

Weaving Reflexivity and Revealing of the Self in Online Foreign Language Practice

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Abstract

In the context of collaborative online foreign language practice, we look at how metacognition and revealing of the self-combine when the full potential of the digital tools are put to use. We present a qualitative study of a corpus of written contributions by English as a foreign language distance French learners and look into a model for teaching and learning in which emotions are integrated. We study how expression of emotion and commenting on learning are combined in the learners' discourse. Throughout our study, various appropriation regimes appeared, such as redundancy, in which the student publishes the same message on the forum and on the learning diary, or progressive appropriation, in which the student goes from a descriptive post about vocabulary to a post including the use of the first person pronoun "I", to a socio-affective post using exclamation marks and reference to the family. There were cases where references to cognitive processes, inclusion of the peers, revealing of the self and use of technology form an intricate cognitive-socio-affective weaving. We relate this weaving to maximum engagement of the learner at the heart of a community of trust, and make an attempt at modeling this engagement.

Keywords

Engagement, Online language practice, English as a foreign language, Revealing of the self.

Introduction

In the context of collaborative online foreign language practice, we look at how metacognition and revealing of the self combine when the full potential of the digital tools are put to use. We present a qualitative study of a corpus of written contributions by English as a foreign language distance French learners and look into a model for teaching and learning in which emotions are integrated. We study how expression of emotion and commenting on learning are combined in the learners' discourse. We thus give insight into the meeting point of technology on the one hand and learning and teaching strategies on the other hand, and detail diverse appropriation regimes within a community of trust [1].

Theoretical background: Emotions and learning

For Chaplier and Crosnier(2014), the language learning class often triggers disruptive emotions because of the obligation to express one's self through a language that is not yet mastered, thus putting emotions among the key features of the learning process[2].

We explore the hypothesis according to which a learning context in which learners nurture the link between emotions and cognition can be favourable to learning, and to more risk-taking. With this in mind, we analyse a corpus of written production from distance learners, through segments that present traces of affect and cognition, allusions to learning and the personal or intimate sphere.

In the context of communication of emotions in infants and adults, Fazia Khaled (2016) suggests 3 levels, that can be useful in our context as well. Affects would be a way for the body

to be alerted on emotional events, the first level in a system in which the second level is feelings. These go beyond intensity involving the body in that they also involve conscience. Emotions, lastly, imply a social dimension, and are a relational act implying behaviour [3].

As far as we are concerned here, it is emotions that we focus on. Indeed we explore the social aspects of references to the self, through cognitive processes or mention of personal aspects as a student, as a parent, as a spouse. This can go from exposing one's pleasure or displeasure with learning to referring to one's self-efficacy as a peer in collaborative learning.

As Khaled advises (2016), we limit ourselves to what traces are available, i.e. external traces, elements of text or online drawings or graphs[3].

Piccardo argues that beyond allowing us to name reality, language is deeply related to a hidden part of the individual [4]. Therefore, it becomes interesting to explore the possibility of offering a space for the expression of this deep relationship, in a community of trust, hoping to make the foreign language more familiar, around an embodied and emotion-related cognition [5]. This study is the continuation of our previous attempts to explore the expression of subjectivity and revealing of the self in collaborative distance learning [7].

Pedagogical context and corpus

In the context of a master's degree in Education Science, the students study English online. The assignment consists in negotiating online on a dedicated forum the construction of a virtual school built using an interactive fiction online tool. The students are also asked to consign learning events on a collaborative learning diary (seesaw.com). The forum also comprises an off-task thread, dedicated to small-talk [6]. Other researches combined diaries and forum. Chateau and Zumbihl (2010), for example, notice that combining both can avoid discouragement and encourage peer counseling[8].

The students published 1663 messages on the forum and 414 messages on the online learning diary they are asked to use. Considering the research establishing a link between emotions and learning [5, 9, 10, 11, 2, 3, 4], we focus on segments of discourse which combine reference to emotions, revealing of the self (as a parent, as a spouse, as a learner) and relationship to the learning process. We proceeded from data to categories according to grounded qualitative methodology.

For the present study, we selected the 7 students (as shown in the table below) who published the most on the forum, and who used the online diary (the study of students with more difficulties must also be undertaken in future research, and their specific regimes of appropriation shed light on as well).

