

**INVESTIGATING THE FEASIBILITY
OF STUDYING
CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION
THROUGH DISTANCE EDUCATION IN
MOROCCO**

**By
Michael Weinman**

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**B.Sc., Electrical Engineering, Technion – Israel Institute of
Technology, 1971**

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Master's of Arts

Organizational Learning and Instructional Technologies

The University of New Mexico
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Michael A. Weinman

Taos, New Mexico

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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ABSTRACT

The following postulates are assumed:

It is important to learn about one's own culture for one's own self development as well as for communicating with others.

Learning about cross-cultural communication, national and international, is increasingly important.

One must seek cultures different from one's own in order to learn about one's own culture through a contrast culture.

It is possible to learn about culture by collaborating with learners based in a different nation with a contrasting culture and with whom there is no history of cultural conflict.

Distance education technology can be used for international collaboration for learning cross-cultural communication.

This thesis investigated the feasibility of students in the U.S. to studying cross-cultural communication through distance education in collaboration with Moroccan university students. This study asked whether such an international distance education project is feasible and desirable for the Moroccan counterparts. It is a study of Moroccan culture in general and the Moroccan higher education system and its cultures in particular. The state of computer technology, the state of communications and the state of telecommunication infrastructure in that country were assessed. While assessing these

variables, special attention was given not only to what particular situations existed at the time of data collection or to what changes were expected in the near future but also to the rate of the various changes in that country and the direction that these changes were taking.

The study focused on determining the needs of students, educators and administrators in Morocco's higher education system in order to learn how to address those needs in the design of the proposed distance education project. Four different universities were investigated, which gave the study added depth, reliability and validity. It was necessary to educate the participants about the project's particulars in order to gain useful information and their insights. Through this process, the project also gained possible partners on the Moroccan side.

The study uncovered a wealth of contrast cultural resources, essential for the program. It also found existing cultural and technological barriers but nonetheless concluded that the project may be feasible under proper condition.

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PREFACE

The present thesis is based on research work and data collected in Morocco, largely during 1997 and 1998. The purpose for the Moroccan study was to investigate the possibilities for conducting a cross cultural communication program which would take place both in Morocco and in the U.S. and would utilize distance education technologies. A proposed project titled Linking Cultures Through Distance Education (LCTDE) became both the background and the basis for the initial research work in Morocco. The LCTDE proposed project was submitted for a FIPSE grant twice by the UNM Distance Education Center, although it was not funded at that time.

My research and study in Morocco in 1997 and 1998, yielded not only interesting and useful data, but also prepared me to see and understand that data from a deeper, more informed and more objective point of view. I was also able to appreciate the complexity of the subject at hand and the many aspects that needed to be taken into consideration. At the same time, I realized that some of the findings of this research might benefit and could be of interest to others pursuing related studies. Educators wishing to pursue cross-cultural communication programs in Morocco or in other Arab World countries may find this information useful. The information in these pages could be beneficial for those wishing to comprehend the possibilities for international distance education in Morocco or in other similar countries. The information presented here could also be useful to those interested in the various topics covered in the research. These topics include the educational system in Morocco, aspects of Moroccan culture, the state of communication technology in the Moroccan education system and other related topics covered in this work.

My hope is to make it easy for readers to access information that is particularly relevant to them. Chapters and sections within these chapters are titled and can be accessed separately. Each chapter's summary gives the reader an overview of what was covered. This preface will briefly describe the content of each chapter, how chapters are organized and how they interrelate.

Organization

This thesis is organized into eight chapters. Chapter I, titled Introduction, introduces the paired themes of this thesis: culture and history, technology and education. These themes as they are applied to the present Moroccan research are the major elements in the paper and are developed throughout the succeeding chapters. The introduction also establishes relationships between the themes and their connection to the LCTDE project. Rationales for the LCTDE and for the Moroccan research are also presented.

Chapter II contains a review of literature investigating the inherent potential of international distance education in relation to cultural differences in an emerging global reality. At a time of increased need for education in the field of cross-cultural communication, rapidly developing DE technology can be put to use. Students can develop cultural awareness by distant collaboration with students of a contrasting culture. Stewart's contrast-culture model is discussed. The literature reviewed also suggests that rather than using DE as a means of selling technology and mass education to Third World countries, the same technology may be used for true cross-cultural communication. With careful consideration and correct application there may be ways to employ DE for fulfilling real needs of those concerned with understanding culture.

Chapter III describes the research design, the methodology and the rationale behind the design plan. It explains why this study was initiated in Morocco, what are aims of the study and what research questions it attempts to answer. The chapter includes a general description of the investigation, discussing research methods as well as other research issues and constraints. Special attention is given to the cultural factors associated with the study and how they could affect its outcome. The rationale for selecting specific educational institutions for data collection is also discussed.

Chapter IV describes higher education in Morocco at present and how it evolved to its present state. Although education in Morocco has its roots in traditional Islamic education, it was greatly influenced and transformed by a Western, French-style

educational system. Moroccan higher education is now at a crossroads, influenced by existing economic, political and cultural factors. How the educational system is described and criticized, primarily by Moroccan educators themselves, can give readers insight into the Moroccan educational system and thus a better understanding of this study. General descriptions of the four institutions where data collection was conducted further helps to understand higher education in Morocco and how these institutions are related to the present study.

Chapter V points the reader to the cultural perspective of the thesis and to the related history of Morocco. Culture and history can be seen as two entities that generate one another and go hand in hand. Due to the nature of the present study, some interesting existing historical and cultural connections between New Mexico and Morocco are discussed. Then, by using the analogy of international air travel, the importance of cross-cultural communication and the possibility of learning about one's own culture through travel are addressed. Cultural differences and contrasting cultures can be used as educational tools in the field of cross-cultural communication. Students in both Morocco and in the U.S. may find benefit in learning together about their own respective cultures as well as that of their peers. An attempt is made to give a "snapshot" of Moroccan culture that relates to the research that was conducted in Morocco. The chapter ends with a brief report about cultural diversity in Morocco with some reference to cultural studies that take place at Moroccan universities.

Chapter VI is a report from a conference titled "American Studies" which was held at the Agdal Muhammed V University in 1992. The conference was an opportunity for Moroccan academia and English faculty members to voice their insights, needs, dreams and frustrations about Moroccan higher education. Participants called for greater emphasis on American studies in their English departments. They called for introducing American culture, American language, cross-cultural communication studies, and in general, they advocated a shift towards a more American-styled higher education system. As one reads this chapter one can better understand to what extent projects similar to

the LCTDE can be relevant to the reality of Moroccan higher education that existed as recently as 1992.

Chapter VII deals with technological aspect of this study and with the possibilities for using technology to provide distance education (DE) in Morocco. It includes topics relating to tele-communication technologies in Morocco, to computers, to internet, to distance education technology, to technologies of media and mass media and to other related subjects. It examines the existing tele-communication infrastructure in the country and the projected development there. The discussion specifically addresses how these technologies are used in Moroccan universities and schools, and the relationships that exist between people and technology, particularly in the Moroccan educational sector. The available technological possibilities at the particular educational institutions studied are examined.

Chapter VIII concludes the study. It discusses the main outcomes of the research and its results. Limitation of the present study and suggestion for future research are considered. An attempt to answer the research questions that were put forth in chapter III is made. The chapter concludes with a short discussion about the three Moroccan universities and how they compare, and with a final discussion about the outcome of the study.

The study ends with an 'epilogue.' It is a short, more current update covering changes which have occurred in Morocco, particularly regarding technology, in the two and a half years after data collection was completed.

The appendices to this study include a list of participating interviewees, a list of the institutions that were mentioned in the study, and a glossary of the main terms and acronyms used. The major portion of the appendices consists of the categorized body of relevant data that were gathered mainly through interviews and, to a lesser extent, during observations. The last appendix contains maps and diagrams.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Education and Technology — Culture and History

How history is told is relative to who is telling it and what is the focus of the teller, said Sulayman Nyang (1997), Professor of History at Howard University, as he related a fascinating and complex picture of the shifting powers in Africa through time. To demonstrate how history is affected by diverse forces, he said, consider insects and their effect on world history. In Africa, we can observe how the Tsetse fly halted the spread of Islam at the banks of the Senegal River and how the spread of Christianity in West Africa was stopped by the mosquito.

As the conquering armies of Muslim traders expanded south into West Africa, they encountered large concentrations of the Tsetse fly carrying the Trypanosomiasis Gambiense, or African sleeping sickness. Their great armadas of camels became a perfect breeding ground for the Tsetse, bringing to a halt the large bodies of both beasts and men. In the same vein, malaria-carrying mosquitoes stopped the armies of Christian missionaries and the spread of Christianity and Western influence in Africa. In fact, said Dr. Nyang, missionaries nicknamed Africa “the white man's grave” before the discovery of quinine.

The technology of distance education, Western-style education, and computer technology are also powerful forces affecting cultures and their history. They represent shifting global powers and political influences of cultural domination. What might look like progress to some might appear as invasion to others.

Throughout history, every human being is largely a product of his or her time and culture. Cultures, like individuals, are unique and complete systems and, like humans, they can never be completely known or understood.

Until recently, man did not need to be aware of the structure of his own behavioral systems, because, staying at home, the behavior of most people was highly predictable. Today, however, man is constantly interacting with strangers, because his extensions have both widened his range and caused his world to shrink. It is therefore necessary for man to transcend his own culture, and this can be done only by making explicit the rules by which it operates. (Hall, 1976, p. 48)

Five years ago, in 1995, I embarked on a journey of investigation — to investigate the possibilities of how to use my innate and accumulated abilities in greater harmony with my beliefs and convictions. Preparing for this journey took even longer in gathering, practicing and training in the diverse fields of education, technology, communication and engineering. At the same time, I also had the privilege to experience and learn about various cultures at first hand. This experience gave me only a glimpse into that which unites and integrates different cultures. In addition, it also gave me the thirst to know and understand more about how cultures and the people within them can better communicate and relate to other cultures and to their other members. Also, the Arab world and cultural conflicts in the Middle East were always foremost in my mind.

Clearly, within the confines of a single culture, disputes, as well as the settlement of disputes, follow reasonably well-established patterns. Otherwise there would be chaos. It is difficult, however, for mankind to come to grips with the fact that there are deep cultural differences that must be recognized, made explicit, and dealt with before one can arrive at the underlying human nature we all share. Given the advanced state of weaponry, if man is not to destroy himself he must begin to transcend his own culture. First, the overt, obvious culture, which it is possible to bridge with patience and good will, but second and more important, unconscious culture, which is much more difficult to transcend (Hall, 1976).

In the winter of 1994/95, I traveled to Morocco for the first time. My aim in going to this unknown land was to study Arabic, and there I met a new and mysterious culture. For four years, I continued to visit Morocco winter after winter. Each visit was different from the previous ones with new activities, new people, and new discoveries. Yet, at the same time, each trip added coherence, depth, and multidimensionality to a no-longer unknown reality and to an emerging picture.

On my return, I went back to graduate school. It was the fall of 1995 and the school was University of New Mexico's College of Education. The fast growing field of distance education seemed to match my skills and at the same time to be a tool possibly suitable for reaching out to students in the Arab world. I set out to master the field of distance education and to understand its implications for international and global use (in education). Simultaneously, I started to develop the Linking Cultures through Distance Education (LCTDE) project, which was the basis for the research work presented in the present thesis.

The LCTDE project went through many phases and changes since its inception as a Fulbright grant proposal in 1995. As my understanding and findings grew and matured so did the nature of the project.

1.2 The LCTDE Project — A Summary

The Linking Cultures through Distance Education project (LCTDE) will develop and implement a series of undergraduate courses using distance education technologies to study cross-cultural communication issues at universities in two different countries. Two classes, based in two different cultures, will collaborate and study together about both cultures and about how these cultures relate to each other. As a prototype for continuing development, a class at The University of New Mexico (UNM) will collaborate at a distance with a class from a Moroccan university.

The classes will define and compare aspects of their respective cultures in order to develop awareness of international cross-cultural issues in their general, specific, and practical aspects. As they explore the use of distance education technology, students will

be able to learn about the culture of another country as well as their own, with culture shock moderated to their abilities and needs, and without the necessity to travel.

Continuous course development and research based on objective evaluation for a period of six semesters will yield a model course to be used in universities and colleges throughout the US and elsewhere.

1.3 The LCTDE Project — Rationale

In today's fast-shrinking world, linked by communication and transportation technologies, cultural differences take on new implications. The educational system of our colleges and universities is presently being asked to prepare a generation of active citizens of this global village to be ready to undertake its challenges and to respond to its stimulations and to become world citizens in the truest sense of the word.

As the borders of our global village expand, different cultures encounter each other in new ways. The technology responsible for this expansion develops much faster than the human ability to adapt their cultures to the resulting changes. Cross-cultural education and understanding is essential and must acquire an international dimension. Without sufficient cultural understanding, existing cultural and ethnic conflicts can rise to new and more dangerous heights precisely because of the available technological possibilities.

The cultural diversity within the United States, unique and so widespread, together with our technological abilities, creates both the opportunity and the possibility for students in the United States to profit from this diversity for mutually exploring, with students in other countries, global cross-cultural education.

To learn about other cultures, students must first understand their own. They must recognize how what they perceive as reality might be both culturally determined and relative. In addition, the existence of cultural paradigms, present to different degrees in all cultures, needs to be addressed in order to create the possibility of true cross-cultural exchange between peers.

Distance education technology is a powerful tool that can and should be used to link cultures internationally. Distance education has been primarily used within the more

technically developed countries to reach larger groups of students and for conferencing. Exploring another possible focus, the LCTDE project aims to develop, demonstrate, and facilitate international cross-cultural and cultural education through collaboration between classrooms in North American universities with corresponding classrooms in the Arab world. As a prototype, we propose to connect, through distance education technology, a class at the UNM with a class at a Moroccan university for a semester of collaborative learning about global cross-cultural diversity by using these two specific cultures as examples.

We chose Morocco and the Arab World because in the global village we inhabit, we find the culture of the Arab world in a situation that makes it uniquely attractive for this cross-cultural project. The Arab world, defined as a “critical culture” by the U.S. government, is rapidly growing in strategic and political importance. Interest in business and economic markets in both the Arab world and in Africa is growing, and the distinct difference in cultures in these areas makes them ideal for cross-cultural research in education.

Morocco is not only the Arab country closest geographically to the West; it is also a country friendly to the U.S. which recently opened its telecommunication borders to the internet. Although Morocco’s modern culture has traditionally been influenced most by the French (due to colonialism), only last year Morocco opened its first American-style university, Al-Akawayn University. There is a growing awareness in Morocco of the importance of opening to American influences. This is balanced by wariness of Western influence rooted in Morocco’s culture and history.

Historically, Morocco is not only linked to European history but also has connections to the history of New Mexico. Historical facts that are only now coming to our attention indicate that possibly a significant amount of New Mexican art, architecture, language, and music may be traced through the *conversos* of Moorish and Jewish roots back to Muslim Spain and to Morocco.

1.4 The Moroccan Research

Unlike most international cross-cultural education programs that are offered in our universities, the LCTDE work attempts to address the needs of both Moroccan and American students and to give both types of participants equal weight. Usually such programs are tailored for the American student, who is presented with a variety of target countries to choose from. The student, individually or in a group, will travel to one or more of these countries to learn about their cultures. These are American-student-centered programs where the American student is the customer, to put it bluntly. The target countries and the target universities are service providers in those cases. The premise, which the LCTDE project is based on, is that in order for students in two different cultures to truly benefit from an international cross-cultural communication experience, both cultures have to be acknowledged, respected, and equally considered.

The LCTDE project advocates the possibility of balanced collaboration between students based in two internationally different cultures. In this case, it is a group of Moroccan students and their faculty and a group of American students and their faculty. The focus is to collaborate and to study together with the purpose of cultural self-development and the development of cultural understanding for all concerned. It is a picture of American students collaborating with their Moroccan peers. It is a picture of American and Moroccan faculty collaborating in design and facilitation of learning. It is a picture of students in each respective country collaborating with each other and with their faculty to reach out, through the available technology, to their counterparts. In order to achieve this goal, the LCTDE program design has to equally address the goals, the needs, the perspectives, the viewpoints rooted in both cultures. The program must be considered, examined, researched, and evaluated with both cultures in mind.

1.5 Cross-Cultural Education

The process of encountering Moroccan culture and its people made me encounter myself and my cultures in new ways. As I struggled to gain access to my subjects and to build a relationship of confidence and trust, I found myself changing to accommodate a new

culture and new rules of an old game. The people I interviewed, the so-called subjects, have become real people whose integrity I must respect and protect and with whom I hope to possibly work in the future. The original research questions and their meaning for the investigation went through transformation. New relevant questions and foci presented themselves while existing ones might have waned in relevance.

In addition, the level of technology and the relationship of Moroccans to distance education in particular went through drastic changes during the time of this investigation. A few straggling internet providers and spotty service blossomed into internet boutiques everywhere, and many more home and business computers. Initially there were only a few expert Moroccans who had even heard about distance education. Very quickly DE became the new star on the block and a subject of great interest to educators and communication engineers.

1.6 Audiences

My hope in writing this thesis is to benefit Moroccans and Americans alike, who are interested in both topics, distance education and international cross-cultural education, and how they can be inter-related. In particular, future participants, users, and other stakeholders of the LCTDE or similar projects might benefit from these findings.

Educators in universities on both sides can familiarize themselves and perhaps gain new insights into how to conduct such projects.

At the same time, this work may be of interest to those involved in international education, studying how technology is used in developing countries or interested in any of the specific topics that are presented in this study. The results of this study can be used for projects in countries other than Morocco and the U.S., and at the same time readers who are interested specifically in Morocco can find a wealth of information within these pages.

1.7 Summary

This chapter introduced the central paired themes of this thesis: culture and history, technology and education. These themes as they are applied to the present Moroccan research are the major elements in the paper and are developed throughout the succeeding chapters. The introduction also established relationships between these themes and their connection to the LCTDE project. Rationales for the LCTDE and for the Moroccan research were also presented.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 International Distance Education

“It is in the interest of students and society to promote and facilitate distance education across national boundaries.” This declaration summed up the 1994 conference on international distance education held at Pennsylvania State University and was followed by eight recommendations. The first of these recommendations called for the promotion of “greater understanding of the cultural, linguistic, pedagogical, administrative, and technological issues associated with studying across national boundaries.” (Moore & Kearsley, 1996, p. 228)

A number of experimental programs in the field of international distance education (DE) were conducted at universities in the US. Most of these programs “were the fruit of individual academic's initiative” rather than deriving from institutional policies. As these programs developed and became more established, several of them acquired a two-way nature, with participation and education originating on both sides (Moore & Kearsley, 1996, p. 229).

Many of the international DE programs mentioned by Moore and Kearsley (1996) involve collaboration between various schools within the American continent and with European and Far Eastern countries. Yet there is not much done, if any, in the field of international DE involving Middle-Eastern and North African countries of the Arab world.

2.2 Globalization and Culture

At the same time, the sound of globalization is heard everywhere, including in the Arab world. Politics is shifting, governments shift their interests and the artists proclaim:

The strength of a country is no longer measured by its military might, size of population, geographical situation, or material resources. The strength of a country is measured by the wealth of its scholars and its scientists, by its innovative capabilities and ability to discover, and apply.

Naguib Mahfouz, 1994

This quote opens a chapter of a World Bank report (1995, p. 61) reviewing the recent economic and political history of the Middle East and North Africa and discusses ways in which the region may capitalize on its natural, economic and human resources to become a key player in an integrating global economy. The report focuses on concepts of shared and rapid economic growth and draws attention to the current upward trends in the economies of Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia and how they can be sustained and increased in the face of population increases.

After stating that the policy regime of most of the Middle East and North Africa “has lagged behind one that would enable producers to take advantage of globalization's opportunities,” The World Bank (1995, p. 20) report goes on to say, “Innovations of the past ten years appear to spell yet another revolution, ‘the end of geography’”. The advent of the fax machine and of computer networks such as the internet put offices in Paris and Washington next door. The implication of the “end of geography” for many companies, small and large, can be summarized in two words: “specialize and globalize.” This shift in emphasis allows trade to encompass service activities based on long-distance services. “The World Bank estimates that long-distance services. . . could double commercial service exports by developing countries in the long run from the current level of \$180 billion. For many developing countries, becoming part of these highly complex networks at a stage other than the production of primary commodities or simple components represents a new challenge.” This, however, means that “the skills demanded of workers must change dramatically” (pp. 20-21).

Morocco has had an educational tradition characterized by exclusivism, elitism, high standards, and relatively high spending per student. Although Morocco has reduced poverty and dramatically increased literacy in the past ten years, “what matters today is productivity, flexibility and speed” (World Bank, 1995, p. 38). Both access to education and educational quality will need to improve. “Quality improvement will depend less on lowering student-teacher ratios and more on providing better educational materials, upgrading teachers, introducing early childhood development programs and . . . reducing the factors impeding girls’ participation” (p. 72). In general, Morocco consistently has been building its credibility over time and is "moving in the right direction" while still facing important reforms ahead, concludes the World Bank report.

Two attitudes of the World Bank report deserve mention. Both of those are rooted in a strong sense of Western ethnocentrism, that is, using the Western cultural viewpoint "as the standard for all judgments. . . . The greater their similarity to us, the nearer to us we place them" (Porter, 1972, p. 6).

One is an attitude similar to colonialism, representing a mentality of “we know what is good for you”, “Just try to do what we do and you'll do OK.”

The other attitude is a lack of reference to the cultures of the countries discussed. One feels, while reading the report, that there is no room for cultural diversity in the world’s new economy of the "end of geography." It is just a matter of time until economical forces will level everything to the lowest common denominator of the “dollar sign.”

2.3 Cultural Differences in a Global Reality

Would the culture of the new global economy diminish or actually eliminate national cultures? Research done by Hofstede in organizations worldwide points to the contrary, explains Adler (1997). It shows that although the cultures of the organizations are strong, still "workers and managers bring their ethnicity to the workplace." He goes on to say that "Even more strikingly, Laurent found cultural differences more pronounced among

employees from around the world working within the same multicultural company than among employees working for organizations in their native lands." Adler's work points out that cultural and ethnic undercurrents are strong and are, perhaps, growing stronger despite the leveling effects of large organizations' cultures.

As we venture into international DE, understanding of and sensitivity to cultures of others is of the essence. When trying to understand another's culture one must understand one's own first. The student learning across cultures cannot understand "the other culture" without knowing about his own, says Moore (1996).

In today's global village, we have the tools, the technology, to communicate rapidly and efficiently as never before, and this ability is increasing exponentially. We can easily communicate across cultures, we can learn from members of other cultures in other countries without leaving our town or if we wish we can be "there" the next day or better. But is our technology used for this purpose? Edward Hall, already in 1976 told us that "if one is to prosper in this new world without being unexpectedly battered, one must transcend one's own system." In order to do that we must first know that there is a system and then find out the nature of this system (Hall, 1976, p. 51).

"Culture norms so completely surround people," writes Dean Barnlund (1994), so much so that they are totally unaware of their culture and take it as if it was the only true reality. He likens it to a fish unaware of the existence of water. "If fish were to become curious about the world, it would never occur to them to begin by investigating water" (p. 35).

Hall (1976) continues to say that "the only way" to know that we are part of a cultural system and what this system is "is to seek out systems that are different from one's own." When we find ourselves in another cultural system, we can learn about the nature of our own culture by using ourselves as a measuring instrument. By carefully measuring our reactions to another culture, says Hall, we will know our own. He goes on to say that "the rules governing behavior and structure of one's own cultural system can be discovered only in a specific context or a real-life situation" (p. 51).

2.4 Cross-Cultural Communication

The question that arises here is — why bother? Why not let every one live in his or her own cultural “paradise”? In his book “The Art of Crossing Cultures,” Storti (1989) tells us about many businessman and government employees who returned back before their contracts were over, not able to adjust to another culture. For him the reason to learn the “art” of crossing-cultures is to keep a job. To be able to stay longer “over there” is a basic American approach. I prefer to propose two other answers, among many, to our question as being more meaningful:

1. Hall (1976) explains that "the natural act of thinking is greatly modified by culture." Different cultures use different legitimate ways of thinking. "Western man uses only a fraction of his mental capabilities." This is because "we in the West value one of these ways above all others — the one we call logic, a linear system that has been with us since Socrates." In the West logic is "synonymous with the truth, . . . the only road to reality" (p. 9). There are other voices in the West but this is the dominant voice of science and technology. Hall goes on to describe the cultural paradox of East and West and how "both systems have strength as well as weaknesses" (p. 20).
2. Even more immediate would be another approach to our question: why bother learning about cross-cultural issues? Cultural wars make our history books all the way up to the present. When there is no communication there is a danger of mis-communication. In our global village, different cultures meet and touch more often than ever. "Today, the sea, the air, the waterways, the earth, the land and what it produces have all become commons" (Hall, 1976, p. 2). There are no borders over the internet. There are very few borders for global economy. "The future depends on man's transcending the limits of individual cultures," and "Technology alone will not get us out of this dilemma, because these are human problems."

Real and accurate cross-cultural communication is now of the essence. "Until rather recently, we Americans had little contact with other cultures, even within our own country" (Samovar & Porter, 1994, p. 1). We are learning, but maybe not fast enough?

The global village is creating technology that is developing so much faster than the human element "that we do not yet know how to live like villagers; there are too many of us who do not want to live with them" (Samovar & Porter, 1994, p. 6).

The ability, through increased awareness and understanding, to coexist peacefully with people who do not necessarily share our background, views, beliefs, values, customs, habits, or life styles cannot only benefit us in our own neighborhoods but can also be a decisive factor in forestalling international conflict (Samovar & Porter, 1994, p. 2).

2.5 Contrast Culture

A central assumption behind teaching cross-cultural communication is that becoming aware of one's own culture (for whatever reason) is desirable. At the same time, being aware of one's own culture is not a natural human state. Culture is commonly "understood from the inside out as procedures for how to get things done. Experience of it tends to be unconscious and typically conveys the feeling that it is natural and normal, while that of other cultures is strange, exotic, or unnatural" (Stewart, 1995). Stewart's *contrast-culture* model, developed in 1965, and his contrast-culture training is of interest to this discussion. His model not only accepts cultural differences but "indeed it celebrates them and uses them" as a training tool to better communicate across cultures. The contrast culture training method refers to "reference culture" which is the culture of those being trained, and a "contrast culture." The contrast culture is chosen to be one opposite in its "four value dimensions: form of activity, form of social relations, perception of the world and perception of the self" (Stewart, p. 49). In the training, one of the trainees "role-plays" the part of Mr. Smith, a member of the local culture, while a professional actor simulates Mr. Khan, a member of a contrast culture.

Stewart (1995, p. 51) found that "Trainees develop cultural awareness and understanding of their own culture only when the role playing provides a comparison with another culture." One's own reference culture, although hidden, affects one's own "perceptions and judgments" when communicating with members of other cultures. The

challenge is to make the learners aware of their own cultural preferences and biases and thus to be able to perceive their own culture, as well as the other's, more objectively, progressing beyond ethnocentrism and stereotypes. Stewart's understanding is that using the contrast culture method is not only useful to train Americans but can be used universally for members of other cultures. Much can be learned from Stewart's findings. Learners of intercultural communication can benefit from experiencing a contrast culture by recognizing their own culture. They also may come to appreciate how communication can be affected by the way members of other cultures perceive their reference culture (the culture of the learners).

Stewart's contrast-culture training uses an actor to role-play a member of an imaginary contrast culture. Would it be possible to use DE technology to bring together students from more or less contrast cultures and have them collaborate with similar results?

2.6 International Distance Education and Culture

In the field of International DE, the two aspects, technology and the humanity of cultures, could come together. This coming together can reflect the tension between the two, but also can indicate the means for a remedy. Two articles by leading thinkers in the field of DE can shed a light on the problems and possible remedies:

In his article "Is There a Cultural Problem in International distance education?" Michael Moore (1996) points out that one's technological superiority does not imply automatic cultural superiority or a better system of values. For example, "the value of individualism," he reminds us, "is also cultural-bound, and would not be accepted as desirable by people in many other cultures." In the West "we are excited by the power of our new technologies. . . . However, we may not be thinking enough about the consequences of our technological successes, both for our own society and for those of other countries." It is not so much the "how" as the "why we do what we do, . . . our purposes, our intentions, our motives, our assumptions." We have powerful DE

technologies and the danger, according to Moore, is the "philosophy of consumerism" which is associated with our educational delivery and which is a distinct characteristic of our Western culture. Whether the intention is to sell the latest technologies to an unquestioning customer, to promote research or experimentation in DE, or to peddle a university lecture course — since education to us has become just another piece of merchandise in the "world as a marketplace" — the outcome is the same. Although we might have the "how," it might be that the "why" and our "educational philosophies" themselves might be defective. We might find that "as a society, we are culturally" unfit "to be teaching across national borders." Dr. Moore's (1996) conclusion is that by designing DE programs which allows the American student to listen to his foreign peers articulating and explaining their values and to learn about their cultures, the student will have the opportunity to reflect, evaluate, understand, and possibly appreciate his own culture in a new light.

A. W. Bates (1996), in his article "The Impact of Technology in Internationalizing Distance Education," illuminates the barriers to international DE from a different point of view. Bates contends that the major barriers are not technological, and even though "cultural diversities and cultural imperialism are critical issues that need to be addressed," they are not as serious a barrier as "the difficulty of matching educational provision to the needs of the learners across international boundaries." Bates identifies six barriers:

1. In many cases, he says, the main goals are other than delivering education. They may be research, development or testing and applying technology.
2. The financial constraints, that need to be dealt with, are not of the actual cost of the educational programs, which usually can pay for themselves, but are the financing of everything that has to precede the delivery of education (such as research and development, negotiations on the organizational levels, etc.).
3. "The emphasis on 'hard' technology in international collaboration in distance education" by governments and other supporting organizations that view the transaction as a marketing opportunity is an obstacle to education.

4. "Fear of the unknown" in potential DE users also retards the pace of development in international DE at both the organizational level and at the learners' level.
5. But perhaps the major difficulty here, according to Bates (also reflecting Moore's outlook), is "that the impetus for collaboration is coming from the supply side." This drive is handled like any other marketing venture in our Western economy — that is, create the need even though "there is no immediately obvious 'demand' from the 'client' for this type of education." Bates' point is that the emphasis should be on the real needs of receivers of education rather than on the technology involved and how to sell it.
6. The final barrier to be contended with is that once the need has been established one must choose the appropriate technology for the purpose. One also must train "the faculty in both, the appropriate use of that technology, and in instructional design strategies that will fully exploit the technology and will work with the students in another country."

2.7 Using DE for International Cross-Cultural Communications and for Cultural Studies

"Don't rule out any media, but don't let the media drive the process," said Michael Moore (1997) in a teleconference with UNM students.

When real international collaboration of DE occurs, it facilitates education that cannot happen in other ways. It allows access to new ideas and to world experts who would not be available locally. It can provide low-cost education and education spread evenly through nations and countries while fostering sensitivity to cultural and ethnic diversity. Because of the prestige of international DE, it may also encourage development of local DE within a country, and true professional and educational development may ensue as "instructors, educational technologists and distance educators work and learn with international colleagues" (Bates, 1996).

Using DE technology for international cross-cultural studies may be a right use of the technology to meet the cultural needs of this global village reality. "We need to

understand not only cultural differences but also cultural similarities. While understanding differences will help us know where problems lie, understanding similarities may help us be closer" (Porter, 1972, p. 18). Using DE for cultural studies may allow educators to control the level of "culture shock" to where it is constructive. It also makes real cross-cultural education more affordable to include many students, in rich and poor countries alike, that otherwise would be unable to participate. As we learned, "to understand intercultural interaction we must first understand human communication" (Porter & Samovar, 1976, p. 15). We must understand our own culture and how we communicate through it first, before we are ready for international cross-cultural communications and collaborative learning across international borders. When we find two or more groups who are ready to communicate with the assumption that "the parties to intercultural communication must have an honest and sincere desire to communicate and seek mutual understanding" (Porter, 1972, p. 15), only then can the work begin.

2.8 Summary

This chapter presented a review of literature investigating the inherent potential of international DE in relation to cultural differences in an emerging global reality. At a time of increased need for education in the field of cross-cultural communication, rapidly developing DE technology can be put to use. Students can develop cultural awareness by distant collaboration with students of a contrasting culture. Stewart's contrast-culture model is discussed. The literature reviewed also suggested that rather than using DE as a means of selling technology and mass education to third-world countries, the same technology may be used for true cross-cultural communication. With careful consideration and correct application there may be ways to employ DE for fulfilling real needs of those concerned with understanding culture.

Chapter III

RESEARCH QUESTIONS & METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Although this thesis is based on research work that was done with a specific project in mind, its findings and implications may be of interest to a broader audience. The LCTDE project was conceived in Morocco, then developed and cultivated at an American university and from a primarily Western cultural point of view. In a way, elements of nostalgia, idealism, and well-wishing can be associated with the conception of this project. Even a quality of naivete in the “real” world of global corporate economies and market survivability can be leveled at its roots. Nevertheless, this investigation was conducted using objective scientific tools of research and study in its design and implementation. One might find the LCTDE project or projects similar to it useful and timely tools for international cross-cultural education and for studying intercultural communication. For the LCTDE project or one similar to it to be relevant and to come alive, a need must exist on both sides. The project should be useful and appealing both in Morocco and in the U.S.

With these thoughts in mind, I titled this current research: “Investigating the Feasibility of Studying Cross-cultural Communication Through Distance Education in Morocco.” This research was designed as a feasibility study for the LCTDE project on the Moroccan side. Its aim was, first, to determine whether there exists a need and willingness in the Moroccan higher education system to participate in an international collaborative learning experience about cultural and cross-cultural issues with American students using distance education technology. (A later study will need to determine whether the same need and willingness exists in the U.S.) At the same time, the research set out to determine whether such a project is feasible in the existing education reality in Morocco. Additionally this study attempted to identify organizations, key persons,

teachers, students, and providers of both resources and necessary technologies, who may be willing either to facilitate or to participate in the LCTDE project, if it occurs.

The results of this study are not specific to a particular project but rather may be used in a more general way. For example, the material presented in this work can be of use to better understand the needs of Moroccan institutions of higher education, their administration, faculty and students in the field of DE. The reader can learn how computer and internet technologies are used in those institutions and how specific cultural and economic realities in Morocco affect this use. This paper can assist anyone who wishes to learn more about academic realities in Morocco as well as cultural outlooks and perspectives there. It can also help readers reflect on global distance education design and how culture must be considered in DE design in today's global reality. But foremost, it is hoped that the results of this research may in some way assist with the use of distance education in the field of international cross-cultural communication.

3.2 Morocco First

Investigating the possibilities for the LCTDE project and assessing its feasibility in Morocco was to be the first stage of work on the project. For a balanced, efficient, and effective assessment to determine whether this project is desirable and feasible, it seemed appropriate to begin the investigation on the Moroccan side. For a research study conducted by a non-Moroccan it seemed necessary to get Moroccans' comments and other inputs, including their participation and commitment when possible. There was a need to initiate the process, to “get the ball rolling,” and in order to do that objectively it seemed clear that research and study must start in Morocco. The five main reasons for initiating the work on the Moroccan side were:

1. The first impetus and vision for this project came from an American with a Western cultural orientation. Some balance could be achieved by focusing on needs and problems from a Moroccan cultural point of view. What do our Moroccan counterparts say about such a project? How would they change its variables?

2. One would anticipate that from the point of view of technology, findings would indicate that the resources on the American side would be more advanced than those in Morocco or, in fact, in any other of the so-called third-world countries. It made sense to first investigate whether such a project is technologically possible on the Moroccan side and whether one can expect reasonably balanced and fair representation of both sides in a collaborative venture using distance education technology.
3. It appeared likely, because of limited resources in Morocco, that the financial support for such a program would, if necessary, come mostly from Western sources. To attract this financial support, a clear picture of Moroccan resources and future prospects there was necessary.
4. Because of the United States' disproportionate size, wealth, and prestige, one can assume that universities here (e.g., UNM) would have many options as to where to conduct such cross-cultural projects. Positive results from a Moroccan feasibility study can attract and inspire educators and students at UNM and other U.S. universities to actively support the project.
5. A well-designed and implemented utilization-focused study in Morocco can involve and attract Moroccan counterparts to actively support and initiate the project there. A foundation for further implementation of the project would be established. As more potential users are introduced into the LCTDE process and become involved with it, the project will come to life. The users themselves will have a say, from their own convictions, as to whether the LCTDE is sound and whether its implementation should be supported.

3.3 Research Issues and Questions

The issues addressed by this research and the questions it was designed to answer were divided into three categories: educational, technical, and questions dealing with administration and organization. There were no specific questions relating to cultural issues and issues of cultural differences. Rather, these issues were a common denominator throughout this research and were treated as such. The following questions, open-ended

and broad as they were, guided this research to a useful and a coherent conclusion. In the process of this study, some questions were answered more fully than others were while new questions were raised.

Research questions were as follows:

3.3.1 Educational

- RQE 1. What is the response in Moroccan higher education to DE in general and to LCTDE in particular — by faculty, by other educators and by students there?
- RQE 2. To what extent can and will both the faculty and students at Moroccan higher education institutions commit their time and energy to a cross-cultural course such as described by LCTDE? To what extent are they willing and available to be trained in using DE technology?
- RQE 3. What educational content of such a course is desired by Moroccan faculty and other higher education people? (If the LCTDE format will be used, then how should it be modified to suit Moroccan needs?)
- RQE 4. To what extent are higher education faculty in Morocco willing and available to collaborate with American faculty at a distance, to design and execute a cross-cultural course?
- RQE 5. Which higher educational institution(s) in Morocco can commit to undertake this kind of project and in what capacity?
- RQE 6. What is the English language level of students and faculty at those institutions?

3.3.2 Technological

- RQT-1. What DE technologies are presently used in Moroccan education, and what are the future goals for DE in the Moroccan education system?
- RQT-2. What DE technologies could be successfully used and are they the appropriate technologies in regards to the LCTDE project?
- RQT-3. What is the existing communications infrastructure in Morocco and what future developments are planned there?

RQT-4. What equipment is available in Moroccan universities and what additional technology is needed in order to accommodate the LCTDE project?

RQT-5. How technologically oriented are Moroccan students and faculty members in higher education regarding the equipment they presently have and how able are they to be trained in using new technologies?

3.3.3 Administration

RQA-1. To what extent is there support for international DE and for international cross-cultural studies by administrators and government officials who are responsible for higher education in Morocco?

RQA-2. What is the response of Moroccan higher education administrators to LCTDE? What is their response to using DE internationally and to introducing international cross-cultural curriculum to Moroccan students? Are they willing to commit time, training, learning, and funding?

RQA-3. What influential individuals and organizations in Morocco might wish to aid projects such as LCTDE, and do they have the ability to do that?

RQA-4. What resources such as funds, equipment, and classroom space can be made available by administrations of higher education in Morocco?

RQA-5. What are possible obstacles when working with the administrations of higher education in Morocco?

3.4 Research variables

In order to be able to answer these questions, this research needed to assess the following variables:

1. Characteristics of higher education in Morocco and the nature of the various higher education institutions in that country.
2. Goals, needs and aspirations of Moroccan higher education.
3. Constraints and barriers in Moroccan higher education.
4. The needs of Moroccan faculty and academic culture in Morocco.

5. The needs of Moroccan students and their relationship to the university.
6. Issues of power, politics and organization in Moroccan higher education.
7. Financial and economic issues in the Moroccan higher education system.
8. International cross-cultural programs in Moroccan institutions of higher education.
9. Cultural studies and intercultural and cross-cultural communication studies in Moroccan universities.
10. Moroccan culture and its implications for this study.
11. Issues of technology and of how technology is used in the Moroccan higher education system.
12. The status of distance education in Morocco and possible needs for DE there.
13. Telecommunications in Morocco.
14. Feasibility of conducting the LCTDE project in Morocco.

3.5 Research Methodology and Design

3.5.1 Research overview

It was the winter of 1995 when I began journeying to Morocco for the purpose of studying Arabic at the Arabic Language Institute of Fez (ALIF). I was intrigued by the new culture I encountered. It was different from American and Western cultures — mysterious yet well organized and functioning. I set out to learn more about this new-old culture and to try to understand it better.

My first informant, ally, and guide into Moroccan culture was Mr. Daoud Casewit. At that time he was the director of the American Language Center (ALC) of which ALIF was a part. Presently, Daoud functions as the Moroccan-American Commissioner for Educational and Cultural Exchange and is the director of the Fulbright commission in Rabat. Mr. Casewit is an American expatriate who has lived in Morocco and in the Arab world for many years. He has become acculturated into the Moroccan culture and is an influential personality in the city of Fez, as well as in Rabat. With his help, I started to work on the LCTDE project in 1996. I started to research international cross-cultural issues and distance education in Morocco — initially in the form of a Fulbright grant

proposal. Mr. Casewit agreed to assist me with his many contacts and with his extensive knowledge of the Moroccan culture and its languages (Arabic, French, and Moroccan colloquial Arabic). He also provided me with access to the ALC's office machines and telephone lines as well as to his faculty. There I also met many young Moroccan students who were studying English.

Through Mr. Casewit, I formed many other important contacts. I met with several personnel and faculty at Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane. Ifrane is a small mountain resort town near Fez and Al Akhawayn, newly established, and is the first American-style university in Morocco. Unlike other Moroccan universities, Al Akhawayn is equipped with a modern local network computer system, telecommunication, and distance education equipment. There I found a strong interest in distance education and its international applications.

At the same time, I also met Dr. Choukhmane, the director of the *Institut National des Postes et Telecommunications* (INPT). The INPT is a technical and an engineering school operated by the Moroccan Ministry of Postal, Telephone and Telecommunication Services (PTT). There, all PTT engineers and technicians are trained. Dr. Choukhmane was enthusiastic about the field of distance education and its technologies and expressed interest in assisting with this research.

After my return to the U.S., I continued to work on the LCTDE project. At that time it became clear that for a balanced, efficient, and effective assessment to determine whether this project was desirable and feasible it was appropriate to start the investigation on the Moroccan side.

Encouraged by a "research, project and travel grant" awarded by UNM and the support for the LCTDE work I received from the director of the UNM Distance Education Center, Dr. Bramble, I traveled to Morocco once again for three months during the fall semester of 1997. I busied myself in data collection while establishing the connections needed to conduct this study. I began by pursuing the contacts I made on my previous Moroccan trip and embarked on the trail that ensued.

Every meeting and every interview became a possible source of new connections. People were more than happy to introduce me to their network of connections and colleagues. This I found to be consistent with “the Moroccan way.” I conducted in-depth, open-ended interviews with people I deemed to be relevant to this study or related in some way to the LCTDE project. In some cases, I facilitated group interviews with two or three participants. I recorded many of those interviews on audiotape cassettes. However, there were some occasions where the interviewees preferred not to be recorded. In these case I took notes during and/or after the interviews.

All participants were presented a four-page LCTDE project proposal summary. The summary included all the research questions posed in the study so the participants were able to contribute to areas familiar to them. At the same time, those interviewed were able to both direct me to other people who might also be able to contribute by answering some of these research questions and to raise questions about related topics interesting to them. Participants were all questioned about whether they might have interest participating in such a DE project in the event that it took place. They were also invited to comment about how to make such a project more attractive to Moroccans.

I conducted direct observations in Moroccan universities, in other institutions and at many social events. Through those observations, I was able not only to understand better how the LCTDE project could be implemented but also to gain understanding about the academic culture in Morocco and how it is related to the general culture there.

I also collected relevant academic and technical documents — material that is very difficult, if not impossible, to find outside Morocco. Frequently, I was guided to these data sources by the people whom I interviewed or met with. This material included academic papers given at conferences by interviewees and by their colleagues. It also included government papers and technical information obtained through meetings.

The process of analyzing, synthesizing, and interpreting the research data was accomplished in two phases. The first phase took place in the field while data were

collected. The second phase was conducted back home in the U.S., after completing the fieldwork.

In the field, data were interpreted and analyzed at the same time they were collected or very soon after. It was important to process and understand what was collected and what these data meant in order to proceed. During the investigation, new contacts were proposed and new material was presented. What was then learned shed new understandings upon what was already known. All this was taken into account as decisions were made about how to continue. Questions of validity, credibility, and the utility of the participants' knowledge and the data they produced had to be faced, answered, and acted upon. It was also necessary to follow up with some of the participants after the interviews, primarily through the internet and by telephone. The need for this continued communication usually became apparent after processing and analyzing the data obtained from the interviews. Continuing the communication allowed me to complete and add to the data collection process and to make sure that formal or informal consent was given by all involved.

The second phase of the data analysis and synthesis took place in New Mexico, after the work of collecting data in Morocco was completed. Here, an analysis with a more general overview approach was possible. It was possible to compare the various results for a more general and inclusive perspective. The various categories and patterns that emerged in the first phase now became clearer and more complete. Without the time constraints that existed in the field and with the data collection process completed, it was possible to answer the research questions in a more careful and definitive way.

3.5.2 Methodology

The nature of this research was essentially qualitative, where the researcher was also the instrument of research. Due to lack of funds and since this research was at best a feasibility study, it was a one-person operation. As the researcher, I had to both experience the field and collect data, while at the same time analyzing, synthesizing, interpreting, and drawing conclusions from the experiential data. At each stage, I used the

results derived from the data in order to make decisions about how to continue the process. This resulted in an inductive analysis where the collected data guided and organized the analysis process. Data collection in this type of research lead to an organic process that reveals itself and takes shape as more data are collected. New findings point the research to new sources of information, new participants, and new insights. Even in some cases of gathering data which are generally considered quantitative in nature, (topics such as obtaining information about available technology in Morocco, evaluating students' proficiency of English, and obtaining information about what the available resources that existed in the country were), data often had to be obtained by means of qualitative methods.

The rationale for using qualitative methodology for this study follows:

1. The proposed LCTDE project was in its planning stage. Thus a formative method of study was appropriate – one that could allow the project to further develop as data were being analyzed and the questions were being answered.
2. It was necessary to conduct this research work as unobtrusively as possible. As a researcher, I came to Morocco with nothing to show except some good will and some relevant expertise. I needed to blend into the background rather than “rock the boat.” There was a need to create an atmosphere that eradicated mistrust and nurtured collaboration. Qualitative, rather than quantitative, methods were better suited to maintaining this type of atmosphere.
3. The uniqueness of the LCTDE project and its individualized configuration called for qualitative methodology. The project was regarded as an individual case to be studied according to its own needs.
4. The uncertainty about using quantitative instrumentation in an unknown cultural environment raised questions about the validity of using results from questionnaires and other quantitative instruments.
5. In general, the Moroccan cultural atmosphere lent itself quite naturally to a qualitative approach and to personal, almost-informal-but-dignified, individual, open-ended

interviews and observational visits. In this way, there was minimal threat to participants and little opportunity for loss of face for the interviewees and hosts. Even in cases where language levels and also levels of computer literacy of the students and faculty needed to be assessed, the data collecting methods had to be limited, at this stage of the research to what was agreed upon with those in charge (e.g., heads of language departments or deans of science and computer faculties). At the same time, more gentle methods of naturalistic inquiry such as direct observations, interviews, working together, socializing, and exchanging e-mail messages were used to assess competency levels, command of the technology and the like.

6. Finally, for reporting purposes, qualitative research works well. A well written, descriptive, and detailed qualitative study is easier to comprehend by individuals and organizations that are interested in the results of this work both in Morocco and the United States.

3.5.3 Design and research methods

According to Denzin (1978, p.21), triangulation or “multiple methods, should be used in every investigation. . . . Because each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods of observation must be employed.” This section will identify the various data collection methods that were used as well as the data sources that were chosen. Triangulation in both these areas strengthened the credibility and validity of the data gathered as well as the analysis process and the conclusions that emerged.

As mentioned earlier, the process of analyzing, synthesizing, and interpreting the data was performed in two phases. In the first phase, this process had to be done continuously, as the data were collected. There was no clear separation between data collection and working with the data. There was also no clear separation between the various methods that were used to collect data (i.e., an interview and an observation could have occurred simultaneously). The few initial informants suggested the directions in which this study was to continue. From there, a process of snowballing took place. New informants indicated other data sources which, in turn, pointed to more sources, allowing

the process to evolve. Therefore, immediate analysis and interpretation of data was essential in order to stay on course.

The research design evolved in a similar way. Usually one expects that design proceeds implementation. In this particular case, I had to adjust the study's design as fieldwork progressed. Although the major design concepts remained constant, design decisions had to continuously be assessed and made along the way. New findings and new understandings guided the direction of this research. As one reads the list of methods described below it is important to remember that they are, in most cases, interrelated. One method may have led into another, and the borders separating them were allowed to be quite fluid.

The following methods of data collection were used:

1. In-depth, open ended interviews: Most of the interviews were recorded on audiotape. Some interviews were conducted with more than one person. Interviewees were given a four page "LCTDE project proposal summary" prior to the meeting. Translated summaries in French or Arabic were used when needed. Interviewees were given ample time to study the summary and prepare their reaction. Interviews in a snowball pattern were the major design format used throughout this study. The snowball pattern meant that from the content of the interviews and through the advice and guidance of the interviewees new possibilities for additional interviews arose. New directions to conduct the study were perceived. New participants were contacted. New material and observations developed.
2. Direct observations: Observations were conducted in universities, in other institutions, and at various social events. In addition, studies about Moroccan culture in general and about how Moroccan culture operates were aided by observations.
3. Other related meetings: One-on-one meetings and group meetings with more than one person were also conducted as observations and as general data gathering functions.
4. Records: Related documentation, academic literature, and other records (academic, technical, and governmental) were collected in Morocco.

5. Correspondence: Data collection was not restricted to the periods that were spent in Morocco. While in Morocco and after my return, I continued to collect data by communicating with Moroccan participants from a distance, especially via internet. In this way I was able to complete and add to the data already collected. I ensured that formal or informal consent was given by those involved. It was also imperative for the distance education nature of the project that all participants, possible future users of the LCTDE project, were able to use the internet and to communicate easily in English. This ongoing communication was used to validate, demonstrate, and determine these abilities.

3.5.4 Research issues and constraints

In this section, I will list major constraints and other research issues related to this study. It is important to identify possible constraints to research design and to anticipate their effect on the obtained data and their interpretation. Identifying these issues makes it possible to arrive at a more balanced design, or at least to attempt to compensate for the presence of existing constraints. Constraints, understood properly, inherently can have useful and positive aspects.

The following important constraints were identified:

1. Possible conflict of interest: The research was conducted by one person who both conducted this feasibility study and, at the same time, was the designer of the LCTDE project. This fact could have introduced questions about conflict of interest. The desire of the researcher to see the project materialize could have clouded judgments and conclusions.
2. Validity issues due to lack of investigator triangulation: The fact that all the information was gathered by only one relatively inexperienced researcher with particular styles, views and understandings, may have introduced validity errors.
3. Fiscal responsibility and funding issues in general: The limited funds that were available might have affected the quality and the possible depth of the research.

4. Language constraint: The researcher did not possess the necessary command of both primary languages spoken in Morocco, Arabic and French. Consequently, in cases where Moroccan participants did not speak English, the assistance of a translator was necessary. This might have caused a communication gap.
5. Cultural constraint: The researcher, being foreign to Moroccan culture, again, was at a disadvantage. This might have caused a communication gap and lack of credibility affecting the data collection process. The cultural factor was a major concern in this study and therefore I will elaborate on it in more detail later in this section.
6. Ethical constraint: There was a delicate line between reporting research results completely and accurately while avoiding possible offense to Moroccan partners, participants, allies and informants.
7. Timeliness: The time that elapsed between when data were collected and when this research was made public was excessive. Results might not be as relevant now as they were then. This long waiting period might cause participants' interest in the project to wane, or they might no longer be in the same position to be able to participate.

3.5.5 Political issues

The political issues associated with this research can also be regarded as constraints. Political issues tend to affect the research field and therefore affect the collected data. Morocco is a highly political environment. Every interaction, personal connection, and decision made might be political in nature. The following are some political issues inherent in this research:

1. The research was conducted by an American from an American university.
2. The power structure in Morocco is extremely hierarchical in nature, affecting all professional and personal contacts.
3. The research was conducted and compared various educational establishments in an attempt to single out the most suitable location for the LCTDE project.

4. The research questioned whether the levels and the sophistication of telecommunication technology in Morocco are sufficient for an international DE project.
5. The research explored Moroccan culture with an aim to encourage students and faculty to look more closely into cultural and cross-cultural issues there.

3.5.6 The cultural factor

Differences between the researcher's culture and the culture in the target country need to be identified studied and correctly analyzed. (Definition of the term culture as used here can be found in chapter five [p. 96], where a more in-depth discussion about culture is presented.) When a particular research is designed by a cultural outsider and/or when data are collected by a cultural outsider, there is likelihood that these realities will influence the outcome of the research. Therefore, in the case of the present research, it was necessary to consider the existing cultural differences in the design, in the implementation and in the analysis-interpretive stages. It was necessary to account for possible distortions stemming from cultural differences on the one hand and to utilize, as much as possible, the strengths that existed due to the cultural differences on the other.

Moroccan culture is uniquely different from the culture in the U.S. and operates according to different social and cultural rules. It was important for the present research work that these different rules were not to be compared or judged, but simply identified, understood and accounted for. It was not automatically assumed that the same research methods that are applicable in the West could be utilized successfully across cultures. The ways data were collected as well as the ways this data were analyzed and interpreted had to take into account cultural differences and cultural limitations.

Academic sources and other literature describing Moroccan culture did not exist. Possibly, since Morocco is a high context culture whose members share a high level of common programming and common understanding (Hall, 1976), Moroccans have little need to examine cultural dimensions that are generally recognized, commonly shared but not often discussed. Thus, in order to understand and describe Moroccan culture in even a

limited way, I needed to use my experience, my observations and information I collected from both Moroccan and expatriate informants. In categorizing and analyzing dimensions of Moroccan culture, I was influenced by the general model developed by Steward and Bennett in American Cultural Patterns (1991). It must be said that Steward and Bennett were looking into their own culture, while this discussion concerns a foreign and unknown culture and therefore introduces a greater possibility for errors and inaccuracies. It was only because it was so central to this research to at least begin to understand Moroccan culture, that it was decided to undertake the following cultural analysis. In order to limit errors and to avoid offending any of those who participated in this study, the cultural information presented in this thesis was edited with the help of Mr. Fitzgerald, who is the Director of the American Language Center in Marrakesh, and others. (Chapter five [pp. 96] goes into more detailed analysis of Moroccan culture.)

Morocco is primarily a collectivistic society (Gudykunst, 1991b; Gudykunst & Matsumoto, 1996a; Hofstede, 1980; Ting-Toomey, 1997) based on strong family ties, tribal and local affiliations and a hierarchical power structure. Its monarchy is popular with, and supported by, a large percentage of the population. This, in turn, affects how authority is delineated and how information is exchanged and shared. All this had to be understood and taken into account in order to conduct this research and interpret its findings. The existing Moroccan protocols for interpersonal and social transactions had to be respected and adhered to.

It can be assumed that any research, merely by being conducted, affects and therefore distorts the field and hence distorts the collected data (the uncertainty effect). In this particular case, where an American researcher from an American university conducted a study in a Moroccan environment, this distortion was probably amplified. Regardless of personality, the presence of an American is likely to invoke a change of behaviors, a change of responses and a change of attitudes in Moroccans. This likelihood should not be overlooked.

Being an American researcher might have both certain advantages and disadvantages that must be taken into account. The following generalizations were noted and can be used as examples here:

1. Western values are affecting Morocco through the introduction of technology and media from the West. These values might be perceived as threatening to Moroccan culture and social structure. Moroccans, who love and value their culture, might be cautious about participating in this research. At the same time, foreigners, especially if they are not French, might be trusted precisely because they are not part of the existing power structure.
2. In addition, Moroccans might have tendencies to look at situations involving an American as possible opportunities — possibly in an unrealistic way. In many cases, an American might represent the materialistic opportunities that are not available in Morocco, regardless of context, and probably in an exaggerated way. On the one hand, I was able to use this fact in my favor. I was able to meet with people and interest them in the project. On the other hand, the question of how valid such responses and other results were must be considered.

Unlike quantitative data and quantitative measurements where accuracy and validity questions can be dealt with in a more defined way, in a qualitative study of this sort it is more difficult to ascertain the true value and the accuracy of the information gathered. Especially when there is a translation from one cultural reality to another, it is important to study the information gathered using appropriate criticism.

I should mention several observed cultural characteristics that are important in understanding how research methods were employed. Three important aspects of Moroccan culture (among others) had to be considered while collecting data there. Those aspects were:

RQE 1. The hierarchical nature of power structures in Morocco. Decisions, directives, and initiatives tend to come from the top down — from the "higher-ups" down the hierarchical ladder.

RQE 2. Sharing of information in Morocco is sometimes done very carefully and discreetly. Information of any sort is regarded as power not to be shared without a reason or without authority. Information is also regarded as having an intrinsic value to its possessor.

RQE 3. The cultural importance given to maintaining dignity for all concerned had to be taken into account while collecting data. Hyperbole and self-aggrandizement are cultural traits that might confuse a non-Moroccan evaluator. A participant might express good will through extravagant promises without either the intent or the ability to fulfill them. Such expressions of sincere interest and support might possibly carry little real commitment.

More cultural information that the reader might find useful for developing a deeper understanding of Moroccan culture is available in chapter five.

3.5.7 Validity

With all that was mentioned above in mind, it is clear that the possibilities of misunderstandings and misinterpreting data are high. In order to improve the validity and the veracity of this research, the following measures were used:

1. I employed, wherever possible, the services of a personal translator to help not only with potential language difficulties but also as a cultural interpreter. This person had enough insight into the different aspects of the research process to be able to fill in the cultural gap. Youssef El Jabri is a native Moroccan who has been educated in France as an electrical engineer. He graciously took on the role of translator and cultural interpreter on many occasions. He had enough connection to Western culture through his education, while rooted in his own culture, to successfully act in this role. His positions as a telecommunication engineer for the Moroccan government made him a useful ally.

2. I shared the collected data, their analysis and interpretation whenever possible with many of the Moroccan participants who were willing to help with the research. Many of the faculty members I met were educated in the U.S. or England and were able to function as experts and as cultural bridges with their insights.
3. Both Mr. Stephen Casewit and Mr. Michael Fitzgerald (see Appendix A), American expatriates well acculturated in Morocco, assisted me greatly in determining possible threats to the validity of data obtained and how to interpret these data. Mr. Youssef El Jabri, the Moroccan engineer who did much of the translating, also helped in interpreting that data.
4. I also requested, where it was appropriate and relevant, a written memo confirming what transpired in an interview. This method was used for data verification and to validate what was said. I found that Moroccans have great respect for the written word and that they are very careful about how they express themselves in writing. This was especially useful where actual commitments and willingness to participate were expressed.
5. I also followed up many interviews with a letter or an e-mail to the interviewees. My assumption was that a participant's willingness for continued correspondence could be used to verify intentionality.
6. For reasons of validity (triangulation) as well as other reasons, I made a design decision, early on in my work, to conduct the studies and collect data in several higher education institutions in Morocco. In the next section this will be discussed in more detail.

3.5.8 Units of research

From the initial stages of this feasibility study, it seemed that Al Akhawayn University was the most obvious candidate for the LCTDE project. At the same time, other higher education institutions in Morocco emerged as possible candidates. Consequently, this study was conducted in four different units for research, four different higher educational institutions in Morocco:

1. Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane.
2. Mohammed V University in Rabat.
3. The National Institute for Post and Telecommunications (INPT).
4. The American Language Center (ALC) in Marrakesh together with the University of Marrakesh.

A more detailed description of the four institutions that were studied can be found in the next chapter, which is devoted to Moroccan education. There the reader will be able to understand how these four schools are an appropriate and representative set of research units.

The decision to conduct study at the four different higher education sites rather than to concentrate on the one most probable university, the Al Akhawayn, was made because of the following reasons:

1. For validation purposes. By collecting and using data from multiple educational units, verification of the information gathered through triangulation was possible.
Introducing into the design data triangulation and triangulation of collection methods strengthened the validity of research findings.
2. Appropriate and representative set. The four institutions that were studied here represented a sample set of different types of higher education institutions where the LCTDE project could be conducted.
3. To compare and contrast. Being able to compare and contrast between the different educational units produced a more coherent picture. By being able to understand what is common in all sites, I was able to better characterize the nature of higher education in Morocco. At the same time, I was also able to better understand the differences that existed between the universities in relationship to this study.
4. Not to put all our eggs in one basket, figuratively speaking. By looking into different possibilities available for the LCTDE project in Morocco, a better understanding of what is possible emerged.

5. To allow some competition among the possible interested parties. The fact that participants knew that other institutions were also interested strengthened their efforts to be clearer, toward themselves and toward me, about their intentions regarding the LCTDE project.
6. To involve more people in the study. Appealing to a broader base of participants created an ongoing debate and an exchange of ideas among interested Moroccan colleagues. It also allowed me to realize the extent to which the different parts are joined together, how cross-connected are the various institutions and how interconnected are Moroccan faculty to each other.

Participants from those four institutions were all presented with a four-page LCTDE project proposal summary. They were all asked whether they might be interested to participate in such a project in the event that it actually manifested. They were also invited to comment about how to make such a project more attractive to Moroccans. The fact that the other institutions were also approached was common knowledge. A discussion about how LCTDE might work in the other locations was commonly entertained.

3.6 Summary

This chapter described the research design, the methodology, and the rationale behind the design plan. It explained why this study was initiated in Morocco, what were aims of the study, and what research questions it attempts to answer. The chapter includes a general description of the investigation, discussing research methods as well as other research issues and constraints. Special attention is given to the cultural factors associated with the study and how they could affect its outcome. The rationale for selecting specific educational institutions for data collection was also discussed.

At the same time, this research was based on an open-ended and flexible plan in order to allow the qualitative research work to unfold and seek its own course. As participants shared needed information, they simultaneously instructed me about how to continue

with the research. While they allowed me to educate them with information they lacked, they (more importantly) educated me in how to conduct this type of research in their country and how to redesign the LCTDE project so it will be better suited to the Moroccan higher education environment. My intentions for the Moroccan study were twofold. I set out to collect the necessary data for this research and, at the same time, to create allies and partners for a project. Although the first part of this research work was completed, the outcome of the second part is still in process.

Chapter IV

HIGHER EDUCATION IN MOROCCO

4.1 Education in Morocco versus Western Education

4.1.1 Introduction

Morocco has a long and rich tradition of higher education and is currently in a period of change and re-evaluation regarding its universities and methods of teaching. Much of the change is a result of new influences from the West and the need for adjusting to new global realities. Higher education has traditionally been held in high esteem in Morocco. Large, state-run universities are established in major cities and towns and higher education is free to all students. Currently approximately 14% of Moroccans age 18-24 attend institutions of higher learning.

Europe was still in the Dark Ages when the world's first university opened its doors in Morocco. While it was not until the Renaissance that universities were finally established in Europe, the tradition of university education has been unbroken in Morocco since the ninth century. El-Qarawiyyin University was established in the city of Fez in 859 C.E. Until it was closed by the French colonialists in 1948, the Qarawiyyin University exerted a profound influence throughout Morocco, onto the continent of Africa and throughout the Muslim world. The Qarawiyyin University was reopened by the Moroccan king in 1988 to continue its programs in traditional Islamic sciences. At the same time, the majority of Moroccan universities today are Western-style universities.

Moroccan higher education is now at a crossroads. Moroccan educators, government administrators, and students are looking for new solutions and a new approach to what their universities are to provide. In an effort to highlight what is needed and how to effect changes, an academic conference entitled "The Idea of the University" was organized in the spring of 1997 by the Department of English at the Mohammed V University in Rabat. The conference proceedings were compiled as a book under the title, "The Idea of

the University" (1997a). Dr. Taieb Belghazi (1997b), in his introduction, divides the major trends addressed in the conference into three groups:

1. To find better ways to achieve the goals of the university.
2. To better acknowledge "the globalization of knowledge, the mercantilization of research, and the growing importance of techno-science" (p. XIX).
3. To use self-evaluation as a tool to adjust to the global change, and to affirm democratic and ethical values in the academic system in Morocco.

In introducing the presentations, editor Belghazi(1997b) says:

The papers debate themes crucial to this change: among them, the reform project(s), the national economy and the idea of the university, the relation between the state and the university, the student population and the idea of the university, autonomous vs. state university, discourse, knowledge, power and the idea of the university, (post) modernity, tradition and the idea of the university, the market and the idea of the university, the languages of the university, gender and class and the idea of the university. (p. XIII)

These words point to the tendency to further “Westernize” and globalize Moroccan higher education, a tendency that will be discussed later in this chapter. Specific ideas presented in the conference will be highlighted.

4.1.2 Education in Morocco

When using the term “education” in relationship to Morocco, one needs to consider the cultural barrier that must be crossed. As with so many other commonly used terms, it is easy to assume that the meaning of education is clearly defined and understood. After all, this term has been defined so often and been used so frequently in the field of education and other related fields. However, in translating meanings across cultures, as is done here, it is necessary to carefully examine all assumptions and definitions, and to consider what might be lost or added in the mental process of translation.

Many cross-cultural communication studies demonstrate occurrences of misunderstanding due to attributing different meanings to words and terms. This kind of misunderstanding can be found when the people communicating are based in different languages and/or in different cultures. In such a situation, communicators may use the same word but attribute different meanings to it. These differences in meanings can range from being completely different to being somewhat similar but not quite the same. Even when Americans communicate with British people, for example, cultural miscommunication and misinterpretation may occur, although both apparently share the same first language. Differences in interpretation may not be recognized initially since the communicators may assume that they understand each other. Fischer (1998) reported that only after many years of marriage to a German wife who is fluent in English, did they realized some of the many language-based misunderstandings that they shared. Likewise, paying attention to the meaning of words from a cultural perspective was important in this research.

English is the language of this research work. Most of the interview material gathered for this work was in English because the interviewer was not fluent in either French or Arabic. The main justification for using English is the assumption that the intended LCTDE program will be English-based. This assumption raises a problem about language domination that must be addressed. In most cross-cultural exchanges where each group speaks a different language, the problem of which language will be used arises. Usually it will be the language of the so-called dominant culture. The two questions that have to be asked are (1) can we assume a fair and balanced cultural exchange between two groups when one of them must use a foreign language? and (2) does imposing one language on the exchange send a message of preference for one culture over another? Therefore, the choice of using English for this project must be justified in a conscious way that is sensitive to Moroccan needs.

In listening to what Moroccans say about education and in examining the Moroccan education system, it is important to be aware of what education might mean in the cultural

and local context. At the same time, the reader must be careful to realize that the Western understanding of what education is, what it sets out to accomplish and how it is manifested, is also culturally based and relative. (The scope of this work does not permit an in-depth discussion about higher education in the West and its relationship to other cultures.) Looking into the rapidly changing educational systems of Western universities, one can observe that, “the universities of the sixties” are no more (i.e. universities were more academically, politically and financially autonomous entities, dedicated to instilling value based education. Presently, the trend in higher education is to develop an information based educational system that prepares a work force for America’s corporate needs).

Universities and traditional higher education institutions in the West are going through drastic changes not only in their content, but also in their philosophy and what they stand for. These changes are global and affect education everywhere. However, there is an added complexity in the Moroccan picture of higher education. In addition, it is experiencing a tension that already exists between two different educational cultures; two different educational traditions. That tension is between the traditional Islamic education and the French style Western university with its French educational system. The latter structure was introduced into Morocco at the beginning of the present century. In order to be able to evaluate the material presented in this chapter and to attempt to construct some kind of useful picture of the Moroccan university, it is necessary to take a look, albeit a brief one, at the diverse influences at play.

4.1.3 Traditional Islamic Education

The traditional Islamic education is the first element to consider in order to understand the complexity of Moroccan education. It may not be apparent in looking at the make-up of a Moroccan university, but the influence of traditional Islam is very profoundly and deeply rooted in the collective being of the Moroccan people. Although the universities and the institutions of higher education there operate as Western systems, the influence of Islam and Islamic values are always part of the larger picture.

El-Qarawiyyin of Fez, the first Islamic university, historically used to set the tone for traditional Islamic education. It was no accident that El-Qarawiyyin University was a major focus of resistance to the French occupation and was closed by the French in 1948. It was reopened only recently, in 1988, by the late King Hassan II, to again provide the same traditional education. I had the privilege of visiting the Qarawiyyin mosque with Mr. Casewit as a guide in February of 1995. With us was another visitor, Dr. Khalid Taher, a professor from King Saud University of Saudi Arabia. At one point Khalid turned to our guide, Mr. Casewit, and asked him to show us where the famous university was. "You are in it" was the answer. He showed us the many green raised platforms placed around the huge (larger than a football field) mosque. Each platform designated a classroom around which students could sit and listen to the revered teacher before them. This was truly an "open university" where not only the students but also others who were interested could attend.

The answer surprised the Saudi professor, who suddenly burst into tears. In one moment, the proud Arab professor realized that in this particular instance he was a representative of Western culture and Western education. He was not able to recognize his own cultural roots.

The 'West,' as referred to here, is not a geographical area on the globe, said Dr. Winter (1998), professor of Islamic Studies from Cambridge University, in a tape recorded lecture titled "Classical Islamic Education." "The West is not a geographical term but a particular vision of the world and of the human condition." Western education is "the prevailing education paradigm not only in the West but all over the world, including the Muslim world."

According to Dr. Winter, we can trace traditional western education to three sources: first, to ancient Greece with its philosophy, art, beauty and ethics; second, to Rome with its legal system and statecraft; and third, to Christianity with its beliefs, religion and morals. He goes on to quote the philosopher Albert Haas to say that "education is a transmission of culture to enable the individuals and the society to attain a quality of life

which is always beyond the mere facts of life." In this instance, education is not only about facts but also about producing better human beings where the teacher is a model to show the student a quality of life that he, the student, yearns to achieve. In this system, the student will get an idea of what a good life might be and who the good person is. This is the Socratic concept of the person's higher purpose rather than the person himself.

Since the 1960s, says Winter, modern Western education has changed drastically. Today's education is chiefly concerned with inculcating information and with being a vehicle for progress. It is not about instilling values but rather about moving society forward into a new direction of social opportunity, equality, democracy, and so forth. It is about going forward into the unknown and hence it is in conflict with tradition and traditional education.

