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Investigating Communicative Models in French as a Foreign Language Classroom: Methodological Issues

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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines some methodological challenges in investigating communicative models of teachers and students in French language classroom in some Senior High Schools in the Cape Coast metropolis - Ghana. The data collection procedure for this study focused on natural setting, use of objective views on the Ghanaian belief systems in the investigation process in order to structure the research and to avoid manipulating the study variables. The database consisted of classroom activities as well as extensive interviews with some old students on a year abroad linguistic programme in University of Strasbourg, France. The results showed that language usage in the French classroom was controlled by teachers. However, strategies used by teachers could contribute to effective language teaching if cultural dimensions were taken into consideration.

Introduction

The relationship between teaching and learning a foreign language in the school context is a complex one. It should be acknowledged that what makes up the whole of classroom communication is the interrelationship between what teachers and learners bring to the foreign language classroom. As a result, data collection was based on an ethnographic approach. The data was used to construct a descriptive and interpretative picture of what goes on in some French language classrooms in the Cape Coast metropolis. The research was carried out in the classroom context where the teacher and students normally learn. The research involved the full participation of teachers and students. We carried out an interpretative analysis of data providing an insight into the culture of teaching/learning French in these schools. This paper therefore describes the procedures followed to gather data for the study and some methodological issues.

Theoretical Framework

This theoretical and reflective part of our work defines the scope of the debate, explaining the approaches and positions adopted during the study. Thus, under this sub-topic, the choice of theoretical framework was justified by reference to previous work in communication. However, there was no in-depth discussions on all underlying theories on communication due to multiplicity of theories. Those related directly to this study include axioms of communication developed by Watzlawick, Bavelas and Jackson (1972) not forgetting the sociolinguistic perspective of Hymes (1974). Though these theories date back to the 70s, they are still relevant and reference is made to them in contemporary researches on human communication.

Watzlawick's axioms

Watzlawick's major concern was to determine how communication is affected within the family set up. His theory is based on five basic axioms often referred to as the *interactional view*. These are: *cannot not, content and relationship, punctuation, digital and analog and symmetric or complementary*. From a systemic point of view, these axioms could be applied to interaction in the foreign language class.

In the first place, the authors opine that "one cannot not communicate" (Watzlawick et al, 1972, p.45). This suggests that every human behavior is communication. In other words, once two or more people are aware

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of the presence of each other, they cannot refuse to communicate. For instance, if each of them prefers to remain silent, communication still takes place because their silence is subject to interpretation. It is therefore impossible not to communicate. However, understanding a message will depend on the type of relationship between the speaker and the listener. This determines what to say and how the message is understood.

Secondly, they suggested that “every communication has a content and relationship such that the latter classifies the former and is therefore a meta communication” (Watzlawick et al, 1972, p.49). This implies that apart from the superficial meaning of a word there could be a hidden interpretation of that same word depending on the relationship between the speaker and the receiver. Thus, content is what is verbally said and the relationship deals with the non verbal aspect. Ability to interpret correctly both verbal and non verbal is paramount in understanding the utterance. Moreover, meta communication simply means communication about communication which is related to relationship. This constitutes the most important element in every human communication.

Again, the third axiom stressed that “the nature of the relationship is dependent on the punctuation of the partners’ communication procedures” (Watzlawick et al, 1972, p. 53). With reference to the key word punctuation, the axiom proposes that in every communication, each partner thinks that the other partner’s action is the cause of a specific comportment. In short, in every communication situation, there is always a reaction when something is said.

Fourthly, “human communication involves digital and analog modalities” (Watzlawick et al, 1972, p. 57). This fourth axiom explains better the first one. In other words, communication is not limited to the verbal aspect. The non verbal always follows the verbal communication making it impossible for one not to communicate.