Table 1. Number of messages per student on the diary and the forum

Number of messages	Aurélié	Fatima	Dorothy	Aïssa	Gabrielle	Lisa	Marielle
On the forum	53	58	36	43	75	116	42
On the diary	26	32	29	31	40	29	31

The fact of diversifying the spaces for expression means that communication is spread out within these various spaces. Indeed, the previous year saw 46 messages in the off-task space of the forum (out of 1325 in total on the forum) with noticeable socio-affective events [6], whereas with the introduction of the learning diary, 22 messages are posted in the off-task space out of 1663 in total on the forum. Beyond this spreading out of the messages, the question is what patterns, or regimes, are adopted for the use of these tools in relation with emotions?

The shaping of appropriation regimes

Varied appropriation regimes appear through the qualitative study of the corpus, implying redundancy, progressive appropriation, implication of the self and revealing of the self. We distinguish implication of the self, with the use of the pronoun « I », for example, from revealing of the self, or self-disclosure, through reference to family, for instance. One could argue that referring to cognitive processes such as understanding or discovering a skill can also be coined

as intimate aspects. Nonetheless in the context of the use of a tool such a seesaw.com, metacognition is expected more than revealing details about the student's family[12].

Redundancy regime

In this first example (figure 1 and 2), the student publishes the same message on the online diary and on the forum.

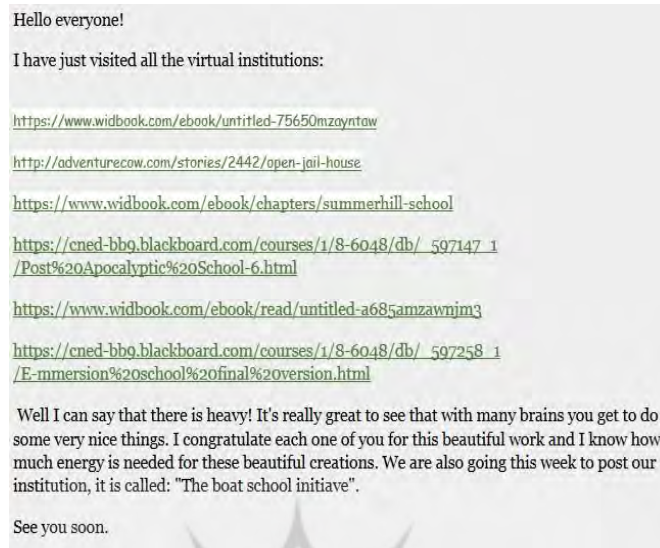


Figure 1. Message on the forum

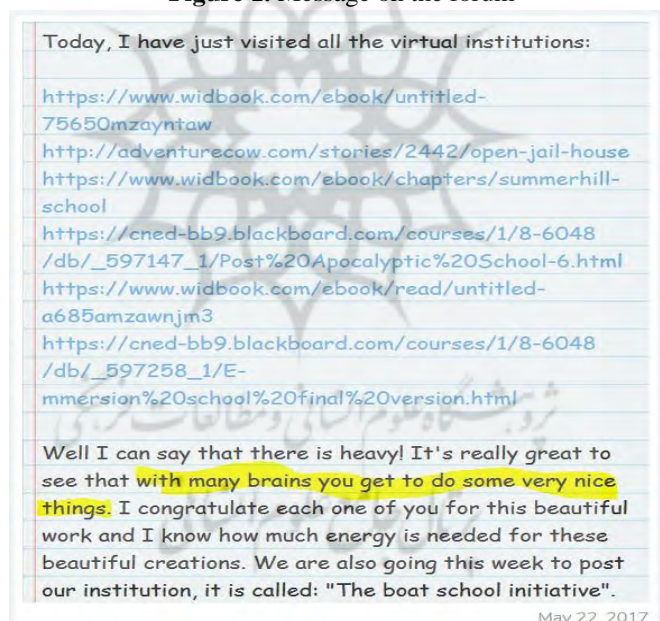


Figure 2. Identical message on the diary

We have highlighted a segment that alludes to cognitive (« with many brains, you get to do some very nice things ») and socio-affective processes through a taking into account of the group (« with many brains», « I congratulate each one of you »). We will come back to this combination further on in this study.

Progressive appropriation regime

Another pattern that our qualitative study sheds light on is a progressive appropriation going from description to involvement of the self, to unveiling of the self, as shows the messages below, published successively by the same student.