Islamic education, explains Dr. Winter, is based primarily on revelation and the belief in its truth, and therefore it stands in direct opposition to today's secular educational system of the West. It is an educational system that is concerned with relearning or the "restoration of what people already knew" as humanity, rather than searching for new, unknown, truths. It is "through learning that knowledge is regained." It is also a system that emphasizes justice, both social and personal.

What is seen here is that traditional Islamic education is primarily a tool of learning from the past. "The past is a pattern for the present" says Dr. El Mansour (1996) in a presentation at a conference in Rabat titled "History, What for? The Social Uses of History." He goes on to say: "In our Islamic societies we probably tend to value the past more than in other cultures since the ideal time . . . is the time of the Pious ancestors." "The further we get from the time of the Prophet and his rightly-guided companions the more corrupt we become. In other words, the good or the ideal society is behind us and not ahead of us" (p. 293).

Can the Western educated mind even entertain such ideas as being useful or valid? It is not difficult to see some of the possible effects that such premises can have on

educational methods. It is less obvious, however, how enriching and challenging such influences could be for Western students in a truly balanced cross-cultural exchange.

4.2 Modern Higher Education in Morocco

The term modern higher education will be used here to indicate higher education institutions that are not part of traditional Islamic education. These institutions are mainly public universities and some other post secondary school establishments in Morocco, fashioned after Western educational models. There are three principal categories of educational establishments there. The great majority of Moroccan students attend Moroccan public universities. These are French style, government operated, free universities. Some attend Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane (AUI). AUI is a new American style private university in a category of its own. It is the only private university in Morocco and is too expensive for most Moroccan students. There are also “high schools.” Those are private schools and colleges, mostly for business administration, for computer sciences, and for other technical subjects. Many of these schools do not grant academic credentials. A fourth possibility of higher education for Moroccans is to study abroad in Europe, England, America, and even Asia. Students from upper class families prefer this option and even many middle income families will endure extreme financial burdens to send their children to foreign schools.

4.2.1 The Moroccan public university

The public university system in Morocco is responsible for delivering education to the great majority of students in the country. As mentioned earlier, the present higher education system was introduced by the French at the beginning of the century. The universities and their curricula were tailored by the French to fit the specific Moroccan situation and culture (as they perceived them). The educational system imposed by the French was a major colonial tool to introduce a dominant French and Western culture into Morocco. After Moroccan independence in 1955, the development of the universities took another course. The new state reformed its higher education only slightly. It seems

that many alterations were made out of reaction to the old colonial power but not enough was changed to meet the new needs of the country. Even today, the central characteristics of the Moroccan system of higher education reflect the structure of the French-imposed model. The public university system is run and administered by the government and is rigid, intransigent, centralized and hierarchical. According to Dr. Mekouar, the 1975 law of higher education was published in the official government gazette. It dictates what a public university is, how it is created and operated and what its mission is. It also dictates how faculties come to being, who recruits teachers, what they are to teach and exactly how to evaluate students. Article 36 states that programs, courses and curricula are set by a government decree. The decree in effect now is the decree of 1982 (see Appendix D, p. 331).

There are more than a dozen public universities, all situated in major cities, and they are very large. Those universities are primarily teaching institutions where little or no research is being done. Most Moroccan universities award only the “license” degree, which is equivalent to an undergraduate bachelor’s degree. The “license” is awarded after four years of studies. The “first cycle” is the first two years and the “second cycle” is the last two. “Third cycle” courses, which lead to the equivalent of a graduate master’s degree, can only be attended at Mohamed V University in Rabat and the University of Ain Chock in Casablanca. Competition to continue to the third cycle is intense and students from other cities are at a disadvantage. As of 1998, no Moroccan university offered doctoral programs with the exception of medical schools. Usually, only students from families wealthy enough to send their children to study in Europe or the U.S. can pursue doctoral and post-doctoral degrees. Many of the Moroccan faculty, many people in other high administrative positions, and the Moroccan elite in general have been educated and trained abroad.

4.2.2 Some distinguishing features of Moroccan public universities

1. Teacher centered — Courses are primarily lecture sessions where content is presented by an authoritarian teacher to students who are tested on their familiarity with and

memorization of the material. Power rests almost totally with the teacher, while the students are passive receptors.

2. One path — Once students enter the academic system, they are required to stay in the same academic field they entered, with very little choice of classes and without the possibility of changing and starting another academic discipline. Students either complete the path they embarked on and graduate or they fail to graduate and have no second chance.
3. Free tuition to all — Every Moroccan who graduates from secondary school and passes the Baccalaureate exams is entitled to a free university education and a small stipend. This stipend is usually not enough to support the student, who therefore is usually compelled to live with his/her parents. Secondary school grades and competition exams (*concours*) determine to which faculty students may be accepted. Medical and engineering schools are in high demand while the humanities are rated low.
4. Centralized and government owned, regulated and operated — The Ministry of Higher Education is responsible to run the public universities and to comply with the “Law of Higher Education.” The law spells out all the details of how the universities shall operate. It includes detailed curricula, the rights and duties of the students, of the teachers and of the administration. It also states how funds are distributed.
5. Students are under extreme pressure to focus on the end-of-the-year exams. Failure to pass a final exam usually means the end of the academic career for the student. Most students are extremely competitive, grade oriented, and focused on future job opportunities. (At the same time a large percentage of graduates will find themselves unemployed. Unemployment is extremely high in Morocco and many university graduates cannot find jobs in their professions or anywhere else.) Strict student selection is exercised, where the “best” will go into medicine and engineering. Next come mathematics and the physical sciences, and only then will come law, arts and

sciences, and the humanities. This hierarchical selection is much more important to students than their personal interests and motivation.

4.2.3 The Idea of the University

Presently the public university establishment in Morocco is in crisis, says Ennaji (1997). It is a system that is seen by many to be in a state of stagnation and regression. Although it is said that more than a quarter of the Moroccan government budget is spent on education, the amount that is spent per student is far from sufficient. There are not enough funds for needed student services, for labs, or for instructional equipment. Public universities are primarily teaching establishments where very little research is done. Salaries of faculty are low, and many teachers take second jobs to make ends meet. They therefore do not have enough time to devote to their students. A large number of students enter the system because they are unemployed and school is free. Unfortunately, many graduates do not find employment once they have graduated due to the high rate of unemployment in Morocco.

Throughout the proceedings of the conference about “The Idea of the University,” one hears again and again the call from Moroccan academia for a major reform in the way higher education is delivered. Many of these professors, graduates of American and British universities, voice both frustration and hope, as they call for long awaited academic reforms. Abdelhay Moudden (1997) considers the situation of the university to be “both as a symptom and the cause of the present crisis” — a crisis stemming from the failure of modernism on which the Moroccan university is founded. He traces the roots of the inability of the university to confront the problems of the post-modern world to the colonial origins of the Moroccan modern university. “By uncritically embracing modernity and instinctively rejecting pre-colonial local culture and knowledge, post-colonial Moroccan University [*sic*] was bound to be elitist, undemocratic, technocratic and consequently intellectually unproductive and inefficient,” says Moudden (1997, p. 243). He calls for a reform of higher education which abandons “its conservative one-dimensional modernist reflexes” in favor of a genuinely intellectually diverse university,

more fitted to prepare Morocco's next generation of students to be able to face the changing world.

Dr. Lahcen Haddad (1997) is a voice calling for education aimed not only to better prepare students for the job market, but also to initiate true academic discourse and to provide students with a general education similar to that in America and other Western countries. His approach is concerned with working with the human qualities of students and with an effort to prepare students to usher the country into a new global age. Haddad raises questions about the relationships between academic discourse and professional training, between general education and specialization, and about the borders between science, humanities and technology. "How can we develop a notion of the University as a venue for training for life if it is simply a place of instruction?" he asks (p. 333).

"The university reflects the degree of development of a country," says Dr. Moha Ennaji (1997, p. 335). By looking at the crisis in its universities, one can see a reflection of the social crises in Morocco. In a paper entitled "The University Reform Project," Ennaji gives the reader insight into problems facing Morocco and its public universities, and into the necessary reform. He gives the following four reasons for the current crisis situation:

1. Mismanagement and misuse of both human and material resources and lack of published research.
2. Lack of sufficient funds yields low "teaching and learning conditions." Libraries are poorly supplied and archaically organized. Teachers and students have no access to computers. There are only a few computers, and they are available only to school's administration and department secretaries.
3. There is a "lack of motivation among students and teachers because of unemployment and teacher's low salaries" (p. 336).
4. Both teachers and students are primarily concerned with political issues and overlook educational and research priorities.

According to Ennaji (1992), two major social realities are not addressed by the university: the wide gap that exists between the social classes in Morocco and the social gap that exist between the different regions of the country. Most students belonging to the upper and middle classes will attend the more prestigious medical schools and higher institutions, public or private, or will travel to attend universities in the U.S. and Europe. The poorer majority will “join the faculties of letters, sciences and law.” Also, there is very little consideration given to the different cultural and economic backgrounds of students from different regions of the country. Universities must precisely follow the guidelines dictated by the law for higher education and do not take into account the diverse needs of the students they serve.

The first step to reform, says Ennaji, is to cause change in “the mentality of students, teachers, administrators and parents.” These changes must be rooted in an attitude of “adaptability, pragmatism, responsibility and learner-centredness.” A new balance of power must be achieved so that more responsibility is given to teachers, students and administrators who “must be accountable to higher-ranked officials.” Pragmatic solutions should be sought, putting the student’s needs and the society’s needs foremost (p. 342).

Reform will necessitate empowerment of both faculty and students. Currently, although teachers are all-powerful entities in the eyes of students, they themselves have little power over academic matters such as curriculum design, course content and student evaluation. Both faculty and students have little motivation to excel and change attitudes owing to their lack of control over how things are done. Students must be allowed to become “learners,” while faculty must also be involved in research and become an “instructor-researchers,” says Fatima Bouzenirh (1997). This is a call to “re-evaluate teaching methods” and “to train students in ‘how to learn’” (p. 352). According to Bouzenirh, an instructor-researcher is a teacher who has control over “what to teach, how to teach it and how to evaluate it.” Adequate instructional means and continuous professional training must be provided to faculty. They also need to have reasonable

workloads and adequate compensation to fulfill their role. Both faculty and students must be encouraged to conduct research by being given clear directives, sufficient time, and necessary funding. For students to become student-learners, they must be involved in the process of planning their program and curricula. They must be given autonomy to actively pursue the knowledge they desire. Bouzenirh suggest that the academic strategy of total fixation on end-of-the year examinations, diplomas and the job market is not adequate for promoting student-learners, for “training for research” or for creating productive “student–instructor relationships.” She also questions introducing specialization before the student-learner is sufficiently prepared. Although Bouzenirh’s suggestions are generally directed to the Faculty of Letters and foreign language departments, they have direct implications for the whole Moroccan university system and the proposed reforms (p. 349).

For the reform project to be effective, a large financial burden is required. Due to Morocco’s present economic situation and large foreign debt, it is unlikely that the state alone can carry this burden. “The university resources must be diversified,” says Ennaji (1992, p. 339). These resources must come both from tuition fees of students whose families who can afford to pay and from the public and private sector of the economy. At the same time, careful accountability and control of how money is being spent must be instituted.

Most members of Moroccan academia that were interviewed as part of this research agreed on the urgency of the need for reform in the Moroccan higher education system. They all agreed this was a long-awaited change. Some were more specific than others about what needed to be changed and they all had diverse ideas on the subject but they expressed a common spirit of hope and a desired direction. Some were more optimistic than others concerning the likelihood of reform taking place or whether this reform would fulfill the needs. When reading the interviews (see Appendix D, section 1.9), it is possible to appreciate this urgency and how personally important this potential reform is to all participants.

4.2.4 Other institutions

The information presented here relates to the state of Moroccan public universities. At the same time it reflects the general state of education in Morocco and the condition of Moroccan society as a whole (Ennaji, 1997). In order for specific reform to take place, the Moroccan government must not only allow it, but also direct it. At the same time, changes are already taking place in the Moroccan education system. While the reform program calls for changes from within the public university system, new alternatives to the centralized French type of education are emerging. Influences of American style education are on the rise. Disappointment in higher education that does not promise employment and American dominance in the global economic markets encourages Moroccans to seek new ways of schooling. Small private institutions are emerging to provide needed training for business, technology, applied sciences and language skills to meet the demands of modern communications, global commerce, and a changing economy. An unofficial, informal reform is evolving which makes alternative types of education available to Moroccans who can afford it, primarily Moroccans of the middle and upper classes.

4.3 Four Institutions of Higher Education in Morocco; Possible Sites for the LCTDE Project

A new autonomous, private Moroccan university providing American style academic education, Al Akhawayn, provides an alternative higher education to Moroccans, mostly from upper classes and others, who can afford the relatively high tuition rates. From the early stages of this research, Al Akhawayn University was hypothesized to be the most likely location for the LCTDE project, if it would occur.

Three other possible candidates for the LCTDE were identified for study. The four institutions were quite different and unique, providing a set of institutions appropriate for this research. Muhammed V University (MVU) in Agdal represented public universities in Morocco. MVU is one of the only two universities to offer graduate studies, and now it offers Ph.D. Programs as well. The English department in the Faculty of Letters is

situated in the capitol of Morocco, which may give it better access to some needed technological resources. Cadi Ayyad University of Marrakesh, with its special connection to the American Language Center (ALC) in that same city, was the third institution chosen for study. Here the interest was the ALC with its unique experience and the available technology. The fourth institution investigated was the National Institute for Post and Telecommunications (INPT), which represented technical schools as possible candidates for the LCTDE project.

The following sections include general descriptions of the four institutions in order to explain further, why they were selected for study. These discourses also provide readers with needed context for deeper insight into the interviews and other data collected in these educational institutions.

4.3.1 Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane

4.3.1.1 General information

Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane (AUI) is a unique Moroccan university that is not subject to the 1975 law of higher education. This law governs all other universities in Morocco. AUI is the only private and autonomous university in the country. Also, while Moroccan public universities are molded after the French system, “AUI is modeled in its administrative, pedagogical and academic organization on the American university system. English is the language of instruction,” says AUI’s catalog (1997). Many of the university’s faculty members are non-Moroccans, most of whom are Americans

AUI was founded by the Moroccan king, Hasan the Second, with matching funds from the Saudi King Fuad. Al akhawayn in Arabic means the two brothers symbolizing the cooperation of the two kings. Unlike all other Moroccan universities which are situated in the center of the country’s largest cities, AUI’s “campus is located in the resort community of Ifrane, nestled in the Middle Atlas mountains” (AUI, 1997). The town of Ifrane is remote, scarcely populated, and somewhat resembles a town in the French Alps. The landscape here is magnificent and this compensates for almost

everything. On the other hand, it is far from everything, related one of the instructors there, Dr. Rachidi. The university opened its doors for the first time in 1995.

In the center of the newly built campus is a large, traditionally designed mosque, to symbolize a vision of modern higher education institution that is rooted in Moroccan culture and Islam. In line with the university's vision, according to Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Benjelloun, “one of the basic tenets of Al-Akhawayn is the notion of tolerance. Tolerance between people's cultures religions and so forth. We interpret it all the way from the classroom to international interaction. So, for us the classroom is an interactive space.”

Academically, AUI consists of three distinct schools: the School of Business Administration, the School of Humanities and Social Science, and the School of Science and Engineering. The three schools offer both undergraduate programs as well as graduate level studies. The School of Science and Engineering offered a master’s degree only in Computer Science. Ph.D. programs were not available in 1998. AUI’s academic calendar is based on the American semester format in contrast to public universities where the academic year is the basic unit of studies, sub-divided to trimesters, as is the French system.

4.3.1.2 American system

What makes AUI an American style institution, related John Shoup, an American faculty member, is that while in the Moroccan public universities students study only subject specific to their academic path, at AUI students are also given general education. Science and engineering students must take subjects in the humanities and social sciences and vice-versa. The general requirements at AUI are those that the U.S. institutions have and that give students more choice. In reality, since the school is quite small, there is not a large enough choice. There are only certain classes that student can take, and there is certain sequencing of classes imposed.

What makes it American is also a significant number of American faculty members. AUI is supported by the Texas International Educational Consortium, which brokers

American faculty members to universities around the world. The Consortium assisted with setting up the school's curriculum and is continuously helping in recruiting American faculty as needed. At the same time, Moroccan faculty members and professors from other countries are also graduates of American or British universities.

Moroccan students who attend AUI are looking for a different educational experience, said Shoup. English language is definitely a central theme, but "American culture is a very important part of what students bring with them and what they think they're getting while they're here. Some of the frustration, on the part of students, is where they may feel that they're not getting enough of it" (Appendix D, p. 250). Students, faculty and administrators all favored and emphasized the AUI's student centered teaching style compared to the highly teacher centered system in other Moroccan higher education institutions.

Class sizes at AUI were much smaller than at the other universities, with a maximum of about 32 or 33 students per class and an average of 25. Some computer classes had a count of between 15 and 20 students. The school itself is much smaller than the huge public universities; in 1997, AUI's student count has reached about 765, although the institution is designed for twice this number.

4.3.1.3 Administration

AUI's administration seems to be a cross between a U.S. style university-administration and a Moroccan administration. On the surface it looks and feels very American. On each secretary's desk there is a networked computer; a sophisticated phone system reaches each administrator, and they all speak good English. Meetings are scheduled and everyone is kept efficiently busy.

At the same time, the system is extremely hierarchical. All decisions, including financial and academic matters, are made at the top, by the president of the university. Departments do not have running budgets and have to wait for every purchase to be approved.

4.3.1.4 English language

The language proficiency requirement at AUI is similar to the majority of American universities, according to Dr. Moncef Lahlou, director of the Language Center. Students who score a minimum of 530 on their TOEFL exams start their academic program directly. Those who score between 420 and 530 come to the Language Center for a semester of intensive English study. All students are required to take at least two English classes (basic freshman composition) once they start their academic program (Lahlou, Appendix D, p. 261).

“Our students are choosing to come here not just because of English but because of American English. It is the culture of their choosing” (John Shoup, Appendix D, p. 331).

4.3.1.5 Cross-cultural programs

AUI has cross-cultural exchange programs with about a dozen American universities. American students come to AUI while AUI students go to the U.S for one semester. American students may come because of their interest in Arabic and Islamic studies, the Middle East or other related topics. Morocco is a safe Arab country and AUI is an accepted academic institution as far as credits are concerned. For the Moroccan students, going to the U.S. is a cultural immersion experience. It is a fulfillment of their dreams, said Amy Fishburn, AUI’s International Program Coordinator. “They want to go to America just to be exposed to it” (Fishburn, Appendix D, p. 266).

4.3.1.6 Students

High tuition rates at AUI are the main reason that most students come from Morocco’s upper classes and the affluent middle classes. Exceptional students are offered partial scholarships, which allows a percentage of students from the middle classes to attend; students from poor families, who are the majority, usually can not attend AUI. According to John Shoup, students tend to come from certain regions of the country: “They tend to come from certain cities more than others,” where families are more open to the West. Students from the Moroccan elite and from affluent Moroccan families, who

would otherwise pursue their education in the West, attend AUI. As far as gender mix, said Shoup, “there’s a good balance”; in 1997, there were a few more females than males.

“Undergraduate students are mainly 18, 19, 20 years old . . . away from their families for the first time,” said Dr. Najiya El-Alami, a faculty member at the School of Humanities. They are ripe “to ask questions about themselves” and are sometimes eager to discuss “topics that are actually taboo in a narrow Islamic culture.” At the same time, reported Alami, working in collaboration does not come easy for Moroccan students who may be very competitive and obsessed with exams.

Again, according to Alami, graduate students tend to be selected more for excellence than undergraduates. They are “selected to be on the same level” academically and for their high language skills.

4.3.2 Muhammed V University in Agdal

4.3.2.1 General information

For purposes of this study, the Muhammed V (fifth) University (MVU) in Agdal represents Moroccan higher education in general and is used as a model Moroccan university. Like all other Moroccan universities with the exception of AUI, MVU is a tuition-free public institution. It is governed by the 1975 law of higher education and operates directly under the Royal Ministry of Higher Education. MVU enjoys a special status by virtue of being located in the capital, Rabat, and by its close proximity to the ministry and to its administration. In many ways, MVU is considered the most prestigious university in the country. Together with the University of Ain Chock in Casablanca, MVU is unique in that it also provides third cycle (or graduate level) courses and some Ph.D. programs. In addition, much of the limited amount of research that takes place in Moroccan universities is concentrated in MVU.

MVU is located in Agdal’s “Cité Irfan” (the District of Knowledge). Like some other Moroccan universities and in accordance with the French model of higher education, MVU is decentralized in its design and construction. Its various faculties are housed in buildings spread out and distant from each other within a radius of a few miles. The university

shares the area with other public, commercial, and private establishments and with many residential apartment buildings. MVU's symbolical center is "Bab-al-Irfan" (the Gate of Knowledge), which is a large arch situated in the middle of a main traffic roundabout. Each faculty building complex is fenced all around, has its own security personnel, and is quite distant from the next building complex. Each faculty unit usually has a cafeteria or an eating hall and a mosque space with a designated *imam* to allow students and faculty members to observe the Islamic ritual prayers. There is also a large, traditional-looking mosque, centrally situated in Cité Irfan, near the student dorm complex. Students normally attend all their classes within their own faculty complex. On some occasions when students need to commute to other locations within the university, the city public transport system, which is provided to students free of charge, is utilized.

The two specific schools where data were collected for this study were the English department of the Faculty of Letters (Kuliya-al-'Adab) and Mohammediya School of Engineering (EMI). EMI involvement in this study was only as a possible source for providing the necessary technological support to the faculty of letters. EMI is a large complex of modern-looking buildings in the heart of Cité Irfan. In spite of its size, reports indicated that the school's classes and computer facilities are quite crowded. Engineering is one of the most preferred professions in Morocco, second only to medicine, and therefore competition for admission to this school is fierce. Technical discussion based on data that were gathered at EMI is presented in chapter seven of the present study (see section 7.7).

4.3.2.2 The Faculty of Letters and the Humanities

The Faculty of Letters and the Humanities (the Faculty of Letters) is the home of the English department of MVU and it is there that data for this research were gathered. The Faculty is located in a large building complex at the edge of Cité Irfan, close to the Rabat downtown area. Since its conception, tens of thousands of Moroccan students have graduated from the Faculty.

According to the Faculty's catalogue (1995), the Faculty of Letters was founded in 1957 to replace the Institute of Moroccan Higher Studies, which was affiliated with the

French university of Bordeaux. Until the 1980s, MVU's Faculty of Letters was the only faculty of letters in the Moroccan university system. In its beginning, the faculty was divided into two sectors, Arabic and French, but in 1973, the Faculty was completely Arabized, and French was studied as a second language. (The term *Arabized* was coined to indicate that the official language used in the university is Arabic, and it is a reflection on a major political debate in Morocco). The Faculty offers language and literature degrees in Arabic, French, English, German, and Spanish. It also offers degrees in Islamic studies, history, geography, and a combination of philosophy, sociology, and psychology. Many other secondary languages such as Russian and Japanese are taught there.

To support teaching and research, the Faculty maintains an extensive library founded in 1917 within its facility. The library is the best of its kind in Morocco, explains the catalogue. It contains more than 200,000 titles relating to the various subjects taught in the Faculty. It also contains thousands of reports, theses, dissertations, and rare documents in manuscript form. The Faculty also maintains laboratories necessary to support teaching such as microfiche and film labs, cartography labs, various geology labs, and language labs.

4.3.2.3 Academic System

In accordance with the French system of higher education, the Faculty of Letters grants diplomas in four levels. The first cycle includes students' first two years and carries the degree of "la licence des Lettres." The second cycle extends to the third and fourth years and awards the degree of "le Certificat d'Etudes Complémentaires" (C.E.C.), which is equivalent to the B.A. degree. The fifth and sixth years of study constitute the third cycle, and graduates are awarded "le Diplôme d'Etudes Supérieures," equivalent to the M.A. In some cases, a doctoral degree or "le Doctorat d'Etat" can be pursued. The doctoral program is the "national Doctorat," which is not always recognized internationally.

The curriculum of the first and second cycles must follow, quite strictly, the official legal guidelines required by the ministry of higher education. Faculty members reported

that teaching first and second cycle courses can be boring and unchallenging since they must teach the same courses year after year. Professors invited change as a way to make teaching more interesting. Third cycle or graduate program courses can be somewhat more flexible, allowing the professors some control over what and how they teach. The students of the third cycle, who have already passed the competition for admission to graduate school, are also somewhat more relaxed about new academic trends and experimentation. According to Dr. Haddad, a member at the Faculty of Letters and a professor of English and cultural studies, there is also a new academic trend at the undergraduate level. Now the university can offer “license appliqué” (applied bachelor) programs. These are specialized programs for bright students, comparable to honors programs in the United States. Professors can obtain special approval to teach such courses. The Faculty of Letters already offers an applied geography course and an applied course in reading scientific books.

The academic year, which is divided into three trimesters, is the basic cycle of studies at MVU. Each course is taught for a whole academic year. At the end of the academic year, students are given final exams that determine their grade and whether they are permitted to continue their studies into the next year. Exams include all the material covered in the course and all students who are taking the same course, regardless of their course instructor, are given the same exam.

In general, the material taught tends to be highly theoretical compared to schools in the U.S.; some language classes are the exception. The lecture is by far the method of teaching used most. Third cycle courses are particularly theory-based. Some interviewees pointed out that since the university is under-funded and classrooms are poorly equipped, it is difficult to change teaching delivery methods. In 1996, the British Consul together with the British Open University donated a VCR and a monitor to the English department, and that allowed teachers to introduce a new dimension of instruction into the classroom.

4.3.2.4 Administration

As in all Moroccan universities, the dean is directly in charge of all faculty affairs. The dean of the Faculty of Letters and his vice dean are directly responsible to MVU's administration and to the dean of the university both of whom are responsible to the Ministry of Higher Education. The dean and his office directly handle financial and administrative matters as well as academic decisions. Dr. Abdelwahed Bendaoud has been the Faculty's dean for many years. Previously, he was a professor in the French department of the Faculty and his wife is a teacher in the English department there. The Faculty members who were interviewed respected Dean Bendaoud as an ally and colleague. He was described as an open-minded personality with a directive towards European and Western cultures. In some cases in the Moroccan university, the appointment of a dean can be purely political, a fact that may cause frictions between administration and faculty. The relationship between the dean and his faculty is extremely important.

Financially, the Faculty of Letters is supported directly by the Ministry of Higher Education and funds are very much limited. Since education is free, there is no tuition income and there are very limited resources for funding other projects. In general, jobs in the university system, although they do not pay much, are secured for life. Many professors keep their university jobs until they retire. On the one hand, this fact adds tremendous stability to the functioning of the institution. On the other hand, it may give professors little incentive to put more effort into their jobs, especially because many of them find it necessary to keep a second job elsewhere. Since faculty members cannot be fired, the administration has little control over their performance.

4.3.2.5 Faculty members

Most faculty members in Moroccan universities are primarily teachers and are engaged in very little or no research work. Research funds are scarce and, since professors are getting paid small salaries and are required to teach only 10 hours a week as a rule, many of them have other jobs that may divert much of their energy elsewhere. Some are employed by other agencies, national or foreign, while others run their own enterprises.

Faculty positions are secured for life; consequently, professors may take a leave of absence to work in another universities or other institutions for several years, only to return later to their old jobs, as was the case with Dr. Haddad and Dr. Mekouar (see Appendix D, p. 236).

Many of the professors are “products” of their own institutions; they have been students there. Most of them also studied abroad for periods ranging from a year or two to four or five years. Universities in France, England, and the U.S. were the foreign universities most attended by participants of this study. Many faculty members had to earn their higher degrees abroad since the diplomas they needed were not obtainable in Morocco.

Professors also reported a desire for more academic challenge in their work and for more control over what material they teach and what teaching methods they use. Since the curriculum is basically set by law and cannot be changed, teachers must teach the same courses, repeatedly, in the same way. Therefore, talk about educational reform and the need for change in the Moroccan university system is prevalent among faculty members.

4.3.2.6 Students

Some students at MVU are residents of Rabat and the nearby communities, and others come from more distant parts of Morocco. Those from places far away usually stay in the students' residence of Cité Irfan. MVU is a most prestigious Moroccan university and the competition for admission is high. According to some, the local students not only has the advantage of living at home with their families and not having to pay room and board, but they are also favored in the admission selection process.

Most MVU students come from Morocco's lower and middle classes and from families that cannot afford to send their children to be educated abroad. According to Dr. Nadia Tahri, the majority of the students come from poor families. Tuition is free and each student gets a small monthly stipend (about 400 DH or approximately \$40 to out-of-towners and half of it to the locals) on which they are expected to live.

Moroccan students pursue higher education solely as an entry to future employment in the limited Moroccan job market. Competition is high for the more sought-after schools, such as medicine, engineering, and physical sciences. Most Faculty of Letters students probably did not compete well in gaining entrance to the more favored faculties. Competition is also high for continuing one's studies into the third cycle. This privilege is open only for top achievers within the Faculty. Students with only a second cycle degree will have a slim chance for employment in the open market. End-of-the-year exams determine how students fare and therefore they are obsessed with preparing for these exams.

MVU students, and Moroccan students in general, are very much politically oriented. It is not uncommon for the entire student body to go on strike several times during a single school year. Students' rights and duties are stated in the law as well as the amount of stipend they receive and the services to which they are entitled. Students are continually struggling to maintain their rights and improve their position.

4.3.2.7 Language

Moroccan students in general have command of more than one language, and many are fluent and literate in three or more languages. Many of the students have good linguistic skills and possess the tools needed to learn languages. At the same time, many of the students who come to the MVU English department know very little of that language. The English level at Moroccan secondary schools is quite low, and unless students prepared themselves ahead, for example, by taking classes at one of the ALCs, they might find themselves ill-prepared for the high demands of the university's English department. Through the first cycle, students who cannot reach a sufficient command of the English language are weeded out. Second and third cycle students have a fair command of the language, according to their teachers.

Students in the English department love the language and find many ways to use it outside the classroom. Being members of a strong oral culture, their oral command of English is more advanced than their ability to write. Their accent is uniquely Moroccan

with a mix of both English and American sounds. In addition, their sentence construction and content reflect their Arabic language and Arabic culture. Much of this has to do with the fact that all the teachers in the department are Moroccan themselves; none of the teachers are native English speakers (unlike the teachers at the ALCs and AUI). Although English levels of students vary, there are many students in the more advanced classes who can express themselves well and are able to communicate in English.

4.3.2.8 Cultural studies in MVU

As a result of recent changes to the law of higher education, a group of professors at MVU's English department was permitted to organize a cultural studies (CS) graduate program. The program designers exported CS programs taught in European universities and tailored them to fit the Moroccan reality. These professors view Moroccan culture as a changing culture and want to address topics such as democracy, cultural diversity in Morocco, rural development, women's rights, questions of identity for minority groups, the Third World and Morocco's place in a global reality. The program emphasizes the everyday culture, issues relating to language diversity in Morocco and how this relates to questions of identity. It also emphasizes how mass media and the culture of the image affect Moroccan culture.

The new program is conducted largely in English, although some visiting speakers lecture in Arabic or French. The organizers hope that students from other departments and other faculties who have sufficient command of the English language may be able to join as well. This is a third cycle level program with a possibility to continue toward a doctoral degree (yet to be recognized internationally).

4.3.2.9 International cross-cultural programs

MVU's Faculty of Letters does not have the funds or the authority to send their students abroad for cross-cultural exchange. On the other hand, the faculty has agreements with some American universities to send American students to Rabat for cross-cultural and Moroccan studies. The Faculty welcomes such cross-cultural programs as they bring

additional needed funds to the school and at the same time provide Moroccan students and teachers cross cultural experience and an opportunity to hear spoken American English.

In the past, the faculty has had agreements for cross-cultural programs with Vassar College and with two campuses of the University of Wisconsin, Madison and Milwaukee. Students from these universities and from other campuses came to Rabat to attend courses designed especially for them. The department was also part of a professors' exchange program with the University of Wisconsin under a USIS grant. Under that exchange, American faculty came to teach in MVU while Moroccan professors went to the U.S.

4.3.3 The National Institute of Post and Telecom (INPT)

4.3.3.1 General information

The INPT is located in Cité Irfan, Rabat's university district. However, INPT is not part of Mohammed V University, but rather is owned and operated by Morocco's national communication company Itissalat Al-Maghrib (previously ONPT). The institute, which was established in 1979, trains and prepares all future engineers needed by Itissalat Al-Maghrib. It also prepares technicians and technical operators. The engineering program is a three-year course that follows an academic calendar similar to that in other Moroccan universities. This program culminates with an all-expenses-paid-overseas study-travel program.

Teaching and training is done in approximately twenty well-equipped laboratories, all connected by a local information network. The laboratories include demonstration prototypes of the actual equipment used by the ONPT, so students are acquainted with the equipment that they will be working with in the field. In 1998, a planned project was to install in the near future a tele-education system for students training purposes.

4.3.3.2 Administration

As part of the traditional ONPT administration, the INPT was regarded in 1998 as an autonomous unit under the direct authority of the minister of Post and Telecommunication. Dr. Larbi Choukhmane, the director of the INPT, possessed the

same level of authority in the hierarchy of the ONPT as the other top directors, and was in complete control of all resources, funds and educational direction of the Institute. The power structure at INPT was more political and strongly traditional compared to the power structure found in Moroccan universities. At INPT, there were comparatively tremendous resources and available funding to administer. As of 1998, it was still unknown how the status of the INPT would change as the process of privatization of the Itissalat Al-Maghrib took place.

In the winter of 1998, Director Choukhmane was weighing the possibilities of involving INPT students in a DE course about cross-cultural communication. His main interest was the opportunity to use international DE technology as well as allowing students the cross-cultural experience. He concluded that it would be too difficult for INPT engineering students to undertake such an additional involvement, but that perhaps the Institute's facility and technical support could be utilized to conduct such a course with students of the humanities from the nearby MVU. Such INPT involvement would require administrative collaboration on a higher governmental level than that of the INPT and MVU alone.

4.3.3.3 Faculty members

In 1997, the INPT had 55 permanent faculty members and another 42 part-time instructors. Instruction delivery methods at the Institute were highly teacher-centered, and a strong formal division separated teachers and students.

4.3.3.4 Students

The INPT upholds a rigorous student selection process. Since many are competing for a small number of available places, those students who are accepted to the Institute are supported through school and guaranteed jobs once they graduate successfully. As of 1998, there were 50 to 60 engineers graduating each year; about 10% of them come from other countries. From its conception until 1996, approximately 800 engineers graduated from the Institute.

According to Dr. Choukhmane, the students were highly trained in science, technology and engineering, but they needed more training to open their minds to the humanities and especially to cross-cultural communication. INPT needed to create engineers with skills to go out and bring the technology from other countries. They needed a balance between technical skills and personal communication skills.

According to a teacher, the students were very goal-oriented rather than interest-oriented. They were politically organized to protect their rights. There was an ongoing struggle between the students and the administration to determine what is the minimum that students are required to do and it is too difficult to motivate students to anything that is not in their original contract with the INPT.

4.3.3.5 Language

The language of instruction at INPT was predominantly Arabic, but some instruction was conducted in French. All engineering students were obliged to study English as a foreign language throughout their three years. English classes focused mainly on reading and writing technical literature and communicating about technical matters. Those selected students who were interviewed had difficulties expressing themselves in English. Also, most faculty members had little command of conversational English.

4.3.3.6 International cross-cultural programs

From 1994 to 1997, third year engineering student had been sent on a study-abroad program with all expenses paid by the government (i.e. by the INPT). The students and some of their teachers traveled, as a group, to Ohio State University in the U.S., where they were acquainted with how engineers were taught in the States. They were able to see and work with technologies that were not available to them in Morocco and to experience working and communicating with their American peers. For 1998, the INPT planned a similar exchange, but this time with a technical university in England.

4.3.4 Cadi Ayyad University and the American Language Center in Marrakesh

4.3.4.1 Acknowledgment

The ALC in Marrakesh and CAU are two distinct institutions, but for the purpose of this study, they are presented as one unit of research due to the possible cooperation between these schools. Research and data collection in Marrakesh was done mostly at the ALC. Both Mr. Fitzgerald, the director of the ALC, and Dr. Knidiri, the rector of CAU, agreed that a joint venture between the institutions is possible and desirable in order that a DE project in cross-cultural communications take place in Marrakesh.

4.3.4.2 Cadi Ayyad University

Cadi Ayyad is the university of Marrakesh. It is located on the newer side of the city of Marrakesh. The university consists of four main faculties. The Faculty of Letters and the Faculty of Law and Economics are located near each other in the Daudiate quarter of Marrakesh. The Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Medicine are located near each other in the Semlalia quarter. Each faculty is composed of five to fifteen main buildings. The Faculty of Letters is by far the largest, and has recently been endowed with a faculty club including two swimming pools. The Faculty of Medicine is new. It is in its second year, and consists of about five buildings.

The dean of the Faculty of Letters is Dr. Mohamed Essaouri. There are approximately 4800 students at the Faculty divided into departments as follows:

Arabic department: 874	History & Geography: 1487
French department: 441	Islamic Studies: 1049
English department: 715	Philosophy department: 234

According to the Law of Higher Education, said Mr. Fitzgerald, students can register into any major they choose. Therefore, English students are not selected and they include people who majored in sciences (which are taught in Arabic) in high school but were afraid that their French was not good enough to do university level work, which is taught in

French. This situation is one of the conundrums of education in Morocco and at the same time the reason for the large number of students who are going into English.

4.3.4.3 The American Language Center (ALC) at Marrakesh

The American Language Center of Marrakesh is one of 10 such centers functioning in Morocco's major cities. Their mission is to teach English and about American culture to Moroccans and to facilitate understanding between the two peoples. Initially, the ALCs were established and owned by the American cultural attaché to Morocco. This situation changed and now the centers are private, student supported, not-for-profit, Moroccan cultural entities. The five main ALCs are in Casablanca, Rabat, Marrakesh, Fez, and Tangiers, and all have American directors. Presently there are about 15,000 students in all ten ALC centers.

The Marrakesh school is located in a large villa, on a quiet street in the Guéliz quarter of Marrakesh. This villa houses the office, library, computer lab, and four classrooms. Another 19 classrooms are arranged in two levels around a spacious courtyard. The ALC is a five-minute walk from the center of the new city and 15 minutes from the nearest gate of the old city.

The Center has been in its present location since 1972. The relatively small size of the school helps to promote a "family" feeling, even though on any given evening or Saturday afternoon there will be as many as 300 students attending classes.

The Center offers a regular program of English as a foreign language with normal terms consisting of three hours per week and accelerated sessions, generally in early summer and early fall, of 10 hours per week.

The ALC Marrakesh was the first of the 10 ALCs to provide students access to computers, in 1988, and the first to give students access to the internet. There are now nine on-line stations, all Pentium II class computers or better, with a digital connection (64 Kbps). These are available free to registered students. They are now in constant use, and more than ever students are using English in a truly meaningful (to them) context, doing information searches, sending e-mails, and communicating with universities.

However, the most popular use of the internet in Morocco, "chatting," is not permitted in the ALC computer lab.

Tuition in the Marrakesh center is reasonably priced at 600 DH per course (in comparison, the tuition in Rabat is over 800 dirhams.) Student tuition also covers library membership and the privilege of using the computer lab, though students must pay for the printer paper they use and for communications costs if they go on line.

4.3.4.4 The students

The Fall 1998 enrollment at the ALC Marrakesh was a little over 1900 students. Of these, 75% were also students elsewhere, with the majority being high school students, then junior high school students, and then university students (about 15%). Non-students who take classes at the ALC come from many walks of life: professionals, people working in tourism, merchants, and homemakers. Gender distribution is nearly an equal number of males and females.

According to a survey done in 1992, the overwhelming reason most students come to the ALC is simply because they like learning the English language. The next most important reason was the value of English in getting a job. The third most cited reason was to supplement the English they were learning (or not learning) in public high schools or in the university system.

In respect to university level students at the ALC, one can make the following general remarks: If they had not studied at the ALC before, which many have, university students come to the Center because the classroom setting stresses oral communication. University classes may contain 100 or more students, so English learning becomes a lecture. In the ALC classroom, with an average of 14 students per class, the students are encouraged to discuss matters relevant to their lives, and all the textbooks used at the ALC contain activities in this framework. As far as individual projects go, although students tend to love this kind of activity, in practice during the "peak periods" of the academic year, they have little time for them.

4.3.4.5 The teachers

The ALC teaching staff was composed of 20 part-time and 12 full-time teachers. The 12 full-time teachers consisted of four Moroccans, two resident native speakers, and six visiting American teachers working on yearlong contracts. The part-timers were mainly Moroccan high school teachers who teach from 3 to 12 hours a week. A teacher who works a 12-hour week can often earn about what s/he earns in a high school job.

The teaching staff was made up both of native speakers of American and British English, as well as of experienced Moroccan teachers. All teachers held university degrees and in some cases certificates of training in Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

Some of the Moroccan teachers are faculty members at CAU and usually teach at ALC in order to supplement the low salaries they receive there.

4.3.4.6 Language and teaching methodology

Although all Moroccan high school students learn English, their proficiency level is not very high. There is a huge gap between high school English and the English taught at the university. Many who enter the university English department fail and drop out. The ones that pass and continue are very proficient in English and they can definitely communicate in English.

In general, language teaching at the ALC uses the communicative approach. Using the latest American language-teaching material, students practice the language in a meaningful context, using only English in the classroom, and work toward language goals that are within their reach. As much as possible, the lessons are student-centered. Students are evaluated based on class work and a final examination and must succeed at one level before passing on to the next.

ALC Marrakesh offers a basic program of English instruction that consists of four main cycles: Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced, and Proficiency. Each of these cycles, in turn, is made up of a number of levels, each level representing approximately 30 hours, amounting to one semester or accelerated session, of study. The different levels are Beginning I-V, Intermediate I-VI, Advanced I - VI, and Proficiency (topic-oriented

modules). At the end of each level, students must succeed in a final examination in order to continue to the next level. The center also conducts TOEFL preparation classes for students who are interested in attending AUI or a university in the U.S. In addition to the normal program, the ALC Marrakesh also offers a special program for young learners, 11-15 years old.

Computers are part of the proficiency level English class. Students are not allowed to use French or Arabic in class, only English. That way, they learn English as they learn to use the computers. They have no textbooks; the computers are their only resource for information.

School calendar: The regular program of study is three hours per week, usually in the evening. During the main quarters, students may opt for:

1. Three times a week (Monday/Wednesday/Friday, one hour per class)
2. Twice a week, (Monday/Wednesday or Tuesday/Thursday, an hour and a half per class)
3. Once a week (Friday or Saturday afternoons, three hours per class with a 15-minute mid-class break)
4. For juniors (11-15 years old), the ALC offers special daytime hours to fit their junior high school schedules, with one, two-hour class per week and a program with more activities aimed at young learners.
5. Accelerated sessions take place in the month of September, in Ramadan, and from mid-June until mid-July. These generally run 15 or 20 days, with classes either two hours or an hour and a half per day.

4.3.4.7 Cross-cultural program

For a long time the CAU and the ALC have been collaborating and working together to conduct cross-cultural programs for English-speaking foreign students. “Cross-cultures is part of what we do,” said Mr. Fitzgerald. Officially, U.S. universities would send a

group of students to be at CAU, but in reality, these students spent part of their time at ALC. The level of ALC involvement would differ from group to group.

In the long-standing program that CAU had with Duke University, the American Language Center was only slightly involved. As to the cross-cultural program with St. Olaf's University, the ALC had come to play a much larger part. Students would use the ALC facilities at cost, telephones, fax machines, the video library and so on. Additionally, one of the ALC teachers would be their main Moroccan advisor.

Another program included students from Williams College. Here again, the students came to be at CAU but, in reality, they studied at the ALC. It was part of the Experiment for International Living program. The ALC organized home stays for the students and arranged Arabic classes. The most recent cross-cultural program included students from DePaul University who came to Marrakesh.

As to a cross-cultural program using distance education, Mr. Fitzgerald said that there is already a framework for the two institutions to work together. The university is interested in the project but they do not have computers or a connection to the internet, which we have here. We also have a core group of students from the English department who has excellent English and the will to participate. We have two professors from the faculty of letters who also work here and are long-time employees. Both of them were heads of the English department at some time, and therefore, we have some cooperation with the university already. Both schools can benefit from such an exchange. (See Appendix D, p. 331.)

4.4 Summary

This chapter described higher education in Morocco at present and how it evolved to its present state. Although education in Morocco has its roots in traditional Islamic education, it was greatly influenced and transformed by a Western, French-style educational system. Moroccan higher education is now at a crossroads, influenced by existing economic, political and cultural factors. The way this educational system was

described and criticized, primarily by the Moroccan educators themselves, gave an insight into the Moroccan educational system and thus a better understanding of this study.

General descriptions of the four institutions where data collection was conducted further helped to understand higher education in Morocco and how these institutions relate to the present study.

Chapter V

THE CULTURE AND ITS HISTORY

5.1 Introduction

The history of Morocco is, to a Western reader, a fantastic story of power struggles and conquests, of lofty ideals and dynasties of sultans rising and falling, stories that can fascinate and intrigue the mind. That history might also shock the same reader with its sheer brutality and powerful imagery. The notion of *barbarism* and things that are barbaric is a term appearing in all European languages and is linked to the endogenous Amazighi tribes of Morocco which were given the name Berbers.

Who is a *barbarian*? This word comes from the ancient Greek to mean a foreigner, non-Greek, non-Roman, non-Christian, uncivilized, a member of a primitive culture (Webster, 1966). The same dictionary explains that a Berber is a Muslim from North Africa. A later edition of the same dictionary corrects itself and tells us that only some Muslims of North Africa are Berbers. This is an example of the general principle that history is a story relative to who tells that story and who listens to it. The study of history can be used to understand one's own culture and the culture of others. History can be experienced as a tool of intracultural communication. It can help members of a national culture to understand their own culture better. Looking at it from the opposite perspective, culture can also be viewed as a generator of the stuff which history is made of.

Later in this chapter, there is a discussion about how cultural differences, cross-cultural issues, and learning about cultures relate to each other and to this study. Prior to these discussions it is helpful to define the major cultural titles and labels that will be used. First, one must note that 98% of the people of Morocco share the religion of Islam and therefore are called Muslims. Berbers are members of the various indigenous tribes of Morocco and other parts of North Africa. In Morocco alone, there are four major Berber groups, each with their own language and quite distinct from each other. The Arabs is an

inclusive name for the Muslims who migrated from the Arabian peninsula, from the middle East and from other parts of the early Muslim world. The Arabs brought the religion of Islam to the Berber tribes of Morocco and to the inhabitants of Andalusia, which is now Spain. The Christian invaders of Andalusia referred to all Muslims of the Iberian peninsula as *Moors* or *Moriscos*.

Next, it is helpful to look at one snapshot from a short history of Morocco.

5.2 History

Morocco was long known in the Muslim world community as *Maghrib el Aqsa*, the land of the furthest west. It was literally considered to be on the edge of the world, a place notorious for its powerful magicians and demon-like “jinn.” It is a country with an intense, almost insular, awareness of itself. In a sense it is an island, encircled by the seas of the Atlantic, the Mediterranean and the sand-sea of the Sahara. The land is further defended by four great mountain ranges (the Rif, Middle Atlas, High Atlas and Anti-Atlas) that run like vast ramparts across its breadth, breaking up the geographical unity of the area and providing a secure mountainous refuge for the indigenous people, the Berbers, against both invaders and any central power. The Berber tribes of the mountains have remained in occupation of the land since the invention of agriculture.

Moroccan history is essentially the tale of a conservative society, which has managed to triumph against all attempts at conquest. At the same time it has happily absorbed technical and spiritual innovations from the various foreign cultures that have tried to dominate the land. The first great change was from 1,000 BC when Phoenician traders brought the achievements of settled agriculture and urban civilization to Morocco. The second was in the 8th century AD when the cavalry armies of the Muslim Caliphate brought Islam, Arabic, and the advanced culture of the Near East. Aristotle was being translated in the court of the rulers of Morocco when

Oxford was still a muddy unlettered village. Arab military rule lasted only a few decades but the spiritual and social message took deep root. All subsequent rulers of Morocco were only legitimate for as long as they championed Islam, either as reformers or as military protectors.

The third great revolution was in the twentieth century when the French, albeit for the selfish motives of a European power, implanted the scientific and medical advances of the Industrial Revolution in Morocco. Morocco's identity has been likened by King Hassan II to the desert palm: rooted in Africa, watered by Islam and rustled by the winds of Europe. (Rogerson, 1997, p. 42)

5.3 Culture and History

The historical account as told by Rogerson above delivers very simply and skillfully an important aspect of Moroccan culture. This is a strong culture burdened with selectively protecting itself from external influences, influences which, again and again throughout its history, have been imposed from the outside. The country's geography itself suggests this pattern. Cultures, like individuals, have patterns of behavior, and Morocco's culture demonstrates the pattern of protectionism from strangers. This suggests a whole spectrum of cultural behaviors on the part of its members; they range from being selective about what they choose to adopt from the outside to having strong xenophobia.

It is important to add that history only shows the diverse influences on the development of a civilization. It is limited to telling the story from the perspective of only one or only a few of those influences, so it can never provide the whole picture. In addition, the person telling the history is also subjected to diverse influences, which affect his or her telling of it. Likewise, the listeners are diversely influenced which affects how they perceive what they hear. It makes telling an objective history impossible, but knowing this can balance one's own telling of history so that it can be effectively told.

The illustration in the introductory chapter concerning how insects affected African history illustrates how history is relative to who is telling it and what is the focus of the

teller (see p. 1). In the present study, the focus is on culture, education, and technology and on how those three themes are related in Morocco. Each of these themes has its own history and its own culture. This section is titled the “Culture and its History.” It could equally well have been titled “History and its Culture.” Both constructions of words describe in their own ways flip sides of a coin. On one hand, the concept of culture can be understood as the outcome of the history of a specific group of people. Such a culture is continuously changing over time, and in many cases it also continues to subdivide itself into subcultures, leaving behind a trail of its history. On the other hand, history can be regarded as a continuous generator of cultural matter. Hence, a people's culture can be likened to the spearhead of their history. The continuous generation of sub-cultural matter is the process of regeneration and change of a people's culture as its history manifests and develops.

5.4 The Morocco — New Mexico Connection

Due to the nature of the LCTDE project, which is connecting Moroccan students and students from New Mexico, it is important to point out some existing historical and cultural connections between New Mexico and Morocco. Morocco had strong ties to Muslim Spain until the end of the 15th century. These ties influenced Spanish culture and history and were carried to the New World. Although limited research has been done on this subject, these influences can be observed in the present culture of New Mexico and thus can be demonstrated and studied. Much research and attention has recently been focused on the Jewish *conversos* and their place in the history of New Mexico. At the same time, there is not much mention of Arab, Muslim or Moorish influences brought over by the Spanish conquerors to the New World. The LCTDE project could be the vehicle for students from New Mexico and their Moroccan counterparts to investigate and research these uncharted connections.

In 1492, the armies of Ferdinand and Isabelle completed their conquest of the Iberian peninsula (Andalusia to the Moors) after more than eight hundred years of Muslim rule there. The Muslims or *Moriscos* of Andalusia, Arabs and Berbers, and entire Jewish

communities were forced to cross the Straits of Gibraltar to North Africa, to Morocco. A reign of terror administered by the Spanish Inquisition was designed to convert those who stayed, the non-Christian inhabitants of the new Spanish empire, to Catholicism. Both Jews and Muslims were given the choice of either converting to Christianity or facing a horrible death by torture. Most chose conversion rather than death. Some adopted the Christian faith only outwardly while risking their lives by practicing their religion in secret. The Inquisition and its informers were on the lookout for Jews keeping the holy Shabat and for Muslims performing the ritual washing before prayers.

It was only 50 years later following the Coronado Expedition of 1540-1542 that Spaniards started settling what is today New Mexico. New territories that had become part of the Spanish empire would have been attractive to many of the *conversos*. The New World was far away from the center of the empire where the Inquisition reigned. Whether there were Muslims or Moors among the new settlers is a mystery. If there were, this information may have been lost. What *is* known is that the Spanish brought with them Arabic names, Moorish architecture, art and technology and Islamic expressions. Names of places that begin with “Al,” like Albuquerque, Algodones, Alameda, or Alcalde, originate from Arabic. The well-known Medina family and other New Mexico family names also come from Arabic. Adobe construction, New Mexico architecture with Moorish arches, the acequia irrigation system all come from the Muslim world of Spain and North Africa. Even today New Mexicans will commonly exclaim “*hijole*,” which comes from the Arabic *insha-allah* or God-willing, and “*hola*,” for Allah or God. These kinds of correspondences could lend themselves well to a cross-cultural study by the students. They could offer familiarity and a point of departure for a learning experience at a distance.

5.5 The Space between Culture and History

The dynamic continuum of culture and history is frequently unperceived by modern science, whose tendency has been toward specialization and fragmentation. Historians, it seems, prefer to stay in their own domain and refrain from using relevant data generated in

the field of cultural studies (CS). At the same time it is rare to find CS experts and researchers pointing to history as a source of lessons learned and patterns repeated. There seems to be an abyss or a “no-man's land” between the two domains. Historical research does not begin until enough time separates an event from the present. Similarly, the cultural studies researcher might not put enough emphasis on historical analysis as a tool for understanding and solving cultural problems.

Before going further, it is important to define the term *culture* as it is used here. The word culture has different meanings to different people and in different contexts. The dictionary relates culture to cultivating. It can refer to humans cultivating the land or nature, or it can refer to people cultivating themselves, through education and through instilling morality and intellectual ideas. To many, culture relates to the arts: fine arts and their institutions, folk art in its many manifestations — music, dance, plastic arts and crafts. Culture is also related to family values and other social values, socio-economic systems and values that bind people together. Some use the term culture to refer to high-culture and low-culture as a means of classifying people and groups. The common thread in all these definitions is that culture has to do with social patterns and systems of behavior, or their manifestations, which glue segments of humanity together into defined groups.

This thesis prefers the following definition given by Marshall Singer (1987) to his Intercultural Communication class for its simplicity, generality and clarity:

Definition: *Culture* is defined as a pattern of learned, group-related, perceptions—including both verbal and nonverbal language, attitudes, values, belief systems, disbelief systems, and behaviors—that is accepted and expected by an identity group (p. 34).

(As in texts in the field of intercultural communication, the term *culture* as defined here is written with a lower-case ‘c’ [small ‘c’], while *Culture* [with a big ‘c’] is used for the arts, folklore etc.)

5.6 Cross-Cultural Domain

Today's international travel, more often than not, means air transportation, or more specifically, flying with a commercial airline. This mode of travel furnishes a helpful similitude to demonstrate some of the issues related to the international cross-cultural domain and which are relevant to our study. The journey usually begins in one's familiar airport. There the routines, language and behavior are familiar. The traveler can go through the required steps quite automatically. At the same time, airport reality is somewhat neutral. It allows separation to begin and promotes distancing from details of the life left behind. As the plane gains altitude, one can observe details disappear as larger realities appear. First the people, then the cars and the buildings become too small to distinguish. The city boundaries become apparent. Then they too disappear. Highways and rivers become one-dimensional lines as the plane flies over state borders. Then the traveler sees the shoreline where the country ends and the ocean, owned by no one, begins. The traveler is still herself, but there might be a change in her focus. As the aircraft starts its descent, the same process reverses itself as it takes the sojourner to a new and foreign reality. A new country and new views spread below. Cities, and roads leading to them, appear. Buildings take shape and moving vehicles start to materialize on the roads. As more details appear the traveler notices that it's not the same place she left several hours ago. The anxiety in the heart builds up. The airport, though still an airport, is different with strange routines and unfamiliar customs. A foreign language is heard everywhere although the customs officials try to speak in English as best they can. The arriving traveler is very aware and on guard because anything may happen at any moment. Her arrival in a different nation is, as Singer describes it, an arrival into "a culture unique to itself."

A nation is nothing more than a particular kind of group. Since every nation is made of different identity groups, and since no nation contains within its boundaries all, and only, the same groups as any other nation, and since no nation occupies exactly the same environment as any other

nation or has had exactly the same history as any other nation, every nation may be said to have a culture unique to itself. (Singer, 1987, p. 62)

The picture of air travel, just described, is useful for pointing out some important aspects in the cross-cultural domain, while still not relating specifically to Morocco. The first aspect to focus on is the relativity in one's perception of social realities. Through travel, sojourners distance themselves from their personal culture. In their culture they may feel comfortable enough not to recognize how relative their perceptions are. In the new environment they may begin to perceive that they are members of a cultural group and that their cultural group has both differences and similarities to the unfamiliar culture.

Distancing from one's cultural environments (personal, group, ethnic and so on) allows the larger national cultural realities to emerge. Physical distance by itself is usually not sufficient to bring out the awareness of one's national culture. Without encountering other cultures, it is not possible to be conscious of one's cultural identity because everyone around shares the same culture — everyone is one of "us." A contrasting other culture ("them") is necessary in order to wake up the sojourner to the relativity of national cultures. The traveler wakes up to being a stranger in a country with its own language, codes, habits, laws and so on. National affiliation may suddenly become apparent, and any fellow national, an ally.

The use of travel for cross-cultural education is obvious. Through experiencing contrasts between cultures, the student can recognize realities which are otherwise hidden. Cross-cultural communication can only take place when the communicators understand the parameters of the target culture and their own. The learner may study both cultures, the target (or local) culture and her own. The knowledge of one will help to understand the other.

Recognition of identity: Any "we" (identity group) comes into much sharper focus when juxtaposed against any "they" (a different identity group). The moment "we" are juxtaposed against some other group, we

have no choice but to become conscious of that identity. (Singer, 1987, p. 61)

5.7 Contrast cultures

From learning about the differences among cultures, a student can learn about that which is common, and precisely because there is much in common, that learning, understanding, and communicating is possible. A useful methodology for investigating specific people from a cross-cultural perspective is found in a study by Stuart and Bennett (1991) about "American Cultural Patterns." The study uses the contrast between cultures to investigate a specific national culture, in this case, American culture. The authors begin by looking into the general differences between "Western and non-Western societies" and from there, they trace general "cultural patterns of perception and thinking" of the target culture. They explore specific behavioral patterns that relate to language usage, verbal and non-verbal, and then they continue to other dominant shared cultural assumptions and values. Stuart and Bennett organize these assumptions and values "into four areas: form of activity, form of social relations, perceptions of the world, and perceptions of self and the individual" (p. xi).

A training method based on the contrast-culture model (Stewart, 1995) uses cultural differences to educate about cross-cultural communication. According to Stewart, opposing cultural differences can be celebrated by learners as educational tools to better understand their own culture which he calls "reference culture." In his "contrast-cultural training," Stewart uses a made-up contrast-culture that is role-played by an actor. In the case of Moroccan culture versus that of the U.S. similar methodology can be used. Although Moroccan culture and that of the U.S. are not complete opposites they are polarized enough to be useful. Students in both countries can use their peers in the other culture as representatives of a contrasting culture to help them understand and describe their own reference culture.

5.8 A Snapshot of Moroccan Culture

It is not within the scope of this thesis to investigate and analyze the culture of Morocco or to discuss the numerous cultural issues that would be relevant when Americans and Moroccans meet. Such an attempt will not do justice to a topic deserving its own in-depth study. A possible function of the LCTDE project could be to initiate such a cross-cultural meeting. One of the by-products of designing and implementing the LCTDE project might very well be to provide data needed for such a study. It might even initiate such future study and research.

At the same time, there exists, within this study, a need to point out and understand, in general terms, some characteristics of Moroccan culture. Some specific cultural patterns, behaviors and perceptions must at least be highlighted and possibly be compared, explained and demonstrated. The purpose of the following cultural taxonomy (also see section 3.5.6) is at least twofold. First, additional insight can be gained as to why Morocco is a country of choice for the LCTDE project. Secondly, by better understanding Moroccan culture and how things are done in that country, one can better understand how this information guided research methodology. This information is also needed in order to correctly validate and analyze some of the results that were obtained.

That said, let us briefly look at an inventory of key features of Moroccan culture, some of which are also mentioned elsewhere in this work. It is important to remember that the following topics, the way that they are presented and categorized, come from the point of view of a lay Western observer. The information I present here, as well as what is not presented but should have been presented, may well be tarnished by my own hidden cultural and personal biases. The first thing that any outsider needs to understand about cultural differences, in spite of any cultural judgments that may arise, is that Moroccan culture works. It is a living and a functioning system that has served and protected the Moroccan nation and its people for over a millennium.

The following list contains some useful generalizations characterizing Moroccan culture, despite the problems inherent in making such generalizations. Individual

Moroccans may or may not adhere to some or all of these characteristics; one must always be careful of stereotyping.

1. Moroccan culture is a non-Western culture, most closely related to the Arab World. It is a Muslim monarchy where the king is also the country's religious leader. Ninety-eight percent of the population belongs to the Muslim faith and identify themselves not only as Muslims, but more specifically, as Sunni Muslims adhering to the Maliki school of Islamic law. In Morocco, "religious homogeneity is almost complete" says Ernest Gellner (1972). This is in contrast to most Middle Eastern countries, where there is greater diversity in the way Islam is practiced (p. 11).
2. Also according to Gellner: "Linguistic diversity" in Morocco "is limited to two groups of dialects — Arab and Berber" (p. 11). Darija, the Moroccan Arabic dialect, is peculiar to the Moroccan people and is difficult to understand, even by people from other Arab speaking countries. It is the language of the street, an exclusively spoken, not written, language. The formal written language throughout Morocco, for those who can read, is Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), a language shared with the entire Arab World. MSA is taught in schools and is used for speeches, newspapers, radio and television news. The older basis of MSA, classical Arabic (an ancient language, the language of the Qur'an) is used primarily in the religion and for reading classical texts. There are also three Berber dialects used in three different regions of the country. The inhabitants of the Sahara desert use Hassaniy Arabic, a higher form of darija, closer to MSA. Both darija and the Berber dialects are spoken languages only and "are not mutually comprehensible" (Hart, 1972, p. 25). The third language group used in Morocco is French, and with it comes the cultural programming that was introduced into Morocco at the time of French colonial rule. Spanish and Portuguese are also used as second languages in areas of Morocco that were colonized by those countries. Most educated Moroccans are at least bilingual and many have mastery in three, four or more languages.
3. Moroccan culture is mostly an oral culture (See Appendix D, p. 345). People do not

keep journals, they do not write to each other much and they do not go shopping with shopping lists. People may not take notes and instead rely on memorization.

Illiteracy is high in Morocco, especially among the rural population and women.

When Moroccans do write it is done in a very intentional, stylized and eloquent manner and the written document is taken very seriously.

4. Unlike American culture, Morocco can be classified as a collectivist society with strong social connectedness between its members. It is a *high context* culture whose members share a high level of common programming and common understanding (Hall, 1976, p. 91). They therefore need to transmit a minimal amount of information, compared to Americans, in order to get a message across to other members of the society.
5. Moroccan society is highly traditional, with its members observing and maintaining its many cultural traditions. There is not much leeway or freedom about how things are done. One can observe this in the way Moroccans greet each other. Greeting is a formalized lengthy procedure revolving around the phrase *la-bas* (literally meaning no harm, but in usage, roughly equivalent to *all right*,) which is uttered many times. The length and content of the greeting depends on how closely related, by kinship or friendship, the greeters are. Other examples are traditional Moroccan wedding celebrations including ritual gifts of milk and traditional gift-giving-protocols such as giving gifts of sugar cones. Among the many other similar examples where one can see strong embedded traditions are the varieties of dishes Moroccans cook, the formalities of eating and tea drinking, and also in the tradition of gathering in *hamams*, which are the Moroccan bath houses.
6. Members of the society are expected not to step out of line and to carry on the traditions. Stoicism or carrying one's burdens without complaint is expected and reinforced. Acceptance of one's own life situation is almost unquestioned, although this does not necessarily mean stagnation into a certain situation. Through education and self-perfecting one can advance. One tries one's hardest at any given task, but if

one is not successful, it was not written for one (no shame in failure). If one succeeds, then all praise belong to God and one is joyous that a beneficial thing was written for one. The concept of shame (or *hushuma* in Moroccan Arabic, where the *h* has an aspirated sound) is a strong instrument for keeping members of the society from going outside the norms. From a young age, Moroccans are programmed about what constitutes *hushuma* and how to stay away from it and how not to inflict it on others.

7. It seems that the long history of often-brutal power struggles and the forceful methods used by various ruling dynasties to maintain their power created the existing, rigidly structured, hierarchical system in Morocco. It is a system based on relationships of patronage and protection. Moroccans in general have a strong respect for authority and for the hierarchical structure by which power is handed down. They are likely to be concerned with “what will the higher-ups approve of?” A powerful, small ruling elite, close to the ruler was always a political reality in Morocco. Clearly defined personal status is important for identifying one’s rank in the hierarchy. To a Westerner it might seem that Moroccans like to boast about themselves, including their credentials, titles, expressions of wealth and power, and social connections, but in the Moroccan social context, it seems both necessary and natural. Additionally, the “grease” that lubricates the machinery of the social hierarchy is a complicated but well-understood system of obligations, duties and favors, although, these beliefs and practices are just beginning to be challenged by a younger generation interested in a government based in meritocracy.
8. The chain of hierarchical command initiated from the top of the power structure downwards is strongly maintained and adhered to. It follows that strong tribal and family loyalties are important, and people will adhere to those in power in order to legitimize themselves. This pyramid of power is found in the family, in the work place, in the government bureaucracy and on the street. In order to get things done one needs to find a connection as high up in the chain of command as possible.
9. Consequently, relationships of trust and mistrust in Moroccan society are deeply

rooted. Codes of whom to associate with and to what extent are important. Trust is mostly given to family connections, tribal and local relationships and to closely guarded friendships. Polite mistrust among Moroccans seems instinctive until more trust can be established. Information about who one's family and friends are is important and is given freely and as soon as possible. This information will include whom one knows and to what people in important positions he or she is related — sometimes in an exaggerated way.

10. The distrust and fear of strangers, or xenophobia, taken to the extreme, will be directed to non-Moroccans in general, but even more to people from the non-Muslim world who do not speak Arabic (*Ajami*). Due to the continuing attempts of European powers to influence and control Morocco since the beginning of the nineteenth century and which culminated with the imposition of French rule in 1904, much of the mistrust and xenophobia is directed to the French, to other Europeans and to the West (and in this order). Paradoxically, in some cases, Moroccans and their organizations might prefer to put their trust in foreigners and in foreign bodies, rather than ally themselves with mistrusted elements within Morocco. Historically, for Moroccans (or non-Moroccans) to travel to other locales in the country, they needed to have a local protector in advance. Even today, to overcome mistrust and to make contact, one may need a locally known and trusted ally.
11. The case of French colonialism is an extreme example of external cultural influence. French rule lasted 52 years and ended in 1956 after 10 years of Moroccan popular resistance. During those 52 years the French intentionally introduced their culture into Morocco in order to be able to rule as superiors. This had enduring effects on Moroccan culture and on the Moroccan psyche. It created a cultural love-hate relationship that can be observed particularly in large urban centers. On the one hand, there is mistrust of the French and laws have been designed to limit their influence in Morocco. On the other hand, one can find French culture in Moroccan higher education, in the realm of business, in the way the government conducts itself, just to

name a few examples. The Moroccan bureaucracy that permeates everything is fashioned after the French system but tailored for Morocco. When Westernized Moroccans refer to high culture and low culture, French influenced culture is the high culture, the culture of the Moroccan elite.

12. What to a Western mind might be seen as superstition may have real meaning to many Moroccans. Beliefs common to traditional societies such as magic and magicians, the *baraka* (blessings) acquired by visiting tombs of saints, casting the evil eye and so on persist in Morocco among even the most Western educated people. Westerners may be surprised by what they perceive as widespread belief in superstitions. Such beliefs, some of which may be rejected by Islam but have roots in pre-Islamic Berber practices, are nevertheless a living part of the Moroccan culture.
13. Westerners are often confused, and sometimes dismayed, by what they may perceive or interpret to be questionable ethics among Moroccans. What they may not perceive is a complicated hierarchy and a complex mixture of ethics based on (among others) Islamic principles, family and political hierarchies, the concept of *hushuma*, and a blunt pragmatism that has enabled Moroccans to endure and survive.

Getting to know "their" perceptions: If we want to communicate effectively with one of "them" it is important to get to know their perceptions, attitudes, and values, as well as their cultural language. The more like them we become the easier communications with "them" will become. (Singer, 1987, p. 61)

5.9 Cultural Studies

To return to the analogy of an aircraft landing, as it descends, more details come into view. As one continues to descend into a foreign culture and gets to know the new environment better, sub-cultures and other ethnic, religious and political groups come into focus. Some of these groups may be more familiar and resonate with the sojourner's former experience, while other factions may be strange, remote and even offensive. In either case, it is an

opportunity to study the local cultures — an opportunity that may also shed new understandings on cultural studies at home.

Cultural diversity within a country, its sub-cultures, ethnic and religious groups, social and economic groups, are the vistas of *cultural studies*. It is not possible to delve into the realm of cultural studies without touching on issues of a country's politics and power structures. The political arena in each country and how its people relate to power issues differ from nation to nation. Even when dealing with similar issues in different countries, those issues would not be the same because different cultural filters exist in each place. It is not within the scope of this paper to expound on cultural studies in Morocco, but at the same time, it is useful to take a glimpse into that subject.

The quickest way for a traveler to get acquainted with the different cultural groups in Morocco and their voices is to stop at a newsstand and visit some bookstores. However, some knowledge of French or Arabic or the help of a friendly English speaking Moroccan is needed to be able to read about the local cultural picture. Cultural discourse in Morocco is characterized by a great diversity of topics, states Dr. Moudden (1996) in a presentation entitled "Cultural Struggles in Morocco." "Themes varying from fundamentalism, secularism, patriarchy, feminism, Amazighism, nationalism, imperialism, democracy, and Marxism are debated, challenged, criticized, and passionately defended or attacked" (p. 135). These agendas have been in the public eye for several decades but presently there are three dominant themes that characterize the Moroccan reality: religious, ethnic and social. They are religious fundamentalism, Amazighism (Berber cultural movement, comparable to the Native American movement), and feminism. These themes have replaced the former discourses of nationalism and Marxism.