Finally, “inter-human communication procedures are either symmetric or complementary” (Watzlawick et al, 1972, p. 65). This final axiom is based on two forms of communication referred to as symmetrical interchange and complementary interchange. When the two interlocutors exert the same power one talks of symmetrical interchange. The complementary interchange happens when the interlocutors exert different powers. Both procedures could be understood in three different forms: one-up, one-down, one-across. In one-up situation, one partner seeks to take control over the communication. However, in the one-down communication, one partner seeks to submit oneself to the other partner. In some situations, both communicators use the same style. Their communication is said to be symmetrical. If they oppose one another, the communication is said to be complementary. In one-across communication, the message of one partner attempts to neutralize the effect of the other partner’s message.

These axioms are not limited to one particular culture; they cut across different cultures and are therefore manifested in French as a foreign language class in Ghana. Hall maintains that “we dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages” (Hall, 1974 p. 91). French is neither a native language nor medium of instruction for Ghanaian students. What are some of the interactional difficulties in the foreign language class? Ansu-Kyeremeh (2005) maintains that “it is generally believed that the characteristics of the audience and the community, or the sociocultural system in which a medium operates, are paramount in every communication process (Ansu-Kyeremeh, 2005 p. 19). Ghanaian students enter the foreign language class with their own perceptions influenced by their culture of socialization. They interpret things around them from their cultural point of view. In the foreign language class, communication may be very interesting since students cannot not communicate.

Research on cultural events and communication patterns show the relationship between the communicative behavior of individuals and their cultural identity. Hall (1974) maintains that “it is increasingly apparent that clashes between cultural systems are not restricted to international relations. Such clashes are assuming significant proportions within our own country and are exacerbated by the overcrowding in cities. Contrary to popular belief, the many diverse groups that make up our country have proved to be surprisingly persistent in maintaining their separate identities”. (p. x). This view point is supported by Caune (1995) who identifies common characteristics between language, society and culture. “At a fundamental level, language, culture and society are experienced by men unconsciously. All three are inherited and can be changed only by the individual will.” (Caune, 1995 p. 19). Second language acquisition in the school setting does not provide students the opportunity to experience the real culture of the native speakers. Although the digital language is presented in textbooks and dictionaries, the analog is almost

absent in teaching/learning situations. It could be suggested that communication in French as a foreign language class would be interpreted from the Ghanaian perspective, thereby reducing the socio-cultural context of native French speakers.

With reference to Hall and Caune, it could be argued that the Ghanaian teachers and students enter French as a foreign language classroom with their different perceptions since Ghana is a multicultural nation. In this regard, one can foresee the complexity of classroom interaction since every human comportment is communication. To unravel the communication models in the foreign language class, these axioms were supported by the SPEAKING model of Hymes (1974).

The SPEAKING model of Hymes (1974)

From a sociolinguistic perspective, Dell Hymes (1974) developed a model which could help analyze discourse within a specific cultural milieu. This model is closely related to the basic axioms of Watzlawick. According to de Salins (1998), the model “gives rise to a multitude of norms and rules that are not only linguistic but also social and cultural. These norms and rules come up in a complementary way during exchanges between social actors” (de Salins, 1998 p. 53). Hymes’ model is therefore capable of analyzing both modalities thus, the digital and analog. In addition, it can cover areas such as: content and relationship, punctuation, and symmetric or complementary axioms. Hymes himself attests that “the starting point is the ethnographic analysis of the communication conduct of a community” (Hymes, 1974 p. 9).

The first letters constitute the different components of the analysis as presented below.

S = Setting and Scene

“Setting refers to time and place of a speech act and, in general, the physical circumstances” (Hyme, 1974 p. 55).

P = Participants

This refers to all the people engaged in the communication.

E = Ends

This includes purposes, goals and outcomes.

A = Act Sequence

It represents the form and order of the communication.

K = Key

This deals with tone, manner and spirit of the interaction.

I = Instrumentalities

Form and style of the communication are referred to as instrumentalities.

N = Norms

These are social rules that govern communication in a speech community.