On the 8th of April, a week after the module started, the student publishes a purely lexical post in the online diary, giving a word and its translation:

7.30pm :
"clutter" : disorder

Figure 3. A lexical post in the learning diary

On the 11th of April, still in the learning diary, she describes her activities, her research project (TER) and a language learning app she tested. She uses the « I » pronoun, thus involving herself in her speech, but does not combine this with any particular modality.

Today I worked on my TER and I tried a new app to learn English : Mondly. It looks quite similar to Duolingo. I have to try different translating sites/apps such as

Figure 4. Descriptive post

On the 19th of April, she initiates an implication of self, with a message where she uses the verb « loved », combined with the adverb « absolutely ». She also uses the adjective « cool » and the intensifier « so », with exclamation marks. She sends this message following the testing of a website that allows to send a message that you receive « in the future ».

I absolutely loved :
- the future me : so cool ! I sent myself a good luck email for the future exams !! However we have to send the email at least 30 days in the future (otherwise I would use it everyday to remind me everyday stuff!)

Figure 5. Implication of self

On the 20th of April, she goes even further, posting an image of a child sleeping across its parents' bed. She refers to her own life, through the use of the pronoun « my » (« my life ») and to her own child (« a baby boy »), thus conveying her personal sphere.



Figure 6. Revealing of self

On the 22nd of April (figure 7), she publishes a post mentioning an article she found interesting, with no other reference to herself than giving a glimpse of the tasks she is undertaking. Therefore appears a to and fro-ing between exposure of the self, as seen previously, and cognitive exposure, as through the use of the adjective « interesting ».

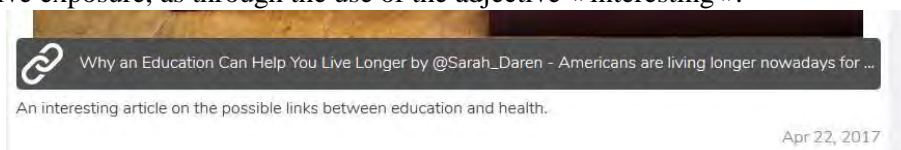


Figure 7. A link towards an interesting article

Another combination appears on the 4th of May (figure 8), with a message on the online diary, in which the student alludes to her daughter's illness (« my daughter went to school chickenpox free »), using the pronoun « my » and the words « school » and « chickenpox » referring to the personal sphere. She adds references to learning: « I tried the wordle and the mind mapping». She uses the pronoun « I » and the verb « enjoyed », thus referring to an emotion. She also alludes to her peers calling them « my co-workers », and uses an exclamation mark to underline the discovery of her own lexical skills (« I discovered I knew the word « enhance » which means « improve »!).

Today I was eventually able to work as my daughter went back to school chickenpoxfree !
I tried the wordle and the mind mapping which I enjoyed doing and will probably use again.
I continued my pedagogical watch but did not find really interesting articles to share.
While writing to my co-workers, I discovered I knew the word "enhance" which means "improve" !

Figure 8. On the 4th of May, a message combining implication of the self, revealing of the self and cognitive aspects

Again on the 7th of May, on the forum (figure 9), she alludes to her child's illness (« the chickenpox invaded my house »), the use of « my house » reinforcing the message's personal touch. The adjective « difficult » also indicates a modality that implies the subject, and can refer in this case either to cognitive difficulties related to the writing of her summary, or difficulties of organisation implying the family.

Here is my summary - a bit late I admit, but the chickenpox invaded my house last week, things were difficult !

Figure 9. On the 9th of May, a message combining implication of the self, revealing of the self and cognitive aspects

The examples above seem to point to a progressive expression of subjectivity, to and fro-ing between description and revealing of the self, combined with reference to cognition and learning such as the discovery of a useful resource or the writing of a summary.

The use of the tool is not predetermined by the tool itself, therefore allowing various appropriation regimes, and latency before seizing the opportunity for socio-affective building. The modalities of appropriation go from mention of cognitive aspects to this mention combined with implication of the self, to this mention combined with actual revealing of the self, as we see now in more detail with the examples below. They show various forms of expression of emotions in relation with cognition and implication of the self or family, pointing to a maximum level of implication in the task, cognitively and emotionally, when all aspects are combined.

Cognition and implication of the self: Pleasure/displeasure

One of the ways the students have of investing the possibilities of the digital tools they are asked to use, is to post messages combining reference to cognition and reference to pleasure or displeasure.