Amazighism is challenging the definition of national culture and is asserting the Amazighi language as central to Moroccan identity. The fundamentalists are contesting the foundation of the political legitimacy of both the state and the existing political parties and their secular political discourse. Feminism on the other hand is challenging the unequal gender

division of power. The main cultural tasks center around political legitimacy, family and language, and the target spaces are the state, the household and schools. (Moudden, 1996, p. 135)

“This pluralism [of identities] is to a large extent the cultural outcome of the significant changes that Moroccan society has witnessed since independence” says Moudden. It relates to a sharp rise in the number of educated Moroccans, both men and women, and their concentration in urban areas. This has resulted in active opposition to any demands for change, both from the government and from the Moroccan social mainstream. Leaders have been jailed or put under house arrests, books and publications have been censored, and general public criticism has been generated. Nevertheless, cultural pluralism has been tolerated in Morocco in an unofficial way and this tendency is growing. “The ability of the (Moroccan) state to gradually establish an uncontested political legitimacy has allowed it to tolerate greater freedom of expression than countries undergoing legitimacy crises.” The government together with its “conservatism and opposition to change,” concludes Moudden, is “relatively responsive to Amazighi, Islamist and women’s issues.” (p. 144)

In 1995, the Department of Letters at Rabat’s Mohamed V University held a conference titled “Cultural studies, Interdisciplinarity, and the University” (Dahbi, Ezroua, & Haddad, 1996). It was an attempt on the part of the department and its faculty to introduce and promote the subject of cultural studies (CS) into Moroccan academic programs. The subject of cultural studies, as referred to here, deals with cultural diversity issues within Morocco and international diversity issues within global realities. It is important to understand that CS itself will assume different meanings and emphases in relation to the culture in which it is taught. Introducing CS, with all its political connotations, into Moroccan university classrooms is new and possibly controversial. Traditionally “the space for cultural criticism, Moroccan type,” says Dr. Lahcen Haddad (1996), professor of cultural studies at MVU, “is not the classroom. It is the newspaper’s weekly cultural supplement, the cine-club, the cultural association and most

importantly, the cafés that constitute the space where the critical potential of culture is tested, debated and challenged” (p. 23).

According to Haddad, an important reason to introduce CS into the curriculum in a third-world country like Morocco is for empowerment and representation in a dialogue. It is precisely because CS deals with topics such as “colonialism and post coloniality, with minorities, with the historically disenfranchised and with the question of migration” that it is relevant and attractive to the Third World (p. 20). Furthermore, Haddad emphasizes that if CS is to be taught in the university, for it to be an effective cultural criticism it cannot be disconnected from or in discord with the state or with the socio-cultural norms of Morocco. It cannot come to a place where debate is replaced with violent and unchecked reaction.

5.10 Summary

This chapter pointed to the cultural perspective of the thesis and to the related history of Morocco. Culture and history can be seen as two entities that generate one another and go hand in hand. Due to the nature of the present study, some interesting existing historical and cultural connections between New Mexico and Morocco were discussed. Then, by using the analogy of international air travel, the importance of cross-cultural communication and the possibility of learning about one’s own culture through travel were addressed. Cultural differences and contrasting cultures can be used as educational tools in the field of cross-cultural communication. Students in both Morocco and in the U.S. may find benefit in learning together about their own respective cultures as well as that of their peers. An attempt was made to give a “snapshot” of Moroccan culture that relates to the research that was conducted in Morocco. The chapter ends with a brief report about cultural diversity in Morocco with some reference to cultural studies (CS) that take place at Moroccan universities.

Chapter VI

AMERICAN STUDIES

6.1 Introduction

"American Studies" (Dahbi, Tahri, & Miller, 1992) is the first of three useful collections in English published by the Faculty of Letters of MVU in Rabat. The other two are "Cultural Studies, Interdisciplinarity, and the University" (Dahbi, Ezroua, & Haddad, 1996) and "The Idea of the University" (Belghazi, 1997a) (see chapter IV). The only place I was able to obtain the first two of these books was the little book store in the lobby of the Faculty of Letters in Rabat, while the third was sent to me as a gift by Dr. Lahcen Haddad a year later. This three-book collection is full of useful insights, particularly into the English departments of the Moroccan public university system and into Moroccan higher education as a whole. In them were the voices, in academic settings, of some of the faculty whom I had the pleasure of meeting and of many whom I met through their written presentations.

These three books are, in fact, collections of papers presented at three separate conferences, especially edited for print. The conferences, carrying the same titles as these book collections themselves, were held by the Faculty of Letters in Rabat. The majority of presenters at these conferences were by Moroccans. Guests from the U.S., Britain and elsewhere also presented papers.

6.2 American Studies

American Studies, as part of the curriculum in Moroccan English departments, is a new direction, the editors Dahbi et al. (1992) tell us. The field of American Studies, introduced in European universities in the late fifties, is only now, in the nineties (as Dahbi et al. were writing in 1992), making its way into English departments and into other departments in Moroccan universities. "North African universities," according to Dahbi et al., "have traditionally looked to their European partners for models to emulate" (p.

10). American Studies is not offered as a degree course but is integrated into other related programs.

6.3 The Conference

The Second Conference on American Studies in North African Universities was held in Rabat in 1991. The content of its proceedings suggested recognition of the need to introduce Moroccan students to American culture and to cultural studies in general. The first recommendation of the conference was to form "a curriculum committee in Morocco to introduce a culture studies option in the departments of English". It was recognized "that Anglo-American Culture must serve as a context for the teaching of English as a foreign language" (Dahbi et al., p. 12).

The following review of selected topics from conference proceedings may help the reader to better understand the Faculty of Letters in Moroccan universities and the students of the departments of English. This will provide insight into some of the problems raised by the English teachers and the solutions that they offered. It will demonstrate how culture, and the integration of cultural studies into the English curriculum, is viewed. One may also learn by what is absent from those presentations.

6.4 Culture and Language

"Anglo-American culture must serve as a context for the teaching of English as a foreign language" state Dahbi et al. Their first section in the book is dedicated to the relationship between culture and language and how studies of American culture can be integrated into the English curriculum. As language teachers, they of course acknowledge the importance of teaching about the target culture as part of the foreign language acquisition process, but one can sense that there is more to it than that. They titled the section "Culture and Language." Culture being the first noun in the title indicates an emphasis on Cultural Studies, and in this case, American culture. The English departments in Moroccan universities are more than language schools or schools to teach English literature. Their aim is to prepare students to be communicators with English-speaking cultures. After

years of preferring the French language and culture as the means to communicate with the outside world, the balance is starting to shift. There is a sense of urgency in Morocco to also acknowledge that which is American.

Most language teachers regard teaching about the target culture as a support to language acquisition. For them, cultural studies are seen as part of language studies. For intercultural communicators, however, language is an aspect of the culture. "Every culture has its own language or code, to be sure, but language is the manifestation—verbal or otherwise—of the perceptions, attitudes, values, beliefs, and disbelief systems that the group holds. . . . Language is merely one of the ways in which groups maintain and reinforce similarity of perception" (Singer, 1987, p. 5). The facts that this major conference about American Studies took place, that it was offered by the faculty of Letters in Rabat, and that its two leading subjects were "Culture and Language" and "Cross-Cultural Perspectives in American Studies," all speak for themselves. They indicate an intention and an interest by the English departments in Morocco's universities to shift toward studying what they call American culture. By looking into the material presented in this publication, one can get some idea of what they had in mind.

6.5 American and British English

It is not surprising that the first topic addressed in the book is "On the Differences between American and British English." To emphasize this distinction is a way to focus on culture. In this presentation, Moha Ennaji (1992) explains some of the relationships between the two branches of the English language. It used to be that Americans were influenced by the 'old country' in its language and its literature, but "Nowadays" says Ennaji, "British English may be drifting toward American English due to mass media -- especially television and cinema."

This is, in fact, the same American mass media that so much influences Moroccan students as well as their teachers. British influence on Moroccan history was felt only around the middle of the last century and was short lived, and perceived as insignificant and disappointing to the Moroccan sultan, Abder-Rahman, who was trying to keep the

European powers at bay. The famous Moroccan tea (green Chinese tea with mint and sugar) was introduced by British merchants at that time, together with the distinctive Moroccan teapot. Today however, the influence of American culture, not British, is felt everywhere in the Moroccan streets. Baseball caps, American tee shirts, blue jeans and distinctive looking sneakers are seen everywhere. Movie theaters carry the less sophisticated American films, usually dubbed in French. Satellite dishes, which are everywhere, are a door to American-style entertainment and commercialism. Many young Moroccans are quite sure that they know American culture and what it is all about.

The majority of English teachers in Moroccan public universities are Moroccans, "non-native speakers of English who have academic background" says Ennaji (1992, p. 25). Many of them were trained in the same English departments where they now teach. They usually speak English in a very distinctive Moroccan style and accent at varying levels of eloquence, and it is easy to detect either British or American influence in the way they speak. "The majority of these teachers (especially those working at the newly created departments of English) have spent [a] few months in Britain or the U.S., but others have studied in these countries for periods varying from a year to five or more, after graduating from a Moroccan university" (p. 25). England is physically closer to Morocco and therefore more faculty members traditionally go there, but many nowadays are also educated in America.

As far as the English program is concerned, both spoken and written English are taught in all the English departments, particularly in the first two years of the university. American and British civilizations are taught in the second year only. In the third year and fourth year, there is more emphasis on advanced composition, modern texts, literature and linguistics. Unlike high schools [and here he means private schools of higher education] and technical institutes, where English is taught as an international language, for utilitarian purposes, in the university English departments there is a stress on cultural and literary aspects of English. In

other words, literature, civilization and culture are important components of the EFL program at the university. For this reason, I believe that English students have the right to be exposed to both American and British English so as to be able to use either one of them consistently, and for the sake of their knowledge as students of the English language and literature. . . . Linguistically, because there are not many American native speakers of English in this country and very few American teachers work at English departments, we must rely on developing students' receptive skills by introducing the American pronunciation in our listening comprehension and spoken English classes. Good use must be made of tapes, cassettes and video films in order to develop students' awareness of this variety along with British English. (Ennaji, 1992, p. 26)

By being able to distinguish between the different varieties of the language, says Dr. Ennaji, students will be able to be more consistent in using only one form of English. He warns that due to diverse influences on students by the media as well as by conversing with a variety of English speakers, there is the danger that students "may end up speaking [or composing] a weird or odd language acceptable neither to the British nor to the American English speakers." If students can master American English then they "will also [better] facilitate understanding and communication with American native speakers, visitors and scholars."

In his conclusion Ennaji adds that "all this is hard to achieve unless exchange programs between Morocco and the USA are multiplied so that both teachers and students can exchange visits, and unless we invite American English native speakers to teach in English departments" (p. 26).

6.6 Formal and Deep Culture

By making the distinction between "formal" and "deep" culture, Mohamed Ouakrime (Ouakrime, 1992), an English professor from the University of Fes, presents his vision of

how to teach cultural studies in a more meaningful and deep way. A quote by W.M. Rivers points to his position: "Learning about the target culture is meant to be . . . a liberating experience in that students are encouraged to develop tolerance of other viewpoints and other forms of behavior while understanding better those of their own society or culture group" (p. 45).

According to Ouakrime, the existing cultural courses in the English departments' curricula, such as "American Civilization," "American Life and Institutions," and others are taught from a *formal culture* point of view where the students perceive their studies "as a body of knowledge which must be memorized for assessment purposes." They study many facts about the American (and British) cultures and civilizations which are only the foundation for the deeper aspects of the culture. The deep culture approach, on the other hand, "will aim at identifying cultural characteristics which are inherent in the behavior of members of the community" (p. 39).

The cultural course proposed by Ouakrime as part of the EFL (English as a foreign language) program is designed to promote understanding and tolerance of the target culture. It is based in knowledge of cross-cultural education in general, as well as knowledge about both American and Moroccan cultures. Ideas such as: "relativism of culture," "differences and similarities existing between cultures," "intended meanings," the use of cultural studies "to value one's own culture," and the developing of cross-cultural communication skills are the building blocks and the potential benefits of this program. Ouakrime proposes some possible design approaches and techniques that are used in similar course designs elsewhere (pp. 40-42).

6.7 Cross-Cultural Communications

Effective teachers who know their own culture as well as the target culture and who are trained in the cross-cultural field are essential for teaching a course such as proposed by Ouakrime. He calls "for teachers, (particularly non-native ones), to acquire a well-informed insight into the target culture so that they can act as cross-cultural interpreters"

for their students. They need to be aware of the risks that a prejudiced approach may cause . . . and to anticipate the reactions and prejudices of their students" (pp. 54-55).

The LCTDE program, or a course similar to it, could be implemented into the English department's curriculum as an answer to the need presented here. A cross-cultural program that will include both, Moroccan and American students and Moroccan and American teachers, learning and teaching together, would be a way to solve problems addressed in the conference. If the language used in such a program were English, it would expose Moroccan students to American English while allowing American students, who are generally mono-lingual, to engage in cross-cultural studies.

6.8 Teacher's Concerns

Indeed, all over the world we find English taking many forms (some quite remote from of the Queen's English) that are used by specific cultural groups and reflect those cultures. In Morocco, however, English is not any of the ordinal languages, but is rather a foreign language. The Moroccan students' aim is to use English as a foreign language to communicate with members of other cultures and to understand their literature. Teachers' concerns about how their students' language skills would be perceived by native English speakers are relevant. Authentic pronunciation, correct grammatical use of the language, and cultural manifestations are topics of concern to the teachers. The Moroccans, as part of the general Arabic culture, are extremely eloquent and put great importance on the way they express themselves orally and in writing. It is not a coincidence that for the Arabs, their culture is named after their language. (The name Arab does not imply an ethnic origin, a religion or belonging to a certain locale, but rather those whose language is Arabic). This cultural characteristic gives even more emphasis to the above-mentioned concerns of the teachers. Dr. Ennaji's concerns were about students mixing English from different cultural sources (i.e. American and British). The next presenter in this collection addresses a similar concern but from a different point of view.

6.9 Moroccan Content, English Medium

“Moroccan Content, English Medium” is the title of the first article in the cross-cultural section of the collection. (The section is titled “Cross-Cultural perspectives in American Studies.”) Abdelali Bentahila (1992), an English professor from Fes, takes "a look at some correspondence" of his Moroccan students in order to show how Moroccan cultural patterns are reflected in the way students use English. In his short presentation, Bentahila uses recurring patterns in the way Moroccan students communicate with other Moroccans in order to demonstrate how the local culture is unconsciously translated, by the students, into English. Even in cases where the students have a strong command of English and where grammatically and structurally their language is sound, the expressed output sounds Moroccan to him. Bentahila's concern as an English teacher is that if students write in this way "to non-Moroccan individuals or institutions, they would often make a very bad impression, with sincerely-meant remarks being judged ludicrous or irritating. Such correspondence might thus contribute to the formation of rather negative stereotypes of Moroccans as being prone to needless exaggeration, flattery and self-praise" (pp. 61-65).

What I would like to consider here are the many cases where, although the message is expressed in correct and even sophisticated English, parts of it, nevertheless, seem quite un-English. All the examples I will cite have been read by native speakers of English, whose reaction to them ranged from hilarious laughter to considerable annoyance. As a member of the Moroccan community, I am able to recognize in these letters strategies of communication, selection and organization which are certainly part of Moroccan culture; many of the remarks which sound incongruous in English might pass as quite normal in Arabic discourse, and some indeed might seem unexceptional if phrased in French. It is the incorporating of such strategies into what seems to be a piece of English discourse which is so often disconcerting. (Bentahila, 1992 p. 62)

For the present discussion, let us not look into Bentahila's specific examples, but rather try understand his process. In order to arrive at his conclusion, the writer had to be able to recognize and distinguish between what is Moroccan and what belongs to the target culture. As reported above, Bentahila was able to do so by presenting the material to people whose native tongue is English. From their input (members of a contrasting culture) some cultural realities which were foreign to English speakers unveiled themselves. This is a process of self-discovery about one's own culture, which could be revealing and transformative as well as helpful in communicating with members of other cultures. For a teacher to transmit this kind of knowledge to the students requires specific skills in cross-cultural communications. For students to be open to receive the needed cross-cultural material, they must be ready with open minds to allow transformation to take place. Bennett's (1993) developmental model of intercultural sensitivity can be used to evaluate the stage of sensitivity of both the students and the teachers in order to facilitate an effective cross-cultural experience.

Eirlys Davies (1992), also from Fes, has thoughts in a similar vein to those of Bentahila. His article is titled "Routines and Realities: Some Sources of Misunderstanding in Cross-Cultural Communication." It deals with the problem of "fixed formulas" and "routine expressions." These formulas and expressions are used to transmit and carry messages with understood cultural meanings that are different from their explicit verbal information. "In particular," says Davies, "I am thinking of the routine of expressions which function as politeness markers and are conventionally used for such purposes as greetings, leave-taking, thanking, congratulating and so on." Here, again, I will not deal with specific examples but rather point to the major concern of the writer.

I would merely like to emphasize how many potential differences there are between the patterns of using politeness formulas in two communities. I think it is well worthwhile trying to draw some comparisons...in an attempt to avoid the unfortunate stereotyping that may arise if the intent behind the use or abuse of formulas is not recognized. (p. 75)

Here again we observe concern about how the Moroccan students will be perceived (when communicating) by the native English speakers, when they do not have a sufficient command of the target cultural code.

6.10 Cross-cultural program

Having in the same classroom members of two contrasting cultures may facilitate transformation of students' natural ethnocentrism by means of cross-cultural education. Both Moroccan and American students whose interest is to learn cross-cultural communication together, and who are mentally and emotionally prepared to be present for each other, could collaborate as equals with mutual respect. If English is chosen to be the language of the exchange, then American students can give Moroccans input about those concerns raised by Bentahila earlier on, while learning about the other students' culture as well as their own. The Moroccan students, who are likely to be bilingual or even tri-lingual and at the same time are able to use English as a foreign language, might be able to give the mostly mono-lingual Americans an insight into the multi-lingual, multi-cultural experience. It is important for teachers on both sides to be in touch with their own cultures as well as to be at an appropriate level of intercultural sensitivity to accommodate their students. According to Bennett (1993), it is sufficient for the cross-cultural facilitator to operate one stage (in the Bennett developmental model) beyond the stage which the training is meant to achieve. The type of cross-cultural program suggested here could be achieved through travel or by using distance education as in the LCTDE program.

6.11 Culture and Language

Every culture has its own language or code, to be sure, but language is the manifestation - verbal or otherwise - of the perceptions, attitudes, values, beliefs and disbelief systems that the group holds. Language, once established, further constrains the individual to perceive in certain ways,

but I would argue that language is merely one of the ways in which groups maintain and reinforce similarity of perception. (Singer, 1987, p. 5)

Armed with the understanding that people whose cultures and languages are different might actually have different perceptions of the same reality and, at the same time, possess the desire to investigate these differences in order to communicate better, students can embark on a journey of self discovery. The LCTDE project does not include teaching Arabic to the American students simply because it's a huge undertaking. Nevertheless, it could be useful for teachers and students to look into some of the research literature that linguistically contrasts and compares Arabic and English suggests Dr. Driss Ouaoicha (1992). In his article "Contrastive Rhetoric Assumptions and Fallacies: the Case of Arabic and English," he brings to the reader's attention some of the Contrastive Analysis research that was done concerning the two languages. American and Moroccan students can actually discuss and try to verify for themselves some of the theories and conclusions found in the research literature.

6.12 Cross-Cultural Approach to ELT&L in Morocco

According to Fatima Sadiqi (1992) from the University of Fez, Moroccan students of English must first be in touch with their own culture through the languages that are used in Morocco. Sadiqi suggests to have the students listen to the different languages (used in Morocco) and to be "able to identify one language from the other" (p. 88). Each language has its own voice and melody carrying specific qualities and characteristics that can be identified. If aided by videotapes, then the visuals of the silent body language can also be identified.

Dr. Sadiqi titles her article "A Cross-Cultural Approach to the Teaching and Learning of English in Moroccan Universities," where she summarizes reasons for adopting the cross-cultural approach and how to implement it. The first reason to use such an approach is to acknowledge the fact that the students' culture is different from that of the target language. "Language is never culturally-neutral" but rather "perhaps the most

perfect reflection of culture." Moroccan students, whatever language they use and whether they communicate internationally or with other Moroccans, are still based in their own culture. A great responsibility of the teacher "is to balance students' attitudes towards their own culture as well as towards the target culture." They should be able to appreciate both cultures. "The English of our students inevitably mirrors theirs as well as the target culture given that learning the target language is inherently learning the target culture" (p. 83).

In order to learn another language, the student must learn the culture of that language, but this does not mean that the student must travel to the target culture. In fact, says Sadiqi, travel can put the student at a disadvantage where the need to learn the language comes from the need to communicate on the everyday level of existence. "Preparing our students for a genuine cross-cultural communication involves making them consciously aware of their own culture and also more aware of the target culture." One can expect, adds Sadiqi, that those students who chose to study English would "have a positive attitude towards the target culture" (p.84), a necessary condition for cross-cultural studies.

"Complete understanding between native and non-native users of English will never be achieved," says Sadiqi. "However," she continues, "it is our responsibility to develop tolerance for misunderstanding and a tolerance for others' culture idiosyncrasies" (p. 89).

The third reason, according to Sadiqi, for taking the cross-cultural approach is that, due to fast changing communication technology, Moroccan culture itself is rapidly changing, cultural barriers are breaking down and the (American) target culture is becoming "an emerging universal culture." Rather than trying to stop this process by isolation (from American culture), which will be futile anyway, the need is "to prepare the students to accommodate themselves in this universal culture and break down all dimensions of inferiority" (p. 84). It is interesting that the writer is substituting, unannounced, American culture for this universal culture (and maybe this is what indeed is actually happening?). Furthermore she says, "Our students need to be sensitized to the fact that a

positive attitude towards the target culture does not by any means diminish the value of their own culture or their self-image" (p. 85).

At the same time as this universal culture emerges, English, its language, also becomes universal. Instead of using the terms ESL and EFL, researchers now talk about using English for "inter" vs. "intra" national purposes. English is becoming less and less associated with a specific country or area in the world. Many varieties of English are nowadays being used for cross-cultural communications" to create a unique "type of English characterized by specific rules of discourse. . . . In fact, given that through the medium of English people come into contact with variety of cultures, it is no longer possible to lay emphasis on the culture of the English-speaking world as was the custom in the past. (Sadiqi, 1992, p. 85)

Dr. Sadiqi goes on to suggest the steps needed in order to implement cross-cultural programs in Moroccan universities. The first step is to assess needs and to select levels of cross-cultural communication that will work best for the students and the teachers. The courses should also include inter-cultural communication material about cultural differences within Morocco. Next, this cross-cultural approach must be incorporated into the university curriculum. Sadiqi proposes drastic changes in the way the curriculum of the English Department is designed. "It is not enough to expose the target culture to our students; a full understanding of both the target culture and the native cultures, together with constructive comparisons, are sorely needed." The students should understand the ways the target culture is transmitted, preserved, and disrupted in comparison with the same elements in the Moroccan culture. In her own way, Sadiqi points out the culture of the university itself and how its curricula are produced. "What we need in our universities" she says, "is a multi-cultural curriculum, established in the spirit of partnership" (p. 87).

What was missing in Sadiqi's work is any mention of training the teachers themselves. Appropriate training is necessary for the teachers to become effective facilitators of cross-cultural communication. Theory must be balanced with practice. In general, Moroccan universities are much more oriented towards the theoretical. The process of cross-cultural education can be psychologically and emotionally intense. It basically is a transformative process, which possesses certain risks to the student, says Michael Paige (1993). The teacher is to guide the students on a journey to face the hidden aspects of their own culture, to look into cultural differences, to deal with ethnocentrism. The teacher should be given the tools to do this job and to have clear insight into the needs and possibilities of the students both to benefit them and to minimize risks.

6.13 American Pragmatism

In Moroccan universities one finds strong emphasis on theory and theoretical learning while lab work and the “how get things done” in practice is less developed. Throughout my visits and observations in Moroccan educational institutions and in my meetings there, I found a very strong, theoretically based educational structure. This was true in both the science and engineering fields as well as in humanities and social sciences. We can perceive this trend in this present collection of articles about American Studies. This trend could be based in the culture of higher education in Morocco (influenced by the French system) or it could be inherent in the Moroccan culture itself. It might also stem from the lack of resources and funding in the Moroccan educational system. While all these questions can be addressed by future research, this reality stands in strong contrast to American culture and its academic culture. "It is said that while England ruled the seas, Germany ruled the clouds with its rich history of philosophical thinkers. By the same analogy, America ruled the ground" (Saïd, 1992, p. 180).

It is interesting to note from a cross-cultural perspective that the scholar presenting a paper about American Pragmatism to the conference, where the majority of the audience were educators based in a primarily Arab culture, is an Arab from an American university. Abdel Aziz Saïd, Professor of Political Science at the American University in Washington

D.C. truly represents both cultures, Arab and American, and the integration between them.

It might be that Saïd's (1992) insight into both cultures prompted him to choose the topic of American Pragmatism to balance the strong theoretical tendencies that we find in the Moroccan academic culture. Here he is giving his audience a pointer as to what is needed to implement change. "Taking pride in the fact that their feet were always on the ground, . . . Americans have traditionally placed applied science above abstract philosophical speculation" (p. 180). After many examples of American thought and American policy through history, Saïd's concluding remarks are, "Pragmatism emphasizes rationality over ideology." "Rationality stresses moderation before extremism." And "pragmatism has no concrete agenda, but simply what works" (p. 182).

6.14 What Works - the Media

One of the things that obviously work (sometimes) is technology. If you ask any Moroccan what American culture is, they will obviously have an answer, (unlike Americans who probably won't even know where to find Morocco on the globe or even how to spell it). Through the mass media, primarily through its images and sounds, people everywhere get a picture of what American culture is (including Americans themselves perhaps). Moroccans don't have to go to a university to "know" what American culture is. They see it and they hear it on the television and in the cinema. American music is everywhere, on the radio and blasting out of music stores. Newspapers and magazines are continuously "selling" American culture and American merchandise. All this is made possible by ever-advancing technology which, at the same time, is being advertised and sold.

The seventh section in the "American Studies" collection is dedicated to "American Studies Through the Mass Media." It is interesting to look into this mainly for two reasons; both relate to the LCTDE project. First, the mass media is, to a great extent, the global cross-cultural classroom of American culture. The LCTDE project design will need to assess and account for the Intercultural Developmental stages (Bennett, 1993)

particular to Moroccan students, educated by mass media. There is also a question related to the technology itself. Is there any indication in our literature concerning the extent of usage of technology in Moroccan universities?

"Crossing Cultures: America as Seen Through its Media" is the first article in this section. The impact of American culture, now a universal culture, is felt by everyone in Morocco and is delivered via the media says Mohamed Chtatou (1992). "The Moroccan public, most of which cannot travel to the United States for financial and administrative reasons, is left to discover that part of the world through the magic window of the cinema and television." Yet "one is made to wonder, to what extent that which we are subjected to around the world is truly representative of America, its people, ideas and way of life" (p. 216). Chtatou describes to his listeners the image of America projected by Hollywood. It is a misconception of a world characterized by "ridiculous wealth" of a "violent society" imbued with "excessive sex" and the "fast life." About television he says, "because of new technological breakthroughs in direct satellite broadcasting, American television is becoming a dangerous weapon of incredible political and cultural importance." By being so popular and so available, American TV broadcasts influences its viewers to think in a certain way. It also creates strong negative American stereotypes in the mind of viewers. Chtatou lists selfishness, individualism, ego-centrism, "no sense of alternative etiquette," materialism, "no respect for age," stinginess, and negative family values (in addition to the characteristics that he mentioned before) as those stereotypes. He also lists the positive values reflected by the media, of freedom, democracy, equal opportunity, honor and respect, free enterprise, pluralism and privacy. "For crossing cultures," he says, "the American media has to be used with great caution to avoid the pitfalls of stereotyping, especially in the case of people who do not have access to other means of information" (pp. 222-224).

Similar ideas are presented by Lassaad Mabrouki (1992) in "A Vision of American Society through the Media." "The gap between the *everyday life* young Americans lead and the vision our students have of it is so wide that it becomes our duty to make them

review any general accepted idea" says Mabrouki (p. 226). "It might prove wise," he adds, "to explain to the students that the image of a society through the media is not wrong but very often distorted. The distortion is especially important in the case of the United States, because the power of the media is so very influential and complex that it is not easy to define or understand." Mabrouki suggests devising a course that will look at American society and how it is portrayed by the media and how different media affect American society. (Again, such a course can be closely related to the LCTDE project.)

6.15 Video and the Media Classroom

The use of videotapes in Moroccan public universities or the use of media classrooms where students and teachers have access to VCRs and video cameras is not common. In fact, one of the characteristics of the academic culture in those institutions is that they have very small budgets to equip their classes. Public universities in Morocco are poor. At the same time, the price of video equipment is dropping drastically and some schools are managing to acquire additional funds. It is very likely that soon there will be more video equipment available to the teachers and students. Two of the articles in this collection mirror this reality as they discuss "using the video in the American Studies Class" and "Scenes from a Media Classroom" (Dahbi et al., 1992, pp. 231-242).

6.16 Summary

This chapter was a report from a conference titled "American Studies" which was held at the Agdal Muhammed V University in 1992. The conference was an opportunity for Moroccan academia and English faculty members to voice their insights, needs, dreams and frustrations about Moroccan higher education. Participants called for greater emphasis on American studies in their English departments. They called for introducing American culture, American language, cross-cultural communication studies, and in general, they advocated a shift towards a more American-styled higher education system. By reading this chapter one could better understand to what extent projects similar to the

LCTDE could be relevant to the reality of Moroccan higher education that existed as recently as 1992.

Chapter VII

TECHNOLOGY

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 Overview

Defining the term *technology* has become increasingly complex as new technologies develop at an exponential rate. The dictionary tells us that technology is “the application of science, especially to industrial or commercial objectives,” and that it is “the scientific method and material used to achieve a commercial or industrial objective” (1997). It is also the knowledge available to a society for making and producing things. At the same time, when one hears the word technology used today, it is likely to imply the segment of technology that on which much of our attention has focused. It is electronics, it is computer technology, it is telecommunications, it is all the subjects that are included under the classification high-tech. Presently, the cutting edge of technology includes genetic engineering, robotics, nano-technology and other fields whose rapid growth is in some way associated with developments in electronics and in semi-conductor chips. When discussing technology, the word revolution may enter in. The fast pace of ever-changing technology imposes continuous readjustment and relearning.

This discussion will be limited to subjects that illuminate the possibilities for using technology to provide distance education (DE) in Morocco. It will include topics relating to technologies in Morocco, to computers, to internet, to distance education technology, to technologies of media and mass media and to other related subjects. It will examine the existing infrastructure in the country and the expected development there. This discussion will specifically address the ways these technologies are used in Moroccan universities and schools, and the relationships that exist between people and technology, particularly in the Moroccan educational sector. The available technological possibilities in the particular educational institutions of this study will be examined. A table comparing, at a glance, the available technologies at the four units of research will summarize the subject (Table 7.1, p. 167).

7.1.2 Development and change

Morocco is considered to be part of the Third World and a developing nation. The term *developing nation* has an implied meaning in today's language that is almost opposite to its literal meaning. It suggests undeveloped in relation to the more developed world. The term also implies progress in a direction preferred by the already-developed nations.

The phenomenon of accelerated change is an important factor to consider. Change that is speeding up appears to be a hallmark of our time. It is the rapid change of the technology itself and the changes brought about by this evolving technology. The never ending race to catch up to the state of the art can leave one exhausted, especially when one cannot afford it, as is the case in poorer (developing) countries such as Morocco. The impact of these changes is twofold. Not only must the actual technological changes be considered, but also the changes that this technology induces in its users must be looked at. Changing technology affects Moroccan education, culture and users in unique ways.

In the three-year period in which this research was conducted, extensive technological changes took place in Morocco. Such changes occur as new technologies move swiftly into vacuum regions, where the level of technology is low. What might have been new and revolutionary one year, becomes matter-of-fact and expected the next. It is precisely because of low levels of technology in developing countries that the rate of change is so overwhelming for their people. For example, we live in a country where the evolution of television took almost forty years, yet most Moroccans moved from having no TV at all to satellite color multi-channel technology within less than seven years.

Data collection for this study was completed two years ago in 1998. Since then technology has continued to change drastically both in the U.S. and in Morocco. Web-based DE took a great leap forward. Other internet technologies developed by leaps and bounds and now are accessible to many more Moroccans than they were in 1998. In discussing the fact that implementation of the LCTDE project might take few years, Dr. Alaoui commented that "in fact it might be an advantage, because as time passes we (i.e., in Morocco) may have more capabilities. Maybe by then there will be e-mail in the

Faculty of Letters and so on.” Indeed, by now there may be even more technological possibilities for conducting DE programs with Moroccan schools.

One important design variable that will probably always be present is a sizeable gap in the available technology between the two countries, Morocco and the United States. Moroccan universities are trying to catch up with technology while its richer American counterparts are setting the standards. Moroccan students and faculty members who are collaborating through DE equipment with their American peers may always be at a disadvantage. At the same time, Americans may be forced to use out-dated technologies to be able to participate.

7.1.3 Technology, DE and culture

I always have to remind myself who I am and to what extent my identity is transmitted. To what extent am I understood by other cultures?

Understanding my culture is necessary for me to be able to communicate my culture. I also need to understand to what extent I am sophisticated enough and well equipped (enough) to use the technology, to be able to communicate and to transnegotiate. Personally, as a Moroccan student, I feel sometimes that I don't trust this process enough. (Student, Appendix D, p. 355)

The idea that technology is “just” a tool which is culturally and politically neutral is not automatically assumed by Moroccans. “How is distance education likely to turn into a form of cultural imperialism?” asks Dr. Barada of students. “Am I just searching for information which is value free and ideology free, or am I the poorer relative of the more powerful, getting second rate information, and for what price?” The question of cultural imperialism and that technology may be a Trojan horse from the invading West is not under consideration here. Yet, it needs to be acknowledged as an existing point of view of some Moroccans.

One also finds many Moroccans almost mesmerized by new technologies and desiring them. To Moroccans, there was almost a quality of magic associated with technology. If we return to the example of satellite TV, I was amazed to see many rural dwellings that looked like small heaps of clay; many of them had satellite dishes anchored to their roofs. Many Moroccan homes had their TVs turned on continuously, regardless of whether or not anyone was watching.

Here is an example from the educational sector: The dean of the medical school of Fez expressed his interest and desire to install a sophisticated and expensive DE system in his institution after he saw it demonstrated in Saudi Arabia. His idea was to connect his satellite medical school in Fez with the main school in Rabat. Yet, he was not exactly sure how the system would be used or who would pay for such a project. Another example is AUI. Al Akhawayn University actually acquired DE equipment. They did not have any idea how they intended to use the equipment; nor did they have any funds allocated for a DE program.

7.1.4 Technical support and maintenance

Problems arising from insufficient, inadequate and untimely technical support and equipment maintenance need to be considered and taken into account.

Halima Ferhat, director of the Institute for African Studies, had two complete new computer systems, a Mac and a PC, on two desks in her office, both covered with plastic and unused. She never was able to use either machine, although she had them for over six-months, because the vendors who sold the equipment were not able to provide the necessary technical and software support.

According to Dr. Alaoui, it is very difficult to provide or receive technical support and maintenance for existing equipment. The bureaucracy is reluctant to create new positions for technicians and maintenance personnel within the higher education system. It is relatively much easier to have big purchases of equipment approved than to have that equipment serviced and maintained. There is material and equipment sitting around,

unused, because there is no one to provide the necessary service and maintenance (Appendix D, p. 357).

El-Aoufir reported that at AUI proper maintenance and systems improvement is extremely difficult because the university does not have a regular yearly working budget. Consequently, the departments also do not have a budget to work from. Everything is done on a per project, per event, and per item basis. When a need is identified, a request to purchase must be submitted to the vice president of academic affairs. If it is approved, then it goes on to the president for approval. Sometimes, even if there is a presidential approval, still there is no money for implementation. In any case, it always takes some time, he said.

7.2 What Technology is Available?

7.2.1 Personal computers in Morocco

According to Fitzgerald, the economy of Morocco is such that even as computers and the internet are becoming increasingly popular, most people would not be able to afford to own a computer or to have their own internet account. People must share the technology as they go online. They go to cyber-café's and places where they can rent computer time in groups. It is similar to the way the Moroccan use public telephones at the popular tele-boutiques one sees everywhere in that country.

Meanwhile, the government, in order to encourage growth in usage of technology, has been cutting import taxes. "The price of computers is the only thing that has gone down in price since I've been here," said Fitzgerald. "We paid 28,000 dirhams for a computer, nearly \$3,000, when I first came here. Now you can get a Compaq computer with a Pentium 133 MHz with all the goodies for only 14,000 dirhams."

7.2.2 Internet in Morocco

In 1994, a few American students at ALIF would receive and send e-mail by dialing overseas, to Spain, to connect to CompuServe. At the same time, Dr. Alaoui introduced,

organized, and initiated the first e-mail server in the country. It was stationed in the Mohammédiya School of Engineering, and used a connection to Spain as a gate to the internet. Alaoui's mission was to educate Moroccan academia and other people who had access to computers about the usefulness of e-mail.

In 1995, Morocco connected to the internet under the high level domain MA (the last segment of an internet address — MA for MArocco), and Dr. Alaoui was the high level contact for Morocco. Since then, he has delegated the authority of the MA node to the ONPT (see definition in 7.3.1), which services and supplies Moroccan users with access to the worldwide internet network.

According to Mr. Banit, users can have access to internet service either through commercial servers, of which there are 29, or through direct lines to the ONPT in the case of big users and Moroccan universities. Currently the ONPT is connected to the internet with a 512Kbps line through Italy and with double that, 2x512Kbps line, through the U.S.A.

The year 1996 was an exciting time as the internet arrived at Moroccan public and academic domains. Initial inefficiencies and learning curves were apparent. The unfamiliar technology required much trouble-shooting and tune-ups. Heated discussions about whether the internet was good or bad for Morocco were ongoing. More businesses, educational institutions and individuals were buying equipment and going on line, but this was just beginning.

7.2.3 Internet service providers

The ONPT subcontracts internet usage to private local providers who, in turn, sell their services to small end users. There are a few dozen internet providers operating local servers, some more reliable than others, said Mr. Fitzgerald. His ALC in Marrakesh used the services of a few of these companies and learned some lessons.

The single biggest obstacle to teaching online, or teaching the use of the internet, is the lack of dependability of the service provider. Sometimes we have to cancel classes because the connection is not there. When

everything is working right, we were told by a visiting professor from Berkeley, the connection is as dependable and as fast as in the U.S. Especially in the morning, we use the internet when America is sleeping and then it is very fast. (Fitzgerald, see Appendix D, p. 320)

7.2.4 Computers in Moroccan universities

AUI was the first educational institution to make the internet available both to faculty and students. Their 512Kbps connection to the internet came directly from France. Since 1996, all their students and faculty have had e-mail and internet accounts and have had enough computers to provide the necessary service. Next came the engineering students of INPT and LEME. Other Moroccan universities, except in rare cases, could not afford computers or internet connections for their students or for their faculty members. “We have no computers at our universities. Computers are extremely expensive and then we have universities that are huge” said Dr. Mekouar. Yet Mekouar was able to list at least six professors who were interested in cross-cultural communications, who would be interested in participating in a CMC with American faculty, and who had their own internet access.

Moroccan universities and other institutions of higher education are awaiting the MARWAN project. MARWAN is a high-speed wide area data network intended to serve educational institutions in Morocco. Even with the MARWAN in place, public universities will still be a long time away from being able to acquire computers so they can serve the needs of faculty and students.

Many of those who cannot afford a computer will privately join cyber-café. Membership in one of these clubs provides computer use, internet access and e-mail accounts. Many professors encourage their students to go to cyber-café even if, economically, they can only do that in small groups. Teachers and students who could afford it were buying computers but not necessarily going on line immediately. The expense of being on line is prohibitive. Telephone service is expensive and always

metered and so is internet service. Those services are more expensive than in the U.S. while salaries are drastically lower.

7.3 ONPT — Itissalat al-Maghrib

7.3.1 Overview

Traditionally, the Moroccan Post Office was a governmental body providing the public with both postal and telephone services. The post office and the office of telecommunications were one entity. It all came under the title of The National Office of Post and Telecommunication or ONPT (Office National des Postes et Télécommunications). The Ministry of Post and Communication was in charge of the ONPT.

7.3.2 Privatization of the ONPT

The ONPT is in a state of change, said El Jabri (see Appendix D, p. 359). While the post office is still to be a government operation, the telephone company is becoming a private entity under a new ministry: the Ministry of Telecommunications (le Ministère des Télécommunications) with Mr. Abdeslam Ahizoune as minister. The new name for this telephone company, together with its office of telecommunications, is Itissalat al-Maghrib, translated to English as Communications of Morocco. The new company is to function as a private carrier (a non-government service provider) for the Moroccan government. The company's vehicles, stationery, and publications already carry the name Itissalat al-Maghrib, but the Moroccan people still use the name ONPT. In the present discussion, the names are used interchangeably.

Privatization is happening, but it is very slow and will be done bit by bit. For example, in March 98 the ONPT intends to begin transferring to a second-carrier a second cellular phone license. It is out for bids now and there are many offers from companies like France Telecom, Telephonica, AT&T, a Korean phone company, and others.

In actuality, Itissalat al-Maghrib was already a private company, an autonomous entity, but it was owned 100% by the Moroccan government. The plan was to sell stocks in this company to foreign second-carriers or other foreign telephone companies while the government would still control 51% of the company. This private company, Itissalat al-Maghrib, would function as a for-profit organization to attract new partners. The interest of the Moroccan government would be the same as that of the other participants: to make money and to be profitable. The process of bringing in other companies was supposed to start very soon, although gradually. It would happen first with cellular telephones, then with multimedia, then with internet and international services and so on.

“Government bodies in Morocco are always inefficient and work with big losses,” says El Jabri. The politicians that run them care about power rather than profitability. Employees care little about the quality of their work since they cannot be fired, while promotions are not related to performance. A government job in Morocco is usually for life and promotions are usually political; there is no incentive to perform better.

With the privatization of the ONPT, the telephone company is expected to become a profitable business. Theoretically, the change should attract outside companies to compete for part of the action. The competition of private foreign companies with the services of the old ONPT would bring prices down and the service should get better. By introducing the changes slowly, employees will have a chance to get used to the changes gradually.

The movement to privatize is part of a global movement that started in Europe. Morocco has to follow if it wants to be competitive, said El Jabri. Privatization also has to do with the GATT agreement and with the directions of the World Bank. Mr. Ahizoune and his Ministry of Telecommunications are actively pursuing global support and participation in the newly formed Itissalat al-Maghrib. (See Appendix D, p. 360.)

7.3.3 Infrastructure

In a 1998 annual report of the Itissalat al-Maghrib for the previous year, the following citation made by the International Telecommunications Union was emphasized:

Thanks to its successes, the Moroccan telecommunications sector today has all the structural and organizational conditions enabling it to respond favorably to the expectations of international investors who are interested in developing the Moroccan market. (Resumé in I.T.U. press release of Feb. 26, 1998, p. 5)

The report indicated a steady increase in the number of telephone customers, primarily residential, with a sharp increase in the number of cellular phone usage, all totaling 1.4 million subscribers.

The report also reflected a continuous investment in a modern telecommunication infrastructure throughout Morocco, including in its rural areas. Modern digital switching equipment has been put into service, additional conventional analogue phone cable and fiber optic cable have been installed, and more national and international transmission circuits have been added. "Itissalat al-Maghrib has continued, this year, its policy of expansion and modernization of the transmission network through recourse to digital technology, namely fiber optics" (p. 18). Precisely because of the needed development, Morocco's infrastructure has, relative to other countries, a high percentage of modern digital switching equipment and fiber optic cable.

7.3.4 ISDN in Morocco — MARNIS

7.3.4.1 Overview

ISDN may be the preferred communications means for video-conferencing and using DE equipment internationally. ISDN could make these technologies financially attractive in comparison to using satellite communication. The case of transmitting between Morocco and New Mexico, due to geographical distance, requires hopping through two satellites, which makes communications even more costly.

According to the Itissalat-al-Maghrib report, “Moroccan Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN), ‘MARNIS’ (Maroccaïn Réseau Numérique à Intégration de Service), covers most parts of the kingdom and is open to foreign ISDN. . . . The network has a capacity of 10,512 for base access and 364 for primary access” (1998, p. 35).

In 1997 Mr. Banit reported that ISDN service is already available from the ONPT, but only in the major cities (see diagram, Appendix E, p. 375). Soon it will extend to all Moroccan cities. However, ISDN will not be available to rural Morocco in the near future, if ever. He also said that “costs are very attractive because there is not much difference between getting a regular telephone service and getting a 64Kbps ISDN line. (For more detailed technical information see Appendix D, p. 362.)

Since the AUI had already acquired DE equipment, it would be beneficial to have ISDN service available in Ifrane for transmission of cost effective international DE.

7.3.4.2 Availability of ISDN service to AUI

According to Mr. Benjira, it is unlikely that the ONPT would provide ISDN service to AUI in the foreseeable future. In order to bring ISDN to Ifrane a 2Mbps primary access line consisting of twelve basic access lines would be needed. The university was the only possible client in Ifrane, and they would need a maximum of two basic access lines. Also, the amount of usage that the university was planning, if they had the service, was uncertain, and the ONPT would not bring ISDN to locations where there was not enough demand to pay for expenses.

7.3.4.3 ISDN connection to the U.S.A

In mid-1997, Mr. Benjira reported that the ONPT was still experiencing technical difficulties in establishing an ISDN connection with AT&T. At the beginning of 1998, Benjira reported that they had established the link and that there were now two ISDN links between the ONPT in Morocco and AT&T. ISDN connection to the U.S. was now possible and was available for commercial use. The link could provide sixty communication lines of 128Kbps simultaneously. (See Appendix D, p. 364.)

7.3.5 Video-conferencing equipment

According to Mr. Banit, the ONPT owned video-conferencing equipment (also referred to as DE equipment) which was made available for special services provided by the ONPT. It could be used via satellite or ISDN.

Mr. Benjira worked in the office where various DE equipment is tested; there “we see how it works and to find if there are any problems.” The DE equipment that was used by the ONPT was made by SAT (Société Anonyme des Télécommunications), a French company. SAT’s DE equipment line comes under the general name TELSAT CAMERIS, and it is compatible with the PictureTel protocol. The ONPT also owned DE equipment that came under the brand name Siemens although it was actually made by Picture Tel (see Appendix D, p. 364).

7.4 Distance Education in Morocco

7.4.1 General information

Historically, DE existed in Morocco through the 1960’s but was discontinued (Barada, see Appendix D, p. 354). DE was transmitted mostly through radio and the post system. As seen from the data (Appendix D), there was growing interest in and awareness of DE among both the engineers and the educators who were interviewed. There are no ongoing DE programs in Morocco at the present, said Mr. Banit, but there are two projects that the ONPT is currently working on, which represent the DE needs of Morocco. These two projects were the MARWAN project, which is a network to connect Moroccan institutions of higher education and a pilot DE project to train teachers in rural Morocco.

7.4.2 MARWAN

The name MARWAN stands for MARocco's Wide Area Network. It is a national project, under the direct control of the office of the Prime Minister, and would serve non-profit educational establishments throughout Morocco. Project MARWAN would enhance education, training and research. The network would link universities, private high schools (écoles supérieures), and other establishments of higher education.

The MARWAN network was designed to provide a high-speed trunk line through which users would be connected to each other as well as to international educational and research networks. The network would permit sharing of resources and databases between the linked sites. Several services and applications, some basic and some more advanced, are planned. Basic services would include, for instance, sharing common databases, sharing software resources, and exchanging e-mail. More advanced services would include access to the internet, multimedia, distance education, video-conferencing, tele-labor, tele-assistance, and so forth.

The architecture of the MARWAN network was based, in this first stage, on providing a main high-speed trunk to connect sixteen nodes conveniently spaced throughout the country. The nodes would be connected via dedicated lines allowing a communication bandwidth of 2Mbps. In the next stage of the project, at a later time, other cities would be added to the network. Schools and universities in cities directly connected to MARWAN would pay only local fees for the service they receive. In the first stage, Rabat would be connected to Casablanca, then to Tangier, Fez, and Marrakesh. The remaining nodes would be connected to those five. The Rabat node would also be the gateway to the internet (see Appendix E, p. 376).

According to Dr. Mekouar, the project was financially supported by the Spanish government and it had been much slower than expected. The Moroccan participation was slow in coming. The engineers of the ONPT were working on the technical design and the implementation of the MARWAN project, said Mr. Banit. The physical cable infrastructure was already in place but the active equipment was not available yet. It was very expensive and the funds had not been allocated yet. Also, the universities would have to provide for their own local equipment and to pay for communication time. These funds would also have to come from the government so it would take a long time.

Mr. Mohamed Lhor, the head of the Multimedia division of the ONPT and the director of the MARWAN project, said that he expected MARWAN to be partially operational by the first of June 1998 and to have the whole network in place and

operational by the end of the year. Others suggested that it might take much longer and would depend, among other factors, on Moroccan politics. (For more details, see Appendix D, p. 365.)

7.4.3 DE Pilot project — training teachers in rural Morocco

7.4.3.1 Overview

Although it is called a pilot project, explained Mr. Banit, this is the only DE plan that we have at the moment. We hope that this project will be the basis and the beginning for a larger national DE program and this is why it's called a pilot project. We are looking at two possible modes of transmission: terrestrial transmission and transmission via satellite (see Appendix E, pp. 377-**Error! Bookmark not defined.**). Banit explained that for now, most likely, the transmission will be via terrestrial cables since much of the infrastructure is already in place and it will cost much less to deploy. In the future, however, when the DE system will cover the whole of Morocco, it will make a better economical sense to use satellite transmission, which requires one signal covering all the Moroccan sites. For this reason, the ONPT is preparing a demonstration for this project which will utilize satellite transmission.

In a document that was produced by the ITU for the Ministry of National there was a detailed project plan (see Appendix D, pp. 367-373). The plan proposed to employ distance education using interactive television for continuous training of teachers in rural Morocco. This project was to be under the direct responsibility of the Prime Minister's Office. The ONPT was to be involved with the technical aspects of the project while the educational ministries and the Ministry of Communication were to work together on other aspects of the project. Internationally, the project was to be supported by ITU in Switzerland and by UNESCO in Paris. The World Bank was expected to finance the project under the technical supervision of the ITU.

The goal of the project was to establish a flexible IDE (interactive distance education) system using advanced technology of interactive television together with advanced educational methods. In its first phase, this pilot project would be used for training

teachers, school directors and other educational staff. Later, this system could also be used to teach students.

The pilot project would be conducted in three rural provinces and will involve a sample group of teachers who would be trained in the use of the technology and in mastering advanced educational methodologies.

This project was to benefit primary and secondary school teachers and educators in rural locations by providing them continuing education. It would also benefit Morocco in general by improving education in rural areas as it introduced DE and other technologies into the Moroccan educational system.

7.4.3.2 Budget

The total cost of this pilot project was to be \$US 5,977,206.

From this total, \$US 2,925,500 would come from the Moroccan government. The rest, (\$US 3,051,706) would be raised outside the country from international bodies and from the international private sector. The international contribution would include necessary equipment, expert advice and supervision, and other needed funds.

In general, the Moroccan government would pay for the training of the project's personnel, for the infrastructure and buildings, for the operating costs of the system, for broadcasting costs and for the educational program production costs. The Moroccan government would also finance the creation of the rural learning centers and of the program center in Rabat.

The international budgetary support would pay for training Moroccans abroad, for international experts who would come to Morocco both to train Moroccans and to implement the system. It would also provide for equipment purchases outside Morocco and other such costs.

7.4.3.4 Implementation

Organization

The local learning sites would be located in existing schools and would accommodate classes of up to fifty students. Each training center would be equipped with all the technology necessary to ensure the success of the program. This would include a television, a VCR, a telephone, a fax machine, a copier and a computer (PC). It would also include the necessary connectivity for the interactive network.

The Center of Presentations would be in Rabat. It would include a center for video productions, the facilities needed for transmissions and for the audio interactive part of the program. It would also house the servers required for e-mail, internet, digital libraries, and so forth.

Technical conception

Signal delivery might be via Very Small Area Terminal (VSAT) satellite system. The system would use the ARABSAT satellite or an equivalent and would occupy a bandwidth channel of 2Mbps. The signal might also be delivered via 2Mbps terrestrial lines.

The total bandwidth rated at 2Mbps allocated for transmission would be divided as follows:

1. The distribution channel transmission would be unidirectional compressed signal at a rate of 1664Kbps (26x64Kbps).
2. The interactive audio channels would operate between each learning site and the center in Rabat. Each channel would carry a bi-directional compressed signal at a rate of 192Kbps (3x64Kbps).
3. The interactive data transmission channel would be a bi-directional line at a rate of 192Kbps (3x64Kbps) and would be used for downloading of software, internet access, e-mail, and so forth.

7.5 Technology at INPT

The INPT was the second higher education institution in Morocco to have an internet connection for its faculty and students. All students and faculty had internet and e-mail

accounts. The INPT was a unique and prestigious higher education governmental institution, directly governed by the Ministry of Communications and possessed tremendous resources.

Solely from the standpoint of available technology, the INPT rated higher than all other educational institutions in this study. The available technological resources at the INPT made this institution quite capable of participating in an international DE classroom. Being centrally located in Rabat's higher education complex, the INPT could even provide its classrooms to students from other universities such as MVU to participate in DE exchanges. The major reasons that the INPT has such a high rating from a technological perspective are that the INPT has the computer labs necessary to permit students sufficient access to the technology. The school's computers were connected via a local information network and provided both internet access and e-mail service. The network was linked directly to the ONPT main server, without having to go through a private internet provider. This allowed a more reliable connection. One could also expect that since the function of the INPT is to keep its students abreast of the developing technology, the equipment at the school would be upgraded as technology developed.

One could also expect that students at the INPT would have high levels of proficiency for technology and the inclination to use it. Students were selected for their technological skills and aptitudes.

Technical support and maintenance at the INPT was high. Many of the staff and faculty there were trained technicians and professionals in various high-tech areas. The students themselves were trained in these areas and in being able to provide technical support and to maintain equipment.

As part of the ONPT, the INPT received free telephone services and free internet access. According to Mr. Choukhmane, ISDN service would also be provided free to the INPT when needed for a DE program. Although the INTP did not yet own video-conferencing equipment, the ONPT in Rabat had such equipment, and possibly would allow a DE program to use the equipment on occasions.

Financially, it seemed that the INPT also had tremendous resources compared to other higher education institutions in Morocco. If the director of the INPT indeed wished that his students participated in a DE exchange, and if there were support from the responsible higher-ups in the Ministry of Communication, the INPT would be able to financially support its part of the program. However, it was not clear how the privatization process of the ONPT would affect the position and activities of the INPT.

7.6 Technology at AUI

7.6.1 Overview

Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane (AUI) had a unique position among Moroccan universities. First, it was not governed by the law of higher education that all other Moroccan universities had to abide by, and thus it enjoyed a higher level of autonomy and academic freedom. The new Moroccan university was initiated with a large budget. These funds enabled the university to become a well-equipped modern provider of higher education by investing in technology and infrastructure. Financially, AUI's on-going funding came mainly from three sources: student tuition, the support of the Moroccan monarch, and grants which it attracted due to the school's unique position. These funds allowed the university to continue hiring the desired faculty and to maintain and upgrade the technology necessary to deliver a high level of education. AUI was the first Moroccan university to provide its faculty and students with internet and e-mail accounts. The university also provided students with multi-media and video equipment and cable service. In addition, AUI owned a video-conferencing system which it had not used yet.

[This report about the technology at AUI reflects the situation that existed there in the beginning of 1998. It is based on interviews that were conducted at AUI and on observations there. (see Appendix D, pp. 266-279; also see chapter 9 for more recent update)]

7.6.2 Computers at AUI

7.6.2.1 Configuration

There were about two hundred computers for both the students and teachers, according to Mr. Youssef El-Aoufir, director of Information Technology & Systems (ITS). There was about one computer for each four students. The main AUI computer access lab had fifty PCs (DOS based computers) and was open from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 a.m. The lab was always congested, and sometimes students had to wait to be able to use a computer, especially when school projects were coming due. Another two smaller labs with twenty PCs each were available by reservation and could stay open until 6 a.m. There were networked printers in each lab.

The computers at Al-Akhawayn were PCs and UNIX machines. There were 25 older UNIX Sun stations for students at the School of Science. Most computers still ran on Windows 3.1 because they had only eight-Mb of RAM, which was not enough for Windows 95 or newer Netscape releases. There was a plan for memory upgrade when and if funds were made available. Most computers in the students' labs were the same 486 machines that were purchased at the beginning. Faculty and staff had newer Pentiums machines. In one of the student labs, half of the PCs were multi-media machines with speakers, sound cards and CD-ROMs. Those could be used for desktop conferencing.

7.6.2.2 Computer lab procedures

There were no special limitations or rules for computer use or for managing the labs. There were only some rules regarding security and on-line ethics. Students were allowed to use the printers without limitations but they had to supply their own paper.

The university had two teams of two technicians each. Those technicians were present continuously in the main lab from 8:30 a.m. until 12:30 a.m. Their duties were to keep all computers running. They made sure that students were able to log onto the network, run all the available software, print and have access to the internet.

In the first year of AUI, there was a regulation that students could not spend more than two hours on a computer if there were another student waiting. This procedure was dropped because it created many problems. The students were not very cooperative and the lab technicians had too many problems with the students. They could not simultaneously handle both their technical responsibilities and the administrative operations such as registering the students and keeping track of computer usage time.

7.6.3 Internet at AUI

All students had internet and e-mail accounts that permitted them to access the web and their e-mail. Additionally, students from the School of Science had accounts that allowed them to work in the UNIX labs.

Out of the 50 computers in the main lab, about half were connected to the internet. In the entire school, 70 of the PCs used by students were connected to the internet. In addition, the UNIX lab also had internet access. Altogether, about one hundred computers allowed students internet access. In 1998, there were about 765 students at Al Akhawayn, so there were about eight students for each computer that had internet access. Still, many times students would be waiting in line to log onto the net. The whole campus was wired for 2,050 internet connections, but they were not all activated.

AUI got its internet service of 64K directly from Paris and not through the ONPT. It cost more than twice the ONPT price (around 35,000 dirhams or \$3,500 per month). “We are willing to pay this price in order to have our own line which is very dependable,” said Mr. El-Aoufir. “We experienced very low downtime since we started using it. We had less than two days of downtime since August 1995. There are a many things that the ONPT still are not doing for Moroccan customers that we have.”

7.6.4 Services

7.6.4.1 ITS

The function of the Information Technology & Systems (ITS) is to provide all the required technical help and systems support at AUI. Youssef El-Aoufir and Majid

Lahlou together with one maintenance technician manage this operation. Mr. El-Aoufir's expertise is in computer systems, telephone systems and information networks. Mr. Lahlou specializes in media technologies, distance education equipment and multi-media. Together they designed, purchased and installed AUI's technology network. "We install software and hardware, provide all the necessary accounts to connect to our network and to establish connections with the remote sites," said El-Aoufir. "We can also provide PCs and other kinds of computer equipment but we are not involved directly with the teachers of the different schools." Although the two engineers were not involved in teaching per se, from time to time if there are interests in specific topics they would give technical seminars and workshops both to the people of AUI and to government personnel who came from the outside.

7.6.4.2 Computer sales to students

The university encourages students to buy their own computers. They do this by arranging group purchases, which brings the prices down. Also since the university is not subject to the value added tax (VAT), it can save the students about 20% off the price.

In the beginning, the ITS managed these sales. The ITS also provided technical support and assistance to the students. Youssef, Majid and their technician found that they didn't have the time to deal with those sales so computer sales were handled by the school's bookstore. The vendors were asked to provide the warranty service. ITS provided consulting only. On occasion they would help some students if time allowed.

7.6.5 Students using computers

7.6.5.1 Students' computer proficiency skills

"As to the technology level of the students, some of the most computer-familiar and computer-confident students in the country come here," said Dr. Benjelloun.

According to El-Aoufir, students' computer skill levels varied. Some were very proficient. They could program and manipulate the various computer systems quite well. Others just used computer for word processing and to access the internet. Regarding

internet usage, [El-Aoufir said that] the students are all used to it by now. They had had internet access for more than a year and a half and they used the [computer] labs intensively. Many of the students majored in computer science.

As far as students doing repair and maintenance work themselves, “They have no technical training,” said El-Aoufir. “They can work with software and development but they don't have the practice or any knowledge of electronic circuits and electronic instrumentation.”

Tazi Muhamed was an AUI student majoring in computer science. He was very helpful and skillful in installing and testing the CU-Seeme software on one of the school's computers. Muhamed had never worked with a computer before coming to AUI but had a great desire to master the technology. He reported that it was very easy for him to manipulate the machines and to work with DOS and Windows and with UNIX systems. “Engineering students that come to Al Akhawayn have to learn to use computers very quickly otherwise they won't be able to continue their studies in the engineering fields.”

Concerning non-engineering students at AUI, Muhamed said, “Business administration students, some of them are very good. I don't mean that they are geniuses in programming and such, but just in using computers. They might have some difficulties when something goes wrong.” They usually were not inclined to operate on the DOS level. Students from the social science departments usually were only able to operate programs like Word and Power Point. All the students used the internet and e-mail. “They search a lot on the Web and they like it.” Muhamed also reported that many of the students spent much time in chat groups that they joined.

7.6.5.2 Chat-rooms, chatting and CU-Seeme

Many students at AUI spent a great deal of time logging onto various chat-room locations on the Web where they engaged in text-based communication with people around the globe. The “chatterers” occupied computers for long periods and other students complained they prevented them from doing their work. But most faculty members at AUI saw chatting as a useful way to practice English and to learn how to

communicate with non-Moroccans. Mr. Fitzgerald, whose daughter was an AUI student, expressed the opinion that students in Ifrane were so cut off and isolated from Moroccan society that they transferred those feelings to the computers. “The computer is their only outlet,” he said.

7.6.5.3 CU-Seeme — usage and technology

Tazi Muhamed, a student majoring in computer science, undertook to install the CU-Seeme software on one of the school’s computers and to test it in the AUI settings. He was able to install the Connectix cam-cad and configured it to work with the software. It must have been easy enough for him since he did it all in the midst of studying for finals. He reported a problem with receiving sound, probably due to an incorrect soundboard. AUI computers all had designated IP addresses, so he was able to directly connect two computers in conference mode, again, without sound. He was also able to go onto the Web and find lists of reflector sites and to log onto some of them with success. “The internet connection here (at AUI) is very slow because too many students are using it at the same time. That is why we will probably always have problems with the CU-Seeme,” he said. He also reported that the image had a slow refresh rate due to not enough bandwidth.

Tazi thought that students, even non-computer students, would like using CU-Seeme very much since it was just another way of chatting with the addition of video. Chatting was a way for students to kill time since playing games in the lab was forbidden. When using CU-Seeme as part of a university course, suggested Tazi, “it has to be a learning process; otherwise it will turn into some kind of chatting.” The students would have to choose to commit to do the work in a particular way, he said.

Student complaints:

1. The network was not installed in the student dorms although the rooms were wired for it.
2. The computers in the lab were very old and could not run some programs.

3. There were not enough computers to satisfy students' demands and there was no limit to how long each student could be on a computer.
4. Assistance and supervision in computer labs was not sufficient. There were no teachers there but only technicians who did not have enough computer knowledge (Mohammed Tazi, see Appendix D, p. 269).

7.6.6 Distance education equipment

Mr. Majid Lahlou would be technically in charge of DE at AUI when and if it would happen. According to Lahlou, the long-awaited DE equipment (i.e., video-conferencing) arrived at the Ifrane campus in the beginning of 1997. It was donated by the National Agriculture Office and by the National Airport Office. It was PictureTel equipment, brand new and in the boxes. It consisted of the main unit, a camera and a teacher's control panel called Socrates. The local Moroccan supplier of the equipment, Tadmouti of Intelcom, "told us that when the ISDN line will be available, PictureTel will provide training." Intelcom was to provide service and installation. "We are still waiting for an ISDN connection from the ONPT. To get good resolution we will need 384Kbps, which are three basic ISDN lines."

At that time, since the needed communications line was not available, there was no demand for DE. "We do not have any information of how the university intends to use the equipment; this will come from the dean's office."

Mr. Lahlou also reported that they had the chance to see DE equipment in action twice. The ONPT, on two different occasions came to AUI and performed DE demonstrations with their own equipment (see Appendix D, p. 275). As far as I know, Lahlou never had the opportunity to put the AUI's video-conferencing equipment into use.

7.6.7 Video technology in the classroom

In the School of Social Sciences and Humanities, students had been exposed only to very basic classroom technologies, but it could be very exciting to learn new things, said

Dr. Alami. Students already used a video camera and a VCR in the classroom; they were doing it from the very beginning. Dr. Alami gave the example of students video-recording their presentations in oral communication class and then viewing those recordings for analysis.

According to Mr. Lahlou, AUI had all the necessary facilities for students to engage in video production. In building number 17, there was a large conference room with three portable cameras and an adjacent control room. The cameras could be focused on a teacher, on students or on the blackboard, and in the control room camera selection and mixing would be done. This studio was usually used for conferences or for musical events. It was never used for students' video productions, but it could be adapted for that. The technicians would have to be re-instructed since it was not the same to video a conference and to make a video production. Students were not allowed to operate the video equipment and the cameras by themselves; it was against the AUI rules. "We don't have a lot of equipment and when you start to give the students the only equipment you have, it can be trouble. . . . Our technician is skilled and knows the equipment very well."

Consequently there was a proposal from the School of Social Sciences and Humanities for a master's level course designed to teach the use of new communication media and technology. The intention was to purchase more of the same video and other equipment. The students taking the course would use the new equipment to do field production, advertising, CD-ROM production and other activities related to communication media. The same equipment could be made available for students to use, said Lahlou. (See Appendix D, p. 276.)

Streaming video technology could be utilized to transfer video clips via the internet, said Lahlou. At that time, AUI did not have the necessary interfacing equipment between video systems and a computer. "Needed is at least a computer with a video acquisition card connected to a VCR or a television, which would digitalize the data and have it stored in a binary form." The video data could then be transferred and transmitted through the internet.

7.6.8 AUI's network and cable infrastructure

All the buildings on campus were cabled for the computer local network, for video signal cable system and for the telephone service. Fiber-optic cables were used between the buildings, which protected communication systems from the many lightning storms in Ifrane. The local network was not yet active in some of the buildings including student and faculty residences.

The cable system was available everywhere. A limited list of channels, approved by the president, included mostly satellite programs in English such as ABC and NBC, an Arabic channel, a French channel, a music channel, and Moroccan TV. Residents only provided their own televisions.

AUI's sophisticated communication system was provided and installed by the ONPT. There were two 4Mbps lines which directly linked the campus to the central ONPT exchange in Ifrane. Only one of these lines was active while the other was a backup. 2Mbps were dedicated to telephone services and 2Mbps carried internet traffic and other communication needs.

The telephone system was served by a SDA technology (Selection Directe á l'Arrivée or direct selection on arrival). This digital technology allowed up to 13 incoming communications simultaneously without operator intervention. To make outgoing calls, normal direct analogue lines were used.

A BMX 264 switching equipment made by SAT divided the other 2Mbps communication portion. 64Kbps were connected through the ONPT directly to a French internet provider. Two 384Kbps leased lines could be used for video-conferencing and DE. Because of the high cost of leased lines, these two lines were inactive. In order to be able to provide more cost effective DE, the university was waiting for ISDN service to be available in Ifrane. The ONPT would need to install a separate ISDN line.

7.6.9 Proposed future projects and goals

1. An additional computer lab with 50 computers dedicated for internet use only was needed. This would free up computers that were currently used by internet users for

- use by student working on their assignments. Internet machines, working off a server, would be less expensive since they would not use a hard-drive or a floppy drive.
2. Internet access to dormitories needed to be completed. The fiber optic cables to the dorms as well as the wires within the buildings were already installed for some time. The network's active equipment, such as hubs, routers, switches, was needed. The project needed funding of about one million dirhams, or US\$100,000.
 3. Additional UNIX-based computers were needed. About 20 additional state of the art UNIX stations were needed for the engineering school's computer lab. In addition, additional Sun stations were needed for computer science and mathematics faculty members.

7.7 Technology at MVU

7.7.1 Overview

From the standpoint of the available technology and the technical possibility to participate in an international DE program, Mohammed V. University (MVU) at Agdal was a fairly good representative of Moroccan public universities, according to Dr. Mekouar. Like other public universities, MVU was a large institution with a large number of students and with insufficient government funds. At public universities, technological possibilities were limited. Computers were not available to either faculty or students and basic teaching aid equipment and supplies were not to be found. "For the time being we don't have computers even for our faculty, but this should change" said Dr. Ezroua, Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Letters and the Humanities. His hope was that by the time the MARWAN network would be operational, the Faculty could have a computer lab available for both teachers and students. Already then, Dr. Ezroua had desktop computers both in his office and at home. They both had internet connection, but he was paying for the service out of his own pocket.

Both Dr. Belghazi and Dr. Haddad also agreed that it was just a matter of time until computers and the internet would be available at the Faculty, but they also pointed out

that even questions of technology “are closely bound up with the political” (Belghazi). The MARWAN project itself and its completion depended on high-level government decisions and election outcomes. Even when the network would become available, funding the necessary equipment, maintaining it and paying for communication expenses could also face financial and political barriers.

At the same time, MVU Agdal possessed some unique characteristics that would favor it in comparison to some other public universities from a technical point of view. The university was situated in the nation’s capital, in close proximity to the central government and its ministries. It was one of only two universities offering M.A. and Ph.D. programs to its students. For these two reasons, it might be easier to attract the necessary funding for international DE work in comparison to other Moroccan universities. The university’s close proximity to the INPT and to EMI, both educational institutions with higher levels of technology, could allow some kind of institutional cooperation. In addition, the city of Rabat was a major node in both the MARWAN network and for MARANIS service.

