with multimedia if we cannot read and write, what's more English more than French. If we want to become some Internet Wizards we'll have to dominate, among others, a language called VRML that does not work with icons and menus, but with command lines. The oral language advantage is the result of the fact that oral language is the first language an individual acquires and it is extremely egocentric at first and remains the main way to communicate with other individuals on an everyday basis.

The global written language disadvantage is of course the result of the fact that written language is imposed, hence represents authority, particularly school authority or social authority, and we have here a clear sign of illiteracy. We can note that BTS students have greatly remediated this disadvantage. But, these students are strictly selected: so this disadvantage is more or less pushed aside, though these students do not show that brilliant an advantage: BTS students are the fourth level of selection in the French system, after the "baccalauréat". On the other side the students of vocational schools are very low because they are also selected, but they are the last, or nearly last level of post-"collège" education, high school education that is nowadays practically compulsory. So the written language disadvantage is concentrated there by the system. The system does not try to solve the problem, but only to homogenize the groups, classes, levels, environments. And they do succeed, because written language, even in the oral form (reading, literature, oral expression) is made compulsory and dominant.

But the surprise comes from the tactile disadvantage. The French system nearly excludes such an approach to education and maturation. This is particularly visible at all levels, though it goes up with age, just as if French education was little by little rejecting any tactile approach to human relation and pedagogical work. The body is not used as a tool, a conscious tool, and certainly not as an expressive or communicative tool, especially in the perspective of possible contact with others. If we follow psychologists or psychiatrists, this exclusion of tactile contact or expression may have tremendous consequences on the personal maturation of any individual. We must say that the overloading of this tactile contact and expression with violent and sexual innuendo can only increase the problem. Some go as far as speaking of the blocking of individuals in the buco-anal phase, which is the starting point of all real "perversions", that is to say the impossibility to accept contact with someone else on a full equality basis. That leads to all kinds of sadism, violence, masochism, submission to authority even into crime if necessary, fetichism, and of course drugs, crime itself, war, torture, and all kinds of other un-human or non-human attitudes. "Man is a wolf to man" Alfred de Vigny used to say. But today "man is made into a wolf to man" could we say to be more precise.

This unrealistic approach to education and the negation of the capacity of an individual learner to come to the right conclusion is shown clearly with subjects like racism. In French schools, we are coming to the idea that it is forbidden to ever utter a racist argument, even if it is to denounce it. We are supposed to produce non-racist kids but without telling them what racism is, what racists say, what kind of arguments can be considered as racist. So they love their ethnic brothers (at least they say so or obey so) at school, and when they go out, they fall in the traps of the grossest arguments, at times, but very often of the very fine arguments some racist movements are developing. And racism becomes common sense, like saying that black people are good at sports, meaning they are not good at science or some other activities. It is easy to pretend races are not equal in our society, and we had that in France, from one or two extreme-right politicians and the state was totally disarmed against it because they did not even want to try to go to court, since the arguments were supported by common sense observations. Never can we disentangle - let alone cut

through - that gordian knot if we cannot quote these “arguments” and show the facts that are behind are the results of segregation. But does the French society wants its teachers to show how segregation works in our midst? Asking the question is answering it. So on this question no autonomy of the learner is possible. He has to abide by the “law” at school and can say anything that seems to be common sense outside. There is no meeting point. And it is not only the result of the desire of politicians for some questions not to be touched. It is the result of the deep conviction of some, maybe many, teachers that to deal with such ideas, with segregation in our society is to be political and they consider politics as being under their level, status, dignity.

