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Indice

Off-task space, autotelism and unveiling of the self on a distance language learning forum

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Abstract

We document, from a qualitative point of view, an off-task space in a distance English as a foreign language collaborative practice on a forum. In the light of previous research linking social presence, learning and unveiling of the self, we analyze the contributions in this non-pedagogical space from the point of view of socio-affective indicators. It appears that this space can play the role of a foster-group in case of a dysfunctional work-group. It is an additional opportunity for risk-taking. Along with personal implication and risk-taking, it also seems to allow autotelic threads to take place.

Keywords: social presence, distance learning, autotelism, off-task

1. Introduction

This study focuses on documenting, from a qualitative point of view, the functioning of a non-pedagogical space in an online collaborative language learning forum. In a previous study, we analyzed how refer-

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ences to the learners' personal sphere or body appeared throughout the forum when there was no dedicated space (Author, 2016). We also noticed that when off-task topics were improvised in the 2015 session, some students seized the opportunity for language performance (Author, 2015). These elements lead us to explore whether opening a space explicitly dedicated to non-pedagogical interactions, along the on-task pedagogical spaces, can contribute to unveiling of the self, thus contributing to the overall online task.

This study is carried out in the more general context of distance learning and collaborative learning research (Chanel et al., 2016; Develotte, & Mangenot, 2004; Dussarps, 2017; Zourou, 2007), as well as research in the field of Network-based Language learning (NBLT) (Warschauer, & Kern, 2000) or Apprentissage des Langues Médiatisé par les Technologies (AMLT) (Guichon, 2012).

Pedagogical scenario

We are both tutor and researcher for this project. Our study is based on a collaborative English/Information and Communication Technology (ICT) module that spans over 8 weeks, the last of four collaborative modules, part of a distance Educational Science curriculum for master's students. The students therefore know each other and have already worked together in groups before when they start this last module. The main task is the collaborative creation of a virtual educational institution using an interactive fiction generator, adventurecow.com. The students have to negotiate in English in subgroups on the teaching platform forum to plan how they are going to design the virtual institution. Evaluation of the students is based on risk-taking and engagement and not linguistic accuracy. There is a huge discrepancy in the level of English between the students. The pedagogical aim is language and technology practice. Each of the four collaborative modules has a dedicated space on the general discussion board. The English/ICT forum is divided in multiple themes, one for each week and one for each work-group. We intentionally added a theme called "Here you can write whatever you want, poetry, words of praise…".

Social presence and risk-taking

This study is in keeping with previous research linking cognitive presence, social presence and educational presence (Jézégou, 2010; Grassin, 2015) and considering social presence in pair with unveiling of the self (Grassin, 2015, p. 153; Lupi et al., 2008, p. 76; Dejean-Thircuir, 2008, p. 41).

Kehrwald (2008, p. 94) defines social presence as "the means by which online participants inhabit virtual spaces and indicate not only their presence in the online environment but also their availability and willingness to engage in the communicative exchanges which constitute learning activity in these environments". In the pedagogical scenario that we analyze below, our aim is to develop this willingness.

Kehrwald links social presence with "feelings of safety in the online environment", "exchanges which require self-disclosure" and exposure to social risk (ibid., p. 98). Our project of documenting the interactions taking place in an off-task online space is to be seen in the context of this link between social presence and risk-taking.

Social presence, learning and access to self

Jézégou (2010, p. 18) considers, in an e-learning context, that cognitive presence, i.e. collaborative problem solving, is scaffolded by socio-affective presence and enhanced in a benevolent atmosphere (ibid., pp. 25-26). In this context, learners can present themselves as "real people" (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 1999, p. 89). Similarly, Satar (2015, p. 485) considers that "SP ensures continuity of interactions, thereby providing further opportunities for language learning".

Molinari et al. (2016) analyze quality of emotional engagement and persistence in online learning, in relation with flow, the optimal experience emotion (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). They draw attention to the "person" dimension rather than purely the skills. This can be done through activities that focus on unveiling each other's identity, towards an "access to self" (Tassinari, & Ciekanski, 2013).

It is in the light of this research, in our position as both researcher and tutor, and within the pedagogical scenario presented above, that we created a non-pedagogical space in the hope of triggering more personal contributions, or student small talk (Dooly, & Tudini, 2016).

Student small talk and presence

Paulus (2009, p. 228) distinguishes between "types of conversational contributions which are 'on-topic', about the concepts to be learned, and those which are 'off-topic' about procedures for completing the task". We distinguish a category of contributions which are off-task, i.e. neither about completing the task, nor about the concepts to be learned. If these contributions are related to completing the task, they are so indirectly and "likely serve an important purpose for the group" (ibid., p. 228).

In the context of a teletandem exchange, Dooly and Tudini (2016, p. 39) study student small talk in relation with collaborative learning. The authors provide "preliminary evidence that online telecollaborative small talk facilitates [...] collaborative learning" (ibid., p. 52). They point that there are "few 'micro' analytic studies" on the subject. Our contribution is to further document the off-task talk that takes place in a dedicated space, and the potential of this space. We wish to contribute to studying small talk occurring alongside task-oriented contributions in a "social-institutional" environment (ibid., p. 52).

Discursive playground

A space that seems non-pedagogical from the point of view of the learners is in fact a crucial part of the pedagogical intention from the point of view of the tutor, therefore we could call it an off-task pedagogical space.

Other researchers have experimented such spaces that allow "less directly pedagogical exchanges" (Develotte, 2006b, p. 3). Develotte studies the online relationship between teacher-trainees and their tutors. She notes that the type of task has an effect on conviviality. In a topic dedicated to literary creation, which involves personal implication and playfulness, the relations are more laid-back, affective and playful than when the task is about transmitting knowledge and, for the student, showing learning has taken place (ibid., p. 10). Satar (2015, p. 486) also links variation of types of tasks and social presence.

