Creating a Simulated Natural Environment as an Alternative Approach to Foreign Language Teaching: Suggestions to Improve the Teaching and Learning of Foreign Languages in Cote d'Ivoire

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CREATING A STIMULATED NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AS AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING:
Suggestions to improve the teaching and learning of foreign languages in Cote d'Ivoire

Master's Project Completed by:
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Lazare Kouabran N'Diore
To my wife and our children
with gratitude and love.
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I. INTRODUCTION

The title of my project is "Creating a simulated natural environment as an alternative approach to foreign language teaching: Suggestions to improve the teaching and learning of foreign languages in Cote d' Ivoire." Our common concern, as language teachers, has always been to find the most appropriate and most effective method, or approach, or strategy, or technique, or whatever we may call it, that will better fit our unique situation of foreign language teaching in Cote d' Ivoire.

This project ambitions to propose an alternative teaching approach that might be more exciting and more helpful to our students because it will be hopefully 'real language' like, and learner-centered. This approach as far as I know, will be different from the ones prevailing up to now in our schools, because it will affect both the physical elements of the classroom and its management on the one hand, as well as the cognitive and metacognitive elements that influence language acquisition on the other hand. Presently, the learning environment in Cote d' Ivoire, to many of us, is not favorable for "natural and normal language" learning. In addition to the poor physical, social, and instructional environments in school settings, the mastering of English, Spanish, or German, does not seem indispensable to the ordinary Ivorians who have many other languages already available for their everyday needs.
The authorities themselves see the use of foreign languages beyond the Ivorians' basic needs, and expect students to be able to communicate orally with foreigners by the time they finish high school. But to communicate effectively, the language learner needs to be exposed to the natural and normal use of the target language.

I can say with confidence that today most language theorists agree that there are no striking discrepancies between the acquisition of first language (L1) and second language (L2), because abundant recent literature existsto sustain on the contrary, that they present a lot of similarities. In the third chapter, the paragraphs dealing with the comparison between first and second language acquisition will support this assertion. An analysis of this literature will allow me to logically deduce that there should not be big differences between the teaching and learning of foreign languages and first languages either, because the common important variable that seems to make the difference between first language and second language on the one hand, and second language and foreign language on the other, is the environment in which these languages are acquired, taught or learnt. In my sense, this physical as well as psychological environment, is what we, language teachers, will have to work on. It should be the number one condition any of us should consider prior to any methods and techniques that we might use or apply to achieve our goal of developing real communicative competence in our students.
The environments I will deal with in this project, are mainly the school environments: classroom and language clubs. But I will also mention other available ones that might be provided by trips and stays abroad.

In this project, I will first present the linguistic environment as it is now in Cote d' Ivoire. This presentation will be supported by some examples and facts that might explain or illustrate why I think such an environment is not appropriate, not to say hostile, to foreign language learning. After analysis of the present situation and before I propose some "new" approach, I will investigate what the literature suggests might be appropriate language learning environment, and how to adapt it to FLT in Cote d' Ivoire. I will analyze the language teaching system nation wide, and I will present some comparative examples from a few schools, and some language clubs' activities both in Cote d' Ivoire and at UMass. My data sources come from eleven years of personal experiences as an EFL teacher and as an ESC (English Speaking Club) manager, and also from other colleagues' experiences. Later, once back home, I hope to have the opportunity to organize workshops about how to implement some of these strategies in FLT, in terms of inservice teacher training, classroom management, etc.

Now, what is the nature of the linguistic environment in which Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) evolves in Cote d' Ivoire?
II. PRESENTATION OF THE LINGUISTIC ENVIRONMENT

Cote d'Ivoire, like many other African countries, is traditionally a multilingual setting. Four main ethnic groups, Akan, Madingo, Mande and Kru, and their sub-groups speak about 62 languages and dialects, not to mention French, the official and instructional language, and other alien languages brought about by the immigrations after Independence in 1960.

The teaching and learning of English, Spanish or German as foreign languages is therefore no easy task in Cote d'Ivoire, considering the impediments from what I call the "hostility" of the environment. Let us review some through the following settings:

1. School setting: the Ivorian schools like many African schools suffer from poor equipment compared to schools in Developed Countries in general, and schools in the U.S.A. in particular. The situation at home has been progressively worsening because of the persisting economic crisis, doubled with the deterioration of the existing equipment and the growing of the school population every year. This general concern touches us, language teachers in particular, because of the specificity of our subject matter. In fact what can even the best language teacher do in a class of seventy, eighty, or even ninety students? What are the chances of each of these students to individually use and manipulate the target language? Actually, if the teacher is concerned by distributing the practice equally among his/her
students, each of them will be granted less than one minute's time in a class period of fifty five minutes, which means, less than three minutes per week! Furthermore, handicaps of diverse origins (human, social, administrative, etc.), difficult for an outsider to understand, put such terrible pressures on both the teacher and the students so that they become in many cases inefficient and non-productive. In such environment the teacher has no motivation and shows no dedication for his/her work. It is thus, unimaginable that he/she should devote extra time and energy to enhance his/her teaching. Thus, the classroom ambiance is tense, non-participative, and threatening. The teacher makes it clear that he/she is the authority, the one who knows and dispenses instruction. If the students want to 'learn', they must be quiet, listen, and follow his/her orders only because the teacher 'has no time to waste with the stupid and lazybones'. This simply means that he/she has no time to pay particular attention to those of the students who do not follow or just cannot keep up for whatever reasons - biological or affective - that might block their interests, or influence their production. At this point, the teacher's tendency is to make it a rule to do nothing more than what may satisfy the administrative and curriculum requirements. This lack of motivation, of course hinders any creative initiative from both the teacher and the students in such environment. Let us note that the school system itself, to some extent, is not favorable either. The new direction of educational policy favors
sciences against arts and literature in general. As a result, Math is taught six to eight hours per week, whereas English is taught three hours per week. Physics and Chemistry have specialized rooms and labs in every school, but almost none of all the secondary schools have a language lab.

2. **Outside the school setting**: Due to the multiplicity of local languages spoken in the country, Ivorians mostly use either Diula, a language derived from Madingo and widely used all over West Africa, or French the official language inherited from colonization, to communicate with strangers in the streets, with friends, or colleagues at their work-place. European foreign languages; English, Spanish, and German, albeit taught in all secondary schools and higher institutions, are almost never used outside classrooms. At their homes, families use exclusively their mother tongues or French for communication among their members and with friends. Thus, FL use is confined to the classroom environments only. Though teachers encourage their students to converse in the foreign languages they teach them (English for example) anywhere and any time they can (in the school yard, in the street, at home with their friends), the student who really does so is seen by his peers as boaster, acculturated, or simply someone who wants to show off. So the environment generally discourages even those, as Leighton (1989) says, "who have a strong communicative drive and who will tend to make full use of whatever opportunities they will find and of whatever skill they possess." On the radio, the one-hour
daily programme in English is not ideal to serve as an authentic listening comprehension device since the radio broadcasts are generally non-interactional (Morrison, 1989).

What I am saying here is that the environment in which the teaching and the learning of FLs operate is very rough, and needs to be improved if we want to create better learning conditions for our students, and establish more agreeable working atmosphere for ourselves as language teachers.

Before investigating the factors and conditions that are thought to govern appropriate learning environments, let us see what the literature says about language learning in general, and second and foreign language acquisition and how does it compare with first language acquisition.