Any particular result is difficult to analyze, particularly extreme cases. We can only understand if we get into the particulars of the subject. The outstanding cases are those where the tactile element is out of “norms”, that is to say heavily deficient or overrated. The tactile element, in these ab-normal cases, reveals a problem with the particular subject, student, a problem that always has to do with his or her capacity to cope with the world properly. We can, more or less, define two groups that are either deficient or overrated as for their tactile results. We must not forget this test is a declarative test. So the picture we get is of course the picture the student wants us to get. Of course he or she does not control the process because of the mixing of the questions and of the fact that they are not told what the objective is, except in vague terms such as “to improve our work in class”. But even so, some censoring or showing-off phenomena can take place. It is not important whether the student is highly over or highly under the “average” of his or her class. The fact that he or she falls out of norm shows his social difficulties. They can be either over-reactive, over-active, turbulent, rowdy or even disruptive, generally using oral language but also physical elements (generally gross or rude) or violence. They can be, on the other side, completely introverted and have great difficulties with their oral expression. They always “beg” for contact: eye contact, physical contact (even violence), linguistic contact, psychological contact (mothering or fathering), in a word attention. They can “beg” for it vehemently, for instance by disrupting the normal course of the class, so that we are obliged to look after them, to answer them. One of their favorite first remarks, often aggressive in tone, is “I have always been zilch in English, and I am not going to change.” If the contact is established, and some will blackmail you into getting “down” or “up”, but always “out”, to their field of interest, then they start moving, improving, getting to something, even in English, but not necessarily, at least immediately. That process of “taming” the rebel in them may take two periods, or two years, or more. But there is no other way: you must “tame” the “wild animal” in the student to get him to some real results, some real constructive attitude, though of course most of them will be trying to pull what you’re doing down to what they want to do, or what they deem themselves able to do. The other introverted group is quite different. Contact is nearly impossible within the academic subject because they have a great handicap at speaking, and they may not, necessarily, have compensated this handicap by a written ability at expressing themselves. Most of the time, and our phrase here is just prudence, in both groups, they are students who have suffered some kind of shock or trauma many years ago, and may go on being submitted to the trauma. The trauma might be anything, from violence, even sexual, from parents, brothers or sisters, relatives, acquaintances or plain strangers, to any failure (particularly school failure) that was not understood as the result of a particular difficulty or the way to ask for special attention. This latter kind of trauma reveals that there was something else before that was re-activated by school experience. Anyway, in those cases, we only have particular cases, individual cases, and we need to explore the subject, his or her file, his or her antecedents, his or her past, to eventually find out the element that is blocking. In fact, we do not need to find it really, because we will not treat it, since we are no psychologists, no social workers, no psychiatrists. We can, if that help is available, ask these specialists to look into the problem. But we are getting out of our own ground there. We, teachers,

can only know that these students need a special treatment that will enable them to enter a discursive, “friendly”, attentive process that will eventually liberate in them the energies they have and they divert into their aggressivity, or introvertedness. There are no miracles. A student might react straight away at one remark that touches the sensitive point that is at stake, at times without us knowing about it. We just see the result: a sudden change in work and attitude, which can be positive or negative. Particular cases could be multiplied. But this very student can then develop some kind of hatred that will lead him or her into some subtle vengeance, which will flabbergast us when it comes. We are dealing here with the deepest layers of the personality of a student, and, among other things, with his or her unconscious areas, with his or her “Id”, to use Freud’s concept. And opening this door may lead to unforeseeable consequences.

And yet, that is the only way. Any person who says no, traps the students in their own shortcomings, their own difficulties, and the more time goes by, the more difficult it will become to revert the process, to solve the problem. Most damages are irreversible, or at least would cost so much money, effort, energy, skill to be reverted that no society can or will afford it. Then these kids become adults and society can only “manage” them, even if it is through some psychiatric hospitalisation, chemotherapy, or even worse methods.

6. ENCOUNTERING THE FIFTH STRATEGY

We really started to realise there was a fifth strategy at play in any individual when confronted to new knowledge to be accepted, understood and absorbed, in our classes. The enthusiasm with which learners accepted videos, the choices they made when asked to choose those videos (action films, Stephen King films, etc, and also comedies) questioned our convictions. The great results they got in difficult activities on those films showed the high level of commitment and motivation they were able to achieve in such situations. What’s more, a very particular experience with fifteen to sixteen year olds convinced us that there was something more than just four strategies. One day, two kids in a music class made an exposé on Michael Jackson. That was their choice. Some time before, some students had declared ballet dancing and opera singing was s... . And that was the word they used, in French of course. We decided to bring them a rare - in France - piece of video to widen their knowledge of Michael Jackson, and that was Thriller. They knew the song, but not the video and they were in great thrills, you can imagine. So introducing Michael Jackson’s Thriller, we were expecting some kind of revolution under their skulls, in their brains. And the revolution took place. They admired Michael Jackson and his dancing, which is very close to ballet dancing, though they admired it because it was modern and somewhat erotic. But ballet dancing does not have to be archaic, classical, old, and it is always erotic. They recognized all the film allusions, to Night of the Living Dead or werewolves. So they had a culture somewhere. And a culture whose existence most teachers would not know, would ignore, we mean, refuse to know. Then, we proposed them to watch and work on West Side Story, though we were thinking they would never go beyond one third of it, we were amazed by the fact that they spent six hours and insisted on working (and we really mean working: answering to eighty questions, sequence after sequence, in writ, corrected and graded) from the very first scene to the very last scene (the credits). Why did they do it and asked for it, once it was started? The film deals with racism, violence and love. And it shows, with beautiful scenes of ballet dancing and opera singing, real racism, real violence, real love (even if it is old in a way, because the pictures are rather tamed, but the situations are obvious and the language is direct), and the film is a demonstration that racism and the violence that comes out of it can only lead to tragedy and the negation of love. The class was an ethnically mixed class and all students really worked hard and succeeded on that very “demanding and difficult” task (quote from a school inspector) and achieved high level grades, that is to say a high level of