7.7.2 Internet usage and e-mail availability

In general, findings showed that computers and access to the internet were available in Moroccan universities only when their use was essential. In most cases, the university did not provide this technology to its administration, faculty or students. The situation in the Faculty of Letters in Agdal was no different; it had only one e-mail account, which was not available for teachers’ use. “E-mail is very new in the university,” said Tahri, “and when something is new, everyone is very careful.” It seemed that e-mail usage was controlled directly by the dean of the department.

In contrast to what was just described, Mohammediya School of Engineering (EMI) at Agdal, which is also a part of MVU, was the exception to the rule. EMI had computer labs and internet access for its engineering students and faculty. In fact, EMI was the home of the first e-mail server in Morocco.

In the English Department, some professors and students found ways to access the technology on their own. Teachers reported that they had their own computers. They also reported that most of their colleagues owned computers. Not many of them had internet access at home or had any extensive experience in using the technology. Those home computers were primarily used for word processing and multi media. As was mentioned before, internet access was expensive for the low paid Moroccan university professors. Some faculty admitted that they were not using e-mail, that they were unfamiliar with that technology, and that they were somewhat intimidated by it.

Theoretically, most faculty members knew that the internet and using e-mail was the future and they were excited about it. In practice, text-based casual communication is not common among Moroccans. Moroccan culture is an oral culture where personal communication is mostly done orally. According to Dr. Haddad, it is uncommon for Moroccans to write notes to themselves or to others; instead, they rely much more on memory and prefer face-to-face verbal communication. Using the telephone, which again is verbal and auditory, would be their second choice. Reasonable levels of keyboard proficiency were reported to be rare and not very common even within the university. One would expect to find higher levels of e-mail usage and keyboard proficiency in computer science departments, in the engineering departments, and in the High Schools of technology.

Some faculty members, particularly those who were trained in the U.S., reported that they were making substantial efforts to use internet technology and to influence their students to do the same. Since the technology was not available within the university, they used the services of cyber-café. Dr. Haddad, Dr. Barada, and Dr. Belghazi all reported that they had internet accounts at cyber-café and that they encouraged their students to do the same, even if those students had to share a membership with their peers. Cost of membership at a cyber-café could be prohibitive for a Moroccan student — about 600 dirhams for a one year subscription and then 20 dirhams for each hour of usage, reported El-Kanaoui.

7.7.3 Access to technology through institutional cooperation

Indeed, computers and internet access were not yet available at MVU's Faculty of Letters. Teachers and students had to go out from the framework of the faculty into the private sector of cyber-café's in order to access the internet. According to Dr. Haddad, this could be an effective way to start, as a small pilot project, international cultural collaboration between a class in Morocco and a class at UNM.

Dr. Alaoui of EMI offered another possibility. After studying a summary of the LCTDE project, he suggested that a joint effort between the EMI and the Faculty of Letters might make the international distance learning project possible. EMI was in fact the only branch of MVU that had computer labs, e-mail accounts, and the needed technical staff to support collaboration at a distance. Alaoui proposed that interested faculty members from the Faculty of Letters would be assigned e-mail accounts at EMI and would be trained in using the technology. "The first step is to encourage them to use their e-mail and to feel that it is very important," he said. Following this, a computer-mediated conference could take place where faculty members from both, Morocco and the U.S. would together design the distance learning course and simultaneously master the technology. The actual international distance learning course would take place only after all the background work was completed.

A suggestion similar to Dr. Alaoui's came from Mr. Choukhmane of the INTP, after it was concluded that his students probably would not participate in a full-blown cross-cultural communication course. At that point, he suggested that possibly some kind of joint venture between a faculty from the humanities and his technical school might be pursued. In both cases, it was made clear that such cooperation could only happen with directive from a common higher authority. A major concept that was formulated from these exchanges with Alaoui and with Choukhmane was that when directives from higher levels of authority exist, Moroccan institutions might be able to work together synergistically toward a common educational goal. Section 7.8 of the present paper

addresses a situation where two educational institutions desired to cooperate on a DE project.

7.7.4 Equipment in the classroom

The extreme shortage of audio-visual equipment and the unavailability of multi media in the classroom were apparent. Professors knew about and advocated the importance modern technology in the classroom, in particular the use of video as a teaching aid (Dahbi et al., 1992, pp. 231-242). The general reality in Moroccan universities was that such funds were usually not available. As an exception to the rule, Dr. Barada related the following success story:

At The British Studies Conference held by the British Consul, the English Department of MVU, Agdal, was awarded a classroom equipped with a VCR and a monitor. On the same occasion, the British Open University gave the department a gift of videotapes that were used in their courses at the Open University. “We are the only department which have this kind of facility,” reported Barada. He said that the exams they just concluded demonstrated a positive response from students. Answers were much more intelligent than previously and included much less focus on regurgitating the material covered in class, with more original thought present. “It was very successful,” he concluded.

7.8 Technology in Marrakesh — ALC

7.8.1 Overview

In Marrakesh, the possibility of cooperation between two educational institutions existed. Cadi Ayyad University of Marrakesh had previous experience in conducting cross-cultural programs with universities from the U.S. and Britain. It was interested in participating in international distance learning, but at the same time, it did not have the necessary technology or the connectivity to support such collaboration. The American Language Center (ALC) of Marrakesh had been cooperating with the University on their

English-based cross-cultural programs for some time. Some university professors also taught at the ALC and others were students there. The ALC operated a computer lab for students and had internet accounts available to its users. Both Dr. Knidiri; the Rector of Cadi Ayyad, and Mr. Fitzgerald, the director of the ALC, welcomed the opportunity to join forces in order to be able to participate in an international course about cultures using DE technology.

Since the technology component at Cadi Ayyad University was virtually nonexistent, the rest of this section will describe only technology at the ALC.

7.8.2 Computer technology at ALC Marrakesh

According to Fitzgerald, already in 1988 he had started to incorporate computer technology into the Center and was the first ALC in Morocco to do so. The school's financial success allowed Fitzgerald to purchase additional, more advanced Windows-based computers with internet access. The ALC computer lab was located next to the school's library and Fitzgerald saw it as an extension of the library, allowing students to access needed information from the internet and from CD-ROMs.

The computer lab had seven desktop computers set up. Four of them were networked to the internet. One networked laser printer served the lab. In a nearby classroom there were three additional computers that were used for instruction. These computers also had an internet connection and were available to teachers when the classroom was not in use. There were also three computers in the administration office, two of which were on the network.

Fitzgerald pointed out that the ALC was the only place in Marrakesh where people could come and use a computer. Most students could not afford to go to the recently opened cyber-café. At the ALC, every paying library member could use a computer free of charge.

The availability of computers attracted people to go there. The minimum requirement to be able to use an ALC computer was to be a library member. Library membership had definitely increased as the number of computers increased. Any resident

of Marrakesh can be a library member for 100 dirhams (US\$10) per year and a security deposit of \$20.

7.8.3 Moroccans' relationship to computer technology

Fitzgerald said that Moroccans usually teach each other how to use the technology, so there was no need for organized instructions on how to use the technology. Moroccans also did not have the fear of technology that some Western people develop; they plunged right in. On many occasions, Moroccans liked to use computers in pairs or in groups. Generally, they were comfortable with the interface and with the mouse, but had difficulty with typing and keyboard usage.

When it came to computer usage, males would take more initiative than females. At the same time, this did not exclude females. Women students from the university came looking for information from the internet and CD-ROMs just as men did. Also, males and females frequently shared the use of computers and taught each other to use the technology.

The ALC teachers received their computer training at the Center. Although some of the teachers were faculty members at the university, none of them had had any previous computer experience. Their only obstacle was that they couldn't type, the rest was quite basic. What is labeled "intuitive" and "user friendly" was basically the same for Moroccans as it was for people from the West.

"The thing that really hampers students, in terms of computer time, is their typing ability," reported Mark Austin. "That's probably the biggest barrier for people feeling comfortable with the computer." Austin and Fitzgerald together taught an oral English class where the students were assigned to get the information for class discussions only from the web.

According to Fitzgerald, in Morocco typing was still regarded as a skill for secretaries. Typing was looked down upon; they got it from the French, he said.

7.8.4 Computer lab procedures and finance

When the library was open, the students signed up for 20-minute time segments. If no one was waiting they could continue. “Next year we hope to get a special lab dedicated to the internet with a minimum of five computers” said Fitzgerald. “When that happens we might have to do things differently.” There would have to be a lab attendant and students would have to pay something for computer time.

Financially, when a classroom would be dedicated to be used as a computer lab, that means lost income that has to be taken into consideration. In addition, the cost of computers in Morocco was quite prohibitive. A 133-MHz PC clone, with multi-media cost about \$1,200 with tax, which was an expensive investment for the ALC. To get good equipment such as IBM or Compaq was even much more expensive.

As far as ongoing expenses, there were the printing costs for paper and toner. Students had to pay a small fee per printed page. Then there were the on-line costs for both the internet provider and telephone time. When students were online, they had to pay the cost of the telephone line, and the librarian supervised that.

7.8.5 ALC students’ internet and computers usage

Most people used the ALC computers for standard applications, principally for word processing and to search for information for their studies. For information, they used the available CD-ROMS and the internet. There was no other place in Marrakesh such as a large library to go search for information. Other people came to send or receive e-mail.

Misuse of the internet was not observed. The fact that the computers were in the library where there were always people was enough to control usage. Shame is a strong force in Moroccan society. To use the internet for entertainment, people would go to cyber-café.

Unlike the students at AUI, the ALC students were not spending time in chat rooms. That is probably because they were paying for on-line time. They paid about 80

centimes every two minutes or 24 dirham per hour, which is about \$2.50. In addition, download time was slow, especially when people were online in America.

At the same time, many students used e-mail to communicate with pen pals all over the world. They were taught in their English classes how to use e-mail for clear and correct communication. They were encouraged to write about specific subjects of interest. The school was not interested in teaching English per se but rather in teaching communication. And students in America are not interested in listening to garbled English from Moroccan students but are looking for content (Fitzgerald, Appendix D, p. 322).

7.8.6 Other available technologies

In the classroom, ALC teachers used audio and visual aids extensively. A library with a large selection of instructional documentary and fiction audio and videocassettes was available together with the necessary equipment for the teachers there. Both American and British movies were regularly projected for the enjoyment of the whole school body. There was also a semi-professional video camera available for special projects.

7.9 Summary

Chapter VII dealt with technological aspect of this study and with the possibilities for using technology to provide distance education (DE) in Morocco. It included topics relating to technologies in Morocco, to computers, to internet, to distance education technology, to technologies of media and mass media and to other related subjects. It examined the existing telecommunication infrastructure in the country and the projected development there. The discussion specifically addressed how these technologies are used in Moroccan universities and schools, and the relationships that exist between people and technology, particularly in the Moroccan educational sector. The available technological possibilities at the particular educational institutions studied were examined.

Table 7.1: The available technology at the four units of research in the beginning of 1998 and the projected availability for 2001.

available technology \ institution	AUI	MVU	ACL	INPT
Computers available for faculty members	✓	➡	✓	✓
Computers available for students	✓	➡➡	✓	✓
Internet access for faculty members	✓	➡➡	✓	✓
Internet access for students	✓	➡➡	✓	✓
CMC software				
Web-based DE software	➡➡			
ISDN available	➡		➡	✓
ISDN infrastructure	➡	✓		✓
Video-conferencing equipment	✓			➡
Video player	✓	✓		✓
Video camera	✓		✓	✓
Video editing equipment	➡➡			✓
Local network infrastructure	✓	➡	➡	✓
Media-streaming software				
Faculty members computer skills	good	medium	good	good
Students' computer skills	good	low	fair	good

Legend:

- ✓ Available in 1998
- ➡ Projected availability by 2001
- ➡➡ Projected future availability

Chapter VIII

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Introduction

The purpose of this concluding chapter is to discuss the main outcomes that resulted from the present study and to attempt to answer the research questions that were put forth in chapter III. The main topics that will be discussed here are by far not the only issues raised by this study. Indeed, this Moroccan field work and the resulting data and analysis provided a wealth of new issues, expected and unexpected lessons, and new questions. This chapter is not intended to be a summary of the study but rather a platform bringing the elements that were presented throughout this study to a coherent conclusion. Additionally, there is sufficient material in this chapter alone to perhaps provoke the reader interest enough to go back and enjoy the rest of the story.

8.2 Limitation of the present study and suggestion for future research

8.2.1 LCTDE, a hypothetical project

One of the characteristics of this Moroccan study was that the proposed LCTDE project was hypothetical. The idea of a LCTDE project functioned as the impetus and the vehicle for this research. The results of the present study are indeed the building blocks needed to begin and design a DE project for international cross-cultural learning in Morocco. At the same time, this is a feasibility study. Its focus is to try to determine whether such an international DE program could be carried out in Morocco or elsewhere in a successful manner.

One of the basic limitations of this study, which could also be regarded as one of its strengths, was the lack of any possible commitment behind the hypothetical LCTDE. There did not exist a real proposal for a potential live project to which the people on the Moroccan side could have responded or committed. Indeed it was hypothetical; however, the reason that this limitation can be also seen as strength is that mistakes that were made

due to ignorance could have damaged a real project in progress. The next step would be to use the lessons learned and the information gathered to come up with a workable project.

8.2.2 Suggestions for future research

Further research and study is needed. There is still a need for a feasibility study to be conducted on the U.S. side. Any future research must involve Moroccans' active participation in order to look at the issues from a Moroccan point of view. Detailed training programs for faculty members and for students must be designed. If indeed research and design work on this project is to continue in some fashion, it must involve a number of participants on both sides to allow true collaboration at a distance and to resolve some of the constraints that were listed in chapter III (3.5.4 & 3.5.5).

Future research is also needed in the areas of:

1. Issues of cultural equality, domination and inferiority in cross-cultural collaboration.
2. Cultural biases inherent in various technologies
3. Ways of leveling the technological field when it is involving collaboration among partners who are unequal economically.
4. Issues of language domination and language equality in collaborative situations where some members must use solely a foreign language for communication.

8.2.3 The time factor

The time that elapsed from 1997- 1998, when data for this study were collected, until the end of the year 2000, when this report is published, may be considered a limitation by some. With today's fast changing technologies and world economy and with the fast pace of change in the DE field, a study that took place more than two years ago may be regarded as dated and therefore less relevant.

Evidently, these changes did not skip Morocco. Most likely, many more Moroccans are using more advanced technologies today. Moroccan infrastructure and communication services have also probably developed. It is also likely that the technology gap between

Morocco and the West has increased. The interest of some of the Moroccan people who participated in this study may have waned or drifted, they may have changed their roles or even left the country. The political atmosphere in Morocco has also changed and there is now a new young king on the throne.

At the same time, these changes do not necessarily invalidate the results of this study. Perhaps on the contrary, the time lapsed may have strengthened these findings. Cultural tendencies and trends in Morocco do not change rapidly and the lessons learned in this study can be utilized when and where they would be needed. Technological advancements have made DE more affordable, more user-friendly and more commonly accepted as a valid educational tool. Educators and educational institutions are increasingly giving more credence and more importance to cultural studies, to cross-cultural communication and to the study of cultural identities; both in the U.S. and around the globe. The ground might be even riper now for implementation of projects similar to the proposed LCTDE.

8.3 Conclusions concerning issues and questions explored in this study

This section includes concluding discussions relating to each of the research questions posed in chapter III.

8.3.1 Education

ROE-1. Response to DE and to the LCTDE proposal: The first research question is composed of two dimensions and the relationship between these two is the main focus of this study. The two dimensions are technology and methodology of distance education on the one hand, and international education in cross-cultural communication on the other. The feasibility of a “marriage” between the two within the Moroccan environment is indeed the subject of this study.

The term distance education is becoming increasingly familiar within the Moroccan higher education community. On the one hand, Moroccan educators, teachers, and students had heard about DE and discussed it mainly in theoretical terms. On the other

hand, in general they had not experienced or witnessed DE technology in use; nor did they have much, if any, information or knowledge about the inherent possibilities and constraints associated with DE. At the same time, many of the interviewees expressed a sense of hope and a faith that DE technology could solve problems that existed within the Moroccan education system.

A number of the interviewees voiced the idea that international DE could provide Moroccan students with an inexpensive access to education in the West without the need to travel. In particular, there was the hope that DE could help Moroccan learners obtain degrees and credentials from higher education institutions in the West while studying in Morocco. Educators voiced hope concerning the possibility of cooperation between Moroccan schools and schools in the U.S. where students could study in a local educational institution while taking some distance courses in order to receive a degree from the foreign institution.

A different educational niche for DE may exist at AUI, where non-Moroccan professors, mainly from the U.S., are presently hired to come and teach in the university. Whether for economic reasons or to supply lacking expertise, DE methods could be utilized, whereby professors teach students at AUI from remote international campuses.

There were also voices of mistrust and caution concerning opening doors to more Western influence in Morocco and into the Moroccan educational system. Concerns and questions about the political and economic motives behind bringing distance education into Morocco were raised.

Locally, interviewees expressed hopes that DE technology could be utilized to narrow the large gap that exists between education in cities and the education available in rural Morocco. The hope was expressed that DE would be used, as it is used by open universities around the world, to provide continuing education. Continuing education, while not available in Morocco is badly needed there.

As to the question of the feasibility of employing DE technologies for cross-cultural education in Morocco similar to what is proposed in the LCTDE project, the responses

were varied and provided a wealth of information. Here, one needs to first examine what participants in this study had to say about cross-cultural education in Morocco, and only then to assess their responses to the question of being involved and collaborating with non-Moroccans. Then, finally, can the question about the use of DE technologies for international cross-cultural communications be entertained.

The varieties of educational methods used to teach cross-cultural communication in the U.S. are little known in Morocco. Although one hears the call of Moroccan educators (see chapter VI) to import and use some of these methods as part of reforming higher education in the country, this probably will take time. In addition, if these methods will be used, they will have to be adapted to the Moroccan culture and to the needs of the education system there.

Interviewees who spoke about cross-cultural programs and cross-cultural studies mainly referred to programs that target foreign students who come to Morocco to learn about the culture there. Moroccan universities conduct such programs (AUI, MVU, and CAU) in order to bring in additional revenues as well as for international and national recognition. Such cross-cultural programs are also conducted by other entities such as the Center for Cross-Cultural Learning in Rabat, Global Involvement Through Education in Casablanca and the Marrakesh ALC. Two educational institutions included in this study, AUI and the INPT, send their own students abroad for the purpose of cross-cultural experience.

Some Moroccan universities (AUI and MVU) conduct cultural studies (CS) programs and courses. These CS programs are of interest for the present study since they are close in nature to what is considered in the U.S. as cross-cultural communication studies. A group of professors within the English Department at MVU have introduced CS there. CS courses are also taught at AUI but with a slightly different focus and structure. At both universities, professors teaching these courses showed interest in the possibilities inherent in the LCTDE project and in teaching about culture together with students from another culture and in another place. These Moroccan faculty members

had many comments, suggestions, and reservations about the feasibility of such an endeavor.

To the students, the subject of cross-cultural communications by itself is vague and abstract. Students wanted answers to more concrete questions such as, How does taking this course relate to the job market? How would it be credited and evaluated? How much of a workload is involved? How does it fit into the rest of their academic path? One of the participants said that with the students, the need, which does not exist yet, must be created. The students are attracted to learning new technologies. They are hungry for new forms of knowledge that will open doors to new opportunities in a global reality. An international cross-cultural communication program must be designed and packaged in ways that fulfill Moroccan students' needs.

ROE-2. Level of commitment of faculty and students to DE and to the LCTDE: The extent of commitment of faculty and students can only be based on circumstantial knowledge gathered from the present study. The reason for this is that there was no specific proposed project planned at that time to which participants could commit. This, in fact, is one of the constraints and a weakness of this feasibility study: that there is no concrete project proposal to back it. "What if" situations cannot evoke commitment.

A number of qualified Moroccan faculty members expressed a willingness and interest to participate and involve their classes, if a project similar to the LCTDE takes place. Professors in public universities report that they are required to abide by the strictly imposed law of higher education and to follow the same state-dictated curricula from year to year, and that this is a boring and uninspiring process. Interviewees indicated that many faculty members are hungry for new challenges in their job and that minimal incentives such as inviting Moroccan faculty for training in the U.S. and training them in new technologies might be sufficient to ensure commitment on their behalf. Moroccan professors are required to teach 10 hours per week and therefore could have the time to participate in a DE project. At the same time, since these same professors are paid low salaries, many hold second jobs that take their energies away from teaching. In

order to get committed faculty for a DE project, sufficient financial compensation must be provided to them.

Interview data indicate that the students also would be willing to commit their energies to a DE cross-cultural studies course if the benefits, as well as the requirements, are presented to them correctly. The attraction of hands-on experience with new technology as well as the international implications at the workplace of the said DE course would appeal to Moroccan students. The course must be designed in a way to accommodate to students' needs such as time constraints that they experience during examinations, for example, and to consider their general workload needs.

At AUI, the parameters just discussed change somewhat, but also there, the indications are that both faculty and students will want to commit their energies to such a proposed DE project. The isolated life at Ifrane leave students and faculty with time on their hands, which some reported as boring or unexciting. Many of the students spend hours in virtual chat-rooms for this very reason. The energies for commitment are available at AUI for a challenging and exciting project.

ROE-3. Educational need of Moroccans for a DE course in cross-cultural communication: The focus here is the need on the Moroccan side. The needs of the Moroccan learners and the needs of the Moroccan higher education system are different enough from the needs on the U.S. side to consider this constraint as one of the major problems, if not *the* major problem, that needs to be addressed and solved in advance. The difference in needs on the two cultural sides must be incorporated into the program design. This constraint was expected, since Morocco was chosen to participate in this type of project precisely for being, in so many ways, a contrast culture to that of the U.S. In order for such a collaborative DE project to have a chance and to be successful, a middle way must be negotiated where each side needs to make compromises that it can live with. If, and when, this balance would be achieved, the compromises themselves would be translated into cultural learning experiences for all participants, that is, if the differences are assimilated in a sensitive and conscious manner.

Interview material suggests that in Morocco, one finds a very rigid social structure compared to the loosely-woven society of the U.S. This rigidity makes it difficult to change existing social patterns. Generally, Moroccan students are more reserved in their speech and are less spontaneous than their American counterparts. They want to prepare what they will say in advance after study and reflection. “They have not been encouraged throughout their educational experience to talk spontaneously and freely” (Appendix D, p. 229). At the same time, one might find, at first, Moroccan students to be very rigid about their point of view. The need to be right and in charge in an adversarial manner is strong and might be perceived as a barrier to collaboration. This type of strong, non-relenting attitude could be especially present when it comes to political, national and religious subjects. In general, students on each side will have different choices of topics for discussion. Moroccan students also feel that they know much more about American culture than Americans know about Moroccan culture. According to Dr. Moudden, these barriers will be strong only initially. Moroccan students will relax as they get to know their counterparts.

The differences between the two educational systems must also be considered in the program design. Moroccan higher education is a highly teacher centered, lecture based system. Students seem to be more specialized in their academic direction and have increased interest in achieving their academic goals since the consequence of failing their exams is not being permitted to continue with university studies. Students also are not allowed to change the academic path they have started.. For example, English students will have little education and knowledge in other fields. Also, there is disparity in the academic calendars on the two sides and the different time zones must be considered.

The data collected in this study indicate that educational parameters and needs in Morocco are different than those in the academic U.S. At the same time, there are not enough data necessary for a complete program design; nor was that the study’s intention. The conclusion of this present study is that the program design and the ensuing course curricula would have to be a collaborative design process done by the faculty members

who will be teaching the course. It will be a group process that will include both Moroccan teachers and teachers from the U.S. They will be trained together and at the same time will design a program which will be sensitive to the needs of students on both sides.

RQE-4. Faculty members' willingness to collaborate with American counterparts:

As in the response to question two (RQE-2) of this section, it is not possible to assess real commitment given the conditions of this present research. In general, data indicate that Moroccan faculty members are willing to take part, even enthusiastically at times, in such a DE project design. At the same time, data about communicating with Moroccan faculty revealed some interesting and relevant findings. Moroccan culture is an oral culture that was just beginning to transform into a written culture as it was swept into the culture of the image, says Dr. Barada. There is also a strong influence from traditional Islam where the written word and the writing process are taken very seriously. Usually, when a Moroccan is asked to relate a specific topic, even informally, s/he will probably try to prepare a detailed, well cognized and rehearsed, written presentation rather than to jot down an outline or be ready to give a spontaneous oral response.

In the U.S.'s academic reality, working together at a distance in collaboration and design usually implies many e-mail messages going forwards and backwards in many directions; maybe short telephone conversations, and possibly some computer aided conferencing (CMC). Moroccans are not quite used to this type of working format. In this kind of relationship, the Moroccan counterparts might seem unresponsive and uncooperative. Here, it is not suggested that the communication method just described would not work, but rather that this is not the way to start the working relationship among faculty members from the two cultures.

A face-to-face meeting to initiate the collaborative effort will be appropriate. The meeting should not only involve discussions about the subject at hand, but also focus on developing personal relationships among the members to form friendships and trust. At this point, the group has to decide together how to continue the communication process at

a distance. Methods of communication and technologies that will allow more oral contacts among group members, contacts that can be repeated and without excessive time constraints might be needed.

ROE-5. Potential partnerships with institutions of higher education: Here again it must be reiterated that since one must meet a commitment with a commitment and since this study was a preliminary study without any authority behind it, commitment on the Moroccan side was not possible at the time of the study. Three higher education institutions indicated a desire to host a DE project involving international cross-cultural communication studies. The three were Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Muhammed V University in Agdal, and Cadi Ayyad University in Marrakesh in conjunction with ALC Marrakesh.

In the case of AUI, the highest level of contact was made with the vice president for academic affair. He was supportive and arranged all the other necessary meetings with faculty and staff on campus. In fact, he suggested starting a pilot project immediately and building up the program from there. At this point, one must remember that in the Moroccan atmosphere of bureaucratic hierarchy it would have been more effective to begin the dialogue at a higher level if possible, for example, at the president's office or even with the minister in charge of the university.

At MVI, the highest level meeting was with the vice-dean of the Faculty of Letters. Here, again, the meeting was successful and fruitful. Positive connections with faculty members were made and data were gathered. However, in order to initiate an actual project, support must be sought on higher organizational levels. Already, when an attempt was made to link the Faculty of Letters, where the program, the teachers and students were, to MVU's school of engineering, EMI, where the necessary technology and expertise resided, there was not enough authority to facilitate it. A rule of thumb for possible cooperation between two public entities in Morocco is that the directive must come from a place hierarchically higher to both entities. In the above example, perhaps a

strong support from the minister of higher education could have made the desired collaboration possible.

The third possibility opened in Marrakesh with Cadi Ayyad University in conjunction with ALC. In Marrakesh, most of the contact was made with the director of the ALC who became an ardent and active supporter of the proposed project. The fact that the ALC director was an American with 25 years of work experience in Morocco made the research work there simpler and the results a bit clearer. Through the ALC, a connection was made to the rector of the university, who very much wanted to see a DE project take place in his university. In the case of Marrakesh, there was a strong commitment from both institutions and on a high enough level of authority that an actual DE project could have been initiated at that time.

ROE-6. English language proficiency at Moroccan universities: Arabic is the first and official language of Morocco. French is considered to be the second language of the country and for the last century it was considered by Moroccan elite and by Western-educated academia there as the language of high culture and as the door to Europe and the West. Since now it seems that English has become the unofficial language of the Western world and of what is known as the global community, many Moroccan students now see English as a door to the world. Many Moroccans are already bilingual or trilingual and have a talent for acquiring foreign languages. Learning very basic English is compulsory in most secondary schools, but the results are minimal. All Moroccan universities have large English departments as part of the Faculty of Letters where the language is taught on a much higher level. Some of the other faculties and private higher education schools teach their students the technical English they might need in their particular field. Many Moroccan students also attend one of the many ALCs found in all major cities, in order to excel in their knowledge of the language. Moroccan culture is an oral culture and consequently students are stronger in their oral command of English in comparison with writing and reading it. At the same time, since excellence in oral expression is so vital in

Moroccan culture, students might perceive the need to express themselves, orally, in English, as a handicap and a challenge.

AUI is the first and only American-style university in Morocco. English, in particular American English, is the language of instruction there. To be admitted to the university, students must score a minimum of 530 on the TOEFL exam, which is equivalent to what universities in the U.S. require of their foreign students. Since the language of instruction at AUI is English, including reading and writing assignments, students' language skills improve substantially in their course of studies there. English is the first language of many of the faculty members at AUI and that helps students to acquire correct structure and pronunciation of the language. As to the non-native English-speaking AUI faculty members, the majority were educated in English speaking countries and again, have good command of the language. American English is indeed the language of choice of most AUI students, and American culture is their culture of choice. Most AUI students use the internet frequently, which also increases their exposure to English. (Partly due to the isolation of the university, many students spend a great deal of their free time in virtual chat-rooms where the language used is English.)

The English Department at MVU does not require any minimum language skills from their new students. This has to do with the dictates of the Moroccan law for higher education. Instead, they employ a sink-or-swim philosophy to weed out students whose English skills are insufficient. Only students whose command of English meets the high demands of the department will make it to the second cycle. Still, students' language skills vary considerably and professors there suggested employing a selection process if indeed a DE course would take place. Many of the students who can afford the expense, improve their English skills by attending classes at the ALC in Rabat. Students also find many opportunities to increase their language skills by engaging English-speaking tourists and other foreigners who abound in the city of Rabat. The majority of Moroccans are

extremely social, friendly to foreigners and hospitable, traits that come in handy for acquiring and practicing languages.

The faculty's teachers are all native Moroccans who acquired their English as a foreign language. Many of them are graduates of the MVU's English department itself. They usually continued their studies in England or in the U.S. Their spoken English is good and grammatically correct most of the time but they speak in a variety of different accents, which are pleasant to listen to and are typically Moroccan (see section 6.5).

The case of the CAU English students is very similar to those at MVU. More than 250 of them also attend English classes at the ALC of Marrakesh. Many of those are in the more advanced courses given at the ALC and their English is quite good. The one advantage that the Marrakesh students have over those at MVU is that they have easier access to computers and the internet through the ALC, which probably helps them improve their language skills.

8.3.2 Technology

ROT-1. DE projects in Morocco: Historically, radio and television technologies were used for DE in the sixties, right after Moroccan independence. All DE programs were discontinued after a few years and one can say that today there is no DE being used in Morocco.

At the time when data were collected for this study, Morocco had two DE programs that were in different developmental stages, neither of which had been deployed at the time of data collection. These were the MARWAN project and the DE Pilot project for training teachers in rural Morocco. Other possible uses for DE in Morocco were mentioned, but these were in the conceptual stages only.

The MARWAN (MARocco's Wide Area Network) project is a wide area network designed to link Moroccan institutions of higher education (see 7.4.2). In 1998, the ONPT reported that they are in the process of installing this high-speed network and are intending to provide the needed technical support and maintenance to the institutions who

would be using the network. MARWAN is designed to provide basic services such as sharing common databases, sharing software resources, exchanging e-mail, etc.

MARWAN is also designed to be able to provide more advanced services including access to the internet, multimedia, distance education, video-conferencing, tele-labor, tele-assistance, and so forth.

The DE Pilot project for training teachers in rural Morocco is aimed at the primary and secondary education systems of Morocco (see 7.4.3). The project's goal is to establish a flexible IDE (interactive DE) system using interactive television technology and advanced DE methods. The pilot project is intended to train teachers, school directors and other educational staff. Later, this system could also be used to teach students.

Other possible uses for DE in Morocco were identified in the present study. AUI already owned video-conferencing equipment with the intent to import distance lectures and courses by professors in the U.S. and elsewhere. The High-Tech Institute in Rabat was possibly interested in joint ventures with technical institutions in the U.S. in order to offer their students courses taught at a distance. The medical school in Rabat was examining possible uses of DE technology to deliver instruction to students at their Fez branch.

ROT-2. Possible appropriate DE technologies: The following DE technologies could possibly be used with reasonable success in Morocco:

1. Video-conferencing; via ISDN, leased line or satellite
2. Desktop video-conferencing; via internet or ISDN
3. Web-based DE; via internet
4. E-mail communication and CMC technologies; via internet
5. Interactive television and audio; via satellite or terrestrial cable
6. Videotape and audiotape production; via internet-based streaming media or via conventional mail

All or some of the above DE technologies may be applicable in a hybrid international DE program for cross-cultural communication studies. The advantage of using a combination of delivery technologies is the possibility to maximize the strength of each technology and minimize its weaknesses by exercising the correct selection of delivery methods. Hybrid DE systems may also be more cost effective by limiting the use of the more expensive methods when possible, and when one technology fails, using an alternative technology is possible. On the other hand, there may be disadvantages in using a hybrid system. Additional training of the facilitators and the learners would be necessary. More equipment would be needed and that would raise the initial cost of the DE system. In addition, more time would have to be devoted to the technical aspects of the program.

Choosing the technology or technologies to be used in the suggested project must be part of the DE program design process. One of the conclusions of the present study is that future facilitators of the DE program would also be its designers. Faculty members from Morocco and the U.S. selected to be trained as program facilitators would collaborate in designing the program as part of their training. Educational objectives and cultural parameters as well as technical constraints present in the field and budgetary limitations would have to be considered as part of the design, which includes selecting appropriate technologies.

RQT-3. Communication infrastructure: Morocco is a “developing country” with limited resources and that translates into a less-developed communication infrastructure when compared to what is available in the U.S., in Europe and in other wealthier countries around the world. Morocco’s communication provider, the ONPT (now Itissalat al-Maghrib), is continuously working, one might say with limited success, on catching up with the fast-changing technology of communication in the West (see 7.3). At the same time, since the communication infrastructure that existed in Morocco only ten years ago was minimal, that which is continuously being added is usually the latest technology.

According to a 1997 report (Itissalat-al-Maghrib, 1998), Itissalat al-Maghrib is successful in meeting the exponentially growing demand for new telephone service in the cities and in rural areas for business, residential and mobile-phone customers. Since 1984, over 26 thousand km of main-trunk conduit containing over 5.5 million km-pairs of cable were installed. As the privatization process of the telephone company takes hold, the quality of service and maintenance enjoyed by the public throughout the country is rapidly increasing. The growing demand for public phones, internet services, ISDN lines, and cellular phones, which more than doubles every year, is being met and this trend is expected to continue.

Internationally, in 1997 there were almost 5,300 transmission circuits operating from Morocco. ISDN service has been established with the major European countries and now with the U.S. According to the ONPT, the bandwidth of Morocco's connection to the internet via the U.S. and Italy is being continuously upgraded to meet demand, although users complain that internet service in Morocco is very slow.

ROT-4. Existing and needed technology in Moroccan universities: Topics about the availability of and the need for technology were extensively covered in chapter VII. Sections 7.5 to 7.8 described the available technologies in each of the educational institutions that this study covered. These same sections also identified human-to-technology relationships in these institutions. Therefore, the discussion here will only highlight overall trends and some patterns that one is able to deduce from the present study.

After reading chapter VII, it is easy to conclude that from the point of view of the available technology, AUI would be the most likely candidate for a hybrid collaborative DE project to take place. Under one roof, one finds computer labs with unlimited internet access, a sufficient number of computers for students and a well-organized technical support group. AV equipment could also be made available for students' projects as part of a DE program together with the necessary technical staff. AUI is also the only institution of higher education in Morocco owning video-conferencing equipment that

could be made available for a DE project. However, ISDN service was not available in Ifrane and that could make the use of video-conferencing at AUI expensive.

The picture of available technology in Moroccan public universities was much different. The under-funded Moroccan universities have very little equipment available to them. At MVU, there were no computers and no internet access available for students or faculty at all. Even if there could be an arrangement for students and faculty to use the technology elsewhere, for example, at the INPT, at EMI, or in a cyber-café, usage would probably be limited and insufficient. None of the other technologies that were identified at AUI (i.e., AV equipment and video-conferencing) were available at MVU either.

In comparison to MVU, the situation of the available technology at ALC Marrakesh was much better. Computers with internet access and some AV equipment were available for both students and teachers. However, in comparison with AUI, the ratio of computers per students were much smaller, technical support was limited, AV equipment was outdated and a video-conferencing system was not available at all.

In making comparisons to evaluate the state of readiness in each of the schools, one must remember that in comparison to the state of technology of a school in the U.S., even AUI will seem to be a poor match. Their computers were non-Pentium, older computers. Their connection to the internet was very slow compared with the very high speed networks found at universities in the U.S. Software that was in use at AUI was very basic and had not been upgraded since those computers were purchased due to lack of funds. AV equipment was also very basic and outdated. School policies did not allow students to use the equipment for fear they would damage the machines and service and spare parts were hard to supply. AUI did not have funds allocated for necessary maintenance and every purchase there took a long time, even if it were approved. AUI's video-conferencing equipment was never put into use, but if it were, the same situation might apply. By then, the equipment would be outdated and insufficient, and technical support and maintenance might be inadequate.

The list goes on. A major point that needs to be understood is that the level of technology available for Moroccan higher education will probably always be a few generations old at best. The available technology for higher education is rapidly changing in the U.S., in Morocco and everywhere else, as everyone is trying to catch up. At the same time, the technological gap may be growing between the richer and poorer countries. Service, maintenance and repair in Morocco may always be a much bigger problem than what one expects in the U.S. Technological inequality will be a problem in need of a solution for true distance collaboration to be possible. One must look at the possible results on a cross-cultural collaboration program where one culture is assumed dominant. In such a case, not only would the language of communication be arbitrarily chosen to be English; technical domination may also be imposed as a given.

A possible way to deal with the problem of technological inequality is to ensure that the equipment used by both sides is the same. Additional needed technology could be supplied to the Moroccan collaborators while the American side would be restricted to the same technology that is available to the Moroccan counterparts.

The state of change in the level of technology available to Moroccan institutions of higher education has to also be considered. The reality of networked personal computers and access to the internet for the major public universities of Morocco seemed to be fast approaching already in 1998. The Moroccan individuals themselves, teachers and students, were acquiring their own computers and internet access or using the rapidly increasing phenomenon of cyber-café's. Once MARWAN is activated, public universities like MVI and CAU would have the advantage of the availability of ISDN and other services that are more likely to be available in major cities like Rabat. Therefore, if additional equipment could be made available in one of those public universities, it could make participation in a collaborative DE program feasible.

RQT-5. Technological orientation of faculty members and students: To understand the relationship that existed between the human factor and technology in Morocco, one must first look at the relationship between culture and technology there. How does being

a Moroccan influence one's ability to use various technologies? Another issue is, how does the availability of and the accessibility to different technologies affects one's ability to successfully use these technologies? One also must ask, how does previous experience with using technology, or the lack of it, affect one's training with new technology? Of course, these issues just mentioned are very broad and cover more ground than what this study can encompass. Nevertheless, these issues are relevant and can provide material for future research.

Some insights into the issues raised here can be discussed. Chapter VII reported findings about the relationship students and faculty members had to technology in each of the institutions (see 7.6.5, 7.6.7, 7.7.2, 7.8.3 and 7.8.5). Each of these institutions enjoyed a different level of access to technology, from the AUI, which is well equipped, to MVU, where there is almost no access. Therefore, it is possible, by comparing the findings in these reports, to learn about the relationship that may exist between local Moroccan culture and technology.

Would students experience difficulties using computers due to not having previous experience? Study results show that Moroccans were eager to use computers and showed no fear of technology. Computers and other technologies symbolized to many Moroccans an opening to a more positive reality, an access to information, employment, change from old ways and a door to a global reality. They utilized the strong cultural bonds that they share, in order to teach and train one another to use the technology. It was very common to see Moroccan students help each other, voluntarily coaching and tutoring their friends in and out of class. In many cases, this behavior substituted for the lack of available formal training.

It seemed that the limited availability of computers and the relative high cost of technology forced young people to collaborate and share these available limited resources. They created ways to use the PC as (a GC or) a group computer. One person would work on the keyboard, another with the mouse while yet others would communicate verbally in unison. Moroccans seemed to enjoy working in groups, physically close to

each other with intense high context verbal activity. At the same time, when enough machines are available. at AUI, most students will choose to work alone.

Many students had their first hands-on experience with computers in their current educational establishment, mainly at AUI and ALC-Marrakesh. It did not appear that they had many problems with the technology but they did have a lot of enthusiasm. At the ALC-Marrakesh, reports indicated that students had problems with the level of their keyboard skills and with expressing themselves in English, the language of the internet, when communicating on-line. In contrast, at AUI, where computers were readily available, usage was encouraged, and a good level of English was required, large numbers of students were found spending many hours in international chat-rooms. In chat-rooms, English text-based communication and a good level of keyboard skills are necessary. Therefore, it seems that this transition is possible and that skills can be acquired. In general, Moroccan students take their studies very seriously, probably since they get only one chance and attending a university is that time in their lives to prove themselves. Therefore, schools can require their students to do great deal of work. Moroccan university students are narrowly focused on their field of studies. For example, engineering students and students majoring in computer sciences know their technology and its theory inside out. In the same way, English students take their language skills seriously and when it comes to mastering the technology, they surely will attend to it. At AUI in 1998, students had been exposed to the internet for less than two years, yet these students quickly became very proficient. Judging from this information, one could predict that both students and faculty members could be successfully trained to use DE technologies (i.e., to use internet-based DE software, to manipulate AV equipment and to utilize video-conferencing). Moroccan students and faculty members will, most likely, be motivated to be trained and to put the necessary effort into the process, especially if the program includes a proper selection process, which will measure technological aptitude of participants.

It was demonstrated here that culture-specific issues must be considered when one examines how people relate to and use the technology. These considerations must be addressed in any future training. The present study indicate that Morocco is basically an oral culture and this fact must be anticipated and incorporated into any DE training. The fact that the academic culture in Morocco is highly teacher-centered also needs attention. How the age of participants affect their ability to be trained and to use technology must be considered. Some of the younger students may excel over their older teachers in such areas as mastering the use of technologies or in their command of the keyboard. Such a situation may become a problem in a teacher-centered classroom. The model of student-centered learning with the teacher as a facilitator may be introduced, but again with cultural sensitivity.

8.3.3 Administration

RQA-1&2. Administration's response and support: DE, international DE, or international cross-cultural studies are subjects which few government officials and administrators of Moroccan education know or even care about. The educational structure in Morocco is extremely rigid and is governed by the law of higher education. It is the duty of the administration to exercise the law and what it entails. The discussion in RQE-1 (p. 98) concerning DE in Morocco applies here also. At the same time, according to Dr. Mekouar (Appendix D, p. 330) "Anything that sounds of technology and of possibility to open links with the world would have tremendous appeal." The king of Morocco, in a 1997 address to his nation, declared that Morocco's goal is to open to global trade and that technology is the means and the key for bringing Morocco into the twentieth century's global reality.

Government officials are part of the volatile Moroccan political structure on the one hand and at the same time they represent the stable and rigid hierarchy of the Moroccan kingdom. Again, according to Dr. Mekouar, there is a great demand for DE in Morocco "which means that if the possibility appears, there will be real political pressure to get this done." What he meant was that if there were a concrete DE project proposed, there

would be political pressure exerted on the administration to act in kind and support it. Since a concrete DE proposal was not offered as part of this study, its results can be mainly used as information about how to work with the Moroccan administration, particularly in designing DE proposals that are appealing to them.

An important lesson learned from interacting with administrators in the Moroccan higher education system and with officials and administrators in general was the need to acknowledge and embrace the existing hierarchy of power. The rules and protocols of power relationships and hierarchical realities are rigid and commonly accepted in Moroccan culture. At the same time, knowledge about this reality is not widely discussed although commonly known.

At the beginning of my fieldwork, Moroccan administrators and officials (who happened to be all men) seemed to be very informal, open, and easy to work with in the untrained eyes of an American,. They were very accessible and willing to meet even on short notice or without an appointment. Even officials in high positions were very friendly, polite and helpful, willing to take their time for a meeting with an unknown American researcher. What usually happened was that at some point in the meeting, after the general ideas were presented and discussed, the official would do one of two things. If he had only a general interest, he would take on the role of ally and advisor and suggest routes of action and names of other officials, colleagues and friends who might be interested and able to help. If the official was interested in pursuing the subject further, he would arrange for a meeting with one of his immediate subordinates whom he deemed to have the proper level of authority and the necessary knowledge base. This contact person, usually a faculty member or director of a department, would become the liaison person. S/he would gather more information, assess the situation further and report back to the superior. The idea here was that the actual work would be done with the liaison while decisions and control would be in the hands of the higher official. There was also the assumption that I, too, was representing a higher authority on the U.S. side.

In Morocco, it is important to correctly assess, before actions are taken, the hierarchical level at which decisions can be made. One can also expect that administrators would take one of the two steps described in the last paragraph whether or not they have the proper authority to make decisions. This information would not necessarily be made available explicitly. If negotiations are not made on a high enough level, they probably will fail. After the fact of choosing the initial contact level, it might not be possible to seek another approach. Much of the unspoken code has to do with politeness to the hierarchy by paying appropriate respect to those in authority by coming to them first.

Once an appropriate liaison is assigned who has a direct channel to where decisions can be made, a meaningful relationship must developed with that person. This relationship must be professional as well as personal. The liaison must understand all aspects of the proposed project as well as how s/he personally might benefit from a successful outcome. Benefits might include professional interest in a new field, learning possibilities, future participation in the proposed project or a new personal relationship. The liaison functions not only as a go-between person but more importantly as an advocate, an ally, and a lobbyist for the project to the higher authorities.

For an international DE project to occur, final negotiations and agreements must be performed with proper respect for the appropriate protocols. The proceedings must to be negotiated by those in authority in Morocco, together with their power equivalents on the U.S. side. Moroccan officials would like to deal with someone in the U.S. who is at least on their own hierarchical level, for example, a dean of a faculty would deal with an American dean, or better, with the president of a university. Agreements need to be in writing and personally signed by those in power on both sides, possibly in some ceremonial fashion.

ROA-3. Administrators and their influence: In the two public universities associated with this feasibility study (MVU and CAU) there was a desire to participate in the proposed DE project, but those universities did not possess the necessary technology. In both cases there existed the possibility of utilizing the necessary technological resources

elsewhere in another educational institution. In Marrakesh, there was good will for cooperation between the two institutions on the highest local administrative levels. The rector of CAU and the director of the ALC were willing to cooperate on such a DE project. In Rabat, the situation was more confusing since there, at the time, communication did not exist between the proposed institutions. Negotiations were not made on a high enough level in the power structure. Some participants suggested that for a productive cooperation to exist between two entities, political influence must come from a high place in the prime minister's office.

At AUI, the situation was different. Here, students, teachers, and the necessary technology were all gathered under one roof. AUI's vice president for academic affairs wanted to start a small pilot project immediately. But here again, the impetus for an international collaborative program might have to start with higher authority. Reports indicated that AUI was directly responsible to the royal Moroccan court from its conception and that extra funds needed by the university still came directly from that source. It was suggested that the Moroccan king and then the president of the university are the places to start negotiations.

RQA-4. Available resources: One can only assume that if the political and administrative atmosphere would be such as to allow the proposed DE project to take place, the universities would make their facilities and existing educational and material resources available for the project. Additional monetary funds would not be easy to generate within an education system already financially depleted and strictly controlled by the law of higher education. Even in the case of AUI, where the institution has more freedom in controlling its own financial resources, additional funds seemed to be very limited. Only in-kind participation of faculty time and the already existing institutional resources could be expected.

RQA-5. Possible barriers on the administration level:

1. For an international DE project between two universities to come to fruition, the administrations on both sides must be able to work together. The cultures of educational administrations in general are known to be rigid and slow to change. In the case of Morocco and the U.S., the large gap that exists between the cultures of the two administrations may indeed prove to be a challenge.
2. Policy changes in the administration of higher education in Morocco and personnel changes of the administrators themselves may alter the level of administrative support for the program. Such alterations may occur after general elections in the country resulting in a new administration, new ministers and new policies. Also, a change of president or a director of an institution may result in a change of institutional dedication to a project.
3. There may be a language barrier since most Moroccan administrators speak only Arabic and French while Americans often speak only English.
4. The difference between the academic calendars in the two countries may prove to be a scheduling challenge.
5. The time-zone differences may also prove to be a scheduling challenge and an obstacle to smooth communication between the two administrations.
6. The administration of maintenance, service and technical support in institutions of higher education in Moroccan can be challenging, to say the least, for those who are accustomed to the university standards of the U.S.

8.4 Concluding discussion concerning “units of research”

One possible approach, as one looks at the three available units of research in Ifrane, Rabat, and Marrakesh, is to compare findings and to choose the highest scoring institution for a specific application. As was mentioned before, AUI is the most likely candidate as far as technology is concerned. It possess the most suitable and available equipment, the necessary infrastructure and sound technical support. With respect to language, working with AUI students and faculty would be easier than working with the other schools. AUI’s administration might also be easier to work with since their academic calendar is

more compatible with and similar to that of the U.S. and their officials are accustomed to working with American faculty members and institutions. Many other universities in the U.S. seeking joint academic ventures have taken this approach and knocked on AUI's doors.

Another approach, which is also recommended here, is to keep the options open and to deal with each individual case of possible international cooperation with Moroccan universities as a unique case. In each case, at least the initial contacts could be made with more than one institution, and assessment could be made according to the possibilities at that time. One opinion that some Moroccans had about AUI was that it does not represent the real Morocco. The real Moroccan students and the real Moroccan culture, they said, are in its public universities. They said that AUI is a school for the children of the Moroccan elite who are very much Americanized already and are isolated, in their Ifrane mountain palace, from the reality of Moroccan cities. This situation may be equated to that of an American tourist who takes an organized tour to some exotic country, stays in the Holiday Inn there, eats only American food, travels in an American Express tour bus, snaps a few pictures in the local markets, and goes back home without ever leaving his culture.

In the cases of CAU and MVU, both the invitation to participate in the LCTDE project and their interest seemed genuine. Especially in the case of Marrakesh (CAU) it felt that a DE program could realistically be implemented there. It would probably be more of an organizational and a cultural challenge to collaborate with a Moroccan public university. It would also be more costly. The resources that would be available on the U.S. side and the nature of the needs on that side may determine whether such a challenge is warranted.

8.5 Summary: A question of feasibility

Investigating the Feasibility of Studying Cross-cultural Communication Through Distance Education in Morocco is a qualitative study that resulted in a substantial amount of information, collection of many people's points of view, and analysis. The material

presented in this thesis can be used not only to establish the feasibility of specific DE programs but also used in a much broader manner. Educators and program managers may find relevant information in these pages to determine answers to questions on feasibility.

In concluding this research thesis, I would like to withhold any definite and inclusive judgments about whether particular educational programs are feasible or not. The possibilities are many and broad, and the field is open. I would like to leave the decision-making process about any specific assessment in the hands of the educator-reader who may be able to use the material presented here in relationship to his or her particular applications. This type of open-ended approach accords with the general nature of this study, which was conducted in relationship to a specific situation, uniquely oriented. Also, working in Morocco or in countries with similar cultural characteristics requires increased personal involvement, from a Westerner's point of view, on behalf of the international collaborating educator. It may require a good deal of personal relationships in the spirit of collaboration and good will on both sides. This again makes every case unique and every decision specific.

At the same time, educating students in cross-cultural communication is increasing in its importance not only in the U.S. but worldwide. Existing international cultural diversity is an educational resource. Collaborating while using tools and technologies of distance education is quickly becoming an extension of the traditional classroom on our campuses all over the globe. The educational possibilities that presented themselves to me in Morocco during this research work by far outweighed the barriers and constraints that exist. I felt as though I were a prospector who discovered a resource of educational wealth that can be exploited for the benefit of Western students of cross-cultural communication. However, the analogy of a prospector discovering some rich ore must stop here. In the present scenario, the ore has to realize equal benefits for itself if it is to take part in the prospector's plan. In this case, Moroccan culture, Moroccan students and teachers could become an educational resource only if, simultaneously, Moroccans see

American students and teachers and their culture as a useful educational resource for themselves. Similar educational needs must exist on both sides.

Those needs might be similar but not necessarily the same. The findings of the present research uncovered only some of the various needs that exist on the Moroccan side. At the same time, the results of the present research led me to conclude that the real needs that exist on both sides and the way to find a balance between them can only be discovered and implemented through true and equal collaboration between Moroccan and American educators. Only by allowing Moroccan educators to enter as equals into the next stage of this research process, can a workable feasibility assessment be made.

To this end, I recently collaborated with a group of graduate students at the UNM Department of Communication and Journalism to begin some related design work. Together, we started to design a training program for faculty members from both Morocco and the U.S. Two teachers of cross-cultural communication, one Moroccan and one from the U.S., will co-train faculty members from the two countries in how to teach students from both cultures cross-cultural communication while applying DE technology. As part of their training, the faculty members will also collaborate to develop a culturally balanced course curriculum which could become the core engine of the LCTDE program (see Gorman, Meares, & Weinman, 1999).

That faculty training design project attempted to incorporate the lessons and conclusions derived from the present feasibility study. It incorporated the fact that with the tremendous development of DE technology it is becoming increasingly feasible to construct virtual classrooms on an international scale where students based in two different countries may learn together. Even with the technological gap that exists between universities in the U.S. and Moroccan universities, it seems that it is feasible to incorporate DE technology to achieve the goal of a multi-cultural American-Moroccan virtual classroom. At the same time, educational characteristics imposed by the media of DE must be incorporated into the design. DE technologies emphasize collaborative work, increased equality between teachers and students and a more student-centered learning

environment. The existence of cultural differences is a major theme in this study and in any consequent design and should be considered as assets rather than barriers.

Differences exist not only between national cultures but also between academic cultures, technological cultures, racial and tribal cultures, regional cultures, religious cultures, and genders, to name the major categories. Differences in educational needs as well as economic and other needs must be addressed from an attitude of equality, fairness, respect and goodwill. A multicultural team of educators from both countries is needed whose members will be willing to apply the material presented in this study into building a virtual cross-cultural communication classroom, which will transform not only the students but their teachers as well.

Chapter IX

EPILOGUE

9.1 Introduction

Two and one half years have elapsed since the data on which this study is based were collected. With the fast rate of change at which communication technology is being deployed worldwide and changing global realities, one wonders what has changed in Morocco and what direction events are taking there. In order to update myself on changes that have occurred in Morocco since 1998, I recently conducted short audio-conferences with some Moroccan participants. The data gathered are summarized in this epilogue. It will provide the reader with only a general temporal orientation and a brief update based on this current data.

9.2 Moroc-Telecomm

9.2.1 Privatization

The process of privatization of what was known as the ONPT is still on-going. Currently, only the cellular telephone service has been privatized. Moroccan customers can now choose between Moroc-Telecom as their cellular service provider and between another private company, MediTelecom. MediTelecom is a consortium of four equal partner companies: a Spanish telecommunication company, a Portuguese company, and two Moroccan companies (BMCE Bank and Afriquia, a gas distributor).

Maroc Telecom is not part of this consortium but it is legally obliged to sell backbone transmission services to it.

The bulk of Moroc-Telecom is scheduled to be privatized before the end of year 2000 with 35% of its shares to be sold to another international telecommunication company. Interested organizations will be bidding for the purchase in the middle of December 2000. Among the bidders are mainly French companies and Telecomm Italia.

9.2.2 Internet

The phenomenon of cyber cafés is rapidly spreading throughout Moroccan cities. More than 1000 cyber cafés are in operation while more than 2000 are registered with the Moroccan regulation office. For less than 10DH per hour, or less than one dollar, one can rent computer time and log on to the internet at a reasonable speed. Most cyber cafés are supplied with ISDN lines rated at 64Kbps or even a E1 line rated at 2Mbps. Some users access the internet in cyber cafés even when they have modem connections in their homes or offices due to the availability of greater speed and due to the social aspect of the cyber cafés environment.

Currently, the total country's internet bandwidth capacity, which is maintained by Moroc-Telecom, is sized at 84Mbps and will be increased to 120Mbps by the end of 2000. According to Moroc-Telecom's director of Multi Media Services, El Aoufir, this exceeds the demand for the time being. Moroc-Telecom employs the services of three internet providers: Global One, France Telecom, and Telecom Italia. All three companies maintain a substantial and reliable connection to the States as required by Moroc-Telecom. They require a minimal bandwidth to the States of 1.5 Gbps, allowing users a "one-hop" to the U.S. internet.

9.2.3 ISDN

The use of ISDN in Morocco is increasing rapidly, especially due to the spread of internet pods and local networks in cyber cafés, in educational institutions and in the business sector. ISDN is already available not only in major cities but also in smaller and smaller towns.

9.2.4 MARWAN

The first phase of MARWAN was operational since the end of 1998 and it included the first two nodes, Casablanca and Rabat. Thirty-two universities and schools were networked by year 2000. The completed MARWAN network with its 16 nodes connecting all Morocco's major cities is presently in place, technically operational, and

fully tested. Maroc-Telecom is ready to provide access but is still negotiating with the Ministry of Telecommunications, Post and Information Technology about the commercial aspects and conditions of the service. This governmental ministry is in charge of the commercial aspect of MARWAN and is currently working out the financial details. Negotiations are due to be completed in November 2000, which will allow Maroc-Telecom to provide service to institutions by the beginning of December 2000.

Universities and other educational establishments will need to order connection to the MARWAN network directly from the Ministry of Telecommunications, Post and Information Technology. Maroc-Telecom will then be able to provide service within two to three weeks in all major cities. Maroc-Telecom's Multi Media Services will operate and manage the technical aspects of the network and will directly bill users for services provided. The cost to the institutions will be the standard cost of a local leased-line and a function of the required bandwidth. A basic monthly fee for a 64kbps line could be approximately \$250 (2500DH). Bandwidth could be increased (in 64Kbps increments) all the way up to 2Mbps which could cost about \$3300 per month.

9.2.5 DE

The DE pilot project for training teachers in rural Morocco has not been realized since the world Bank was not willing to help fund it. It was only a paper project, Mr. El Jabri told me. Originally, the World Bank was going to provide the equipments for the project while the former ONPT was to provide the needed telecommunications channels. Since the privatization, Maroc Telecom was no longer willing to pay for the telecommunications channels nor was the government and therefore the project was abandoned. In its stead, a different project with DE implications is being implemented in the Moroccan secondary school system by the Ministry of National Education (MEN). The project is to network the entire public school system in the country to the internet.

9.2.6 Internet in primary schools

This project, which is already in progress, proposes to connect all of Morocco's primary and secondary schools to the internet by year 2008. The schools will be connected directly to the national internet backbone run by Moroc-Telecom, and the MEN is already in the process of selecting hardware providers according to Mr. El Aoufir.

Presently, the department Multi Media Services is in the process of deploying the network in 600 secondary schools located throughout Morocco. They were contracted by Mr. Saaf, the Minister of National Education, to complete this phase by the end of 2000. Moroc-Telecom is providing the schools with an ISDN line terminated by an active router, and with internet access. The schools are being connected directly into the Moroc-Telecom's commercial network because the Ministry decided to begin the project urgently, before the MARWAN network was operational.

All Moroccan schools will have available internet positions in their libraries for students and teachers. Mr. El Aoufir was not sure about all the details, nevertheless he said that as far as he knows, the ministry's technologists are preparing small local networks to be installed in the schools to connect a few PCs. The plan is to provide some limited free internet access to students.

The Internet in Primary Schools project is a recent development in Morocco. Since September 2000 there has been a big change in the position of the government concerning internet technology. Mr. Naser Haji, a former director of the INPT and a politician, is a main force behind the government's strategy to usher Morocco into the technology of the 20th century. Within MEN, Mr. Sbihi is the main figure responsible for connecting Morocco's school system to the internet, the projected completion of which is within the next seven or eight years.

9.3 INPT

Due to the privatization process, the INPT, formerly part of Moroc-Telecom, is now under the direction of ANRT (Agence Nationale des Regularmontacion des

Telecommunication). ANRT is a governmental regulatory body with functions similar to those of the FCC in the States. Dr. Mounir Alaoui, formerly professor at Mohammediya School of Engineering, is now a director at ANRT and is responsible for introducing new communication technologies in Morocco.

9.4 AUI

9.4.1 New direction

According to Mr. Sidi Ali Maelainain, associate director for development at AUI and an instructor in the school of engineering there, many changes have taken place at the university. AUI's student population has grown to about 1015 with over 30 exchange students who stay at Ifrane for a semester or two. AUI's new president, Dr. Rashid Benmokhtar, who is well versed in and well connected to global business realities, was successful in setting the university on a new course with a new vision and a solid financial base. The new vision is strongly based on internet technology (IT) and on developing a technology park around the university to attract business partners in the IT field. Dr. Rashid Benmokhtar is working to promote the image of the university in Moroccan industry and world wide. As an example, business agreements were reached with IBM's CATIA division, producers of industry grade CAD/CAM/CAE software, and its Canadian parent company ACP. As a result, a CATIA based lab with all licensing was donated to AUI, which may allow outsourcing for computer students to be given projects from the industry that could bring income to the university.

In the past, 60% of AUI's students were in business administration, 25% to 30% were in engineering and science, and only 10% were in the humanities. Now, the School of Science and Engineering has taken the lead and has the highest number of students. In addition, the School of Humanities has changed direction. The emphasis on social sciences and applied humanities has given way to what is labeled diplomacy and international relations. The program is supported contextually as well as financially by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is directed by the new dean of the School of

Humanities and Social Sciences, Dr. Driss Ouisha, formerly the rector of the University of Meknes.

9.4.2 Technology

The available technology at AUI was upgraded significantly. Now, there are over 300 computers, mostly Compaqs and some IBMs; all are Pentium II and III, rated at 300MHz or faster. Software upgrades include Windows NT in all the labs, soon to be replaced by Windows 2000 professional, and Microsoft Office 97 that will be replaced by Microsoft 2000. Many servers were added to the network and include a dedicated students' server, a faculty server, UNIX and LINUX servers, and a couple of network servers to manage the accounts and disk space.

As to infrastructure, the AUI's local network was completed and now includes about 3000 nodes. Network connections are now available throughout the campus, including in all dorms and residences.

9.4.3 Internet and ISDN

AUI's network is no longer connected to the internet via France but rather through the "ma" domain of Moroc-Telecom. The available bandwidth was increased to 256Kbps. This bandwidth is no longer sufficient for the present demand, and will soon be upgraded again to two Mbps. One option that is presently being studied is a 2Mbps internet satellite connection (VSAT).

ISDN service to Ifrane is due very shortly. Moroc-Telecom is presently installing ISDN equipment in that region and is projecting to provide AUI with the service by the beginning of year 2001. Each ISDN line will cost about \$25 a month, explained El Aoufir, so AUI's three lines will cost \$75 plus usage time charges.

9.4.4 DE

The university awaits the ISDN service since there is a great demand to begin using the DE equipment. AUI's original PictureTel equipment was found insufficient and was

upgraded. The university is also preparing to use internet-based DE by utilizing Lotus distance learning technology. They already have the server and are currently working out the bugs of the DE internet based system.

Distance learning will be used to supplement AUI's student exchange Arabic program, which is done in collaboration with some American universities (Montana State University, for one). In this program, American students begin to study Arabic in their home universities then they come to Ifrane for a summer of Arabic. UAI would like to allow them to continue studying Arabic after they go back by conducting DE classes based on the internet and video-conferencing. This distance learning course is scheduled to commence in few weeks with at least 50 American students.

The university's School of Business will offer distance courses within Morocco as well. Working executives and other businessmen from major Moroccan cities will be able to attend classes at AUI while keeping their jobs. They will come to the AUI campus for one week each month and then continue to study at a distance through the internet. The school also plans to import DE classes and courses from abroad.

9.5 ALC — Marrakesh

According to Mr. Fitzgerald, he still would like to open his institution to be part of a cross-cultural program that uses DE technology. Cadi Ayyad University, he said, does not yet have computers or an internet connection, but rector Knidiri is still interested in the LCTDE program.

"The ALC in Marrakesh has a fast computer lab — as fast as any in the States," said Fitzgerald. Currently, the lab includes nine Pentium II networked computers. The school's network is connected to the internet through a fast ISDN line. The telephone company also offers a dedicated E1 line for 6000 DH per month (about \$600), which is too expensive for the time being, but it is almost to the point where a E1 line will make economic sense.

Taos, New Mexico, November 2000.

9.6 Addendum

Recent news (as of the end of year 2000) is that Vivendi Universal, a large European-based telecommunication and entertainment corporation, was permitted to purchase a major share, approximately 35%, of Maroc Telecom. Indeed, the contract signed between Vivendi and the Moroccan government is much larger in scope than a simple purchase of shares in Maroc Telecom: It gives the company control over the management of Maroc Telecom and an option to buy up to 51 % of its holdings. Vivendi owns rights to provide large internet services in Morocco. It signed a contract with the Ministry of Education to be the service provider of internet to the Moroccan schools projects, including educational content. Vivendi is preparing to open subsidiaries to its music, cinema, and publishing divisions in Morocco and is looking into purchasing Morocco's second television channel. Vivendi will also hold various interests in Morocco's petrol production, water distribution, and waste collection services through the Vivendi Environment Company.

In January 2001, the Moroccan King, Muhammed VI, received the CEO of Telefonica, the Spanish carrier that owns one-third of Medi Telecom. Consequently, Medi Telecom now also owns the right to provide internet services in addition to its cellular phone services.

Taos, New Mexico, January 2001.

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Appendix A

PARTICIPANTS LIST (AS OF FEBRUARY 1998)

1. Dr. Najiya El-Alami — A faculty member at the School of Humanities at AUI.
2. Amina Ismaili Alaoui — director of the Language and Communication Department; INPT
3. Amine Mounir Alaoui — Professor of computer science at Mohammediya School of Engineering (EMI) in Rabat.
4. Youssef El Aoufir — Information Technology & Systems; Al Akhawayn University
5. Mark Austin — American student from University; Salt Lake
6. Bouchta Banit — Director of International Telecom-Division; Itissalat Al-Maghrib
7. Dr. Fakhereddine Barada — Professor of Cultural Studies and English; Faculty of Letters & the Humanities; Mohammed V. University
8. Dr. Aïcha Belarbi — Sociologist at the Faculty of Educational Science
9. Mukhtar Saïd Belcadi — Director of Scientific Research and University Cooperation: the Royal Moroccan Ministry of Higher Education; Rabat
10. Dr. Taieb Belghazi — Professor of Cultural Studies and English; Faculty of Letters & the Humanities; Mohammed V. University
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12. Rachid BenJira — Chief Engineer; Intelligent Network Services; Itissalat Al-Maghrib
13. Dr. Rahma Bourqia — professor of Sociology and Anthropology; Faculty of Letters & the Humanities; Mohammed V. University
14. Daoud Stephen Casewit — Executive Secretary of the Moroccan-American Commission for Educational and Cultural Exchange; Rabat
15. Larbi Choukhmane — Director of INPT
16. Dr. Mohamed Dahbi — Treasurer of the Moroccan-American Commission for Educational and Cultural Exchange; Rabat
17. Dr. Doug Davis — Professor of psychology, Hartford Collage, USA
18. Dr. Mohammed Ezroua — Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Letters & the Humanities; Mohammed V. University
19. Halima Ferhat — Director of the Institute for African Studies; Rabat
20. Amy Fishburn — International Program Coordinator; Al Akhawayn University
21. Michael Abdurrahman Fitzgerald — Director of the American Language Center, Marrakesh
22. Dr. Lahcen Haddad — Professor of Cultural Studies and English; Faculty of Letters & the Humanities; Mohammed V. University
23. Mr. Youssef El Jabri — International Telecommunication Engineer; Itissalat Al-Maghrib

24. Dr. Fatima El-Kanaoui — Professor at the English Department; Faculty of Letters & the Humanities; Mohammed V. University
25. Mr. Kazolar — Computer expert and instructor, INPT
26. Dr. Mohamed Knidiri — Rector of Cadi Ayyad University
27. Dr. Moncef Lahlou — Director of the Language Center; Al Akhawayn University
28. Majid Lahlou — Information Technology & Systems; Al Akhawayn University
29. Dr. Nufissa Lakrissa — Professor at the English Department; Faculty of Letters & the Humanities; Mohammed V. University
30. Professor Abdelaziz Maaouni — Dean of the Faculty of Medicine (medical school) in Fes
31. Dr. Hasan Mekouar — President of the Moroccan-American Commission for Educational and Cultural Exchange; Rabat
32. Dr. Abdelhay Moudden — Academic Director of the Center for Cross-Cultural Learning; Rabat.
33. Mr. Mroussi — Director of computer labs and instructions, INTP
34. Dr. Tajje-eddine Rachidi — Assistant Professor; Computer Science; Al Akhawayn University
35. Dr. Bachir Raissouni — Dean of School of Science and Engineering; Al Akhawayn University
36. Jack Rusenko — Executive coordinator of Global Involvement Through Education; Casablanca
37. Dr. John A. Shoup — Assistant Professor; School of Humanities & Social Sciences; Al Akhawayn University
38. Youssef Slitine — English Teacher at the American Language Center, Marrakesh
39. Dr. Nadia Tahri — Professor at the English Department; Faculty of Letters & the Humanities; Mohammed V. University
40. Muhamed Tazi — Third year student at the School of Computer Science; Al Akhawayn University

Appendix B

INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

1. Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane (AUI)
2. The American Language Center (ALC) in Marrakesh
3. Cadi Ayyad University in Marrakesh (CAU)
4. Center for Cross Cultural Learning (CCCL); Rabat.
5. High-Tech; High Technology School in Morocco - Rabat
6. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in Switzerland
7. Itissalat Al-Maghrib (Moroc-Telecom)
8. The Ministry of Communication
9. The Ministry of Higher Education
10. The Ministry of National Education (MEN)
11. The Ministry of Professional Education
12. Mohammed V University (MVU) Faculty of Letters and the Humanities in Agdal
13. Mohammediya School of Engineering (EMI — L'Ecole Mohammadia d'Ingénieurs)
14. Moroccan-American Commission for Educational and Cultural Exchange (MACECE)
15. The National Institute of Post and Telecomm (INPT)
16. The Office of Post and Telecomm (ONPT)
17. The Office of Professional Training and the Promotion of Labor (OFPPT)
18. The Office of the Prime Minister
19. Radio and Television of Morocco (RTM)
20. St. Olaf's University
21. The Texas International Educational Consortium
22. UNESCO
23. The University of New Mexico (UNM)
24. Williams College
25. The World Bank

Appendix C

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS

1. ALC — The American Language Center
2. ALIF — Arabic Language Institute in Fez
3. Al-Maghrib — Morocco (in Arabic, “the West”)
4. ARABSAT — The Arab countries’ satellite
5. AT&T — American Telephone and Telegraph
6. AUI — Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane
7. B.Sc. — Bachelor of Science degree
8. CALL — Computer Aided Language Learning
9. CAU — Cadi Ayyad University in Marrakesh
10. CCCL — Center for Cross Cultural Learning in Rabat
11. CD-ROM — Compact Disk used in a PC as a Read Only Memory device
12. CMC — Computer Mediated Conferencing
13. CS — Cultural Studies
14. CU-Seeme — Desk-top videoconferencing software developed by Cornell University
15. Cyber café — For fee public internet access
16. DE — Distance education
17. DH — Dirham; the Moroccan unit of currency (about \$.11)
18. EMI — Mohammadiya School of Engineering (L’Ecole Mohammadia d’Ingénieurs)
19. GATT — The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
20. Gbps — Giga bits per second
21. Hashuma — Moroccan Arabic; cultural term indicating public shame or humiliation
22. IDES — Interactive DE software
23. INPT — The National Institute of Post and Telecomm
24. IP — Internet Permanent address
25. ISDN — Integrated Services Digital Network
26. ITS — Information Technology & Systems service at AUI
27. ITU — The International Telecommunication Union in Switzerland
28. Kbps — Kilo (1000) bits per second
29. LCTDE — Linking Cultures Through Distance Education project
30. Licence appliqué — Specialized master’s degree
31. MACECE — Moroccan-American Commission for Educational and Cultural Exchange
32. MARNIS — Moroccan ISDN (Marocain Réseau Numérique à Intégration de Service)
33. MARWAN — MARocco’s Wide Area Network
34. Mbps — Mega (1,00,000) bits per second
35. MBA — Master’s degree in business administration

36. MEN — The Ministry of National Education
37. MSA — Modern standard Arabic
38. MUX — Multiplex unit, equipment used in ISDN systems
39. MVU — Muhammed V (the fifth) University in Agdal
40. OFPPT — The Office of Professional Training and the Promotion of Labor
41. ONPT — The National Office of Post and Telecommunication
42. PC — Personal computer
43. Qur'an — The sacred revealed text of Islam
44. RNIS — ISDN in French
45. RTM — Radio and Television of Morocco
46. SAT — Societé Anonyme des Télécommunications; a French company that makes DE equipment
47. SCII — A French company who makes DE equipment
48. SDA — Selection Directe a l'Arrivee; a type of digital line
49. SIT — School for International Training (in Vermont)
50. TOEFL — Test of English as a Foreign Language
51. UNESCO — United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
52. UNIX — A trademark used for a computer disk operating system
53. USIS — United States Information Service
54. USIA — United States Information Agency
55. UWM — University of Wisconsin at Madison
56. VAT — Value Added Tax
57. VCR — Video cassette recorder
58. VSAT — Very Small Area Terminal

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Appendix D

CATEGORIZED DATA FROM INTERVIEWS

0. Overview

[The data presented in this appendix have been extracted from transcribed interviews conducted during the winters of 1997 and 1998 in Morocco. It also includes portions summarized from various textual material submitted by interviewees. A full list of those who participated in the interviews (i.e. interviewees) and their description is provided in appendix A. Analysis of the data that were collected yielded the various categories and sub-categories that comprise this appendix. Interview data that were not relevant to the present study were omitted while the relevant material was portioned into the various categories. Further analysis and processing of the interview material is indicated in this appendix by the central ideas underlined within the text. A reader should be able to scan the underlined portions within the various categories to glean a general understanding of the information related in the interviews.