Celik (2010, p. 311), in her study of an online learning environment for French teacher trainees, describes an off-task space called "playground". Celik notes that this space generated the most interac-

tive exchanges, involving up to 6 different participants and including 16 turn taking rounds. The author calls this space "space of discursive freedom", and suggests that it takes part in establishing a community of learning (ibid., p. 337). Our contribution is to study in more details the interactions that take place in this discursive playground, in terms of who participates and through what type of language production.

2. Methodology

Develotte (2006b; 2006c, p. 88; 2006a) argued in the past that since online discourses vary according to the discursive space in which they take place, and are not yet stabilized, an empirical approach is suitable in order to describe the discourses produced by online teaching. More recently, Kern (2015, p. 191) reminds us that "there is no uniform language of electronically mediated communication". In this dynamic context, qualitative methods are relevant for Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis (Herring, 2004, p. 338; González-Lloret, 2015; Develotte, 2012; Paveau, 2012) in the field of Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning, as Mangenot (2007, p. 6), Celik, & Mangenot (2004) and Celik (2010) argue.

For Celik (ibid., p. 106), in the context of a pedagogical forum, discourse is defined as a multiadressed polylogue composed of reactive or initiative contributions. The conversation units are isolated contributions (with no answer), dialogical contributions (two participants), and polylogal contributions, involving more than two participants (ibid., pp. 149-151). We adopt her approach which is based on traces of interactivity visible in discourse such as reference to a peer, mention of the group, reference to the group by plural pronouns (ibid., pp. 105-106). Indeed, along with Tassinari and Ciekanski (2013), and Halté (2013), we study engagement and presence through "affective reactions indicators"(Grassin, 2015, p. 152).

2.1 Corpus analysis

The total number of messages on the English/ICT forum was 1355 for 38 participants. 46 messages were published in the off-task space. These are the messages that we considered for this study. The cor-

pus was saved after the 8 week online module was over. This process generates a file in which the messages are classified by name of student and a file where the messages are classified by thread. This capture process is transparent for the users, but their authorization is collected beforehand. We plan to undertake similar analyses on a corpus in which we are not involved as a tutor, thus introducing more distance between the analysis and the tutoring practice. In the present study, our positioning as reasearcher and tutor has the disadvantage of cancelling that distance, but on the other hand gives us an insider's knowledge of the module and it's evolution over the years.

Quantitative data

In our case, there is an array of non-linguistic traces available, among which:

- the number of messages, the number of answers, the number of views,
- the connection time, the duration of each connection,
- the number of different students actually participating in a given theme.

   In the figure below (Fig.1), we present, for each student taking part in the off-task space, the total number of messages on the forum, the total connection time over the eight weeks, the total number of connections over the eight weeks and the average duration of each connection.

	total number of messages	total connection time	number of connections	average duration of connection (mn)
1. Dorothée	57	56h11	56	60,2
2. Flavie	57	28h19	59	28,8
3. Monique	28	59h13	109	32,6
4. Djamila	106	206h44	203	61,1
5. Sadia	66	26h30	88	18,07
6. Simone	26	3h42	150	1,48
7. Christine	26	26h14	42	37,48
8. Nadia	34	79h10	78	60,9
9. Noémie	19	8h26	23	22
10. Sophie	28	42h48	79	32,51
11. Catherine	20	56h32	61	55,61
12. Valérie	50	166h10	92	108,37

Figure 1. Quantitative data

Out of 38 students engaged in the training, 12 students post in the off-task theme (the colors show the students from a same work-group). Out of 8 constituted groups, 1 group, with the lowest number of messages (46), has no students taking part at all, possibly due to a lack of linguistic skills (Satar, 2015, p. 485). 3 out of 4 students in this group have also a low individual total number of messages (18, 16 and 12 messages, the average number being 28). 1 group, with 3 students in total (students 1, 2 and 3 in Fig. 1), has all three participating, including the main actor of the socio-affective event we describe below.

From the point of view of connection time, both the student (marked in yellow in Fig. 1) with the longest connection time (206 h 44) and the student with the shortest time (3 h 42) were involved in the off-task theme. The students with the highest number of messages are involved in the off-task theme, whereas the lowest number of messages for the students involved is as high as 19. This seems to indicate there might be a threshold of involvement under which socio-affective intensity does not reach.

It is difficult to say whether a student who spends 206 hours for 203 connections and 106 posts for an average connection time of 61 mn, is more present than a student who spends 3 hours and 42 mn for 150 connections and 26 posts, for an average connection time of 1 mn 48 (both in yellow in Fig. 1). Molinari et al. (2016, p. 12) link quantity of effort to behavioral engagement, and quality of effort to cognitive engagement. For example, the time between two posts can correspond to an episode of reflection more than disengagement (ibid., p. 60). It becomes obvious with such data that qualitative elements are needed.