III. SOME THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

1. From Chomsky to Breen and Candlin

Most of the new language teaching approaches originate with the cognitive theories of learning, that were said to emphasize the role of the mind in actively acquiring new knowledge professed by Chomsky (1959) and his followers. Before them the behaviorist thinking which assumed that human learning and animal learning were parallel, if not contiguous, developed the Stimulus-Response (S-R) school of psychology that prepared
Behaviorism prepared the way for Audio-Lingual Method after World War II (Omaggio, 1986). In S-R psychology, all behavior is viewed as a response to stimuli, whether the behavior is explicit or implicit. In 1959 Chomsky attacked the behaviorist school in psychology when he reviewed Skinner's Verbal Behavior (1957), and argued forcefully and persuasively that Stimulus-Response (S-R) psychology could not begin to account for novel utterances or for creativity in language behavior (Omaggio, 1986, p.65).

Chomsky's attack started a real revolution in the field of linguistics. By opposing the idea that the mind is simply a tabula rasa, Chomsky reminds us that language is not made by us but rather develops as the result of the way we are constituted, when we are placed in the appropriate external environment. That challenge of the Skinnerian theory and, indirectly, of most of the application of behaviorism to second language teaching is perhaps as Rihard-Amato (1988) says, "his most important contribution to date." Bruner also gives Chomsky credit for "freeing us from the paralyzing dogma of "association-imitation-reinforcement paradigm" (1978, p. 245), since the latter (Chomsky) hypothesized that language was not acquired by children through a form of conditioning dependent on reinforcement or reward. He maintained that human beings come to the world with innate language-learning abilities in the form of a language acquisition device (LAD) which proceeds by hypothesis testing. In other words, children make hypotheses and compare these with their innate knowledge (of possible
grammars based on the principles of universal grammar (Rivers, 1981, p.77). In this way, their internalized knowledge of the grammar of the language, is built, and this competence makes language use, or performance, possible. Therefore, basic to his Transformational-Generative Grammar theory is Chomsky's (1965, pp.3-9) distinction between the terms of competence and performance. Basically, competence refers to the knowledge of the system of the language, including rules of grammar, vocabulary, and how linguistic elements can be combined to form acceptance sentences, while performance refers to the actual production and comprehension of specific linguistic events.

Chomsky in turn has been criticized rather severely by those who point out that his basic linguistic model is too restrictive in failing to include the societal aspects of language (Hymes, 1970; Halliday, 1979; and many others). Halliday for example, rejects Chomsky's distinction between competence and performance altogether by calling them misleading and irrelevant. For Halliday, the more we relate the grammar system to meaning in social contexts and behavioral settings, the more insight we will have into the language system. That's how Wilkins (1976) came about with his notional-functional syllabus as a structure for input in the classroom. But, this notional approach is not reproachless either. Breen and Candlin (1979) criticize its artificial breakdown of communication into discrete functions. They feel that the negotiation for meaning is crucial to a successfully applied communication methodology. Actually,
this negotiation which seems fundamental in our interactions in our mother tongues or first languages (L1), has led a good number of language theorists to investigate the field of first language acquisition and compare it to second language (L2) acquisition.

2. Comparison between L1 and L2 acquisition: some findings.

In 1974, Ervin-Tripp carried out research that opposed a popular idea that it was not logical to attempt to develop a common theory for first and second language acquisition. She directly challenged that widely spread idea and pointed out that one reason of that idea's apparent popularity was that research traditions have been so different for each of the two areas. On the one hand, first language (L1) studies have been longitudinal for the most part, have focused on learner strategies, and have been limited mainly to natural settings in which language is a by-product of communication needs (Richard-Amato, 1988, p.20). On the other hand, second language (L2) studies, have focused on a manipulation of structure and methods, and, until recently, have been limited to classroom settings in which syntactic form rather than communication needs have been emphasized. According to Ervin-Tripp, the idea that L1 and L2 acquisition have little in common theoretically has been based on two common misconceptions: 1) The foundations for L2 is built largely from a transfer of the rules of L1,
and 2) only L2 is constructed from prior conceptual knowledge within the learner. Thus, Ervin-Tripp (1974), Newmark (1979), and Ellis (1986), think that although important differences must be taken into account, there are sufficient number of similarities between L1 and L2 acquisition to support a common theory (Richard-Amato, 1988, pp. 22-23). Therefore, if the acquisition of L2 is somehow similar to the acquisition of L1, the classroom strategies for the teaching of L2 should take those similarities into account and adapt its methods. From here, I think we can extrapolate/hypothesize and say that there must be, indirectly, some commonalties in the strategies for L1, L2, and a foreign language (FL) acquisition, since the common element that makes the difference among them is their different contexts/environments.

3. Language acquisition in the classroom

Breen and Candlin (1979) in their research assume that the classroom can be an appropriate environment for language acquisition, assumption that I share under the condition that 'appropriate environment' means 'simulated natural environment', because only this way can the language be acquired. In his Monitor Model, Krashen (1981b) stresses a basic distinction between the two linguistic systems of acquisition and learning. As part of the rationalization of this model, acquisition is subconscious and learning is conscious. In language acquisition,
in an informal situation, he believes, linguistic abilities are internalized naturally, that is, without conscious focusing on linguistic forms. The items that are acquired are those that were able to pass through the affective filter, which consists of inhibitions, motivation, personality factors, and so on (for more understanding see next paragraph), and move into the subconscious to become intake. On the other hand, the items that are learned, for example the formal rules of the language, become part of the Monitor, a device that learners use to edit their language performance (see Krashen, 1981b, 1982; and Krashen and Terrel, 1983), and are used in production if only they are relatively simple (Richard-Amato, 1988). So according to Krashen, the rules of the target language do become acquired, but only by exposure to the language. This is slightly different from Stevick's (1980) Eureka phenomenon, which is said to occur when the student is made consciously aware of the acquired rule through teaching. This awareness might lead the student into thinking that the learned rule, because it has been learned, goes directly to the acquisition store, when it may actually have been acquired through exposure to the language itself. However, as Richard-Amato (1988) says, it is highly probable that the subconscious/conscious dichotomy has been too simplistically drawn in the first place. Who says things learned cannot go into the acquisition store? Many have questioned the dichotomy, arguing that it is possible for rules that have been consciously applied over and over in a variety of situations,
to become automatic and thus internalized (Bialystok and Frohlich, 1977; Stevick, 1980; Ellis, 1986). McLaughlin, Rossman, and McLeod (1984) are also critical of the distinction Krashen has drawn between learning and acquisition. They prefer to speak of controlled and automatic information processing. What actually differentiates these concepts from Krashen's is that in the latter concepts, individual learning styles are an additional factor to be considered. Although the Monitor Model may be questioned (because flawed) as theory, Krashen has highlighted an extremely important issue. "He has brought the point home to many language teachers that the classroom does not have to confine itself to formal instruction in the target language" (Richard-Amato, 1988). It can instead provide the kind of input that he feels will best facilitate the second language/foreign language acquisition process, that is, input that is comprehensible, interesting, and/or relevant, that is not grammatically sequenced, and that is present in sufficient quantity. So if, we as language teachers, fill our classrooms with input that is optimal for acquisition, it is quite possible that we can actually do better than the informal environment (Krashen, 1982).

While Krashen emphasizes the importance of providing comprehensible input, Ellis (1984a, 1986) in his Variable Competence Model focuses on interaction. He believes it is not enough to be concerned with input. A key factor in the second/foreign language acquisition process is "the opportunity
afforded the learner to negotiate meaning with the interlocutor, preferably one who has more linguistic resources than the learner and who is adept at 'foreign/teacher talk'" (Ellis, 1984, p.184).

Thus, second/foreign language acquisition can occur in our classroom provided we create an appropriate language learning environment.

