

Journal of Trainee Teacher Education Research

“Their customs can teach us lessons about our own lifestyles”: integrating the teaching of cultural awareness and intercultural understanding to the teaching of language through a task-based approach in a Key Stage 3 French class

Simon Baron

(PGCE Modern Languages, 2017-2018)

email: simonbaron11@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper reports on an attempt to identify and implement strategies to teach Key Stage 3 students about culture, understood through the concepts of cultural awareness and intercultural understanding. Through an action research project, the hypothesis that a task-based approach could be an effective way to integrate the teaching of culture to the teaching of language was tested. The intervention raised students' cultural awareness of French-speaking cultures, but had a limited impact on students' intercultural understanding. This framework could be improved by making cultural learning objectives explicit to all students and by creating more opportunities for teachers to assess for learning.

© Simon Baron, 2019

“Their customs can teach us lessons about our own lifestyles”: integrating the teaching of cultural awareness and intercultural understanding to the teaching of language through a task-based approach in a Key Stage 3 French class

Simon Baron

Introduction

The languages programme of study for Key Stage 3 (KS3) in England (Department for Education [DfE], 2013, p.1) begins with the statement that “learning a foreign language is a liberation from insularity and provides an opening to other cultures” and asserts that learning languages should “foster pupils’ curiosity and deepen their understanding of the world”. This paper reports on my attempt to integrate these aims to my regular teaching practice through the teaching of culture. In order to identify and implement strategies to teach students about culture, I conducted an action research project centred on the concepts of cultural awareness and intercultural understanding, in a year 8 French class. This class was a top set in a culturally diverse school whose international sixth form attracts students from many different nationalities. The purpose of this project was to improve my teaching practice by finding ways to address the complex, yet central theme of culture in KS3 lessons, and to integrate it to existing schemes of learning. I hope that my conclusions will be of interest and value to other teachers and researchers who seek to teach culture in their modern languages lessons.

In this piece I adopt the definition of ‘culture’ that Levy (2007, p.105) offers: “culture is both a manifestation of a group, or a community, and of an individual’s experience within it, or apart from it”. This definition satisfactorily accounts for two distinct aspects of culture, namely the identification of elements characterising a group, and the notion of individual experience of culture. Although there is some overlap between both concepts, I see ‘cultural awareness’ as mainly relating to the first aspect (identification of elements characterising a group), and ‘intercultural understanding’ as mainly relating to the second aspect (individual experience of culture). Therefore,

I use Pachler, Evans, Redondo, and Fisher's (2014, p.278) definition of 'cultural awareness' as "the identification of different cultural characteristics or knowledge about the countries where a particular TL [target language] is spoken"; and Walton, Priest, and Paradies's (2013, p.181) definition of 'intercultural understanding' as "an on-going reflexive process involving the development of skills, attitudes and knowledge, necessary for interacting with people from diverse cultural backgrounds". In this sense, cultural awareness is a component of intercultural understanding; it is the knowledge and preconceptions that individuals use as reference, more or less consciously, when interacting with their own and other cultures. The concept of culture and the rationale behind my analytical and semantic choices will be explored in more depth below.

The aim of this study was to try to account for the complexity of these notions while making them accessible to KS3 students. I sought to explore the theme of culture, French culture, and cultures of French-speaking countries, and to develop students' self-awareness of their own culture. Another objective was to find practical ways to integrate these reflections to normal, day-to-day teaching, rather than to design a special sequence of lessons solely dedicated to this topic. I came to consider a task-based approach as a potentially effective strategy to teach cultural awareness and intercultural understanding to KS3 students while respecting the school's schemes of learning and decided to test this hypothesis. The overarching research question of this piece, therefore, is as follows: is a task-based approach effective in integrating the teaching of cultural awareness and intercultural understanding to the teaching of language at KS3?

To answer this question, I will begin by reviewing and analysing the literature that previous teachers and researchers have produced on this topic. I will then explain and justify the rationale behind my own methodological choices, before presenting my findings by analysing both quantitative and qualitative data. Lastly, I will interpret these findings and discuss their implications for my own teaching and for future research.

Literature review

The aim in this section is threefold. Firstly, to account for the complexity of the concepts of cultural awareness and intercultural understanding, while clarifying my personal use of these terms against commonly used conceptualisations of culture. Secondly, to explore the ways in which cultural awareness and intercultural understanding have been integrated to curricula of learning in England

and other countries, to compare approaches and justify the rationale behind my own pedagogical choices. Thirdly, to clarify what is meant by a task-based approach, and why it could present opportunities to be effective in raising students' cultural awareness and fostering intercultural understanding. I will conclude by presenting the research questions I chose to focus on after having considered the existing literature and the opportunities that the school context provided.

Cultural awareness and intercultural understanding

As mentioned above, cultural awareness is here defined as “the identification of different cultural characteristics or knowledge about the countries where a particular TL is spoken” (Pachler et al., 2014, p.278). It is important to note, however, that Pachler et al. (2014, p.278) see this as involving “the understanding and appreciation of different ways of life”. Although my conception of cultural awareness differs from Broady's in that I consider the “skills in exploring, observing and understanding difference and sameness” to be on the level of intercultural understanding, I join her in claiming that cultural awareness goes beyond mere cultural knowledge, which on its own “is likely to be ‘external’, ‘static’, ‘stereotypical’ and ‘reduced’” (Broady, 2004, pp.68-69). Given the significant overlap between the concepts of cultural awareness and intercultural understanding in the way I understand and use them, it is useful to bring in Byram's dimensions of culture knowledge, skills, and attitudes (summed up in Pachler et al., 2014, p.282, and in Table 1 below) to clarify my stance. I consider *savoir être* and *savoirs* to be part of cultural awareness, while intercultural understanding includes the components of cultural awareness but also *savoir comprendre*, *savoir apprendre/savoir faire* and *savoir s'engager*. Intercultural understanding, therefore, involves the relation between the target culture or cultures (C2) and an individual's native culture (C1). The interaction between an individual's understanding of their C1 and their understanding of a C2 is what Kramsch (1993, p.210) calls the “third place”, “that cross cultural education should seek to establish” to “start building a more complete and less partial understanding of both C1 and C2”. In other words, cultural awareness refers to attitudes towards, and knowledge of, cultural characteristics of countries where the TL is spoken, while intercultural understanding refers to the skills of interpreting and relating these attitudes and this knowledge to individuals' perceptions of their own culture, thereby encouraging comparisons between C1 and C2, deepening individuals' understanding and awareness of their C1, and enhancing individuals' capacity to interact with people from other cultural backgrounds.

Savoir être:	for instance, attitudes of curiosity and inquisitiveness
Savoirs:	knowledge of different aspects of life in a certain society, such as work, education, traditions, etc.
Savoir comprendre:	involving the skill of interpreting and relating those savoirs
Savoir apprendre/savoir faire:	involving the skills of discovery and interaction
Savoir s'engager:	involving critical cultural awareness

**Table 1: Byram’s dimensions of culture knowledge, skills, and attitudes
(based on Pachler et al., 2014, p.182)**

Cultural awareness, therefore, is a stepping stone towards intercultural understanding, which is itself a stepping stone towards intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence. Rollin, drawing on Byram’s works, provides distinct definitions of both terms:

The term 'Intercultural Competence' tends to be used when there is emphasis on the ethical and cognitive understanding, as well as key skills, and the ability of individuals to relate in their own language to people from a different culture. 'Intercultural Communicative Competence', on the other hand, suggests interaction in the foreign language.

(Rollin, 2006, p.57)

Rollin (2006, p.60) is right in arguing that these competences should be taught as part of language teaching, and although her context is distinct from the scope of this project since her conclusions are based on studies made at higher education level, I believe that these aims should be adapted and implemented in languages lessons at secondary-school level. In their review of effective teaching and learning practice for promoting secondary-school students’ intercultural understanding, Walton et al. (2013) convincingly used a variety of school-based research projects to conclude that simply teaching children about diversity was not enough to foster intercultural competence, and that there was a need for inclusive classroom discussions encouraging students to reflect critically on the notion of culture in order to change their attitudes to other cultures in the long term. Crucially, Walton et al. (2013) found that the most significant changes in attitudes towards other cultures happened when students interacted with people from other cultural backgrounds, that teachers had an important role to play in modelling attitudes and allowing students to reflect on questions of culture, and that programmes promoting tolerance in schools should start before age 11. Furthermore, Peiser and Jones (2013), who investigated pupils’ perceptions of intercultural understanding at KS3 in England, pointed out that intercultural learning was influenced by classroom experiences as well as out-of-classroom experiences, and that levels of interest and motivation to learn about culture were correlated to factors such as gender and socio-economic

backgrounds. From this perspective, teaching modern languages becomes a key opportunity to allow all children to discuss and reflect upon culture, regardless of their socio-economic background, and this implies a responsibility for teachers to design and implement strategies to teach children about culture sensitively, in the classroom, from KS3.

Integrating the teaching of cultural awareness and intercultural understanding to the teaching of language

Although cultural elements are mentioned in the languages programme of study for KS3 (DfE, 2013), there is little guidance in this document on how to implement the teaching of culture. Peiser and Jones (2012) provide an acute critique of previous policy documents mentioning intercultural understanding in modern foreign languages teaching, through fascinating discourse analysis that space and scope do not allow the examination of here. Most importantly, they identify points of ambiguity such as requirements in terms of TL use when talking about culture, the numerous flaws in assessment criteria, and the fact that updated guidance on the teaching of intercultural understanding was discreetly published and thus little known by practitioners. Peiser and Jones's (2012) conclusion that intercultural understanding was more a rhetorical feature of the national curriculum than a practical and meaningful objective for learners to attain seems to be confirmed by the fact that beyond the introduction of the current programme of study (DfE, 2013), cultural elements are only mentioned once in the list of elements that students should be taught. This contrasts with some curricula from other countries which explicitly embrace the integration of cultural learning objectives to the teaching of language at secondary school. For example, Artal, Carrión, and Monrós (1997) designed a programme of study including 'sociocultural contents' as part of the overarching objectives of language learning, and designed a syllabus with cultural as well as communicative learning objectives, assessed by self-observation questionnaires before and after each section of the course studied. The Australian government (2003, pp.47-51) also produced a framework to design a curriculum for intercultural language learning which includes intercultural objectives for teaching such as "value and promote discussion, thinking, inquiry, experimentation", "encourage 'noticing'", "foster engagement with difference", and many others, which despite their vagueness can be given credit for making these intercultural objectives explicit to language teaching. Furthermore, East (2012, p.70) makes a compelling argument for the opportunities that task-based language teaching (TBLT) provides to integrate intercultural language objectives to communicative teaching objectives in language classrooms, although his interviews with teachers

suggest that this would require, to be implemented, “developing teachers’ thinking to help them to understand that communicative language proficiency includes an intercultural dimension”.

The potential of a task-based learning approach in raising cultural awareness and fostering intercultural understanding

The definition of ‘task’ that East (2012, p.67) refers to is the one used by the Ministry of Education of New Zealand, itself based on Ellis’s clarification of the meaning of TBLT (2009). Ellis defines a task as any activity following these four criteria:

1. The primary focus should be on ‘meaning’ (by which is meant that learners should be mainly concerned with processing the semantic and pragmatic meaning of utterances).
2. There should be some kind of ‘gap’ (i.e. a need to convey information, to express an opinion or to infer meaning).
3. Learners should largely have to rely on their own resources (linguistic and non-linguistic) in order to complete the activity.
4. There is a clearly defined outcome other than the use of language (i.e. the language serves as the means for achieving the outcome, not as an end in its own right).

(Ellis, 2009, p.223)

Ellis (2009, p.223) distinguishes between ‘unfocused tasks’ which involve general language use and ‘focused tasks’ which “provide opportunities for communicating using some specific linguistic feature”. Ellis (2009, p.236) also insists on the fact that TBLT can include a pre-task and a post-task phase which provide opportunities for explicit teaching before or after students are encouraged to notice language features. This approach makes it possible to integrate some ‘tasks’ as defined above to the more traditional ‘Presentation – Practice – Production’ (PPP) approach followed by the schemes of learning in a school. My hypothesis is that by momentarily reversing this PPP approach through the use of carefully constructed tasks in the classroom, it is possible to avoid having to ‘present’ culture as a set of facts to learn, to instead give students opportunities to notice cultural characteristics through elements of tasks, to then discuss them and relate them to their own culture as part of a post-task phase. Van den Branden (2009, p.280) has demonstrated how skilled teachers could, in TBLT, have multidimensional interactions with students, “swiftly switching from one level of linguistic analysis to another”. As well as their potential for differentiation, these multidimensional interactions could include cultural conversations, if inquisitive students were trained to notice and ask their teachers about cultural characteristics they noticed while competing a task.

Tasks, therefore, could be a framework for discovering culture, giving students the opportunity to become ‘ethnographers’ (Broady, 2004, p.70). Tasks could also be an approach to using and analysing authentic materials. Gilmore (2007, p.98) adopts Morrow’s definition of ‘authentic text’ as “a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort” to argue that authentic materials should be used to enhance learners’ communicative competence. Issues such as what constitutes authenticity or who can be considered a ‘native speaker’, which Gilmore (2007) discusses in the context of the variety of English native speakers, can become points of discussion, and a way into teaching students about the variety of francophone cultures beyond France. Therefore, I join Gilmore (2007) in arguing that there should be no attempt to dissociate language from cultural elements in authentic texts, and that instead authentic materials should be used to get students to notice cultural elements of countries where the TL is spoken.

Despite the potential of a task-based approach and the use of authentic materials to raise cultural awareness and intercultural understanding, there are risks associated with this in practice. Gilmore (2007) brings out the issue of motivation when using authentic texts, and reasonably concludes that despite a widespread belief that using authentic materials can increase students’ interest and motivation, many evidence-based studies have led to inconclusive or contradicting results. For example, Peacock (1997) found that his learners of English as a Foreign Language displayed more on-task behaviour when working on authentic materials, but self-reported that their motivation was unchanged and that working on them was less interesting than working on the artificially-constructed materials they normally used. A key point of Peacock’s study (1997) is that learners’ levels of on-task behaviour increased as they spent more time working on authentic materials, perhaps suggesting that a period of adaptation is necessary for students to get used to the unfamiliarity of these materials. Another potential limitation of addressing the themes of cultural awareness and intercultural understanding in the classroom is the consequence on teacher and students’ use of target language, given the complexity of the concepts involved, especially at KS3.

Research questions

Bearing in mind the opportunities and limitations of using a task-based approach to integrate the teaching of cultural awareness and intercultural understanding to the teaching of language at KS3, I focused my inquiry on the research questions (RQs) presented in Table 2.

RQ1.	Is a task-based approach effective in raising students’ cultural awareness of the French-speaking world in French lessons?
RQ2.	Is a task-based approach effective in fostering intercultural understanding in the language classroom?
RQ3.	How does the teaching of cultural awareness and intercultural understanding affect students’ attitudes to the subject?

Table 2: Research questions

Methodology

This study is an action research project since I was “directly participating in the process of initiating change, while at the same time researching the effects of such changes” (Wilson & Stutchbury, 2009, p.62). Most of the data is qualitative, although some quantitative data was also collected to measure students’ attitudes towards the subject. An unavoidable limitation is that most of this data relies on student self-reporting. Students’ work, produced in written form, and observed and recorded in lesson observations and personal reflections, will also inform my analysis. Table 3 summarises the methods used to gather data for each research question.

Research Question	Data-collection methods
RQ1. Is a task-based approach effective in raising students’ cultural awareness of the French-speaking world in French lessons?	Pre- and post-intervention questionnaires Interviews Students’ work Lesson observation notes and personal evaluations of lessons
RQ2. Is a task-based approach effective in fostering intercultural understanding in the language classroom?	Pre- and post-intervention questionnaires Interviews Lesson observation notes and personal evaluations of lessons
RQ3. How does the teaching of cultural awareness and intercultural understanding affect students’ attitudes to the subject?	Pre- and post-intervention questionnaires Interviews

Table 3: Research Questions and data-collection methods

Rationale behind data-collection methods

Questionnaires

Questionnaires were chosen because they are a quick and efficient way to gather quantitative and qualitative data from all participants. Two questionnaires were completed before and after the intervention (see Appendix 1). As advised by Denscombe (2010, pp.162-163), the questionnaires were kept as short as possible and only contained the questions that were vital to the study. With hindsight, however, I realised that the fifth question from the pre-intervention questionnaire – “In your opinion, what is the main difference between the French and the British culture?” – had the same purpose as the second and third questions put together and was too general to create some meaningful data; it was thus dismissed in the data analysis. The questionnaires started from more straightforward questions to move on to questions requiring more complex answers (Denscombe, 2010, p.164). Each question was created to produce data relating to one or several research questions, except for question 4 – “Have you ever travelled to France or a French-speaking country?” – which was included to inform my planning by getting an idea of students’ past experiences in encountering French or French-speaking cultures, and question 8 – “Lastly, is there anything you would like to learn about French culture and/or the culture of French-speaking countries?” – which was an opportunity for students to inquire about specific aspects of French or French-speaking cultures.

I used open questions to address the first two research questions about cultural awareness and intercultural understanding because they are “more likely to reflect the full richness and complexity of the views held by the respondent” (Denscombe, 2010, p.165). In the pre-intervention questionnaire, questions 2 and 7 were designed to assess students’ current levels of cultural awareness of France and French-speaking countries. In question 2 students were asked to list ‘items’ that they associated with French culture, which were then coded thematically to discover what cultural characteristics students associated with France. As Evans (2009) points out, a small-scale study makes it possible to code qualitative data thematically ‘by hand’, which stimulates reflection over and interpretation of this data in the process. Question 7 – “List as many French-speaking countries as you can.” – was designed to assess students’ knowledge of the existence of French-speaking countries before the intervention. Both questions were asked again, with identical phrasing, in the post-intervention questionnaire as questions 2 and 4, which allowed for comparison

between students' pre- and post-intervention levels of cultural awareness. In the pre-intervention questionnaire, question 3 – “What comes to mind when you hear/read the words ‘British culture’? Make a list of up to 10 items.” – was designed to compare thematically the cultural references students used to characterise French culture and the ones they used to characterise their own, thus providing some information about students' awareness of their own culture. Thematic coding provided an opportunity to compare students' characterisation of both cultures, but this method's reliability is limited by the fact that I created these categories myself based on the ‘items’ students wrote down, thereby unavoidably adding a layer of personal interpretation into this set of data. Question 6 in the pre-intervention questionnaire – “Do you think it is important to learn about other cultures? Why?” – was open enough to collect students' opinions about the importance of learning about culture without leading them. Lastly, question 3 in the post-intervention questionnaire – “What did you learn about French and/or French speaking culture in this strand (ideas and beliefs)?” – was also left open in order not to guide students towards specific types of answers: this allowed for some spontaneity in students' answers, and comparisons between those who limited their answers to cultural characteristics and those who spontaneously related French or French-speaking cultures to their own culture.

I chose to ask a series of closed questions in the form of a Likert scale to address the third research question about the evolution of students' attitudes towards the subject, in order to create “information which is of uniform length and in a form that lends itself nicely to being quantified and compared” (Denscombe, 2010, p.166 and p.243). Therefore, question 1 was identical in both questionnaires to measure students' attitudes towards learning French, learning about culture, desire to learn about French culture, and desire to learn about French-speaking cultures, before and after the intervention. Although quantitative data of this nature allows for clear comparisons, whose statistical significance can be tested through a t-test, one needs to bear in mind the effect of how the data is grouped in the data analysis, which can influence findings significantly (Denscombe, 2010, p.247, pp.256-258).

Interviews

I organised one-to-one semi-structured interviews because “depth of meaning is central” to my analysis and my “research aims mainly require insight and understanding” (Gillham, 2000, p.11). Individuals were interviewed, rather than groups, because one-to-one interviews allow interviewers

to “locate specific ideas with specific people” (Denscombe, 2010, p.176). Five students were chosen, of varying ability, attitudes towards French, and levels of cultural awareness and intercultural understanding as assessed through their answers to the pre-intervention questionnaire. A ‘semi-structured’ interview style gives “more emphasis on the interviewee elaborating points of interest”, which once again made it possible to assess their spontaneity in comparing French and French-speaking cultures to their own culture (Denscombe, 2010, p.175). I therefore focused on the elaboration of open interview questions (see Appendix 2) based on the research questions, giving students more time to elaborate deeper answers. Question 1 – “What did you learn about French culture and French-speaking cultures last term?” – and question 2 – “How did you notice these cultural characteristics?” – addressed the first research question about cultural awareness. Question 3 – “Do you think we should learn about French and French-speaking cultures more in languages? Why?” – and question 4 – “Do you enjoy learning about French and French-speaking culture in languages? Why?” – addressed the third research question about students’ attitude to the subject. Lastly, question 5 – “Did learning about French and French-speaking cultures make you think about your own culture? How?” – sought answers to the second research question about intercultural understanding. I followed Bill Gillham’s recommendations (2000, pp.48-49) by getting ready to use probes such as “what makes you say that?”, “give me an example”, or “tell me a bit more”, which encourage interviewees to expand and add layers of complexity to their answers. I also got ready to use ‘reflecting’, in other words rephrasing and offering back the interviewee’s answer, to encourage self-reflection and further exploration (Gillham, 2000). Lastly, both field notes and audio recordings of the interviews were used to collect data securely and to have the option of going back to the recordings if needed (Denscombe, 2010, pp.186-188).

Students’ work, lesson observation notes, and personal evaluations of lessons

The last set of evidence used to evaluate the impact of the intervention is threefold. Some samples of students’ work that demonstrated their learning about some cultural characteristics of French-speaking cultures were collected. I asked the teacher who was observing me to take focused observation notes recording parts of lessons when culture was discussed in English. Lastly, I personally evaluated each lesson taught in the sequence, making specific notes of students’ remarks about French-speaking cultures and comparisons with their own cultures.

Designing the teaching sequence

The sequence of lessons was part of a cross-curricular KS3 'strand' called 'Ideas and Beliefs' which, in the languages department, meant teaching students about different types of media. The schemes of learning of the school are designed to prepare KS3 students to start GCSE from year 9. Therefore, a strong emphasis is put on the use of three different tenses within the same piece of work, and in this top-set year 8 class all students were expected to attain this, with varying levels of consistency and accuracy. The vocabulary students had to learn was also in line with GCSE specifications, focusing on TV programmes, types of films, types of books, and new technologies. Thus, demanding contents had to be taught in little time, since all students learn two languages and have only three sixty-minute lessons of each language a fortnight. Given this context, ethical considerations meant that the lessons could not deviate too much from the schemes of learning in place, since that would have unfairly prevented students from being prepared to tackle GCSE from year 9 at the same level as their peers. This was a good opportunity to find practical and realistic strategies to integrate the teaching of cultural awareness and intercultural understanding to the teaching of language within a content-heavy syllabus.

With these restrictions in mind, I decided to adapt the concept of task-based language teaching (TBLT) to make it a more loosely defined task-based approach through which to integrate cultural learning objectives to the communicative learning objectives of the strand. Therefore, the 'tasks' used were simultaneously language practice opportunities that came after the presentation of new language, and cultural learning opportunities through a 'pre-task', 'task', and 'post-task' structure. In other words, from the perspective of communicative and language learning objectives, a traditional PPP approach was followed, while from the perspective of cultural learning objectives, the presentation of language became the 'pre-task' phase, the practice of language was the main 'task' through which to notice cultural characteristics, and a 'post-task' phase was added in English to evaluate how much students had noticed in the task. Thus, from the perspective of cultural learning objectives, the 'tasks' I designed followed Ellis's definition (2009, p.223) since the primary focus was on 'meaning' (since language was used to access culture), there was some kind of 'gap' (as will be detailed below), learners largely relied on their own resources (that were taught through PPP prior to the tasks), and there was a clearly defined outcome other than the use of language (noticing and learning about culture and cultural characteristics of French-speaking countries). The result of this combination of a PPP approach for communicative and language

learning objectives and a task-based approach for cultural learning objectives shaped my medium-term plan for the ‘Ideas and Beliefs’ strand (see Appendix 3).

After having considered the requirements of the schemes of learning and the opportunities for cultural learning, I decided that the strand allowed space for two ‘tasks’ with associated cultural learning objectives. The first was a task based on authentic TV programmes extracted from the internet, from France, Belgium, and Switzerland. The cultural learning objective was that all students should be able to “notice the similarities and differences between French TV programmes and TV programmes from other French-speaking countries”, although I was hoping that some students would also make spontaneous links with their own culture after noticing that many English-speaking TV series appeared on the programmes. The communicative learning objective was for all students to “understand and describe a TV programme in French”, which they had to demonstrate through a gap-fill activity to complete in groups of four. Visual support was given on the board to complete the communicative aspect of the task, and the cultural aspect was presented as an extension. The second task was completed in a computer room. The cultural learning objective was for all students to “discover films from French-speaking countries”, while communicative language objectives were for all students to “talk about which types of film you like to watch and why” and to “talk about a film you are going to watch at the cinema”. Students had access to a model of a poster presenting a French-speaking film with a short paragraph using language seen in previous lessons, for them to adapt and personalise. They were then assigned, in small groups, one French-speaking film each, and they were asked to produce posters following the model on the board. Lastly, as a ‘post-task’ phase, the last lesson of the sequence included a short discussion in English to encourage students to recap what they had noticed and learnt about culture in the previous lessons.

Ethics

The design and delivery of this intervention followed the ethical guidelines set out by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011). Discussions with my subject lecturer, my school mentor, and the classroom teacher helped to ensure that the intervention provided an educational opportunity to the participants without affecting their motivation and attainment negatively. The Faculty of Education’s ethics form was signed by all parties to confirm that suitable ethical considerations had been taken into account. Participants were offered to participate without

obligation, and they were made aware through the introduction of the questionnaires that they could be withdrawn from the study at any point and that all the data collected would be anonymised and deleted after completion of the study. Identical assurances were given to the five students who agreed to participate in interviews. All students thus gave their voluntary informed consent to participate in this study.

Findings

Context

It feels sensible to provide some background information in which the impact of the intervention should be viewed. The year 8 class was a top set from a culturally diverse school; 23 out of the 29 students of this class had been to France at least once before, and two and three students had visited Belgium and Switzerland respectively. Finally, a French exchange took place during the penultimate week of the intervention, and some students participated in it by hosting a French partner for a week.

Raising students' cultural awareness of the French-speaking world

Students were given opportunities to enhance their cultural understanding of French-speaking cultures during the sequence of lessons. Personal evaluations and observations indicated that the TV programmes task, although it was not delivered to its full potential, allowed some students to notice cultural similarities between France, Belgium, and Switzerland. The task about French-speaking films was more successful, and created opportunities for some meaningful interactions with students in the classroom, for example when a student was surprised to learn that Ivory Coast was a country, and, when encouraged to look it up, found out that he knew a football player from this country. This student then put the flag of Ivory Coast as the background of his presentation. The 'post-task' discussion revealed that students had learnt about the existence of some French-speaking countries they previously ignored, but also that some students were confused and thought that all the films were French. This is confirmed in students' work, where some groups did not adapt "c'est un film français" ["it is a French film"] in the paragraph they had to personalise, although the films they were working on were from other French-speaking countries. Lastly, two students managed to put a cultural reference in their final assignment, quoting a film and a famous series of comics.

The data collected through the questionnaires also suggests that the sequence of lessons participated in raising students’ cultural awareness of French-speaking cultures. The most unequivocal impact of the sequence was students’ ability to name more French-speaking countries after the intervention, as shown in Figure 1: in all but the first pair of bars, the second bar of each remaining pairs is higher than the pre-intervention bar. France, Belgium, and Switzerland were the most commonly cited, followed by “some parts of Canada”; some students who had worked on a film from Ivory Coast in lessons cited this country too.

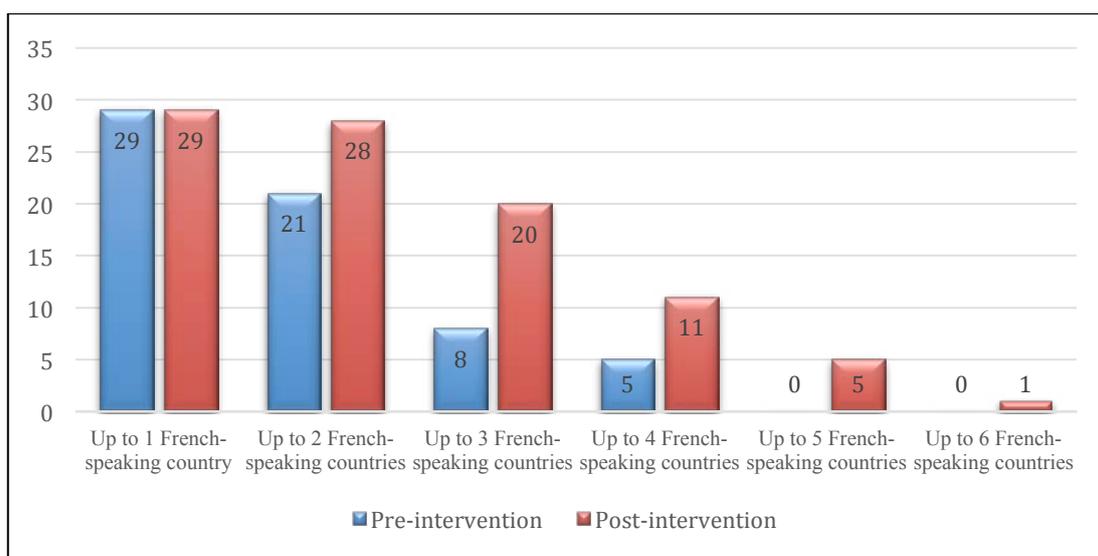


Figure 1: Number of students successfully naming French-speaking countries from memory

Comparing answers to question 2 on the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires shows a limited impact of the sequence of lessons on students’ perception of French culture. Figure 2 and Figure 3 below were drawn using how many times an item was mentioned in each category, and on the post-intervention figure the categories ‘football’ and ‘clothing’ have been reduced while a new category has arisen which has been given the label ‘media’: most of the additional items were “films”, including three titles of films that students had worked on in class, and “mangas”. These media ‘items’ came to be part of some students’ representation of French culture. Mangas were part of the vocabulary list students had to learn in the lesson. As an aside, I told students in English that “France is the second biggest consumer of mangas in the world”, after Japan. I spontaneously made this unplanned remark, but the data shows that students remembered it very well. It is telling that apart from these few notable additions, students’ perceptions of French culture before and after the intervention remained centred on the same categories. Food was overwhelmingly the most common category, with many “crêpes”, “escargots”, and “frog legs”.

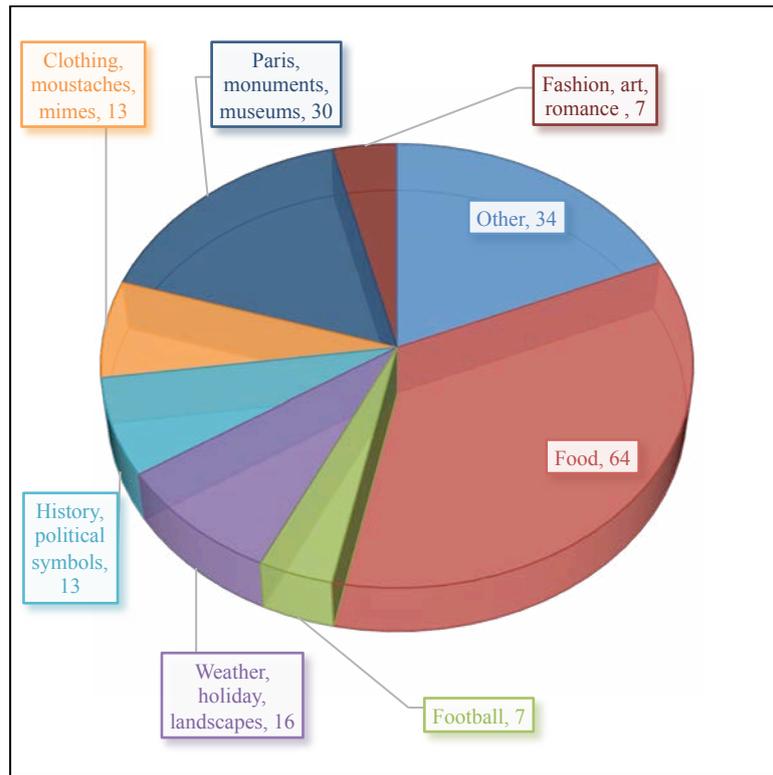


Figure 2: Items characterising French culture (pre-intervention)

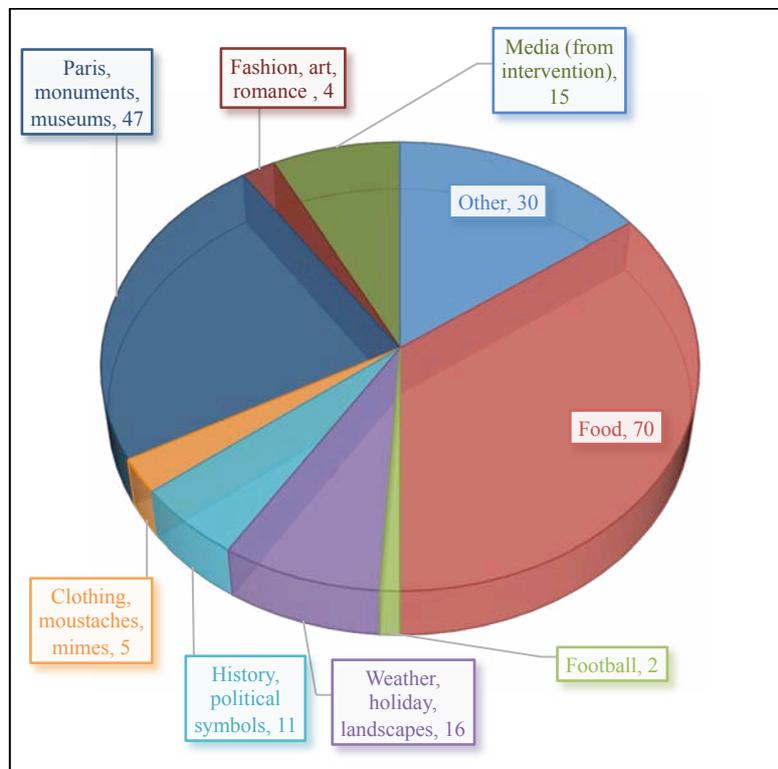


Figure 3: Items characterising French culture (post-intervention)

The strand taught before the intervention included lessons about food, which explains why students mentioned it in their answers. Other items seemed to be drawn from students' personal experiences, mostly holidays to Paris, "beaches", "old villages", or "skiing"; historical facts and political symbols such as the French revolution, the French flag, or some French institutions; and common, sometimes stereotypical, cultural elements that are often associated to France in Britain, for example "moustaches", "mimes", "romance", or "berets". It is notable that some students wrote "stereotype" in brackets next to some of their items, revealing an awareness of the stereotypical character of their answer but also, perhaps, their inability to think of alternative non-stereotypical cultural elements to characterise French culture. In fact, stereotypical items were less present in the post-intervention questionnaire, where items about media were mentioned. This could suggest that some cultural elements that students learnt from the sequence gave some of them the opportunity to characterise French culture with less recourse to stereotypes.

Answers to question 3 of the post-intervention questionnaire (see Appendix 4) confirm the results mentioned above, since seven students mentioned their learning about more French-speaking countries, six mentioned films, five mentioned mangas, and four mentioned TV programmes, including two remarks about time expressions on TV programmes. The variety of these answers to a question that was deliberately left as open as possible shows that students' perceptions of what they learnt about French cultures from the lessons was very different from one individual to another.

The variety of students' cultural takeaways from the sequence of lessons was highlighted in the interviews conducted after the intervention. To answer the first two questions about what they had learnt and how, student 2 and student 9 (these numbers correspond to the answers in Appendices 4 and 5) both mentioned TV programmes; however, while student 2 could articulate how they noticed similarities and differences between the types of programmes shown on French, Belgian, and Swiss TV, student 19 simply remembered noticing the way French people told the time (the 24-hour format). Student 28 answered to the same question that they were surprised at learning how many "places" spoke French. Student 9 and student 21, for their part, mentioned learning about films through the presentation they had to make, and both said that they had enjoyed having the opportunity to search facts about their respective films on the internet before writing in French about it. For example, student 21 reported that he had taken some time, during this lesson, to read an article on Wikipedia about differences between Belgian and French ways to speak French.

Fostering intercultural understanding

The choice to avoid being explicit about intercultural understanding in the lessons stemmed from a desire to see whether students would spontaneously make links between French-speaking cultural aspects they were noticing and their own culture. However, this meant that intercultural understanding was not mentioned explicitly in a whole-class context and there is, as a result, little evidence of intercultural understanding in students' work or lesson evaluations and observations. There is a notable exception, however, in a group's presentation of the film "Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis". Students spontaneously compared the expression 'Ch'ti' to 'Geordie' in English, after I explained to them in English what a 'Ch'ti' was.

Nevertheless, data from questionnaires and interviews suggests that some students made links between French cultures and their own culture, although it is difficult to assess the extent to which the intervention was the origin of these reflections. Answers to question 6 of the pre-intervention questionnaire (see Appendix 5) unveil an overwhelmingly positive attitude to otherness in this class, with 28 students considering it important to learn about other cultures, including eight claiming that it is necessary or at least useful when using the language and/or travelling, and five explicitly mentioning that they find learning about other cultures "interesting" or even "fascinating". One exception was student 28: "I don't really care to [sic] much about other places". Some students already associated learning about another culture with learning about one's own culture before the intervention. For example, student 17 wrote that "we can compare cultures to ours" by expanding our knowledge of other cultures, and student 21 wrote that it "[could] teach us about our own lifestyle".

Questions 2 and 3 in the pre-intervention questionnaire made it possible to compare the frameworks students used to characterise both French culture and their own culture before the intervention. It is fascinating to see that students used similar frameworks, in similar proportions, to describe both cultures, as shown by Figure 4 and Figure 5 below. This seems to confirm the idea that learning about another culture is a way into being more aware of one's own culture. It is unfortunate, therefore, that time constraints meant that I chose to exclude question 3 (about British culture) from the post-intervention questionnaire, since it was consequently impossible to produce post-intervention data to compare to this initial set.

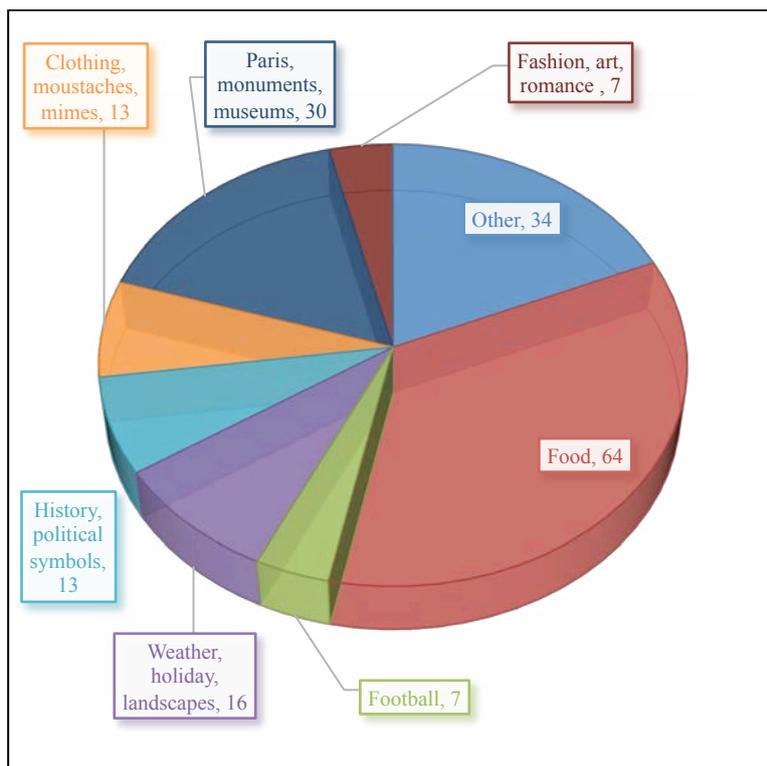


Figure 4: Items characterising French culture (pre-intervention)

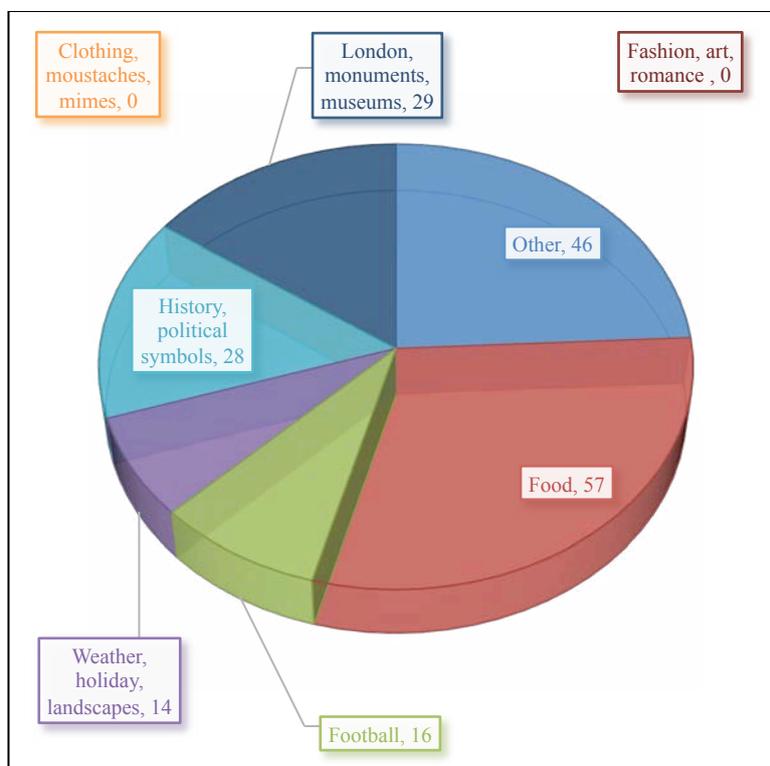


Figure 5: Items characterising British culture (pre-intervention)

Nevertheless, four students spontaneously compared French-speaking cultures to their own culture in the post-interview questionnaire. For example, student 2 wrote that they “learnt that in France, there are certain aspects of culture shared with England (music, TV, films)”, a much more specific comparison than their answer to the pre-intervention questionnaire: “it is important to tolerate/embrace new ideas and traditions from other cultures, in order to understand differences around the world”.

Interviews confirmed that there were significant disparities between students’ levels of intercultural understanding. Student 19, student 9, and student 28, when asked if learning about French-speaking cultures had made them think about their own cultures, all responded that they had noticed similarities and differences, but all remained unable to articulate specific links between French-speaking cultures and their own culture when prompted to expand on their answers or to give an example. On the other hand, student 2 made a link between what they learnt in class and what happened when their exchange partner came, in that they had been surprised by how “much [they] actually had in common”, for example the kind of programmes that were on TV. Similarly, student 21 explicitly said that learning about French-speaking cultures in class had made them think about their own culture in the “same [way] as when you go abroad”. Nonetheless, both of these students had also displayed high self-awareness and produced articulate discourses about culture before the intervention, therefore it is once again necessary to question the extent to which the sequence of lessons can be considered as influential in fostering their intercultural understanding.

Students’ attitudes to the subject

The evolution of students’ attitudes to the subject as a result of the sequence of lessons was measured through question 1 of both pre- and post-intervention questionnaires. Averages of points chosen on the Likert scale by students suggest that students’ desire to learn about culture and not just the French language increased after the intervention, while their enthusiasm to study French and learn about French and French-speaking cultures in class decreased. However, two-tail paired t-tests conducted through Microsoft Excel revealed that these results were not statistically significant, since the critical value (p) was systematically above 0.05. These results, presented in Table 4, are therefore inconclusive.

Question 1	Average (pre-intervention)	Average (post-intervention)	Paired t-test
I like studying French	3.59	3.52	p = 0.489164
I like learning about culture, not just the French language	3.66	3.79	p = 0.442438
I would like to know more about French culture	3.79	3.55	p = 0.069804
I would like to know more about cultures of French-speaking countries	3.62	3.52	p = 0.44826

Table 4: Averages and t-tests for question 1 (pre- and post-intervention)

A different way to interpret this data, however, may be more revealing. Figures 6, 7, 8, and 9 show the distribution, for each question, of the number of students disagreeing, having a neutral opinion about, or agreeing with each statement. From this point of view, it becomes clear that attitudes towards learning French (1a) remained largely stable, since there is a difference of only one student in the ‘neither agree nor disagree’ and the ‘agree or strongly agree’ columns. For the statement “I like learning about culture, not just the French language” (1b), a slight trend appears since fewer students disagree, more students are neutral, and one more student agrees.

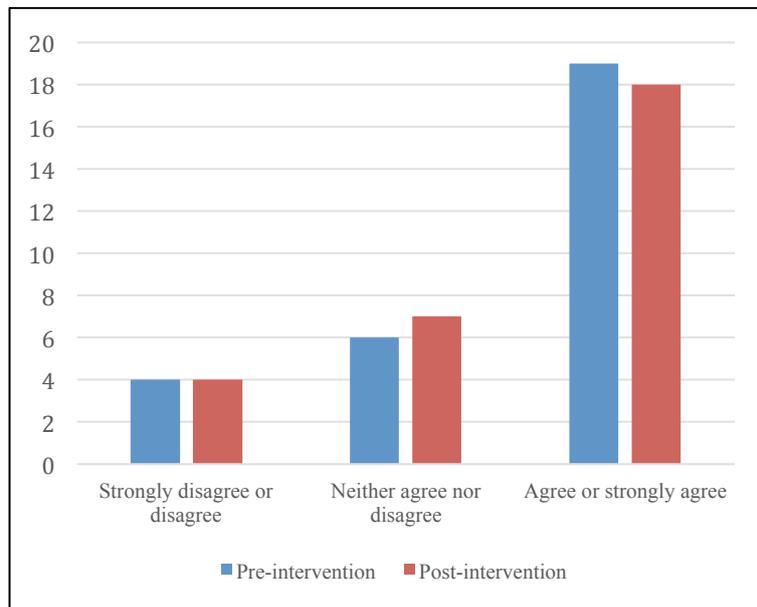
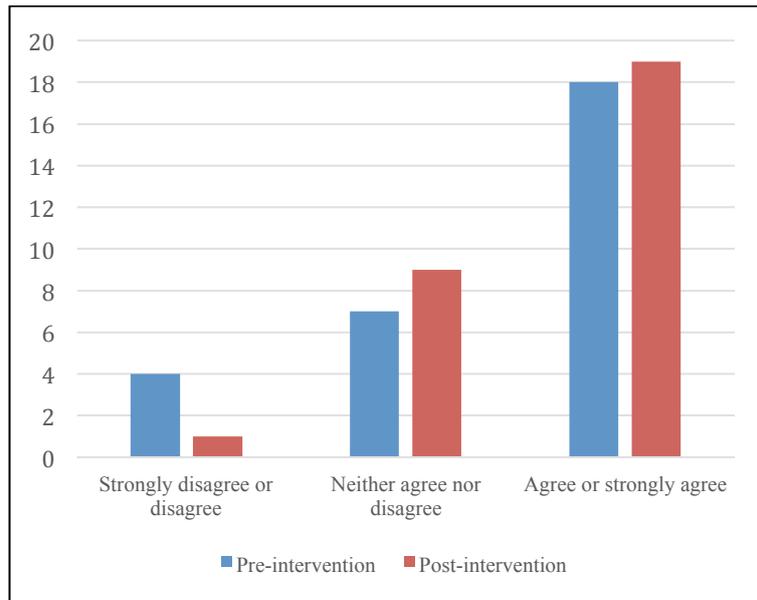
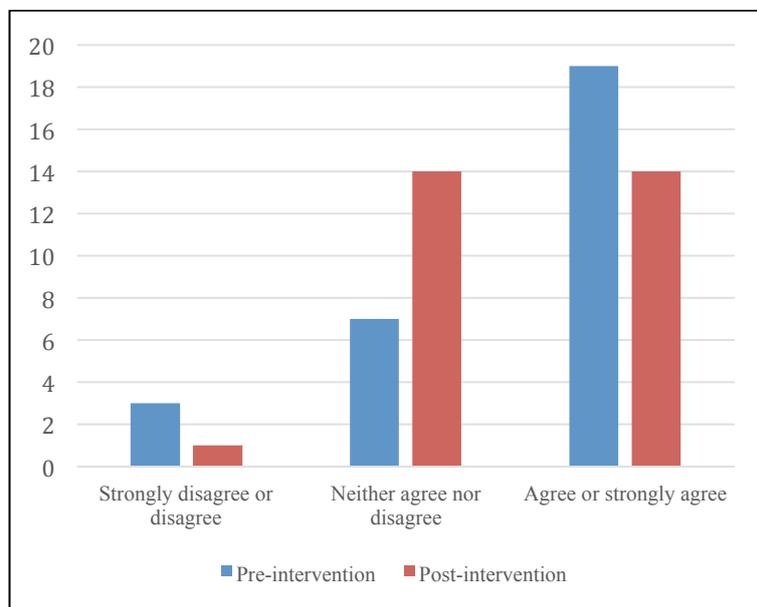


Figure 6: Responses to question 1a statement - I like studying French

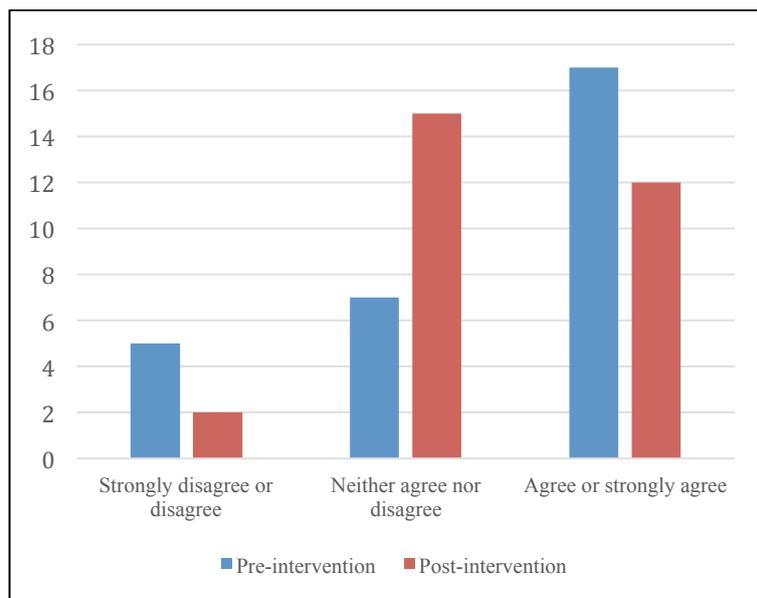


**Figure 7: Responses to question 1b statement -
I like learning about culture, not just the French language**

A different trend comes out of the reactions to the last two questions 1c and 1d (Figures 8 and 9, respectively), since the data shows that fewer students disagreed with them, but also that fewer students agreed with them, pushing more students towards a neutral stance.



**Figure 8: Responses to question 1c statement -
I would like to know more about French culture**



**Figure 9: Responses to question 1d statement -
I would like to know more about cultures of French-speaking countries**

Although any conclusion must be tentative given the small amount of data collected and the reliance on students’ self-reporting, it seems like while attitudes to learning the French language have not changed, more students enjoy learning about culture after the intervention. Furthermore, students seem to have adopted a more neutral attitude to learning more about French and French-speaking cultures, as fewer students seem reluctant to learn about it, but fewer students seem enthusiastic about it.

During the interviews, student 2, student 19, student 9, and student 21 all declared that learning about culture through the tasks they had to complete in class had been enjoyable, “quite fun”, or generally “nice to learn about”, and they all saw the value in studying culture alongside language, claiming that it was important and useful to know about if travelling or working abroad. Student 28 had a differing opinion and explained that they found learning about culture helpful in lessons, although they were unable to explain why when prompted, but that they thought there would be “no point” learning about French and French-speaking cultures if they were not learning the French language. It seems, from these interviews, that attitudes towards learning about French and French-speaking cultures were generally quite positive after the sequence of lessons despite differing levels of cultural awareness and intercultural understanding, except for student 28 who was already the only student to stand out before the intervention.

Discussion

The data gathered allows me to claim that the task-based approach taken can be effective in raising students' cultural awareness of the French-speaking world, provided cultural learning objectives are made explicit to students. The task-based approach enabled most students to explore new cultural characteristics, although returning to learning objectives through clearer post-task phases would have ensured all students learnt as much as they could from the tasks. Students could name more French-speaking countries from memory after the intervention, and some students used examples like films or types of books to characterise French culture in the post-intervention questionnaire at the expense of some stereotypical elements they had used in the pre-intervention questionnaire. This suggests that they had noticed and remembered cultural characteristics in class that became part of their conception of French culture. Some of the evidence, however, points at some confusion from some students – for example, which films were French and which ones were from other French-speaking countries – and shows that students benefited from tasks to different extents. Students who were not as well equipped to notice cultural similarities and differences in the tasks seem to have learnt less than their peers, which goes against the initial purpose of this project, namely to widen access to other cultures.

My experience in lessons, the feedback received through lesson observations, and comparisons with the existing literature all suggest that the main causes for this disparity were the lack of clarity in the instructions for the tasks and the failure to mention cultural learning objectives explicitly in class. The TV programmes task confused some students because I did not make the deliberate dual focus (linguistic and cultural) clear to them. This dual focus was mentioned during the French-speaking films task, which probably accounts for a more successful lesson that was recalled by more students at the end of the sequence. The anecdote of the aside about mangas proves that using English to mention cultural elements helps students to remember it, but also exposes the risk of 'presenting' culture as a set of facts since some students remembered this more than what they noticed through the tasks. A clearer post-task phase based on reflections and discussions in English would have allowed more students to remember cultural elements that they noticed without presenting culture as fixed. Thus, instead of putting questions about culture in extension activities and leaving the post-task phase until the end of the lesson as I did for the TV programmes task, I should embrace the cultural learning objectives of lessons, make them explicit to the students, and plan all stages of the task including the post-task as integral parts of the lesson. This is in keeping

with East's findings about integration of cultural knowledge into programmes of study in New Zealand: he concluded that the cultural strand of the curriculum "requires more explicit attention if teachers are to help their students to get to the heart of its intentions" (East, 2012, p.69). Furthermore, my conclusions resonate with the limitation that Artal et al. (1997) and Peiser and Jones (2012) have identified, namely the difficulty to assess cultural learning. Clearer post-task phases would also have allowed for more insight into students' knowledge, giving me opportunities to assess for learning.

Furthermore, while there is evidence that the intervention fostered more intercultural understanding for students who were already capable of linking the discovery of other cultures to a greater awareness of their own culture, there is little evidence to suggest that the tasks I designed were delivered in a way that allowed students without this initial capacity to develop it in class. I chose not to be explicit about the fact that I wanted students to compare French and French-speaking cultures to their own culture to find out which students would do it spontaneously. As a result, students who had demonstrated more capacity to establish links between C2 and C1 before the intervention seem to have benefited from the lessons more than those who needed to learn about intercultural understanding the most. I regret the decision to take out of the post-intervention questionnaire the question asking students to list 'items' they associated with British culture, since references to British films, TV programmes, or books, or the absence of such references, would have provided me with an opportunity to assess the impact of the sequence on all students' intercultural understanding. The evidence gathered from the interviews, nonetheless, and the fact that only four out of 29 students compared French and French-speaking cultures to their own cultures in the post-intervention questionnaire, seems to confirm that few students got their intercultural understanding fostered by their engagement with the tasks. Therefore, future schemes of learning seeking to integrate the teaching of intercultural understanding to the teaching of language will need to make intercultural learning objectives explicit in each phase of the task so that students who are not yet familiar with comparing other cultures to their own can benefit from it. Once again, the post-task phase will also need to provide an opportunity to assess students' intercultural learning in order to inform further planning.

Lastly, there is no robust data to confirm that students' attitudes to the subject were altered by the teaching of cultural awareness and intercultural understanding through tasks, but it is still worth reflecting, tentatively, on the trends that were identified in the data. The discrepancy between the

self-reported sense of enjoyment when working on the tasks from most of the students I interviewed and the mixed results from the questionnaires may stem from the fact that as Peiser and Jones (2013, p.347) underline, “rather than having a specific interest in cultural learning, most pupils were more positive about its potential to provide lesson variety”. However, this would contradict the positive attitudes to learning about culture that students displayed through their answers to the pre-intervention questionnaire. Similarly, the fact that fewer students disagreed and fewer students agreed that they wanted to know more about French and French-speaking cultures could indicate that what may have grasped the attention of the former may not have been challenging enough for the latter. In any case, these hypotheses can only remain assumptions due to the absence of statistical significance in the analysis of this data.

All of the above findings and interpretations must be tempered by an awareness of the context in which this study was conducted. Many students lived in an environment where the perception of ‘otherness’ was very positive, many of them had visited French-speaking countries – sometimes regularly – in the past, and the first part of the school exchange with a French school took place at the end of the intervention, therefore it is safe to assume that some cultural awareness and some intercultural understanding were fostered by these out-of-classroom experiences. As a result, although the data gathered was designed to measure the impact of the sequence of lessons on students’ cultural learning, conclusions must be tentative, since French lessons cannot have been the only experiences shaping students’ perceptions of French and French-speaking cultures and their intercultural understanding in that period.

Conclusion

Therefore, a task-based approach can be effective in raising students’ cultural awareness of the French-speaking world and could potentially foster students’ intercultural understanding if paired with explicit cultural learning objectives. The effect on students’ attitudes towards the subject are still to be investigated since no firm conclusion can be reached here. A task-based approach to cultural learning as defined in this piece can be integrated to schemes of learning based on a PPP approach, if the presentation and practice of language becomes the pre-task for cultural learning, and if the production stage of language is undertaken in the form of a task encouraging students to notice cultural elements – using, for example, authentic materials. The post-task phase recapping

the cultural elements students have noticed must be included in order to ensure all students benefit from engaging with the task and to give teachers opportunities to assess for learning.

In my own practice, I will use this framework to integrate cultural learning objectives to language learning objectives, bearing in mind the conclusions of this project. Both cultural awareness objectives and intercultural learning objectives need to be addressed explicitly as aims of the tasks, alongside language learning objectives, and need to be recapped in a post-task phase that includes all students and ensures they all have a chance to reflect upon the new cultural elements they noticed, and how this new awareness affects their perception of their own culture. Furthermore, I will try to find strategies to include more opportunities to assess for learning both informally and formally. This could take the form of targeted questioning with specific students during tasks, discussions in whole-class setting during post-task phases, or even short self-assessment questionnaires that students could complete on a regular basis. This will make my teaching of culture more inclusive, since it will help me to differentiate and adapt my teaching for students who need more support or more challenge to access or discover more about the complexities of cultural learning.

Future research could try to measure the impact of a similar sequence of lessons delivered more rigorously and including more effectively-planned post-task phases that explore cultural awareness and intercultural understanding while giving teachers more opportunities to assess for learning, differentiate, and make cultural learning more accessible to all students. A similar project could also be conducted over a longer period of time, to be able to measure with more precision the impact of this style of teaching on students' cultural awareness, intercultural understanding, and attitudes towards the subject. Lastly, it would be important to trial a similar project with different classes, that do not have such positive and open initial attitudes towards cultural diversity and otherness. If successful in these contexts, this method could be implemented in a more systematic way in languages classrooms from KS3, thereby addressing practically the most ideal, but most crucial aims set by the languages programme of study (DfE, 2013, p.1): “[providing] an opening to other cultures”, “[fostering] pupils’ curiosity”, and “[deepening] their understanding of the world”.

References

- Artal, A., Carrión, J., & Monrós, G. (1997). Can a cultural syllabus be integrated in the general language syllabus? In M. Byram, & G. Zarate (Eds.), *The sociocultural and intercultural dimension of language learning and teaching* (pp.21-37). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Australian Government: Department of Education, Science and Training. (2003). Report on intercultural language learning. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- British Educational Research Association (BERA). (2011). Ethical guidelines for educational research. Retrieved October 28, 2018, from <https://www.bera.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/BERA-Ethical-Guidelines-2011.pdf?noredirect=1>
- Broady, E. (2004). Sameness and difference: the challenge of culture in language teaching. *The Language Learning Journal*, 29(1), 68-72.
- Denscombe, M. (2010). *The good research guide: for small-scale social research projects* (4th ed.). Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Department for Education (DfE). (2013). Languages programme of study: key stage 3. national curriculum in England. Retrieved September 29, 2017, from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/239083/SECONDARY_national_curriculum_-_Languages.pdf
- East, M. (2012). Addressing the intercultural via task-based language teaching: possibility or problem? *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 12(1), 56-73.
- Ellis, R. (2009). Task-based language teaching: sorting out the misunderstandings. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 19(3), 221-246.
- Evans, M. (2009). Analysing qualitative data. In E. Wilson (Ed.), *School-based research: a guide for education students* (pp.57-75). London: Sage.
- Gillham, B. (2000). *The research interview*. London: Continuum.
- Gilmore, A. (2007). Authentic materials and authenticity in foreign language learning. *Language Teaching*, 40(2), 97-118.

- Kramersch, C. (1993). Teaching language along the cultural faultline. In *Context and Culture in Language Teaching* (pp.205-232). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Levy, M. (2007). Culture, culture learning and new technologies: towards a pedagogical framework. *Language Learning & Technology*, 11(2), 104-127.
- Pachler, N., Evans, M., Redondo, A., & Fisher, L. (2014). Teaching and learning culture. In *Learning to teach foreign languages in the secondary school: a companion to school experience* (4th ed.). (pp.277-304). London: Routledge.
- Peacock, M. (1997). The effect of authentic materials on the motivation of EFL learners. *ELT Journal*, 51(2), 144-156.
- Peiser, G., & Jones, M. (2012). Rhetoric or reality: intercultural understanding in the English Key Stage 3 Modern Foreign Languages curriculum. *Curriculum Journal*, 23(2), 173-187.
- Peiser, G., & Jones, M. (2013). The significance of intercultural understanding in the English modern foreign languages curriculum: a pupil perspective. *The Language Learning Journal*, 41(3), 340-356.
- Rollin, H. (2006). Intercultural competence for students of Spanish: can we teach it? Can we afford not to teach it? *The Language Learning Journal*, 34(1), 55-61.
- Van den Branden, K. (2009). Mediating between predetermined order and chaos: the role of the teacher in task-based language education. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 19(3), 264-285.
- Walton, J., Priest, N., & Paradies, Y. (2013). Identifying and developing effective approaches to foster intercultural understanding in schools. *Intercultural Education*, 24(3), 181-194.
- Wilson, E., & Stutchbury, K. (2009). Research design and ethics. In E. Wilson (Ed.), *School-based research: a guide for education students* (pp.57-75). London: Sage.

Appendix 1

Pre- and post-intervention questionnaires

Action Research Questionnaire

Dear Year 8 students,

I am running a research project about the teaching of culture in French lessons. This will take place with your class this half-term (until the Easter holidays). It would be very useful if you could answer the following questions for me. I ask for your name in order to track how your thinking evolves between now and the end of the project, but I will not share this information with anyone else, and your name will not appear in the final research; everything will be anonymous. This is not a test, there is no right or wrong answers, please just do your best and be honest!

If you do not want to participate in this study, please raise your hand and let me know.

If you have any questions about my study or this questionnaire, please raise your hand and let me know.

Surname: _____ Forename: _____

1. **How much do you agree with the following statements?** Please circle your chosen answer.
(1: strongly disagree; 2: disagree; 3: neither agree nor disagree; 4: agree; 5: strongly agree)

a. I like studying French.....	1	2	3	4	5
b. I like learning about culture, not just the French language.....	1	2	3	4	5
c. I would like to know more about French culture.....	1	2	3	4	5
d. I would like to know more about cultures of French-speaking..... countries	1	2	3	4	5

2. **What comes to mind when you hear/read the words 'French culture'?** Make a list of up to 10 items.
(Could be objects, food, ideas, places, anything! *NB: it can be fewer than 10 items*)

1) _____	2) _____
3) _____	4) _____
5) _____	6) _____
7) _____	8) _____
9) _____	10) _____

3. **What comes to mind when you hear/read the words 'British culture'?** Make a list of up to 10 items.
(*NB: If you consider your 'home' culture to be different than British, you can choose which one to talk about. If you choose to talk about another culture, please specify which: _____*)

1) _____	2) _____
3) _____	4) _____
5) _____	6) _____
7) _____	8) _____
9) _____	10) _____

4. **Have you ever travelled to France or a French-speaking country?**

If you have, please state where and how many times.

5. **In your opinion, what is the main difference between the French and the British culture?**

6. **Do you think it is important to learn about other cultures? Why?**

7. **List as many French-speaking countries as you can.**

If you want, you can add some information you know about these countries.

8. **Lastly, is there anything you would like to learn about French culture and/or the culture of French-speaking countries?**

Thank you very much for answering these questions.

Action Research Questionnaire

Dear Year 8 students,

It would be very useful if you could answer the following questions for me. Some of them are the same as at the beginning of the strand, to compare your thoughts before and after the sequence of lessons. Once again, please just be honest!