Results

A socio-affective event

The creation of a dedicated non-pedagogical space seems to trigger two unusual contributions, embedded in six threads that we will analyse below. The eventful character of these two unusual contributions comes from the combination of several features:

- length of the message
- references to the personal sphere
- references to the work-group
- humour
- exclamation marks
- pronouns
- number of replies

Dorothée 11 avril 2016 20:44
how crazy I was !!!!!
Dear all,
I was full of pregnancy hormone when I have decided to manage at once these studies (after 7 years of interruption), the building of a new house and having my first baby, all this, in the same year of course. When I was pregnant, it seemed to me easier to succeed everything. I was bursting with energy and motivation .... and hormone in huge quantities !!!!!!!
But now, my baby is fourth month old. There is many things I have to manage,and I didn't anticipate. Gone are the energy and the vigor, pregnancy hormone once gave to me !!!!(A little flight of poetry cannot hurt). Collaborative work, theoretical class, research work, baby's tears, unforeseen on the building site, night awakening …. This is a mad pace. And I'm still not the "cerebral shiva" I was, (I had the feeling to have many brains, helping me to succeed in a multitude of plans). Now, a typical day for me can be summarized in the following way :
Baby is crying because he's hungry or tired !!!
I am crying because baby is crying and I'm delayed with everything !!! Even "taking a shower "requiere a paramilitary organization when you've got a child.
My husband is crying because his baby and his wife is crying !!!!
What a deafening atmosphere, hard to find the concentration necessary to work !!!! and to work in english !!!!!
I confess that I have a tendancy to exaggerate : my husband is not crying, he looks like a "modern gandhi"(with hair in addition) : full of patience
and philosophy . Or maybe he wears ear plug all day long to immunize himself against the noise, I don't really know, I have to check it.
So, I call upon you, this is a amber alert : my energy has disappear. Last time we've seen her, it was december 14. She was strong and plentifull If you see her, don't act alone, please just call me, and not the police. I promise you a reward in the form of big smile. Thank you in advance.
I want to finish my note with positive sentiments.
My little boy is marvelous, each moment shared with him, each smiles and giggles of him give me force (except when he has a pee on me !!!!)
I've got a wonderfull husband who support me every day
And thanks to these studies, I have met two wonderfull person who help me in each difficulties.
So thank you René, Denis, Flavie et Monique for being here.

Dorothée

Figure 2. Dorothée's long message

The theme is created by the tutor on the 11th of April. It generates 46 messages in total. The first message in this theme (Fig. 2), on the same day, after the tutor's launching messages, is by the student called Dorothée[1].

She uses exclamations marks eleven times in this message, including in the title. She uses several exclamation marks each time, up to seven in a row. The vocabulary she uses refers to the personal sphere and bodily functions, as the Wordle below shows[2] (Fig. 3): "pregnancy", "hormones", "house", "baby", "little boy", "husband", "pee", "crying", "hungry", "tired", "shower", etc. The pronouns also indicate unveiling of the self: "I", "me", "my".

Figure 3. Wordle word cloud showing the vocabulary used in Dorothée's message

The message is humorous: "Even 'taking a shower' require[3] a paramilitary organization when you've got a child". She mentions the members of her work-group by name to thank them: "So thank you René, Denis, Flavie et Monique for being here." She also starts her message by "Dear all".

[1] The names have been changed.
[2] The size of the words indicates frequency.
[3] We have not corrected mistakes in student contributions.

This message has 168 consultations (40 by the tutor) and triggers 9 direct answers, which we will study in detail below. 9 answers can seem a relatively low number, but most messages only trigger one answer (Celik, 2010). This is in keeping with the fact that the participation framework of a forum is based on the oppositions silent/participant and occasional/animator (Marcoccia, 2004, p. 36).

On the 5th of May, Dorothée publishes a long poem (Fig. 4), which is consulted 37 times (8 by the tutor) and triggers 16 direct answers (detailed below).

Again, this contribution is specific due to the combination of its length, the vocabulary used, the references to the work-group, and the very fact that it is written in rhymes.

The poem starts by "Dear all" like the message in Fig. 2. The vocabulary used refers again to the body, the private sphere and psycho-affective or cognitive states: "brain", "hangover", "neurons", "stress", "distraction", "exhaustion", "motivation", "energy", "capitulation", "happy", etc. She also refers to the collaborative aspect of her situation: "not alone", "entourage", "help". She mentions her co-workers, "Fla and Monique", the tutor, and even the whole group of master students: "my master companions", to whom she addresses a word of encouragement: "keep going on".

It is difficult to say whether these messages would have been posted anyway, had this non-pedagogical theme not been created. Dorothée posts unusually long messages on the rest of the forum and her strategy is specific, connecting once a day for 8 weeks for an hour on average, and posting a message each time. But on top of this specific profile, it is reasonable to suppose that she was encouraged by the very existence of the theme, which made her become salient from the point of view of the self. Jeanneau and Ollivier (2009, p. 13) argue that the less the learners perceive the situation as pedagogical, the more they give information about themselves and communicate socio-affective elements. The creation of a dedicated non-pedagogical might contribute to relieving the learner from pedagogical constraints, by creating "an online community of trust and learning" (O'Dowd, 2015, p. 68).

poetry

Date de publication : 5 mai 2016 21:23

Dear all,
My brain is like after a huge hangover
No cannabis joint to make me higher
This is only du to this master

The days march at breakneck speed
I wonder many time if I will succeed
As this master need to be fully invested

Finding time to work on my TER is a hell
My neurons in depletion state ring the alarm bell
And the worse, I don't know if what I do is well

Fortunely, I'm not alone in this adventure
My entourage will recognize them for sure
They help me to move serenely into future

Fla and Monique, I do not forget you at all
I'm still here thanks your role which is capital
You always reduce my stress when it is maximal

Mrs Robert thank you for your laughing publication
I find some distraction with your funny application
It helps me to recharge my batteries for action

Conciliate studies and baby was just crazy
But if I had to restart this year, I'll redo it surely,
Because this two expérience makes me, in fact, so happy

Last word are for you, my master companion
If you are in the same state of exhaustion
Think that you're never alone in such situation
We are in the final stretch, so no capitulation
We can be proud of our energy and motivation
So keep going on

Figure 4. A poem by Dorothée

The two contributions analyzed above are embedded in threads that we now analyze in detail to see whether they enhance the online experience for the peers as well, i.e. whether it is a shared socio-affective event that is taking place.