4. Appropriate language learning environment and affective factors that influence FL acquisition.

In the past decade or so, growing attention has been paid in the environment surrounding the learner, since language learning is a two-way street. Learners, and the mental and physical machinery they come with, comprise one dimension. The environment, including the teacher, the classroom, and the surrounding community, is the other (Oller and Richard-Amato, 1983, p.38). Growing interest has been attached to affective factors in FL learning. More specifically, negative factors that tend to block the learner's mind from incoming FL material have been the focus of interest. Breaking the emotional ice is considered essential in several recent methods, or 'approaches', and not without good reason (Laine, 1987). Now, most recent FL teaching methods and approaches recommend strategies of helping the FL learner to 'lower his filter'. But, what is the filter?
The 'socio-affective filter', 'affective filter', or simply, 'filter' is a common term in recent literature used to denote "that part of the internal processing system that subconsciously screens incoming language" (Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982, p.46). In a previous book, Krashen (1981, p.101) has made reference to various affective variables which "act to block input from the LAD (Language Acquisition Device)". The question put forward is what factors, representing the various aspects of formal FL learning, actually screen incoming language so that only part of the 'input' reaches the 'information processor' of the learner. Factors or combinations of factors that many researchers seem to agree upon have to do with attitudes, motivation, traits of personality, and level of anxiety, which are central to the affective domain. I will not, in this project, go into a detailed study of the 'affective filter', I will simply give brief explanations of some of the factors I have just mentioned in much of the current literature, Integrative motivation and Instrumental motivation are differentiated. Gardner and Lambert (1972) describe integrative motivation as a desire of the FL learner to integrate and identify with the target language group. They describe instrumental motivation as a desire to use the language to obtain practical goals such as getting good grades or taking an exam. Integrative motivation is generally stronger than instrumental motivation in predicting target language proficiency. Bernard Spolsky (1969) found that it is among the strongest predictors of proficiency in ESL/EFL
students', attitudes, develop as Richard-Amato (1988) says, "as a result of experience, both direct and vicarious." They are greatly influenced by people in the immediate environment: parents, teachers, and peers. Attitude toward self, the target language, the target culture and people who speak that language (peers in particular), teacher, and the classroom environment all seem to have an influence on acquisition. Personality traits have a strong link with a person's feeling of safety. According to Gardner & Lambert (1972), ethnocentrism, authoritarianism, anomie/alienation, and (trait) anxiety are the main elements. They call the first three "ethnocentric syndrome". They can be seen as generalized attitudes which make the learner unwilling to take in information concerning outgroups. In FL learning, they can be seen as screening variables working to block intake at the very outset. Anxiety as a generalized personality trait has strong connection with low self-esteem and discrepancies between self-esteem and the 'other' or 'social' self (Burns, 1982, PP.185-187). For more acquaintance with affective factors in FL learning, see Eero-J. Laine's (1987) study.

I think this 'short insistence' on these factors was necessary because my main idea is to suggest a 'natural' language learning approach, an approach that is "an attempt to achieve a language-learning situation which resembles as closely as possible the way children learn their first language" (Rivers, 1988). That is, an approach in which affective elements such
as motivation, inhibition, personality traits, etc... should be addressed in our teaching. The experience of children seems so effortless, so enjoyable, and so successful in contrast to most classroom language learning that the possibility of reproducing it with adolescents or adults acquires my irresistible fascination. I know there is a big controversy about whether or not foreign language skills should be learned in the order in which children learn their native language (Rivers, 1981, PP.55-58). I also know some teachers will say this 'natural' language learning, almost necessarily implies a residence in the country where the target language is spoken. Yes, it is true. But, the Natural Approach (Krashen & Terrel, 1983) involves setting up informal situations where students communicate with each other and their teacher and, through communicating, acquire the new language. In other words, the teacher should create a 'natural' environment where trust, confidence, and fun are the key words.

From here, I will suggest that we pursue some integrative approach, we may call it 'natural approach', that will rely on providing comprehensible input in the classroom, but will not fail as Hymes (1970), and Halliday (1979) remark, "to include the societal aspects of language". The learner should always be seen as 'a whole person' living in a society. And because language is also a living being, it changes to suit the situation of the moment. Furthermore, in a foreign language situation, the socio-affective variables such as personality, motivation,
attitudes, and others should be taken into account. Therefore, helping the learner to free him/herself from emotions that might block his/her 'information processor' is indispensable. In other words, if we establish a low anxiety classroom ambiance that might make the learner feel totally at ease, we might be more helpful in our teaching.

IV. THE NECESSITY OF A NATURAL LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENT

1. Natural exposure to the target language.

Before Rivers (1988), Stern (1981) had also expressed that advanced knowledge of a target language, with few exceptions, requires residence in the target language country or exposure to the realities of language use by contact with native speakers of the target language. (p.304). Today, we language teachers are more attracted by communicative goals, communicative competence, "real" language use etc. and hope to create whenever it is possible, the kind of "natural" language learning environment that might have the potential of native speaking areas. That simply means that most of us, concerned with communicative competence, view the natural setting as an ideal language learning situation. In our case in Cote d' Ivoire, particularly for EFL, short trips to neighboring English-Speaking countries such as Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria,
are feasible. Also, periods of study may be arranged on an exchange basis with schools in the target language country. In such a submersion model, there is a "maximum amount of context - the learner is surrounded by the second language and uses it to convey meaning - and a minimum amount of grammar explanation" (Savignon, 1978, p.12). My personal experience as an exchange student at Furah Bay College, Sierra Leone, in 1974, was extremely helpful. But my students' experience in Illinois, U.S.A. in 1987, was definitely more exciting and more positive to me as a language teacher. That Illinois experience came about as a result of an encounter with Mrs. Louise Crane in March 1986 in Abidjan, Côte d' Ivoire. Louise was then the outreach coordinator of the Department of African Studies of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. After one year of contacts and paper works on each side, Louise in the U.S.A., Christy Coulibaly my American-Ivorian friend and me in Côte d' Ivoire, a Youth Exchange program was set between three High Schools in Illinois (University High at Urbana-Champaign, Morgan Park High in Chicago, and Academy-Spalding at Peoria) on one side (U.S.A.), and Lycee Classique and Lycee Sainte Marie of Cocody (C.D.I.) on the other side. The program had two stages or phases. It started with exchanges of writings (letters and essays) on personal, national, and international interests. Let us note that the American students were learning FFL and my students were learning EFL. The students who were on both sides high school junior and seniors, were asked to write in
the language they felt most comfortable with. Thus, the students could freely communicate their ideas, and naturally share their joys and concerns with their peers in the two different countries for months, before the second stage of the program. That final stage, no less exciting, involved reciprocal visits in each target country. Being the manager of the English Speaking Club (ESC) of Lycee Classique and the local coordinator for this Youth Exchange, I was selected to conduct a group of six of the student-participants for a six week stay in Illinois in Spring 1987. They stayed in host families with their host student with whom they usually did everything: go to school, go to the shopping malls, to parties, etc. In the following Fall, six of the American student-participants reciprocated that visit in Cote d'Ivoire. The idea behind this exchange program was to see how the natural exposure to target language would influence those students' oral production, and certainly most important, was the promotion of better understanding and acceptance of other people and their cultures. As part of the evaluation of the program, we received from parents, host families, and teachers of both sides, written feedback which were extremely positive. The respondents unanimously declared that their kids have remarkably progressed in their oral use of the foreign language, and now seem to be more receptive and open-minded about the cultures of either side. Some close friendship have maintained ever since, and almost all the students continue to correspond. In Summer 1988, one of the
American students went back to Abidjan to visit her 'new family' again.

From this I can conclude that the natural exposure to the target language and the experience of family living not only make the use of the language more real and purposeful but they also give, as Rivers (1988, p.248) says, "vivid insight into the culture of the native speakers."