In the material presented here, one can often hear the voice of the speaker. The majority of interviewees were Moroccans whose first and second languages are not English. In many cases, the sentence construction may reflect a foreign sound and lingual construction that may have greater resemblance to Arabic or French. One can also notice the more spontaneous oral quality in the text. At the same time, out of respect for the persons interviewed and with a concern to assure that the ideas expressed are clearly articulated and easy to read, some linguistic changes in the text have been made. Some sentences have been made to sound more English-like and grammatical corrections were made. For this reason, it is not always possible to assess the English proficiency level of the speaker from what is reflected in the text. In fact, the more fluent and proficient the participant was, the fewer linguistic corrections were made in order to allow the original voice of the speaker to come through. Some interviewer notes concerning set up, feelings that were not verbalized and other explanations are inserted into the text within square brackets.]

1. Higher-education in Morocco

1.1 Moroccan higher-education's need for DE

Dr. Mekouar:

First of all you have to understand [he said] that Morocco is a country that education takes a very important part. Up to a quarter of the budget of this country is devoted to education. And it is a system that promoted and believed in education ever since its independence, because it was the only way in which Morocco could develop. So Morocco is a state that is extremely generous with its budgets and with its education policies, trying to get every Moroccan to have access to education and every student, everybody with a baccalaureate degree [which in the U.S. is equivalent to a high school diploma,] gets into university.

And problems started appearing as far as higher-education is concerned only in the early 80's. Because the university just couldn't cope with the growth, which is dictated by the pressure of the population pyramid. We kept building universities and still the number of students kept increasing.

So the first thing that the government did, the first measure was not to limit access to students who have a high school or what we call baccalaureate degree, but to limit access to those who have more than one registration which was possible before. It was possible to study law and English or study economics and history and so on. And then at a second stage, in 1981, they limited access to people who are civil servants (who already had some kind of a secure job) and when they limited this, it prevented people like primary school teachers and other people from entering the university.

Now the accumulation of people who were not able to enter university for over two decades now, has created a kind of demand for distance education.

I'll give you two examples: a twenty-year-old Moroccan who did not make it through the baccalaureate, it's a very competitive and tough exam, but he got a job. But he's very keen and wants to learn but has no possibility of accessing higher-education.

And the second person is one who got his baccalaureate and went to school to be trained as a primary school teacher. This person studied for a year and a half or two years and went to teach in some remote place but still wants to get his equivalent of a B.A. And the size of this demand for education, I once evaluated, is between 60,000 and 80,000 people. So there is interest in this country for this [for DE]. Maybe the exchange could be done with the New Mexico University if you could provide the technology and we will provide the culture.

There is here a distance education project — I think I gave you the name of the director in the Ministry of Higher-education, Mukhtar Saïd Belcadi. They created a project to link up all the universities and it is called MARWAN.

1.2 Characteristics of Moroccan higher-educational systems

Dr. Mekouar:

The university here is organized differently than an American university. It's not concentrated in one tight campus. It's the old French way where the university is a huge construct where each institutional department has its own address somewhere. Faculties and schools are far away from each other.

Everybody complains about the fact that educational programs are set and cannot be changed. The departments have just so much freedom within the content of the program, but they cannot decide to introduce culture where culture is not taught. But with the reform everybody's going to be looking for new fields that have not been taught and we will be in a big competition. So if the university decides to go ahead with cultural studies then they will be given a chance — money and so on — to start. (So, it's true what she says, but) the situation might be changing.

I know Ezroua — he was my student, so was El Kanaoui. I know that department and the faculty there very well. Right now they have the same program that was published in 1982, which is still in effect. All you have to do is get the official gazette, number 3666, and check the list of courses. English two hours, grammar two hours, the novel two hours, criticism two hours and so on. And if it says 'novel' you can choose to teach Faulkner or Swift or whatever, but, it's the law, you cannot teach culture. You may decide to teach culture within the heading of American civilization for example — but you still have to give the basic American civilization like human rights, and the American civil rights movement, and the Western movement, and the migration, and religion in America, and diversity in America, etc. This doesn't leave too much time for studying culture.

But the graduate program was reformed already, and the reform went into effect as of February of last year. And all of the universities are now doing something different from what they did last year. That is, that they propose new programs and these programs are put through the accreditation process. In that accreditation process they accept some programs and reject other programs and determine which programs are approved. So those programs that were approved are now in effect. Those classes have small groups of students whereas, before, many could get in. These small groups of students take part in a two-year program which could lead to a Ph.D. So they opened to the possibility of attaining a doctorate degree in Morocco.

Dr. Haddad:

You can play with the curriculum to an extent. If you have the name of a course then legally you have to abide by that, but what you do in the content of that course can be varied. For example, if you have the 'theory of the novel' course then the minister wants to see that it is taught in the third year, but within that you can teach almost anything you want. Another example is a second-year class I teach called 'spoken English'. I took it on because it is an oral class where the testing is done orally and because I don't have to coordinate it with the other teachers. What I'm teaching in this class is public communication, how to address people, problems of organization, problems of culture and so on. This doesn't abide by the course specifications, but no one minds that.

Even with courses that have written exams, there is leeway for change within that, too. [The same exam has to be given by all the teachers who teach the same course.] You have to take the initiative to gather the other teachers that teach that same course and to discuss the changes you want to introduce. You might have to do a lot of convincing and coordination. If you don't patronize the other teachers, and convince them of the importance of the changes, then it can happen. There are hundreds of possibilities.

1.3 Needs in Moroccan education

[Other needs for DE]

Dr. Mekouar:

So what we are interested in is not in terms of culture I can tell you, although I'm not speaking officially, but what the country is interested in is the technology that will allow taking what is available

and bringing it to where it is demanded. There is a huge demand for learning on the part of individuals who are not able to make it to universities. They are in the villages and towns where there are no universities or in cities where there are universities, but they are not available.

Dr. Moudden:

As far as attracting the students here is concerned, you might even try to make some changes in the content of the program. You also might have to look into diversifying the kind of students that you will have in the States to interest Moroccan students. My guess is that from the Moroccan side you will find more people who will be interested in having a discussion with American students about business opportunities, investments, management and things like that. There are so many schools and programs who will 'die' to have a program like that on these issues. Management, use of computers in business, MBA in America and this sort of things. You'll find less people who really see the need for things about culture and cultural identity. This is where you might have to compromise. I don't know, I'm not sure but you might have to.

[Would High-Tech be interested in the LCTDE?]

Dr. Haddad:

They would. If I tell them that I'm interested then they would be, too. In High-Tech I have more say and more leeway. What they probably might be interested in is having some connection that would allow either American students to come here or our students going there. When I negotiated with St. Thomas Aquinas College for example, about having students come for a 'semester abroad,' the administration at High-Tech told me that there is a 'green light' to work out any kind of connections with universities in the United States.

We probably can do things with the University of New Mexico if they are interested in connecting with our master program. We do such things with other universities. With Manhattan College and with St. Thomas Aquinas College for example. We also are trying to get Indiana College to send some students to us. The kind of contracts that High-Tech has with schools in the States would be that our students would do most of their course work here, but when they come to the last five or six courses, then they go to the States and do them intensively over the summer. They might take four courses for six or seven weeks. Many of our students are interested in this kind of arrangement. Using video-conferencing would be even better. Some of those courses can be given at a distance.

[Dr. Haddad's proposal for work with UNM]

What I would like to propose to you is a kind of connection in which two ways are possible for the students. Let's say they have to take 12 to 15 courses (that is between 36 and 45 credits). They would do about eight here and four in the States. Those who want to go to the States could go there to study and experience the culture. For those who cannot go for reasons such as expense, work, etc. — for them it

would it be possible to be here and at the same time follow the courses in the States [using DE] and write their papers.

So that's what we are interested in. We are interested in having them get an American diploma from university there. We expect UNM to give them their academic accreditation. I don't know if your university can or wants to do this, but I would be interested in finding out.

Youssef Slitine:

Using distance education for your project brings into focus the potential of DE in general. Now that distance learning is available people can get certificates and diplomas in different fields of study from a distance. Many times I thought about doing a project like this one, and setting up a school where there is only distance learning with collaboration of different universities in the U.S. that provide DE. Providing a school that is only technology. Students that are eager to go further in their studies find Morocco very limited. So many of them are forced to stop their studies when they get their B.A., although they wish to continue. Providing DE programs to them would enable them to continue.

[Need for internet-based course design know-how]

Mounir Alaoui:

There is something that you might be able to help us here. I don't know if you might have curricula or methodology about distance learning or learning through the internet that we can use here. The internet is currently the main focus of the Middle East and North Africa Economic Summit Secretariat. It's a private group that I'm working with. We want to have at least four to six training sessions each year and we want part of the session to be done from a distance — remotely. There are people from Tunisia, from Egypt, from Jordan, and so on. We'll have distance education material and training material and we will make them meet for one week. The meeting will be here in Morocco or in another place, this is not a problem. We want the learners to meet with the professors and the trainers to finalize their training. We want to design something like that, so if you can help us in any way I will be very happy.

Some of the problems that we need assistance in solving are how to organize the whole thing, the methodology, how to design the courses, how to best use the internet, how to use the physical face-to-face way in an environment where the main courses will be through the internet or through video-conferencing. And then we want to have one or two case studies about specific training courses.

The State Department will support the organization of this project. What we need is the technical expertise about how to do this. We still never have used remote learning and remote training, and since you have this expertise it will be great if someone can help us design the courses and the training in coordination with our people. If this goes well we can have something like six sessions of distance learning in this region each year. It will involve Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Palestinian territories, Israel. We can even start the training in English and then translate it to French and Arabic for those who need it. Some of the training material for these programs is already available from the World Bank, but it is designed for normal face-to-face training.

[Who are the learners?]

There are two types of people in need of training. First there are administrative people from ministries and so on, all from different countries. The others are businessmen. Those are the two populations that we aim to. We already have some of the material. What we need is to redesign the material so it will have the maximum impact when taught partly at a distance and partly locally. We want the local part to be as small as possible, while most of it will be at a distance. We need to know how best to distribute the training material, how to evaluate the training, and so on. So if others already worked out this methodology, maybe it can help us here. If you have the expertise, maybe we can arrange a training for the teachers in how to redesign the material for us on the internet.

[Need for distant learning exchange between engineering students]

We have a very active student *club informatique*, they are very active. So just give me two addresses and you'll see that things fly. It will be very useful for the students to have English pen pals. It will be very easy and it will oblige them to read and write in English. Their English is pretty good, but they need more practice. They can have exchanges about technical problems and about the technical things they are involved in. We don't have good technical libraries here, so students can ask their colleagues about information they need, and so on. If we get the students together I'm sure that there will be benefit for students on both sides. The benefits here are more obvious because we lack the resources, but the students here with their computers can provide a needed test ground for other student's projects. Our students have projects that can be shared both ways. We can have projects that need this kind of situation. If you want I can also write to your DE department about these kinds of possibilities.

1.4 Students needs on both sides are not the same

Dr. Belarbi:

The suggested (LCTDE) project is very bold and might be of interest to Moroccan universities. At the same time, she said, this project is one sided in the way that it was presented. It only addressed the needs of the American side and was designed only to fit the American type of education. In order to make such a project work, it needs to take into account both societies and both cultures equally. On the Moroccan side, you'll find a very rigid social structure. The American society is much more loosely connected and organized. The program design must find a middle path between these two extremes.

Dr. Moudden:

The first thing to look at is that students in your project are coming not only from two different cultures but also from two different educational systems. Your system encourages free speech, openness, talking spontaneously and also talking more concretely in terms of empirical information. Our students are more reserved and would not be ready to talk openly from the first sessions. They also tend to be more

theoretical. They have not been encouraged throughout their educational experience to talk spontaneously and freely. This is the first problem that needs to be — and can — be solved.

[Note: The other side of this picture is that the Moroccans are very comfortable in taking the time to deeply study a problem and consider their answers in advance. They will prepare to answer the question first at home. They will think about things before they answer and consider their words carefully. Here is something American students can learn — to think and reflect on the consequences of their speech before speaking while the Moroccan can learn to loosen up a bit.]

Dr. Bourqia:

The first problem is that there are differences in terms of needs on both sides; they are not the same. The American student, I think, wants to know about other cultures because America is such a huge culture, such a self-sufficient society. They don't know much about other cultures.

But on this side [Morocco] since much of the student's reference is somehow [she hesitated a bit] Western culture, they know more about American culture than what American students know about Moroccan culture.

Dr. Moudden:

The second problem is that our students seem to be more specialized. If you are looking for students who speak English, then you'll be looking for the students in the English department. There you'll find students that have a background in literature almost exclusively, yet very little education and information in sociology, anthropology, history, economics or politics. They don't take any courses in those disciplines. Here I assume that your students who are interested in cross-culture would come from different disciplines. They might be coming from women's studies, international studies, history, religion, Middle East studies — something like that. So this is going to be a problem.

1.5 Who are the Moroccan students?

Dr. Moudden:

To prepare the students in advance as to what they should expect. There are a lot of misunderstandings that are going to be generated in the beginning, and it usually takes us more than one session in direct discussion between American and Moroccan students just to have the people get out of their system what their suspensions of the others are. And you should expect that the Moroccans are going to be aggressive in the beginning. But then, all that is going to change once they become more familiar and comfortable with the other group.

Then the big issue here is going to be getting Moroccan students to come from different disciplines.

Now you can talk to the people in the Faculty of Letters and see if they can integrate students from other disciplines into this program. The problem is going to be always that the language has to be

English' and that is why I don't know if bringing students from other disciplines can be arranged. I don't know if you can even entertain the idea of some kind of class that not only for English students but for university students in general and then provide some kind of translation. This, of course, will increase the cost of the program, but I think that if one sees that this is the best option then one should consider it. I can imagine a group of interested Moroccan students coming from the Religious Studies and History departments and to see how this can be incorporated.

Three English faculty at Mohamed V:

Fatima: There will certainly be much motivation for the students to be part of this program. I don't know how much contact you've had with our students. These people are very eager to try something new and to learn and have contact with the outside world — especially with the Americans students. They're also fascinated with technology.

Nadia: To have an incentive on the part of the students is not a problem. I think there are many of them who would be very much interested.

1.6 Students' selection for LCTDE

There will need to be some kind of selection and preparation process. Feedback and evaluation mechanisms will need to be set up to ensure that throughout the seminar the students will be communicated with in the same tone, at least. It's going to be difficult at the beginning but it can be done, I think. We can have some feedback after each session, for instance. Professors could have an evaluation session with their students after every DE experience and prepare them for the next meeting.

Dr. Bourqia:

The best students for the job will be those of the humanities because they are familiar in thinking about society and culture.

Three English faculty at Mohamed V:

Nufissa: Another problem we need to resolve is the selecting the students. A lot of students would be enthusiastic about such a program and want to be in it, but we need some criteria for selection.

Nadia: Well, the language level is the criteria.

Nufissa: How do you determine even that?

1.7 Students' evaluation and examinations

Nufissa: However, if the students will put effort and time into learning the technology and also will do extra work the questions that they will ask are about the examination.

1. How is this course going to be examined?
2. What credit are they going to get for it?
3. How is it going to be incorporated in the syllabus?

4. Is it going to be too time consuming for them?
5. Is it going to be a problem when examination time comes?

You see, now is the examination time, and the students have no time to do anything else.

Nadia: Especially in the graduate program, it is very much loaded and there is a lot of work and competition.

Dr. Moudden:

There should not be any problem with the Moroccan university's requirements of the students. This is because whatever is going to happen in the discussion part is going to be secondary. What is more important here is the readings. The students will be tested in a written form on the readings that they have done. In class, they can have a discussions with their professor or they can have an on-line discussion with the American students abroad. But legally the students will have a curriculum and related reading material to be tested on and the exam is going to be related to this material. In Moroccan schools and universities, students are getting graded basically according to how they did on their final written exam. Students may be required to write papers or other requirements, but what is most important is the final written exam.

Three English faculty at Mohamed V:

Nufissa: Students here are very much obsessed with the idea of exams, especially the exams at the end of the year. It's a nightmare because students study for a whole year and then they have to be tested. The exams is what decides how they do.

Fatima: We don't have a semester system here. They study throughout the whole year and then they get evaluated right at the end, so they keep thinking about it the whole year and it's obsessive.

Also, in America, if you fail something you get to do it again or you can start somewhere else. But here they get only one chance.

Nufissa: Also in the States you can study for a year or two or three and then you can go and do something else. Later you can go back to school if you want. When I was in the States, I had a classmate who was about 60 years old. And this is really something you can't do here.

Fatima: And the same in Europe.

Nufissa: Not here though. Here, if you flunk your exams you are out of school. You can't even register for the next year any more.

1.8 Dead end, one-path track

Dr. Bourqia:

[About the education system in Morocco, and whether within this one-chance, goal-oriented public educational system, Moroccan students might find an initiative and a desire to take part in studies which are more personal-growth oriented.]

Indeed, it is true. In the Moroccan educational system the student doesn't have many alternatives. There are not many choices to make, there is only one path. From the primary school there is one program

for everybody. When the students reach the university level, of course, there are many faculties. Here, the best students go to the faculty of medicine and to the engineering schools. The others, respectively, will go to the Faculty of Letters, faculty of law, and so on. The people are obsessed with the question of employment. So in the educational system or in their lives they don't have the time and the need to think about these kind of questions [she was looking for words to describe this other concern but couldn't even verbalize it]. The question of finding a job in the end, this is the main objective of studying in the university.

Youssef Slitine:

[What does motivate students of the humanities to complete their universities studies? They must know that only small part of them will gain jobs in the end.]

That's a good question. This is what is happening in the university. To create the interest is a little bit hard but it is not impossible. The way students think of their studies, they get somehow depressed because there is no horizon to look at. Giving them a program like this one will "in what way will it help me with my future?" I'm really anticipating this question to come up.

Dr. Mekouar:

Let me tell you in very few words about it. You see the system here is based on the French system. It is a very rigid system. Universities are just virtual groups, but the actual entities are faculties, and these faculties are independent. And within the faculty are departments and each department has its program. Once a student is in this program, nothing can be changed. He cannot move from one program to another. A person can go into medicine for example and study five years of medicine and fail or quit. At this point he would have nothing. Not even the equivalent of two years of science. You cannot change from English to philosophy or from philosophy to history.

1.9 Reform in Moroccan higher-education

Dr. Mekouar:

I think that Morocco and Rabat would be a good place for this distance education project. It's new technology and Morocco is very much into distance education, although there's nothing much done. It's starting. Also the fact that everything was frozen because of this lack of movement in terms of the reform. If the reform starts it's going to be a very good thing. This nation will reopen.

Dr. Moudden:

New developments in the Moroccan higher-education program are in progress as we speak which might open new possibilities for projects like the LCTDE. We are now in a process of revising our graduate studies programs at our universities. It is going to be different from the past because we, as professors, will be able to propose and come up with our own seminars. In the past, seminars were always assigned and designed by the ministry of higher-education. With the new educational reform, a professor can make a proposal for a seminar or even a whole graduate program. With serious programs,

we can join forces between two faculties. I can think of the Faculty of Letters and the Faculty of Law having a joint graduate program for both schools. It is still a wild idea in the Moroccan higher-education system but it relates to a text that came out just yesterday from the Ministry of Education, calling professors to make suggestions regarding specific graduate seminars.

Dr. Mekouar:

You see, the educational system in this country is in need of reform, especially since many of the graduates do not get jobs. It's the pressure to get the system adapted to the market that is pushing this reform. So the reform will aim at providing an education that is going to enable all graduates to be better equipped for employment. Our educational system should have more flexibility, more professional programs, more bridges between the departments, and to be less rigid. That's roughly the story about the reform.

No, the reform doesn't come just from the minister of higher-education, it's a national thing. Many attempts were rejected before because the minister of higher-education is not particularly interested to see that the reform happens. Only through elections, which would give a new political color to parliament, could this educational reform come about. In fact, one opposition party, the USFT, got the highest number of seats in the Parliament which could give the idea that it's possible. They have some new ideas. So wait and see, they might help you with your project.

Dr. Belghazi and Dr. Barada:

Taieb: There are two things to mention here: one is that I can see your proposal fitting into the reform project, that is, into what the reform project actually states. The reform project has been submitted to the teachers by the ministry. One of the things that it says is that the universities in Morocco will be computerized. Mind you, the fact that the proposal is coming from the minister down to the teachers is not specific to Morocco. In France and elsewhere the governments can propose things to teach.

The reform project started with a committee that they had set up. Of course it was on the basis of the recommendation from that committee that the ministry actually wrote the format of the project proposal. In this proposal you have a commitment on the part of the ministry to equip all the faculties of the universities with Internet and computers. That's going to make things very easy for the people involved in distance education and so on.

Another thing is the flexibility of the new system, because it allows the teachers and students to make their own decisions. This means that courses like teaching cultures and so on and so forth could easily be fitted into whatever programs the teachers decide on. That flexibility would be enhanced by the existence of what the project calls 'research units.' Research units are not rigid structures. They are structures that promote student research and teaching that is up to date. The main concern of the project is to keep abreast with what's happening on a global level. Everyone is talking about globalization and this project is a kind of a response to that need.

Barada: Eventually this will include the whole educational system. It will begin on the graduate level, but soon we'll be moving to the undergraduate level as well. We're starting from the top.

I thought I would mention that first because all this is happening now. I would like to add to what Taieb has just said, that a project like yours can be very well fitted within these new structures. Especially within cultural studies of our present culture, distance communication or at least the use of technology as a place to start with, can be crucial to this reform project. In other words, we can talk, and whatever we say will be provisional of course, and in the same time I also think that you should probably try to find out more about what's happening. I'm sure that we would be happy to meet with you again after we have met in the department and tell you, given what we've decided on, how we see your project within in our new picture.

Three English faculty at Mohamed V:

[Today I met with Fahradin and Belghazi. They were talking about reforms in the educational system. It will happen soon, they say.]

[(emotional discussion).]

Nadia: They're very optimistic.

Nufissa: Well, things are going to change but whether they're going to change for better or for worse no one knows.

Fatima: When are they going to change, never. No one knows.

Nufissa: I think that the changes are coming soon.

Nufissa: They've been announced but no one knows for sure when and how.

Fatima: Apparently it will happen next year. Officially changes are going to be made next year except that nobody's informed exactly about what is going to happen, how it's going to happen. How much initiative is going to be given to the different departments is also a big question that we don't know about.

1.10 Possible participating faculty in LCTDE

[Who are they?]

Dr. Bourqia:

As to the trainers, they can be historians who are more sensitive to cultural issues and sociologists and such.

[Faculty members who could participate in LCTDE]

A colleague of mine, Dr. Fahradin Barada — he is very interested in cultural studies she said, and is also currently taking part in an exchange program with Wisconsin University.

Dr. Moudden:

I can think of at least two professors in the Faculty of Letters, if indeed that is the faculty that you are targeting, who could be ideal for this kind of program. One of them, for example, is Abdurrahman Lahsasi. Lahsasi is a professor of philosophy and would be ideal for this kind of program. The other one is Dr. Lahcen Haddad who is a professor in our English department. We also have Professor Dehebi. These are the kind of people that you might be considering because they are familiar with both the Moroccan and the American systems of education.

Dr. Benjelloun:

[He suggested that I meet with one of his faculty, Najiya El-Alami, a young Moroccan woman teaching literature, language acquisition and women study topics.]

In this university [he said] we have a lot of foreign faculty but this is not what you are looking for. Najiya El-Alami is a Moroccan, she is also internationally active and she is young, therefore representing the new generation of Moroccan in that way.

Dr. El-Alami:

I did my MA in cross-cultural studies in Essex University in England, and cross-cultural studies is more or less what you are talking about. It's looking across cultures and trying to understand the other, beyond the stereotypes and misconceptions that we have. It's also exploring ourselves and seeing what we are, in order to counter how others view us. I did my graduate studies during the 80s when Orientalism (or how the West views the East) was fashionable. I investigated Orientalism through the literature, mainly travel literature. I did my dissertation on the portrayal of Arab women in English travel literature of the 19th century. Right now I'm working on a paper to be delivered in a conference this December. Its title will be something like 'A Dialogue across Cultures.'

Dr. Mekouar:

I would be available to participate in such a program. To talk about American culture through some author. Suzanne Ralston, for example, a woman who is considered the first American novelist.

1.11 Faculty incentives and barriers

Dr. Moudden:

[I asked Moudden about teacher's training. How to motivate Moroccan teachers to participate and what incentives are needed?]

First incentive for the Moroccan faculty can be travel. Just going to the States, to New Mexico, can be enough.

Second incentive is to give the teachers internet access. This does not apply to Al Akhawayn where everybody is already connected. In public universities, a free internet account is a strong incentive. Also library resources and access to material can be given. These incentives should be enough, I think. Also, the possibility of trying something new can be attractive to teachers.

Dr. El-Alami:

As to the benefit from such a course to me personally, intellectually it fits into my research, which is cross-cultural issues on globalization and women. (We have to be involved in both, teaching and research. Research is about fifty percent or whatever.)

1.12 Faculty mastery of and access to technology

Dr. Haddad:

[Can we stay in touch through the internet, by e-mail? Do you have a computer or an access to one?]

I have a computer, but it's not working right now. It has been in Rabat to be repaired for a long time now.

At Al Akhawayn I had my own e-mail account but now I don't. We are in transition right now and it depends on where we are going to be this summer. If we go to Rabat I can have e-mail there. At the cyber-café's you can have an internet account very easily.

In the meantime you can send e-mail to a good friend of mine in Al Akhawayn and she will give it to me. Her name is Latifa.

Three English faculty at Mohamed V:

Nufissa: The problem is that I don't feel like I have any competency with the technological stuff.

Nadia: I have to take some time this summer to learn a little bit about computers.

[Are you saying that you need to be trained on how to use e-mail before we can begin our communication?]

Fatima: I used e-mail when I worked for an American agency here in Morocco for a little while, but that was two years ago and I don't quite remember how to do it.

1.13 Job stability and holding a second job

[Most Moroccan government jobs in general and university faculty positions in particular are jobs that can be held for life. A professor can hold other jobs simultaneously or can leave a teaching post only to come back to it in a later time.]

Dr. Bourqia: [Bourqia is a professor of sociology and anthropology at the Faculty of Letters, Mohamed V and at the same time she is the Moroccan coordinator of the USAID research project about illiteracy among Moroccan girls.]

Dr. Haddad: [Haddad was a full time professor in the Faculty of Letters at Mohamed V before he taught at Al Akhawayn. To teach there he took an indefinite leave of absence, but now he is back in his old office while he also works at High-Tech.]

Dr. Moudden: [Moudden is a full time professor in the Faculty of Law at Mohamed V University, and at the same time he is directing the Center for Cross-Cultural Learning in Rabat.]

Dr. Mekouar: [President of the Fulbright commission in Rabat, better known as the 'Moroccan-American Commission for Educational and Cultural Exchange' (MACECE).]

Since I finished my job as the rector in Oujda I'm officially back in the Rabat University. I'm simply just preparing myself, recycling myself as it were, after 17 years of administration. Recycling myself in order to be able to start teaching again next year.

Three English faculty at Mohamed V:

[How long have you been in this department?]

Fatima: Since 1980. We all been here together for a long time

[And you probably will keep this job for a long time?]

Fatima: Well, maybe?

Nadia: We're going to be teaching here for a long while. They only change the deans, not the teachers.

[So are you more permanent than the dean and the administration?]

Nufissa: Yes, and we're more reliable.

Fatima: I'm going to be here because I'm not likely to become dean, partly since I'm a woman.

Nadia: It's not always like that. We had one women teacher who was appointed to be the dean of the Faculty of Letters in Mohammedia. She was a teacher from this school.

Fatima: We do have a few women now who are trying to climb up the ladder but I don't think any of us here is likely to get a higher job soon.

Mounir Alaoui:

[The business card that you gave me was not from the university but from the Middle East and North Africa Economic Summit. Is this where I should contact you?]

The telephone number on the card that I gave you is much more useable than that of the university because we have a secretary there. I work both here and there; in fact I'm most of the time there because I have my own phone there. Here I don't have a telephone. You know, in the university in Morocco we don't have a telephone and we don't have access. The e-mail here was cut for six month. There I have everything available, so it is easier for me to work over there even if physically I'm working for the university or for anybody else. It's just more convenient and useable.

1.14 Academic culture in Moroccan universities

[Power issues in the classroom]

Dr. Moudden:

The facilitator— this is something that has to be very carefully prepared. This is a difficulty that we have in our program also. Our professors tend to be very comfortable in their own system of education which some of our students, coming from American universities, don't see as the best approach to meet their needs. For example, most of the here would rather give long lectures and it is very difficult to change

that. So that is why I suggested to you before that you should talk to some of the potential teachers/facilitators before you leave here. Also, talk to some of the possible students here or at least try to have some kind of an idea of what kind of students you would have on this side — in Morocco. That way you can prepare and advise your students in the States.

Dr. Haddad:

[I asked Haddad how would Moroccan teachers adopt to a student-centered collaborative classroom. In Morocco the academic culture is strongly a teacher-centered traditional system.]

They would not accept it very easily. In my department at Al Akhawayn I had 15 teachers and most of them had this kind of professorial qualities. It's the influence of the traditional Arabic teaching system. For example, the teachers didn't want the students to sit in the same computer room with them.

Contrary to that, in my communication class at Al Akhawayn, I would ask the students to write several speeches and at the same time I worked on my speeches as well. I suggested to the students that we could correct each other's speeches and grade them together. The students graded my work as well. This might have been a little bit too democratic for Moroccan society, but I think that it was a good way to work. Peer teachings, where the students learn from each other in very small groups, is a good way to work.

I think that there will be some kind of resistance by the teachers to loosing their power in the classroom. Probably the medium itself will take care of this problem. The medium will demand it, and they won't be able to do otherwise. If communication is text-based then you lose the voice of the teacher. If some students write much better than the teacher, so much the better. I think it's a good thing that teachers will have to learn to be a little bit more humble.

Three English faculty at Mohamed V:

Nadia: It's very good for the teachers, too. An example is the times I break down and speak Arabic to my students. As English teachers we try to speak English in class all the time. This is the only time the students have for practicing English. But sometimes you just get fed up with explaining things in English — when they don't understand. So you just say it in Arabic or sometimes even in Berber if the student is a Berber and wants to hear it in Berber. At that moment they look at each other and say, "she's just like us, she can speak Arabic".

Fatima: No, you are a teacher! You are an English teacher!

Nadia: It's like when you're a teacher, you're not a human being. Sometimes we get this feeling. A number of years ago I, in the summertime, met at a sports club a woman who was my student two years earlier. We both were there at the swimming pool. She looked at me in disbelief. The teacher was there, swimming like everyone else. I said to her, "why are you looking at me like that? I'm a human being too."

Nufissa: We never have a chance to socialize with them or to talk to them outside of the classroom.

Fatima: Myself, I have a tendency to socialize with the students.

Nadia: I'm afraid to do that.

[Would teachers here be willing to get closer to their students in order that they can get closer to each other?]

Nadia: It's a challenge to the teacher for sure.

Nufissa: It will be interesting for us to discover some new aspects in the personalities of our students, aspects that we never get to reach.

[But if you want to do that you also have to sacrifice some of your power as a teacher. Somehow you have to open yourself to the students for them to open to you. If the teacher is like a king and the students pawns then the king has to relinquish some of her power.]

Nufissa: We have ways to restore the balance.

Nadia: Fatima has always been close with the students. We have this joke that she does a lot of social work with them. She comes and talks with the students and she knows all sort of things about them. I also teach the same class and I don't know a thing about the students. It's really a question of personality.

Fatima: My relationship with my seminar students is that we're really close. This year especially, I had four students in the seminar who were real good and we became really close. We were more like a family type of thing. Sometimes I talked to the students about a few of my problems and then they talk to me about their own problems. It really helps me to get closer to the students.

Nufissa: That's what I meant when I was saying that there are ways to restore balance.

Fatima: I can restore the balance very easily because I have those two faces. They know that if they dare to step the limit, then I will switch to be a very strict teacher.

Nadia: I'm sure that we learn a lot about the Moroccan culture from our students.

Nufissa: Our relations with our students is cross-cultural.

Fatima: My interest is to write about relationships between women and men and really to capture what's happening to young people today. I do that through talking to my students. I find out what's happening nowadays because it's very different than before. I'm ready to write something about comparing the past with the present. How things changed from the time of my youth to the present.

Dr. El-Alami:

[About learner-centered classes:]

I think that Al Akhawayn is open to this kind of context, where there is no traditional structure of the classroom.

1.15 University organization and power structure

[From the meeting with Dr. Alaoui: See pages 291 and 135]

Dr. Mekouar:

[About the outcome of my meeting with Dr. Mounir Alaoui.]

It is because that when you see somebody in the system, you have to see people who are capable of following up on whatever it is. It's not America where every single faculty has its own budget and can negotiate with you and discuss with you. If you discuss things just with a professor, he can promise you anything. It's not up to him to deliver. He has to go to the director who has to go to the minister. The minister has to go to the minister of finances, and if it's not in the budget it's probably not going to happen. Even if he can promise 1500 computers, he's not going to deliver on the goods.

When you deal with Ezroua you are in a similar situation. Ezroua is the vice dean and he doesn't have anything in his hand either. He has to persuade his dean to do something and the deans will tell you that their resources are very limited. He can help, but you have to know that it is limited.

[Other discussions in this appendix are also related to this subject (1.15).]

1.16 How to select the Moroccan educational institution for LCTDE?

[Moroccan universities — which one?]

Dr. Bourqia:

As for institutions for the project — this brings us to the third problem which is the language. For distance education it will have to be in English, so maybe the Al Akhawayn is the best place not only because of the English language but also because they have the technology and the Internet access.

In the Mohammed V University, in our faculty there are only a few computers and no internet connection and none of the funds needed for such a project.

[I asked about the INPT]. There, she said, since the main problem is the technical possibilities, so if they have the right trainers, it might be possible and it might work out. They do have the equipment and the communication lines. They are, after all, the source of communication in Morocco.

As far as finding the suitable institutions for such a course, you might also look into some of the private schools and colleges where they might be offering some courses in sociology and the like. There is one such school in Rabat, 'the High Institute for International Education'. It's a kind of a private college for business management and business training and they may have some courses like what you are looking for. If they are training their students to be sensitive to cultural issues, that I don't know.

Maybe in Al Akhawayn, because of the quality of education there, and despite all the problems they have, maybe there they have a place for that. Here in Mohammed V University, the Faculty of Letters will be the best place if they didn't have the problem of equipment and had the financial possibilities. If the material problem can be solved, maybe there is a possibility here. They have their English department, they have cultural studies, the head of the English department, Dr. Belghazi, is very interested in cultural studies. You can talk to him or to Dr. Ezroua, the vice-dean of the faculty. They both might be interested in your project.

Dr. Moudden:

The two institutions that come to mind — and which you have already mentioned — are Al Akhawayn and the Mohammed V University in Rabat. Particularly I thought about the cultural studies program at the Faculty of Letters here in Rabat.

[How to go about selecting the institution for a project like this?]

Now, you have here three possibilities.

The first possibility would be to have it in a public university, whether in the graduate level or undergraduate level. If you decide to go with a public university in Morocco, because of this coming change (reform) in our graduate program, I would not consider having it as an undergraduate course for the Moroccan side. It would have to be a graduate course.

If you go with Akhawayn [the second possibility], they have their own system which is very similar to the American model. I don't know how they will handle it. Al Akhawayn is totally different because they have their own college of social science and humanities where the students have been already selected, so it is going to be very easy for them to do it.

Another possibility is to have it in a private school or university. The only problem in a private school is having to deal with students whose interests are in computer science and business management etc.

You also mentioned the INPT. There you will have the problem of the language. Their English is not too good. On the other hand they have the equipment. The ONPT take their students to the States every year and that can be another motivation for them.

My first choice, frankly, will be to have the students come from the cultural studies program at the English Department in Rabat. It's a graduate level program (third cycle). And then to have different reading material for them [different from the reading given to the American students], including Arabic and French readings. Maybe to have less reading for the American students. That will be choice number one.

Choice number two will be Al Akhawayn.

Choice number three will be to come up with a program involving students from different disciplines and see how to 'push' for it or to 'sell' it to any of the schools.

Choice number four will be school like the INPT or one of the private business schools.

You can choose to have a graduate class in Morocco working with an undergraduate class in the States. This will make up for the language difference. In this case you will require more reading from the Moroccan students.

Dr. Haddad:

[I asked Haddad to compare the two possible schools in Rabat, the INPT and the Faculty of Letters.]

Instinctively, without looking into the details, I would say — the Faculty of Letters.

Students there will be more interested in knowing about others and will want to get into some kind of program like this one.

Engineering students at the INPT would not be as motivated, but it is an interesting challenge. The challenge is to make those people interested in it.

The English students at the Faculty of Letters are the people who want to know about America anyway. Their interest is in cultures. They want to know about others and the specialty is English. It's like reaching to the converted, in a sense. But the challenge would be to do it with engineers who are learning distance technology. To get them interested and thinking about cross-cultural issues and distance communication.

So my answer is that it would be easier to do with the English students but more challenging to get the program to involve all kinds of students.

Dr. Mekouar:

Al Akhawayn is another world because it's completely autonomous. It can commit itself, it can even commit money, whereas other universities cannot. If you sign a contract in Al Akhawayn and they determine to do a B.A. in American/Arabic-cross cultural studies with you, part of it is distance education and part of it is give and take and so on, they can do that. But you need somebody who is committed and has got enough clout to get the thing through. The best thing is to persuade the president, and if not the president, the vice president.

Vice dean Dr. Benjelloun would not understand your program because he is from biology. The president there is from science, he is a mathematician. The person who could have understood you was Mohammed Dhabbi, but he is no longer there. He knows something about your subject, the others don't.

If you decide to work with Al Akhawayn you need their commitment. You need a commitment from somebody there and also his cooperation. (This is the big name in the academic world for working together). Cooperation needs dedicated people on both sides.

Dr. Benjelloun:

As you described the project, and from an impartial evaluation of the situation, I don't think that you will find a better institution than this one [Al Akhawayn] in terms of the availability of the technology and in terms of the profile of the students that you'll find here. Some of the best students academically, tomorrow's leaders in fact, are in this university, and they come from all walks of life. It's not a university of the rich by any means. Most of our students as a matter of fact are middle class. Most of the students are on some kind of financial assistance. So you get a good cross section of the society — some of the more brilliant minds of this generation. They are open, very inquisitive, very curious and they are very sophisticated. So I don't think that you'll find a better partner for your students.

Dr. Moncef Lahlou:

[Some people say that the student population of Al Akhawayn doesn't represent a true picture of the Moroccan student since students here belong to the upper classes and to the Moroccan elite.]

There is something to that effect although it's not true 100 percent. The fact that this is a private university where students have to pay, limits access in a way, but you find students from all walks of life here. We have students from rich families, from poor families and from the middle class.

It might be a good idea to look at the Al Akhawayn and at some other university at the same time, either in Fez or Rabat, for example. There is a good department of English in the Faculty of Letters in Fez and you can maybe check there, even though they don't have the technology. That's a big problem. In that case what people would have to do is just use snail mail.

In Rabat, you might have more technology available but still the infrastructure will definitely be less of a problem here. The fact is that students here, all of them without exception, all have access to Internet 24 hours a day. They're used to it, they know it, they're all in chat rooms. Many of them spend hours and hours in chat rooms. So from that respect, it's a lot easier.

Three English faculty at Mohamed V:

Nadia: They [Al Akhawayn] certainly have more technology than what we have here. They also have more labs, smaller number of students in each class and their students are probably better selected.

Nufissa: But the real Morocco is here and not at Al Akhawayn. Al Akhawayn does not reflect the real Moroccan student.

Nadia: Even time-wise, this is a very good time for such a program. Cultural studies were virtually unheard of in this university even five years ago, but now you hear about it more and more.

Dr. Ezroua:

First Al Akhawayn is a small group, it's not a big university but since it's a private institution you don't have many students that go there. Not many Moroccans can pay for Al Akhawayn. The other thing is that the Moroccan public university is a tuition-free education system.

[Technical Schools]

Dr. Mekouar:

There is a faculty now, it's a school, which is supposed to train people in your field, not the cultural part but the computer part. It's called Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Informatique et d'Analyse de Système [The National Advanced School for Information and System Analysis] — ENSIAS. It is one of two engineering schools in Rabat. Both schools are part of the Mohammed V University. [The other] one is the Mohammadia School of Engineers to which Mounir Alaoui belongs, and the other school that trains people as computer engineers, specializing in systems. It's a small school, it's a recent school that's been in operation for the past five or six years and they are very open people. I can give you the name of the director. He knows the administration and he knows what he can deliver. So whatever Mounir told you about the Mohammadia School of Engineers, if you were to see Mr. Bannani, he could help you. If he

promises you something he would have the means to carry it out. The school is ENSIAS and Abdelfodil Bannani is the director there. If you went to see him and tell him that I recommended you, he would tell you what he could do. He is an expert software and hardware engineer, and his school is a government school for an engineering degree.

Dr. Haddad:

What is happening in Morocco now is that there are new type of institutes like the International Institute for Higher-education and the High-Tech Institute in Rabat. They are developing MBA (master in business administration) programs that are jointly supervised by American universities and these special institutes. These kinds of institutions are needed here. A friend of mine who is a director of one of these institutes asked me to manage their MBA program. I told him that although I was not an MBA specialist I still want to do it in order to gain experience. These schools have the needed technology. If I can acquire the kind of expertise that I could learn from such programs, then a lot of courses can be taught through distance learning. For example, these schools are looking for management and marketing specialists to teach there. If they can't find them then from colleges or other institutions in America we can deliver the needed courses at a distance.

Of course you should look into private schools and private institutes who are a little bit more equipped, which is better for your project.

[The High-Tech Institute]

Dr. Haddad:

High-Tech is 'high institute of education', it's also like a small college. It is a private school that provides a BA and an MBA program. It's also a computer school which provides BA and MA in computer science. We are the first private computer school in Morocco. We teach business, management, finance and computer science but computer science is their big thing. It's the equivalent of the Mohammediya School of Engineering (EMI) in the private sector. So people like Mounir Alaoui and other professors of engineering in the public Mohammediya school have something to do with High-Tech.

Most of our students are from the middle class. It's somewhere between Al Akhawayn and public universities.

Both the president and the vice president there are good friends of mine and they are very positive and well-meaning people. At the same time they want to see the school make money. For example, they would be interested in questions of culture only as long as the students want it too. I know that they like to try new things but, at the same time, if it's a project that drains a lot of money without financial returns, then of course they won't be interested.

They are very interested in doing things with Americans and with American universities. That's their big thing. What they are interested in, which we can use for our purposes, is to have joint ventures concerning specific programs. It can be a Bachelor level, an MBA level or a Master level program.

Let me ask you this question about High-Tech. I coordinate the MBA program there and the reason why our program is successful is because we cater to the needs of people. We have an on-going program where students meet in the evenings and on Saturdays. We sent them to the States only for six weeks during their summer vacation. My question is would it be possible to have some kind of an exchange using distance education in which students would not even need to go to the States. They can take some of their courses here in Morocco and some with teachers in the States through video-conferencing. This is something you maybe can find out when you go back. We need that here; it's an urgent thing. We need it in our Master of Science and the MBA programs.

2. Al Akhawayn University

2.1 General information

Jack Rusenko:

Early on when they just got started I tried to help find some professors for them and I did find some. These days I'm not involved with the university any more. It's true that the students there are not your average Moroccan students. What is interesting is that they have American universities and schools come knocking on their door constantly saying that they want to do a working agreement with them, all the way from Georgetown and on down.

(You know that our friend Professor Doug Davis is on his way to Morocco this week because his school, Haverford, is interested in doing some kind of student exchange or partnership with al Akhawayn.)

The encouraging thing here is to see that when a Moroccan university follows the American system, where the kids speak English, how interested American institutions are in working with Morocco. Up until now there has never been an American-style university in Morocco where there is an abundance of people who speak English.

Dr. Benjelloun:

The first thing I like to talk about is the university's vision. One of the basic tenets of Al Akhawayn is the notion of tolerance. Tolerance between people's cultures, religions and so forth. We interpret it all the way from the classroom to international interaction. So, for us the classroom is an interactive space. It's where a student prepares for his course and comes in not to listen but to discuss knowledge, to challenge it and to be curious. Of course, within the limit of responsibility whether a student or a faculty. That is a central element in the teaching process at Al Akhawayn. We select our students and our faculty along those lines. When people are tolerant with their ideas then they can be tolerant with major concepts like culture, religion and so-forth. So, in that sense, I don't think that there will be much difference between most American universities and our learning and teaching situation here. The students are just as inquisitive, just as curious and just as challenging as their equivalents in American universities. Our faculty also expects this kind of interaction in their classroom. So I think that they will be able to communicate well.

I see our work together starting almost immediately in something like internet, without the more advanced DE technology, as a first step. To get a group of our students and a number of faculty members to start communicating with a group of students in the U.S. and a faculty member about just how it is they want to go about this. We shouldn't be necessarily overly bent on technology, since we do have something (the internet) that works. Once they get it running, then a videoconference in operation could be a second step in the development of this program.

The challenge, of course, is going to be in terms of funding. I don't know if you've given it some thought. An initial modest interaction through internet probably is not a problem that can't be worked out.

It is a question of identifying interest and interested students and faculty on both sides of the ocean. If it goes beyond that, then obviously it requires an investment. And I see it in the third step — that is they can start with the internet then move into video-conferencing and then finally, as a third step go into a local immersion in the culture where our students will go over there and they will come here. I think that if we build it that way, modestly from the beginning, then we can start it almost immediately. However, if you we say that we need to start it through video-conferencing, then it is going to take some time.

My approach is to get something small going right away and then it would be easier to get funding for a larger-scale project. It is easier to get the funding once you have something going rather than look for funding first through need assessment and design. Once you have something to show, for example that there is an initial contact and that something is being done on the internet already, then you have a better chance for funding.

Dr. Benjelloun II:

As to authority, you could have come here and talked with Najiya from the beginning. We're very de-centralized as far as that goes. When Najiya sees that this project has gone far enough, then we'll take it to the president and see if we want to sign something between the two universities. We don't like to sign anything until we see it working. It's the opposite process to most Moroccan universities.

In other Moroccan universities you can find that they might have 50 or 60 accords with different universities around the world that don't mean anything because those agreements never see the light of day. Here we prefer to have something working and on the basis of that we'll sign whatever needs to be signed.

[Courses involving cultural studies]

Dr. El-Alami:

I'm involved in teaching a graduate course in Al Akhawayn called the 'History of an Idea'; which is the idea of the nation. It is more or less about — what is my nation? The students assess and explore the complexities of their own cultures, and we get into many very interesting debates about this subject. Students wrote quite a few papers about subjects such as 'what is Moroccan culture?' and 'what is a national culture?' It was a very challenging and difficult process because it is very easy to believe in generalizations. When you start asking these questions, they are very painful. But I think that the final papers and presentations from the graduate students were very good.

As far as undergraduate students are concerned, we also have the course English II: Introduction to Research. There, the students choose the titles they want to work on. Most of them choose to write about different cultural aspects such as: women, male-female relations, taboo subjects, notion of virginity, notion of homosexuality in Morocco, Berbers, Blacks in Morocco and so on. This is my field, so your project is something that I'm very interested in. But I wanted to find out more about it from you.

[Communication and Media Studies]

Actually you came at the right time because we are just finishing exams, and a group of us are working on designing next year's communication course. It's a new program called "Communication and Media Studies." We're hoping to start this program in January of 1998. In terms of new technologies and new videos and new equipment for TV production, the university is willing to put more funds into it. So just in terms of new equipment and all that — it might give us more possibilities, which might help this project.

[Communication class]

Now I understand why Dr. Benjelloun was asking me to think about it in terms of our communication class. Those classes are smaller than our regular classes, with a maximum of 17 students. That's where we teach communication skills. They learn how to communicate with others and how to address a large audience. At the end of each semester we have a symposium, where we invite people from the university and from the outside, and where the students present their papers. This course is a platform and a framework for raising many issues. The students are free to explore or elaborate on what's interesting to them. We try to leave them free to choose their own themes. Only in the last four or five weeks they work on a common theme. There they try to research one specific aspect. Our recent theme was the environment in Morocco. Another was tourism in Morocco, which was a very successful theme. Students had to collect data and do some field work. They had to come and talk about one specific aspect of the theme. This class is where they discuss ideas. There is some theory, but lots of practice and lots of really concrete things. Another interesting topic was the issue of housemaids in Morocco. It's about young girls who work in people's houses — their status and their problems. They interviewed lawyers. They went into the courts and to where people were prisoned because they stole and they weren't able to get lawyers. The students started thinking in those terms.

In this class the students present their papers and we video them. They watched their own performance and criticized it themselves. So according to Benjelloun this class would be ideal for a distance communication class. This is where they communicate and work with some technology.

Actually, it might be of interest to our MC program (or Media and Communication Studies). I'm working on developing a course on media — the Impact of the Media on Culture in Morocco. That will be one of the main courses to be proposed. It will include issues about international communication, globalization and how they are changing the values of the society. That might be an interesting topic, but we won't start that course before January 1998.

[Other Al Akhawayn faculty members who might be interested]

I agree that it needs a lot of thinking. We have another suitable Moroccan faculty, Nadia Elzeni. She teaches Moorish art and Islamic architecture, and she might be interested in this. She is in Britain for the summer though, and won't be back until September. I would give it some thought this summer because I will be here. (I'll be working on my paper for the Maymonides conference. Also there is a fellowship in

Oxford University for those interested in Islamic literature and I want to work on that). The summer is the term that I'm not teaching, so it's not that hectic and there are no students around. I certainly can give it some thought then. Also John Shoup will be around and he has been involved in the Middle East and North Africa for some time now. He is an American who has been in the Middle East for nine or 10 years, so he knows both sides. That's the only person that I can think of for the summer. There is also Imad Shahin, but he left yesterday for the States.

Dr. Haddad:

Before I came to Al Akhawayn I was teaching English and English literature at the Faculty of Letters in Rabat. I was there from 1984 to 1995. At Al Akhawayn I was from its beginning. I was the chair of the Department of Communications. There we did language teaching, public speaking in communication, business communication and subjects that have to do with culture, rhetoric and the use of images. I was teaching and in the same time running the department. They are still teaching it. Currently they are running into a lot of different problems. This is since most of the chairs of the departments there left. We all resigned because of academic freedom problems we had with the whole administration. There was a divergence of visions. We had a vision of open and tolerant, responsible, trusting academic community. There were a lot of incidents that showed that they were not going in that direction. The last of those incidents had to do with the way final projects for graduate students, MA students, were handled. The administration insisted that they had to approve any MA projects before they were defended. They didn't trust the academic faculty to do that. Once you're not trusted, then you won't be trusted with other things. We insisted that the faculty was the one to represent the president on academic matters and not the administration. We also said that academic evaluation of students and their work has to come from faculty who are the experts in that field. You can't have biologists or mathematicians evaluate students' work in the humanities and other subjects.

It has to do with principals and values. We believe that we know our limit, and in the same time we know what is academically acceptable and what's not academically acceptable. You can't have a situation where faculty members instruct students in what to do and then, later, to be told by the president that it's not the right way. The university administration wanted it to be that way. The faculty in the business school allowed it, but in the School of the Humanities we didn't let it happen. It wasn't a personal thing but the ideal itself. When they told Dahbi, the head of the department, to go, the rest of the faculty thought that if we stay, we accept this kind of thinking, so we all left. I'm very proud that we did that.

Of course, it was not an easy decision to take in the middle of the year and to have to change the life accordingly. Financially, here it's better than in Mohammed V. Now I'm officially back with the University of Rabat where I get paid a third of what I got at Al Akhawayn.

Al Akhawayn is parading itself to be an American-style university, but those things that I spoke about don't exist in American Universities. They don't exist in Moroccan universities, either. That is why we thought that if we let it go that we would be betraying ourselves.

[What's American about Al Akhawayn?]

John Shoup:

I don't think that we have here a real American educational system. It's sort of a Moroccan version of an American system. As of yet, since this institution is young, we don't have large class choices. So it's very strict in the sense that there are only certain classes people can take, and there is certain sequencing. So it's not quite like an American institution, where at the beginning of the freshman year you could take electives and that sort of thing. At the same time, we do have general requirements that the U.S. institutions have, where if you're a student you have to take hard sciences, math and this sort of thing, and science students have to take our (humanities and social sciences) courses. This is different from the Moroccan system where they are very specific. So they do have that picture so it's much more American-like. And again this gives the students more choice so those who come here are coming here for that reason. They're coming here to get a different educational experience and their parents want them to have this different educational experience.

English is a very important part of it and certainly, as you can see, American culture. However we can define it, American culture is a very important part of what students bring with them and what they think they're getting while they're here. To a degree, I think that some of the frustration, on the part of students, is where they may feel that they're not getting enough of it.

It's the only American-like institution and it is supported by the Texas International Educational Consortium, (the Texas Consortium for short), which is an American institution. The Texas Consortium is partially behind the founding of El Al Akhawayn and through them they set up the curriculum here. It's also through them that initially members of the foreign faculty, i.e., the American faculty, were brought here. They provide continuing faculty support for this school.

Jeff: I'm employed by the Texas Consortium. It's a consortium based in Texas which supplies teaching staff from America to universities abroad. They are contacted by foreign institutions when those institutions need faculty. They use their contacts and their pool of available people to send temporary teaching staff to Morocco. There are schools all over the world that they work with. And so I'm being paid by this consortium that is being contracted by Al Akhawayn.

[Teaching style]

[I asked about their teaching style and whether it is similar to teacher-centered classes one finds in other Moroccan universities.]

Jeff: No, my personal teaching style is not at all a lecture — write the notes and see you on Wednesday. It's much more designed, as are John's classes, around reading and discussions — Let's talk about these ideas, what do you think? What do I think? The students are very open, very supportive and want more of it. A number of students have expressed to me that they're tired of lecture classes and that

they like discussion. They want to talk about current events — how they affect Morocco and what people think of Morocco. I haven't had any problems with this way of teaching whatsoever.

[Who at Al Akhawayn will benefit from DE?]

Majid Lahlou:

In many of the faculties there is the situation where they ask some visiting professors to come from the U.S. or from England to teach for a semester (for example) which is four months. During this semester maybe the professor needs to give one course, one class a week. Instead of bringing this person over and stopping him from doing his work, they can have this person give his lecture from a distance once a week for a semester. For a professor to teach from the U.S. with DE will cost the university less than to bring him over.

From an organizational point of view and from the economical aspects, DE will be of interest to all the departments in the university. It will cost less and will be more appropriate than to bring a teacher over just to give one course.

[About Al Akhawayn's remote location]

Dr. Rachidi:

It's good and bad in the same time, but even if this school was in Rabat, it would have advantages and dis-advantages. The landscape here is magnificent, and I think that this compensates for almost everything. On the other hand, it's far from everything. For example, I have to apply for a visa for my coming trip to London. I have to go all the way to Casablanca, and it takes a long time. This means that I have to leave for two days since I don't have a car. I have to take a bus to Meknes and from there I take the train to Casa. The bottom line is that some people like it here and some don't. Personally, I like it because I like the tranquility and the beauty.

For the students it is very good because they have less distraction. Imagine, if we were in Casablanca, there will be hardly a student doing his schoolwork. This doesn't mean that there are no activities. Every week there are at least five or six scheduled activities, projection of films, theater, musical groups, quiz shows, sports, all kind of tournaments with the intent to win medals and so on. Of course there are students for whom it's not enough and they want different kinds of activities. Those students usually leave on Friday afternoon to go home and come back Sunday.

2.2 Administration

[ISDN service at Al Akhawayn]

El-Aoufir and Lahlou:

Lahlou: Al Akhawayn has to create the demand for DE, but until now, to be honest, the problem has been that the service is not available. When the service will be available and tested, then we can tell our

faculty that we have video-conferencing capabilities. Only then can they start to get in touch with the people outside and set up conferences and start to have distance learning take place.

At this point we depend on the availability of service from the ONPT. Some pressure is needed to come from some high places for them to provide the service because, in reality, we can't imagine that another institution from this region, other than this university, will use ISDN service. This pressure has to come probably from Benjelloun because he deals directly with the president. The president can make the necessary pressure on the government.

Of course Benjelloun don't know and doesn't need to know exactly the technical aspects about ISDN. He knows the need to have video-conferencing capabilities with the States. He knows especially about the need to have seminars and courses that will be more economical for the university. They can use video-conferencing in place of bring the teachers here, to the university, which costs a lot more. Benjelloun is in charge of all academic affairs at the university. He's on top of all the deans and he's directing the strategy for the university's academic evolution. I think that he's the right person for you to speak with, and he has a very good connection line to the president. If he's convinced, he can convince the president.

Youssef El-Aoufir:

The ONPT is not making ISDN connection available in Ifrane yet. We have requested it and we can pay for that with no problem. ISDN costs are not high compared to a leased line where you pay for it whether you use it or not. For ISDN you pay when you use it, like the phone. Also, the one-time installation cost is not very much. I don't have the exact prices but this is not something we can't afford. They say they don't know exactly when they will make it available here. I assume that this kind of service is new to them and although they are starting to make installations in Morocco in smaller centers like Ifrane, they still don't have all the required equipment that will support the service here.

Majid is the one working on the ISDN project. He was never able to get any estimates from the ONPT's representative as to when this service will be available. (Mr. Ait Boubker is the commercial representative of the ONPT in Ifrane). In general, we have very good relations with the ONPT here. They are very responsive when we need them. It seems that ISDN service is just not available in this region. Actually, we are a small ONPT center. We are their main customer here and we have the same phone capacity as the whole town of Ifrane combined.

Once the ONPT installs ISDN here, we'll be able to move the DE equipment anywhere on campus. The cabling exists so we can have the video-conference equipment installed everywhere.

[Financial constraints (initial budget vs. working budget)]

In the beginning, when Al Akhawayn was being built there was a lot of money for equipment. We were able to buy all these computers and to provide the network and the labs. However, to maintain and to improve the system is very difficult because there is no working budget. The problem is that since the university does not have a regular budget at the beginning of each year, all the departments inside the university also do not have any budget amounts announced for them at the beginning of the year.

Everything is done on a per-project basis and on a per-item basis. Each time there is a project or a need is identified, (things that are needed by the university,) we prepare a file in regard to this project or item. Then we submit it to the management — to the vice president of academic affairs — and he approves or refuses it. If it's approved it goes on to the president for approval. Sometimes, even if it is approved by the president, there is no money to implement it. In any case, it always takes some time.

Al Akhawayn has financial problems because it has no regular funding. I think that the only regular income is the students' tuition and it's not enough. There is a lot of equipment and a lot of property. All this stuff needs to be maintained. It costs the university a lot, and there are no other funding sources. We (ITS) organize, from time to time, conferences, continuing education workshops for government workers and for other organizations. This brings some money to the university but it's not much.

I don't know exactly how things are done in regard to funds. I think that the king is still supporting the university but that it's not regular. I assume that when the president needs money he goes to the secretary and asks for funding.

[Cost of usage]

We want to start charging for ITS services when the university has conferences or seminars that have nothing to do with our department. When there is a conference, maybe in the auditorium (building 17), we put there a technician to run all the audio-video services, and we are using our audio-video equipment. So we want to charge for this and for people who need internet access — I mean people from outside the university. Those people need temporary accounts in the computer labs. We also install for them TVs and phones. All these are things done by our staff and we want to start charging for it in order to get some money for the department. We are still fighting for that.

2.3 The students

[Students and class configurations]

Dr. Rachidi:

I never had any non-Moroccan students in my class. They usually take the Humanistic and cultural subjects. In general, I never heard of any tension between Moroccan and non-Moroccan students.

My classes have between 15 and 20 students in each one. Sometimes you can find classes here that will have up to 32 or 33 students. Computer labs are scheduled in such a way that each student will have the use of his own computer. I used to teach computer lab, but now I teach theoretical classes only.

John Shoup:

In general for here, where we only have 700-some students altogether, no class is going to reach over 35 students. We just don't have those kinds of numbers (you have in the States). The classes I suggested, one has 28 and the other, 25 students — something like that. One of them, the women's society class, is totally a discussion class. Ten percent of their grade is on discussion.

[Undergraduate students at Al Akhawayn]

Dr. El-Alami:

At Al Akhawayn, the undergraduate students are very advanced and with very good backgrounds. Some of the students in this program would be very interested in the subject of cultural communication. This course that I was telling you about, its aim is to learn skills of how to address an audience. The students have to give a speech about a topic of their choice, and they mostly choose topics related to culture. At one stage, I used to feel that we needed to research why students choose certain topics. They are mainly 18, 19, 20 years old and that's a critical age where they try to ask questions about themselves. They try to situate themselves within the community. Here they are away from their families for the first time, so they start to objectively think about themselves as individuals. It's amazing what they come up with. I think that a communication course can be a space or a platform where they can present these very daring topics. These are topics that are actually taboo in a narrow Islamic culture, but here they feel that they can dare to talk. This includes topics ranging from friendship to parent-children relations to sexuality and the like.

[LCTDE as a graduate course — undergraduates vs. graduate students]

In terms of the students, I want to see their reactions and what they think about the project. I want even to look into the possibility of doing it with the graduate students.

[A graduate course might also be a possibility at UNM. At the College of Education we have an ongoing cross-cultural graduate course and distance education graduate courses. Those could be the foundation for a new course in the spirit of the LCTDE.]

I know what you meant about the graduate courses in the Rabat University being very theoretical and dry. I was a student in the faculty there. But here at Al Akhawayn, the graduate students are different. The teaching here is less theoretical and more applied.

Last semester I was involved in teaching a graduate course called The History of an Idea. I also worked with graduate projects. The History of an Idea is about the idea of the nation and what it means. What is my nation? — More or less. But mainly it focused on the minorities within the nation, in terms of Berbers, in terms of women and so on — people who are living on the margin. Even the notion of culture, what is it? What are all its complexities? What does national identity mean? What does it mean to be Moroccan or Tunisian or Algerian? Is it the clothes they wear (is it the *jellabiya*)? It's very interesting, although there were no answers in the end of the semester but rather more questions. The students were freely motivated and interested. It was a small class of 14 students but they were the cream of the crop of Moroccan students — Intelligent, serious and motivated. The best a teacher can have. So it made it a joint pleasure to teach it, but it was very challenging also. We had 80-minute classes twice a week, but they would carry on and never end their discussions. I would tell them to go and continue [their discussion] in the coffee shop.

So that's what I was thinking about undergraduates vs. graduate students. Undergraduates are not really that selected. There you have different levels. Some have problems with the English language. With graduate students you have a group who is really excellent and where the students are selected to be in the same level. So we have a choice here.

[Students working together — collaboration — group-work]

I try to encourage group work. For example, just last week we had a symposium whose theme was the physically handicapped in Morocco. The students had to choose a topic such as the physically handicapped and the role of the cinema or the handicapped in architecture. They work in groups of four, and they present their work. It is hard for them to do group work in the very first stages, but later it works well. What I try to do is not to have students work with their friends, but rather work with other people, and they become friends through their work. I started this process two semesters ago and it is working well. They have to make new friends if they want to succeed in the class.

Another problem that we had to deal with is that students like to hide what they do from the other students. [Characteristic of Moroccan culture.] They will show their work to the teacher but they don't want to show what they have done to other students. So I try from the very beginning to do away with that. I start from the selection of the project to the process of the research and to the final work. They have to share all that with their project partner in working together on presentations.

[Why do students want to attend Al Akhawayn?]

Muhamed Tazi:

As far as I'm concerned, I wanted to go to the U.S. right after graduating from secondary school. Now we have here an American-style university, so I came here. Personally, I don't appreciate the French system at all. Most students like the American system because at least you have the choice to choose your courses— this is an advantage. You can decide to take the things you like.

It also prepares you to go and study in the States. Although the universities are very expensive in the States, I heard that after one year there you could start working. Also if you have a high GPA, there are grants and scholarships available. I like to continue to study in the States and get my master's there.

[Students' cultural background]

John Shoup:

You mentioned the students' backgrounds. They do have a bit of a cultural cross-section. It's from lower middle class and up. The university is actually quite proud of how much of a cross-section it has because it is very different from many other institutions here where it wouldn't be quite that broad. They do offer scholarships, for instance. So we have students that come from different backgrounds but they tend to come from certain cities more than others. They tend to be more from the northern cities, which are

more cosmopolitan, and where the families themselves are more open to the West. For example, they will allow their daughters to leave home and come here.

As far as the mix of genders goes, there's a good balance here. There may be more female students than males at the moment. Students who come here are the ones who are probably more interested in the West — this is one reason why we're here in this institution.

Dr. Shoup's discussion class:

Female Moroccan student: I think that most of the students here are from the richer classes and I think that these people here do not mirror the real Moroccan society. We are only representing a part, a minority.

Male student: I think that in each culture you find many sub-cultures, and that's what's happening here in Al Akhawayn university. There are many sub cultures that come here, from different places, from different parents, and that they all reflect the Moroccan culture.

Male student: I would like to mention an incident that happened to me and another two people from here. I was actually working on a project in Fez and on our way to the place where we were trying to make our research, we were called by some people — “the spoiled people of Al Akhawayn.” They said that we don't really represent the Moroccan culture, that we represent the elite, the spoiled people, the privileged people. That we don't have anything to do with the mass culture. I was actually hurt and felt that it's not true.

Many voices: Yes, that's not true.

Female American student: There are no people here from the tents of the Sahara, those who don't have the opportunity to go to university. There are no people at this university that don't know what it's like to go without food for weeks. I mean that there is a sub-culture here. There are many different cultures represented here but they are all going to be the upper class of Morocco or middle class.

Female Moroccan student: The fact that we are coming from a different social strata does not mean that we do not know about our culture. We know everything — the majority does. The fact that we are seen as being spoiled, as being privileged in some way, does not mean that we are really detached from our culture.

Female Moroccan student: I think that in this university there are many students who have financial aid because they are not able to finance their studies. I think that we could be representatives [of Moroccan culture] because in the university, you know, we have many social classes, there are many ranks in this university.

Female Moroccan student: Something about poor and rich. I think that the meaning of poor and rich in Morocco take another perspective, another angle. For instance, in Moroccan cities, for example Marrakesh, you see that it's a little bit contradictory. You find the old city near the new city. Rich people live near poor people. They cohabit and they coexist together. So there is not a huge difference. I think that rich people can't avoid learning about the poor. They have knowledge about the poor people.

Female Moroccan student: I think that most Moroccans have some consenting ideas, some common characteristics. I'm Berber but I am Muslim, and if I'm Muslim, I speak the Arabic language. So we have some components that gather all the Moroccans. So I think that we are a Muslim culture.