G = Genre

This is the kind of speech act or event.

For the purpose of our study, the various components have been redesigned.

Setting refers to the classroom.

Participants are students and the teacher.

Ends include objectives and outcomes of teaching/learning a foreign language.

Act is the nature of the lesson.

Key stands for aspects of paraverbal dimensions in the French as a foreign language class.

Instrumentalities suggests different languages used in the class and their form (oral/written).

Norms refers to rules laid down by the educational institution.

Genre will deal with the type of class activities.

The various components of this model were presented in isolation, but can only be analyzed in an integrated manner. In a communication situation, they constitute a common sociological background and help to unearth communicators’ behavior. Depending on the selected concept, several components of the model were used to explain the communicative behavior of actors in the classroom. Cultural events in this study were not analyzed from the perspective of discourse analysis, neither from the perspective of the analysis of social representations. It was a dominant ethnographic analysis. It helped to understand the cultural behavior of the teacher and students in the co-construction of knowledge. In addition, ethnography of

communication, derived from social and cultural anthropology, is well positioned to investigate all social events within any cultural group. De Salins (1992) opines that ethnography “is enriched with concepts from all social disciplines for the analysis of human relationships in communication situations” (De Salins 1992 p. 12). Axioms of communication developed by Watzlawick et al (1972) and Hymes (1974) SPEAKING model were combined into a functional framework for data analysis.

Research design

The researchers used the ethnographic research design for the investigation since the research focused on interactive strategies and analytical descriptions of the socio-cultural dimensions of the foreign language class. In other words, the research was both process and product of describing and interpreting cultural behaviours of Ghanaian teachers and students in the French language class.

Population

Purposive sampling was used to determine three Senior High Schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis. These schools were selected on the basis of their excellent performance in French at the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination. Cape Coast is considered the cradle of education in Ghana. Most of the best schools in the country are located in this city attracting a diversity of both teachers and students from other parts of the country. The teaching/learning of French as a foreign language is not encouraged in most of the Senior High Schools in the country. French is not taught in some of these institutions. That was why we focussed on Senior High Schools in the regional capital where French is taught alongside other subjects.

Criteria for selection of teachers

The first criterion was the professional status of selected teachers for the research. They must be trained in Ghana, must hold at least one of the following degrees : BA. Dip. Ed. (French), B. Ed. (French), BA. PGCE (French), BA. PGDE (French), a Graduate Diploma: M. Ed. (French), M. Phil (French). The three teachers in the sample held one of these degrees and have all been trained in Ghana.

The second criterion was the number of years the Teacher taught French in Ghana. Tugbe (fictive name) taught French for seven years : five years in the Junior High School and two years in the Senior High School. Fada (fictive name) taught French for eight years : four years in the Junior High School and four years in the Senior High School. Novi(fictive name) taught French in Senior High Schools for twenty seven years. The three teachers have had their initial and continuing training in two universities in Ghana at different times. Novi is one of the pioneers of French teachers trained in the old system. He took language courses in France and other francophone countries in Africa. He benefited from training programmes organized by the International Centre of Pedagogical Studies at Caen. The other two have had their language courses in West African French-speaking countries.

Sample size

The total number of students who took part in the research was one hundred and four (forty six male and fifty eight female students) plus three French teachers (two male teachers and a female teacher). The students in the sample were second year Senior High School students. They have already studied French for three years in Junior Secondary School (ninety minutes per week). They have therefore, at the time of the research, learnt French as a foreign language for five years. In the Senior High school, the weekly French class was four hours and forty minutes. We determined a girl school, a boy school and a mixed school.

Data collection instrument

Data were collected by microphone integrated digital video cameras, which helped to record images and sound without external manipulations. Our past experience as French teachers in the Senior Secondary School enabled us to obtain a variety of contextual information about the teachers and students. However, we remained detached and played no significant role in the data collection process. This stand helped solve the problem of partiality in the methodology adopted. Our own practices did not therefore inform the analysis.