The threads

The contributions in the off-task space are organized in 7 episodes, that we identify according to a change of topic, and a change in the participants. This is in keeping with Marcoccia's definition of discussion forums as "discontinuous computer mediated polylogues" that foster fragmentation, emergence and bifurcation of conversational sub-groups (2004, p. 18). Fig. 5 shows the participants in the off-task space and the number of messages in each sub-episode. The colors show which students are from the same work group. For instance, Noémie and Nadia work together on the main task. The table presents the number of messages posted by each participant in each episode. It is in the last thread that the most students are involved, 7 out of 12. It is possible that, by the end of the event, more students have become aware of what is at stake and therefore get involved.

	Ep 1	Ep 2	Ep 3	Ep 4	Ep 5	Ep 6	Ep 7
Tutor	5	1	2	1	5	3	3
Dorothée	4				1	1	
Flavie	1					1	
Monique	1				1	1	
Djamila			1			1	
Sadia							3
Simone			1				
Christine		1					
Nadia						1	
Noémie				1			
Sophie	1						
Catherine					1	1	1
Valérie							

Figure 5. Participants in the off-task space

We now look in more detail at the interactions within each thread.
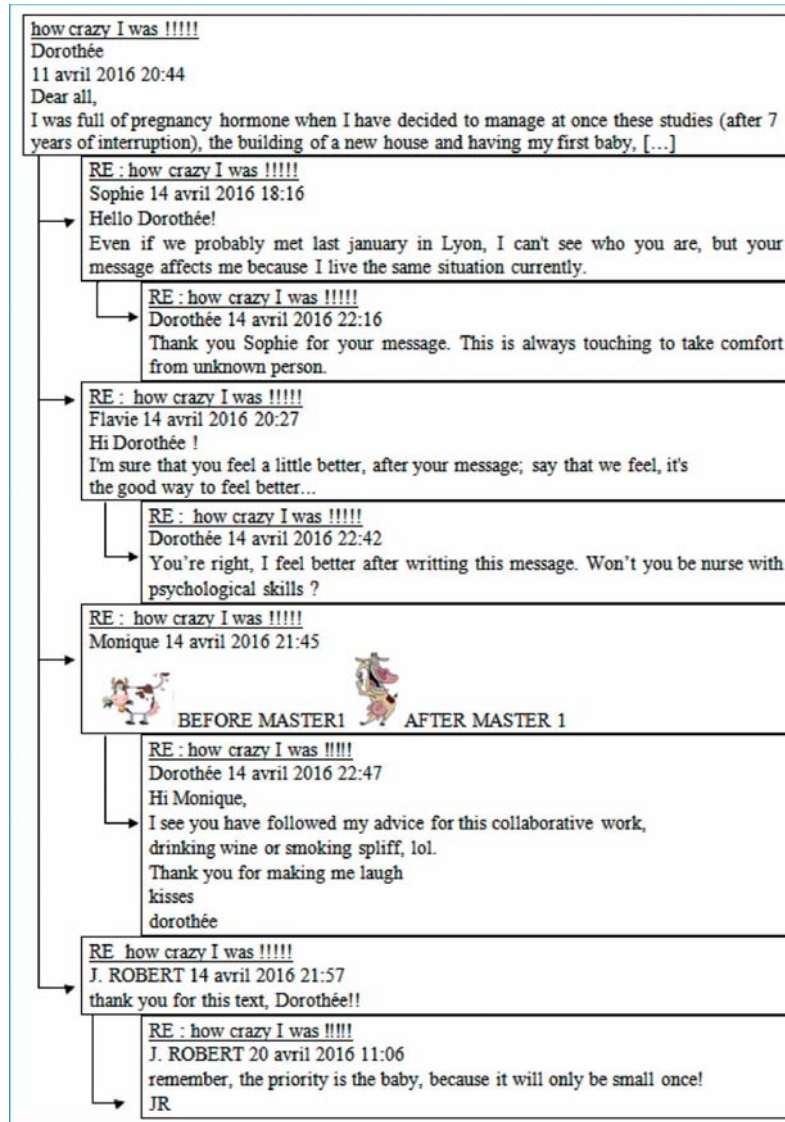
Thread 1: an autotelic episode

Figure 6. Thread 1

The tutor launches the topic with "Here you can write whatever you want: poetry, words of praise, ...!", on the 1st of April. She then reactivates the thread by posting a picture of a warrior cow, entitled "a brave cow" (in reference to adventurecow.com)[4]. On the 11th of April, as we saw earlier, Dorothée posts a long message. It triggers an answer 3 days later, on the 14th, by Sophie, from another group, who also has a new born baby. Still on the 14th, Flavie, from Dorothée's group, comments on Dorothée's message. At 21:45, Monique, also from Dorothée's group, posts 2 humorous pictures in relation with the previous messages. Then later in the evening (22:16) Dorothée thanks Sophie and answers Flavie's message (22:42). She thanks Monique at 22:47. The tutor thanks Dorothée for her text at 21:57, and comments on the happy cow at 21:58, but these messages do not trigger any new reactions, neither does the tutor's later comment to Dorothée, on the 20th. Therefore, the core of this topic actually takes place between 4 students, 3 from the same group and one external, and spans over 7 messages.