Obviously, being submerged in "a 24-hour communicative competence classroom" which the natural learning environment represents, has a lot of advantages. Still "street learning" as it has been called to distinguish it from classroom learning (Savignon, 1983, p.284), can be harmful to the foreign language learner. Number of well-known researchers like Krashen & Terrel (1983), and Mohan (1986), do not support the laissez-faire approach which affirms that the second language students can learn English simply by exposure to schooling in an English-Speaking community. "Some can. Others cannot..." (Mohan, 1986, p.7). For fear that the "street learning" does more harm than good to the foreign language learner, Krashen (1988) suggests that "if we fill our foreign language classrooms with input that is optimal for acquisition, it is quite possible that we can actually do better than the informal natural environment." I believe he is right. Many of us are really concerned by possible fossilization and creolization our students might be victim in some neighboring English-Speaking countries.
I also believe a kind of controlled natural environment using interactional and contextual communication, should be created by us, language teachers, to facilitate language acquisition.

2. Creating a simulated natural learning environment in the classroom.

According to the approach I am suggesting in the above paragraph, affective activities are best to develop 'natural and normal' use of the target language by the learner. However, to practice these activities effectively in our Ivorian contexts today, we need to change the physical and social environment of our classrooms.

Physical environment resources:

Until now, only one or two out of the 190 public high schools have got what might acceptably be called appropriate FL equipment. According to David Nott (1985) the 'hardware equipment required for effective foreign language teaching need not be extensive. But at least in the FL department, each teacher should have a portable radio/cassette recorder/player, and an overhead projector (OHP). Each student should have easy access to a cassette player with headset, the FL department should have a slide projector, and each school a video-cassette recorder (VCR)" (David Nott, 1985, PP.3-9). In fact, it is ideal to have:
a) A cassette recorder for using and recording live broadcasts in FL; for playing songs/poems/sketches, etc.; and for recording students' individual or group performances of their own or other people's inventions.

b) An overhead projector for presenting documentary material for example, cartoons, or even images of some aspects of the country of the target language, as a stimulus to oral work and for teaching grammar.

c) Cassette players with headsets for students' use, which will be cheaper than a language laboratory.

d) A slide projector for presentation and discussion of slides as part of the sequence of work on a specific topic.

e) A video-cassette recorder to ensure that all students see some appropriate FL films, or to show materials relevant to the current topic, and so forth.

In the case of Cote d'Ivoire, seldom will any school gather all this appropriate equipment. The school might have one cassette recorder/player but must have been broken years ago and not repaired. This single cassette recorder/player could exist but probably at the headmaster's or the bursar's home for personal use. There is no OHP in our schools as far as I know. There must be one slide projector in the school but often directly affected to the biology department only. Rarely will some schools have a VCR and a color TV, but even in that case, they are used for boarders' entertainment only. I suppose that initially all this hardware was at the disposal of all teachers.
who could use them when they wanted to. But those of the teachers for whom the use of these materials was not a requirement for their work, just ignored them. Their socio-economic preoccupations that I mentioned earlier, caused them not to be motivated for any sort of extra-work. And also the fact that science disciplines (biology, physics, and chemistry) have their specialized rooms, whereas there is no one FL classroom, could justify language teachers disinterest in using these basic educational technologies. Furthermore, the common room used for Maths, French, History/Geography, and FLs, is a rectangular room packed with three to four rows of fixed (immovable) benches and tables. The room has absolutely empty walls. The usually black chalkboard is fixed on the front wall below which there is a sort of stage to uphold the teacher's desk.

Clearly, we cannot afford the hardware Nott (1985) considers basic to FLT effectiveness. Necessarily, some other strategies need to be thought of. I believe if every high school can have a specialized language room, something can be done. though. The classrooms where communicative activities are the norms, must look different and must contain some basic resources. Enright and McCloskey (1988) rightly suggested that the appropriate language classroom must have four key characteristics: "they must be functional, flexible, enticing, and student-owned" (Enright and McCloskey, 1988, p.99). What does it mean concretely? Let us take these characteristics one by one:

a) In contrast with a transmission-classroom like the ones I
have described in the Ivorian context where the room is set up to accommodate two major kinds of activities: lecturing and individual seat work, with fixed tables and benches, and where the primary materials are textbooks, copybooks, pencils, and pens. A functional classroom should be set up to facilitate many types of activities and many kinds of student interaction and collaboration. It should be spacious in terms of uses of various areas and mobility of students using these areas. To plan or set the physical environment of his or her classroom, the teacher should think of the communicative activities such as discussions, role-play, storytelling, games, drama, receiving a visitor, etc. that will be performed in the classroom.

The structure of the environment and its component parts must make their intended functions clear to all the students (Enright & McClosky, 1988, p.102). Let us not forget that part of providing a warm and supportive environment is providing a safe environment, that is, an environment where the students understand and know exactly what is expected from them.

b) The language classroom environment should be more flexible than ordinary classrooms, in order to facilitate the dynamic, student-centered teaching approaches. In our traditional classrooms, desks are more or less permanently arranged in rows, and the teacher's desk and the blackboard are placed at the front of these rows. In contrast, the modern language environment should be designed to permit frequent and easy changes in the arrangement of furniture and materials. This flexibility will
Figure 1:
Classroom setting for small group work

1. door
2. windows
3. books
4. b-board
5. occasional screen
6. occasional TV
7. multi-purpose stairs
8. small group
9. Teacher's desk
10. flowers
11. loud-speakers

*5. oc/screen for 9
Figure 2: Setting for large group activities such as lectures, presentations, etc...

NB: Some tables have been removed and put aside (12) to make more space for all the students.
facilitate the use of new and diverse learning activities which are organized to make the social environment and the curriculum more integrated entities. Furniture that can easily be arranged is helpful in this environment. For example light tables and/or moveable desks are preferable to attached desk chairs or other heavy items. The ideal will be to have stackable chairs that can be put aside to provide space for an active movement event or a large group activity where students will be seated in a carpeted area. For example, a set of carpeted stair steps can provide a very successful multipurpose activity area (Enright & McCloskey, 1988, PP.107-108). It can be used for class performances and for teacher or visitor presentation. These stairs can also be used as a stage for small-group game, small-group dramatic play, etc...(Figures 1&2). Like stair steps, much of the furniture in the modern language classroom should be used by more than one person at the same time, thereby allowing "the collaboration that is necessary for language development." (Enright & McCloskey, 1988. p.108). Tables can replace desks, and desks can be pushed together to create group work spaces for the same purpose. In other words, the modern language classrooms should have the flexibility to facilitate the activities of the transmission classroom without being organized exclusively for the use of these activities.

c) The third attribute of the modern language classroom physical environment as proposed by Enright & McCloskey (1988), is that it should be a rich and enticing place to be for the students.
Somehow like a kindergarten classroom, the modern language room should be adorned in a way to create or maintain students' interests. "What might be called "distraction" in the transmission environment are learning starters and learning aids in the modern language classroom (Enright & McCloskey, 1988, p.110). If language learning truly involves meaningful communication and reflection, often about concrete and mutual referents (Oller & Richard-Amato, 1983), then it is essential that all kinds of objects that appeal to all the senses should be displayed on the walls of the classroom. It is better for example, that they change or vary in relation to the topic of the unit of study or the theme of the day.

d) The last characteristic attributed to the ideal modern language classroom physical environment is that it should be student-owned. This means that contrary to the classic classroom which is adult-owned (because it is organized without the students having their input), the modern language class should be organized in a way to promote student initiative. In such a classroom, the teacher is a senior partner. So he/she must involve the students in all aspect of daily classroom life. For example, the teacher can delegate to students various leadership roles and classroom responsibilities, such as attendance keeping, room maintenance, putting up a display, interviewing and escorting visitors, etc... (see figure 3).

"Anything that students can do that will promote their language learning, growth in self-esteem, and autonomy, they should
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Figure 3 Various leadership roles and responsibilities are delegated to the students.
do" (Enright & McCloskey, 1988, p.114). The teacher's task is to prepare them to succeed at these tasks.