Data collection techniques

In each of the three classes, five sessions (forty / sixty minutes per session) were videotaped. The first three sessions were not analyzed, so that the teacher and the students were sufficiently accustomed to the presence of the camera in the classroom. This method avoided the impact of the camera which may affect or

influence the behaviour of the teacher and students. We recorded ten hours session, but only four hours were analyzed. The lessons were recorded by two video cameras. They were then burned onto CD-ROM, before being manually transcribed.

It was possible to use other methods in educational ethnography such as : direct observation, taking notes and participant observation. However, communication in foreign language classroom is dynamic and complex, we opted for recording, which has the advantage of being simple, more discreet and more effective. A camera placed in a classroom for a long time, came to be forgotten by those who were shot and would not have any serious impact on the data. This had other advantages including the ability to conduct a full and comprehensive analysis, considering and revising the interpretations and studying rare events which were as important as any other behaviour (Cambra, 2003). Recording allowed the researcher to move into the perspective of teachers and students in order to understand the cultural traits the actors brought into the classroom. It took into account non-verbal aspects such as proxemics and kinetic, which are hidden aspects but the most important in human communication (Hall, 1984). The recording technique allowed researchers to make selections taking into account the type of interaction, task and behaviour they decided to analyse.

We opted for the orthographic transcription of the corpus. However, expressions or mispronounced words were transcribed according to the phonetic model. Verbal transcriptions were accompanied by related nonverbal communicative behaviours.

To substantiate our results, we have conducted an interview with five former Senior High School graduates from Ghana on a linguistic programme at University of Strasbourg. They have viewed and commented some aspects of the videotaped class sessions. The interview lasted two hours and was later manually transcribed.

Segmentation of activities

A lesson is made up of different activities that could be grouped into smaller phases. It was however difficult to determine any precise criteria for grouping the various activities into stages. One difficult aspect of our work had to do therefore with regrouping various activities into specific moments of the teaching process. The criteria used by various researchers (Fanselow 1987, Spada and Fröhlich 1995, Germain 1999, Cambra 2003) had their own problems. On one hand, words such as "OK", "Good", "Now", etc. may not necessarily indicate a change of an activity. On the other hand, some learning experiences may sometimes not be announced by connecting words. It was therefore not possible to rely exclusively on linguistic traits to delimit the units under observation.

Moreover, a change of place or a significant gesture on the part of the teacher could mark a distinct learning activity. For example, the teacher's position in the class, his movement from the board to the students could constitute a change of an activity. There was therefore a strong possibility that movement of the teacher indicated a change in teaching activities. Also, certain modes of grouping learners determined the type of interaction or activity. Finally, a change in the content could mark the beginning of a different learning activity. Sometimes, the teacher moved from teaching a grammar point to teach vocabulary. After reviewing the transcripts, we found that almost all the lessons followed the same pattern. Each lesson began with a review of the previous lesson that we called the warm up. The teacher then started the day's lesson with questions and answers. The next step was to explain the new elements, followed by application where students put into practice the grammatical elements and vocabulary taught. It was also the evaluation stage where students answered questions orally or in writing. The last moment was the conclusion where the teacher gave homework.

Each segment was assigned specific codes. We accepted to respect the anonymity of all participants therefore the various schools, teachers and students were given fictive names.

Limitations

The nature of ethnographic research did not allow researchers to extend the investigation to all schools offering French in the country. Our findings could not be generalised as a true reflection of what goes on in all Ghanaian Senior High French classrooms. However, the design could be replicated in other schools to confirm or reject our findings.

The transcription of data could also raise questions of validity and reliability of data. What made the transcription more difficult was the problem of incomprehensible sentences. A lot of statements made by students were syntactically incorrect and it was not always easy to comprehend their meaning. Thus, a lesson of 40 minutes required an average of 25 hours of transcription. The six lessons took approximately 300 hours to be transcribed and constituted a written corpus of more than 300 pages.