[About scholarships and financial aid at Al Akhawayn]

Three English faculty at Mohamed V:

Fatima: You see, the unfortunate thing is that only the students who can effort to pay go to Al Akhawayn University, and only in that special university can students have programs like this one.

[I was told that students could get scholarships to go there?]

Fatima: My best student, the best student that I had in the last five years, couldn't get a scholarship to Al Akhawayn. You might have met him in Fahradin's third-cycle class.

His name is Ghadad.

Nufissa: Oh yes, he's very good and very serious student. If he couldn't get a scholarship there, no one can. I think that in the beginning they gave scholarships, but not now.

Muhamed Tazi:

I have five more semesters and to get my bachelor's, inshaAllah. Then I will either have to stay at Al Akhawayn to get my master's or go to the States. It depends on if I get a scholarship to the States. I am on a scholarship now because I finished my baccalaureate with honors. My score was 14 over 20 points, which in the Moroccan system is very good. I'm was in the math and science direction in the secondary school.

Many students with good scores in the secondary school can get scholarships here. Nearly 30% of the people receive financial aid. I have to pay some of the tuition only. Next semester I will take full load of twenty (20) credits. The full tuition for that will be about 46,000 dirhams (\$5,000) for one semester. Up to 15 credits you pay 25,000 dirhams. Those are prices for Moroccan students. [Foreign students pay much more.] I have a 50% grant, which is the maximum grant available. I took a loan from the bank that I will pay after I complete my bachelor degree so that I can keep on with my studies. My mother will pay everything because she's the responsible in our family since my father is dead. She is an official in the government, so she can afford it.

From the nearly 30% of the students that get a grant, some pay more than I do. It depends on their financial needs and their academic achievements — I get the maximum 50%. Many students have to take much bigger loans than I do. It's a contract between the bank, the university and the student. It's partly a private loan but the government is also involved. I have to pay 8.5% interest which starts only one year after graduation. The bank gives the money directly to Al Akhawayn with no interest as long as I'm in the university. Every month I have to pay something towards this loan. This allows not only the rich

students to come here. We are middle class, although most of the students here come from rich families. Very poor students can't go to Al Akhawayn at all.

[Student's economy]

Most of the students in Morocco are poor. You can see it in the 1996 World Bank report. (The World Bank publishes a report every year and in 1996 it was also about Morocco.) There you can see that we don't have a high GNP, and there you can find some statistics about poverty in Morocco. We are an underdeveloped country, so it's quite natural that many are poor.

The reason that I can go to Al Akhawayn is because my family is not rich or poor. I would say that we are average. My father died 11 years ago so my mother is the responsible for everything. We have some other resources besides her job. We also have another apartment from the time that my father was the director of a private company in Casablanca.

Another reason is that I have only one sister and that she is twenty-three years old and married. Most Moroccan families have many children and if they give something to one child they have to give the same to the others. Usually they can't send all the kids to this university.

[Cultural issues]

John Shoup:

Some times when we touch on issues that are especially sensitive in Morocco we get a lot of response. To give you an example about these discussion classes—I had one of the American students, who very innocently in this Women's Society class asked a question. We were talking about the problems of identity and loss of identity and why Moroccans have certain feelings about who and what they are and how this can be affirmed. So he said: "I don't understand what your problem with identity is? Every language (and culture) borrows from other languages. Look at English, and he went on and on about that. The class certainly rose up, and I was afraid for a moment that they were going to turn on him because he asked a question that for them is very sensitive, and they really do feel that identity, right now, is a major problem. They feel that they are losing their identity and feel out of control with it. Certainly on this campus students mainly reflect the ideas of the Moroccan elite, so it's interesting that they have so much problem with the idea of identity.

At Al Akhawayn, whether we want to pat ourselves on the back for this or not, many of the students are the children of the very top elite, ministers and such. They're the ones who are going to run the country for the king when the time comes. They also are very touchy about this idea of identity and whether or not they have lost their identity. Morocco actually has an official national policy about their national culture. Some of our students are very qualified in this matter.

It gets interesting when you get an issue like say, globalization or some other hot issue and you, as a teacher, can step back and let the students discuss it and argue amongst each other about these things. This has happened on several occasions in the sociology class, particularly where people from different parts of Morocco have very different responses. It happened yesterday, where a group of girls from the north were

saying: "Oh, America is so bad because you have old-folks homes there. This is what you do with your old people. Here we take care of our old in the family." One of the girls said: "I'm from Tangiers and we have an old folks home in Tangiers. We have them here in Morocco too." Another said: "Our families are from here and we don't do that sort of thing." And another: "I'm from there, I know the place, what are you talking about?" And they argued back and forth between themselves. It was kind of nice to be able to just let them argue it out. Finally, one student just turned to me and said, "Sir, we do have them!"

One of the things that we talk about a lot is the difference between the ideal and the reality. What are they going to tell someone about what Morocco is like. What are Moroccan and Arab cultures like. There is the ideal of what you would tell someone and then the reality of how it really operates. If there's one thing that I've been successful in getting through to this group in the sociology class is, that there is a difference between real and ideal and they have to account for that.

Jeff: This could be a problem. Students on both sides might see themselves as ambassadors representing their cultures rather than just being American or Moroccan students. Especially if they work in groups, they will be editing and sorting what they say to show their culture in a certain positive way.

I think that one of the first obstacles in such a cross-cultural program from our students' side is the stereotype they have of Americans, which they get from television and movies.

[What characterizes Moroccan and American cultures and how are they different?]

Dr. Shoup's discussion class:

Female Moroccan student: Excessive freedom. When we say U.S., we immediately see excessive freedom. Freedom in the negative sense because it has no limits.

Male Moroccan student: I think the word that would fit Moroccan culture is tolerance. This word springs from the principals of Islam — we tolerate differences. We can cooperate with anybody from anywhere without having any problem. And this is the main character of Moroccan culture.

Female Moroccan student: Maybe the Western culture is much more based on the individual whereas Moroccan culture is much more based on the collective.

Female Moroccan student: For example, if I were an American and my neighbor was dying just next door, I wouldn't care for him. If I were a Moroccan I would want to help him and stop him from dying.

[This, of course, causes a big commotion and reaction in the class. The next comment was given in the midst of many other reactive voices:]

Female American student: I'm sorry, I know my neighbors and I know their children. No, I'm sorry, this is not true. I carry pictures of my neighbor's children in my wallet. I don't know any American who wouldn't care if their neighbor was dying. You just don't have a heart if you don't care if your neighbor is dying.

Female Moroccan student: I think that in the American culture, it is well known in the entire world. American children are brought up and trained to be independent. I mean, they learn since their childhood to rely on themselves. Rather on the contrary, in Morocco or in the Arab world, the children are taught to depend on others, to live in a group. Also the family is very important — the family and the neighbors.

Male Moroccan student: I think that the Moroccan culture is changing now with urbanization and the new technologies, and with the disappearance of the extended family and moving towards the nuclear family. All these changes show us that the idea of a collective society in the true meaning of the word has somewhat vanished and is not completely valid any more. There are some features of individualistic society that are taking place in Morocco.

Female Moroccan student: If you want it, there is the collectivity within the family. Within one's family there is collectivity but between two families there is perhaps hostility.

Dr. Shoup: If here the image of America is one of excessive freedom, then in America, for people who don't know the Arab world, the image is almost one of a place that's excessively homogeneous — meaning that everybody is the same. They imagine that everybody acts the same, everybody wants to dress the same way. That anybody who doesn't do things in a certain way or maybe doesn't go to the mosque or wear certain types of clothing is going to be somebody that the society does not tolerate. That's the image from America.

This is the feeling I get from other people in America and I've seen it portrayed in the media in this way. There was this picture that Kristin showed me, it was published in the *New York Times*. It was a picture of a ceremony in Morocco honoring the King. It just showed a crowd of men in white jellabas but it gave the feeling like it could go on for miles and miles of people in white jellabas all looking completely the same. That was the image given to the American public.

Female American student (Kristin): That was "the celebration of the throne" and the dignitaries were in their [traditional] white jellabas. The headline was "Ceremony Honoring the King."

[The case of LCTDE — a course not directly related to students' majors]

Dr. El-Alami:

Of course job opportunities are very important to the students. Most of the students go to business administration and to engineering school for this reason. But the difference from other Moroccan universities is that, here, we have, as they have in American universities, a core curriculum where all students have to take courses like biology, chemistry and so on. Here they are exposed to a variety of subjects for general knowledge. In the beginning the students were resistant and reluctant to take it, because in the Moroccan system students specialize in their one line. But now they appreciate it and this kind of project can have a place in our curriculum. But credits and grades should be given with the course. Our students love grades and they panic about their grades. They won't take the course only to be in it for its own sake. They will want to have the credit acknowledgement. So they do take courses that interest them, which are not directly job related, but you do have to examine them.

The students will benefit from the cultural aspect of the project. It's a very complex situation because they don't know much about their culture and we are trying to refocus that. They need to know more and to ask questions about the notion of culture. Just yesterday we had here a graduate students defending a thesis about "reclaiming the culture through the world of advertising." She started with the hypothesis that

advertising in Morocco is very much Westernized and that we have to reclaim it. [We need] to invoke our own culture in advertising. When she was asked what does she mean by the "collective unconscious of the Moroccan people," she had no answer to that and she has to rework her project of three month work.

2.4 Language

Dr. Moncef Lahlou:

Here, at Al Akhawayn, I am the director of the Language Center, which opened in Jan. 19985 with the university. When students are admitted to the university their file is looked into and we look at the language component of the students by using the TOEFL. Students who score a minimum of 530 start their academic program directly. Those who score between 420 and 530 come to our Language Center for one semester of intensive English training. Most of our students, after one semester of 300 to 350 hours of classroom instruction plus another 200 to 300 hours of related activities, are tested again.

While in the Center students study only English, five hours daily of classroom instruction plus other English-related activities. It's an intensive program similar to what you find in All American universities. Actually the program has been modeled after what you find in those universities where the cut-off TOEFL points is similar to what is found in most American universities where they require scores somewhere between 500 and 550 for undergraduates. We have chosen somewhere in the middle and require 530.

Moroccans (like most other Arabs) are, in a way gifted for languages. For a Moroccan who comes to Al Akhawayn, English will be for them a third, fourth or maybe a fifth language. At least a third language if all they speak is Arabic and French. Many speak Berber, so for them it's Berber, Arabic, French and English. When I say Berber, actually there are three different varieties and they will speak one or more of those. And some of them speak all three varieties, plus Moroccan Arabic, plus classical Arabic, plus French, so when they come here they have several languages that they know. The fact that this university teaches in English is also something that pushes students to work harder on what they need to learn.

So this is the fifth semester of this Center and we have been doing very well I must admit. Most of our students after one semester improve their English to the level where they can function relatively easily in their respective schools. We give them the TOEFL at the beginning of the semester and at the end. So they know that they have improved by so many points. The average increase for us has been between 60 and 70 points, which is even higher than the average increase in the TOEFL in the 2,000 or so American institutions in the States. There, in a program similar to ours with approximately the same number of instruction hours, at the end of the semester a student will improve by an average of 45-50 points. Our students improve by over 60 points. (These are the statistics from ATS which we have been using).

Our students are motivated. Some of them view the passage through the Language Center as some kind of punishment and they want to get it over with. This means that they work even harder and they want to reach the required level even quicker. This is fine with us and we help them to reach this aim. (You can get all the information about the center in the university's catalogue).

[The use of e-mail for learning English]

At the same time, because we are the only institution in the country that has full access to internet, when the students are in the Language Center, apart from improving their language skills they are introduced to the internet and e-mail. We find them 'key pals' and they correspond with students all over the world. The project you have just mentioned, I already have some classes involved in something like it. They are exchanging information over e-mail with classes of students from the States and from other parts of the world. Every semester I have one teacher who I put in charge of this activity. This semester it is a colleague who came to us from Canada, and she has organized it for all students. So all the students have 'key pals' and some of the students even have writing projects, in terms of composition, together with university students from the States, usually. Students write here and they have their 'key pal' look at it and they work on the project together. Most of them love it. The purpose for us is, of course, to learn about the culture but the first aim is to improve the student's language skills.

The way it's done is through discussion lists on the internet, which you join. You post your message where you describe your students that you're interested in pairing the students with others, and within a day you have answers from all over the world. There are different services now and discussion lists, the same way as you have job lists etc. Technology is fantastic, and again it's technology in the service of pedagogy.

So I think there is grounds for cooperation for doing something together between your university and ours.

One of my faculty members, Peter Hardcastle, who is from Britain and has been with us since our conception, is doing research on the impact of the semester that the students spend in the Language Center, on their academic achievements after they start their academic program.

So far he has found some very good correlation between students who go through the Language Center opposed to those who don't, and also positive correlation in relationship to the grades that those students get in the English classes which they take later. All students have to take at least two English classes (that's the basic freshman composition) once they start their academic program. It is English 1301 and 1302. He's also following how they do in other classes such as history, sociology and even mathematics, since everything is taught in English. Supposedly, the premise is that those who spent the semester here and do well and improve their language skills, do better than the others. So far, the preliminary results that Peter has found go in that direction and he is still working on it. So you see, we try to follow the students and see how they're doing even after they've left the Language Center.

[With video-conferencing — people speak to each other directly. What is the oral English level of students' verbal confidence and proficiency?]

I wouldn't put English there; I would put the person. Even in one's own first language, some feel more comfortable than others when they are being recorded or when they are being watched by someone else. It's not so much the language as it's the personal factor but, again, after a few exchanges things will

find their level. We also have here a communications course. The students who take this course might be, at least in theory, more at ease in front of the eye of the camera than other students.

[As a professor of language, do you have any advice as to what are effective ways to measure language skills? This can help me with my evaluation of students here.]

There are specific tests that I use to test language in a professional setting, but apart from that, basically just talking to the people and making them feel more at ease can be useful. You can then try to judge their language level. I'm a firm believer in practice, over and over. Just interview students and see how they answer. I did a lot of fieldwork myself and I recorded many people for my Ph.D. work. What I did was to record people without telling them when they were recorded. Of course, I asked their permission ahead of time. Most people do much better when they don't know that they are recorded. Building their confidence and making them feel at ease will make people perform much better in their L2 and will allow a more accurate measure of their command of a foreign language.

John Shoup:

At Al Akhawayn, at least you have staff and students whose linguistic ability in English would allow the students to have the kind of interface needed, otherwise you'll be limited to American students of French — university level French. They will have to be very fluent in French or Arabic. Our students have varying levels of English from extremely poor to good.

As far as the language of communication is concerned, it's true that it would probably give an advantage of ability of expression to the American students, but I think that maybe it would be something you would be interested in anyway. Our students are choosing to come here not just because of English but because of American English. It's the culture of their choosing. It is what they hope to be a vehicle into global American culture. One student, for instance, is a member of a Rap group. An awful lot of this culture is going on everywhere, that people don't think very much of it anymore in some ways. The students don't. They come from the kind of background where their parents are European educated, or they lived in Europe for some time. Some of them lived in the States. So language is and isn't a problem. For some of them it's a severe handicap of expression. For others it's not much of a handicap at all.

Sometimes handicaps make you stronger. If you have to think of how to say something, maybe you can say it stronger. Take for example one of my students. I have been her teacher for three years now and she's quite bright. She's very frustrated that she can't speak as quickly as her minds thinks, and as such, everything she says comes out garbled because she does have a lot to say. So I just have to remind her to take a breath, slow down and to tell me what she wants to say. For her, it might actually be better if she communicates on a keyboard because then she can go back and make corrections before sending it (i.e., before saying what is on her mind).

2.5 Cross-cultural programs at Al Akhawayn

Dr. Benjelloun:

We have always maintained that you can't be tolerant unless you are comfortable with your own identity. This is what we tell our students, that they must know who they are in order to know how to deal with others. If you go outside and try to deal with non-Moroccans when you don't know who you are and what your roots are, then you are dealing with them in a strict disadvantage because they will be much more comfortable in the situation and you will become completely disoriented. And that is what happens to a lot of youth when they go overseas without even knowing who the hell they are, so they get involved in strange situations.

So the university is built around the mosque and this is part of the central tenets of knowing who we are, but we also, in the second phase, will be building a synagogue and a chapel. Currently we have an area on campus for Christian faculty for worship — a multi-denominational chapel.

[I asked whether they have non-Moroccan students.]

Currently we have something like 10 students seven of which are American. We're moving now towards becoming an international center of learning Arabic. We are negotiating with Binghamton State University of N.Y., and we almost completed our negotiations with Georgetown University. Our university is a unique institution in the sense that students can come and study their Arabic through immersion in the culture and at the same time take other university courses. This way they advance their normal education and don't lose out on other requirements of their own institutions. This is the first semester that we are doing this and it's going to continue.

We also have a summer Arabic culture language program for the first time. There are seven students signed up who also want to stay on and the applications are still coming in. So I think that we will have a group of 20 for the summer.

Dr. Moncef Lahlou:

[Would Al Akhawayn be open for student travel, on both sides, as part of their studies?]

Of course, of course. Well, the question of money would come in there. We have set up exchange programs with a good dozen American universities and some of our students are now in the States for one semester. At the same time we have some American students on campus here. We have seven American students this semester with us. They are all undergraduate students. It's junior year for most of them. They go for one semester and take their credits back with them to their home school.

Amy Fishburn:

I am the International Programs coordinator. So my primary function right now is to oversee and handle all the exchange programs. The actual relationships with other sister universities, that's all done on a very high level. These are agreements signed by presidents and vice presidents. Once those are done, of course I work out the details.

We have several relationships with universities in the States and, at present, I have seven exchange students here; one from Boston College, four from Binghamton State University of New York (SUNY); one from Carson Newman College in Tennessee and one from Johnson C. Smith in North Carolina. Then we have other programs too. Gap is a British program. I have two English kids here right now, as well.

I have six students from Al Akhawayn who are presently abroad and are just coming back from their semester there. I have five more going out this summer and 16 going out next fall to various schools in the U.S. They all go for one semester and maybe ten or eleven are coming in.

By and large, we have different exchange agreements. With many of the schools, it is simply a total exchange. Students pay tuition in their schools and that cover all their expenses here while they go there. We exchange students.

Generally the students pay for their transportation, at least at Al Akhawayn. Some schools subsidize travel for their International programs. They have funding and other sources.

[Different priorities for Americans and Moroccans]

The priorities of the Americans and the Moroccans are actually quite different. Morocco is usually 'on the menu' with many other countries for our foreign sister schools. In Boston College, for example, they go to China, to Turkey, to Ecuador and so on. An American student is looking at the whole world as different places where they can go. Morocco, then is one of their choices. Where as our students, basically they go to America. The question is which school? So you're looking at some fundamental differences in motivation. Our students are very America oriented. Students who come here from other countries generally have an interest in Morocco; in most cases Morocco is their first choice, but they are actually looking at other countries too, unless Arabic was their major or something like that. Even here there are also programs in Tunisia, West Bank, Jordan and other Arab counties. So the fundamental motivations are different on each side.

For the Americans, they have different motivations for coming, if it's language, or they're in international studies. Mainly it's the fact that it's a Middle Eastern country, an Arabic country, a Muslim country, and it's actually motivated by security. If they're Arabic majors or are international studies majors [and want to be in an Arabic country,] then they're can come here and feel absolutely safe. We don't have terrorist incidents here. There are no car bombings, there are no hijackings, and there are no busloads of tourist getting shot.

Also the fact that we have a system that academically is competent, and so these other schools have absolutely no problem excepting our credits. Their students do not lost time at all because they take the credits with them.

Several other schools are coming onboard very soon. We already signed an agreement with George Town, but we'll start exchanging students with them [only] next spring. Haverford will be coming on board, also Beloit, probably VMI (Virginia Military institute) and so we have all that sorted out.

Exchange agreements vary from school to school. Some are totally reciprocal, one for one, two for two... others are a bit more flexible.

The Moroccan students want to go to America just to be exposed to it. They've dreamed of it, they've looked at it and they know about it. Now they want to experience it, not to move there. They just want to feel it, and touch and taste it. Many of the students who do go, have already traveled. They've been to Europe; some have even been to the States before. Some are from privileged backgrounds but not all.

This is the first semester we've had so many go out. They're just now starting to come back — in the next couple weeks. I've talked with them a bit over the course of the semester by e-mail. They've had a wonderful time. They enjoyed shopping — there's a strong cultural component to buy gifts when you've been traveling. It's just something they're almost obligated to do and they enjoy doing it where there is much to choose from.

As for the American students, the first one was from Boston College last fall. We had only one then, now we have seven. Two of them will be returning for another semester. They're going home for the summer and they'll come back next fall. They have the number of courses that suit their majors, which are Arabic and Middle Eastern studies.

The American students had a very good time here; they find it absolutely fabulous. They love the laundry room, they told me. There are people there who move their clothes from the washer to the dryer for them fold their clothes, match their socks.

2.6 Technology

2.6.1 Computers at Al Akhawayn

El-Aoufir:

Computer labs are open all day till midnight and students use them a lot. The labs are always full of students. Sometimes students have to wait to get to use a computer, especially when they all have school projects coming up. There are about two hundred computers for both the students and teachers. There is about one computer for each seven students.

We have one open access lab which is open from 8:30 a.m. 12:30 a.m. This lab has a capacity of fifty PCs. We have two other smaller labs with twenty PCs each, which are available upon reservation even later, so they can work even until 6 a.m., if they reserve it ahead. There are printers in each lab. During the day, because there are no reservations required during the day, the labs with the 50 PCs is congested. Students are requesting more equipment and we are planning to get more equipment. We are working on a project to provide students with networked computers which will be dedicated to internet access. We'll have additional fifty such computers.

The computers at Al Akhawayn are all PCs and UNIX machines. We have 25 UNIX Sun stations for the students of the school of science.

All the students have network accounts and e-mail accounts that they can use to access the web and their e-mail. Students at the school of science have additional accounts that allow them to work in the UNIX labs.

We are still using Windows 3.1 on most computers because our PCs are still with eight Megs of RAM, which is not enough for Windows 95 or Netscape. We are planning to upgrade the memory-chips when we have the money.

[Computer lab procedures]

Last semester we had some rules saying that students cannot spend more than two hours on a computer if there is another student waiting. We stopped it because it creates a lot of problems. The students were not very cooperative. Lab technicians come here almost each day and complained about their working conditions because they have problems with the students. They couldn't handle at the same time both their technical responsibilities and the administrative operations relating to registering the students, managing the number of hours and such things. They have to help fifty students on fifty PCs who have problems. We have only two technicians working on each shift.

We allow the students to use the printers with no limitations except that they need to bring their own paper. We don't have any limitations or rules for managing the labs. We have some rules regarding security and regarding ethics, but there are no limitations in regard to usage.

[Do you execute any type of screening or control of how students use the internet here?]

We did some screening from outside our network after we received some insulting mail that was sent directly to some individual mailing lists here. We have since then installed some mailing list management procedures. The big mailing lists are moderated now, so that if you send mail to all students, or all faculty, or all staff, it doesn't go directly to those users but it goes through a moderator who will approve it or not. We are not filtering addresses from the inside to the outside. Also with the web, there are no restrictions. You can get www.playboy.com [Youssef laughs] or anything else. We provide network access only to users on campus. We don't provide services outside our network. We don't have the equipment to do that.

Muhamed Tazi:

As far as I'm concerned I feel that the network here is somewhat weak. We don't have the network installed in our rooms, in the student's housing, although the place is wired for it. The PCs in the lab are very old, that is they are not Pentium but just 486, DX2 or DX4. That is why we can't run some programs using those computers and this is one of the problems.

Another problem is that we have a shortage of computers and a lot of people who want to use them. The computer lab we just saw; it is a small room with maybe fifty computers and it was very full of people. So you have to wait for an available computer to be able to work on it. There is no limit for how

long each student can be on a computer. Many people like to be on chat lines for many hours and this is the problem here.

Out of the fifty computers in that lab, only half of them, about twenty-five are connected to the internet. In the entire school there are about seventy computers connected to the internet in three students' labs. Also the UNIX lab has the internet, so all together there are about ninety or maximum hundred computers which are connected to the internet for the students. The other computers in the labs don't have internet. So you find yourself in line, many times, waiting for a computer. Many of the students want to use them. There are about 765 students at Al Akhawayn, so there are about eight students for each computer which is on the internet. If you count all the other, non-internet computers, then there are maybe four students for each one. I think that at anytime there are at least thirty students on line [I asked him to make a guess here.]

Actually we do have about 2,050 internet connections here but they are not all ready to work yet. There are also some labs where you have to reserve the computer in advance if you want to work there. For example the lab located in building five (lab five). You have to go to the ITS (information technology & systems) department and fill a form to use the lab. Also when you want to work on a project in the UNIX lab, for example to program in 'C', you have to wait for our turn and sometimes you find the UNIX lab full. There are only twenty stations there and you have to physically wait, there is no list here.

Nowadays [the end of the semester] it's like this all the time because most students need the computers to write their projects and their papers. All of the students need computers because the final exams are coming soon. Actually it's like this all year long and the computer labs are open from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 at night.

Lab five is special in that it is reserved for classes. It is similar to the lab we just been in — that was lab eleven. It has the same kind of computers but it's reserved for classes that use computers, (like your project for example.). Only if there are no classes then students can go to the ITS and take the key for lab five and use the 22 or 23 computers there.

[Computer wish list]

What I wish is to have some Pentium PCs here. They should have at least 133 megahertz processors with a huge hard disk, lets say two gigabytes and with at least 32 megabytes of memory. Then we won't need Windows 3.11 anymore and can use Windows NT which is more useful for a network. We need a Windows network. We also need a more developed version of UNIX PCs. I've heard that the UNIX stations here are a very old generation of computers. They are SUN workstations from nine years ago and this is old for computers.

[Lab technicians]

El-Aoufir:

The lab technicians are there all the time and their duties are to keep all computers running. They make sure that the students can log onto the network, can run all the software that is available in the lab, that they can print and have access to the internet. Sometime they also give a hand to the students who have no knowledge of computer usage. They are in the main lab with the fifty PCs. We have two teams of two technicians that are present in the lab from 8:30 a.m. until 12:30 a.m., when it closes.

The technicians were trained in the beginning, maybe at the end of the second semester, and since then we have not put a lot of changes in the lab. They are still running the same software that was installed in the beginning. The same compilers that were installed in the beginning are still there, the network architecture is still the same and the servers are still the same. So they have the initial training and the experience they accumulated solving problems. They never needed to get more training because they were no changes in these labs since the beginning.

Muhamed Tazi:

As far as assistance and supervision in the computer labs, there are no teachers there. There are only technicians whose work is to supervise and help the students with their problems. The problem is that most of those technicians do not have a good level in computer knowledge. They may know how to use Word processing and things like that but not a real knowledge of computer science.

El-Aoufir:

The computer labs are used a lot. I can show you the traffic evaluation reports, which show an increase every month. We also have statistics about our webpage that shows an average of 1,500 accesses to different pages daily. Here we are only counting external accesses. We don't count accesses from within the university.

[Information Technology & Systems (ITS)]

El-Aoufir and Lahlou:

[Youssef El-Aoufir is the technology expert in charge of computer systems, telephone systems and networking. Majid Lahlou is in charge of media technologies, distance education equipment and multi-media. They both direct the ITS.]

El-Aoufir: We, at ITS, can provide all the required technical help and support needed. We will install software and hardware, provide all the necessary accounts to connect to our network and to establish connections with the remote sites. We can also provide PCs and other kinds of computer equipment. We are not involved with the teachers in the different schools who will be giving the distance learning courses. We ourselves don't give any courses to university students. From time to time we give some technical seminars and workshops if there are interests in specific topics.

2.6.2 Students' computer proficiency and computer skills

Dr. Benjelloun:

As to the technology level of the students, some of the most computer familiar and computer confident students in the country come here. The day they set foot here they forget that there is this something called the pen. They do programming and they have free access to computers. They are on the internet and they are always downloading something.

El-Aoufir:

We have students in all skill levels. Some, their skills are very good. They can program and manipulate many things in the system. Regarding internet usage, the students are all used to it by now. They have had access to it for more than a year and a half. They use the labs intensively, and many take computer science as their major.

Muhamed Tazi:

My name is Tazi Muhamed, and I never worked with a computer before I came to Al Akhawayn but I wanted very much to know about it. I find it very easy to work with DOS and Windows and with UNIX systems. Windows are very easy stuff for everyone because you have just to click.

Engineering students that come to Al Akhawayn have to learn to use computers very quickly otherwise they won't be able to continue their studies in the engineering fields.

Concerning business administration students, some of them are very good. I don't mean that they are genius in programming and such — but just in using computers. They might have difficulties when something goes wrong. For instance if a document file doesn't want to be saved, or some other serious problem; they don't know how to do it sometimes. They won't think even to go to the MS DOS commands and try to save it there or something like this.

Concerning the Social Sciences students they might know only how to use Word and Power Point. They all use the internet too. They search a lot on the Web and they like it. I also observed last promotion (semester) that they liked chatting very much. They join chat groups and do it a lot. They all use e-mail too.

[Computer sales to students]

Computers are sold at the university bookstore. We have laptop and desktop computers there. You can order computers from the store at very interesting prices because the university is not subject to the VAT (value added tax) so it saves about 20% off the price.

ITS gives the students with computers the needed technical support. In the first two or three sales operations we did the purchasing of the equipment but we don't have the time to do it any more. Now when the bookstore contacts the vendors and gets offers, they send everything to us. Here we check the configurations and see if everything is ok. We approve it or make changes, so we are still involved in this process as technical devisors. We make sure that computers are current and have all the required features etc.

We have only one maintenance person in charge of hardware and there's a lot of work. Technically he is very reliable. He does the maintenance on all our PCs, on the sound equipment and so on. He can also repair TVs if needed. He's very good. Unofficially we give service to students. We help them in case of failure of their computers. We don't refuse when a student brings a computer here and asks for help. We take the computer, and when we have some free time, we try to repair it.

[About training students to do the maintenance?]

Students have no technical training. They can be used for operations that involve software and development, these kinds of things, but not for maintenance. They don't have the practice or a good knowledge of electronic circuits and the electronic instruments that are used to measure voltage and such, when you try to locate a failure somewhere. It has nothing to do with their current training at the school of science. They are more software oriented.

2.6.3 Chat-rooms, chatting and CU-Seeme

Dr. Rachidi:

[I related to Dr. Rachidi my impressions after visiting the Al Akhawayn's computer labs. Earlier that day his student Muhamed walked me through the various computer labs in the university. I found the labs to be very crowded. Students were waiting in line for long time to be able to use a computer. Muhamed's complaint was that many of the students were "in" various 'chat rooms' much of the time, and this is a major reason for the congestion:]

From what is reported to us, there is almost one-to-five ratio of computers to students. This was the case last semester any ways and it is in line with the best universities in the States.

As to the chatting, we do consider that as part of the learning process. Students are learning English and they learn how to communicate with other people across the Net — It's not necessarily a waste. Even if somebody is downloading a game [might be beneficial]. (Officially it's forbidden to install unauthorized software on our computers. That is because of viruses and stuff like that.) It's a learning process, especially for students who are not in computer science studies. For instance, for students from the business school, it's very good for them to know it. I say that it's just a matter of time management. Just next door to here there is a computer lab, right now, with nobody in it.

Dr. Shoup's discussion class:

Dr. Shoup: Can I ask a question that I think is relevant to this discussion? I know a lot of students who chat with English language groups, mostly based in the U.S. I'm just curious for any of you who chat — who do you mainly chat with, which groups? Are they American groups and what do you chat about?

[Chatting on the internet must be a popular activity for the students, judging by the positive instinctive participation of the students here. The students told us that usually chatting could be about any subject, and about nothing too. "They just talk constantly" with people around the globe.

Female Moroccan student: Not only with Americans. I also chat with Brazil, South Africa, about anything — about their hobbies and their studies.

Female Moroccan student: Some people can give you their e-mail address and you can continue a personal communication.

Female Moroccan student: I know a girl who got married through the internet and it started with chatting.

Female Moroccan student: A friend sent me a music tape from the U.S. I knew him from a chat group.

Female Moroccan student: Of course one of the amazing things is to find out how little others knew about Morocco. The first questions are: "do you still have camels?" "Do you have TV?" Or "how come you can speak English?" Chatting is a way to correct their ideas.

Fitzgerald:

[At Al Akhawayn I saw a different picture. Though they have many more computers there, still, people were waiting in line to use them.]

That's a special situation because the students there are so cut off and isolated from any other kind of society, from the Moroccan society, so they transfer everything to the computers. They get on chat lines and chat with people in America. The computer is their only outlet.

[About CU-Seeme — use and technology]

Muhamed Tazi:

[Do you think that CU-Seeme, as tool, could be used by students here? Would students be attracted to use CU-Seeme?]

All the students will be very attracted because all the students like chatting on the internet. Since CU-Seeme is like chat but using some video and some audio stuff they will like it very much. They will be able to see the person to whom they are chatting. They will be very attracted as far a chatting is concerned. It's like what people call 'killing time'. Many students pass the time this way because playing games on the school's computers is forbidden in the labs.

[The remoteness of Al Akhawayn makes it very boring — complain many students and some faculty and staff. Muhamed Tazi (and others) see this, possibly as the reason that so many students spend much of their time on internet based chat groups. Some teachers at Al Akhawayn see the time students spend by students in chat groups as a valuable learning experience where they get to enrich their text based communications skills, their key-board mastery and their command of English.]

Muhamed Tazi:

I found the software on the internet at the address you gave me. I downloaded it into two computers with no problems. There was no problem with the software or the camera. It was very easy. The only problem I faced was the sound.

First I installed the camera and there was no problem with that. It was one of the 486 computers, not a Pentium and with the sound blaster already inside. There was an option in the camera driver that enabled us to auto-detect the sound and I got no error message for detecting the sound. I also tried to connect two local PCs in the lab and there was no problem with that. When I clicked on transmit there was a messages that told me that the sound was transmitted from the one PC to the other.

I did not have time to go to the reflectors that you told me about, but I found some addresses in the CU-Seeme software itself so I used that. I was able to connect to only one reflector, it was called P60 and something else, I guess. I was able to see some people but I didn't hear them. We were eight people in that reflector. The pictures were not so clear but I could receive them. As for the sound, no way, but it was fun. I don't think there will be any problem for other students to use CU-Seeme, even for non-computer students, because it's just another way of chatting. When I first began to use the internet I liked to chat but now I don't have the time.

CU-Seeme can be also used as part of a classroom course but it depends on the course you are offering. If it's interesting and the students are attracted to it then there will be no problem. It has to be a learning process otherwise it will turn into some kind of chatting. You need to have the students choose (commit) to be in your course.

I had the installation and reflectors instructions even before you e-mailed them to me. There are some sites on the net listing the protocols of the reflectors. Dr. Rachidi gave me the address of the CU-Seeme software page and there was a recent article about using reflectors so I clicked on it and it gave me the protocol. It also had the rate at which you have to download instructions and so on. What I didn't understand was why the sound didn't work.

[Most likely, the computer that Tazi was using didn't have an appropriate soundboard installed. We never had the chance to go any farther with it since the student was too busy with his end of the semester finals.]

The internet connection here [at Al Akhawayn] is very slow because too many students are using it at the same time. That's why we will probably always have problems with the CU-Seeme. I also couldn't see the other person to whom I was chatting very clear because his or her picture was not complete, especially when they moved and changed positions.

2.6.4 Al Akhawayn's internet connection

We get our internet service directly from Paris, not through the ONPT. We are paying about 20,000 French francs a month, which is around 34-35,000 dirhams, for a 64 K line which is more than twice the ONPT price. We are willing to pay this price because we have our own line and it's very dependable. We experienced very low downtime since we started using it. We had less than two days of downtime since August 1995.

In the beginning ONPT didn't have all the technical qualifications to run DNS, to run routers and so on. We have a special configuration needs here at Al Akhawayn. Unlike regular Moroccan customers, we

have multiple networks so we need special configuration in the routing tables and special configuration in the DNS. There are a many things that the ONPT still are not doing for Moroccan customers that we have.

[In order to use the CU-Seeme there is a need for a permanent IP addresses.]

Yes, we can provide that. Usually, dynamic addressing is used especially for people who connect through phone lines to the terminal server. The service provider network assigns dynamic address to its users. But here we have PCs with permanent connections and they have their own IP addresses.

Most of the computers in the students' labs are the same 486 machines which you saw last year. For the faculty and stuff we have provided newer Pentiums. In one of the students' labs we have half of the PCs with multi-media. They have speakers, sound cards and CD-ROMs, so they can be used for the CU-Seeme.

2.6.5 DE equipment

In the meantime, since we talked last year, we did get the equipment, but we are still waiting for an ISDN connection from the ONPT. ISDN is a more flexible solution than lease lines. To lease dedicated lines for a conference for example, we have to inform the ONPT two days before, and we need to reserve our data lines for the duration of the conference. If we had an ISDN connection it would be like a dial up connection. It's very easy to set and to establish, and you need no planning with ONPT before hand. All you need is the address of the remote site you want to communicate with and you establish connections.

To get good resolution you might need 384 Kbps. Each line is 2b plus d and so you need three of 128 Kbps. ISDN is very recent here in Morocco so we're not very experienced at it. As far as we know there is no ISDN service to the States yet but it's sure to come soon.

Our DE equipment is made by PictureTel. It's still brand new in the boxes. It was provided by one company and paid by another. It might have been a donation but I don't know the exact status of who paid for it. We don't care about that. Now that we have the equipment, it won't leave the university, so we can use it. What we have is the main unit, the camera and a teacher's control panel called Socrates. I can give you a copy of the specification for the equipment. I know that sometime there is a problem with compatibility between equipments, but PictureTel is one of the most known companies that provide DE equipment and software. There shouldn't be any problems.

The university is not ready to install the DE equipment at this time because there is no demand. We don't have the needed communications line. The only customer the ONPT have here in Ifran is the university. We need to make an impression on the ONPT to provide us with this connection and once the connection is established we can look into installing the equipment.

The DE equipment was purchased initially by the team who started the university as component of the audio-visual system. It took a long time before the equipment was delivered. Maybe because the equipment was not available there were no studies made, and no projections, of how it would be used and if it will be used. I'm not sure if anyone in the academic department of any of our schools has already started to look at the possible uses for this equipment. Maybe they are just waiting for the equipment to

be really available and only then to see it as another available resource, like the internet, and start to plan to use it.

As to the maintenance of the DE equipment, it probably will have a period of warranty from the time when it is installed. For the first year of usage we'll need to set a maintenance contract for it. We have maintenance contracts for other equipments for which we can't do the maintenance ourselves.

Majid Lahlou:

We had two opportunities to see how DE and video-conferencing works here in the university in Ifrane. The first occasion in which we saw teleconferencing and the video-conferencing at the university was during an international conference of an organization called Universite de la Communication du pays du la Mediterranee. This is a university of people concerned with communication from many Mediterranean countries. They came to Ifrane and held a conference here. People from France, Algeria, Italy and other Mediterranean countries came here, and the ONPT came and held a demonstration in which they used video-conferencing through ISDN. They connected a temporary two Mbps (Mega-bits per second) ISDN service to the university and used it to do video-conferencing with Switzerland. They also had the communication minister, Mr. Akhizun, in Rabat gives a speech to the conference. The people in the conference could see and hear him in his office and he could see and hear the people here, in auditorium 17. All this happened on the 26th of April last year. The ONPT brought their own equipment, and the person in charge was Mr. Hajoumri. He works at ONPT in the division of multi-media.

The second time was during the inauguration of the new ONPT office building in Rabat. The prince came to this inauguration and they took this opportunity to show him the different possibilities in communication technology. They sent a person here with equipment for video-conferencing. A teacher from the school of business gave a class that was transmitted through a two Mbps leased line to Rabat. The prince was able to speak with the teacher and the class was projected on a big screen in the Rabat office.

Although we never used our new DE equipment yet, I'm the one in charge of it. I'm also the one in contract with the ONPT about the possibilities of installing an ISDN line at Al Akhawayn. I have already sent them the university demand for ISDN access.

Once we have the line available we will ask the people in PictureTel to come here and give us training on the use of the equipment and its software. The training will be given to myself, to another technician and to other people who will be using the equipment. Probably some teachers will be involved too.

We don't have any information of how the university intends to use the DE equipment. You need to ask the deans this kind of questions. The ITS's job is to make this service available, to install the system and to try it out. Once the service is available, naturally academic persons will ask for the service.

As far as the ISDN service, we don't even know how much it's going to cost. The ONPT won't give us the prices. It's typical for the ONPT to do that. When we ordered the 64 kilobytes leased line we were

in the same situation. They could supply the technology, but they didn't know how much it would cost. It is usual for them to master the technology long before their bureaucracy establishes the cost guidelines.

The equipment is made by PictureTel and was supplied by a Moroccan company called Intelcom. We don't have a direct contact with PictureTel. The person that we are in contact with is Mr. Tadmouti at Intelcom. He told us that when the ISDN line will be available, PictureTel will provide training for us.

As far as I know, the equipment was donated by the National Agriculture office and the National Airport office. It's a kind of cooperation between the university and the government but Mr. Tadmouti can tell you more about it.

I'm looking forward to start using the equipment especially after the little bit of experience I had working with the ONPT team at their last demonstration here. Once the DE equipment is in use and the teachers are trained in how to operate the system, perhaps they may involve the students in how to orient the camera and such. Technically, I don't see any problem in involving the students to operate the equipment.

2.6.6 Video technology (in the classroom)

[Streaming video: Can students prepare video presentations and send them via internet to American students?]

El-Aoufir:

It can be done, but we don't have any interfacing equipment between video systems and a computer. You need at least a PC or computer with a video acquisition card that you can connect to a VCR or a television that can do digitalization of the data and have it stored in a binary form into a PC. Then you can use it to send as e-mail or whatever you want to do.

Majid Lahlou:

I think it's possible to send videos on the internet both ways if we have the PC cards that we need. I think it's not so very quickly. It takes some time because video is a lot of data. The time it will take depends on the video quality that we want and the load on the network at the time of transmission. Depending on how much time it will take there's also some technique of compression. We can compress data to reduce the time of transmission. Maybe it won't be in the same day also because we have to deal with the difference of time between the U.S. and Morocco. I can imagine that we can make a video tape here and edit it and after that we can manage to digitalize the data and to send it through the internet to the other side.

[Use of video equipment by students]

We have the facilities where students can do video production. Last year we showed you the auditorium, building number four. There is another big round building; it's building number 17, where we have a control-room and a large conference room with three cameras that can be moved. They can focus on

the students or the blackboard. In the control-room we can select the different cameras and do the mixing. This place is usually used for conferences or for musical events. We never used it for the students before, but it can be adapted for this use if needed.

We have technicians that know this control room and how to manage a conference. You will have to explain to the technician what exactly you want since it's not the same thing as to video a conference or a show.

Unfortunately we can't allow the students to operate the DE equipment and the cameras. It's against the rules. We don't have a lot of equipment and when you start to give the students the only equipment you have, it can be trouble. Our technician, he's really skilled and knows the equipment.

In the future we are hoping to have some new projects with more of the same equipment. They are planing some workshops for students to learn how to use new communication technology. It's going to be a master's level course for communication media in the School of Social Sciences and Humanities. This course is being prepared by a committee of professors and led by Dr. Benjelloun. We are involved in this project from a technical point of view by providing them with technical specifications. The students involved will use the new equipment to do field production, advertising, CD-ROM productions and other things related to communication media.

[Technology in the classroom]

Dr. El-Alami:

To give you an example, we already use the video camera in the classroom. Students get used to that from the very beginning. They place the camera and use the VCR. This is very basic, but I think that it is very exiting to learn new technologies. I like to try new things and I'm used to use computers for a long time new. The students also like to try new things. But we have never been exposed to anything more than the basic technologies. The classroom was always the world. I guess we have to experiment and see. We have to talk to the students and see what are their responses.

2.6.7 Network and cable infrastructure

The network connecting all the buildings on campus uses fiber-optic cables. We can't use copper cable between buildings here because we have many lightening storms.

We also provide cable service to all the buildings. The dishes you saw outside are for reception of the satellite programs. We have a broadcast cable system that covers the whole campus. All the rooms in the dormitories are connected. Students have to just bring their own televisions. We provide a limited list of channels, which is approved by the president. Most of them are English channels like ABC and NBC. We have one Arabic and one French channel, one music channel and Moroccan TV. The satellite dishes here are for reception only, not for transmission, so they can't be used for DE.

[In the telephone center]

Majid Lahlou:

[Majid took me to the basement where we entered a medium size equipment room. The room was crowded with computers, phone equipment, wires, switching boards and the like. Many of the enclosures had the logo of the ONPT, the Moroccan telephone company, displayed on them. In the middle of the room there was a control console where a technician was sitting. Majid showed me where a white fiber optic cable was connected to a large switching box.]

As you can see here we have fiber optical terminal equipment. The university is served with two 4 Mbps (mega-bits per second) lines linking it to the ONPT in Ifrane. This white circuit carries these two 4 Mbps lines but only one is in use. The other line is for backup, in case of line damage.

The 4 Mbps line is divided into two. 2 Mbps for the phone service and 2 Mbps for the internet connection [and communication.]

The phone system is served by a SDA. circuit (Selection Directe a l'Arrivee - in French). This kind of digital line can receive up to 13 communications in the same time. The university is connected to the PPT by this switch which sends a code which allows direct communication without the operator intervention. This is why this is called direct selection. This 2 Mbps line is only to receive calls where there is no charges. If the university wants to make phone calls to the outside, the normal direct analogue telephone lines are used because we have to pay for these calls.

The other 2 Mbps can be used for communication lines. It's called the BMX 264 from SAT company. 64 Kbps are connected through the ONPT directly to our internet provider in France (and not through the Moroccan ONPT internet node). There is also the equipment for two leased lines for video-conferencing. It has the capacity of six IT lines, which is six 64 Kbps units which gives bandwidth of 384 Kbps for video-conferencing. This service is not connected at the moment because the cost is prohibitive when there is no use for it.

For ISDN, the ONPT will have to bring another line in, but this will make video-conferencing more affordable.

2.6.8 Proposed future projects and goals

[Internet access to dormitories]

Connecting the network to the dorms is one of the projects that was identified in the beginning of the university's operation two years ago. Even then we had all the technical specs on the equipment required to have the network extended to the dorms. It should cost about one million dirhams to have all the dorms connected because they are already cabled. We only need the network's active equipment like hubs, like routers, like switches etc., but the project needs funding. Once the dorms are connected, students can use their own computers there.

[The UNIX lab project:]

There is a project for getting maybe twenty more UNIX stations for the engineering school, more recent and more powerful. Also maybe some Sun stations for faculty — especially for computer science

and mathematics faculty who really need to work on UNIX machines. For this project also we have identified the configuration needed and we want to do the project.

[Network computers lab]

The third project, and maybe the more important one, is a new lab with fifty network computers. A network computer is a device without a hard drive and without floppy drive. It has only a network card, a monitor, a keyboard and a mouse. It loads its software from a server. When it loads its operating system it can operate as a stand-alone machine.

The goal in getting these computers is to have low cost machines for internet browsing. This will free some machines in the other PC labs that are needed for student assignments but are being used by people for internet. We can't tell students that since they are using the internet they should quit the lab and leave the computer for other students. They are all paying students. They paid for computer use and they paid their internet fee.

2.7 LCTDE

[LCTDE and Al Akhawayn]

Dr. El-Alami:

[Najiya reads e-mail that she received from Dean Dr. Benjelloun:]

“I believe that distance education will offer an interesting framework for our undergraduate students at AUI [Al Akhawayn] to explore and discuss global cross-cultural issues from an interdisciplinary perspective. Our students will also become familiar with the technology involved and so will the Al Akhawayn faculty — you mentioned a committee of people who can work together, and most of them would be here in the summer like John Shoup and Moncef Lahlou. — As far as AY faculty being involved in distance teaching programs using modern communication media, we are interested in collaboration, course designed and the curriculum development with the teaching staff at UNM. We are interested especially because we have the technology and we are currently not using it. It will offer new challenges. I need to add however that the goals and prospects of the program need to be worked out by both parties involved.”

Youssef El-Aoufir:

With your project, you need to arrange for all the expected money expenses. You can prepare a project financial analysis and estimate before you start and submit it to the vice president of academic affairs, and wait for his answer. Maybe you can propose other sources of funding if you know that other people may fund certain parts of the project. You can say that these parts will be funded and then exactly express to him what the university will need to pay for the project. Then you have to see the president and get the approval from him. Once you get the approval from the president it means that money is allocated.

We can help in projecting costs of usage for your project. Maybe you can work on it with me and especially with Majid, because he knows about the audio visual and the ISDN side of things which are all

part of the ITS activities. I can give input regarding the computer usage etc., but regarding audio-visual, telephones and DE, those are Majid's responsibilities.

[Would the LCTDE project be charged separately for the ITS services?]

It all depends. If it's something that is approved by the university and is identified as a project that needs to be implemented by the university then there are no extra costs. When a project is identified as something the university needs to do then all internal usage of staff and equipment won't be charged. I think that when the university will do a project study, it will certainly include these charges as a part of its contribution to the project. We do that with other projects.

All we need to know is what you need and we can give you the cost. We already do this for other proposed projects. For example there are some projects that are being prepared with the European Community. There were six items that were identified by the university and a commission from the European Union. For each one we have estimated a budget. We prepared proposal estimates for those projects where we gave the exact cost for university supplied items and for European Union supplied items.

John Shoup:

Probably, institutionally, I'd say that Al Akhawayn is the only university in Morocco that has the support that would be necessary to do something like the project that you are describing.

One of the program design problems that you might have here would be the lack of Moroccan teachers. You might have to get people from outside of department to do it. Most of the teachers in the department are non-Moroccans.

[Having non-Moroccan faculty] might actually work better in some ways. It may get Moroccan students thinking about questions that otherwise they assume. One of the things I think has come out from my class is that if you are posed by somebody who says "explain to me why," then you start thinking more deeply about it. Otherwise, it's simply a given. Our students' first answers are always the given. It can be simply as — "that's the Moroccan way." Then comes the "why" or "explain what is the Moroccan way", so they have to start thinking about it. If the teacher is non-Moroccan then there will be more such questions raised.

Dr. El-Alami:

I like the notion of interaction and dialoguing (and all that) between our students and other students of their own age, more or less. Usually they have a teacher, one person, dictating to them what to do. But when there is an exchange among students of the same age from two different cultures, it's a different thing.

Amy Fishburn:

[To promote the LCTDE project at Al Akhawayn, start] by working with the deans. That's probably where you're going to get the most cooperation. Then they, in turn, will work with their various teachers and students to set something up.

The project description seems to be pretty clear; I just looked at it briefly. It really depends on how seriously the students take it and what kind of cooperation you get from the teachers? What's the payoff for them? Are the students going to get something out of it? What will the teachers get out of it? I mean that at the end of the day, beyond the fun and entertainment, the question is; is anybody going to get something of value out of it? As you know, people sort of lay out their priorities.

[Needs for LCTDE]

Dr. Shoup's discussion class:

Female Moroccan student: I would say that we could, through this project, correct the misunderstanding people have about Islam.

Male Moroccan student: It's important because teaching other foreign students about our culture is like teaching ourselves our own culture. We may be ignorant of our culture and by doing that we both, the foreign students and us, may learn and discover many new things. As an example, it's like building a bridge between two cultures to exchange ideas and learn about each other perspectives so that there will be no stereotypes to the degree that we could reach out to each other.

Female Moroccan student: I think that it is always interesting to learn more information about other societies and cultures. Instead of going and looking for information in books, it's better to have direct contact. This way maybe things you will find in books, we will find that they are not the same. With sharing ideas and traditions we will know more about both cultures.

Female Moroccan student: This question of transferring our culture to other foreign people can have much broader implications. By establishing a relationship with others we can correct the false stereotypes through understanding and also improve our relation with that foreign country. We are supposed to represent our culture to that foreign country. Therefore by improving this relationship we can even improve our economy. We can make them come in and invest in our country. Come in and discover our history. Come in and discover our beautiful country. And step by step, (maybe I'm a little bit optimistic), perhaps it can bring peace and full understanding and love between all the people.

Male American student: I think this cultural program is really needed on this end because what people see of American culture is through films and through television, through the movies, and that's not American culture. That's American's fantasy about themselves and their culture. What this class will do is break those doors down about Americans not being friendly and open.

When we first came, people told me that the custom here is to kiss on each cheek, and they said that they were told that Americans don't like to kiss. It's true that Americans have their own social parameters where we have our need for more space around us, but in different sections of the country we do come close, we hug and we shake hands. And this class will break down those stereotypes created by movies that these foreigners watch about Americans, — Oh, this is how America is. And that's not true because American culture is so diverse. We had a discussion once in class about church, and it was said that American culture is based on religion, and that it is very religious. We would say oh, this is not true or

that is not true. What is true is that this class, or this project, will open up the doors and show others that America isn't all about that we're God loving and religious. Even one Moroccan said that not all Muslim women wear the veil. They are not all uneducated — they're educated.

The segment of Morocco [represented] in this class is the future of Morocco. This is Morocco's future in this class. This is the so-called elite class, but this is what Morocco wants to have their whole society be like. They want to go out to the world, to interact with everyone. This project will help this to happen.

[LCTDE couldn't replace travel]

Male American student: It seems like a good program as long as we keep the biases that it has in mind. It's two universities talking to one another, and it's over telecommunication links, over media, through television sets and a camera — as long as it's kept in mind that it's a supplement. It's a good way to learn, it's like a PBS special punch, but it can never really replace actually going over and learning about another culture in the place where the culture is. That's really the only way to learn but this program is a good primer, I suppose, for going abroad. In a sense it's very good as long as it doesn't bill itself as like: "now you're going to learn about Moroccan culture" or "now you're going to learn about American culture, here it is" — wham.

3. The National Institute of Post and Telecommunication (INPT)

3.1 General information

[Introduction]

[It was early on in 1996 that I was directed to meet with Choukhmane, the director of the INPT. Dr. Dhabi, then the dean of the School of Humanities at Al Akhawayn, proposed and arranged that meeting. Right from the beginning of this exchange, Amina Alaoui, one of the institute's English teachers, was assigned to me as their liaison person. Both Choukhmane and Alaoui were very interested in involving their students with DE technology. In the beginning, in 1996, Choukhmane suggested that Amina involve some of her students in doing their final English research project on the subject of possible uses of DE in Morocco and the feasibility of the LCTDE project. Later on, in 1997, both Choukhmane and Alaoui entertained the idea of possibly having the INPT students participate actively in a cross-cultural project with American students. I proposed to them that in order to go that way it would be interesting to somehow evaluate the students' proficiency in English and their interest in such a project. I also asked to be able to examine the available technology at the INPT and the students' technological skills.]

Jack Rusenko:

The advantage for you in dealing with Choukhmane and the INPT is that they were probably the second university, after Al Akhawayn in Ifrane, to have an internet connection, probably only because they are structurally a part of the Phone Company. This is changing now because of the deregulation process in the Phone Company.

On the other hand you have to ask yourself if you want to deal with students who are a bunch of technicians who don't speak English as well as other students in comparison. You just have to look at the goals and what you want to get out of it and again, how much their kids really do understand English at that level.

Another advantage can be the fact that the INPT sends their students on a study trip abroad. A couple of years ago I helped them with their first field trip to the U.S.

Their strength is that they do have tremendous resources. I don't know if that's going to change when the ONPT is privatized or deregulated or whether their funding will stay the same?

[Who could be the LCTDE teachers?]

Choukhmane:

They can come from the university (Muhammed V), from their different humanities departments.

Amina: since I graduated from the faculty of literature (de letters) I have many connections there and I can be the liaison for the program.

3.2 Need

Choukhmane:

The future engineer who is specializing in telecommunication needs to have an open mind about culture about social studies humanities and so on. That why it is very interesting for us to communicate with American University. To discuss things with other students in other cultures. To open the students up to other interests.

We need to introduce the humanities and social sciences to the students to open their minds and scope to a bigger picture. He says that once the students get their diploma, if they are open minded and culturally adjusted, they can find a job very quickly. People who are very good scientists but are limited in their perspective can't find a job.

Preparing the students for cross-cultural communication is important. In Morocco there are few research laboratories in telecommunications. There is little development work going on. INPT needs to create engineers who have the skills to go out and bring the technology from the outside. They need to learn to buy and sell and negotiate the technology they need. They need to learn methods for communicating with other people in other cultures [i.e. the West] about the technology before learning methods to communicate with the technology — with the machines. Human communication comes before machine communication, says Amina. Our students need to negotiate with others and with their own. They need to understand the trends in the big picture and what is needed. The INPT needs to discover how to train the engineers needed for the Moroccan economy and its specific reality and how to keep them home. It doesn't want to train the work force that Morocco needs then loose them to America. Nor do they want to have students end up unemployed, sitting in the caFez.

3.3 The students

Choukhmane:

People who are open minded and cultural it is easy for them to find a job while graduates who are very strong in science and theoretical knowledge but are limited in their human side can't. And we have very good students. Very smart and intelligent because of the high selection process that the students go through to get to the school. We take only the best students [Choukhmane and Alaoui both said this, confirming each other.]

[Language]

Amina Alaoui arranged a meeting with three of her students. I couldn't meet with her whole class since the students were too involved with preparing for exams and working on their final English paper. Alaoui complained that it is too difficult to motivate the students to anything that is not in their original contract with the INPT. It's a political matter, she said, and there is a struggle between the students and the administration to determine what is the minimum that they are required to do.

The two women and one man whom I met with were very polite and a bit shy. They preferred that I didn't record the conversation. I introduced the subjects of DE and cross-cultural communication and told

them a bit about the LCTDE project. From the discussion that followed I determined that all these three students had hard time expressing themselves in English.

3.4 Cross-cultural program

Choukhmane:

We are sending our students abroad every year. We have connection with a university in Ohio and this year they will go to London.

Amina Alaoui:

[About the students visiting foreign universities]

We send our graduating students abroad every year. They go to see the technology oversees and how other students study in the same technical fields. We used to always go to the United States but this year the students will travel to England instead. Last year we visited the university in Ohio with which we are signing a continuous agreement of exchange in few weeks. I'm the one who usually goes with the students on these visits along with another faculty member from the technology side of things. The INPT, and therefore the Moroccan government, pays all the expenses for these trips.

3.5 Technology

Observations (based on after the visit notes):

Amina introduced me to Mohamed Mroussi, a faculty member of INPT in charge of all student computer labs in the school and students' s training. His colleague Mahmud Kazolar accompanied Mr. Mroussi. They took me on a tour to see the various computer labs in the school. Their attention and interest was directed to the two Connectix videocams that I brought with me at the request of Mr. Choukhmane, so we could test the CU-Seeme software on the schools' machines. They had never tried any video-conferencing technology before. I had the cameras express-shipped from the States just a few days before as a favor to Choukhmane. If we had to order this equipment through our regular channels, he explained, it would take months. This way we can pay for it as a petty cash expense.

Mr. Mroussi's English was very limited and we communicated mainly in French with Amina's help. Mr. Kazolar was younger than Mroussi and spoke better English. I found that when it comes to technical matters, it was not difficult to communicate with broken English, broken French and a little bit of Arabic. They showed me the computer lab where the CU-Seeme experiments were to take place. Most of the dozen or so computers there were fully loaded, multi-media Pentium machines. Mr. Mroussi wanted to start installing the CU-Seeme software immediately and excused himself. We continued the visit with Mr. Kazolar.

The four student computer labs and classrooms at the INPT were much more advanced compared to Al Akhawayn or to any other computer lab set-ups which I had observed in Morocco. Each of the two classrooms had approximately two dozen Unix work stations. One room contained older Sun-stations while the other had much newer and more powerful machines, recently purchased. The other labs had

mostly Pentium computers, some with multi-media capabilities. The main school library had three older computers available to users. Another difference that I observed in comparison to the computer labs at Al Akhawayn was that the labs were empty and deserted. There were no students using any of the computers. Although there were many students in the large yard and in the halls, no one was by a computer. It might have had to do with the school's schedules, but everything looked very sterile, as though it was not used much.

All our computers are networked together explained Kazolar. All the students have internet and e-mail accounts and the INPT is connected directly to the main ONPT server. In classes and while doing computer projects, the students work in pairs, two students in front of each computer. The reason for this, according to Kazolar, is not a lack of computers but rather that they determined that the students are more efficient and more productive when they work together. They teach each other and figure out things together. Instructors have much less work this way.

By the time the tour was completed, Mr. Mroussi had already installed the videocams and downloaded the CU-Seeme software off the web onto two computers that were situated in separate rooms. Both Mr. Mroussi and Mr. Kazolar were very quick and efficient in manipulating their equipment both on the Windows and DOS levels. Very soon we were visiting some available reflectors. They also were able to send video images between the two computers but had some problems with their sound drivers. At this point, everyone's time was running out, so we agreed to meet again after Mroussi and Kazolar had a chance to make it all work. This proposed meeting never occurred since the work with the INPT was halted.

3.6 LCTDE — how to go about it

Choukhmane (and Amina):

First we need to determine what equipment is needed. What is needed in Morocco and what is needed in the States? Then we can find the sources [he called it organizations] that will help to put it together. The INPT have many computers but we have no video-conferencing equipment that is needed. [When I suggested that the cost of equipment and communication might be prohibitive, he said that, well, we can start with the internet. We then talked about CU-Seeme and other possible combinations.]

Amina who was, at that point, eager to work with DE, had a clear picture of what she wanted to do: To use internet and CU-Seeme as much as possible since it is available, with some ISDN based conferencing and perhaps some travel.

Amina's idea was to start by involving some students as part of their final English project (this was also mentioned the year before). It is a research paper written in English on a technical subject. While working on their project, the students need to have two advisors: one of their English teachers and one teacher from the science department for input about the content of the project. Choukhmane suggested selecting two students to work on a DE project to document the different technologies in the field while working with a distant advisor.

3.7 The outcome — INPT Backing Out

Amina Alaoui (Summary of meeting based on after the meeting notes):

I never met Choukhmane again. My last visit to the INPT was late in May 1997 where I met with Amina once more. It was her job to let me know that things have changed and that it was decided not to go any further with the projected LCTDE model. She made polite excuses as Moroccan do, in explaining the problems and barriers that they were facing. She asked me not to cassette-record our meeting.

It seemed that since our last meeting she was contacted by Dr. Haddad Lahcen who shared with her his vision of how he might go about teaching cross-cultural issues. Amina said that, until now, we were talking about this project being part of our English courses, but now we are introducing outside teachers and different classes, so there are questions about whether this is suitable for the INPT.

She said that she is not sure the project will succeed because cultural studies are not exactly part of the INPT curriculum. They are a technical school and the problem is that the students may not be interested. It is very difficult to get them to do things they don't want, Amina said. They only care about their exams and don't want to do more than what their contract calls for. It is hard to interest the students in non-curriculum things. It is even hard to get them to do their English homework. The students are very goal-oriented, not interest-oriented.

Language was one of the problems that Amina raised. It is difficult for the students to express themselves in English on cultural matters. It is very different from technical English, which is what they are taught mainly.

Amina's last objection or problem had to do with decision making power. Although it came last, I felt that this was probably the main barrier facing Choukhmane and the INPT. She said that although Choukhmane is head of the school he has to explain what he does to his superiors. The more she explained the more it sounded as if there was no agreement from the higher authorities.

It might be better if the INPT just helps with their available technology and expertise without involving the students, suggested Amina. Students can come from the university and participate in a cross-cultural project from here. This will take future negotiation and planning, she said.

In hindsight I feel thankful that they were so frank with what was going on and didn't let me hang on with unrealistic promises.

4. Mohammed V University (MVU)

4.1 General information

[About the academic levels]

Barada: First cycle is the first and second years, second cycle is third year and fourth year and the third cycle is the graduate level. It's very much based on the French system. First and second year they give you a diploma called Dug, but the diploma that really counts is the B.A. that you get at the end of four years.

Dr. Ezroua:

The graduate program in the Moroccan public university is more flexible than the first and second cycles that are undergraduate level. Let's say I want to introduce a new course like yours. I can do it easier on the graduate level because there we have more freedom to do whatever we like. The material is the responsibility of the teacher but of course the teacher has to be responsible in terms of respecting the content. So you have to always fall within the boundaries of the discipline of the humanities. Take for example cultural-studies — we've tried on different occasions to introduce cultural-studies at the undergraduate level (of the English program). The undergraduate level in the university is quite strict and the students have to follow a certain path from beginning to the end and so on. The ministerial legal system legislates what courses and how many we have to teach, so we had no room to add cultural-studies. What we did was, we took a literature course that was taught for three hours a week. We kept two hours per week for studying literature and left one hour for cultural-studies as part of that course. Nobody told us that we were doing anything wrong but on the contrary we were enriching the program. That's one example at the undergraduate level where it's more difficult. On the graduate level it is easier.

Dr. Haddad:

[Undergraduate program]

On the undergraduate level the new thing that is happening now in our faculties (of public universities) which is a change from before is what they call 'license applique' (or applied bachelor). This means that after the second year of college studies, there can be program which professors can get approved by the faculty and by the ministry. Those are specialized programs for bright students, something like the honors programs in the States. Under this license applique we already have a program in applied geography and a program of reading scientific books. We are now proposing a new program which will be either in communication studies or in translation studies which is related to cultural studies. With such programs we can get equipment because there is a limited number of students and also you can get funded by different kinds of organizations.

So there are opportunities here although it's not yet clear where the faculties are going with this and also whether they will all be connected to the internet come June. There are quit a few computers in the university but they are not connected yet.

[Graduate and doctoral programs]

Concerning our cultural development program, we have applied to get approval of both the master level and the doctoral level. We have the doctoral level approved, so now we are registering doctorate students and we have people working with us on topics such as illiteracy, literacy and communications problems.

This doctoral program is called *le national Doctorat* and we hope for the degree to be accepted internationally but we'll see.

Dr. Belghazi and Dr. Barada:

At the level of the undergraduate program, I think that the project you just mentioned will probably have more relevance there. This is because that in the first and second cycle the courses are very boring. I mean it is teaching language, grammar, comprehension, again and again in the same way. But when you say to teachers that we're going to change the way we've done things so far and make it interesting. People [in the faculty], even without the money incentive, raises or anything, will be motivated. We've already started doing that in the second year. The students will be more motivated too.

I'll give you an example that to me was a success story. I had been teaching a course called British Civilization, British History and Culture for the last 15 years. This is a second year undergraduate course and over the last few years I got really fed up with it. My colleagues were too. We're using the same manuals, the same approach, etc. We didn't have the money to do exactly what was needed to create a better course. We needed a VCR and a room to show the relevant programs and to change the format of the course in order to motivate students more. We wanted to have a seminar-based approach to the course. Finally we managed to do all that with the help of British Consul together with the British Open University.

So even in the first cycle, or what you call the undergraduate program, things have been happening and I think that the British Civ. program was the first to have started this trend.

Three English faculty at Mohamed V:

Fatima: I think the context of this school is right for such a program [LCTDE].

The fact that it's cultural studies will attract many students. I had an experience with Spoken English class which might be relevant here. This year we got a very good response from the students in our language lab because, for the first, time this year we had televisions and video machines which were donated by the British Council. One of my colleagues lent me a few videocassettes about how the Americans view the Arab culture and also about some famous Arab Americans or American Arabs who have enriched America. It showed how the Americans react to Arab stereotypes. The students response

was just terrific. The class was full of students. You know, the word very often spreads very quickly and I had a full class. The response was very good and they wanted to discuss the content. They had many original ideas and it brought out the best in the students. Basing my analysis on what I experienced there — cross-cultural subjects can be successful. Usually all what the student care about is their exams, but in this experience they prepared talks and put in a lot of work. Sometimes they came up with very original topics. They did some research and came with the bibliography and such. So I have no doubt about the response or the participation of the students. But are they definitely will want to know how they will be examined?

Nadia: And the problem is how to insert this into the existing program.

Nufissa: You talked about Spoken English but maybe if they write reports it could be part of the Written English. The question is whether the course would be tested in the written or in the oral formats. Maybe it is best to establish something with the Oral first.

Fatima: It's definitely something that would be tested in the oral.

Nufissa: In the oral, in the beginning, maybe see how things go, rather than in the written at the beginning.

Nadia: Especially if you think about undergraduate students, particularly second year students whom we were talking about. I think their performance is better at the oral than at the written.

[About the third cycle — graduate level:]

[Dr. Ezroua suggested to target the students of the third cycle. He thought that they would be more dedicated and already selected.]

Nufissa: Oh no, I don't think so. Maybe this is his point of view, but I don't share his view. The third cycle students are full of theory. I don't think this is what this program is about.

4.2 Administration

Dr. Ezroua:

What I'm saying here is that as long as you have the agreement of the institution — here I mean that the University of New Mexico has to sign a protocol and an agreement with Mohamed the Fifth University or with our faculty here in Rabat. You might also be doing it with Al Akhawayn in the same way. In any case we have to have a written legal text. With this agreement we inform the ministry so we can get the green light to go ahead with the project — only then we can go ahead and start experimenting with it. The question whether the students would be tested on it and receive credit — that has to be negotiated but it's possible.

If you have funds you won't have a problem. If the funds are available it makes it much easier. What you need to do is present your project with a letter to the dean of the faculty and then we can answer you in two weeks. The dean's name is Abdelwahed Bendaoud, the dean of the Faculty of Letters in Rabat.

[Administration changes]

Nufissa: Another problem that you have to consider is possible changes in the administration. There has been some talk recently about a change in the administrative staff in other faculties. We had our dean for a while but he can go too. He could get promoted somewhere else or he can retire. Many things can happen. In general, if a dean happens to be a member of the department originally, before he got to this administration position, he would be more likely to cooperate with the members of the faculty and to help. It could happen that a change will occur in the meantime and someone else will become the dean who is not from this department. He could have been a teacher in the geography or the Spanish departments for example. The problem here is a matter of relationship that you have with the person who is sitting in that office.

Fatima: The point here is that here you really do have to take into consideration the people who are in those positions, who is the dean, who is the vice dean? Some people are more open than others. Presently, our dean and our vice dean are quite open to a lot of things like new proposals and programs. They take the effort to find out what is new in the field and to find the best possibilities for our institution. This is something we all have to acknowledge. We don't know what will happen if we had a dean that is less open.