We seem to have a glimpse here into what Molinari et al. (2016, p. 24) call an "autotelic pedagogical design principle based on the "flow" of the multiple participants, where the main energy is co-produced by the interactions and the contributions of all the learners". According to Vanin, & Castelli's model of online intervention and moderation (2009, p. 150), the tutor should indeed reduce their own intervention, by avoiding initiating discussions and favoring "pull" type interventions on discussions initiated by the learners.

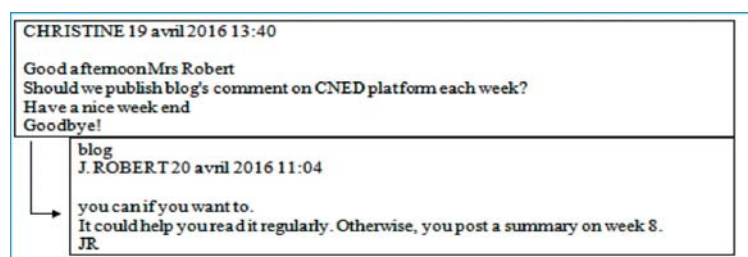### Thread 2: blindness to a socio-affective event

Figure 7. Thread 2, blindness to a socio-affective event

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[4] We don't show the tutor's first messages here for lack of space.

Thread 2 is an "off-topic" thread (Sotillo, 2000, p. 108) that is not emotionally oriented. It is "non-engaged", i.e. "what was said before is ignored" (Molinari et al., 2016, p. 51, according to Barron, 2003). Indeed, the presence of a message in a topic does not mean the student is actually co-present to the peers (Quintin, & Masperi, 2010). Marcoccia (2004, p. 29) points out that the individuals involved in an interaction don't necessarily all have the same vision of the interaction. Here, the student seems blind to the "wider picture" and does not seem to grasp that something is taking place that is outside of the pedagogical contract *sensu stricto*. On the 19th of April, Christine asks the tutor about a task involving a blog or twitter account to follow. In fact, she published the same message in the "Week 2" theme, on the 15th of April, and there was no answer from the tutor. Had there been an answer, this message would likely not have been posted again, and the dynamics of the non-pedagogical theme might have been slightly different. The peers, perhaps sensing the self-contained character of this message, remain silent. Only the tutor answers.

Thread 3: the off-task space as a foster-group

On the 20th of April, thread 3 is initiated by the tutor who relaunches interaction by posting congratulations. Simone thanks the tutor and mentions her difficulties. The tutor answers by posting a picture of a warrior cow and words of encouragement. Djamila thanks the tutor, and wishes courage to everybody. Valérie answers Djamila "and everybody", and says thank you. These 3 students are from different groups, who have not participated in this topic so far and will not participate again, except for Djamila.

These messages are more tutor-oriented that in thread 1. Indeed, only Valérie's message does not contain explicit reference to the tutor. It is noticeable that Valérie is the only one from her group to take part in this topic. She actually says "In fact, I actually feel a little alone in my group, which must be tired and weary". The live creation of a group, as interactions unfold in the off-task space, seems to be able to serve the function of a foster-group in case of dysfunction of the work-group.
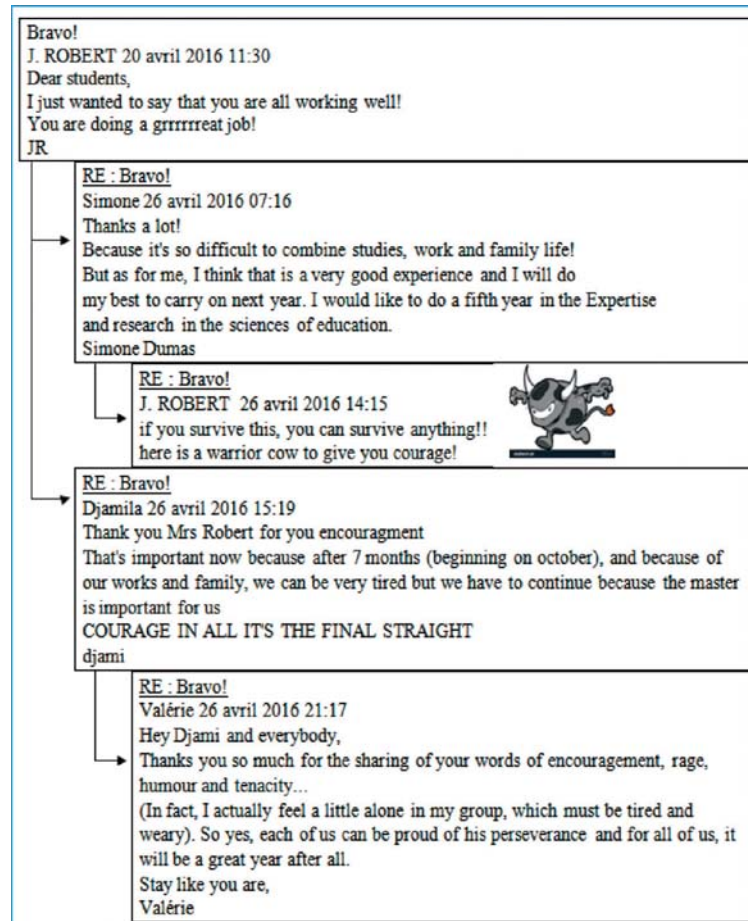
Figure 8. Thread 3, tutor-oriented

Thread 4: blindness to a socio-affective event

With thread 4, we have another example of an off-dynamic message. It is not related in any way to the previous messages. Noémie tries to share a discovery she made. It is a message she posted first for her group (10:45), where it did not get any reactions. So she posts it in

the non-pedagogical topic as an afterthought, which can explain its off-dynamic character. Her message (1st of May, 10:59) triggers no re-action from her peers (only the tutor thanks her for sharing), and she does not take part again in the theme. It is noticeable that she signs with her first and second name instead of just her first name or even a nickname like most students do.