As regards the human factor, we often forgot a word or a phrase. The written text is then completed by some words that were not in the oral discourse. Also, sometimes certain words were unwittingly omitted. Researchers had to watch and listen to the same utterance several times to correct errors. Besides the difficulties of transcription, others were technical in nature. Various camcorders were used, but some were not compatible with the transcription software. Beyond these specific points, the biggest problem remained that of the sampling procedure. Some Heads of institution did not allow us to film classes. It was therefore not possible to make choices at random. Despite the difficulties associated with the sampling and transcription, the written corpus that resulted was authentic.

Method of data analysis

Ethnographic data collection varies according to the original objective set by the researcher. We opted therefore for the model developed from the principles and theories of ethnographic research in education (Cambra 2003). Data analysis was based on various verbal and nonverbal behaviours observed during the transcription as in the example below.

YIBOE-RIDGE-TUGBE-ADVERBE-EXPO- JUIN-2009

Turn	Loc	Verbal	Paraverbal	Extraverbal	
				Kinésique	Proxémique
45	E12	Il va mal. il ne mange pas bien, il dort mal. Franchement (mal prononcé), je suis inquiète (mal prononcé), pour lui.	Ton timide	E12 reste debout et regarde au tableau.	P est debout devant la classe.
46	P	Très bien Inquiète ? tout le monde	Ton d'emphase	P regarde les élèves.	P marche vers la classe.
47	GC	Inquiète	Ton élevé		
48	P	It is not pronounced /inket/ Inquiète /ein/ Franchement Tout le monde, franchement	Ton d'emphase	P regarde les élèves.	P entre dans les rangs.
49	GC	Franchement	Ton élevé		
50	P	Franchement	Ton élevé	P regarde les élèves.	
51	GC	Franchement	Ton élevé		

We drew insights from ethnography of communication enriched by anthropological, sociological, psychological, educational, interactionist, linguistic tools, inter alia, for specific reasons. The goal of this research was to take a critical look at cultural events by providing conceptual tools necessary for a clear-sighted observation of behavioural recurrences. These tools must also verify, interpret and evaluate all human behaviour in the foreign language class. The communicative acts are symbolic and researchers needed to elicit investigative approaches to understand group communication (Nunan 2002).

The analysis was divided into two different activities grouped into categories: sequential analysis and interpretation. Sequential analysis was syntagmatic, narrative and descriptive; it gave a detailed description of all classroom activities in their natural forms. The analysis took into account not only the learning

activities, but more importantly, what each actor said and how he or she behaved in the classroom. The analysis was therefore presented in a descriptive and a narrative manner, so that the reader had the impression of following the teaching/learning process him/herself. Sequential analysis showed the class activities in a coherent way by placing them in a natural context. It gave an overview of various behaviours moment by moment by reproducing the scene of the class. This first step ended with theoretical sources to support our observations. The theoretical model required a synthesis of remarkable facts in a very structured and significant way.

The categorical or paradigmatic analysis grouped similar components in different categories. This allowed grouping facts which were then categorized in an orderly and comprehensive manner. This part was the interpretation of the various behaviours identified during the analysis. It was necessary to reproduce here the voice of all actors as manifested. No attempt was made to manipulate the data collected so as to subscribe to a stronger interpretation of verbal and non verbal behaviour. Researchers therefore avoided manipulating the phenomenon under investigation.

The analysis was holistic in that it took into account both the behaviour of the individual student and that of the class as a group and the context in which the behaviour occurred since the context had an influence on the behaviour of the teacher and students. Consequently, the horizontal and vertical approaches were used in the analysis. The horizontal dimension had to do with description of events and behaviour as they evolved with time. The vertical dimensions dealt with the description of factors that influenced behaviours and interactions at the time at which they occurred (Nunan 1992). The need to go beyond description to explanation became necessary for the fact that the research focussed more on cultural dimensions on teaching learning of French. The method was explicit such that it could be replicated by those who wish to use it for similar research work.

