Joan D. Patterson is a Curriculum Specialist with the Utah State Office of Education in Salt Lake City.

SOURCES

*Aire de formation: Futuroscope* [Training ground: Futuroscope]. Publication of the département de Vienne.


Reviewed by Allen Rowe

□ If “global simulation” brings to mind forecasting the consequences of the greenhouse effect, these two articles will require that you expand your conception of the term. Both articles reconfirm the relevance of the French proverb: *Qui peut le plus, peut le moins* (the one who can do the most can do the least). Language acquisition is probably the most complex human learning achievement, so any method that can “do the most,” i.e., succeed in the extremely difficult task of foreign language study, probably has important implications for any other area of learning.

WHAT DOES GLOBAL MEAN?

An English teacher who has third-grade students work together to imagine and define an ideal community complete with people, buildings, animals, vegetation, insects, and rules of living is engaging the learners in a global simulation. In the context of language learning, global means “whole language.” Although most French-educated foreign language teachers would probably understand the meaning of global in this context, many U.S. foreign language teachers may not.

This difference in the understanding of the term global took root more than half a century ago. In the United States, the advent of World War II spawned an intensive approach to language training for military personnel. The Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) gave the U.S. Armed Forces a tool for rapidly inculcating military personnel with the skills necessary for mission-oriented language use (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). By contrast, in France, a new approach to language teaching grew out of the post-war years, when France saw the need to rebuild its world influence through the exportation of its language and culture.

When the Soviets launched Sputnik in 1957, the mission-oriented approach to foreign language learning was revived in the United States, with the goal of keeping Americans abreast of scientific developments abroad. The U.S. foreign-language teaching profession responded with the Audiolingual Method (ALM), a renewal of the Army's intensive training approach which rested on a “combination of structural linguistic theory, contrastive analysis, aural-oral procedures, and behaviorist psychology” (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 47).

The French paid little attention at the time to Skinnerian behaviorism and the linguistics of Bloomfield and Fries that engendered U.S. audiolingualism. Instead, the French built upon the work of Ferdinand de Saussure and Petar Guberina, linguists largely unknown in the United States, to develop a methodology known as the Structural-Global Audio-Visual (SGAV) Method (Cortes, 1981).

In the context of the SGAV method, “global” means a whole language approach. SGAV courses introduced structurally complex language from the very beginning of language learning. By contrast, the audiolingual methods often involved language artificially contrived to present a predetermined sequence of grammatical structures. Thus, when one speaks of global simulation relative to the French approach to foreign language study, one implies an approach that attempts to deal with the unruly reality of language rather than such comforting, orderly devices as a grammatical syllabus replete with verb conjugation tables.
GLOBAL SIMULATIONS FOR TAMING REALITY

In his article, Carl explains how global simulations offer a possible synthesis of the perpetual dialectic between the need for realism and the need for order in foreign language learning. Raw reality never fits completely into the schedules and resources of institutional language training, yet both students and teachers aspire to a learning experience closely related to real-world needs and goals. Carl presents the global simulation as a means of taming reality to the point that teachers can bring it into the classroom without fear of finding themselves and their students devoured.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF GLOBAL SIMULATIONS

Global simulations offer several advantages:

- Global simulations seek to make use of the fact that, even though second-language learners may know nothing of the new language, they do know a lot about themselves, the world, and others.

- Global simulations provide the continuity that students miss when language study involves a series of independent situational vignettes such as those usually found in texts and instructional programs.

- Global simulations generate truly authentic communication requirements as learners and teachers communicate about the simulation using the target language as a vehicle.

- Goal-oriented communication among students and between students and teachers involves students and teachers with one another much more intensely than approaches that focus individual student attention on the teacher.

- Global simulations strike a balance between dialogue and narration and between speaking and writing as learners alternate between the creation or customization of the simulation and playing the roles created as part of the simulation.

Global simulations can stimulate intense personal involvement, enjoyment of the target language, and a spirit of play and creativity in language learning.

Global simulations do present some special problems. First, students drawing from their own experience will project upon the simulation concepts that are totally foreign to the language and culture under study. Even teachers quite familiar with the target language may find themselves unable to identify or accurately correct all such cultural incongruities. The Carl article mentions two approaches to this problem:

1. The simulation can be based on the culture familiar to the learner and teacher. This is no solution at all if the learners are of diverse cultural backgrounds. Even if cultural hegemony reigns in the class, such a simulation would be at best impoverished and at worst an exercise in self-deluded xenomisrepresentation.

2. The teacher can use each occurrence of a cultural misprojection as an opportunity to correct and expand the learner’s knowledge. This approach can work only if the teacher is both quite knowledgeable and has access to current, extensive, and accurate data on the target culture. The Carl article suggests cultural databases as a partial solution.

Another difficulty with global simulations is that teachers must possess special skills and knowledge and may have to invest a great deal of time to become effective in their use.

BROADER IMPLICATIONS

The Godard and Carl articles offer a glimpse of a world where simulations constitute a major influence on instructional design. This reality generates several questions relating to the practice of instructional technology in the United States:

- To what extent do our institutional programs in instructional design promote an interest in and an awareness of developments abroad? Are we not a little too focused on our own native luminaries, such