success. And the singing or the dancing was definitely neither a handicap nor a hindrance: they watched it and even analysed, prompted to do so of course, the dramatic value and effect of the dancing and the meaning of the songs. What motivated them into working so hard?

The only answer is that the film, which they did not know before, was in direct articulation onto their everyday life and culture. Culture, not what we may have in our minds, but what the kids, the learners really have in their heads, and they do have a lot because of the multimedia society we live in, the learners' culture was at stake, and the learners projected themselves into the process because they recognized themselves, they identified themselves with the characters. And we should not even speak of culture in the singular but cultures in the plural. The youth of today have many cultures, and they know how to discriminate them and they identify, at times to the extreme of gang-building, to every single branch of it.

We then remembered the symposium we went to in Amsterdam in the 10th AILA congress in 1993. That symposium had to do with using rap as a teaching method in a very difficult high school in New York, and the effect it had in transforming physical violence into heated but peaceful debates on Lincoln or Martin Luther King, on what each group had expressed in their rap songs on those subjects they had been obliged to discover, search and enrich through their own research, and the way they performed them.

Then we had the opportunity to go to Bournemouth to observe an Anglo World International Language School in 1997. We found there, exactly the same problem. Students were not motivated if they did not connect their own culture with what they were taught. It is the connection between the culture or cultures the learners already have and the culture or cultures the learners are proposed to acquire that is the main force that motivates them. This school is international and is mixing all the time at least ten or twelve nationalities in each group. We could think the English culture could be the motivating common denominator. Wrong. It is not, for many of them. They go back to their national languages, as soon as they can. They go out to discos, or cinemas, or pubs, in national groups. They do sports the same way. They do not see the link between their cultures and the English culture, and some become demotivated. Such schools are good to learn English, but we estimate that 20 up to 50 or even 60% of the benefits are lost and wasted for a great proportion of students because they do not enter the English culture and do not relate to it. When, one night, in a law class for University Foundation Year students, one student, supported by a few others, suggested that the Law Lords could buy their positions, and for them the only question was how much, thus showing buying such functions was natural for them, I really felt the cultural gap that we must fill all the time. I say, the students will become all the more autonomous in such a process, if they understand the links, if any, between their own cultures and the culture they are introduced to. We must start from what the students are if we want them to assume the process of learning, to become motivated and eventually to be autonomous. The question of the autonomy of the students is not even askable if the students are not motivated.

We can see here we are introducing a very new idea. The culture the learners have is part of their "Moi", of their "Idéal du Moi", of their already acquired knowledge. The connection with a new knowledge is of course the discriminating element Vygotski uses to define his "zone of close knowledge", the knowledge the learners accept to consider, because it is connected, in a way or another, with what they already know or possess. That means any successful pedagogy has to appeal to the egocentric force that lies in any learner, in any human individual.

We are going to move now, in our research, into a new field which is that of the impact of the Internet on the autonomy and the motivation of the learner. Let's just say here we are dealing with something quite different, because we are entering a field where the users play, conquer new territories and project themselves into new territories. But these questions can only be analyzed if we work on the tools of this domination, conquest, colonization and so on, i.e. the languages that enable someone to enter the realm of Virtual Reality. More about it in a few months or a couple of years. We are only standing on the verge, on the fringe of this new territory and looking at the wild nature living there without even, at times, recognizing the species and the messages that are being exchanged.

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