NOEMIE VILLEMONT 1 mai 2016 10:59
Hi,
I just want to share a sad discovery.

In working the module "History of Education" this week (partie2, chap1),
I discovered that the "boat-school" project already existed...
Awesome!!! So I click on the net "school boat" and there: the horror.
No educational article, no project for the future or posterity, no ...
a dark pedophilia story was in the news since the end trial on March 22, 2014.
I was disgusted. Inevitably, I read the articles in full.
Here is the link to one that really touched me:
http://www.liberation.fr/ecrans/2014/04/14/ecole-en-bateau-les-jeunes-gens-et-l-amer_997496
Justice has opened the eyes of the educational's psychologist Leonid Kamenev.
He admitted his guilt when he heard the testimony of his students.

Of course, our project is only in imagination, and in a truly educational purpose ...
but the reality is shocking!
To know human nature, especially in its darkest sides, is still important
for prevent perversions.
Thank you for your attention.
Noémie Villemont

boat

J. ROBERT 2 mai 2016 09:15

thank you for sharing.
JR

Figure 9. Thread 4, blindness to a socio-affective event

Thread 5: tutor-student intertwined interactions
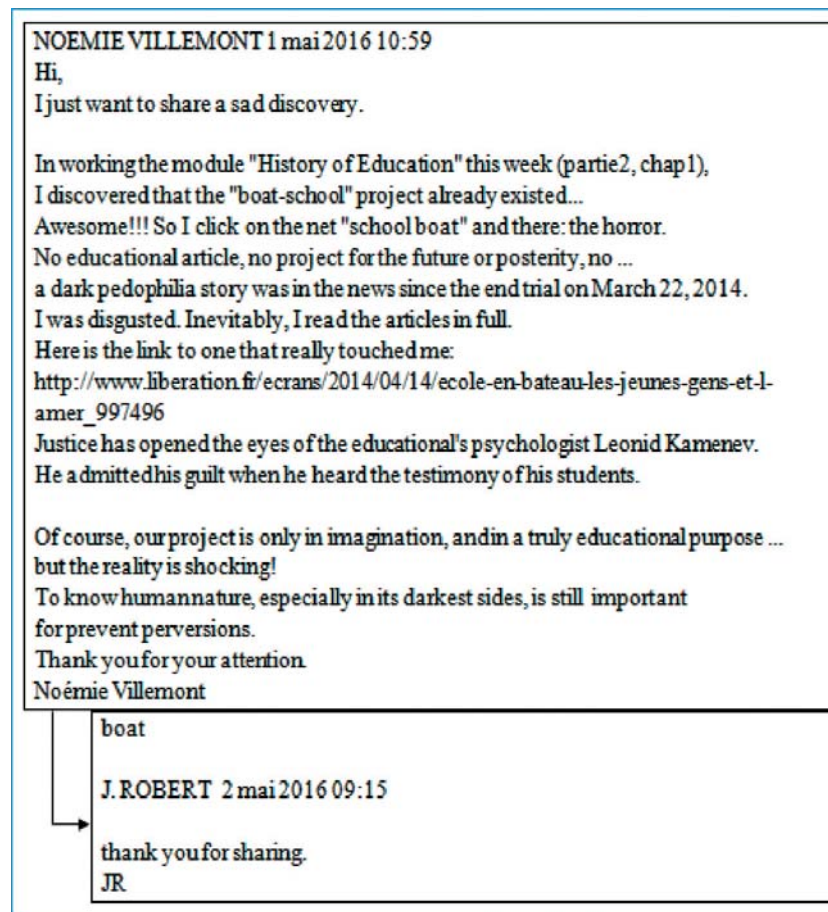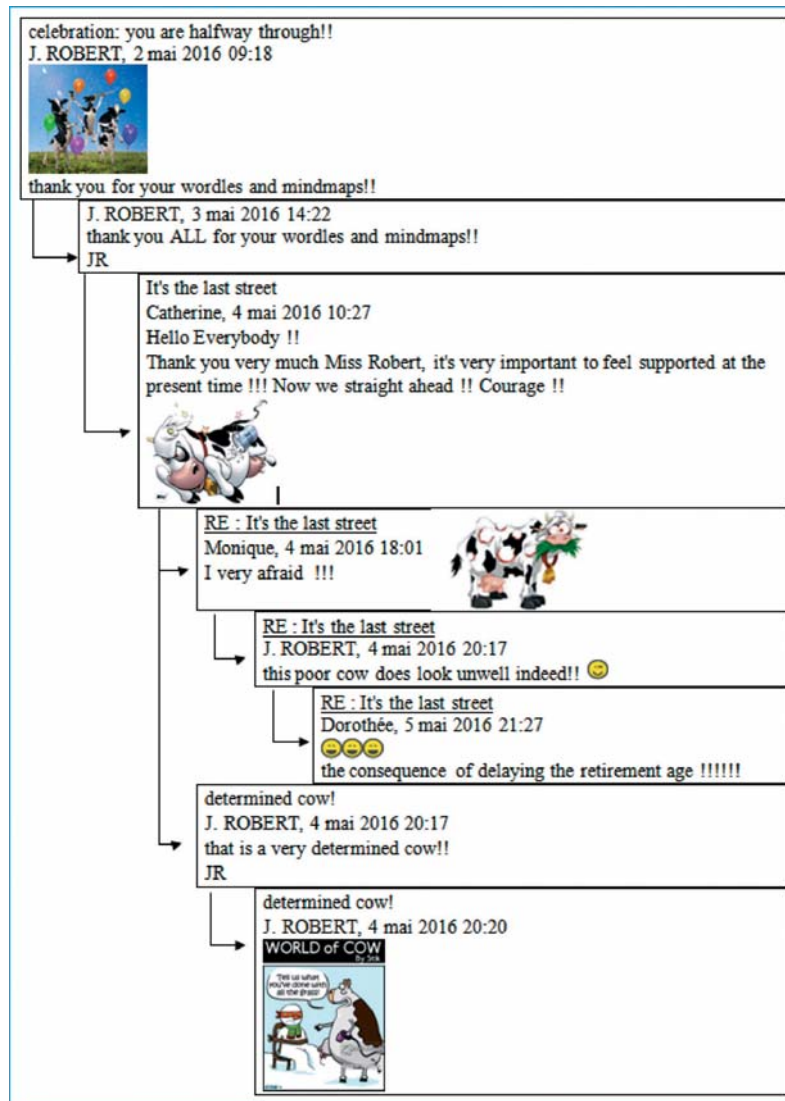