On the 13th of April (figure 10), a student writes that she found an interesting article, which « made [her] smile ». She also uses the verb « envy » that also refers to an intimate feeling.

good evening everyone!

I found an interesting article and made me smile really.
It's about wearing slippers in class. I envy them because I would like to do the same with the job. People would be more relaxed!

Figure 10. Emotional and cognitive aspects combined

In conclusion, this week, I had a lot of fun. I discovered a lot of sites that I did not know! I'm happy with my discovery.

Figure 11. Emotional and cognitive aspects combined

Here is my prezi : <https://prezi.com/view/XP8iMRzDpQijO8HMEhO/>

I hope you manage to see it ?

I had a lot of fun creating it, and I could spend hours doing it

There is a multitude of creation possibilities, I find it very interesting !

Figure 12. Emotional and cognitive aspects combined

In figure 13 (below), again the student alludes to the use of a mind mapping tool and uses the verb « enjoy », the adjective « fun », and the adverb « really » to intensify her message.

Figure 13. Cognition and pleasure

I enjoyed creating my bot this week, as it asked me to go beyond my comfort zone and it feels good to see that you can always get more than you think !

Figure 14. Cognition and pleasure

The pleasure mentioned by the students, in relation with cognition, is sometimes none other than brought by a good result in an online game (figure 15), referred to using the adjective « satisfied » and the pronoun « myself ». The student introduces a modality in the shape of the adjective « pretty ».

I watched this game, i like because i tested my knowledge about the human body. I had a score of 180/190, so i'm pretty satisfied with myself. i chose the quizz of :

the body: essay done or fiction

Fichier joint: <https://www.britannica.com/quiz-you-body-fact-or-fiction.webloc> (279 B)

Figure 15. Pleasure and cognition

We also found mention pleasure in relation with the peers, from a cognitive point of view. In figure 15 (below), it is indeed not about self-satisfaction but advising the peers to use a resource (« I recommend ») qualified as « super », and telling them to « have fun ». She uses an exclamation mark to intensify her enthusiasm.

I have read your comment and i decided to try this game. I found it great as you. Super to learn english and to perfect our knowledge.

Others students I recommend it to you. Have fun !

Figure 16. The peers' cognitive pleasure

The reference to peers in relation with cognition is in some cases about displeasure, as in figure 17, which alludes to the coming exams and the “stress” it can trigger.

I hope that you are well and that you do not stress too much when approaching the exams.
Here is my link for PREZI, can you tell me if it works?

Figure 17. The peers’ displeasure, or stress

Figure 18 also illustrates a reference to displeasure, through the testing of an app that can send a message that you receive “in the future”, future in which the student hopes she will be “relieved” of the stress of the coming exams. The message thus combines cognitive aspects in the testing of an app and emotional aspects with reference to future relief from stress.

Hello

I wrote a letter to myself and it's really strange. I will have to receive it on the 29th of June 217, the day after the exams, to know if i am finally relieved to have finished...

Fichier joint : <https://www.futureme.org/webloc> (248 B)

Figure 18. Combining reference to cognition and to emotions: Stress

Stress and displeasure is again the object of figure 19, in which the student posts a variation on the famous world war II « keep calm and carry on » alluding to the end of this difficult master’s year: « the end is near ».



Figure 19. Combining reference to cognition and to emotions: Stress

The displeasure mentioned by the students is sometimes related to technical problems, pedagogical or language difficulties. Figure 20 shows a student using the verb « panic », combined with reference to schedule (« so little time »), the adjective « little » indicating a lack of time to work on the collaborative project (creating a virtual school).

This weekend, I am working on the institution. I am starting to panic when I see what there is left to do by June and so little time to do it. I will try my best to combine everything. We will see!

Figure 20. Combining reference to cognition and to emotions: Stress

In figure 21, the student uses the word « angry » and the intensifier « very », about technical problems.

Wednesday, 19. 10h

I am very angry, one more time I can't reach blackboard. I don't understand why, no link with CNED answers !!

Figure 21. Combining reference to cognition and to emotions: Technical problems

Here (figure 22), implication of the self takes the shape of reference to displeasure in relation with cognition around language problems: the student apologises for what she considers a weak level in English.

This is my opinion concerning the first debate . Sorry for my approximate English!!