Nadia: It's a matter of who the person is. Our dean right now, Bendaoud, is somebody who was a teacher in the French department and who has already an open mind and a directive towards European culture and Western culture. His wife also is teaching with us here in the department. You know that you have a ground for discussion and you get to understand each other more easily than when you work with someone with different agendas. Bendaoud has been the dean for five or six years so we have good working relationship with him, but recently there have been talks about possible changes.

Mounir Alaoui:

[What will really help is if you could put you proposal in writing as a letter on your department letterhead. You could introduce yourself and what you are proposing for this project, however you want to go about it. Maybe we should also have a letter from your dean or vice dean or whoever would be responsible for making the decision here?]

Dr. Alaoui: In the university, each professor is responsible for his own research. In the modern university, the dean and vice dean and so on are only responsible for administrative stuff like budget and coordination with the ministry and so on. The academic issues are dealt with by professors directly, so we have departments where we talk about things.

4.3 Faculty

Dr. Ezroua II:

[Job security for faculty members in the university]

On the one hand, as you say, it can be an advantage to have secure jobs and continuity in the faculty. Many of the professors keep their jobs for the rest of their lives, until they retire. On the other hand,

because the faculty are so secure in their jobs and at the same time get paid so little that they have little motivation to do a good job. They have to get another job which may take much of their energy elsewhere.

Dr. Belghazi and Dr. Barada:

[It's definitely a new and different picture than that of university professors who, on the one hand, have a very secure job no matter what they do. On the other hand they earn so little that they may have to take a second job that leaves them not enough time for their students].

Taieb: I think that the situation varies from university to university and from one department to another. Here in Rabat it's completely different.

Barada: I think what you just said is true to a certain extent, but not on the level of the third cycle. There I don't think it's true. For instance, Just last year we started working with this cultural studies course. There were only Taieb, myself and Ibrahim Musabir. We sat down and agreed pretty much on what we were going to cover. We were not paid for it and no one told us to do it. We just pushed for cultural studies. We submitted a program proposal to the Ministry and it was accepted.

4.4 The students

Dr. Ezroua:

If you don't ask the students to pay, you will have a very wide population of students interested in this project. Mind you, this kind of program can not be offered to all students but rather to a select few. Once you have an agreement with the university to do a program like that, then you can select a group of twenty to fifty students to teach this special program to. If the institution accepts to offer it to a select few, those select few will be very happy to take part.

[Can students pay for the course?]

Three English faculty at Mohamed V:

[Professor Ezroua suggested that we require the students who wanted to participate to pay something for the course. Knowing your students, do you think that this is an option?]

Fatima: Then you would have another type of selection. People who can pay are not necessarily the best students. They may be good, but you are taking the risk of not getting the best group.

Nadia: And the majority of the students here come from poor, quite poor families.

Fatima: They have a lot to pay for already, and they don't have that much income.

Nufissa: I don't think it is such a good idea — at least not in the first year maybe.

Mounir Alaoui:

In the Moroccan university, as I told you last time, you should deal with postgraduate students. They are more open-minded, they have more time and they have more horizons to seek. They are not just blocked by the exams that tell them what to learn and can take all their time. In fact, in the engineering

school (EMI) the students have more room to do things, but it's purely technical. Therefore, what you have to do is to set something up with the post graduate students program in the Faculty of Letters, and then we can go step by step to make it happen.

4.5 Language

Three English faculty at Mohamed V:

[Q: Is the students' English in the second or third year good enough to be able to communicate with American students? Would they be able to sufficiently express themselves in a debate for example?]

Nufissa: The students of the third or fourth year could do just fine.

Nadia: Even some of the second year students can do it. Some just love English so much. They are like English freaks. They have very interesting accents. They picked up their accent somewhere, I don't know where. It can be either English or American.

Fatima: They are stronger in their oral use of English. I would probably say that this is part of the Moroccan culture. For Moroccans speaking is stronger than writing.

[Q: So would audio and speech based communication be more desirable than using written text?]

Nadia: Oh definitely yes, especially with the second year, even with third year. Their English writing skills are not so good

Nufissa: I think that in terms of knowledge of writing most students are quit limited. Part of the students are really limited in their writing in second year and even in third year. I base my judgement on what they write in composition.

Fatima: But you are interested in culture. It's an oral culture, and they will find a way to talk about their own culture.

[Maybe they should speak French?]

Fatima: No, no. There was a time when you could assume that Moroccans could speak French very well, but not now. Their French is very limited.

Nadia: And besides that the interest of any student in our department would be to practice English as much as they can.

Fatima: Really, for this generation now, (Moroccan) Arabic is their strongest language when it comes to expressing themselves. It used to be French because in the past Arabic was taught in our universities only as a second language while French was the main language. All the subjects were taught in French. Now it's the other way. French is taught only as a language while all the subjects are taught in Arabic.

Nufissa: There are some students who are bilingual, French and Arabic. Those people can really use both languages equally.

Nadia: Bilingual! I don't think we have any students who are really bilingual. Maybe two or three in the whole department. They are very few.

Nufissa: Those students come from private schools where they have very good bilingual programs. These students who are good at Arabic and French are very few. Then you have Spanish speakers, people from the north who speak Arabic and Spanish. Another group that we have is of students who come from the Mission. It's a French school so their French is very good but not their Arabic. Then the majority, their Arabic is better than their French.

[Different language levels]

[Q: We're going to have on one side American students whose language is English while the Moroccan might have to struggle to find the words to express themselves in a foreign language. Linguistically, would that be a fair and equal exchange? What problems can we expect here?]

Nufissa: I think that we have to consider a selection process in this case. I think that only students who can speak English well will take this course.

Nadia: In this kind of program you really have to point out the fact that the Moroccan students are in an ESL (or English as a Second Language) kind of framework and this should be taken into consideration.

Nufissa: It's true that the students we have, well, their English is definitely not as good as that of American students; however, I think that we can really have a number of students whose English is good enough for them to be able to communicate. And I think that we really have to think about selection.

Nadia: Oh definitely, there should be a selection process.

[About the use of translation]

[Of course, there has to be selection on both sides. At the same time someone here suggested that we could try to use interpreters or translators on each side?]

All the teachers: No, no, no!

Nufissa: I don't see the point in doing that.

Fatima: It can be a very interesting cultural experience for both the Americans and the Moroccans to hear how one language is translated in to another. It can be also very entertaining for Americans to try to make out what was said. You have to remember that language is also culture and the way Moroccans speak English reflects their Arabic and their Arabic culture.

Nadia: There shouldn't be too much of that because it will interfere with the meanings and with communicating.

Fatima: But this is culture and that can lead them to learn something. They will have to ask themselves why did he say that, why did she say that, in that way? And so on.

4.6 Cross-cultural programs

Jack Rusenko:

There is one [cross-cultural program] that Americans are doing with the university in Rabat and it's a local American thing. It's a cross cultural exchange with the Rabat university. They collect students from all over America and they did it three years ago. Last year it was cancelled and this year they're not sure if

it's happening because they don't have enough students. I think the reason that students aren't available is because it's a French system and they are requiring the American students that come, to speak French.

[Travel abroad programs (from both sides)]

Dr. Ezroua:

Currently we have agreements to do cross-cultural programs with three universities in the States. With Vassar College and with two campuses of the University of Wisconsin — Madison and Milwaukee.

With Wisconsin we've been doing this for three years now. We have a grant from USIS (U.S. information service) for the exchange of professors and teachers from both schools. This grant will run out next year, but we're looking to find a way to extend it. They have applied for the grant in both schools, Madison and Milwaukee. Milwaukee got the money for the teachers' exchange and Madison didn't. Madison made an agreement with us to collect students from different universities in the States and send them here. They have cultural exchange programs like this with many other countries. I think there is one in Israel, in Jordan, in Egypt. They have some programs in China and Latin American countries too.

With the Vassar experience we found that with 15 students you can easily pay for the teachers and for all the expenses.

The students stay with families when they are here. AMIDIS, an American organization, deals with all that. The program pays an extra \$100 per week per student for room and board to AMIDIS.

Dr. Ezroua II:

[Cost of cross-cultural programs]

For our program with Vassar College with a minimum of eight students (we had ten in the beginning, but it dropped to eight, one boy and seven girls) we charged two thousand dollars (\$2000) per student for seven weeks and four thousand dollars (\$4000) per student for sixteen weeks.

Their program included Arabic, both Standard and Colloquial (four weeks each), history of Africa (four weeks), Arab sociology (four weeks), and cities of the Muslim world (four weeks). It also included a ten-day excursion to the mountains and to the Sahara desert.

For the summer program with the University of Wisconsin (June and July) we charged twenty five hundred dollars (\$2500) per student for seven weeks. We had between fifteen and twenty students from Wisconsin and Michigan.

Our cross-cultural programs are similar in some ways to those given by Dr Abdelhay Moudden, but he's doing it privately. Our advantage is that we are doing it on campus and the American students can meet their Moroccan peers. Some institutes in the States prefer to have their programs here connected with the university but Moudden does culture and tourism at the same time. Actually, he started it with us and then he pursued it on his own.

Now we are pushing to have programs which will involve graduate students. They will be conducted in English with American-trained teachers.

Dr. Belghazi and Dr. Barada:

Dr. Belghazi: It depends on several things: One is competence. We have quite a few colleagues who are competent in cultural studies in the English department and in other departments. They've been involved in teaching Moroccan culture to both Americans and Moroccans and with exchange programs between faculties. Ezroua must have told you about those exchange programs. UWM for instance. Barada have been to Wisconsin within the framework of that program. This means that distance education could meet several needs in Morocco. It's just a question of actually being concrete and making concrete proposals.

Another is the technology. How are we going to use video-conferencing, what are the possibilities? As far as I am concerned, we can set up a program about teaching of culture in Morocco with teachers and syllabi and so on. The questions are how to implement that and how to acquire the technology?

4.7 Cultural studies in MVU

[The Rabat Cultural Studies group]

Dr. Mekouar:

The group of teachers that you met last year at the Rabat university are organizing a third cycle course this year on the same subject — cultural studies. There is a structure now in which culture is studied and taught at the masters level. They are the same group of professors that you met last year, especially Lahsan Haddad and Taieb Belghazi. They actually started this program just a few days ago.

I suggest you just see some of these people while you're in Rabat. See Haddad and Belghazi and I'll be glad to work with them on it, because officially I'm suppose to be the director of that group. They drafted me to it just because they wanted my name to get the program approved. It's an honorary thing more than anything else. I do not teach culture as such, but my past work was devoted to cross-culture in a many ways. I still read up on the subject, especially since I left Oujda.

Dr. Haddad:

We're working now to improve the master portion of this program. We need to change few things before they can be accepted. The Cultural Development Program has been accepted on the doctorate level while the (B.Sc.) master's has not been accepted yet. This is good because it means that we have more time to work on it. What we want to do is rather than develop a program that uses culture and cultural studies in a theoretical manner, we rather study the burning questions here. We want to study Moroccan issues in the last two decades such as democracy, development, rural development, women's rights, questions of identity for minority groups, the Berbers and the Jews in Morocco, these kinds of things. Also questions related to organization. So you see it's almost like social sciences, but looked at from the cultural point of view in a sense. We are a group of Humanists and Social Scientists looking at burning issues and related questions in Morocco.

Generally this program will be for students from the English Department but if there is someone who wishes to join from other departments who has a good mastery of English, then we will accept such person as well.

Most of the teaching will be done in English but some of it will have to be done in French as well because there would be faculty who are not versed in English. We have invited members from other faculties who will teach specific issues and if they want to do it in Arabic or French, so much the better, but most of the teaching will be done in English. It's for our English students.

So our next step now is to improve the program and the way it's presented

A second step will be to find out how we can have connections with other places, with other people and with different kinds of organizations, like yourself. We had some talks with a student group in Belgium. This European group of international development is interested in cultural developments issues. They have a network called 'Culture et Development'. I can give you their e-mail address. They use mainly French but also English. There are students from India and from Latin America working with them — an interesting group. We also have connections with a few people in the States — in Indiana and also in Austin Texas. We also have connections with some people in England, but we want to diversify more. We also want to look towards Africa and the Maghrib but we are not organized for that yet.

[Last year when I visited your department, I was invited to Dr. Barada's cultural class. I was impressed by the highly theoretical content of the course. My question is whether there are also interests in a more practical application for cultural studies in your department? For example, in America we see attempts to solve cultural diversity problems in the work place and in the street through training.]

This is what I'm more interested in now. My work as an administrator both at Al Akhawayn and now, here in High-Tech, has pushed me towards being more practical. For example, I teach business communications at the graduate level for the MBA students. I have to deal with cultural questions which are very practical. Examples are: questions of literacy, questions of identity, politics in Morocco, organizational developments. We are even interested with questions like what are the cultural handicaps to foreign investors in Morocco. What are the cultural handicaps to development, to democracy, etc., Here we are dealing with real practical questions and that's what we are interested in.

There are two directions here which interest me. At the university faculty level I'm interested in the cultural development program. It's less commercial than High-Tech and its aim is to help students get a grasp on reality. It can help them to go out and do something with the knowledge they have acquired. You can read about some of my ideas in a new book that the Department just published in English about the usefulness of the Moroccan university. Taieb Belghazi is its editor and it is called The Idea of the University. Most of it is a critique about the Moroccan university and its practices.

The other direction of my interest is what I do at High-Tech which is more practical knowledge.

Dr. Belghazi and Dr. Barada:

Belghazi: The teachers in our department, especially those involved in the cultural studies have been interested in questions of relocation of programs like cultural studies. What happens to a program when, for instance cultural studies, which emerge in a certain context like Birmingham in England, what happens to it when it is appropriated by people in Morocco. What happens to it? How is it used to suit certain purposes and how it can be Adapted? These are questions which go to the heart of what's at stake now — Problems of identity, questions of hybridity and so forth. So questions of exchange, juxtaposition of ideas and culture are of real concerns to both the students and the teachers.

Barada: This is the field we are interested in. We kind of rebelled and deviated from the traditional division in the Faculty. Usually you have literature and you have linguistics. Culture is very much a marginal subject. What we said was that today, cultural studies stands probably as "the discipline" (quote/unquote) of the future. Taieb was very much behind that and it was accepted.

Barada: The Open University made us a gift of a number of videotapes that are very much up to date and are used in their courses at the Open University. We use them here, but again, we adopted and adapted those programs to teach in our British Civ. course. My teaching approach is to look at British civilization and culture from the perspective of the Moroccan students.

[What is the need of your students here to learn about culture and specifically about their own culture? Is there a need for cross-cultural training and what does it mean here?]

Barada: I'll start by saying that the way we have seen cultural studies is not just teaching about cultures but the rethinking of the teaching of literature, the teaching of language, the interaction between the learner and what is being learned, etc. In other words cultural study is not simply the teaching about culture but the rethinking of the traditional model within which we have been teaching and within which we have graduated ourselves. It's just not a simple or simplistic study of culture, whether it's foreign culture or our own. Taieb and I do a lot of such things with our 'culture in literature' course in the third year (not the novel course). The way we are teaching these novels, whether we approach them from the first colonial perspective or look at them from different aspects, is in itself a way of teaching cultural studies.

Taieb: The question we've been raising is that it's no longer possible to talk about culture as something given or separate. And of course what the new thinking about technology, identity, etc. allows, is an opening up of the issue of culture and a rethinking of its dimensions in terms of its construction. That is to say, we cannot possibly talk about culture as something already settled but rather it's a process. This is the reason why we have been emphasizing things like the culture of every day, like issues relating to language variety and how they relate to the question of identity, like the question of mass media etc.

Barada: Also the question of morality, which is a part of our culture and so on.

[From oral culture to the culture of the image]

Barada: I was talking to my students this morning about this transition that Morocco is in, as do all third world countries in general, which puts us in a very special and critical position. If you look at the West, from the Gutenberg revolution to the beginning of twentieth century, they've moved from an oral culture, or pre-technological culture, to a technical technological written culture. Only then they evolved into the culture of the image. Here we are in a very different and difficult position. Here [in Morocco] we are talking about an oral culture still moving into the circle of the written culture. All of a sudden we're taken over by the culture of the image.

Barada's graduate cultural studies class:

[Barada open the floor to a discussion about the possible political and cultural ramifications that international communication might have. Some students (most actively participating students were males) where quit ready to debate about their political and ideological points of view. Most students didn't participate actively. My impression was that an important aspect of this Cultural Studies class was to be an arena for political and ideological debate. It was a mixture of theoretical thinking and, what seemed to me, opinions and conjecture.

Barada asked me to turn the tape recorder off as we entered this discussion part. He said that the students would be less intimidated and freer to express themselves when they were not recorded.]

Three English faculty at Mohamed V:

Nufissa: Nadia is really the person that introduced cultural studies to this department.

Nadia: Yes, I think I was the first. I have studied it in France. In the beginning people looked at me as though I was some kind of weird person but now people are ripe for this.

Nufissa: Last year was the first year for these cultural study courses in the third cycle. To have an undergraduate cultural program could be a way to prepare the students for this third cycle course to which they come totally unprepared for.

Fatima: You have to begin somewhere and just because it's easier to set up a third cycle course, it doesn't mean that this is the best for the students.

Nadia: It's interesting to have something like this happen in the first three years and then have the students make a choice to continue a fourth year of cultural studies. It can be their specialization where they will register for a seminar, and write their own paper.

4.8 Technology at MVU

Dr. Ezroua:

For the time being we don't have computers even for our faculty, but this should change.

Dr. Belghazi and Dr. Barada:

Belghazi: It's not just the political ideological question. Technical questions have to be looked at but of course even those have other dimensions which are closely bound up with the political. There are the questions of infrastructure. In the Faculty of Letters everyone is keen to make use, and the best use, of

what is available in technology and science. A clear example of this is what professor Barada has been doing with his students. He's been taking them to use the technology wherever they can find it. Our dean of course expresses the wish and the willingness to get internet to the faculty and it's coming, it's bound to come. It's just a matter of time.

Barada: Although Taieb doesn't have access to e-mail yet, you can write to me.

Barada: Last November we went to a conference in Marrakesh where Taieb and other colleagues gave presentations. It was the British Studies Conference held by the British Consul. There we were awarded the needed equipment that the university couldn't give us. We were given the facility, a VCR and a TV. Now we are the only department which have this kind of facility. There is a room where we have a TV, a VCR and videos. The Open University made us a gift of a number of videotapes that are very much up to date and are used in their courses at the Open University.

[As a result] the exams, which we just had, showed positive response to the questions we asked from the students. They were much more intelligent than before and much less regurgitating materials covered in class, etc. It was very successful.

Three English faculty at Mohamed V:

[Does any of you have access to e-mail?]

Nadia: No, that's reserved for the administration.

Nufissa: I have an e-mail address somewhere, but I'm not sure how to use it.

Fatima: I have e-mail. I use it just for sending messages to friends, that's all.

[Your colleague Fahradin told me that he uses e-mail].

Nufissa: Yes, he gets his e-mail in the same place as I do, at the Cyber-café. Fahradin does not have a computer so he goes to the Cyber-café to get his e-mail.

Fatima: I have a computer but I don't have e-mail on it, so I go to this cyber-café also.

Nadia: I also have a computer but I haven't used it at all and I'm waiting for someone to initiate me on it. I think that even five years ago teachers did not have computers, I mean just a simple computer. Now I don't know anybody in this department who doesn't have his own computer. Now multi-media is something we're getting into.

[So teachers do have computers but they're still not set to receive e-mail?]

Fatima: The only one in this department that have e-mail is Ezroua. He gets his e-mail in his office.

[Q: Do you think that Ezroua might let the three of you communicate with me through e-mail from his office?]

Nadia: That's another story because the university has to pay for it. I'm think that if you write to us, Ezroua will give us your letters, but for us to write back will be too expensive.

[Usually it doesn't cost much to send few e-mail letters]

Fatima: At the cyber-café I paid about 600 dirhams to subscribe for one year, then to use the computer there, once you subscribed, you pay 20 dirhams an hour.

[But if I don't want to send you to some cyber-café. After all you are the faculty in this school. Would it be possible for somebody to allow you to sit by a computer and send e-mail from here?]

Nufissa: I don't think so.

[Talking about these things is not enough. What I like to see happening is to have teachers here communicate at a distance with teachers in America through e-mail.]

Nadia: That would be the first stage, of course.

Nufissa: Which means, I think, that we need to have e-mail at home.

Fatima: Well, some of us will have it at home and some wouldn't be able to afford it.

[That's an expense for you, I like to see if you can use what is here already?]

Fatima: The faculty has the e-mail service, why wouldn't teachers use it for a course. I can see why they won't give it to us if we want to use it for something personal, but if it's for a course that has been set up in this university then we should be able to do it.

Nadia: Also it would be a good test for the university and the faculty to see if they really want something like this to happen.

Nufissa: The thing with e-mail is that it's very new here and when something is new everyone is very careful.

Fatima: The question of e-mail use should be also addressed to the dean directly.

Nufissa: And if there is a firm commitment on his part it should be a written commitment. I think that the dean will not object.

Dr. Haddad:

Well, if you talk about the facility and the technology, I think that we are still far in terms of being connected to the internet and also I don't know if we have the right computers. Now, what probably can be done, is through cyber-cafés. I think that would be a nice thing to do. I've encouraged my students of the third and second year to get e-mail addresses. (Those are not the third cycle students in the cultural program — they are undergraduates.) I tell them that if it is too expensive, then two or three can share one e-mail address. It's not really expensive but you never know what's expensive for people and what is not, and they might have to prioritize their expenses.

When I give them many assignments to do, I would really like to coax them into getting it to me all on e-mail and I think the cyber-café works better than through the department's computer. There they only have one e-mail connection and the dean, Dr. Ezroua, might not let us use it.

[Mounir Alaoui's proposal to give his support and to allow use the EMI's computer labs]

Mounir Alaoui:

[I met with Professor Alaoui two times at EMI. He was very interested in DE and in ways to use the internet for distance learning. He expressed strong interest in the proposed LCTDE project and talked about ways he could help it happen from the technology side of things. Alaoui took me on a visit to the various student computer labs in the school and spoke about his leading role in bringing the internet to Morocco.

I told Alaoui about my meetings both at the INPT and with the people at the Faculty of Letters at MVU. I expressed to him the questions and doubts that I had about whether LCTDE can happen in Rabat at all. I talked about the lack of computers and access to the internet in the university of Rabat.]

The university is completely different from INPT. In fact, there they (INTP) depend on the ONPT, which is the local PTT (post office). They have their hierarchy, they have their own programs and so on. They are not very free. We are the university and we are completely free to do anything we want. I just have to tell people that we are doing such a project in such a way.

From what you are telling me, I think that the Faculty of Letters in Rabat is a better place for your project than the INPT. The problem of teachers not having the technology — I can solve that for you. I have to check with my director but I am sure he will be okay, it's not a problem because we open e-mail accounts for people that are not from the school. And there is no problem. But I have to check that everything is ok. What I propose is to contact this person, to train them on e-mail, the teachers, and teach them how to use e-mail. And to open accounts for them here at EMI so they would be able to have their accounts and coordinate with you. If there is any technical stuff that is needed, they can report to me. But at least they can begin the coordination and thinking about the problem and what's needed. So I can open this needed door first and then it depends on what we do next.

For me to be able to help, it will be best to identify the educational project that you are doing here in Rabat and to have someone, a professor with a specific classroom, in mind. If they want to do something through e-mail or through newsgroups, just send me the professor's name and I will open for him a new mailbox, so he will be able to coordinate with you through e-mail. Then we will arrange to have one room [a computer lab] here available for the students, not always, but from time to time.

What I can do is to be in communication with Dr. Ezroua. He is the vice-dean there, right?

[Yes, he is my main connection person in the Faculty of Letters. He helped me in meeting many different teachers there. I communicate with him by e-mail. I've met with teachers there, individually and in groups. They all want to participate in this project very much. They're ready to start program design with teachers and student over there. But the problem is that most teachers here don't have access to the internet and don't have e-mail accounts.]

[Would the teachers be able to come here at different times and communicate with me in America, via e-mail?]

Yes, this is the first step. The second step will happen once there is a project that is really well-designed, in terms of what is needed, what are the hardware and software capacities, the technical skills and so on. We can then re-coordinate to have one real project going on. I think that this is the best way. All this will take some time. In my opinion, it might take even six months.

[More likely between six months and three years. We have to start the work on the teachers' level and on design. By the time we get to the student level, it might take a while.]

Yes, because the things have to be designed and tested and so on. In fact (it might be an advantage because) as time passes we may have more capabilities. Maybe by then there will be e-mail in the Faculty of Letters and so on.

[So when you tell me that you can make a computer lab available for this kind of project, or you can make e-mail and access to computers available to these teachers, is this final? I don't have to go to the ministry of education for final approval?]

No, no. The person who is the director of university cooperation in the Ministry of Higher-education is a good friend of mine on the personal level. He will be more than glad to have such a project going on in Morocco. No, there is no problem on the academic level.

What I can do is if you give me a telephone number for Ezroua, I will contact him and check what we can do together. I have to leave the next two weeks free because we have the exams and all the academic studies at the end of the year. So I will be offline but I'm going to contact him either this week or next just to be in touch.

[I'll send you e-mail with Ezroua's phone number and his e-mail address, and you can take it from there.]

After the exams I will also write to you the letter that you asked for. I'll do it both in e-mail and as an official letter from the university.

To the teachers you can tell not to worry. I'm going to see Mr. Ezroua and I'll see how we can manage training here at EMI. After the training, we can tell them that we will deal with all the technological problems. If there is some computer to install, some line to install, something to configure, we will deal with that here at EMI. The students here can do it for us or even we can do it. But the first step is to encourage them to use their e-mail and to feel that it is very important. So if they have counterparts in the U.S. and they have a flow of e-mail in and out, it will be very important.

As soon as they will be installed they can start. It will be two or three weeks, after the exams. What I'll do is to start it before the summer, so in September when the teachers are back, they will be set-up.

Three English faculty at Mohamed V:

[Using the computer lab at the Mohammedia Engineering School]

Nadia: That's nice, but let me tell you something else. This is informal information which I heard from some students I know from the Mohammedia Engineering School. When I inquired, they said they

have good computer lab but that it's constantly being used by the students of the school, and it's crowded. I really don't see how we may be able to fit our own students in there. From my understanding you really have to take into consideration the given. There is a time lap that exists between New Mexico and Morocco. Morning in New Mexico is late afternoon here. That would be an additional problem and I don't see how they can fit our students into the needed time slot to let them use the computer lab.

[The outcome of Mounir Alaoui's involvement]

[Mr. Alaoui never wrote the letters that he promised to write nor did he answer the e-mails letters and faxes that I sent him throughout the next year. Both Dr. Ezroua from the Rabat Faculty of Letters and Mr. Fitzgerald from the Marrakesh ALC tried to make connection with Alaoui with no success. I was a little confused by Mr. Alaoui's silence because of his enthusiastic desire to help and to be part of the proposed LCTDE project. I asked some of the Moroccans whom I interviewed, and was in contact with, of what they thought was the reason for Alaoui's behavior. The common opinion was that probably Mr. Alaoui promised to do things that he was not able to deliver on. That might have been embarrassing for him. I also think that maybe Alaoui promised much more than what he had the time and the energy for. He has a key role in developing the Moroccan internet and is involved in so many of its aspects. Recently I heard that he was appointed to a high position in the Ministry of Communication.]

[About MARWAN]

Dr. Haddad:

Yes, that's what they say, but I'm careful about saying that we will have that in June because there will be new government, there will be new budgets there will be new priorities. Things change here. It's not like we have an administration, and the Minister have no say. I think that the Minister have big say in these things. There will be a new minister and I think that he will be from the left this time, but we don't know the policy yet. So one has to be careful and if they say that it's going to be in June, it's probably true, but one has to take this with a little bit of salt. But I think that all this does not mean that there is no opportunity for people to get connected with others in the States. It can be done through cyber-café's and also through privet schools for example.

Dr. Ezroua II:

The faculty is planning to have a working computer lab for teachers and students soon. It's in the works so to speak. By the time Moroccan universities will be networked together, we will be on line.

Since last year, when we met, I have now two computers — one here in the office and one at home. They are both on the internet but until now I have had to pay for the service out of my own pocket.

5. ALC in Marrakesh and Cadi Ayyad University

5.1 Cadi Ayyad University

Fitzgerald and Slitine:

Fitzgerald: Cadi Ayyad is the university of Marrakesh — The only one here. All the universities are part of the public Moroccan university system and each one has a different name. In Rabat it's Mohammed V University and here it's Cadi Ayyad.

Meeting with Dr. Knidiri:

Slitine: That is where I studied. The department of English there is quite big, a large number of students actually enrolled there. The first year will [usually] have some 700 students. The whole graduating level will have about 2000 students. This is for all of Marrakesh. Students also come from the regions around Marrakesh that don't have a university.

Fitzgerald and Slitine:

Fitzgerald: I've known the dean of the university here for a long time now. It's been the same dean for as long as I've been in Marrakesh. He is a sociologist by the way; his name is Mughali, so this is right down his line. If he could get involved and have something published with his name on it, he would be very happy, I'm sure.

[Could we involve him in this discussion? Would he read this LCTDE proposal and respond to it?]

Fitzgerald: Sure. He's been to America and understand some English. At the same time you'll need to have it translated into French for him. He's a Franco-phone more than an Arabo-phone, although he has been to America. We can translate your paper with no problem. So it is something that can be done.

Meeting with Dr. Knidiri:

Fitzgerald: Dr. Knidiri is the rector of Cadi Ayyad University. His position is higher than that of a dean and he oversees the entire university system in Marrakesh — all the faculties. He is the ex-Moroccan minister of education. He still holds the grade of minister until the new minister is appointed.

Fitzgerald: I don't think that Knidiri was speaking just to be friendly. I do think that he encouraged the project and asked us to take the next step, which is, to contact some of the teachers who have already been involved in cross-cultural studies. The only thing that I think he was a little over exuberant about was the fact that the university system in Morocco is going to all be networked soon, and that they'll all have access to the Internet. Well, that may happen, but who knows when? I'm sure that they are working on it but it's not here yet.

I think you should understand that Knidiri is indeed interested in these outreach kind of programs.

Slitine: They wouldn't object to the fact that the premises of the Center could be used, for example, in implementing or working on the project. That way they can do this program even before they have

internet. They can use our facilities, our computer lab. The networking of all the universities of Morocco and putting them on the internet is still a developing project.

Fitzgerald (from an e-mail):

[Location]

Consists of four main faculties: Letters, and Law and Economics are located near each other in the Daudiate Quarter of Marrakesh, near the road to Casablanca. Science and Medicine are located near each other in the Semlalia Quarter of Marrakesh. Thus all campuses are in the newer side of the city of Marrakesh.

Each faculty includes about from 5 to 15 main buildings. The Faculty of Letters is by far the largest, and has been recently endowed with a faculty club including two swimming pools. The Faculty of Medicine is in its second year, and contains about five buildings. The faculties are basically near each other, in one part of town.

The dean of the Faculty of Letters is Dr. Mohamed Essaouri.

The dean of the Faculty of Science has just been changed but the vice dean is Dr Othman Bouab

[The students]

The number of students at the Faculty of Letters is about 4800, and are subdivided into departments as follows:

Arabic department: 874	History & Geography: 1487
French department: 441	Islamic Studies: 1049
English department: 715	Philosophy department: 234

[Who are the students in the English department?]

According to the law of higher-education in Morocco, students can register into any major they choose. Therefore, English students are not selected and they include people who majored in sciences in high school (which are taught in Arabic) but were afraid that their French was not good enough to do university level work (which is taught in French). This situation is one of the conundrums of education in Morocco and is also the reason for the large number of students who are going into English.

5.2 The American Language Center (ALC) in Marrakesh — General information

[How would the LCTDE fit into the university's curriculum?]

Meeting with Dr. Knidiri:

[Q: Can this be actually made into a credited university course, and would Moroccan university students be interested in learning about their own cultures?]

Slitine: This could be possible with the help of a well-established curriculum. It will have to put the students in gear to do things about presenting of their culture too. The brilliance of these students and their experience could really be good for the project.

Fitzgerald: You have to understand that the university system in Morocco has no such thing as electives. Everything is required of the students — what they take. It can be worked into their studies. One of the courses they take is American Civilization (American Civ.) Perhaps this small group of students, with the blessing of the rector, could get credit for participating in a course like this, rather than taking an exam. This would be a big revolution. What! No exam? It would take a lot of negotiating. There might be such courses where the university might be willing to give them the credit.

Slitine: Some of the teachers in the university may regard this project as a substitute for the Spoken English class requirement.

Fitzgerald: Back to the university credit question. An ideal modality — The English students have to write a research paper for their fourth year. This project could be the foundation for the paper. This is the area where the professors are given the most leeway that I see. Some of the students are coming here to do questionnaires about English teaching in Morocco and asking our teachers about these things. Now they are really forcing this question of field studies. They give the students a lot of freedom in choosing their subjects.

[About ALC Marrakesh]

Dr. Ezroua II:

I used to teach in the ALC in Rabat for many years. My wife who is a faculty member here at MVU is still teaching there now. Many of our faculty are teaching there. I'm a very good friend of Gary, the director of the Rabat ALC. The ALC here is the biggest in Morocco but they have very little technology.

The reason that so many of our English professors teach at the ALC is to supplement the low salaries they receive from the university. This is why the ALC in Marrakesh is able to offer you a joint cross-cultural program with the university since so many of their teachers are also teaching in the university. The dean of the university there, of course, would like to pursue such a program. They don't have enough computers.

[Q: Can the ALC, as an American institution, apply and get funding from America?]

Fitzgerald: No, the American Language Centers are actually Moroccan organizations — Moroccan cultural entities. The American Language Centers were started, originally, in the seventies as the American Culture Centers under the auspices of the USIS (United States Information Service). They were government organizations in the beginning, with centers in the main cities of Morocco. Eventually there were five of them: in Casa Blanca, in Rabat, in Marrakesh, in Fez and in Tangiers. The people that were running them were U.S. State Department employees. Then in 1976 the cultural affairs, or political officer in the embassy, issued a famous memo called "Let's not learn English". In those days everyone had to use the

same (approved) textbook called “Let’s Learn English,” so it was a word play on this. It criticized the whole program of teaching English in Morocco. The teachers, who were hired then, in the seventies, were still a lot of leftover hippies. The program wasn’t reaching the Moroccan VIPs. The students were just some grungy high school students, while the embassy wanted to reach the more important people in the government and it wasn’t happening. So they said to the directors: ‘OK, you can have the whole operation. (All the premises were rented anyway.) You can keep the blackboards, the desks and the rest of the equipment, but don’t look for any more money from us. You have to establish yourselves. Under the statutes that existed then, between the U.S. and Morocco and signed in 1956 as the cultural accords, the entity that was formed was called the American Culture Association. So [now] it became the ALC, which is a private, not for profit, cultural entity in Morocco. It was unheard of. There was nothing else like it in Morocco, except for maybe the Catholic Relief Organization. So they established a governing board with statutes and laws under Moroccan law. The governing board has to be half American and half Moroccan. One of the seats on the board, the statutory seat, has to be the cultural affairs officer of the U.S. embassy, who is a non-voting member. The people from Morocco are either from business or from education. Generally they have tended toward business people who have done their studies in the U.S. So from that time on, everything was private and student supported.

The centers began making much more money than before they were privatized. The ALCs were so successful that they began replicating themselves. The first one to replicate itself was Casa Blanca. They opened a sister center in the nearby Mohammadiya. Then ALC Tangiers opened a center in Tetuoan. Now there are ten centers in all. Each main center has a sister center that it opened with moneys that was available from profits. Since the time when they made the changeover, in 1977, Gary, [the director] of Casa Blanca was the president. The total number of students being taught throughout the country then, equal to the number of students registered in Casa Blanca today — 3,500 students. Right now there are about 15,000 students in those ten centers.

A center can’t be considered a full Center, with a capital C, unless there is an American running it. That’s the policy. There are centers that are being run by Moroccans, Mohammadiya for example, but they aren’t considered full centers. The ones that aren’t full centers right now are Tetuoan, Mohammadia and Kenitra. The rest are full centers.

ACLs teach students of all ages. Some of the centers start at an earlier age [than others]. Here our youngest is 11. At Casa Blanca they have babysitting classes in English. Until a certain age we do not allow students to go to the night classes for instance. All the centers have the same general program, which is three or four main cycles — beginning, intermediate and advanced. If a student was really advanced then the fourth cycle would be proficiency level, which isn’t as heavily registered as the other levels. We have students who reach the advanced-one and the advanced-two classes, and who get high scores on the university level exams. They continue to study even after that. Youssef [Slitine here] is a specialist in teaching for the TOEFL.

[Is each Center financially sufficient or do you have to provide help to other Centers?]

Fitzgerald: [Only] in special situations it happens. Each center is autonomous economically, unless there's some emergency and then there's a central fund that can help a center. It hasn't been necessary, however. The financial soundness and strength of a Center determines whether it can actually add computers, which are extremely expensive. If you have ten thousand (10,000) dirhams and you need to either paint a classroom or buy a computer — you have to paint the classroom. This has been one of my big things in Marrakesh — to keep putting money back into the place. The consequence is that we've never had any money left over in the bank at the end of the year.

[Q: Do you prepare students for universities as they do at the ALC in Fez?]

Fitzgerald: There, they had some classes that were called Al Akhawayn preparation and I purposely don't get involved in that. I don't think that it's the center's job to be replacing the educational system in Morocco. I also don't want to make promises to people that we can't keep. So if people pay a lot of money for an Al Akhawayn preparation course and for some reason they weren't accepted, or even if they were accepted and found that it was terrible, they may say: "Why did you prepare me for that?" Instead we do TOEFL preparation. We don't do GRE but we make the material available. Even on the computer we have GRE preparation material and we have books available.

Fitzgerald (from an e-mail):

The American Language Center of Marrakesh is located in a large villa, on a quiet street in the Guéliz quarter of Marrakesh. This villa houses the office, library, computer lab, and four classrooms. Another 19 classrooms are arranged in two levels around a spacious courtyard. The ALC is a five-minute walk from the center of the new city, and 15 minutes from the nearest gate to the old city.

The Center has been in its present location since 1972. The relative small size of the school helps to promote a "family" feeling, even though on any given evening or Saturday afternoon there will be as many as 300 students attending classes.

The Center offers a regular program of English as a foreign language with normal terms consisting of 3 hours per week and accelerated sessions generally in early summer and early fall of 10 hours per week.

[Tuition]

[Q: What about tuition? Would you have to charge more for courses that use computers?]

Fitzgerald: If we get this computer lab set up the way we want, we're going to be doing some computer based classes and we are going to be charging a higher rate for those classes. So there's going to be no problem — it's obviously something that is going to cost more. Compared to the other centers we are relatively very inexpensive. We are budget priced. In Rabat tuition is over 800 dirhams for a course. Here it is 600.

5.3 ALC's teaching method

In general, language teaching at the ALC is through the communicative approach. Using the latest American language-teaching material, students practice the language in a meaningful context, using only English in the classroom, and work toward language goals that are within their reach. As much as possible, the lessons are student-centered. Students are evaluated based on class work and a final examination, and must succeed at one level before passing on to the next.

[Class Times/Calendar]

The regular program of study is three hours per week, usually in the evening. During the main quarters, students may opt for:

1. Three times a week (Monday/Wednesday/Friday, one hour per class)
2. Twice a week, (Mondays/Wednesdays or Tuesday/Thursday, an hour and a half per class)
3. Once a week (Friday or Saturday afternoons, three hours per class with a 15-minute mid- class break)

For juniors (11-15 years old), the ALC offers special daytime hours to fit their junior high school schedules, with one, two-hour class per week and a program with more activities aimed at young learners. The junior program is described below.

Accelerated sessions take place in the month of September, in Ramadan, and from mid-June until mid-July. These generally run 15 or 20 days, with classes either 2 hours or an hour and a half a day.

[The Basic Program]

Marrakesh offers a basic program of English instruction that consists of four main "cycles": Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced and Proficiency. Each of these cycles, in turn, is made up of a number of levels, each level representing approximately 30 hours--one semester or accelerated session--of study. The levels are: Beginning I-V, Intermediate I-VI, Advanced I - VI, and Proficiency (topic-oriented modules). At the end of each level, students must succeed in a final examination in order to continue to the next level.

[Current Textbooks In Use 1998-99]

Beginning 1-2 Vistas Book 1

Beginning 3-4 Vistas Book 2

Beginning 5 - Intermediate 2, Interchange Book 2

Intermediate 3 - 6 New Interchange Book 3

Advanced 1-3 Passages Book 1

Advanced 4-6 Passages Book 2 (to be introduced F99)

In addition to the normal program, the ALC Marrakesh offers a special program for young learners, 11-15 years old. Junior classes are during daytime hours, meet once a week for 2 hours, and are taught using games, songs, and other activities to supplement the basic textbook. The Fall 1998 registration included nearly 300 students in the junior program.

5.4 The ALC teachers

From the ALC web site — June 2000

The teaching staff of the ALC Marrakesh is made up both of native speakers of American and British English, as well as experienced Moroccan teachers. All hold university degrees and in some cases certificates of training in Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

Fitzgerald (from an e-mail):

For the academic year of 99-2000, the teaching staff was composed of 20 part-time and 12 full-time teachers. The part-timers are mainly Moroccan high school teachers who teach from 3 to 12 hours a week. A teacher who works 12 hours a week extra at the ALC can often earn about what s/he earns from the high school job.

The 12 full-time teachers consist of 4 Moroccans, 2 resident native speakers, and six visiting American teachers working on year-long contracts.

Meeting with Dr. Knidiri:

[Q: Would you say that Dr. Knidiri's approval included allowing teachers to participate and supporting those teachers in doing the work? Was it more than him just saying that it's a good idea?]

Slitine: I think that since he mentioned the names of two teachers, he is aware of who can do that.

Fitzgerald: He asked us to get in touch with Stolti and Behedi Afdali, and he asked us to tell them that this project has his blessings as the rector of the university. Actually Stolti is the most senior of the part time teachers who works for us. His main job is a full time professor in the university's English department. He went on the faculty exchange with Duke University and he's the main teacher that runs the St. Olaf's program. He is a faculty that had much experience overseas and in the States and with professors there. Actually, yesterday he was here. He wanted to talk to me about the DePaul students that came and about some problems that we had with that. In our meeting I talked with him about our meeting with Knidiri and his roll in it.

[About the teachers and teacher's incentives]

[Q: What incentives do the teachers need to be actively involved? Would they be willing to participate with e-mail correspondence and in a CMC on their own time?]

Slitine: I think that they would be into it. They would be willing to spare time for this project. They're not that busy.

Fitzgerald: University professors teach 10 hours a week as a rule. Stolti's also teaches here once a week on Saturday afternoon. He is not that busy and has the time. Behedi has almost the same schedule as Stolti [in the university] although he teaches here every night now. They both will have great interest in this project. But we should remember that although Behedi's English is good, he is not absolutely fluent. He is not a teacher of English but of Islamic Studies. He might have some difficulty expressing himself. I don't know how well he writes in English?

As Stolti pointed out to me, when dealing with a live round table of both Moroccan and American students, there are some difficulties. Students pose questions in a certain idiomatic way, as they would say them in their own native language. It might be misunderstood by students on the other side.

Generally, I think they would be willing to take part in your project. As far as technology is concerned, Stolti has just had his first initial exposure to e-mail. He got interested in it because he had to make a quick trip to the States. He was trying to get his son into Duke University. I helped him to send e-mails to find prices on the internet for plane fares, connection fares and all the information he needed when he arrived. When he came back, the first thing he wanted to do was send an e-mail to his contact there to tell them that he arrived safely and all that. When he came in yesterday he wanted Ahmad to help him with word processing, so he is getting into it.

5.5 The ALC students

From the ALC web site — June 2000

The Fall 1998 enrollment at the ALC Marrakesh was a little more than 1900 students. Of these, 75% are also students else where, with the majority being of high school age, then junior high school, and then university. Non-students who take classes at the ALC come from every walk of life: professionals, people working in tourism, merchants, homemakers. Gender distribution is nearly an equal number of males and females.

People come to the ALC Marrakesh to learn English for a variety of reasons. According to survey done in 1992, the majority of students come to the ALC simply because they like the English language. Other reasons cited were to have further practice in order to supplement studies in high school or the university, and the need for English in the workplace.

Fitzgerald (from an e-mail):

The total enrolment in the Fall 1999 was just over 2075, with a gender distribution of usually 51 per cent male and 49 per cent female. Of the 2000, approximately 20 percent are young learners from 10-15 years old following a special junior program, 50 percent high school students, 15 percent university students, and the other 15 percent non-students.

According to a poll done in 1992, the overwhelming reason most students come to the ALC is simply because they like learning the English language. The next most important reason is the value of English in getting a job. The third most cited reason was to supplement the English they were learning (or not learning) in the public school system.

In respect to university level students at the ALC, one can make the following general remarks:

If they hadn't studied at the ALC before (which many have), university students come to the Center because the classroom setting stresses oral communication. University classes may contain 100 or more students, so English learning becomes a lecture. In the ALC classroom, with an average of 14 per class,

the students are encouraged to discuss matters relevant to their lives, and all the textbooks used at the ALC contain activities in this framework.

In respect to individual projects, although students tend to love these kind of activities, in practice during the "peak periods" of the academic year, they have little time for them.

Meeting with Dr. Knidiri:

Fitzgerald: We have a core of [university] students here. I could think of about six or seven students, of the top of my head, who have a long term association with the American Language Center. They are all university students in the English department who already had experience with three or four groups of American university students who have come here. The first was with Williams College where those Moroccan students actually participated by offering them their homes to live in while they were here. That resulted in some long-term friendships. Then, when the St. Olaf students came, these students welcomed them and took them around town. They would sit up at night and talk into the small hours about all the different issues. So they have this sense about what American students think about and what they don't think about. They are familiar with the vocabulary and their English is excellent, sometimes it's better than their professors [laughs].

[Learning together and sharing knowledge]

[It seems to me that in Morocco everything from information to knowledge, to gossip, and even to behavior, are transmitted throughout the society mainly by people. It's a real grass root society and a tight woven culture. You can see it everywhere]

This is right. For instance, we have a good inter-active language learning game on a CD-ROM called Planet Arizona. Just the other day, in the library, I observed a boy sitting there and learning the game. At the next table was a girl reading a book. She was wearing the Islamic headscarf and a jellaba — obviously from a traditional strict Muslim family. She was watching him from a distance and then, the next thing I knew, they were sitting together playing this game, although it's a one-person game. You see, there is no shyness about sharing and learning from each other. Then, the next step will be for her to go and play it by herself.

[Physical space and sharing technology]

Sometimes there will be more students learning together. As you saw in our little tour, many students all group up around a computer. Space is our main problem here. It's been documented that the Arabs and Semitic people have a different concept of the physical space around them. Americans needs at least something like three feet of space around them whereas Moroccans don't mind being crowded together and in physical contact with each other. They're also very collaborative in using a computer. One student might be clicking the mouse while his friend next to him is on the keyboard. And of course the fact is that there certainly isn't the money for everyone to have a computer. It necessitates sharing.

This sharing also protects them in a way from being totally absorbed by the computer. It's still a social event were the students communicate with each other. They give instructions and advice to each other and collaborate about this piece of technology.

[Q: How many people can share a computer?]

Well, it depends on the space. We just walked in the library and there were about five people watching one person surfing the internet. If there was more space there would be more people. It's like a movie show.

[It was amazing to see how many students can crowd around each computer.]

Fitzgerald: I think that Moroccans, in general, like [in other] places where there are lots of people, like to be crowded. They like to gather together and be close to other people. They like a lot of people. Moroccan society is somewhat like a big family, with a lot of people. Sometimes it seems that they don't even like each other [he says laughing]. Have you ever been in a Moroccan Hamam [public bath]? — It's a crowded place. I can't stand to be crowded in a 'hamam'. So there are times when you go there and it is completely empty. But most people here go Saturday night because it's a social thing and they all crowd there together.

5.6 Language

[About student's English level]

Meeting with Dr. Knidiri:

Fitzgerald: Everybody takes English in high school but it is not very good. One of the problems in the university is that anyone with a *baccalaureate* can choose to go to any department or any specialization. They don't have to have a particular gift for it. There is a huge gap between high school English and university English. In high school they don't expect them to read any literature, or to do much writing. Suddenly they graduate from high school and they're doing all of these things and learning lots of grammar. So many of them fail and drop out. The ones that pass and go through it are good — real good. They can really communicate in English.

[Computer class]

Fitzgerald:

[At this point Mark Austin, an American, who just finished teaching his computer class, joined us. I asked Mr. Fitzgerald to describe what we saw in that class earlier.]

In that classroom we have four multi-media computers with eleven students. This was a proficiency level English class. Of those eleven people, three of them have had computer experience. So we put the [three groups of] two people without any experience in front of each terminal and have the other three help out, like student teaching. One of these three is a university Chemistry professor and one is actually attending a computer school now. Then we have Mark Austin, (he is from Brigham Young University by

the way,) who comes to help out. The only rule there is that they are not supposed to use French or Arabic when talking about what they're doing. That way, they learn English as they learn to use the computers. The exercise was to start up the computer and load a text in Microsoft Word — a text that was not punctuated. Then they move the cursor around and punctuate the text. In this special English proficiency class there are no textbooks. They use the computer as a resource to get information about the subject that they've chosen to present to the class. In their next class exercise, on Tuesday night, we'll need to spend at least half of the time on line — to load their chosen text from the internet and to save it as a file.

Mark: This class is usually an evening class but there we don't get to spend much time on the computers. Especially the internet is very slow in the evening when people in America are on line. That's why the students have been coming on Saturday mornings, like today, and we help them with their computer work and getting on line.

[When a group of students share a computer, is it only a question of availability? Do you think that if you had more computers, would there still be two or three students using a computer together — just because they like it that way? It looked like that they were very comfortable sharing. It looked like a social event.]

I don't know. That's a good question. We'll have to see that. Remember, we're a language school. We teach here English first. In 'CALL' — computer assisted language learning, one of the big things that they are stressing is to arrange the computers so that people have to move and come to somebody else's computer, physically, in order to see what they're doing. If a student is on line and he find something interesting, the idea is that he can call another student to his computer to see what he had found.

5.5 Cross-cultural program

[Other international cross-cultural programs with Cadi Ayyad University and the ALC:]

Meeting with Dr. Knidiri:

Fitzgerald: As he [Knidiri] said, they already have a long-standing program with Duke University. This program goes back a long time. The American Language Center was lightly involved in that. We did have some American students studying with us for a while as part of that program. As to the St. Olaf's program, the American Language Center (ALC) has come to play a big part in it. Student come from St. Olaf's, and true enough, they take classes in other places than the at the university but it is through the auspices of Cadi Ayyad. I gave some of the classes, and so did some of the university professors. They were very pleased to be able to do that. Even beyond that, the students themselves come here and participate in our classes at night together with our students. The last time we had 25 students from St. Olaf's.

Most recently students from DePaul University came through, although the university had some problems of organization with them. Some of the big items of that program were introducing the program director to the American Language Center, bringing the students here, etc. etc. So there's no difficulty in

doing joint project, which will include both the university and the Language Center. The only thing I'm sure that the university wants, is that the name Cadi Ayyad always comes first. Somewhere along the line they will mention the ALC but the main program is the university, and we are very happy with that.

Fitzgerald and Slitine:

Fitzgerald: Cross-cultures is part of what we do. The American Culture Centers statutes say that the reason for their being is to promote understanding between the two peoples of the U.S. and Morocco. That's why we can justify teaching Arabic and teaching English as well. It's a big umbrella.

[I. Williams College]

Fitzgerald: We also have had Williams College students come here. We used to participate in the 'Experiment for International Living' where American students would come to live in Morocco and would come to Marrakesh to study Arabic. We taught them Arabic and did home-stays for them. The Williams College people stayed with Moroccan people. The students actually came to Cadi Ayyad University, but they studied here.

The Williams College people that came here have what they call the January semester. They will come back to Marrakesh when Ramadan moves out in January, in three years time. Ramadan started just at the end of their stay the last time. They started fasting with us. They can't come here this year because it's too difficult if they come for the whole of Ramadan, but many of the students have carried on regular letter correspondence. One of them has come back twice to spend time with the host family that he was here with. He has been writing papers on Islam and sent them to us for criticism.

Slitine: And I also got to travel with the Williams College students down to the desert as their teacher, translator and guide — to the dunes.

[II. St. Olaf's University]

Fitzgerald: The dean of St. Olaf's University in Minnesota was here and made an agreement for the students to come and use our facilities at cost. Telephones, fax machines, to watch videos and so on.

They have their traveling advisors with them but one of our teachers here is their main Moroccan advisor. It's a regular college credit course for them. They use me to lecture to the students. I've given them lectures on sociology in Morocco and also on the cult of saints in Morocco (Maraboutism). In return we've asked the students, when they come in October, to sit in our classes with our Moroccan students and participate. So these blond blue-eyed kids, most of them from Minnesota, come to these classes and participate in discussions. The Moroccan students ask them all kinds of questions and there are discussions. A lot of them are female, so big gender issues discussions take place. Communication continues with e-mail.

They come from Istanbul to here and from here they go on to Cairo and then to Jerusalem — six weeks in each place. They always write back and say that the place they want to come back to is Marrakesh. They don't like it in Cairo because of the pollution. Of course they like Jerusalem, but the tension there is sometimes a bit much.

[About the programs]

[Q: Do the American students learn Arabic here?]

Fitzgerald: Not very much. They study just enough Moroccan to get by. Their course is mainly focused on sociology but I give them three talks, one about the day to day life of the Moroccan, from birth to death. It's about the ordinary Moroccans' experiences and how they are marked by their religion. Another talk is about women saints in Morocco. We go up to the shrine of Sitti Fatima.

These kids were very easy going. Some people that come have a lot of demands but these people were very flexible.

Slitine: They also learned a lot, especially when I went down to the desert with them.

Fitzgerald: They sat in the caFez and talked with the other students.

I suggested to the visiting American women: "Look, you say that the Moroccan woman is a non-entity. She's veiled and just subservient". This subject always comes up with the St. Olaf's people. So I told them not to ask me or some other professor — "why don't you ask these young women your age, why they are doing this?" And we finally had a situation where they could ask and it was an opening experience for all.

[Q: Can you see something like this done in a distance education course? A computer based cafe where people meet and discuss things?]

Fitzgerald: Oh sure. The gender issue is a very big issue and people who come here have read either Fatima Merenisi or other writers with certain axes to grind. Usually it's very political and antagonistic to Muslim traditions. I tell these young American women to go to the university — nobody is going to bite you there [I say]. Go there and talk to ten women in the English program, who are wearing hijab (head scurf). Ask them why they do that? Don't take my word, don't take Fatima Merenisi's word or the other books. Why not talk to the people who are doing it. Get beyond stereotypes or what a professor might want you to think.

5.6 Technology at the ALC

Fitzgerald (from an e-mail):

It should be noted that the ALC Marrakesh was the first of the 10 ALCs to give students access to computers, and the first to give students access to the Internet. There are now 9 on-line stations, all Pentium II class computers or up, with a digital connection (66 000 bps) which are available free to registered students. These are now in constant use, and more than ever students are using English in a truly meaningful (to them) context, doing information searches, sending e-mails, and communicating with

universities. (The most popular use of IT in Morocco, however — "chatting" — is not permitted in the ALC computer lab!).

[Technology and computers at ALC Marrakesh]

Fitzgerald and Slitine:

[Q: What is the level of technology in other ALCs? Are they as computer advanced as you are?]

Fitzgerald: No, not at all. I started with computers because of my own interest and necessity. The ALC in Marrakesh didn't have enough money to hire a lot of people to do a lot of different things. Early on I had to do practically everything myself. We first got started with computers in 1987. I got it to help me with accounting. When Casa Blanca, the biggest center with the most money, didn't have any computers, we had computers here in Marrakesh.

Fitzgerald:

We started to introduce computers to the Marrakesh ALC back in 88 and 89. We had a couple of old Concord computers in the library for students so that they could do word games and English language learning games — things like that. We just continued to upgrade them as we could, when we had the money. In the last couple of years we've been able to get four fairly good window-based computers.

Students have said that it was at the ALC, here, that they first put their hands on a computer, and that otherwise they wouldn't have access to computers. Their only other option would be for them to enroll to a business school and take computer classes, which is expensive. We just put the machines out there for library users and for students as a free service so that there wouldn't be anything between them and the computer. And that's the policy we try to continue.

Well, [this is] just to give you an idea how things happen in Morocco. Back in the DOS days, when computers were a more complicated, we just put the computers out there. A couple of people, somehow, figured out how to run the thing and load the games that they wanted to play, etc. Then they would show their friends how to do it also, and they will learn from each other. That kind of mechanism eliminates the teacher and training. But now, the four window-based computers that we have in the library are used mainly for the internet and to run CD-ROMs. The students use the CD-ROMs as a library resource. Since we can't afford expensive encyclopedias and history books we get these CDs. The students from the university come and, somehow, learn how to use them. Just to give you an idea how much the system is used; the laser printer goes through a cartridge in about a month. That's how much people were using it to print out articles and such.

[Moroccans' relationship to technology]

You have to understand that Moroccans don't have the fear of technology that a Westerner develops. When we started computerizing the ALC, there was more resistance to learning about computers, or having anything do with them, from the Americans that were working in the centers than from the Moroccans. We had directors and assistant directors in our centers that would not learn to use computers, or have anything

to do with them. They were afraid to damage the expensive equipment. Moroccans will plunge right in. They are not born with this fear of technology that the Americans have — for better or for worse. So this has an up side and a down side with this lack of fear.

[Computer lab procedures]

Here we have a signup list and students can sign up for twenty minutes at a time when the library is open. If no one is waiting then they can continue. Next year, if we get a special lab allotted with five computers, then we will have to have an attendant for the internet. Then we might have to do things differently.

At the ALC in Meknes they have all sorts of CD computers and people buy books of tickets that gives them ten hours of computer time for hundred dirhams. [Remember, ten dirhams are roughly one dollar] We might go into something like that. This is a financial decision. If we need an attendant for the computer lab, the students will have to pay something for computer time.

[Tell me more about the financial situation. Obviously you don't have enough computers for the students.]

We have two problems. If we allot the space, we have to allot a room that's being used as a classroom, which brings in money, so there's one consideration. And of course, the cost of computers in Morocco is quite prohibitive. A 133 PC clone, with multi-media costs about \$1,200 with tax. It's an expensive investment for us. To get good equipment, like IBM or Compaq, it's much more expensive. It's only because we had few good years financially that we were able to make this service available to the students.

As far as ongoing expenses, there are printing costs, paper and toner. There are the on-line costs of internet provider and phone time. When the students are online, they are paying the cost of the telephone line. The librarian supervises that.

[How are the ALC computers used?]

We haven't seen any miss-use yet. The fact that the computers are in the library and that there are always people in the library is enough to control usage. Shame is a strong force in Moroccan society. People don't do shameful things in public and this gives enough control over the usage of the internet.

Some people want to send or receive e-mail, but most of them are looking for very standard types of things. Mainly [they are looking for] information for their studies, because there is no other place, like a big library, to go and search for information.

[Usage of internet for entertainment?]

It hasn't gotten that way, at least not here. Now if you go to a cyber-café, you find kids looking for song lyrics, looking for some pop star home pages and the like.

[Internet service providers]

[You told me that you were having problems with your internet provider. Who are the internet providers here?]

The internet is new in this country. There are supposed to be 25 companies that provide internet service throughout the country now. In actuality there are probably about 15 functioning internet providers. We started to work with one of the oldest companies that had a good reputation. They were also one of the most expensive. It was AzureNet in Casablanca and we were paying 650 dirhams or more per month for full service, 24-hour access. Then we found another company, Winnernet, which we thought was a local business, but it turned out to be an agent for another company in Casablanca. All they did was to give us another telephone number. Their service was indeed cheaper. About a month into the service with the second company, suddenly, their number wouldn't answer. When we called the company to complain, they gave us these other telephone numbers that, later we came to realize, were long distance toll lines to Casablanca. Our telephone bill went from 1000 dirhams per month to more than 5000 dirhams. We were very angry with them, dropped them and went back to the dependable AzureNet. Unfortunately AzureNet is not always dependable either, and they blame the PTT [Moroccan post office]. The PTT claims that the providers are to blame, and so it goes. So after this last week with AzureNet, I came to the conclusion that the single biggest obstacle to teaching online, or teaching the use of the internet, is the lack of dependability of the service provider. Sometime we have to cancel classes because the connection is not there.

We also find that if you're having initial trouble getting connected, when you finally do get connected it is often unreliable. As far as the general connection, when everything is working right, we were told by a visiting professor from Berkeley that the connection is as dependable and as fast as in the U.S. Especially in the morning, we use the internet when America is sleeping and then it's very fast.

I just recently contacted another new company and asked them to tell me why their company is better than the others? They said that they had a very dependable connection. They also said that they already have 200 users. From this I figured that there are no more than 3000 to 4000 internet users in all of Morocco. But this is going to change rapidly because the price of computers is going to go down. The government is cutting taxes on technology to encourage this growth. In fact the price of computers is the only thing that has gone down in price since I've been here. We paid 28,000 dirhams for a computer, nearly \$3,000, when I first came here. Now you can get a Compaq computer with a Pentium 133 MHz. with all the goodies for only 14,000 dirhams.

[Moroccan learning to use technology]

There are certainly people who can't learn to work with machines. They just don't have any rapport with them, but that is true anywhere I suppose.

We train our own teachers here in the center. In the beginning I thought that instead of doing it ourselves we can send them to a cyber-café where they had ongoing computer classes. We paid for a group

of eight or nine teachers to start. I don't know if it was the French way of teaching or what, but there they start by giving them theory, what's inside of the computer, what's DOS, programming, etc. Our teachers didn't care about that. They just wanted to learn how to start it and startup the programs. That was all that they needed. We ended up paying a lot of money and the teachers said they learned nothing. They didn't even know how to start the computer after ten hours there. So we brought them back here, and started all over. I am the trainer here along with Youssef.

Presently I teach with Youssef's help two groups of teachers, ten teachers in each group. We are giving them a series of lessons starting with turning on the computer. Those students are teachers here at the ALC. Some of them are university teachers. None of them have any computer experience at all. Their only obstacle is that they can't type. But as far as being able to grasp it, the windows programs are more intuitive and can basically pick up how to do things. My group of younger students are learning computer skills and on line skills. They had no hands on experience with a computer before, and now they can cut and paste text, get into word processing, manipulate a text and save it, all the basic things. After all, this is not rocket science here. It's very basic. What we call intuition on this level, it is basically the same for Moroccans as it is to people from the West. As I said, these young students are not afraid of the technology, they plunge right into it. In fact this is one of the problems that we have encountered here. We've had people going into the computer inner programs that are supposed to be used for CD-ROM use only, change the configurations and write their little programs in there, etc. They aren't supposed to do that.

[Gender]

[Do you see any gender related trends in computer use in this Center and in Morocco in general?]

Like anything else in Morocco, the males do take a little more initiative than females. I can make this generality, but that doesn't exclude the females. But I think that's true even in the U.S., that cyberspace is more male dominated. Women students from the university come looking for information off our CD-ROMs just like the men.

[Do you think that some students are attracted to come to your school because of the computers?]

Oh yes, definitely. The minimum to use one of the computers here is to be a library member and our library membership has definitely increased with computers. Anybody that is a resident in Marrakesh can be a library member for 100 dirhams per year and a security deposit of \$20. They don't have to be students here. As I said, there is no other place where a person can sit down and actually touch a keyboard. Cyber-café's are expensive and stores don't allow hands-on experience or trying out. Part of my feeling is that we shouldn't treat technology as a god. It's just a machine there. Make it available.

[None of the other ALCs provide this type of service.]

Right. There are ten language centers in Morocco and the first one to make computers accessible was here in Marrakesh. The young fellow that's running the ALC in Meknes, Scott, has as many as nine multi-media computers available, but they don't provide the internet to the students — Only CD-ROMs.

And only now, the biggest ALC school, the one in Casablanca, has put in a real state-of-the-art multi-media lab. Eventually they will have five computers there. They also don't have the internet for students, only for the staff. We are the only one with student access.

[Do students log on to chat rooms?]

No, because they are paying for it. They pay like 80 centimes for two minutes or 24 dirham for an hour. That's about \$2.50 per hour. Also download time is slow, especially if it's the time when people are on line in America. In any way, chat lines are not very popular; they're not something people are looking for.

[What about using e-mail to communicate with pen pals?]

Yes, this is what my little computer group is doing. There are a number of resources where they can get on student lists and find other students to write to. They're discussion lists, like music, movies, abortion, whatever. They're experimenting with that.

Fitzgerald and Slitine:

[Good e-mail practices]

Fitzgerald: In my internet group, some of the students that we are communicating with are specialists in this format. Our students received several pages of how to do it before they start using the net. They've sent examples of a bad e-mail message and we have to discuss what is wrong with it with the students. It would help to have your students send each other e-mail written by hand in class. I'm not interested in teaching English but communication, and the students in America are not interested in listening to garbled English from Moroccan students.

[Keyboard and Typing skills]

Fitzgerald:

[I asked Mark to talk about problems that he sees in teaching Moroccan students, which might be different in America.]

Mark: The things that I've noticed are very basic. There is no problem in clicking, moving around and understanding what is going on. The thing that really hampers students down, in terms of computer time, is their typing ability. That slows things down immensely. That's probably the biggest barrier to people feeling comfortable with the computer. Typing, typing addresses, trying to find a site and so on. We've been working a lot on cutting down time, using short cuts through the files by using the mouse. We've taught them some quick key functions, cut and paste and such. Just yesterday I was helping a young girl to write a five-sentence e-mail message. It took her over half an hour to do that. The difficulty was both with the language and with the hunting and searching keys on the keyboard.

[Q: Would it be easier for them to type in Arabic, or is it just the unfamiliarity with the keyboard?]

Fitzgerald: In Morocco typing is regarded as a skill for secretaries. It's looked down upon, though everyone's handwriting is impeccable — they got it from the French. It's only now that it's slowly starting to sink into people's mind that even people in key positions can also have computer skills. At the moment, we are not in a position to teach typing. They have special schools for this here.

[Q: Are “user friendly” programs “user friendly” enough for the people here?]

Mark: Seems to me that they are. They're fairly comfortable with the mouse, but not with the typing. They definitely aren't afraid of using computers.

5.7 LCTDE

[What incentive does the ALC in Marrakesh have in promoting the LCTDE program?]

Meeting with Dr. Knidiri:

Fitzgerald: I would be very interested in this project. I don't think that the ALC is interested to directly gain anything material out of it. One of the statutes of the American Cultural Association, which governs the ALCs, is to facilitate understanding between the two peoples, meaning America and Morocco. So this would be totally within the writ of the ALC. The other agenda would be that of course something like this generates interest in the ALC as a place where something interesting and different is happening. This is publicity, and it has a trickle down effect. It attracts attention to our school and probably more students.

Personally, I might get something out of it too — experience and credibility.

[Q: Would the ALC be willing to allocate their computer lab, on regular bases, few afternoons a week lets say, for the project?]

Fitzgerald: Sure, we'll set aside the time. The Internet connection is best after 8 o'clock and before 11 in the morning here. In the afternoons, which is the time needed for the project, the internet is sluggish because America is awake. Although 'Abdelali, just yesterday, said that ISDN lines for the public are officially underway in Morocco, and that might help.

[Q: Would you be willing to be one of the teachers in that program?]

Fitzgerald: Sure, with pleasure. For several years running I have given one or two of the lectures for the St. Olaf's program. The university would ask me to give a lecture about Marboutism (saint worship) in Morocco and St. Olaf's paid for my time.

[What other thoughts do you have, in connection with this project? What is my next step?]

The next step, I think, is to get your proposal to Dr. Knidiri. It would be best if it was in Arabic and with a cover letter asking for their response as quickly as possible. If they don't answer right away it can get lost in the cracks, especially since the month of Ramadan is coming soon. I'm not sure what the next step after that is. From there on it's all yours.

Fitzgerald and Slitine:

Slitine: This project is very important and interesting, and to tell you the truth, I personally want to get involved in this because I think that at this particular time, it is important to promote cross cultural understanding. At least it will reduce this tension that we have because of misunderstandings of people from different cultures. Not only will it be good for the students, but also for the other people involved in it. I, myself, could learn a lot from it.

Fitzgerald: It will be fascinating to see it unfold and to see what actually happens. We do have this intention to create a whole internet connected computer lab by next year, inshaAllah. By then we should have some extra money to do that with.

Meeting with Dr. Knidiri:

Slitine: Your presentation of the project seemed to really catch the attention of Dr. Knidiri. When you mentioned the possibility of doing it in Rabat, he immediately said, why not in Marrakesh? That was a very positive indication. He really wants the project to be implemented in Marrakesh and see it come into fruition here. He agreed with us that this project would be more successful in Marrakesh. I would say that you have his primary approval.

[LCTDE in Marrakesh — Cadi Ayyad University collaborating with the ALC]

Fitzgerald: In theory, it could be done here in the ALC. There is always the possibility that Al Akhawayn won't be there next year or by the time you want to do something like this [laughs]. Since we are not a university per-se, I'm suggesting that we only provide facilities for the program. This is not a money making thing for us. We would consider it in terms of our cultural function. We don't try to make money on cultural presentations.

The university here has no computers — even for professors there are hardly any computers available. There are certainly [university] people, like the people you saw in my computer class. One of them is a professor preparing to go to Harvard to do special graduate studies. He's a brilliant man in chemistry but he has no access to a computer. He comes to the class and works with the kids and has no problem with the fact that he is a university professor and they are 16 to 22 years old. People like that would be glad to help set up the program here, in the university. We have this core group of students from the English faculty who have excellent English and who would love to get involved — not for the sake of getting something in return but because they are interested.

[Q: Would these people, both students and teachers, be interested in engaging with cross-cultural issues in addition to how to use the technology?]

Slitine: One way to solve this kind of problem is just to get the students involved in different kinds of tasks where they have to deal with those issues.

Fitzgerald: There are always those students in every class that try to steer the discussion off the subject on hand. You can almost tell in advance who the people are. So it is a question of selection. Selecting the people who you know are ready to work, and collaborate. All these things are possible.

[Q: Do you think that organizationally collaboration between the university and the ALC is possible? Would the university do something like this?]