Social environment:

The classroom social environment refers to the rules and procedures and ways of interacting that the teacher uses within his/her classroom and within his/her learning activities. Here again, in contrast with the transmission classroom, where the teacher is the absolute boss, the one who possesses and dispenses knowledge, the one who orders and the students obey, the one who talks while the students listen and supposedly 'learn', the ideal language classroom social environment should be based on "two well-grounded cognitive-developmental principles: (1) that learning is two-way and interactive, and (2) that concepts and language are best learned in direct combination" (Enright & McCloskey, 1988, p.70). For that, the atmosphere should be non-threatening and of low-anxiety so that the less gifted or less daring students may feel at ease to participate. In such a classroom, learning might be easier and more fun, in terms of the teacher filling it with 'relia' and 'concrete referents' (pictures, posters, signs, etc...), as well as encouragements (verbal or gesture), and jokes. To permit meaningful, and real communication to happen in the classroom, the teacher needs to change what Sarason (1982) calls the "classroom constitution", meaning rules usually determined before the students come to school, and are then just adapted slightly in order to take
Figure 4: Rules mandating collaboration and mutual respect as a behavior in the classroom will replace the 'interdiction rules' of the traditional classroom.
into account any unique group characteristics. The teacher must develop rules that will best suit his/her personal interactional goals within the communicative activities he/she wants his/her students to engage in. For example, to replace the 'interdiction rules' of the traditional class which I think block second/foreign language development, I believe the teacher can make rules mandating collaboration and mutual respect as a behavior in the classroom (see figure 4). The new rules will differ from the ones they replace in two respects. First, the students themselves will often be involved in the formulation and interpretation of the rules. For example, a rule requiring students to "respect the needs of others" means that the students will constantly make judgment about when to interrupt another student and when not to; when to help another student and when not to; and so on.

So the teacher who chooses to adopt communicative approaches in his/her classroom, will have to introduce new rules to his/her students and explicitly practice them for some time before they get in full effect. These new rules will be skillfully wrapped up in words or phrases connected with the values of self-control, collaboration, mutual respect, and good manners in order to entertain a richer and safer language learning environment in the classroom (see figure 4).

Samples of activities.

I think we language teachers must always remind ourselves
of the overall goals of our FL teaching: What do we want our students to be learning? Do we want to teach them the grammar and vocabulary of the language, or do we want to teach them to communicate in that language - that is - to speak and understand, to read and write so that they will be able, as Fantini (1984) says, "to function independently in the target language? This ability to speak and understand a native speaker in another language - "communicative competence" - is our main goal today. However, we have to recognize that in our particular context where almost all the teachers are non-native speakers of the language they teach, we do not always have the material and the training to work toward it. Thus, native speaking visitors can be inestimable resources.

Here are some communicative activities that might be performed in the kind of simulated natural environment provided by the classroom as mentioned in these last paragraphs. These activities are meant to stimulate the natural and normal use of the target language in this informal, (because non traditional), setting of the model FL classroom.

1. A visitor in the classroom.

Brief description:
This is an activity during which the students and their teacher receive a guest visitor in their classroom. The guest visitor is preferably someone whose mother tongue is the foreign language the students are learning. In a place where there is no native speaker of that FL, the visitor can be any person who masters that FL and who the teacher thinks is qualified to entertain his/her students (e.g. another teacher of that FL).

**Purpose:**

"Humans are social animals, and adolescents are the most social of humans" (Fantini, 1984, p.3). Listening and talking to a real person speaking the new language gives the students new interest for that language (in this context at least, the teacher does not count as a real person because it is his/her job to speak that FL), for the simple reason that a living person is more interesting than a book or a recorded voice. They hear his/her voice, they see his/her gestures, and interpret his/her facial expressions. The visitor might spontaneously use unfamiliar words and structures when trying to communicate with the students, and this presents a special challenge to them: the challenge to communicate with a real native speaker rather than merely solve an intellectual problem. As we all know, teachers often limit the structures and vocabulary they use when talking to their classes, in order to help the students understand them. More regrettable is the attitude of some teacher
Preparation:
Prior to the day of the session, the teacher will identify the prospective visitor, then will arrange for the delegate (s) of his/her class to meet with the guest and agree about what he/she will talk about. Let us not forget that this is a student-owned classroom where the teacher is simply a senior partner, and the responsibilities and decision making are shared. Thus, the classroom arrangement and decoration will depend on the taste of the students, and will be done with the collaboration of their teacher. I will suggest that part of the class session before the D-Day be devoted to students pair-works to prepare questions of their own interests that they will put for their visitor at the following class session. Finally, the teacher will help the students prepare speeches that will be delivered by a representative of their own choice, in the beginning and at the end of the session.

Procedure:
The procedure will depend on the type of activity agreed upon by the students and their guest. Let us take the example of a general presentation of the visitor's country, or its currency.
A. A visitor’s presentation of his/her country

1. The class before the visit the teacher should prepare his/her class with an introductory activity (name of the country, geographic location, inhabitants, main language(s) spoken, etc...).

2. Allow the class about 10 minutes to look at the exhibition of concrete referents displayed in the classroom (maps, pictures, postcards, photos, artifacts, etc...) without asking the visitor any questions at this moment.

3. The teacher, or the master of ceremony (the delegate of the students) asks the class to join their seats according to the arrangement of the classroom they have chosen for this particular session; then delivers the welcoming speech, and let the floor to the guest for 10 to 15 minutes.

4. Let the students discuss and prepare questions in small groups (3-4). Each group will come with 4 or more questions but only two questions that they will judge most important will be presented by the spokesperson of each small group. The students are encouraged to prepared more than two questions to avoid repeating the same questions another small group might have asked already. Allow 10 to 15 minutes.

5. In turn, the spokespersons of the small groups put their new questions to the visitor who answers them.

Nota Bene: in this activity, the teacher serves as a resource
to the students. He/she must encourage them to react to the
visitor's answers by giving their opinion or asking about their
guest's personal feelings, or sharing similar experience of
their own or of their parents.
6. When every small group has asked its questions and it seems
that everybody is 'satisfied', the teacher or the M.C. concludes
the activity by a speech thanking the guest.

B. Currency of the country:
* Questions about other countries' money often spring naturally
from dialogues or stories involving buying something, or from
pictures that show prices. Generally speaking, beginning students
seem to interpret prices in francs, even if they see "dollars"
or "pounds" after the number. Not having any other standard
for money, they think "pounds" or "dollars" are just other words
that really mean "francs". They are amazed that a sweater costs
'only' 20 dollars because they think it is 20 francs.
1. The visitor can simply pass around coins and bills from
his/her country, explaining their relative value. He/she can
explain why a unit of money is named what it is, point out
historical figures or landmarks pictured on the currency, and
explain the significance of the person or place, and writes these
names on the chalkboard as he/she mentions them to reinforce
what the students are hearing.
2. Hold up a coin or a bill and ask the class to identify it.
3. Say and write down the equivalent value in local money.
4. The visitor may narrate his/her daily activities and how much money he/she spends during the day to give a 'real' idea of the cost of life in his/her country.
5. Allow students to ask questions about the cost of life in this country.
6. Ask them to turn to their immediate neighbor and in pairs, prepare short dialogues about something they have on them or with them (e.g. shirt, bag, etc...) in relation to the foreign currency they have just been presented. For example:
   a- How much was your shirt?
   b- Uh... about 6,000 francs CFA. That means about $20.
   a- $20? That's cheap!
   b- What? CHEAP?...I bet this is not worth $10 in N.Y.C.
   a- Do you mean life is more expensive here?
   etc...

Follow-up
The follow-up activity will depend on the level of the class. For example for an advanced class, the teacher will ask the students to write out what the visitor told them, or to write about their daily routine, translating their own expenses into foreign currency.
2. Who am I? / What am I?