Figure 22. Combining reference to cognition and to emotions: Language problems

The displeasure mentioned is in some cases due to the tutor. Here (figure 23) the students uses exclamation marks to intensify the expression of negative emotions, along with the adjective « difficult » and the past participle « disappointed ». She points out that these difficulties will « make [her] stronger », thus expressing metacognition.

I follow my researches about Summerhill school and i work for my TER : so difficult, no answer but nothing from my tutor during all the year !! Really difficult and disappointed but it make me stronger !!!

Figure 23. Combining reference to cognition and to emotions: pedagogical problems

In the study of the examples above, we have seen the combination of implication of the self through pleasure or displeasure and cognition. We now look at revealing of the self through reference to cognition and intimacy.

Cognition and revealing of the self

The tight webbing of emotions and cognition for a revealing of the self takes the shape, in our corpus, of references to sleep patterns, family or marriage breakdown.

Staging one's personal rhythm

Twice, a student alludes to her sleep pattern in the online diary. She posts at 2 in the morning and at 3:35 in the morning. In both cases (figure 24 and 25), she uses the verb « sleep » and in figure 24, she opposes « you » (her peers) and « I », the former sleeping while the latter reads articles.

Thursday, the 4th of May, at 2:00 am
 Hi everybody,
 I hope you are enjoying your sleep regardless the time that I read articles... It sounds that it is the way that I give to my brain a break and a bit of rest.
 This article called : "Energy and Calm : Brain Breaks and Focused-Attention Practices" by Dr Lauri Desautel,

Figure 24. Cognition and intimacy

Thursday, the 4th of May, 2017 at 3:35 am...
 Hi everybody, soon i will go for a nice sleep til 8h...
 I read this article called : Teaching a class with big Ability differences in which you can find techniques for meeting the need of learning differentiated approaches.

Figure 25. Cognition and intimacy

Sharing matrimonial difficulties

Lisa alludes to marital difficulties four times. In her message in the online diary on week 1 (figure 26), she writes a list in which she includes having created a twitter account, having exchanged with colleagues and « marital breakdown ».

Week one
 Personal Difficulties (marital breakdown)
 Sign in on Tweeter
 Exchanges with my colleagues for the presentation of our virtual collaborative institution (several contacts)

Figure 26. Revealing of the self and cognition

Later (figure 27), she refers again to her marital situation with an understatement « a little bit absent », along with mention of a pedagogical task (« build my box »).

And i started to build my box with my argument. I let you see it on the site.
 I'll come back this evening.
 Mrs Rémon, it is possible that I am a little bit absent this weekend (personal difficulties evoked at the beginning of the TC)
 Thank you for your understanding. I do my best but it is not always obvious.

Figure 27. Revealing of the self and cognition

In the two next messages, she refers to her situation indirectly. Indeed, answering a colleague's description of a family breakfast (figure 28), she writes that she has just separated and wishes she were there to share a homely breakfast. She uses the adjective « good », along with the pronouns « I » and « me », as well as exclamation marks to intensify the expression of her emotions.

Can I come and have breakfast at home? !! ;)
 Your children are lucky !!! and you as well. Beautifull idea end family. It's nice to read and imagine.
 Thank you for sharing a piece of your life, I have just separated and these few lines do me good.
 Nice week-end

Figure 28. Emotions and revealing of the self

In figure 29, she alludes to the fact of not being well by saying “it makes me getting better”. She uses exclamation marks in her thanking of her colleague. Emotions are expressed while socioaffective bonds are being built.

Thank you for your good mood !!!! It reaches us and it makes me getting better
 Enjoy as well !!!!
 Nice rainy day

Figure 29. Emotions and revealing of the self

In the two last examples above, there is no direct mention of cognitive processes, but an indirect link in that as she comments on her emotional state, the student also achieves one of the tasks which is to post messages on the forum and the diary. She probably also implies that while she is dealing with intimate issues, she is less efficient in her tasks. We will see later on examples of even more intricate webbing between cognition and emotions.

Revealing family

Revealing of the self sometimes takes the shape of unveiling family. In can be, as in figure 30, a simple mention such as « my son », who participated in an activity by choosing a colour:

My son is happy because you like the colors that he chose for the tow clouds!!!

Figure 30. Cognition and revealing of the family

Several occurrences in the corpus mention family around the testing of interactive resources. Here (figure 31) the student posts a drawing that looks like it could be by a child but is not, thus alluding in the negative to her child (« this is not my child's draw, it's mine »).



Figure 31. Cognition and exposure of the family

In some cases, the combination of cognition and intimacy can be more complex, as in the example below (figure 32). The student blurs the lines between digital, cognitive and intimate aspects, suggesting her son attends the virtual playschool created by her colleague.

Figure 32. Blurring the lines between cognitive, digital and intimate aspects

2 things :

- can I put my son in your nursery ?
- can I work there ?!

;-)

The same student (figure 33) mentions the bot she created, called « busymum », thus once more digitally implementing through a nominee the combination of cognitive and personal aspects (i.e. being a mother and studying as a distance student for a master's degree).

Hello everyone !

I created my bot called busymum this morning. She answers to hello, how she is, her age, her occupation, her name (without the question mark).

Not an easy task these robots !

Figure

33. Blurring the lines between cognitive, digital and intimate aspects

On the 29 of may (figure 37), she mentions « two deliveries », her colleague's child and the digital project, for which she uses the pronoun “our”.

the motivation was never too far to remind us that " You must never let go. It has been a real pleasure to work with you in our group. And I pull my hat, because you have lived in the end two deliveries (your baby and our project). Congratulations!

Figure 37. Cognitive socio-affective weaving

This close cognitive socio-affective weaving built on revealing intimacy, has in some cases the added dimension of weaving the digital tools into the process, thus blurring the lines between the pedagogical task and socio-affective construction of the self.

Blurring the lines between the task and construction of the self

In the following example (figure 38), the student refers to the bot she created, mentioning that it « gradually learned », thus weaving the task of written production on the forum with the task of creating a bot, with the task of reflecting upon her own learning, using the bot as a nominee through which to implement her own learning process.

Hello,
My botID is iioo/ooii , title is iioo.For the time being , my bot know little things(name, profession, hobbies). He gradually learned !!!
Have a good weekend at all!

Figure 38. Implementing one's own learning process through the use of a bot

Similarly, in figure 39 the student tests the conversational bot ALICE, and mentions the bot's empathy (or absence of), thus weaving into her account of her task the mention of emotional aspects.

ALICE used the word empathy. I'm not sure it knows what it is
!!!
In any case it is a very funny experience

Figure 39. Weaving emotions into the account of the task

Figure 40 illustrates the fact that the student links the testing of a tool with a task she has to undertake for another module (a research project). She uses the adjective « nice », along with a smiling emoticon, thus weaving positive emotion with completion of a task with a peer-oriented account of this very process.

Another nice tool that we are discovering this week. Very easy to use and indeed it gives the presentation or lessons you have to prepare a whole new dimension.
It made me plunged into my TER and maybe that was what I needed to start writing so thank you ;-)

Figure 40. Weaving emotions into the account of a task

Figure 41, in a similar process, shows the account made by a student of the finding of an article. The concepts in this article echo for her with the learning process she is undertaking in the English module: « these learning concepts approach with brilliance what we work to master the structure of a language ». She introduces modality through the use of the noun « brilliance » and the adjective « amazing », thus weaving subjectivity, metacognition and taking into account of her peers, since she cares enough to share her discovery with them.

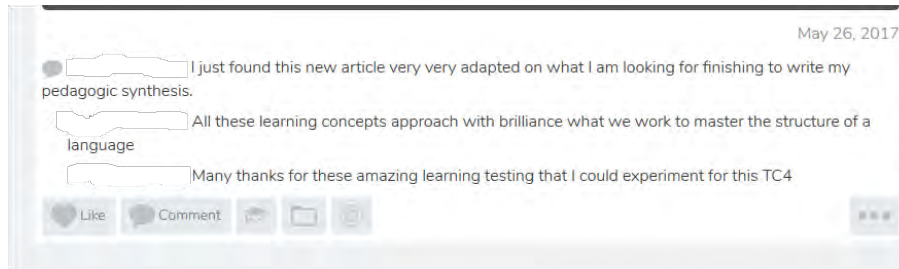


Figure 41. Weaving subjectivity and metacognition into the account of the task

This complex weaving is illustrated again through figures 42, 43, around the theme of self-esteem and coming back to studies in adulthood. Indeed, this topic is a personal issue for the student, as she mentioned to the tutor in a face-to-face conversation, and email. Her research project in another module is about this topic as well (« my TER which is about going back to school in adulthood »). In figure 42, she accounts for testing a mind mapping tool, and chose this theme (« self-esteem » et « social self-esteem ») for her mind map.