Choice of framework for analysis

The interpretations that accrued from ethnography are based on ones observation and assessment of the ways in which an utterance conforms or violates the rules of a speech community and the implications that the said community attaches to these rules. Consequently, we used tools that seek to understand what happened in the foreign language classroom. Hymes' framework (1984), that of Bachmann, Lindenfeld and Simonin (1991) and that of De Salins (1992) seemed relevant in this regard.

Towards an operational framework

Our framework was classified into six major categories each with dependent variables. These were analysis of language, taking turn to speak, acquisition of competence, place of language in education, typological generalisations and recognition of rebalancing forces.

Analysis of language usage

We identified the relevant components of the model SPEAKING that were implemented. These involved :

- Setting, Participants, Ends, Act, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, Genre
- the type of discourse;
- the different languages in contact;
- the relationship between the various components.

Taking turn to speak

Researchers identified,

- general attitude towards group communication;
- specific roles for each participant;
- difficulties group communication created to participants;
- rules governing taking the floor;
- attitude towards different languages in contact.

Acquisition of competence

Researchers identified,

- traditional model of language acquisition;
- language skills transmitted in the host culture;
- particular styles students adopt when speaking
- the use of these styles in the classroom.

Place of language in education

This involved,

- whether the class had a real objective for foreign language learning;
- the role of language in the acquisition of knowledge;
- the methods implemented in foreign language classroom;
- whether they match those of socialization of students;
- whether the class has a philosophy of social control;
- the role of language in this control.

Typological generalisation

Identified here were some typological generalisations in relation to :

- teaching model in a given culture;
- education model in a given culture;
- socio-cultural model in a given culture.

Recognition of rebalancing forces

This involved identifying :

- rituals of interaction;
- social values;
- whether the interaction contained elements of content and relationship;
- whether the digital mode was supported by that of the analog;
- whether punctuation of sequences was verbal or nonverbal;
- whether one of these was discordant.

Application

The various components of this framework were presented in isolation, but could only be used in an integrated form. In a communication situation, there are common sociological backgrounds that determine behaviour. Accordingly, several components of the framework could be evoked to explain the communicative behaviour of teachers and students.

The cultural events in this study, as already stated, were not analyzed from the perspective of discourse analysis, neither from social representations perspective. It was mainly an ethnographic analysis. Its primary aim was to identify the cultural attitudes of teachers and students in the co-construction of knowledge. In addition, this research could also be described as observation of people in their cultural context. Accordingly, the various components of the framework helped to describe the cultural dimensions in the foreign language class in some Ghanaian schools.

Methodological implications

The most important methodological issue raised by the research was the effect of the presence of the camera in the classroom. This issue was raised with the teachers who attested that students were familiar with the presence of video cameras in the class. However, researchers could not ignore the possible effects of the camera on the comportment of the participants. As a result, steps were taken to minimise these effects on the final data collected. Initial video recordings were not analysed since these may be more threatening.

More important still was that we intended to investigate not just mere verbal communication, but also the non verbal behaviour of participants in order to explore the relationship between both variables. This allowed us to build up a categorisation of critical behaviours which were analysed in a more systematic way. In addition, this method justifies the internal validity which underlines most ethnographic researches. Our study has internal reliability since independent observers, on viewing the primary data, could come to the same conclusions as the original work. Nonetheless, this went beyond low inference descriptors which describe behaviour on which it is easy for independent observers to agree. The method was made up of low and high inference descriptors. High inference behaviours were those requiring the observer to make inferences about the data under investigation (Nunan 1992).