Fitzgerald: Sure. We have two professors from the faculty [of letters] who also work here and are long-time employees. Both of them had been heads of the [English] department there. So we have some cooperation with them already. The St. Olaf students who come and spend six weeks here every year, they come to be in the university. The university brings the students here and they spend most of their free time here with us. The university [only] gives them some talks and so on. So there's already a framework to do this. It's not out of the realm of possibility, as long as the dean gets his name mentioned as working with the project. It needs to get written up somewhere that it's "the dean of Cadi Ayyad University in collaboration with the American Language Center". We don't care about the glory and whose name is mentioned.

[Logistics]

Slitine: As to the program, I guess this program seems like it's going to be workable in this center as long as we get the necessary facilities, and as long as we motivate the teachers and the students to be involved in this kind of a project. It sounds very appealing not only to us here but also to our students that might find it very new to them.

Fitzgerald: How many students are we talking about?

[Let's say 15 students, I don't know, you tell me what you can work with?]

Fitzgerald: That might be too many. Well, for us, if we have a computer lab right now with just 5 computers available, I don't see how 15 students can use it together?

Slitine: Do they all have to be online at the same time? We might put them into groups.

6. Cross-Cultural Study Programs in Morocco

[Sections 6.1 through 6.4 pertain to cross-cultural programs for American students within institutions that were already covered in other sections]

6.1 Al Akhawayn University

(see pp. 264)

6.2 INPT

(see pp. 285)

6.3 Rabat's Muhammed V University

(see pp. 294)

6.4 Cadi Ayyad University and the ALC in Marrakesh

(see pp. 315)

6.5 Center for Cross-cultural Learning (CCCL)

Abdelhay Moudden, the center's director, received his Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Michigan. He is a professor in the school of law at Mohammed V University. He runs the CCCL in parallel with his university post.

The 'Center for Cross-cultural Learning' organizes a variety of cultural and educational activities which include language courses, seminars and lecture series on Moroccan society and Arab and Islamic culture, artistic shows and performances and educational excursion in different parts of Morocco. The aim of these activities is to provide participants with the opportunity to learn from the richness of cultural diversity in Morocco and to develop approaches to the understanding and the appreciation of cultural differences. The Center is a private institution run by Moroccan academics specialized in cross-cultural education and with years of experience in directing in Morocco college semester abroad programs for American universities. Courses of Modern Standard and Moroccan Arabic are taught by experienced teachers and the list of lecturers includes names of outstanding English speaking scholars in the areas of social science, humanities and literature as well as artists, journalists, artisans and working men and woman with interest in cultural and social issues. (From the CCCL brochure)

Dr. Moudden:

After I received my degree in political science from Michigan I was a Fulbright Scholar at the School for International Training (SIT) in Vermont. The SIT has programs like the one we have here all over the world, and they suggested to me to take care of their Moroccan program. They had this program

here for one year but then it stopped during the Gulf War and they were not sure what to do with it. This is when I took over. I was doing it as a private personal contract with the SIT for some time but then we turned it into a Center. Now we have one program with the SIT and then the Center is open for programs with other schools. We have a program with CUNY (City University of New York) where the students come here to study for three weeks. We also have people who are already in Morocco who come here to study Arabic. These are the three programs that we already have and I am considering opening the center for short programs like three or four weeks, or even ten days, for students coming from different universities. We can do the same things we are already doing or other programs, depending on the needs.

During our course, we take the students to live for one week with families in a very remote rural village in the mountains where the people do not speak any English. Last time, for example, we had the students do an exercise where they imagined themselves living in this remote village for the rest of their life with no way to go except to live there. They had to think of how to make a living there. Now that was a reinforcement for them to understand the frustration of people who are their age, who are university graduates and who have to go back to their village and have very little resources. One of the nine students we had there came up with a brilliant project about raising Arabian horses which we intend to present to the governor's office of that area. In that particular project, the student gathered all the information about how much it will cost and how to do it. It seemed very feasible to me.

6.6 Global Involvement Through Education

Jack Rusenko:

It's a private foundation supported by private donors who are mostly businessman and some corporations. In the States we are a non-profit educational corporation which would be the same status as a school. Our goal would be that funding would pay for myself and for basic office expenses, and then projects and other things we do would get outside funding. We've only done small things with USAID or USIS as far as funding goes. I'm on a contract with Global to start the office here.

My initial goal for the internet was to help universities. The whole reason why I somewhat deviated from the educational area, which is our goal, was because I saw the internet as a worthwhile project which had great potential to help universities, especially in Morocco. Now I want to come back, reorganize and invest the time to use the internet for education. If you mention my name at the embassy they think that I work for internet because I've spent so much time on promoting it. The goal is to help universities and the whole education system here, which something I think is starting to happen.

Part of the educational projects that we have, similar to what you have mentioned, will be to use the internet for distance education and I think that it has tremendous potential. I don't know if the people at USAID or USIS see that. They usually react two or three years after things are apparent. Some of the people at the embassy that I talked to knew about the internet for some time, but didn't put the time or effort to do anything about it.

What I propose is to see not only Casablanca connected directly to some university, but also to see that universities (in Texas or Pennsylvania) [are] connected to Morocco and to Egypt and to Turkey. They have a lot to learn from Turkey and vice versa. Tunisia, Turkey, Egypt and maybe Jordan are some examples of countries that share a lot in common with Morocco, — particularly Turkey. It would be a good experience to have a virtual classroom to the whole Mediterranean connected to the U.S. That's kind of my idea and my goal for what I would like to see. Whether I'll be successful in tracking down the funding or not — it's a long process.

We also do the Semester At Sea® in Morocco. [It is a project of the Institute for Shipboard Education which is affiliated to the University of Pittsburgh.]

What I'm [also] talking about is a one-way thing. To bring students from America and bring them here. Teach them some Arabic, show them around and give them some credits. We have eight or ten students coming this summer for a month and a half, from Colorado, New Mexico, Virginia Tech, Penn State, and Cornell. Some of them come as a vacation where they learn something. One was a community health major, one was a Middle Eastern studies major, one a French major. Typically as a senior or upper level undergraduate they can get credit for senior projects or something.

Penn State does have a large continuing education program and the vice president for international affairs is very interested. But he said the bottom line is they're not willing to subsidize Moroccans. What they are willing to do is a direct student exchange. A student from Penn State comes to Morocco, he pays his tuition at Penn State, all his fees; the Moroccan student goes to Penn State either for a semester or a year. And he said it doesn't really matter to us, you just tell us student semesters. You send a student to do a 2-year master's and we can send 2 students to do a one-year course. And he said they would do all the direct exchanges we want. The problem is their students pay there and our students pay here and just switch bodies. The difficulty is, nobody's going to do it unless it's a somewhat of an equal exchange. American students aren't going to come to a Moroccan university where they aren't going to get credit and the level of education is below their level. To find one where you can have an equal reciprocal exchange is difficult. That's why Al Akhawayn fits that. It's in English and the campus is nice.

Fitzgerald:

Global Involvement through Education is for me a very strange set-up. As far as we've heard, they're covert Protestant missionaries with a lot of money behind them. They've opened a big private elementary school in Casa, the George Washington School, to compete with the existing American School there. They are both doing all their teaching in English. It's an expensive school, but somehow has gotten a not-for-profit status from the Moroccan government. They also have some sort of links to the US government, and that's what I find the strangest thing. It's probably only because after all this time of being away I still operate under old notions that there is supposed to be separation of church and state in America. The truth

of the matter is that fundamentalist Christians of various persuasions are strongly represented in the American embassy in Rabat

I don't know who could say anything for sure. Apparently this group tried to get inside information on the university in Ifrane by talking to disgruntled former employees. This is why the people at Al Akhawayn see them in a very negative light.

As you might know, Moroccan law specifically prohibits trying to convert Muslims to other religions, with stiff penalties, etc. I used to have a copy of the specific clause right out of their law books. But in practice, this is less and less enforced since Morocco signed the Human Rights charter. For some reason, missionaries have targeted Fez for a long time, and they still have people there. Generally they seem to operate through bookstores. There's one in Meknes, one in Mohammédiya and one in Agadir, all owned by the same group. There's also the orphanage in Azrou. That and the bookstores are run by Protestant groups. Catholics no longer seem to be in this game. That's really all I know about Global.

7. Politics of DE

7.1 Politics of education

Dr. Mekouar:

Nothing can be done in our universities unless the government takes action and establishes distance education centers and puts computers in these centers and opens them to people. Then, whoever is registered as a distant education student can come to these centers with a card and have access to the stuff. Our educational system today is not able to do that. You have to understand that we have 280,000 students in this system.

The people in the ministries will let you know the official position of the government and what they are ready to do. They will ask you to define your project and what you want to do. All I can tell you is that there is competence in cultural and inter-cultural studies, in cultural cooperation, and also in distance education and its technology. This is because Morocco is a huge country and has places extremely remote. I was working in Oujda until last January and this city is 500 kilometers from Rabat. And the people there can benefit tremendously from distance education, even the researchers in the university. So I am very sensitive to this topic and I know that there is a great deal of interest in DE.

There is also a huge demand [for DE] which means that if the possibility appears, there will be real political pressure to get this done. And right now we are going into an election and it could easily become an issue. People might say that education is our right and if you don't give us the university then give us something else. It could even turn into a key element in negotiating for some sort of registration limitation. The government may say: we can't give education to all of you now but part of you will go through distance education. And it's better for you anyway. Rather than to travel from your village, you can stay where you are, we'll give you a job where you are and then we can provide some form of training. So it could even become a complex political issue if some politician decides to take it on.

A problem that we have in this country presently is that the system has not been reformed yet — it's still in the process of being reformed and this will take a few more years. This means that until now and still the educational paths now being pursued are supposed to be (what we call) dead end tracks, like biology or history — a well-defined curriculum with no changes. On the other hand, today, anything that sounds of technology and of possibility to open links with the world would have tremendous appeal. Your project might have this appeal.

But again, our structure is extremely rigid because it is set by law. Reforming the system means introducing legal ways in which the system can operate, because the law tells you that you can teach English, history, philosophy and so on. The student gets so many hours, you cannot add, you cannot subtract. Degrees are national degrees and can't be changed. But now since we are in the process of reform, any idea that is interesting or appealing could be built into the new law. In this new educational reform law they might have special categories for public universities (state universities), private universities and

private non-profit universities. Maybe even DE universities. Or within the universities they could name faculties and centers and within that they could say distance education centers or offices or whatever.

Historically, the last educational reform is the law of 1975. Its text is published in the official government gazette which dictates, as far as higher-education is concerned, what the university is, how it is created, what its mission is, and how its institutions are created, who recruits teachers and how programs are set. It tells you for example, in article 36, that programs and courses are set by decree, which means a government decree. The decree in effect now is the decree of 1982. In it, it will say something like: in order to get a degree in English you have to do one, two, three and so on. And this can only be changed by another government decree.

Al Akhawayn University is unique and special. It's a private and autonomous university and it's ruled by its own charter. All the other schools are ruled by the law of 1975, until the reform which will integrate everything. Because it is a private university a non-profit university, it will be in category two or category three in the new law. You see, there will be three categories, public universities, private universities and non-profit universities. The understanding is that Al Akhawayn will be a private, for-profit university.

Here we have to understand that what is being debated has come with the elections campaign. This reform may not come to be now, because whoever gets to power will carry their own reforms. So it looks like there will be a new parliament, but we don't really know where things are going.

7.2 About cooperation between different agencies

[I asked Youssef about the difficulties in getting different administrative agencies to cooperate and work together. It would be very good to have the ONPT and a university working together on LCTDE, I said.]

To make two entities work together on a common project in Morocco is not easy. First the will to cooperate has to come on both sides from the same level in the organizational hierarchy. The way the bureaucracy works is that you must have on the same document the signature of both directors (chiefs), who are on the same bureaucratic level. Otherwise nothing can move. The next step would be for those chiefs to appeal to the next authority above them both to agree and support the project. There is always the need for a higher authority to approve a project. This is how things work in Morocco.

An example for this kind of situation is the Rural DE Pilot Project that Mr. Banit is involved in. Since this project involves different government ministries who need to work together, the responsibility and the authority for that project comes from the office of the Prime Minister who is above all the ministries involved. The Prime Minister is the common authority.

[The following is a summary of a document submitted by Mr. Bouchta Banit of the ONPT. (Banit is the head of the International Telecom-division of Itissalat Al-Maghrib). This document is a plan-design for a proposed distance education project to train educators in remote rural locations in Morocco. It was

published by the Moroccan Ministry of National Education (MAN), 1996. The original document is more detailed, especially when it refers to the budget and technical details.]

7.3 Government issues

Dr. Bourqia:

[Q: Might there be any governmental opposition to teach about cultural issues? Might it be too politically sensitive?]

I don't think so. For example there are no restrictions on the use of the internet, and therefore obviously you know that there is no problem talking about cultural problems. You know, we do it all the time anyway. No no, I don't think that there is a policy of that kind. On the contrary, they would encourage any such exchange between universities, if we have the means for doing it.

Dr. Haddad:

[Q: Do you foresee any problems on the government level in allowing the LCTDE program to take place?]

No, I don't think so. There is always government bureaucracy to deal with, but this is something our partners here will have to deal with. They will have to present it and get it approved and all that.

8. LCTDE

8.1 Students' needs

Youssef Slitine:

For Moroccan students, it is not part of something that already exists in the university. The question here is what is the benefit of the project to the students beside the good point of cultural or cross-cultural exchange? In the U.S., at UNM, the students will participate in this project, and I think there will be many of them, since there is already an interest in this kind of exchange. This interest has not yet been created in Morocco.

The need should be created I guess. To the best of my knowledge about Morocco, you have to create the need. You have to expose the participants, especially the students, to this question and raise their interest. For Moroccans students it is not part of any set kind of program at the university. If we are targeting the university students, especially those in the English department, they have a good command of English, but the content does not match what they study there. They study American literature and British literature and it is limited to that. How do we make the project somehow match, or go along with what the students are already involved with?

As to the feasibility of the project in Morocco, the program somehow does not match. If it indeed matches a certain kind of interest in the U.S., it does not do the same here.

If we wanted to make the project more appealing to not only the students, but the teachers and all the participants involved — the university, the dean —everybody, then the project has to be modified a little. I mean, we can keep the project as it is because it's very good but is it possible to add something to it?

What I think that we should add or modify, is something that goes along with what the students are already involved in the university. Most of them learn about American literature. If students are doing research in the fourth year, for example, could the students have access, through technology, to resources from UNM? Can UNM provide the students with help and assistance in what they are doing here? This way, while the students are doing the project, they are not cut off from what they are doing in their university work. We could also have the students at UNM who are studying American literature and students here that are studying American literature do the project but involve the question of cross cultural exchange to reflect their curriculum. I think that this way, students will be doing something that they benefit from. They will get academic credits, they will get new resources and aid, and they will master the technology.

[Possible benefits to Moroccan students]

This project is somehow geared towards a particular aspect that is very interesting. It is this coming to terms with cross culturalism, so to speak. Our Moroccan students need that. I thought of the gap that you spoke of. Moroccan students look at the other side of the world, which is the U.S., from a very

narrow kind of angle. They see the U.S. as technology, as development, as high life so to speak. This does not give them a clear idea of the cultural aspects of the U.S. [Through this project] they can get a comprehensive idea about that part of the world. Americans, on the other hand, may think of the other side, that is Morocco, as being alien in certain aspects. So this project, if it is implemented, will bridge this gap and bring understanding based on something that is real and not just fantasies.

The students involved in this project will learn more about the Western culture but also, through that, they would learn about their own culture.

Whether Moroccans want to learn about their own culture or whether it would benefit them — needs to be investigated and to see if it really is of interest to the students.

My understanding is that the objectives of the course for Moroccan students would be:

1. Students would exchange ideas of various issues related to the design topics which are cross cultural exchange.
2. Students would learn more about the U.S. culture and their own and promote cultural understanding.
3. Students would get hands on experience using modern technology for learning purposes. This is very useful for them and I view it as a very motivating factor. The students here don't have access to this anywhere. The use of technology itself is a very motivating factor on the part of Moroccan students.

[Need for LCTDE & other needs]

Dr. Bourqia:

When I'm talking about the need for such a project on this side, on the Moroccan side, it could be also to correct an image. To show that others have their own culture.

[Usefulness of communication skills]

Youssef Slitine:

I came up with ideas of how to motivate participants, especially students, teachers and government. I found out that there are various ways to do it. We need to work towards creating the interest in Morocco. This interest can be created in terms of convincing them that this is useful. I agreed with you when you said that cross-cultural communication is a skill. It's a long-term skill. Learning now to work tomorrow. Or to be able to do something beneficial tomorrow and gain something from it. So I agree that this will be very convincing, not only for the students but for the teachers and the administration. It goes along with what Morocco is seeking now concerning global economy, global markets and the common market. Morocco is really working towards this goal so it makes the project really feasible and interesting for them. Pointing out these things is a way to convince them, here in Morocco, that the project would be of interest.

[Creating the need]

I was thinking of ways to motivate participants viewed from my understanding of Moroccans. For students in Morocco there is no need until the need is created. There is no interest until you instigate them to this interest. This can be done by bring in students and exposing them to the possibilities.

To give you an example, in one of my classes the students didn't know anything about e-mail. One time I asked them if they have pen pals to correspond with? They said no. Then I asked them if they would like to have friends on the other side of the world, in the United States for example, with whom they could communicate? They said yes but we don't have time to write. I told them not to worry about that because they could have an e-mail address to communicate. They were surprised and said "lets make it happen." Then I introduced them to hot mail, and now they are hooked on e-mail and on correspondence. E-mail made it easier than sitting and typing a letter. They are motivated to do so by using the technology. This is what gave me the idea that we can create interest. By exposing the students to the realm of technology they will be much more motivated to go ahead with the project. I can do some demonstrations and seminars for students and teachers in the university about the possibilities of this project. We have to work on creating the interest. This is the Moroccan aspect. The interest here is somehow latent, so there must be a kind of stimulus given. In Morocco when one or two people have the interest, suddenly it spreads through the whole culture. It's either everybody has the interest or nobody has it.

It is like this in every aspect of Moroccan life, even in business. In business you find that for long time things in the city don't change. Then somebody might have an idea to build a new type of business and he starts up that business. Soon everybody does the same thing. So I think that to convince the Moroccans and make them interested in the project, we have to create the interest and bring it up to the surface.

I'm also sure that the students will say that they are going to do this because it's interesting but they will ask — what will be the long-term outcome? In the short term they will be communicating about culture to the others, but what is the long term objective? What are the long-term benefits for them? We have to make them understand that the long-term goal of the program is to prepare them for tomorrow when they will be working with American companies. This is something that they will understand.

[Introducing LCTDE in Morocco]

When introducing this project to Moroccans we have to address those things that make them interested. Tracing not only the objectives of the project but also the outcome. To make them see that the outcome will really match what they have in mind, what they're seeking. Moroccan administrators are seeking this open market and developing the economy. They want it to be based on the American model. All Moroccan are really drifting towards that direction and the government encourages this aspect. The king's visited the United States in 1994 where he met with business people there. The speech that he made there in front of some organizations of business people talked about these aspects.

Currently Morocco is really encouraging foreign investment in the country. They especially want Americans to come and invest in Morocco. They set up facilities to assist those Americans who want to

come and invest in Morocco. But the Americans don't know much about the culture. They are hesitant to invest their money here primarily because they don't understand the culture. At the same time those Moroccans with whom these Americans are going to work, they don't understand the American culture. So first we have to make both people reach the point where they know who they are dealing with from a cultural standpoint and this project will help to do that.

An example of the king's intention is the establishment of Al Akhawayn University. It was built by the king and carries his name.

8.2 Program design

Dr. Moudden:

The third problem is that you don't want this program to be designed by you [i.e. by Americans] alone. You don't want to meet the needs and the interests of your students only. The design also has to take into consideration that there are other systems of education and that although they might have their negative aspects, they can also be profitable to your students. So it is not good to be designing a course for an American campus or for American students and have it implemented here. You need to also integrate our own system of education into the design because it can benefit your students as well.

One of the things that needs to be worked out (and will require serious thought and consideration) is the reading material. We need to have material that will be familiar to both your students as well as to our students here in Morocco. This means that we might have different readings for each group. You might have students here reading something in Arabic and or in French and your students reading something in English. You might also have texts that are translated and are sent back and forth but I think that diversity in the reading material should be a good thing. You don't want students to be repeating or thinking in the same way.

Now, if you are going to have different readings on both sides then what needs to be more emphasized are the questions and the issues at hand. I can think of a number of issues like how to deal with gender differences in Morocco and then in the U.S. Or how one views the other's religion. How one views the other in general. Issues and questions like these can be worked out in advance and the different groups assigned to think about them. During such discussions, interesting things can come out. It can be also very enlightening for your students to be familiar with how these issues are being debated in the intellectual climate of Morocco. And the same thing for Moroccans about the U.S. For example, I was talking to some colleagues about "political correctness" on American campuses. They found it very exotic. People are not familiar with these kind of issues on our campuses.

[About sequencing]

Nufissa: Maybe the solution is to have this program in the beginning of the year but not when the exams are taking place.

[Cultural diversity of American students]

Nufissa: In your proposal you're talking about the cultural diversity within the United States and in your university in New Mexico. My question is how would this be reflected in the program? The cultures of the students in the University of New Mexico, it's location in the States, the kind of population that you have in your State, all this will effect the program. For instance, are you going to be taken into consideration the student population, their background and their ethnic origin when you select your students? This is interesting because it would influence the program and the kind of topics that are going to be discussed in the course. The approach of the American students will influence approach of the students here.

We had a conference here a couple of weeks ago where Abdelhay Moudden gave a talk. He described the kind of American students that were in his program. He mentioned that the ones who were really interested in cultures and in the cultural work they did here were people who came from minority groups. They are more interested in other cultures. Maybe minority students could be an asset for this program?

[Difficulties in text-based on-line conferencing]

John Shoup:

Shoup: Logistically, are you going to have one class in two different physical places where students talk to each other? The reason for my question is that for the last year and a half at AUC, before I came here, I was involved in a couple of courses where we used online computer conferencing. We had text-based discussions where the students had to type. They couldn't speak to each other. Even though the AUC [American University of Cairo] students knew that it was serious, and it would be printed for people to see, there was an awful lot of initial wasted time of people saying silly things to each other. The teacher had to interject and say: "Get back on to the topic"; or "somebody answer this question" or "so and so has just proposed this idea, what do you think?" Then you would get back maybe one person that would respond out of 16 or 17. The rest of them were still busy doing their own chatting, not really getting serious with it. It actually took several sessions before you could get really good conversations done in this way.

Our face-to-face Discussions, on the other hand, seem to be quite serious. Of course, even here, there's always a certain amount of levity, especially when tense times arise and you want to disperse this tenseness — then, yes. Generally, though, I think that they're quite serious when they're discussing.

Jeff: And it comes down to the teacher. You can give a teacher an atlas but how they use it and to what extent that they use it, this is completely up to a teacher. With computers and the internet, video-conferencing, satellite links, it's the same. It's how you use it.

8.3 Program facilitation

Dr. Moudden:

The fourth problem to be solved is how this project is going to be facilitated.

To find interested and committed faculty is most important. First you have to have the agreement from the dean but then the professor has to submit a proposal. The professor has to be committed to the program. He has to be really into it and to want to do it - this is the key. Only then you have to have the agreement of the dean. If the dean sees that the professor is really for it then he, the dean, will find a way to “sell” the idea to the students, to motivate them and to make it happen.

Mounir Alaoui:

As you probably already noticed, here in Morocco the proper channels to do anything is that you have to have one key partner or a key person in each place.

Daoud Casewit:

As much as you can try to promote correspondence between the highest level that you can. If a president of a university is willing to write a letter of support or at least a dean — from one dean to another — so it's on a level of protocol that people think that it's important.

Dr. Mekouar:

If this could be done, and because this is a centralized country and structured in such of having ministers and so on, then you should first meet with the proper ministry. The Ministry of National Education and Ministry of Higher-education they are two different ministries, and you can sit with them and explore some sort of agreement in which you define what you both want in some kind of pilot project and then you can see how it works. If it is with the Ministry of Higher-education then I suggest that it will be attached to a university, one of the state universities. If it is with the Ministry of National (elementary and secondary) Education then it has to be attached directly to the ministry itself.

[This project is basically a university course.]

Then the demand for distance education is there and they have been talking about it for years and no action has yet been taken. It is an extremely complicated and sensitive issue and the financing of it is almost impossible. The ministry just doesn't have enough money to do something like that, for both the technology and the program itself. Here I associate the two, the distance education through the technology. To have a program like this the students have to pay but they can't. This is why it is a very sensitive and complicated issue.

When I was still part of the administration of the higher-education system we talked about this. It is an extremely important subject. Nothing has been done yet, but I think that the needs are there and right now there is talk or debate of big reform. If any proposal comes in at this time it might be integrated within the reform system. So I think you need to try to see both ministers and to talk to them about what can be done. Roughly speaking, you provide the technology and they get you the best people to do the cultural lectures. Right now at the commission we have trained a number of Moroccans who are perfectly competent in English, and can lecture on history, philosophy, theology, cultural anthropology.

I must admit that I'm ignorant about the details of distance education. Here I'm just proposing one possible avenue. It's up to you to develop it and go through all the explaining and planning and so on.

I'll give you one example. You may ask somebody to teach about Moroccan proverbs and how they function in the society and so on. You need a social linguist specializing in this who can speak in English. If there is a need on the other side for this then you should be able to develop the technology and the course work, both. You need to develop the method whereby it could be taught at a distance effectively. It's not easy.

[Strategy of implementation]

This is the key. You need to get a dedicated group of people who have a clear go-ahead from their respective superiors, they have to have some authority behind them. Your work starts with finding the people and getting them dedicated to the project. Once you have a dedicated person, that person has to lobby for it and persuade his own dean. It's not your job to persuade the deans and rectors. You see them [the dean and the rector], and are exposed to them, but the job has to be done by the [Moroccan] teacher. He has to educate them.

They [the dean and the rector] have to be educated on what is the purpose and how much money they need to give and what are they going to get from this project. This is essential. In my long experience in university administration I oversaw many people and projects. To some projects I was attracted much better and faster than to others just because they were better explained to me, or better lobbied, better presented.

So your work is to work with the teachers and educate them to what the project is. It might be needed to invite them to the States for some sort of training, a week or two maybe. Educate them first and before they come, six months ahead from when they come, you want to give them some reading to prepare and some idea about the project.

Dr. Benjelloun:

From our experience here, and we've done a lot of this before, I think that the key to a successful program is to have two committed faculty, one on each side. The teacher in New Mexico will take all of the necessary steps to see that it succeeds on the American side, and Najiya here will do the same on our side.

8.4 Effects of cultures differences on LCTDE

Fitzgerald:

[My basic question here has to do with communication over the internet and the effects that cultures differences might make here. I'm trying to understand how a Moroccan educator will perceive this proposed program for a virtual Moroccan/American classroom. Can you help me with that?]

I do have some thoughts about communicating. For example, Youssef is an English teacher here who I'm very close to. He is on an English teacher's e-mail list [which is] on a server list somewhere. One of the things he has gotten is basically an advertisement for a teaching certificate that you can do by

distance learning over e-mail. He showed me a letter he got from Robert so and so. When I look at a message like this, I immediately see junk mail and delete it. He, on the other hand, wrote back an extremely polite note and asked me to read it and send it for him. Personally I think he's simply communicating with a program — a machine somewhere. He really thinks that he's communicating with a human being.

Another example: One of the students here did a project about problems facing teenagers in America. He posted some message on a teenage bulletin board somewhere and got about 30 e-mails back. The communications he got back were very personal. People don't care what they say in e-mail. Americans just write back about the very core of their life. About problems with sexual relations, divorced parents, drugs. A Moroccans would have a big problem talking about anything like that. These subjects might be shameful for them or too intimate.

Mark: As I reflect on this same topic, it seems to me that when Moroccans want to do something, they have an over-formalized view of how it should proceed. I do this class every Friday — it's a voluntary discussion group for all the students who study English at the university. I'm really just the catalyst of discussion. At the end of each class, I ask one of the students to bring a topic for the next class, just something we can talk about. Clearly, most of the time, they will bring pages and pages of written stuff, like an essay, very formal. They want to prepare in advance.

8.5 Start with a Pilot Project

Daoud Casewit:

In order to avoid setting up some special class and organizing it and so forth, which could take much longer, you can do a pilot project in the context of a language center. These centers, at any one time have hundred to hundred and fifty students with a pretty good English level, who are preparing to be accepted to the Al Akhawayn or schools abroad. They don't even get admitted to the language school unless they already have a good level, and they are trying to get a high score on the TOEFL exam usually within one semester. The teachers often assign extra curricular work, and activities, and homework, and so forth to the students. It's not only work that they do in the classroom. So among other activities there can be this cultural program, networking and so forth, establishing contact with their peers in America and comparing notes on culture and that sort of things. That will be a very good exercise for them in terms of language and the technology and so forth.

[To my comment that there will be a big gap in the language levels between the two sides, Mr. Casewit said that he thought it wouldn't be a problem.] Most of the students in the language program [he said] are not beginners. They have to have a high level of English just to get into this language program. They only take people within a certain range in these language centers and if they are below that then they have to go back to the American language center (ALC) or whatever. The reason I suggest that is that it just seems a bit simpler to start with a pilot project.

Dr. Benjelloun II:

The beauty of our situation here is that we don't have to initiate a new class for this. Najiya can build this into one of her existing classes. We've already done something like this in our language center. Every student there has an overseas partner and they interact through e-mail. In this project we could start with e-mail only and only later move on to the visual part. The two faculty members should decide how they want to work it out.

I think that if you start modestly like that you stand a good chance of succeeding. In this kind of situation, even if you're funding is late, at least the e-mail is available. If the people involved want to get something off the ground then they can start it right away. They don't need initial funding to start.

Additional funding will only be needed when we get into using the internet for visual and audio. As you explained to me, there will be some set-up costs; the needed additional equipment and software. Then, if in fact we do get to the video-conferencing part, then there is going to be the whole cost of using the conferencing facility. The ISDN lines and so on. The equipment we have, it's here already.

I see us starting tomorrow. Najiya is convinced and she can start this up tomorrow. This kind of project is very good for us because it's good for our students.

So on our side there's really no problem to starting this with e-mail already. To get students to get to know each other and be comfortable with each other at least on paper.

Dr. Haddad:

It's an interesting project, certainly ambitious. I think it's doable but if you go gradually. You can start with some kind of correspondence between two classes and two teachers who are interested in that. Talk about things, problems they have, what kind of issues they want to talk about. And I think after a while, if you narrow it down to things people really want to talk about and want to know, or want the others to know about them. But I think if there is a limited number of people you want to involve. I'm thinking about some kind of a pilot project for six months or a year in which two people are involved on a very small scale. Not the large scale of two universities where there are many teachers interested in doing that. Then it becomes a bit large and it's hard to prepare. Then one needs to know what's shortcomings and what capabilities people have, etc.

What I'm saying is that you limit the number and you use like pilots, maybe for about 6 months. Probably the technology won't be there because of the small budget. People from the Faculty of Letters in Rabat for example, will be able to go to cyber-café's to send their messages to the others, whatever. But that in general I think it's very doable.

Dr. Shoup's discussion class:

Dr. Shoup: Just to suggest a possible further activity, even if your program does not start right away, we can use e-mail even. You could set up a special chat group just to connect our students with UNM students. We could have a discussion group through the internet.

8.6 The language question

[Translation]

Dr. Moudden:

Now you can talk to the people in the Faculty of Letters and see if they can integrate students from other disciplines into this program. The problem is going to be always that the language has to be English and that is why I don't know if bringing students from other disciplines can be arranged. I don't know if you can even entertain the idea of some kind of class that not only for English students but for university students in general and then provide some kind of translation. This, of course, will increase the cost of the program but I think that if one sees that this is the best option then one should consider it. I can imagine a group of interested Moroccan students coming from the Religious Studies and History departments and to see how this can be incorporated.

[Dr. Moudden, I would like to talk some more about the language aspect of this project. Earlier you brought up the possibility of using translation. This can be an interesting solution to the language barrier problem that most Moroccan students here will be facing. Most of them will not be able to fully express themselves and will be in a handicapped situation in relation to their American counterparts whose first language is English. This kind of unequal situation can cause inaccuracies, frustration and anger.]

Well, we do organize for our [non Moroccan] students, sessions with Moroccan people that do not speak English at all, and we do use translation here. It's not even a professional simultaneous translation, but rather we have a Moroccan assistant who does it. During our course, we take the students to live for one week with families in a very remote rural village in the mountains where the people do not speak any English. There we encourage discussions about issues between the students and the local youth with the aid of translation. Very interesting group discussions emerge between Moroccans and Americans. We had our students discussing issues ranging from development to fundamentalism. At times we also experienced big problems, conflicts and misunderstandings.

In any way, the use of translators can be used to allow both sides to express themselves. The use of professional translators can be beneficial. The cheapest way will be to have people talk in English and have a Moroccan who is proficient in English aid the Moroccan students to express themselves and to understand what is being said more completely. The translator can intervene now and then when needed. The teacher himself can be that person. In our project we have an assistant or sometimes myself who are doing that. There are also professional simultaneous translators here in Morocco, but that might make your project too expensive. It also depends on who are the students and how you select them.

Dr. Moncef Lahlou:

[Mr. Casewit of the American Commission (MACECE) suggested to use translators to allow students to use the language of their choice. What do you think about using translation in this project?]

If it gets real deep into serious discussion and people gets carried away with a subject that they feel deeply about, then maybe you can tell them that if they need to, they can express themselves in any

language they feel like. Especially if you are recording it, then people can switch from one language to another. This is another means of communication. You can then have the same person who was talking go over the recording and say what he meant. This can be translated. This is called code switching and it can work very well. At first when people talk, they'll keep switching because they are more interested in the content, in the ideas. You can tell them, 'listen don't worry about the language just concentrate on the ideas'. After that you can go back and ask them to concentrate on the language. 'What ever is not in language A, please say it in language A this time.' You might try that first.

The other way is to have a translator, but here you sacrifice some of the spontaneity of the exchange. Of course, different things work for different people and you can try to see what works. Translators and simultaneous translations can be helpful but you never can get it completely accurate even with a good translator. There is an Italian proverb that says that 'every translator is a traitor'.

[The need for language exercise]

Dr. Benjelloun II:

They can start it as a language exercise, or as a get-to-know-each-other exercise, or as a cultural sharing phenomenon, or maybe all three of those together? The students can have assignments spread out for them over the semester on both sides. Each student will be expected to communicate with their partner on the other side maybe once a week or every two weeks, and then, in the end, share the result of the experience with the rest of the class. It's up to the teachers to build on this.

9. Moroccan Culture and LCTDE

9.1 Related cultural issues

Dr. Belarbi:

[Moroccan culture]

Belarbi said that her research shows Moroccan culture to be very rigid and very difficult to change. The main strength of the culture lies in the family and the way family traditions are passed on. This was evident in research conducted with Moroccan girls and young women. For example, when a young female is taught in seminars or in special classes how to do things in new ways (new methods of cooking, for example, or new approaches to taking care of babies) when they go back home to their families, they revert to the old ways. The influence of the extended family, the older women and traditional ways are much stronger than that of schools and outside teaching. Whatever is taught and has no support within the family will have very low retention.

One of the most noticeable aspects of the LCTDE summary paper, she said, is that all the suggested cultural topics are anthropological in nature. In reality, cultural issues are more loaded and have potential problems that have to be solved. In Morocco, there are many cultural problems that have to do with bringing people from different social classes together. Moroccan people are very identified with the politics of class-differences and that makes it difficult for them to talk to each other. It is difficult to conduct cultural studies in such an environment. Belarbi brought as an example a situation that she observed in many of the international women conferences she attended. It is usual that the Israeli and the Palestinian women attending these conferences are so involved in their national conflict that they can't give it up even for a moment to be able to agree about issues that they share in common. Even if they agree, when they go back to their home culture, the influence is so strong that they revert to the conflict state.

[Islam and culture]

Belarbi said that it is interesting to see how relative cultures are. Take the example of Islam in Morocco. A great part of Moroccan culture is the culture of Islam. There is no Morocco without Islam. Every Moroccan is a Muslim and has an understanding of what Islam is. At the same time, when one goes to international conferences where Muslim countries are represented representatives of each country see Islam differently. The meaning of Islam changes from country to country. For Malaysians, for example, Islam might mean knowledge and peace. In Pakistan, Islam is more militant and concerns state rule. Both are different than the way Moroccans see Islam. There you can see that there are many Islams, or maybe, many cultures of Islamic countries. One may say that each country filters Islam differently. The way Islam is seen in each country is a mirror reflecting the culture of that country.

[Cultural studies]

Belarbi pointed out that the way you define cultural studies is very important. In different places, it could get a different definition according to how it is used. So it is important to come to an understanding of what cultural studies is, in a way that will benefit both sides and benefit all the students who will participate in the program. The first step in designing a cultural studies program including students from two different cultures participate is to define the gap between the two groups. First, we need to define what is cultural gap. Only once the gap is understood — and here we must look at the gaps within each group as well as the gap between the groups — only then, the program can be designed.

Belarbi mentioned that Ernest Gellner is a major American cultural studies researcher who wrote extensively about Moroccan culture is. She said he is very much respected among Moroccan academia.

As to the use of distance education technology in cultural studies, she said that not much research has been done on the subject. There is a need to ask the question whether this is a relevant way to use technology. There is a need for a conference on the subject, with psychologists, cultural researchers, educators etc. At the same time, a project like the LCTDE can be seen as a case study and a field research that will provide data for such a conference.

[Oral tradition in Moroccan culture]

Dr. Haddad:

Something one should take into consideration is that many Moroccan's don't write, even with e-mail. At Al Akhawayn for example, we used to send to people high up in the administration there urgent e-mail notes. We would write that this is urgent, please write back and tell us what we do. There would be no response. That is why I think that for Moroccans, voice conferencing or video-conferencing would be ideal. When people will use computers to talk to each other then Moroccans will be excellent at it. When it's writing it won't be as good.

It's not easy for Moroccans to converse to another person through writing. We have not developed that kind of ability to read a message and answer it in writing or debate through writing. We are mostly an oral culture. This is a cultural question that we have to deal with. Here a debate is normally an oral debate. This is what Moroccans have been doing for a long time and they are very good at it.

Generally, what I am saying here is that writing is not very developed in Moroccan society. People don't keep journals, they don't write to each other much. Moroccans don't do things in writing, they don't go shopping with shopping lists for example if you see what I mean?

Writing activities are not developed as much because Morocco is mostly an oral society. You'll be communicating with people who won't be taking notes at all. Memorization is used a lot. Memory here is very strong. Moroccans have always stored things in their memories. They learn the Qur'an by heart and they memorize many other things. Now, with so much information coming in, people are realizing that putting thing in writing is a better way of storing information but it's coming very very slowly. This is probably one of the things to watch out for if you have a DE class, which includes Moroccan students. If you find them not participating it's probably not because they don't have anything to say but because the

medium is strange to them. That is if you use a medium that asks the students to write things as if they were speaking them. The thing about computer conferencing is that you are not asking the students to write in a really beautiful style about what it is you are debating about. It's an oral thing that they have to put in a written form. If you would ask them to write essay in nice style, Moroccan could do that well. The old tradition of style and rhetoric in Arabic is very developed and our students are familiar with it. Your medium is something between oral and written. There will be things like that that the Moroccan students will have learn and get used to.

[The culture of coffee shops]

The culture of coffee shops is a new culture here. It is a replacement for the traditional marketplace and the Khalqa where all that kind of interaction took place. The Khalqa is our traditional theater. It's a place where people gather and participate in things like plays, story telling, music and other events. You still can see it in Marrakesh and here in Salé. People, when they finished with their work in the afternoon, they go to a meeting place by the city walls to listen to stories, to watch shows and to see the doctors and healers display their stuff. That's the place where people see each other, meet and talk.

Nowadays the coffeehouses are like clubs where people meet each other, talk politics and date. They discuss politics because here it's not done over television, radio or in newspapers. This is also a place where people can date and meet. They do that in Europe, but not as much as they do here. This is because of high unemployment and because there are no clubs or places where people can go and do sports. Especially for the middle and lower classes, coffee places are where people meet each other. In most of the coffee shops you see only man but now some of them have women also. There is a lot of waste of time there and people get addicted to it. They leave their work place and go directly to the cafe.

Cafés are places that are not traditionally controlled. Many people can gather there. You may find even hundred people in a café without being disturbed or without being looked at, politically and socially. For example if you have a hundred people gather somewhere, the police will come to check what is happening. They will ask if it's a demonstration and whether it's authorized.

When I talk about control, it's not only political but also social. Morocco is a society that is a bit conservative. Although there is openness towards the West there is always an alternation between conservatism and openness which is kept in equilibrium in our society. There are always these two forces acting together. That is why specific spaces need to be created, contained spaces, where people can express themselves without disturbing the generally accepted and expected social picture. These places can be coffeehouses, they can be newspapers that belong to the opposition and are read by certain group, or the classroom at the university. All these are safe places where people can go and express themselves outside the main stream, outside the manufactured consensus, without out being disturbed. This kind of forum is allowed and it gives almost free expression to other voices.

[Why communicate with New Mexico or with the West?]

Barada's graduate cultural studies class:

Barada: Let's go back to our questions about distance education. What I'm talking about here is that distance education cannot be seen separately from a global world order. We can talk about distance education and we can talk about it in not only theoretical terms but we can talk about it in more or less neutral terms. What it is and what it involves. It involves technology, it involves using the TV, it involves using the radio, correspondence, now the Internet, satellites etc. But that's as far as we can go talking about it as a neutral medium through which we can have or establish distance communication. Now we enter the scene as students of cultural studies. We have to ask — and then what? Who are we as users of distance of education? Who are the people we are communicating with? Are we communicating with Iranians?

Student: Absolutely not.

Barada: Exactly, because if we were, even with their so-called new open leader of today, Mr. Khatimi, for instance, we would still be talking between two Muslim cultures and we would have a certain closeness of interests. We still might be against this and against that and pro this and pro that. —If we start communicating at a distance, why can't we start distance education with Israel for instance? Why not? Because, of certain ideological wars which are going on between the Islamic-Arab world and Israel. Why with America? Why not with France? That's the question I would like to ask. Why with New Mexico? Why with the University of New Mexico and not with La Sorbonne?

[Cultural imperialism]

Fitzgerald:

[Some people here (and elsewhere) view the internet and computer technology as a cultural "Trojan horse" of the West.]

Mark: Internet definitely carries something. I can see their point. When you have all these computers you are connected. And who got most of the sites? Most of the sites are in Europe and in the West. Only few are Arabic sites. All the sites are very westernized. I can see their point, but I don't know how much validity there is there?

Fitzgerald: It's ironic that although Iraq bans the internet, at the same time Saddam Hussein just made his own homepage.

But to go back to the question of cultural imperialism — yes, I think that's valid, and that there is a certain degree of that. The fact that all other web sites in the world have an abbreviation for the country name, Morocco is MA and France is FR and Spain is SP. But American sites have none. America is the default on the internet.

You know, I'm in the business of teaching English. Teaching a foreign language is also cultural imperialism. You can't teach language without teaching some bit of the culture. The English language can be used for good or harm, and I don't see that it's much different with the internet. For a country like Morocco, there are very limited resources for learning. Here there is nowhere to go for information. In fact

I see less of a need for the internet in the U.S. than I do in a country like Morocco. There are college libraries and public libraries on every corner in America, and it has better information than the internet. But in Morocco — this little library that we have here is the only library for hundreds of miles, of English books, that students can put their hands on and take out — maybe for thousands of miles. So I don't see the internet here as something for entertainment or even not that much for individual communication, but as an educational resource.

[Studies in Moroccan culture]

Dr. El-Alami:

As far as academic work and research about Cultural Studies in Morocco, there are few psychologists who write in this field. The most known is Abdullah Larwoui who published and wrote books in French and Arabic, mainly about history and culture. He writes about the “complexity of Moroccan culture” and that there is nothing that is truly traditionally Moroccan. He sees Morocco as the resulting complexity of many other cultures. Those are very difficult concepts for the students to deal with. The students ask me why I chose these topics for them to write about. They are so complex, and difficult, and a struggle for them. (I can show you some of their papers). I told them that the aim of the course is not to find solutions or to find answers since there is no way to do that. It is to, at least, make them think.

Dr. Belarbi:

Belarbi mentioned that Ernest Gellner is a major American cultural studies researcher who wrote extensively about Moroccan culture is. She said he is very much respected among Moroccan academia.

9.2 Cross-cultural topics for discussion and what to avoid

Dr. Bourqia:

In general, she said, your project is a good idea. This is my field, you know, and my remarks come from that perspective. When I'm talking about the need for such a project on this side, on the Moroccan side, it could be also to correct an image. To show that others have their own culture. For example, when I was teaching in the States I realized that the students were surprised to see a woman teacher coming from a Muslim country. They asked me if I dressed like this in Morocco. They wanted to know if I was allowed to teach here and was my husband mistreating me. They really had questions like that. Our role is to teach them how cultures are complex. There is a complexity where you can't just stereotype and use cliches like that. Some man can mistreat their wives in America and you can find them also in Morocco. So this is the same everywhere but as I told you, there are core differences between cultures, for example what is the importance of the family in this culture compared with the American culture. This can be an example for comparisons. Also what are the limits of what the husband and the wife can do in the family. The importance of the extended family and so on. What is the importance of the family is an important theme or the specificity of this culture. We have to teach also that there are cultural diversities within the same culture. When we talk about women for example, we have to understand their way of life, their legal

status, whether they are urban or rural. Even within the same culture not all women have the same status. It depends on their milieu, their social status, their level of education, all these are parameters that intervene to reshape the culture. So culture is not a homogeneous entity.

We also need to see how the media contributes to changing and reshaping our cultures. Through satellites and the TV dishes Morocco is exposed to the effects of the media. Different channels from different countries. So culture might be that which doesn't change in the middle of all that? Maybe that tiny little space that doesn't change - this is culture? So all that is changing in terms of behavior, institutions and such -- here we are reaching what we now call [laughs] globalization. But despite all this, there is a core, something that remains.

[We talked about cross-cultural issues and research concerning large global corporations.]

Here she said that culturally, in some areas people might be all the same in the work place, but when they go to celebrate their own marriages they'll follow their culture. This is what cultures are all about - to show our own differences. We don't want to be like you. I want to be myself and for me to be myself is to stick to my culture. To stick to this culture in some areas that I perceive and consider to be important. Take the example of marriage. The way we celebrate marriage here, because it is an important institution, because it is the channel through which the reproduction in society takes place, and this is why it is very traditional. It is the family. So there are some areas that are important for the society — so the culture is kept and changes don't radically touch these areas.

Youssef Slitine:

There are various cultural problems. For example marriage — marriage in the city and marriage in the countryside. The purpose of marriage on the part of both partners. That's a cultural problem here. Also children and parent relationship can be a good example.

Dr. Moudden:

[I asked Dr. Moudden if there are any fears and reservations that students might have due to the political and social atmosphere in Morocco.]

No, I don't think so [he said]. Indeed there are some taboo subjects that our students would not deal with, but these are very few. I'm talking about taboo subjects like talking about the king or questions concerning the politics in the Sahara.

[Q: Are there subjects that we shouldn't touch?]

Well, we have to be careful, especially with students from America saying some things against the king. It's very normal to expect a student in America to say something negative about a monarch or something very negative about the personality of the Prophet for example. But apart from that I don't think that there are any problems.

[The subject of Islam and religion in general, should those subjects be included?]

Yes, this is something that we should prepare the students for, both here and in the United States. Maybe one way of doing it is to have one of the Moroccan professors going to your university and have whoever is going to be your facilitator coming here, and then advising and preparing the students. It can be done either by personal contact or through a DE session, they don't have to go all the way there. We can have the professor saying - ok, this is the protocol of how to raise specific questions, and this is how you formulate them. For example, I have an American student who is working on human rights issues. I was telling him that one has to be careful, that it is easy to criticize, but one has to put himself in the shoes of the Moroccan. How would you then deal with the problem? You can still be critical, but it is a question of how you formulate your opinions. It might be different here than in the U.S. So this is something you need to orient your students towards.

Also, Moroccans are not used to talking about religious pluralism because it doesn't exist here. So our students need to know to be careful when they address someone who is Jewish or Catholic or from other religions. So this is something that is new for our students.

Also, in general, social science is not very developed here in Morocco. You'll see that the tendency among the students here is to be more theoretical because they don't have the experience of dealing with the empirical data coming from the social sciences. But all those problems, I think, can be overcome.

There is a need also to prepare, psychologically, the students about how to respect the opinion of others even if that opinion sounds absurd (to them). One way that I do that is by showing my students that any idea can be considered absurd, and that nobody can really claim to hold the final truth. So even if an American thinks that the U.S. is a democracy where we are free, where we can do whatever we want, while here (in Morocco) it is not. All these things are very relative and one has to be careful about not talking from a position of feeling superior. As soon as one takes to this tendency of superiority in looking at the other, then communication becomes very difficult.

[In America we have many cultures. It might be easier for American students to understand cultural relativity.]

It's the same here also. Even here there is the tendency to look at Morocco as a united, homogeneous community, but all this is an ideology, and once you start looking deeply in the culture itself then you'll find great diversity between north and south, between rural and urban, women and man etc.

[In your article Cultural Struggle in Morocco (Moudden, 1996) you write about three main cultural themes in Morocco today. You mentioned fundamentalism, Amazighism and feminism. What is it about Islamic fundamentalism that is relevant to Morocco? Who are the fundamentalists?]

What is happening now is that there is a growing tendency among the young to reconsider religion to be a very important part of their identity. Some consider it to be the main part of their identity. They also consider that the truth is embodied in the religious text - in the Quran, and all the rest is relative and secondary. For the fundamentalist the real truth and identity is embodied in the Quran.

[Q: Is this a positive development?]

Sure, it comes from people. If it comes from the people that means that there is some need for it. But here, for this program, it can be a problem. I had a few American students in a discussion with a group of Moroccan students. Many of them were referring to religion and they found that they had a problem in communication. Two different ways of looking at the world. But again my assessment is that if it comes from the people it means that they found a need for it. And if they found a need for it, that means that whatever is available did not meet these needs. That there is a gap that modernity was not able to fulfill. Now from here to move to all the other issues of violence and terrorism, it seems to me to be two separate issues.

[Here you are pointing to a basic problem that exists in the States. In many cases, the media, and therefore the people, tend to associate fundamental Islam with violence and terror.]

Right, it is in the same way that many Moroccan associate all Americans with the invasion of Iraq or with the Vietnam war. To them all Americans are related to these events. They don't care who is for or who is against or who doesn't care or who doesn't even know. Many Moroccans would be very upset at Americans because they consider Americans to be a part of the war against Iraq and the support of Zionism. And it is very important for the Americans to understand how the other students view these things. They will say to them — look, Israel is not respecting the peace treaty and the U.S. government is the only country to veto in the UN in support of Israel. So America is controlled by the Jews. Many of the people here believe that, while for the American students this idea is absurd.

So I think that all this needs preparation and then it can be very beneficial for both sides. People can start benefiting from the differences of opinions. It is very important that the differences can be highlighted but at the same time these differences have to be channeled in such a way that the people will benefit from them rather than go in opposing ways and be angry at each other.

Three English faculty at Mohamed V:

Nufissa: I looked at the list of topics that you are suggesting here like, relationship with the family, individualism and so on. My comment here is that some essential aspects of culture have not been mentioned. One of them is religion and religious differences. This will always come up.

Fatima: This subject could be a problem here because we have these fundamentalist groups and some of them are really non-compromising.

Nufissa: One thing that our students will find out very quickly is that the moment Moroccans start talking about their own culture they always disagree among themselves.

Nadia: As long as you talk about other cultures they are in consensus. The moment you start talking about your own culture, each one has his or her interpretation.

Nufissa: And that's where regions and ethnic groups come into consideration.

[Nature of confrontation]

[Abdelhay Moudden brought up to my attention that one problem in the beginning could be the confrontational nature of the Moroccan student. An attitude of "I'm right no matter what".]

Nadia: This is so true.

Fatima: This thing about "I am right" really comes from ignorance and the lack of background knowledge about culture. They might think that they know their culture but there is much they don't know. Our students don't read enough and that's what I mean by background. They're not really very informed even about their own culture. They have to learn about their own culture first. They have to do some reading and research, before coming to class. It will be a good learning experience for them.

Nadia: The reality here is that a person from a poor background knows very little about how a middle class person lives and even less about the upper class because the barriers between the classes are very strong.

[This is an example of a cultural barrier. Would students here be interested to cross such barriers? To learn to see the nature of their own culture and somehow change within? Only then real communication can occur. The Americans would also have such problems to solve to allow cross-cultural communication to take place.]

Fatima: They have to read more and learn a lot more about their own culture. This is really what they need to do if they are too sure about themselves. They are so sure just because they don't know enough.

Nufissa: It's part of our culture. This is how you grow up here where you are told that you have always to be right. People here very seldom apologize or say I don't know. Most of the time they will tell you: "this is the truth" because they can't tell you "I'm sorry, I don't know about that" or "I'm sorry but I made a mistake".

[To find somebody who says "I don't know" might be very good.]

Nufissa: They always have a theory to go around "I don't know".

9.3 The many cultures of Morocco

Dr. Bourqia:

The second problem is to ask what do you mean by the word culture (or Moroccan culture). In Morocco we have many cultures. The students of Al Akhawayn, for example, reflect one of these cultures. They are the Moroccan elite in the society and they reflect that culture. In order to study cultures, students have to be familiar (or be trained to be familiar) in how to step away and to take some distance from their own cultural reference to be able to see the culture. You don't want to take, for example, engineering students for this project because they are trained differently. You need to take student who are trained to think about these cultural issues, maybe students of humanities.

This is the problem of "sub-cultures". One has to take into account that there is not only one culture but many sub cultures in terms of classes, in terms of regions or whatever divisions we see. You might find a core of common culture (a common denominator) but you have to take into consideration that

Morocco has many sub cultures. Some of the people not only that they don't consciously know about their culture but that many of them deny their own group's culture while trying to be Western (or associate themselves with Western culture). Maybe they deny their own culture because they think that it is backward and that it is backward to associate themselves to their root culture. That is why the students have to be trained to think about cultures and to think about what is their own culture.

Three English faculty at Mohamed V:

[People of the dominant culture and foreigners tend to lump cultures of others together. For example, I have no idea what different cultures are associated with Berbers.]

Nufissa: That's right. You have to be a Berber to know the difference and to distinguish between the three main Berber groups. I don't like people to call me Tashakhit for example. The Tashakhit are the southern tribes around Agadir and that area. My people are from the Atlas mountains where you find the Shikhimats.

[Dr. Moudden says that the main cultural agendas in Morocco are Islamic fundamentalism, Amazighism and feminism.]

Fatima: These three subjects that he mentioned are really essential. Cultural problems here are also regional. There are very strong regional differences.

[I think that those subjects are discussed more on your streets and in your cafés than in the university].

Fatima: Discussing cultural differences and diversity is very new for our universities. Many people here still make the distinction between high culture and low culture and they make value judgments between the cultures here. This behavior I think is disappearing in the Western world.

[Students of different sub-cultures on both sides exchanging ideas]

Dr. El-Alami:

We actually have students from different cultural groups right here [at Al Akhawayn]. For example we have students who were educated in the French system, the French Moroccan schools. Then we have the students from the purely Arabic Moroccan schools. You can feel the tension between them and how they are forming different groups. Each one has different conceptions about the other and misunderstanding. So we had a debate on this very issue in the class with the students of the different cultures. I don't know what the age of your students is, but here they are between seventeen and nineteen. It's a good age because they are trying to find answers quickly.

Multi culturalism is not only an American issue. It is very much alive here too. In my English II class, the students were writing about this subject. (The English II course is introduction to research. That's the first time they get exposed to writing a small research project — about ten pages). The students just wrote an article about the issue of multiculturalism in school. I haven't checked their responses yet, but I could see that they were really interacting with the article. When dealing with some sensitive

subjects, you have to be very careful. Sometimes it's difficult to differentiate between cultural issues and political issues. Politics is cultural and culture is political. We try to be on the borderline.

9.4 Technology, DE and culture

Dr. Belarbi:

As to the use of distance education technology in cultural studies, she said that not much research has been done on the subject. There is a need to ask the question whether this is a relevant way to use technology. There is a need for a conference on the subject, with psychologists, cultural researchers, educators etc. At the same time, a project like the LCTDE can be seen as a case study and a field research that will provide data for such a conference.

Barada's graduate cultural studies class:

Barada: So as we have said, obviously television (and the radio), has been traditionally, the major medium from which we've done distance education from the 60s on. DE was practiced in Morocco, in England and other parts of the world. As I was reminded this morning, Morocco did start a distance education program right after independence through radio and later on through television. It was discontinued because of many different reasons. So it's not something alien to our culture. It's something that we have done, discontinued and are likely to go back into now, because of many different problems that we are facing today in education.

The question to think about and to keep in mind, as we're talking is — how is distance education likely to turn into a form of cultural imperialism? The whole process of cultural globalization, although it's usually used for economics, does run the risk of becoming a problem of culture imperialism. Supposing that we're talking about a program between Michael's class in New Mexico and our class here. Michael's interest, by the way, is in intercultural communication. He himself has crossed many different cultural borders. The question to ask at this moment is — when we put our fingers on the keyboard, who is controlling those fingers? Who is controlling that process? Am I just searching for information which is value free and ideology free, or am I the poorer relative of the more powerful, getting second rate information, and for what price? [As he turns to me]...So do you have any questions?

[I would like to hear some responses from your class].

Student #6: In the reading assignment for this class I was fascinated by the idea of the relationship between media culture and identity, and this has to do with what I'm saying now. The problem of technology and the problem of distance education is a problem of identity. That is because once I'm using this highly sophisticated technology and once I'm communicating with people in different regions of the world via the internet I always have to remind myself who I am and to what extent my identity is transmitted. To what extent am I understood by other cultures? Understanding my culture is necessary for me to be able to communicate my culture. I also need to understand to what extent I am sophisticated

enough and well equipped to use the technology, to be able to communicate and to transnegotiate.

Personally, as a Moroccan student, I feel sometimes that I don't trust this process enough.

[It might be interesting for you to know more about the history of the internet, how it started and who is behind it.]

Student #7: I'm not interested in the history of the Internet but I'm interested in what kind of information I'm getting from them and who is taking care of that? Who disseminates the information?

10. Technology and Distance Education

10.1 What's available?

[Computers in universities]

Dr. Mekouar:

It will be difficult because we have no computers at our universities. Computers are extremely expensive and then we have universities that are huge. For example the one in Casablanca has 25,000 students and classes of 500 or 600 students. There's not much you can do there. We have smaller groups only in the third cycle or what you call the graduate level. Only at the Al Akhawayn can you find small classes in the undergraduate level.

Whatever computers exist now are only in very few sections of the universities, for example in the faculty of law fourth year management. This is because they're dealing with accounting and management. There a group of twelve or so students will have two or three computers.

[Possible CMC about culture]

Only a few people have e-mail and that is a problem here. My friend Bushairi Idrisi in Tangier has it. He is the director of Kind Fahad School of Translation at the University of Tangier and Tetouan. He does translation and translation is also culture because he translates Arabic into English and French. The dean of the Faculty of Arts in Oujda has e-mail and he can take part in it. He did work about English travelers in Morocco, which essentially has to do with cultural exchange or cultural representations. Idris Ishwat from Meknes also has access to the internet. He is a linguist who worked with Texas University on a program called "Tracking Culture" which brings American students with their teachers here to experience our culture. He also has e-mail. All these people are officials and therefore they have their offices and they get e-mail there. All these people also know each other. All of us are friends. They can be of use to you with this conference.

It's a place to start because they have the access and you don't have to wait for people who say, "I'll help but I don't have a computer, I don't even have a room." Ezroua himself has a computer but doesn't have internet in his office. It's going to take a while, maybe a year or two, to get internet into the Faculty of Letters with the MARWAN project. Many of the teachers in the English department need e-mail, so what they do is to go to one of the providers, like a cyber-café. That's where they get their e-mail and use the internet.

Mohammed Dahbi also has a computer at home with e-mail. He might be open to be part of a project like this.

Barada's graduate cultural studies class:

Student #4: Technology is beyond the means of individual people in this country, like Moroccan students for instance.

Barada: In Morocco people go elsewhere to get their education. In other words, those who can afford the technology they're not usually here to need distance education courses. Most of the people who can afford it are studying in France or in the United States.

Student #4: I've always believed that distance education does not really have to cost that much in terms of money because I guess that you can pay something like \$1,000 dollars a year, whereas if you go, for example, to American or England you would have to pay something like six or seven thousand dollars.

[Personal computers in Morocco]

Fitzgerald:

[Q: In the West some see the PC causing people to spend more time alone, with only the illusion of being connected to other cyber people. Do you think that there's danger of computers changing Moroccan society in the same way?]

I don't think that it's as much of a problem because of the limited resources in Morocco. There won't come a time in the foreseeable future when everyone in Morocco will have their own computer — economically I mean. There will always be a situation where several people will have to share a computer when they're going to do something online. The cyber-café's maybe have ten or fifteen computers and that's the most computers you're going to see in one place. The teachers that went there told me that half the time half of them weren't functioning.

Dr. Shoup's discussion class:

Female Moroccan student: I think the computer in the next century will be the center of interactions through the internet, and we won't be interacting with each other as we do now, but through computers. The government will do its work through the internet and it's not really a good thing. The intimacy between people will be lost. We'll be interacting with each other through a machine. [Many of the students agreed with this opinion.]

Female Moroccan student: It will avoid face-to-face discussions. Sometimes face-to-face discussions are more effective. You get the feedback from the person and that helps communication.

[Technical support and maintenance]

Mounir Alaoui:

In the Moroccan system, it is almost impossible to provide or receive technical support and maintenance for practically any equipment. The Moroccan bureaucracy is so reluctant to create new positions for technicians and maintenance personnel because any government job is a job for life with all its benefits, securities and employer responsibilities. A person hired can never be fired or even transferred to another job. This is why it is relatively much easier to have big purchases of equipment approved than to have that equipment serviced and maintained. There is material, equipment and technology sitting around unused all over Morocco because there is no one to provide the necessary service and maintenance.

Youssef El-Aoufir:

In the beginning, when Al Akhawayn was being built there was a lot of money for equipment. We were able to buy all these computers and to provide the network and the labs. However to maintain and to improve the system is very difficult because there is no working budget. The problem is that since the university does not have a regular budget at the beginning of each year, all the departments inside the university also do not have any budget amounts announced for them at the beginning of the year. Everything is done on a per project basis and on a per item basis. Each time there is a project or a need is identified, (things that are needed by the university,) we prepare a file in regard to this project or item. Then we submit it to the management — to the vice president of academic affairs — and he approves or refuses it. If it's approved it goes on to the president for approval. Sometimes, even if it is approved by the president, there is no money to implement it. In any case, it always takes some time.

Halima Ferhat:

[Centrally located in her office were two computer systems, both covered with clear plastic. Each computer was placed on a separate desk, side by side. One was an Apple Macintosh machine and the other, a PC clone.]

To my inquiry, Dr. Ferhat told us in French that both computers were donated for her research but were never in use. First she got the Macintosh and when she was not able to use it, she got the DOS machine. In both cases, the computer company that distributed the machines failed to provide the needed support and software to be able to use the systems. It is easy to buy computers here, she said, but after the sell you the computer, it is hard to get the support that they have promised you. I kept calling them but they said that they can't get the software I needed.

10.2 Internet in Morocco

Jack Rusenko:

[For the last two years Jack has served as a member of the Internet Society of Morocco, small group of people who helped usher the internet into Morocco.]

Amine (Mounir) Alaoui is the high level contact for Morocco. He owns the high level domain MA. (The last group of letters in the internet address is called a high -level domain). So Amine is responsible for the MA (for Morocco) high level domain. He has delegated the power to the ONPT to create domains for Morocco. That means that if he wanted to change something, with a simple e-mail he could change the whole configuration of the internet in Morocco. For example, right now the primary domain name for Morocco (MA) is with ONPT's server. If he wanted to transfer it to another location he just has to send an e-mail and all the routers in the world would recognize a new server as MA. I think that's a good thing because the ONPT is a strong monopoly in Morocco and therefore has certain difficulties with efficiency and service. The fact that another person controls the high level domain might encourage them to give

better and cheaper service. Amine and I still work together. There are about six of us on the executive committee that run and manage the Internet Society.

[About] Mounir Alaoui:

Dr. Alaoui could be considered the father of the internet in Morocco. Two years before he activated the first Moroccan internet access, he organized and initiated the first e-mail server in the country which was stationed in his university laboratory. Already, in 1994, he was working to educating Moroccan academia and other people who had access to computers about the usefulness of e-mail. He made the EMI's server available for Moroccan e-mail users. Once or twice a day he made connection to an internet server in Spain and sent and received mail for all of Morocco. In 1995 the Morocco internet high level domain MA was established and Dr. Alaoui was the high level contact for Morocco, responsible for all internet access in the country. He was also a founding member of the Internet Society of Morocco, which helped usher the country into the internet age.

According to Dr. Alaoui, in the beginning it was very exciting to start e-mail going and to introduce people to it. Very soon, the workload of maintaining the e-mail traffic operations became too much for him to manage alone. There was no real support from the university and Alaoui had to provide all necessary technical work and support with very little help, this in addition to his regular duties as a professor. He had to stop the growth of this project until the MA domain was established which he transferred for the ONPT to take over.

10.3 ONPT (National Office of Post and Telecommunication)

10.3.1 General information

[About the privatization of the ONPT]

Youssef El Jabri:

Things are in a state of change in the ONPT. They are preparing for the anticipated privatization process. In the beginning the Post Office and the Office of Telecommunications were one thing. The Ministry of Post & Communication in the government was in charge of the ONPT (Office National des Postes et Télécommunications). Now it's called the Ministry of Telecommunications (le Ministère des Télécommunications). As you remember, in the beginning we wrote a fax to the Minister of Telecommunications, Mr. Abdeslam Ahizoune. So it's basically a process of separating the post office from its telecommunication part or what you call the Phone Company. The new name of the phone company together with the Office of Telecommunications is Itissalat al-Maghrib, (translated to English as Communications of Morocco). The new company will function as a private carrier for the Moroccan government. All our vehicles, all our stationery and our publications say on them Itissalat al-Maghrib, but people still use the name ONPT. This is because the change is slow and still in process and every one is still used to the old name ONPT. The separation didn't happened yet, but they are working on it at this time.

All this is done for this privatization process. It's happening, but it's very slow and will be done bit by bit. Next month, or in March for example, they will transfer to a second-carrier, or a non-government service provider, a second cellular phone license. It's out for bids and there are many offers from companies like France Telecom, Telephonica, AT&T, one Korean phone company and others.

In actuality, Itissalat al-Maghrib is already a private company but it is owned 100% by the Moroccan government. It is an autonomous entity. The plan now is to sell stocks in this company to second-carriers or other foreign phone companies while the government still will own 51% of the company. This private company, Itissalat al-Maghrib, is supposed to function as a for-profit organization to attract new partners. The interest of the Moroccan government will be the same as of the other participants — to make money and to be profitable. This process of bringing other companies in is supposed to start very soon, maybe in a month or two. It will happen first with cellular phones then with multimedia, then internet and international services and so on.

Government bodies in Morocco are always inefficient and work with big losses. They are run by politicians who don't care about profits for the government but only about power. Also, the workers don't care too much about the quality of their work because they can't be fired. A government job in Morocco is for life, unless you do something that is really bad. Also, workers don't get promoted for what they do or how they perform. Promotions are usually political or because of connections to cultural and ethnic background. So there is no incentive to perform better.

In a private company, things are different. Workers can be fired if they don't perform or if their job is not needed. The Moroccan law will still protect the workers but not to the extent that government jobs are protected. In theory, with the private company there is also more incentive to perform. Since I no longer work for the ONPT but for Itissalat al-Maghrib, my status is different. It's not apparent because they move very slowly so as not to anger the workers, but this is the goal. It is to make the phone company a private profitable business. This change should attract outside companies to compete for taking part in it. The theory is that by competition of other companies with the service of the old ONPT, prices will go down and the service will get better.

The movement to privatize is not only in Morocco, it's a global movement. In Europe it started in 1984 with England, then with Germany and Spain. Now it's everywhere in Europe, in France too. So Morocco has to follow if it wants to be competitive. It also has to do with the GATT agreement. In order to be able to be part of these new global markets we have to follow the directions of the World Bank.

10.3.2 3rd Journées Nationales Télécoms

The Third "Days of National Télécoms" conference was held in Rabat on the seventeenth and eighteenth of December, 1997.

Youssef El Jabri was able to attend only the second day of the conference. He brought back a brochure containing the conference program, which he translated for me. The conference showcased 'the new technologies of information and communications' and its main issue was summed up in the question

— ‘what are the contributions that will usher Morocco into the twenty first century?’ Both Mr. Banit and Mr. Lhor [interviewed in this work] gave back-to-back twenty-minute presentations about their respective projects. Both presentations were part of the section on ‘using technology for education.’ Banit's talk was titled: ‘The telecommunication infrastructure in the service of distance education in Morocco,’ and Lhor presented ‘the MARWAN network at the service of education and research.’

The Télécoms program’s pamphlet reflected on some interesting themes relating to this study:

1. The conference was an ONPT event, hosted and sponsored by the Minister of Telecommunications, Dr. Abdeslam Ahizoune.
2. On the one hand, it was a Moroccan presentation. The main telecommunication directors and experts of the ONPT presented their achievements in the field. On the other hand, the main direction of the event was globally directed. It focussed on countries in Europe and on America and invited their intervention and input.
3. Representation from the major technologically developed countries of Europe and major communication corporations was strong.
4. Canada was also represented while the person representing the U.S. also represented the World Bank.
5. There is strong directive, voiced by (the late) King Hasan II on many occasions, to use technology to (electronically) bring jobs and employment into the country. The Moroccan government sees information and communication technologies as a key or/and a gate for Morocco to enter European and global markets.
6. The conference called for support and assistance from the richer and more technologically equipped nations.
7. It was an opportunity for both the Moroccan ONPT directors and communications experts on the Moroccan side to rub shoulders and make connections with their European and global counterparts.
8. The gathering climaxed at the afternoon session of the second day. This was session four, dedicated to ‘alliance strategies’ and was chaired by the Minister, