

Teaching French as a foreign language in South Africa: Incorporating the *chanson africaine francophone*

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Résumé

L'ouverture croissante de l'Afrique du Sud sur l'Afrique francophone implique que les enseignants de FLE puissent renouveler les programmes d'enseignement de français afin de trouver une articulation plus étroite entre les enseignements offerts et les besoins des étudiants. Le but de cet article est de présenter la manière dont la section de français à l'Université de Pretoria a tenté de relever ce défi en enrichissant les programmes de deuxième année par l'exploitation de la chanson francophone africaine et l'écriture créative. Dans une première partie nous analyserons le contexte dans lequel ce programme a vu le jour, ainsi que le cadre théorique sur lequel il repose. Dans un deuxième temps nous présenterons une description des activités proposées aux étudiants. Nous offrons ensuite quelques remarques sur la réaction des étudiants à ce nouveau programme introduit en 2012 et 2013, en nous appuyant sur les données recueillies lors des interviews auprès de nos étudiants et la lecture critique des journaux en ligne tenus par les étudiants.

Mots clés : Français langue étrangère (FLE) ; chanson francophone ; écriture créative ; production écrite ; *process genre approach* ; approche actionnelle

Key words : French as a foreign language ; francophone music ; creative writing ; written production ; process genre approach ; action-orientated perspective

Introduction

It is commonly accepted that francophone Africa plays an increasingly important role in the expansion and preservation of the French

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language. Ngalasso-Mwatha (2012 : 2) posits that by 2050 approximately 80% of all French speakers will be African. This article takes its cue from a special edition of *French Studies in Southern Africa* (2010) on the position of French in South Africa in which various authors consider the impact that democratisation and the consequent opening up of South Africa to the rest of Africa has had on curriculum design and teaching of French (Aldon : 83, 90-91; Alexander : 7; De Oliviera : 11; Delena-Le Roux : 142-143; Everson : 173; Morake : 70).

This 2010 edition proves that researchers and educators are becoming progressively more aware of the importance of innovation in curriculum design which takes these changes into account. The position of this article is that French programmes should ideally comprise African francophone cultural content in order to equip the learner with a more inclusive understanding of the French language and to encourage the development of a greater degree of intercultural sensitivity with regard to francophone Africa. The aim of the article is to demonstrate one of the ways in which the Department of Modern European Languages at the University of Pretoria undertook curriculum change in order to align itself with these developments.

In the article, we give context as to what lead to the design and implementation in 2012 of a Creative Expression programme, based on the use of African francophone song. We describe the theoretical approaches that informed the design and organisation of the programme. We then discuss the teaching process and provide examples of learning activities and related student productions in an annex. Finally, we reflect on student perceptions and experience of the newly-introduced programme.

Context

The introduction of francophone music combined with creative expression activities at the University of Pretoria was prompted by certain potential areas for development that had been identified with regards to the second-year French course. Although the literary component of this course already comprised a selection of francophone short stories and poetry, one of our aims was to increase the amount of

African francophone cultural content offered to students. Furthermore, we wanted to provide more opportunities for creative production and language play. Our first-year course already proposes a creative component and we felt it would be appropriate to continue to develop creative skills in the second year and thus align ourselves to the suggestions of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)¹ which defines the ludic and aesthetic uses of language play as being « an important part in language learning and development » (Council of Europe 2001 : 55).

Examples of ludic activities include fabricating stories, playing writing games and other audio-visual activities (*Ibid.*). Aesthetic uses of language refer to « imaginative and artistic uses of language which are important both educationally and in their own right. Aesthetic activities may be productive, receptive, interactive or mediating [...] and may be oral or written » (*Ibid.* 56). They comprise activities such as singing, retelling and rewriting stories, performing scripted or unscripted plays, the production, reception and performance of literary texts and performing and watching or listening to recitals, drama, opera, etc. (*Ibid.* 55). Another aspect of our course that merited attention was the use of song ; we were already using French songs in the classroom but we wanted to do this in a more systematic and pedagogically informed manner.

A further contributing factor to the creation of the programme was the personal interests of one of the lecturers² who is also an active musician, interested in both composing music and creative writing. During her undergraduate and honours studies, completed between 2006 and 2010 at the University of Pretoria, the French courses consisted mainly of Grammar, Cultural Texts and Literary Texts classes. When she became an assistant lecturer in the Department in 2011, she noticed that although songs were used in classes informally from time to time, accompanying activities seemed to be structured

¹ The CEFR provides a « common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe » (Council of Europe 2001 : 1).

² Willemien Rust, who is also the main author of this article.

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according to what Gouvernec (2008 : 16) would call an « arbitrary methodological approach » ; in comparison to the Literature, Grammar and Translation classes, these activities appeared to have a less sound didactic basis.

Furthermore, she noted that although students were encouraged to argue creatively in certain classes such as literary textual analysis classes, no assignment or class activity specifically focused on developing creative writing skills. The way in which the course was structured appeared to focus more on enabling students to establish an intellectual connection with the language and less on creating an emotional connection. Her own experience as a student had made her sensitive to the affective aspects of learning a foreign language and she had become aware of the potential of music and creative language play in addressing those aspects.³ This experience motivated her to design a programme that would address these identified needs.⁴

Thus, in 2012, one of the five hours of the second-year course presented to ex-beginners was allocated to experimentation with the proposed Creative Expression programme. The course would then consist of two Grammar classes, two Cultural and Literary Text classes and one Creative Expression class per week.⁵ The profile of this largely homogenous group seemed to be ideal for the programme, as the majority of them had had little previous exposure to francophone culture. In their first year, the students are all true beginners without significant prior knowledge of French. In their second year, they have only completed one year of French and are on average at an A2 level

³ The findings of this study related to the affective in FLE will be elaborated on in our forthcoming article.

⁴ In preparation, she attended a course in the use of song in FLE at CAVILAM.

⁵ Initially these three components were offered as separate and autonomous parts of the course and lecturers did not attempt to create links between them but we soon realised from comments made by students that it was important to integrate and link these components in order to reinforce learning that was taking place.

according to the DELF classification system.⁶ In 2012, the ex-beginner second-year group consisted of 67 students, taught in three smaller groups, and the Creative Expression programme was compulsory for all these students.

Whilst the pedagogical aim of the newly introduced programme was to address the issues raised above and thus enhance our second-year programme, the endeavour also provided possibilities for research. This article therefore presents the process in two phases : we consider firstly the programme and how it was developed, bearing in mind the relevant theoretical underpinnings as well as the pedagogical objectives. Secondly, we present some of the findings of the research that the programme engendered. The aim of the research was interpretative and qualitative ; it attempted to establish how students would experience the introduction of such a creative writing component. The final part of the article therefore describes student perceptions and experiences of the programme. Our focus on student perceptions and experience aligns itself with the position taken by Delena-Le Roux (2010 : 127-129) who posits that the pedagogical « needs »⁷ of students should receive more attention when designing programmes and that links should be established between these needs, expected outcomes and the content of programmes. She acknowledges that the identification of these needs is largely a subjective process and is linked to the perceptions of the individual learning the language or the society to which this individual belongs. In the light of these affirmations, it seems to us that research on student perceptions of the programme and the value of suggestions

⁶ More advanced 2nd year students who are either francophone or have studied French at high school or elsewhere are accommodated in a separate group, and in the third year these groups are merged.

⁷ She defines such a need as « un manque ressenti par un individu par rapport à un usage envisagé d'une langue et correspondant à des savoirs, savoir-faire et savoir-être qu'il doit maîtriser afin de faire un tel usage de cette langue » (Delena-Le Roux 2010 : 128). In other words, the need is identified by the individual and may refer not only to knowing how to perform certain language acts (*savoir-faire*), but also to adopt certain appropriate forms of behaviour (*savoir-être*) related to the language.

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for improvement made by the students themselves should not be underestimated.

The *chanson française* in FLE

The use of the *chanson française* to teach French as a foreign language is not a recent practice. Demari, who provides a comprehensive summary of the use of music in FLE from the 1950s up to 2001, explains that music was initially used to assist learners to memorise grammatical structures. Thereafter, the focus shifted to the meaning of texts and, eventually, all elements of the songs were taken into account: the grammatical components, the meaning of the lyrics, the socio-cultural aspects and the musical elements (Demari 2001 : 55).

It is mainly since the 1980s that the use of song in FLE has received attention in academic literature dealing with foreign language teaching. Literature shows that one of the reasons that had initially prevented FLE educators from using song was the perception that the lyrics have the potential to hinder the language learning process, as one does not necessarily sing lyrics the same way that the words are pronounced when speaking (Calvet 1980 : 8). Other barriers to using music in FLE teaching are described by Gourvenec (2008 : 16-17), who posits that the use of music in class is often too « arbitrary », that the worksheets are too generic and that educators do not make use of interesting teaching methods, even though many options are available. In spite of these limitations of using music in the learning of FLE, there are numerous authors that advocate the benefits thereof.

Legg (2004 : 10) suggests that « it seems likely that learning words and phrases through the medium of song can indeed improve teenage pupils' ability to memorise and understand key vocabulary items in French ». Calvet (1980 : 20) theorises that there are linguistic arguments in favour of the use of French songs in the FLE classroom because through music, students are exposed to different forms and registers of language. Calvet further argues for the benefit of learning with music because music has the potential to enhance the meaning of the lyrics: « Les transformations que la musique fait subir à la langue, qui peuvent déformer les mots au point de les rendre difficilement

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reconnaissables, soulignent en même temps le sens, ou mieux, établissent le sens » (Calvet 1980 : 18).

The research of both Hourbette (1993) and Weaver Failoni (1993) describes how, in addition to language learning, the use of songs in the FLE classroom enriched their learners' cultural awareness. Boudou and Isern indeed state that song can no longer solely be considered a form of relaxation, as it helps students not only to gain cultural awareness, reinforce grammatical structures and improve their pronunciation and listening skills, but can also lead to a playful learning experience and promote interaction and creativity :

Longtemps envisagée comme détente/récompense par ceux des enseignants qui osaient l'introduire dans leur classe, la chanson, souvent réduite à ses paroles, sert ensuite à illustrer certains aspects de la langue et de la civilisation [...] Ses caractéristiques ont permis de voir en elle l'exercice structural tout fait grâce au refrain ou à la reprise systématique de structures grammaticales, le support susceptible de développer chez l'élève des facultés d'audition ou de phonation, le déclencheur privilégié de communication, le prétexte à des exercices de reconstitution, à des jeux linguistiques ou de créativité. (Boudou & Isern 1984 : 31)

In the light of the positive results associated with the use of song in FLE classes, and given the context in South Africa which invites the inclusion of francophone cultural material in the South African classroom, our Department made the decision to introduce the use of the *chanson africaine francophone* in our course by selecting appropriate francophone songs and developing related learning activities.⁸

⁸ There are various websites that provide examples of the use of song as a teaching resource. The activities on the website of *TV5Monde*⁸ (TV5 n.d.) and *Le point du FLE*⁸ (Le point du FLE chansons n.d.) can be consulted. CAVILAM, the French language institute in Vichy, regularly makes available francophone music and related meaningful learning activities. The activities *French Studies in Southern Africa No. 45 (2015): 103-130*

Theoretical approaches that shaped the design of the Creative Expression programme

The following three approaches shaped the design of the teaching material for the programme : the principles of the *Approche actionnelle* advocated in the CEFR (Council of Europe 2001), the three-phase approach advocated in the textbook *Écritures Créatives* (Bara *et al.* 2011) and the process genre approach, developed by Badger and White (2000).

Amongst other things, the *Approche actionnelle* aims at moving beyond the demands of the communicative approach to equipping non-native learners to perform tasks and actions together in the target language (Puren 2006 : 40). A prominent aspect of the *Approche actionnelle* is thus that learners are encouraged to work with peers in order to perform set tasks which involve engaging in specific actions within a defined environment:

The approach adopted here, generally speaking, is an action-oriented one in so far as it views users and learners of a language primarily as ‘social agents’, i.e. members of society who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action. (Council of Europe 2001 : 9)

The CEFR points out that « [i]n so far as carrying out these tasks involves language activities, they necessitate the processing (through reception, production, interaction or mediation) of oral or written texts » (*Ibid.*: 15). When designing the Creative Expression programme, it would thus be key to take into account both the inclusion of group assignments which required of students to interact with their

proposed by them are not necessarily adapted specifically to the South African context but they can serve as useful models.

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peers and act as « social agents » as well as the « processing » of oral or written texts as a part of the process.

Puren reminds us of another aspect of the *Approche actionelle* which indeed appeared to be very relevant to a programme that endeavoured to increase cultural awareness, namely its intercultural aspect :

Il s'agit désormais de former les citoyens de sociétés multilingues et multiculturelles capables de cohabiter harmonieusement [...], ainsi que des étudiants et des professionnels capables de travailler avec d'autres dans la longue durée en langue-culture étrangère. (Puren 2009 : 124)

He furthermore elaborates on the notion of « social agent » by implying that the tasks and actions are no longer 'simulated', neither is the mini-society in which the students perform them; the actions and society are in fact real actions performed in a real society, transforming students into real « social agents » (*Ibid.*: 125-126). These characteristics of the *Approche actionelle* were to form part of the conceptual framework that informed the design of the programme.

The second approach which was relevant for the design process is the three-phase approach proposed by the authors of *Ecritures Créatives* (Bara *et al.* 2011). This is a textbook for the teaching of French as a foreign language, intended to develop the creative writing skills of learners at various levels. It is divided into three sections, each representing a different phase: Section 1: *Imiter, Emprunter*; Section 2: *Inventer, Imaginer* and Section 3: *Jouer, Créer*.⁹ The objective of the first phase is the imitation of a given text. In the second phase, the intention is to create imaginative texts. In the third phase, the learner is encouraged to develop language play or to experiment with language for recreational purposes (*Ibid.*: 9, 38, 66).

⁹ Section 1: Imitate, Borrow from; Section 2: Invent, Imagine; Section 3: Play, Create.

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The activities that were planned for the Creative Expression classes followed the first two phases as set out in this textbook over a period of a year. Initially, students imitated the lyrics of the songs but they were given increasingly more creative freedom and autonomy in their assignments as the year progressed. In the beginning, students copied many aspects of the lyrics in the song and merely replaced specified words, or put words in the correct order while listening to the songs. As students became more autonomous and gained self-confidence in the creative writing process, they were encouraged to write more freely, by not merely imitating the texts but by formulating their own sentences as well. This approach was adopted because imitating a text is a less threatening way of first introducing learners to creative writing in a foreign language, as there is not as much room for error (*Ibid.*: 9). The gradual increase in freedom, autonomy and self-confidence motivates the learner (*Ibid.* : 38).

The third phase advocated in *Écritures Créatives*, namely playing in the target language, was difficult to use to its full potential in the initial stages of the programme. It was only once an appropriate class environment and cohesion between the students had been established, and students started to gain confidence in the creative process, that we could meaningfully venture into this phase. Language play and experimenting in the language took place during the collaborative, voluntary project that was launched at the end of the year.

The third approach which was useful for the design of the programme, and which is specifically related to creative writing, is the process genre approach¹⁰ advocated by Badger and White. Certain aspects of this method are aligned with the three-phase approach proposed by *Écritures Créatives*. In both these approaches, the learner is guided progressively throughout the creative writing process; the amount and type of guidance and constraints offered by the lecturer differs, depending on the expected outcome of the particular phase.

¹⁰ A detailed description of the process genre approach can be found in the article “A process genre approach to teaching writing” by Badger and White (2000).

Badger and White introduce a model for the process genre approach, which includes three different stages. Firstly, the educator illustrates the specific context of the text and related writing activity by providing examples of the type of creative writing the students are required to produce. Thereafter, the learner is lead to identify the purpose of the writing activity and the social context by clarifying the target audience, the information that must be included, and the expected format or genre of the text. Finally, the production of the text occurs in stages – planning, drafting, redrafting and proofreading (Badger & White 2000 : 158).

Implementation and design of the Creative Expression programme

During the course of the year, the students participated in two group and six individual assignments. The individual assignments were based on African francophone songs by artists such as Tiken Jah Fakoly, Alpha Blondy, Amadou & Mariam, Francis Bebey and Angélique Kidjo. In order to reinforce learning, the songs were selected to be aligned to the different themes that the students were studying in their Cultural and Literary Texts classes. The lyrics of these songs became *textes déclencheurs* (source texts) for the classroom assignments and the textbook *Ecritures Créatives* served as inspiration and model for the design of the activities used in the Creative Expression classes. At the end of the year, students were invited to participate in a collaborative creative project during which they collectively wrote and recorded a song.

The principles of allowing increasing autonomy and freedom of creativity, as well as of providing guidelines both in terms of process and genre, as discussed in the approaches mentioned above, were adhered to in the planning of activities. In the interest of brevity, we have selected to discuss one group assignment, one individual assignment and one collaborative project.¹¹ We provide a description of

¹¹ All assignments are available in the addenda of the online dissertation “Enriching French foreign language learning with African francophone music and creative expression” (Rust 2014).

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the assignments, and in the annex we give examples of activities and creative productions written by students.

Group assignments

One of the group assignments (view Annex I) consisted of the creation of an advertisement for Air France, similar to those seen on aeroplanes. The purpose of the assignment was to encourage the groups to do research on an African francophone country of their choice in order to create the advertisement. Students were expected to focus on the cultural features of the country, such as the artists, the musicians and places of cultural interest. They synthesised information they found about the country and formulated summaries in their own words. The twofold objective of this endeavour was to increase their awareness and knowledge of francophone Africa whilst providing an occasion for them to interact with their peers and perform the set task together. Students had to do a creative presentation of their advertisement in the form of a PowerPoint show, a video or a play, and handed in a hard copy of their summaries.

Group work has always been a major challenge within our Department, which accommodates students from a variety of faculties who therefore all have different timetables. For this reason, they were granted time in class (2 periods of 50 minutes each) to work on the assignment, and this could be followed up by meetings outside class. The lecturer moved around between groups in order to facilitate the brainstorming process.

Individual assignments

One of the individual assignments (view Annex I) was based on the song *La condition masculine*, by Francis Bebey (Bebey n.d.). Bebey's song speaks about the relationship between the narrator and his wife, Sezanna. Initially, Sezanna is a very submissive wife, but as the song progresses, she becomes more and more independent and eventually ends up challenging her husband. The theme corresponded to what students were studying in the Cultural and Literary Texts classes, namely the different types of relations and masculine and feminine roles as presented in the following texts: *Pitié pour les garçons*

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(L'Actualité 1999 : 41-43) *La femme: épouse* (Bâ 1999 : 33-36) and *On fait le marché avec papa* (Goscinny n.d.). Students were specifically encouraged to make use of the vocabulary and expressions they had learnt from these texts.

The model on which the first proposed activity for *La condition masculine* was based (Bara *et al.* 2011 : 72), involved cutting out the words from a poem by Jacques Prévert and expecting students to use these words to write their own poems. In the same way, lyrics of *La condition masculine* were printed on cardboard and each sentence was cut out. The first activity entailed merely assembling the lyrics in the correct chronological order while listening to the song.

The second activity was inspired by *Fiche 52 (Ibid. : 80)*, in which extracts from a novel were used as *textes déclencheurs*. In these activities, the learners were expected to write down as much as they could about two specific characters in the story : their age, their professions and so forth. Based on this information, they wrote a description of themselves. The activity that we proposed similarly required of them to produce descriptive pieces of writing based on the information gathered from a song. They had to describe the character traits of the narrator in the song and his wife, Sezanna, as well as their relationship, thus focusing on the masculine and feminine roles that were portrayed in the lyrics. This activity served to prepare them for the final activity.

The final activity required the students to write a poem to their 'future' spouse. However, they had to describe the gender roles they envisioned for their relationship with this person, using the vocabulary they had acquired in activity 2. The only additional instructions were to employ the future tense and the correct placement of adjectives. In comparison to previous assignments, students were allowed a large amount of creative freedom and autonomy.

This assignment illustrated how, through the use of one song, various stages of the approaches advocated by the authors of *Ecritures Créatives* as well as the model set out for the process genre approach can be included. Due to the subject matter and theme, the assignment

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also created the opportunity for students to discuss different cultural approaches to issues such as polygamy and masculine and feminine roles. Two student productions that illustrate this activity can be viewed in Annex II.

Collaborative projects

At the end of each year, students were invited to participate in a collaborative, creative music project. Participation was voluntary and their efforts were not evaluated. The collective music projects were considered an extension of the activities in the Creative Expression classes and the productions were then turned into professional videos that later became available to the public on YouTube.¹² These projects combined both interacting with peers in a ‘real-life’ environment in order to produce a ‘real’ oral text in the form of a song that was recorded in a professional studio as advocated by the *Approche Actionnelle*, as well as the use of creative and imaginative language play suggested in the third phase of *Écritures Créatives*.

For one of the music videos, *Enracinée en moi*, the following theme was chosen during a group discussion and brainstorming session : “Learning French is like learning to love someone”. The concept for *Enracinée en moi* can be summarised as follows :

When you learn a foreign language, you are initially intrigued by the novelty of the experience. You quickly become capable of constructing basic sentences and you feel a certain pride in your achievement. But after writing a few tests [...] [y]ou realise that it is harder than you expected and your resolve starts to waver. But then, gradually, you start finding words when at first there was nothing and you start making connections between topics.

¹² The videos can be viewed on YouTube: “The Creative Expression programme” (Étudiants à UP : 2012b), *Étudiant à l’université de la Vie* (Étudiants à UP : 2012a) and *Enracinée en moi* (Étudiants à UP : 2013). The links are provided in the bibliography.

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You develop coping strategies and you finally realise that you do, in fact, still love the new language.

The process of intrigue, infatuation, disillusion and eventual love when learning a foreign language is comparable to the ups and downs in a relationship. Initially you are intrigued by the idea of this new person in your life, which is followed by an all-consuming feeling of love [...] However, after a while, after the honeymoon...you start to argue and the other person feels like a stranger to you, you start doubting the relationship. But, you persevere and you compromise, and you realise that even though the relationship takes effort, it's worth all the effort it takes. You still love each other. (Philomien n.d.)

The music video, *Enracinée en moi*, acted out and sung by the group, is a metaphor for the process of learning a foreign language and portrays a couple playing Scrabble while being served at a table. The Scrabble blocks are then given to the waiter serving them and who in turn passes the blocks on to others. This passing on of the Scrabble blocks is presented in a comical way and is almost like an infectious cold that is then caught by others. The couple in fact represents “Francophonie” and the Scrabble blocks symbolise the French language. The waiter and the students represent the French learner. The waiter is the first one to be intrigued by the French language, and he transmits this ‘love sickness’ to others, who in turn shares it with yet others.

The imaginative language and sentence structures seen in the lyrics (view Annex II) demonstrate the level at which students were able to write creatively by the end of the process. The following observations could be made while watching the videos. The students appeared to be relaxed and were enjoying themselves. At the same time, learning took place, as their pronunciation skills improved whilst recording, which entailed repeating the sounds many times. The process also brought about a sense of achievement and of social coherence as can be seen in the following comments :

You could see the interaction, see someone laugh, enjoying themselves. The video was just the best thing for the

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programme. People were like: WOW! The video had a very strong impact. I never thought a department could pull that off (Makalo).¹³

I will remember it for being the most educative and entertaining collaboration (Mamello).

I enjoyed it because I got to know people that I have been studying with for two years but never interacted with (Rika).

Another collaborative video, entitled *The Creative Expression programme*, did not involve producing a song, but provided an introduction to and description of the programme. In it, students reflected during interviews on how they had experienced the learning process. The video can therefore be considered as a form of critical engagement with the programme. It also serves as advertisement for the course and is shown at the beginning of every year to the new group of second years.

Student perceptions and reactions

Further evidence and illustration of students' perceptions of and reactions to the new programme were purposefully collected from a representative sample of 20 students throughout 2012 and 2013 by perusing interviews and their online journals.¹⁴ Student comments referred to both the individual and group assignments, as well as the collective music projects. Content analysis of their perceptions corresponded to four main themes as shown below.

Cultural enrichment

¹³ All students quoted in this article were given pseudonyms.

¹⁴ More detailed information on methodological issues related to this study and to the analysis process that was adopted can be retrieved from the online dissertation "Enriching French foreign language learning with African francophone music and creative expression" (Rust 2014). The participant remarks, as quoted in this article are available in this dissertation.

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Students felt that the Creative Expression programme enhanced their awareness of francophone countries and culture. Quite a number of them knew very little about the West-African countries mentioned in the course and had not realised that there were such significant francophone communities in these areas. One student suggested that the French language became a greater reality to him by saying that the Creative Expression classes made him realise that French « is happening, it is real, living, and not only for course credits ». To another, it seemed as if the francophone « person's life was brought into the classroom » when he listened to the songs. A few of them found that it was crucial to have a broader understanding and awareness of the African francophone cultures because these countries could offer potential working possibilities. Some of them noted that the classes inspired them to be more receptive to other francophone media, such as videos and films they would come across outside of the university environment.

Some students were disappointed that African music was used exclusively and would have appreciated the inclusion of music from France. These comments were taken into account for future planning of the programme. A balance between the use of the *chanson française* and the *chanson africaine francophone*, or from other francophone areas for that matter, could allow us to meaningfully accommodate the « needs » (Delena-Le Roux 2010 : 127-129) of as many students as possible.

Non-traditional approach to learning

A large number of students described the Creative Expression programme as innovative when compared to other programmes presented at the University of Pretoria. They said that the Creative Expression classes offered “an alternative way of learning” to the usual academic environment. They described the programme as being “non-academic, but academic”, as an “indirect approach”, saying that it “had no boundaries” and that it offered “another angle” to learning French. Students appeared to have benefited from breaking down the writing process in phases, as advocated by both Bara and Badger and White. They confirmed that they enjoyed discovering the different steps of

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how the creative writing process works and which they could then use when they had to write their own productions.

Initially, the different learning approach was not welcomed by all of the students and a few participants said they preferred traditional grammar and textual analysis classes to creative writing. Data indicates that the perceptions of the small group of participants who felt this way changed as they gradually became more comfortable with the alternative learning environment.

Language development

Students felt that all four language activities as stipulated by the CEFR (Council of Europe 2001 : 58, 68) were addressed in these classes.¹⁵ The largest benefit in terms of language development appeared to have been the expansion of vocabulary. Many said that they learnt and remembered new vocabulary, noting that «the music helps you remember words» and that they could «recognise words after having listened to song».

Social bonding

The social aspect of the Creative Expression classes first became evident in comments made during the second semester. Students said they felt more comfortable amongst their peers as the year progressed because they spent more and more time together. Some noted that they would clarify the instructions of the assignments for one another ; others remarked that they would make comments on the activity and share ideas with each other. They also said language-related matters were discussed. They shared their frustrations and supported one another.

¹⁵ Students presented oral productions in class and for each activity they had to submit some form of creative writing production. They listened to a new song for every activity, thus taking into account aural reception and they read the lyrics for each song, which stimulated visual reception.

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It is clear that the participants appreciated the social environment and ‘sense of community’ that was created in class. These findings associated with the social aspect illustrate that the Creative Expression programme adheres to the principles advocated by the *Approche actionnelle*, in which learners are encouraged to engage with each other in class and perform various learning tasks together. It also shows that the social bonding went above and beyond the class situation ; learners professed to have formed lasting friendships through their interaction in the class.

The student feedback confirmed the observations made in class, and the applicability of the theoretical basis on which the course was designed. We confirmed the benefits of using music to strengthen language learning (Calvet 1980 ; Hourbette 1993 ; Weaver Failoni 1993), of increasing intercultural awareness (Puren 2009 : 124), and of assigning tasks which required of students to act as « social agents » (Council of Europe 2001 : 9).