Figure 10. Thread 5, tutor-student

The tutor relaunches the interactions once more by posting a celebratory message on the 2nd of May and another on the 3rd. Catherine, the only one in her group to take part in this new thread, has not participated so far. She joins in, and will also participate in thread 6, with 2 messages. She thanks the tutor for her support and posts a humorous picture. The tutor reacts. Dorothée and Monique who had been silent during threads 2, 3 and 4, join again with 1 message each. Monique replies to Catherine by sending a humorous picture with the comment "I very afraid!!!", to which the tutor reacts with a comment and a smiling emoticon. This makes Dorothée join in with a comment and 3 smiley emoticons. Here, the interactions are neither exclusively tutor-oriented, nor exclusively autotelic between peers, but intertwined.

Thread 6: a second autotelic thread

Thread 6 is launched by a student. On the 5th of May, Dorothée posts a long poem, as we saw above. This post questions the previous attempts by the tutor to relaunch the discussion. Indeed, had the tutor not intervened, there might have been more student relaunchings. In this thread, 6 students out of 12 participate. Nadia, who had not participated so far, joins in with one message. Out of 9 messages in this thread (including the poem itself), 6 (including 1 message by the tutor) refer directly to the first post, the poem by Dorothée. The tutor inserts two comments in relation to the wonder woman cow posted by Nadia. Again, this insertion can be questioned in that it can potentially interrupt the autotelic flow of comments about the poem. Indeed, it is the tutor's messages that divert the thread away from the poem to comment on a picture.

Thread 7: tutor-oriented

The section below (Fig. 12), initiated a week later, although in answer to the poem by structure (RE: poetry), branches off to a different topic, the fact that the students deserve their degree. It is almost exclusively between the tutor and one student, Sadia, except for one final message by Catherine.

poetry Dorothée 5 mai 2016 21:23 [poem]

> RE : poetry Djamila 5 mai 2016 22:23
> Thanks Delphine for your poetry
> I'm very happy to have this master training because I met
> physicaly and virtualy some very nice people and I learn with them more than I
> can learn for this master
> Have a good nignt all
> Fatem

> RE : poetry Monique 6 mai 2016 17:23
> Dorothée,
> I do not doubt your skills.But I did not know your talented poetess!!
> [picture of cow with barbecue] courage that is soon summer !!
> see you soon
> kiss
> sign............................ [picture of cow with university graduate hat]

> RE : poetry J. ROBERT 6 mai 2016 19:33
> I am speechless! Thank you for your post Dorothée! JR

> RE : poetry Nadia 7 mai 2016 23:18
> Dorothée, you are a wonder woman, dealing with different roles: a good mother, a serious
> student, a funny girl! Even when you're not feeling vey we, you are able to give us all
> your support in a hilarious poem, explaining your difficulties, thanking your mates and
> our teaher, you're so great!!!
> Thank you! [picture of wonderwoman cow] So strong!
> Nadia.
>
> > wonder woman cow J. ROBERT 9 mai 2016 11:28
> > I like the wonder cow woman!! JR
> >
> > cow with super powers! J. ROBERT 9 mai 2016 11:30 [picture of super hero cow flying]

« Union gives strength » Catherine 9 mai 2016 15:13
[picture of happy cows in a group] « Union gives strength »
It's true, when we are not very well, it is very important to have friends or family whom
we could talk to about personal things and our personnel ones.
Having the support fordoing this Master is essentiel !!!!
See you soon
Catherine

> RE : poetry Flavie 14 mai 2016 21:21
> Thank you Dorothée for these words. I didn't know that you also had poetic talents... !
> Never doubt you...
> Lot of kisses
> Fla (picture of a cow and chicken dancing)

Figure 11. Thread 6, a second autotelic thread

RE : poetry Sadia 22 mai 2016 22:11
[picture of a graduate cow] After the TC4, we have well merited this outfit , isn't it !!!!!!!
Good night
Sadia

emotion Sadia 22 mai 2016 22:19
That is my condition after writing my following account .....
[humorous picture of a cow trembling and sweating]
Bye
Sadia

RE : emotion J. ROBERT
22 mai 2016 22:31
yes, I think all the TC students are in this state!!
and the teacher:
[picture of an exhausted teacher from the Simpsons cartoon]
JR 😊

RE: poetry J. ROBERT
22 mai 2016 22:37
yes, you have all worked really well!
You are as clever as these cows:
[picture of cows and chicken having a philosophical discussion]