Surname: _____ Forename: _____

1. **How much do you agree with the following statements?** Please circle your chosen answer.
(1: strongly disagree; 2: disagree; 3: neither agree nor disagree; 4: agree; 5: strongly agree)

- a. I like studying French..... 1 2 3 4 5
- b. I like learning about culture, not just the French language..... 1 2 3 4 5
- c. I would like to know more about French culture..... 1 2 3 4 5
- d. I would like to know more about cultures of French-speaking..... 1 2 3 4 5
countries

2. **What comes to mind when you hear/read the words 'French culture'?** Make a list of up to 10 items.
(Could be objects, food, ideas, places, anything! NB: it can be fewer than 10 items)

- 11) _____ 12) _____
- 13) _____ 14) _____
- 15) _____ 16) _____
- 17) _____ 18) _____
- 19) _____ 20) _____

3. **What did you learn about French and/or French speaking culture in this strand (ideas and beliefs)?**

4. **List as many French-speaking countries as you can.**

If you want, you can add some information you know about these countries.

Thank you very much for answering these questions.

Appendix 2

Interview questions and prompts/probes

1c Interviews

One-to-one – 10mins

1. What did you learn about French culture and French-speaking cultures last term?
2. How did you notice these cultural characteristics?
3. Do you think we should learn about French and French-speaking cultures more in languages? Why?
4. Do you enjoy learning about French and French-speaking culture in languages? Why?
5. Did learning about French and French-speaking cultures make you think about your own culture? How?

Probes

- *“what makes you say that?”*
- *“give me an example”*
- *“tell me a bit more”*

‘Reflecting’ (rephrase and offer back)

Appendix 3

Medium-term plan and description of the teaching sequence

Date/Time	Communicative Learning Objectives	Language Learning Objectives	Homework
19/02 P3	<i>Assessment Strand 3</i>	n/a	n/a
22/02 P2	1c pre-intervention questionnaires All: talk about which TV programmes you like and why All: talk about what you usually watch, what you watched, and what you will watch on TV Most: talk about how often you like to watch TV programmes Some: talk about what TV programmes someone else likes to watch and why	Vocabulary: TV programmes, frequency phrases, opinion phrases 3 tenses (present tense, perfect tense, near future tense) with 1st and 3rd person	n/a
22/02 P5	All: talk about which TV programmes you like and why All: talk about what you usually watch, what you watched, and what you will watch on TV All: tell the time in French Most: talk about how often you like to watch TV programmes Some: talk about what TV programmes someone else likes to watch and why	Vocabulary: TV programmes, frequency phrases, opinion phrases 3 tenses (present tense, perfect tense, near future tense) with 1st and 3rd person Numbers and expressions of time	Revise vocabulary from both lessons, and numbers (especially 1-60) to be able to tell the time in French
05/03 P3	All: understand and describe a TV programme in French All: write about what you like to watch on TV All: notice the similarities and differences between French TV programmes and TV programmes from other French-speaking countries	Vocabulary: TV programmes, frequency phrases, opinion phrases 3 tenses (present tense, perfect tense, near future tense) with 1st and 3rd person Numbers and expressions of time	Write a paragraph about what you like to watch, what you have watched and what you will watch (extra: talk about someone else)
08/03 P2	All: talk about which types of book you like to read and why All: talk about what you usually read, what you read (past), and what you will read Most: talk about how often you like to read Some: talk about what types of book someone else likes to read and why	Vocabulary: types of book, frequency phrases, opinion phrases 3 tenses (present tense, perfect tense, near future tense) with 1st and 3rd person For some: the distant future	n/a
08/03 P5	All: talk about which types of film you like to watch and why All: talk about a film you are going to watch at the cinema All: discover films from French-speaking countries	Vocabulary: types of film, frequency phrases, opinion phrases, "ça a l'air..." 3 tenses (present tense, perfect tense, near future tense) with 1st and 3rd person For some: the distant future	Revise the vocabulary from all the strand (and focus on your verbs!)

Date/Time	Communicative Learning Objectives	Language Learning Objectives	Homework
19/03 P3	All: reflect on our progress in this strand so far All: understand and talk about the activities that you do online, on your phone, or on your tablet	Vocabulary: new technologies, frequency phrases, opinion phrases, "ça a l'air..." 3 tenses (present tense, perfect tense, near future tense) with 1st and 3rd person For some: the distant future	Revise for the assessment
22/03 P2	<i>Revision for assessment 1c post-intervention questionnaire</i>	All of the above	n/a
22/03 P5	<i>Strand 4 Assessment</i>	n/a	n/a

The lessons in italics are the ones that were taught by the students' regular classroom teacher due to my absence.

The objectives in **bold** are explicit cultural learning objectives that I integrated into the syllabus and taught with a task-based approach.

Appendix 4

Answers to question 3 post-intervention questionnaire

Student 1	that there is a lot more connected to france [sic] than I thought
Student 2	I learnt that in France, there are certain aspects of culture shared with England (music, TV, films).
Student 3	There are a lot of french [sic] speaking countries
Student 4	
Student 5	Anime is very big in france [sic]. Onion soup is a thing in france [sic].
Student 6	They enjoy manga more than most countries - There are a lot of things in our culture that come from French things
Student 7	I also learnt about 2 different films from french [sic] speaking countries - I also learnt that several countries I didn't know spoke french [sic] did speak french [sic]
Student 8	There is quite a lot of countries that speak French and it's a popular language
Student 9	the types of films they watch. Have a lot of comics and animation
Student 10	
Student 11	How different the french [sic] culture is compared to British culture
Student 12	Different foods - French movies
Student 13	
Student 14	they like mangas
Student 15	France is the second biggest country in comics (manga)
Student 16	A lot of films are French & there are a lot of French speaking countries in the world. Manga is popular in France as well as crêpes & macaroons
Student 17	I learnt about onion soup being a traditional French meal. I also learnt about macaroons and crêpes.
Student 18	
Student 19	French people use the same time expressions, different types of TV programmes.
Student 20	I learnt about French films, TV shows and Books
Student 21	French people like mangas
Student 22	
Student 23	How different the cultures are in England and in France. To do with food and other things and what the community is like.
Student 24	Some france originated films - TV programmes
Student 25	That they make a lot of things and care about family. They are a very big region and a lot of people learn/speak french [sic].
Student 26	I learnt that a lot of different countries speak french [sic] and not just france [sic].
Student 27	... traditional (?) French films
Student 28	That when they write down the time of a program they write it like 20h40 instead of 8h40. There are more countries that speak french [sic]
Student 29	we learnt about some of the thing they watch and read

Some students did not answer this question. Since it was to be completed during their assessment, lack of time is likely to have caused their failure to respond.

Appendix 5

Answers to question 6 pre-intervention questionnaire

Student 1	Yes because it helps you to understand how others live their lives and what is important to other countries.
Student 2	Yes because it is important to tolerate/embrace new ideas and traditions from other cultures, in order to understand differences around the world.
Student 3	I believe that it is important to learn about different cultures because it creates less of a stereotype and allows people to know and learn that not everyone is the same and that's ok. It lets people connect with others and helps everyone to understand one another, therefore making it easier to adapt in other places and meet new people without intruding [sic] in their beliefs and cultures.
Student 4	To better understand someone from where they come.
Student 5	I think it is important to learn about other cultures because you get a feeling of their lifestyle and it is easier to understand their feelings.
Student 6	It is important because all countries around us have different cultures so if we learn them we can manage easier when we go to them.
Student 7	Yes, I do. This is because cultures that are different to our own are extremely interesting to learn about. Furthermore, soon, many may be gone as the world seems to be becoming [sic] more 'Americanized'.
Student 8	Yes because it is quite fun to learn and will probably be quite fascinating. It would be quite useful as well, if you do go to France.
Student 9	Yes, if you go there you know what it is like and think how different people live to us and its something we have not properly done before.
Student 10	Yes
Student 11	Yes because in different cultures are new and interesting things which people can learn about.
Student 12	Yes, because you can discover new things about a country. And it can inspire people to travel. It's interesting to learn about another way of living.
Student 13	Yes, so we can learn how others live and we are more educated about our planet.
Student 14	Yes, because otherwise we only know our culture, which we see as right, and if we don't learn about anywhere else, then we may think of their 'mysterious' ways as wrong.
Student 15	Yes, because if you learn language you need to know about cultures.
Student 16	Yes, because we can connect more with people of different races.
Student 17	It expands our knowledge about different parts of the world and we can compare cultures to ours.
Student 18	Yes because you become more aware about how other countries do things, and the different food they eat etc.
Student 19	Yes because if you just know about your culture when you go to other places you will know how that country works. Also to widen your knowledge.
Student 20	I think that if you want to then yes because you can find out about how other people live and what they do around the world.
Student 21	I think it is important to learn about other cultures because their customs can teach us lessons about our own lifestyles. Also I think it makes us more accepting.
Student 22	Yes because if we are to visit their country we have to understand their culture and how they do different things and they make the effort to learn our language and culture.
Student 23	Yes because you get to see what other people do to celebrate different occasions or what they do on a regular basis. It helps you understand about different people and how they live.
Student 24	Yes because then you can incorporate different ideas that you like into your lifestyle. It would be interesting and a topic that could become extremely popular.
Student 25	because it teaches you about other places, right and wrong
Student 26	Yes because then if you go there it will be easier to understand.
Student 27	So you can understand the different ways people live and why they might move to a different country and choose to live how they live in that certain country.
Student 28	not really, I don't really care to [sic] much about other places. Like if I was to go on holiday I only care about how hot or cold it is, the rest doesn't matter to me.
Student 29	Yes, so you know what other things are in this world.