Conclusion

In this article, we have shown how the French section at the University of Pretoria attempted to remain relevant with regards to the changing landscape of teaching French as a foreign language in South Africa by introducing a new programme on second-year level. This « Creative Expression » programme combined African francophone music with creative writing activities. The results from this study demonstrate that students found the incorporation of the *chanson africaine francophone* in the FLE classroom helpful and benefited from the creative engagement with the language : student feedback confirmed that students felt that their knowledge of the African francophone environment was enriched, that they experienced the use of song and creative writing as an alternative learning method, that their language competences improved and that social bonding with peers occurred as a result of the classes. The reaction of the students to the programme suggests the close interconnectedness between music, particularly culturally relevant song, creative production and language learning. African francophone music supported learning FLE, and enabled

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students to creatively produce their own unique *chansons africaines francophones*.

It would be beneficial for FLE educators in South Africa to consider the use of francophone music in their classrooms and the inclusion of creative writing activities related to these songs, as they provide opportunities for developing the ludic and aesthetic uses of language play in the foreign language classroom. Although the programme, as it was created in 2012, is dependent on a lecturer who is skilled specifically in music, this does not have to be a limiting factor, as the focus of this endeavour is on the inclusion of francophone content and stimulating creative engagement with the target language. It is possible to adapt the Creative Expression programme in such a way that other French lecturers could present the programme, as long as their principal interest is the creative use of French as a foreign language and the incorporation of francophone cultural content in the course. One could, for example, make use of other creative forms of expression such as drama, poetry, or visual arts as a point of departure. In this way, similar programmes could be used by educators in other contexts and with other interests who realise the value of including imaginative components and diverse cultural content in a foreign language programme.

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Annex

I. Examples of Assignments

A. Group assignment : Faire une publicité pour « Air France »

Consigne :

Vous êtes présentateur(s) sur le petit écran dans un avion d'Air France. Vous présenterez une publicité sur un pays francophone en Afrique.

- ❖ Sélectionnez des sites Internet français afin de faire vos recherches.
- ❖ Proposez brièvement des informations générales sur le pays comme introduction (2 minutes).

Par exemple: l'histoire, la population, l'agriculture, la politique intérieure/extérieure, les actualités.

- ❖ Concentrez-vous sur les aspects culturels qui sont intéressants selon vous (8 minutes).

Par exemple: la musique, les artistes, la gastronomie, les marchés, les écrivains ...

Division des groupes:

C'est le professeur qui répartit les étudiants dans les groupes.

Durée de la présentation:

10 minutes.

Format :

- *faites une présentation sur Power Point ou
- *conduisez un jeu de rôle ou
- *faites une vidéo originale

À soumettre:

- ❖ Une affiche (A3) qui représente votre pays
- ❖ Les pages agrafées avec:

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1. Le nom et le numéro d'étudiant de chaque membre de groupe.
2. Les sites Internet auxquels vous faites référence.
3. La contribution individuelle (écrite en français) faite par chaque étudiant. Expliquez votre contribution en répondant aux questions suivantes :
 - *Est-ce que vous avez fait l'affiche ?*
 - *Est-ce que vous avez proposé des idées ?*
 - *Est-ce que vous avez trouvé les rapports entre toutes les idées ?*
 - *Est-ce que vous avez envoyé des messages aux membres du groupe en ce qui concerne les réunions ?*
 - *Est-ce que vous avez mis les idées en pratique ?*
 - *Est-ce que vous avez participé à la présentation ?*
4. La liste de présence faite pendant chaque réunion dont le chef du groupe prend la responsabilité.

B. Individual assignment

La condition masculine

Activité 1

- ➔ Ecoutez la chanson « La condition masculine » de Francis Bebey. En groupe, replacez les paroles dans le bon ordre.

Activité 2

- ➔ Travaillez en binôme et discutez des deux personnages (l'homme et sa femme) dans la chanson. Faites une liste des adjectifs qui exposent leurs traits de caractère différents. Les dictionnaires sont autorisés ainsi que les textes suivants:

- *Une si longue lettre*
- *On fait le marché avec papa*
- *Pitié pour les garçons*

L'homme	La femme
<i>Au début de la chanson:</i>	<i>Au début de la chanson:</i>
<i>Le changement de caractère:</i>	<i>Le changement de caractère:</i>

Activité 3

Se préparer à écrire un poème à son futur mari/ sa future femme.

Dans les deux cases, listez les traits de caractère qui sont, selon vous, souhaitables ou, au contraire, peu souhaitables pour un mariage/une relation. Les dictionnaires sont à votre disposition ainsi que le vocabulaire tiré des 3 articles étudiés dans votre cours de textes culturels.