RE : THANKS Sadia 26 mai 2016 21:51
Hello Mrs Robert,
The TC4 is finished, i love to work with you, your TC is very interesting,
funny and i relearned the english.
Thank you very much.
[picture of a happy cow]
I'm HAPPY
Sadia

RE : THANKS J. ROBERT 27 mai 2016 22:49
thank you Sadia!! JR

Message :The end
Catherine 30 mai 2016 23:29
[picture of a happy-looking cow]
Thanks Miss Robert and all the students for their testimonies
and their frenzies !!!
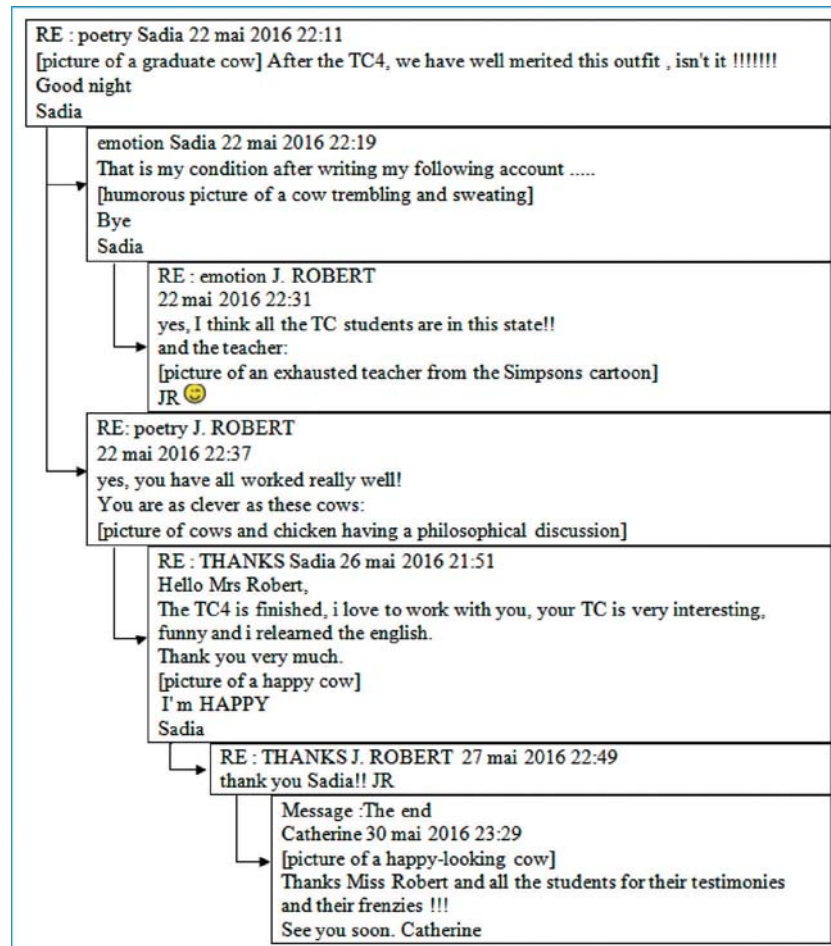See you soon. Catherine

Figure 12. Thread 7, tutor-oriented

3. Discussion

The non-pedagogical space seems to have triggered two autotelic threads (1 and 6), or socio-affective peeks, where the students refer to their peers' messages, independently from what the tutor says. These

peeks do not benefit all the students since it is the same three students, from the same group, who appear in both autotelic episodes, along with one other student in thread 1, and two other students in thread 6. Two students even seem blind to the socio-affective event at stake, creating two off-dynamic threads. Thus, participation in the off-task space does not mean autotelic participation. This analysis also allowed us to question the role of the tutor who can be a hindrance to the autotelic flow, unless the tutor/students contributions are really intertwined (thread 5). We have also seen that a thread in an off-task space seems to function as a live self-constituted foster-group, in case of a dysfunctional work-group.

From the point of view of risk-taking, the students are indeed showing that they can take risks because they produce language when there is no obligation to take part in this particular off-task theme. We are not talking about the risk of having a bad mark, which we could call academic risk, but the linguistic risk of making mistakes when performing language, and the social risk associated, which can be embraced in a space of trust (Green, 2005, p. 304). In the case of a foreign language pedagogical forum, there as a mild urgency created by the fact that the messages are the task. In our module, they are part of the evaluation, not from the point of view of the structural correctness, but from the point of view of risk-taking, given each student's individual language capacities. We consider each post as not only part of a dialogue with the peers or the tutor, but also with the learners' previous learning stage. Each trace of language production is a step further towards learning and this process unfolds message after message on the forum (Satar, 2015, p. 485). In this way, the act of posting on the forum has a performative function: not until I have done it, do I know as a language learner if I am capable of forming this sentence as part of this ongoing conversation.

4. Conclusion: presence and language production as a performance

Hobart and Kapferer (2005, p. 1) define performance in arts, from an aesthetical point of view, as "a process that continually forms itself before reflection, engaging those embraced in its dynamic field to its

constructive and experientially constitutive force". In a similar way, language performance is not pre-existent like the answer to a mathematics exercise that does not vary according to traces of personal implication. Language performance is closely linked to "the specific turn of the world for a specific individual, their very own way of perceiving it" (Meyor, 2002, p. 91). Markee and Kasper (2004, p. 496) consider that "learning behaviors may usefully be understood as a conversational process that observably occurs in the intersubjective space between participants, not just in the mind/brain of individuals". Producing language is live problem-solving, accepting to involve one's self in the language performance. Paradoxically, maximum engagement or flow in a learning context might be more likely to happen when an outside element occurs, or is made possible. The study of the effects of unexpectedness on engagement is one of possible future studies.

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