**Brief description:**
This is a game activity in which each participant is stuck a card in his/her back. On the card is written a well-known name of a person, a city, or a place from the target language country (e.g. the English-Speaking world). No one can see the card on his or her own back. To find out the name of the character he/she represents, each participant has to interact with other participants through questions and answers. The participant who will find out the biggest number of those names is the winner.

**Purpose:**
This activity can be a good ice-breaking exercise. I will suggest that it be tried at the beginning of the academic year when the students are still new to one another and need 'a pretext' to openly interact, in order to build confidence and feel at ease with one another.

**Preparation:**
Write names and brief descriptions of them on the cards -- one to each card. The number of cards should be at least three times the number of participants.
Procedure:
1. Tell your students that this activity needs space because the participants will be moving around, so the classroom should be arranged consequently.
2. Describe the game to them and explain that the more people they converse with, the more helpful it is for them.
3. If after some attempts a participant thinks the name is too difficult for him/her to discover, allow him/her to change. Stick another name on his/her back.
4. Let the students mingle and talk to each other for 20 to 30 minutes.
5. When it seems that everybody has conversed with everybody else and you feel the ambiance has reached its climax, conclude the game.
6. Single out each name (character) one by one and have the other students tell what they know or remember about the character.

Variations:
A lot of variations are possible. For example the names or characters can be reduced to categories (e.g. famous political leaders in the English-Speaking world).

Follow-up:
At the end of the game, have the students write down the name (of the political leader) they find most interesting and explain
why, and then read their papers and compare.

3. Only hard-work pays

Brief description:
This Role-Playing exercise shows two senior High School students, perhaps equally intelligent, but, who have different attitudes vis-a-vis success in life in general and school exams in particular. Though coming from the same world (traditions), each of the students' family also differs in their vision about how success can be achieved and are very supportive on each side. On the one hand, one of the students believes, as many African students still do, that a good fetish priest's power is the key to success. On the other hand, his friend is doubtful about this sort of unverifiable power, and thinks that only hard-work pays. Both take the entrance exam to the University and the superstitious student fails while his friend passes it with honors.

Purpose:
The purpose of this exercise is to teach or remind the students of one of the most important moral values of life that is "only hard-work pays". As teachers, we should be concerned by 'real life matters' and not only instructing our students. This Role-Play also shows to the students that the FL they are learning is also a tool they can use to dig their own realities like
some of their fellow Africans and Caribbeans do every single day of their lives.

**Preparation:**

Explain the game and its objectives to the participants. Explain the different scenes and their settings. Have the students arrange the room accordingly. Prepare a radio-cassette player for music, and prepare a tape to announce the results as in a radio broadcast.

**Procedure:**

1. On a card write down to each participant the name and the role of the character he/she must play.
2. Have the class divide into two groups. Each group represents one family.
3. Have each group prepare the role-playing according to the plot and the instructions on the cards.
4. Explain to each group that they will have to choose only some among the group to act as family members on the stage.
5. 25 to 30 minutes should be enough for their preparation. Then ask the acting members to perform the role-play on the stage while the other students play the spectators.

**Characters:**

A. The Donkor family:

1. Tano Donkor, 45 years old, successful cocoa farmer.
You are pragmatic and believe in hard-work. You and your wife Ama Kuma have one son who is preparing to finish High School and hopefully pass the G.C.E. A level to enter Legon University in Accra.

2. Ama Kuma, 36 years old, you are Tano Donkor's wife. You know your son works hard but you are very anxious about his exams. You think you and your husband should request the fetish priest to help your son pass his exam.

3. Patrick Donkor Kese, you will be 20 years old in two months. This year is supposedly your last year in High School. You are serious and work very hard, because like your father, you see success as the result of continuous effort and hard-work. Your best friend and class mate Francis Yaw, does not see things the same way as you do.

B. The Yaw family:

4. Yaw Dihye, you are 47 years old. You are from a wealthy and traditionally high-ranked family. When you were child, you attended school but could not pass the Primary School Leaving Examination. After two unsuccessful attempts, you gave up and decided to join your parents in your village, convinced that some evil spirit might be at the source of your failure. You and your wife Adjoa Bakon have four children. Francis the oldest and the only son, has so far done pretty well in comparison to your own schooling. You are superstitious.

5. Adjoa Bakon, you are 37 years old. Like your husband,
you are very superstitious and always consult diviners and fetish priests for anything that troubles you and your family.

6. Francis Yaw, you are 20 years old and about to finish High School. You are handsome and enjoy life. You have a girl-friend who also loves having fun. You think your classmate and friend Patrick is too serious. You do not understand why he worries so much about the future.

C. 7. Comfort Kwabenan, 18 years old. You belong to a modern bourgeois family. You were born and brought up in the big city. You take life easy. For three months now, you have been going out with your new boyfriend, Francis Yaw.

D. 8. Akrasi Kwaku the diviner. You are perhaps 50 years old. You have been practicing your art for a little over 20 years now. People come from everywhere in the country to consult you. You are proud of your success. You pretend to be very 'powerful', since many people seem to believe so. But in the heart of your heart, you know that your art is nothing but cunningness and tricks.

These four exercises are the kind of activities that I think can favor 'real language' learning. The second exercise (the currency of the country) has been adapted from Index Card Games for ESL by Clark et al (1982). It has been my intention to make them practical and ready for teachers to use if they so desire, any time they want to break out of the mold the
curriculum requirements and the administrative constraints of our system often confine them to.

All the activities I have just proposed can be carried out in the language classroom. Nevertheless, due to the short period of time devoted to each class session, that is, 55', most of these communicative activities can be more profitable to our students outside the normal classroom, in a setting like the one provided by language clubs, where time is more flexible.

3. Language clubs: optimal language learning environments!

Language clubs, as we see them in High Schools and Universities, are social clubs formed by non-native speaker students whose common interest is to improve their learning and mastering of a particular FL and its culture. They provide informal settings where students practice communication in an informal and non-threatening atmosphere. This very informality, for example, the students dressing in their preferred clothes instead of school uniforms, is, in itself, a highly positive motivation.

The program of the language club should be designed with the intention of creating a simulated natural setting, where the students can be engaged in activities they would normally enjoy in the native language, or sharing the kind of activities their counterparts would enjoy in the foreign culture. Most of the English Speaking Clubs (ESC) I know, for example the
one of Lycee Moderne II of Bouake and the one of Lycee Classique of Abidjan which I personally managed for periods totaling 10 years, share three basic activities in common:

1. Tea-parties, generally held in the afternoon with the pretext to have tea like people supposedly do in the English-Speaking world. Tea-parties are actually times for recreation and social gathering. They are special opportunities offered to the club members to socialize with their guests, native speakers of English, living in their community or visiting the country. Tea-parties also involve sub-activities such as sketches, topic presentations, music, songs, and games. The afternoon is usually accompanied by refreshments, tea, coffee, and cocktail-snacks.

2. Film/video shows are organized every month by the club, thanks to movies and tapes graciously lent usually by the American Cultural Center or the British Council. In a non-native speaking country where the target language speakers are counted, films and videos are important means to natural language exposure. Language teachers and language clubs should really take opportunities offered by some embassies who are always ready to help.

3. Club's newsletter is another element that characterizes the ESCs in our schools. The members are generally dynamic and often manage to publish their own newsletter every semester. The clubs generally have a 'Press committee' co-advised by the the English teachers of the school, who edit articles, poems, stories, games, etc..., written by their FL students.
(4) FL days are organized once every year by the language club(s) of the school under the benediction of the school authorities and the collaboration of teachers of the other disciplines. During these days, with the help of some embassies, the members organize exhibitions, dances, competitions, sports, and games. In schools where the ambiance is very supportive such as Lycee Classique of Abidjan, the FL language days are always a success. It is real fun to hear, during breaks, most students using the FL, or hearing the Math teacher struggling with the FL when teased by his/her students.