Hereafter, you will find the link to visualize my mind mapping for my TER which is about going back to school in adulthood. The measure and the proportion between the self-esteem and the social self-esteem in education and the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic reasons which push somebody to give it a trial for himself. Redefine is present for writing a better future, a new page, create your success that it,

Figure 42. Weaving meta-cognition, a personal issue and completion of a task

Again (figure 43), when she tests Prezi.com, she chooses the same topic (resuming studies in adulthood and self-esteem).

- Self-esteem and social self-esteem, which of these two notions takes precedence, in the decision to accession of an adult to a diplomatic formation

Figure 43. Weaving meta-cognition, a personal issue and completion of a task

Lastly (figure 44), the task of creating a bot also tackles the issue of going back to studies. The bot is programmed to answer the question “Why did you decide to go back to study”, and the answer is in reality the very words of the student herself, with the bot used as a nominee, as in figure 38 above: « I was so frustrated in my professional life. I could not stand anymore seeing me so unhappy with no energy ».

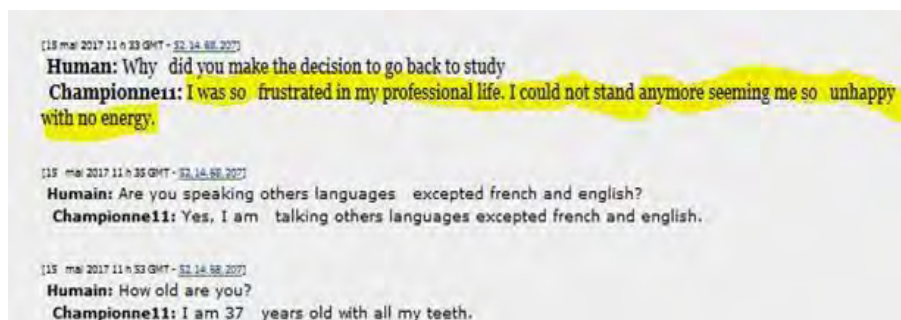


Figure 44. Weaving meta-cognition, a personal issue and completion of a task

We argue that the level of combination in which the task becomes the revealing of the self and revealing of the self is made possible by the task, is when the optimal use of the online environment is made, contributing to creating the community of trust in which autotelic language practice [13, 6] can take place.

Conclusion: Emotions, learning and full engagement of the self

Throughout our study, various appropriation regimes appeared, such as redundancy, in which the student publishes the same message on the forum and on the learning diary, or progressive appropriation, in which the student goes from a descriptive post about vocabulary to a post including the use of the first person pronoun “I”, to a socio-affective post using exclamation marks and reference to the family. This progressive revealing of the self [7], itself follows patterns and we attempted to establish a typology. We found references to cognitive processes in relation to the notion of pleasure/displeasure, be it personal pleasure or the peers’; then there were mentions of cognitive processes in relation to more intimate elements such as sleep patterns, marital crisis or the family; and finally there were cases where references to cognitive processes, inclusion of the peers, revealing of the self and use of technology form an intricate cognitive-socio-affective weaving. We relate this weaving to maximum engagement of the learner at the heart of a community of trust, and make an attempt at representing this engagement below (figure 45).

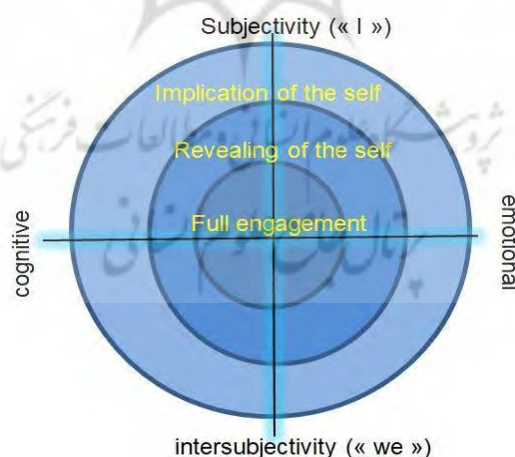


Figure 45. Full engagement

Further research will imply tackling the cases of students who publish less on the forum and

the diary, to understand how to engage less fluent students in the process described above, and whether a linguistic limitation necessarily results in subdued trust.

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