Activité 4

Traits de caractère souhaitables	
Homme	Femme
Traits de caractère souhaitables peu souhaitables	
Homme	Femme

Ecrivez un poème à votre futur mari, ou à votre future femme, dans lequel vous manifestez vos attentes de votre mariage. Vous pouvez vous adresser directement à la personne, ou vous pouvez la décrire. La longueur du poème: au moins 10 vers.

Il faut:

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- utiliser au moins 10 adjectifs tirés de la liste que vous avez faite en classe. Rendez aussi ces listes au professeur.
- employer surtout les temps du futur (le futur proche, le futur simple) dans la majorité du poème. Vous avez aussi le droit d'utiliser les autres temps (le présent par exemple).
- expliquer dans le poème, les rôles masculins et féminins qui sont, selon vous, souhaitables pour un mariage/une relation.
- expliquer, dans le poème, les rôles masculins et féminins qui ne sont pas appropriés, selon vous, pour un mariage/une relation.

La longueur du poème: au moins 10 lignes.

Example of poem provided to students for *Activité 4*

Titre : *Moi, toi, nous.*

1. *Mon cher, mon futur mari,*
2. *J'aimerais qu'on se marie*
3. *Bientôt ! Dans un proche avenir.*
4. *C'est bien ça que je veux te dire!*

5. *Tu seras peut-être plus courageux que moi,*
6. *Alors moi, je serai plus affectueuse que toi.*
7. *Quand-même, je vais te traiter comme mon égale.*

8. *Je ne vais pas garder le silence, si quelque chose me dérange,*
9. *De plus, je ne vais pas prendre la responsabilité de tout le ménage!*
10. *Parce que, parfois je serai plus occupée que toi,*
11. *Alors d'autres fois, je te soutiendrai, je t'apporterai un repose-pied!*
12. *J'aurai besoin de compter sur toi, comme tu auras besoin de compter sur moi*
13. *Nous n'allons pas nous embêter avec les stéréotypes typiques des hommes et des femmes: moi la princesse, toi le guerrier!*
14. *J'attends avec impatience notre avenir, l'avenir que nous allons partager*
15. *Toi, moi et l'avenir inconnu, nous.*

II. Examples of student productions

1. Individual assignments for *La condition masculine : Activité 4*

Example 1 :

Toi et moi ensemble (Robert)

Ma belle chérie ma future femme
Je te connais et tu me connais aussi
Mais aujourd'hui nous devons discuter de notre situation
Dis-moi qu'est-ce que tu veux de moi ?
Je veux que tu aies tes propres idées
Si tu me respecteras je te protégerai
Je n'aurai pas peur de toi mais tous les jours je t'aimerai
Nous fonderons un foyer ensemble
Tu feras la cuisine lorsque je ferai le ménage
Je serai compréhensif et tu seras prévenante
Je te demanderai ces choses s'il te plaît :
Tu prendras soin de toi-même, tu ne te laisseras pas aller
Je ne te mentirai ni te maltraiterai
Tu ne me donneras pas d'ordres et tu ne me gifleras jamais
Je t'aime et tu m'aimes
Nous fonderons un foyer
Toi et moi ensemble

Example 2

Mon mari unique (Zaziwe)

Mon mari gentil, mon amour sensible
Je t'écris patiemment et avec assurance
Les montagnes connaissent notre future relation
Je veux aller aux arbres et jouer au violon de mon cœur
Tu auras l'intention de me faire ta femme unique
Notre société est trop sérieuse mais je peux marcher au nom de l'amour
Je vais avoir une vie heureuse et harmonieuse si nous partageons les pièces de
mon cœur
Je t'aime mon mari unique, tu es mon futur

2. Collaborative song written for the music video :

Enracinée en moi

(Music video available on

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGdz6LHK9gQ>)

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Une voix m'appelait, une voix inconnue
Dans le lointain, je vous ai vue
Quelle beauté vous étiez
Votre voix m'a enchanté
J'étais captivé, intrigué
Par votre présence puissante
Quelle beauté vous étiez

Tu m'as parlé, mais je n'ai pas compris
Je t'aime, mais je ne t'aime pas

Je vous ai aperçue
car je vous ai entendue
Mais j'ai buté sur les mots
Ma chère belle de loin ...

C'était le coup de foudre
J'ai dansé sur votre musique
Belle de loin mais oh loin d'être belle ...

Tu m'as parlé mais je n'ai pas compris
Je t'aime mais je ne t'aime pas

Pourquoi tu m'abandonnes au moment où je me jette à l'eau ?
J'ai essayé de déconstruire le mur en mots
Mais je veux, je veux que tu reviennes
Je ne renonce pas à nous

Tu m'as parlé mais je n'ai pas compris
Je t'aime, je t'aime quand même