In addition to these most common activities, some language clubs may organize inexpensive outings and week-end camps for the club members who may be join by their language teachers and some native speaker(s) of that language living in the community. In some more affluent countries, language clubs may extend their activities abroad in native speaking countries. Such is the case of the French Club of UMass at Amherst, who organizes a trip to Quebec every Christmas vacation.

V. WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE: some practical suggestions

Most of the above theories assume a certain number of ideal conditions to support the whole school management/system. The hard realities of many African countries in general, and Côte d' Ivoire in particular, will make us believe at first thought, that the project is idealistic and might not be feasible in
most cases. I share this concern about the luck of funds for public schools, the constant overpopulation of students by classroom, the constant degradation of existing minimal equipment in schools, etc..., but I think despite all these difficulties something can be done. Let us not be just desperate. On the contrary, let us see this situation of crisis as a challenge to our imagination. I do not pretend we can find solutions to the difficult problem of the lack of funds, but I think it is possible to create: a) a language classroom in each major High School; b) a language club in each school or group of school; c) recurring immersion programs; international school relationships; etc... What does this all mean concretely?

1. The language classroom

As I suggested earlier in the fourth chapter, the ideal situation will be the one where each foreign language, that is, English, Spanish, and German, has a specialized classroom in every High School where they are taught. For the time being, this situation is not possible in our public schools in Cote d' Ivoire, though the need for it is undeniable; if we want to operate in a more appropriate environmental classroom. For example, if it is not at all possible that the 15 EFL teachers of the 4,200 EFL students of Lycee Classique of Abidjan, have one only EFL classroom, then, I will suggest that all the FL teachers of this school should be granted, or perhaps 'fight' to obtain one FL classroom to share. In that case, 'le conseil
d'enseignement des langues étrangères' (the department of FLs) will be responsibilized to manage the functioning and the daily use of that common classroom. For example, like the physics and biology's specialized rooms, the FL room will be hour-scheduled on the basis of relative equity, and taking into account some priorities. This group management will be a challenge for us, language teachers, who ambition to have our students use interactions and collaboration through our communicative language teaching. After all, charity begins at home! To obtain one or two classroom reserved for FLs, should not be a problem because it does not require the building of new classrooms. It is simply a question of planning, rotation, and collaboration in the management of the disponible body of classrooms in a particular school. This should be done long in advance, before a new academic year, by the vice-principle(s) and head of the 'conseil d'enseignement des langues étrangères', and the heads of each pedagogic unit of the school. This co-management may reduce the opportunity offered to each class to use FL room. For example, one teacher may be able to use the FL room only once a month for each of his/her classes in the case of huge schools such as Lycee Classique of Abidjan, Lycee Municipal of Bouake, or Lycee Houphouet of Korhogo, where the average number of students is over 3,500 in each school. This means that in our case in Côte d'Ivoire, a class in the FL classroom will be a complimenting requirement. In other words, since each class meets 3 times a week, that makes 12 ordinary
class sessions per month. Now, with the creation of the FL language classroom, the ordinary sessions will be reduced to 10 instead (since each session takes about 1 hour), and the class will have 1 session of 2 hours in the FL room. That is, the same amount of time managed differently. I think in such case a 2 hour session in the FL room is ideal. It is a different environment, and learning in such place through role-playing, simulations, and games, etc., is fun. The students will look forward to it every month.

2. Language clubs

In addition to a FL classroom in each school, the creation of a language club such as an English-Speaking Club (E.S.C), must be a requirement each conseil d' enseignement des langues étrangères in each school. An ESC in a non-English-Speaking environment is an excellent forum we can offer our students so that they can be in touch with real and normal use of the foreign language through activities such as the ones described in the preceding chapter. Today, there exist, at least by name, a certain number of ESCs in many of our major High Schools, but since they do not exist as a requirement, most of them do not work as they should. I know from more than 10 years of personal experiences, that it not easy for a 'normal' teacher, with the same amount of ordinary teaching load as his/her other colleagues, to manage an ESC. In such case, it means that this teacher will have no Thursday and Saturday afternoons for
him/herself, and probably no day-off, as opposed to his/her other colleagues in the same school. Therefore, I will suggest that: 1) like the head of each pedagogic unit, the teacher who is elected, or chosen, to be responsible for managing the ESC, should be relieved with one or two hours off his/her normal weekly schedule; 2) being a requirement, other colleagues teaching the same FL should be compelled to assist their friend, the manager of the club, or participate in the ESC's major activities like the Tea-parties and FL Days.

3. Immersion programs

Along the line of providing more 'natural and normal use' of the target language in an appropriate learning environment, and exposing as much as possible our students to the culture of that FL, I believe some work needs to be done on the side of the people who have the responsibility to teach such FL. In a country like Cote d'Ivoire where the great majority of teachers are non-native speakers of English, the difficulty faced by those EFL teachers whose preparation has been conducted in a non-English speaking environment, is the acquisition of those linguistic and paralinguistic features of English that will enable them to teach this language 'properly'. This difficulty relates to communicative competence which comprises such variables as the acquisition of registers (special jargons), and some non verbal dimensions of the language difficult, if not impossible to learn outside the culture of this FL. So the
their students organize similar immersion programs on weekends for their members. In such occasions, the club can organize E.F.L sessions through content-area instruction (Crandall, 1987). I am sure the students will enjoy being taught some Mathematics, Biology, or History/Geography in English. I remember when I was in Bouake, I organized Mass a couple of times with my friend, then Father, now Bishop Bruno Kouame (formerly EFL teacher). The students loved it. Some members who were Muslims said they wished the same thing could be done with their own religion. Here, I want to show that we can do so many things if we are imaginative, and courageous enough to try out our ideas. I believe, the 'engaged' language teacher does not rely exclusively on the resources provided by his/her school. Even in a non-native-speaking environment, there is always an exciting resource we can find in the community to offer our students. Father Bruno had been in Bouake for more than five years, but never before, had any English teacher thought of 'using' him to teach English to his/her students.

4. International school relationships

One of the most effective and the most enjoyable way of being exposed to natural language learning can be provided through international school relationships. Fortunately, it should not be too difficult, in the case of the Ivorian schools, to develop such relations. Our geographic location is highly favorable, owing to the fact that two of our next door
neighbors, that is, Ghana and Liberia, and three other regional neighbors, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Gambia, are English-Speaking countries. These relationships can be initiated with a cross-boundary connection, Teacher-Teacher. For example, one particular teacher in Cote d'Ivoire will be in contact with one particular teacher in Ghana. These two teachers will then involve their students and their school authorities on each side. The teacher will help his/her students develop pen-palship, exchange of essays and tapes with their friends in the other country. A student exchange program can also be developed this way. The teacher and the school authorities have to find out how and when it is appropriate. For example, since the Ghanaians have longer Christmas vacation (one month), they might take one week or ten days in January to visit their Ivorian friends. And during the February break (which the Ghanaians do not have), the Ivorians might also go to Ghana. It is important that these reciprocal visits should occur during the academic year so that the exchange student not only will have the opportunity to share his/her host student's home life, but will also be able to experience his/her school realities. The involvement of school authorities and the community, principally the host parents, is the condition to the success of such programs. In this domain, I believe the C.I.E.T.A. (Cote d'Ivoire English Teachers' Association) can be very helpful.
VI. STRENGTHS AND LIMITS OF THE APPROACH