The need to go beyond mere observation to recording resulted from the argument that educational research is mainly a cultural phenomenon with complex dimensions (Jaillet 2005). While admitting the fact that

classroom activities differ from one culture to the other (Yiboe 2011) and that the experimental method is widely used, the researcher deemed it necessary to remain objective using only reliable and valid data collection techniques. This explained the fact that these two methods might not necessarily answer the same research questions. Although this approach allowed for the preservation of the primary data, it should be noted that these recording instruments did not capture all the activities in the class. In addition, activities captured were not all selected by researchers for analysis. This approach was holistic in that behaviour of our population could not be understood in isolation, but through the relationship of verbal and non verbal communication.

Another important aspect of our research was data analysis and theory development. Numerous cultural dimension theories emerged in the course of our analysis. However, we strived to avoid theoretical preconceptions and instead induced theory from the perspectives of the Ghanaian culture. We needed to seek validation of induced theories by going back to teachers and students under investigation. Nevertheless, it was not possible due to circumstances beyond our control. The interview with the Ghanaian students on year abroad linguistic programme was consequently used to validate the induced theories. The theories allowed us to answer a lot of questions raised by the cultural behaviour of our population. They guided us to learn not only about how the students act in the classroom, but to learn more about how those particular ways inform and are informed by social and cultural processes. We therefore considered the implications of our findings in an attempt to add more insights to existing foreign language learning theories.

This methodology assured that common cultural behaviours were identified, analysed and interpreted. Interpretation involved attaching meaning and significance to the analysis, explaining descriptive patterns and identifying interlocking cultural events. This stage played an important role on the cultural dimensions making it easy to understand the behaviour of teachers and students. Researchers did not however overrule the possibility of overestimating cultural perceptions that could undermine objectivity. This raised the question of whether the researchers were capable of understanding the cultural elements of the population under study. When findings are not based on a deeper knowledge of the culture of the people there is the danger that researchers could be biased judging from their own cultures. Our findings were not based on cross-cultural ethnographic research and consequently eliminated false assumptions that the behaviour of our population has the same interpretation across cultures.

The results showed that inference as a teaching technique played several roles and may contribute to the development of communication strategies in foreign language classroom. However, the approach was hampered in Ghanaian schools by a misunderstanding between the European culture and the culture of socialization of the students. Moreover, code switching in French as a foreign language classroom took many forms controlled by teachers. Different linguistic codes within the class were therefore limited to only meta linguistic discourse. In addition, nonverbal communication was also reflected in various complex communicative functions that teachers and students played in class. Finally, the analysis revealed the importance of emotion in the acquisition of foreign languages in Ghanaian Secondary Schools.

Conclusion

The main objective of our methodology was to capture the behaviour of our population in a natural setting and this could only be possible in the classroom situation by the use of video recordings which could be viewed over and over again. The classroom, a natural setting, exists independently of our research process and differs from those set up specifically for experimental research. However, researchers needed to be careful about the effects of the camera on the population under study. Thus, in studying classroom situations by the use of video cameras, researchers need to minimise the effect of these instruments on the population under investigation. The rationale behind this was to increase the chances that what was discovered could be applied to other groups with similar cultural behaviours. To make the video camera less threatening, we suggest it is introduced initially as a teaching/learning resource in classroom activities. Students could be asked to film their own classroom activities. This technique could help eliminate to a greater extent threats posed by the presence of camcorders in the classroom.

Another important aspect of our methodology implies that socio-cultural phenomenon and processes must be explained in terms of their relationship to the cultural milieu that they occur. Central here is the position

that human behaviour differs from one culture to the other. This implies that in order to explain human behaviour effectively, researchers need a thorough understanding of the cultural perspectives on which they are based. We could argue that this position is directed to researchers who study cultures alien to them. However, our research findings prove that this argument is as important to those studying societies familiar to them. We cannot confirm that our interpretations were devoid of difficulties taking into account the multicultural nature of the Ghanaian society.

Finally, we acknowledge the high risk of ignoring triangulation in any ethnographic research. Although this aspect of our research process was done indirectly, we considered it a vital part of the research design. All in all, valuable data could be discovered through the use of video cameras in classroom research.

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