As we can see, this 'Simulated Natural Environment Approach' to FLT as it appears in this project, is very much dependent on the good will and collaboration of both the language teachers and the school authorities, as well as that of the students themselves. Those non-controllable variables make its success highly hypothetical. For example, a teacher who is not afraid of innovations might be willing to try this new approach but might be blocked by the administrative constraints which do not really provide a canvas for such an approach to be applied on everyday basis. Also in a country such as Cote d' Ivoire where there is a national curriculum for all the schools because of national exams, it is not evident that language teachers and their school principals will accept to take the risk of doing something different from what they believe is the only right way to bring success to the students and guarantee their own reputations. Thus, until it becomes compulsory for every high school to have a FL classroom and a language club, you cannot say language teachers will be willing to spend some of their time doing extra work with the same students they have had during the week. Yet, I am not sure most schools will easily 'grant' a room for FLs only, and if it happens, how this room will be furnished appropriately, that is, with light and movable tables and chairs, radio cassette recorder/player, newsreels,
felt-pens etc... I know that it is feasible. What I am saying is that it will require personal dedication and collaboration on the part of language teachers and school authorities, which in itself, is a good thing for school efficiency. What seems most interesting in this project is the realistic adaptation of theories to the specific situations in the Ivorian schools. Having only one FL classroom for English, Spanish and German, which will be centrally managed by the 'Conseil d' enseignement des langues', and having 10 ordinary class sessions of one hour each, plus one special session of two hours in the language classroom instead of the 12 ordinary sessions per month, are in my opinion, examples of realistic management of space and time. Furthermore, the practical examples of activities provided in the samples, makes this project also look like a practical guide ready for teachers to use if they so desire. In the whole, this new approach, because of its intended characteristics (low-anxiety, student-centered, etc.), and owing to the types of communicative activities it suggests, such as games, simulations, songs, and so on, is likely to be less stressing and more interesting for both the students and their teacher. We teacher advisors often encourage our colleague teachers to vary their lessons but we have never proposed such full alternatives for them to use, yet.
VII. CONCLUSION

This project gives confirmation to two basic assumptions apparently admitted by both language teachers and learners: 1) environment is a very important criterion in the teaching and learning of FLs; 2) a natural setting is better for learning languages. In a non-native speaking environment such as ours in Cote d' Ivoire, I believe we must create an 'informal' setting to maximize our students' chances to acquire 'normal and natural' use of the target language. This approach has been inspired by the works of some celebrated researchers such as Krashen and Terrel, Richard-Amato, and Scott Enright on the one hand, and by some practical experiences done at Brattleboro, Vermont, and personal experiences as EFL teacher, initiator and manager of some English-Speaking Clubs in a couple of high schools in Cote d' Ivoire. I consider this project as a threshold for further works I intend to pursue with the help of my colleague Teacher-Advisors, and the practicing teachers I will have the pleasure to work with.

Some readers might think this project is unnecessarily loaded with sample activities. To them I will say that, in order to grow in future works, my intention has been to propose something that colleague practitioners can try out in their schools and give me feedback. That's why, to some extent, this work is more practical than theoretical. Yet, some teachers...
might find it unrealistic in consideration of the large number of students we have in our classes. To them, I will recall that one of the most essential elements in this approach is the teacher's self-commitment and determination to stimulate communicative competence in his/her students. Again, its realization is very much dependent on the type of activity we choose for our classes. Let us be imaginative and aggressive. What cannot thoroughly be accomplished in the classroom because of curriculum and time constraints, can be done in the alternative setting that language clubs offer.
A Total Immersion Institute for EFL Teachers of the North-East Regional District in Agnibilekrou.

**Theme:** Using normal and natural English to communicate.

**Length:** 5 days.

**Period:** Tuesday .... to Saturday ..... 12 o'clock.

**Goal and content:** The goal of this Institute is to give opportunities to EFL Non-native English-Speaking Teachers who have been trained in Cote d' Ivoire, a non-native English-Speaking country, to intensively hear and practice English in a simulated natural Anglophone environment. It will be done by creating a setting which will look like the one participants might find abroad if they travel to a native English-Speaking country. The program will evolve around activities which are presumed to stimulate natural and normal use of English, the target language, such as conversations, games, movies/video shows, cooking, party-ing etc..., and activities which might give them more insight in the cultures of the Anglophone world, to help them understand some non verbal dimensions of the language they are supposed to teach their students.
Objectives:
By the end of this week program, the participants will:
1. be able to practice their English with native speakers and some of their own colleagues.
2. be exposed to normal and natural English through videos and movies.
3. be able to create and practice activities they might use in their own classes to encourage natural use of the target language.
4. realize by themselves that games, songs, and other fun activities, when practiced in a relaxed and non-threatening ambiance, are very productive as far as language learning are concerned.
5. be able to feel at ease in the streets and public places in most English Speaking countries they might visit.
6. understand more cultural dimensions of the target language.
7. be more sympathetic to the people from the country of this target language.
etc... .

Participants: 30 - 50.
Selection: preference will be given to the teachers who have never lived in an English-speaking country, and those who have taught for 5 years or more without a stay or long trip to an English-speaking country.
Resources:

a) Human: Teacher-Advisors, Inspectors, Regional Directors of Education, identified and selected native speakers of English, the attache-culturels of the American Cultural Center and the British Council, a representative of the Nigerian and Ghanaian embassies, a representative of the West Indies, etc...

b) Material: V.C.R, sound system, tapes, books, newsreels, magazines, games, felt-pens, etc...

c) Financial: subscriptions from participants and from private schools (for their teacher participants). Donations?

Procedure:

1. Do a needs assessment 4 months before.
2. Send information and application forms 2-3 months before.
3. Identify resource persons and apply for material resources about 3 months before.
4. Gather financial and material resources 3-4 weeks before.
5. Send 'self commitment' forms, and instructions (for the personal timeline activity).
6. Have resource persons, principally presenters, confirm their participation at latest 2 weeks before.
7. Visit the site and make sure everything is adequate at latest 2 weeks before.
8. Ask all participants and facilitators to be on the site on the eve of the D-Day.
## TOTAL IMMERSION INSTITUTE: PROGRAM OUTLINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00-9:00</td>
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<tr>
<td>9-10:30</td>
<td>(Why being fluent in English?)</td>
<td>Perspectives (Video Show)</td>
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<td>Africa</td>
<td>The African Connection</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:30 to 10:45</td>
<td>BREAK</td>
<td>Break</td>
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<td>BREAK</td>
<td>Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:45-11:30</td>
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<td>EFL Teacher's Self Maintenance</td>
<td>CLOSING SESSION</td>
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<td>11:30 to 12:00</td>
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<td>PACKING</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:00-2:30</td>
<td>LUNCH</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2:30 to 3:45</td>
<td>English Literature to Presentation (Native Speaker)</td>
<td></td>
<td>The American Character: Behavior &amp; Attitudes</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:45</td>
<td>English Literature to Presentation (Native Speaker)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4:00 to 5:30</td>
<td>Football Game: Index Card Games</td>
<td>Group Simulations</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:30-7:00</td>
<td>DINNER</td>
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<tr>
<td>7:00-9:30</td>
<td>Personal Timeline Activity: Trends in my Life</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:30</td>
<td>BED TIME</td>
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</table>

**Notes:**
- **LUNCH** is provided from 12:00 to 2:30.
- **DINNER** is provided from 7:00 to 9:30.
- **BED TIME** is 9:30.
- **BREAK** times are for transition and relaxation.
- **SESSIONS** include presentations, discussions, and activities.
- **Activities** include language classes, simulations, and interactive games.
- **Parties** are planned for social engagement.

**Additional Notes:**
- The program balances educational content with breaks for self-care and socializing.
- Participants are encouraged to actively engage in the activities and discussions.
- The program aims to provide a comprehensive immersion experience in English language and culture.
REFERENCES:


Pergamon.


Language Learning, 33 (2), 135-158.


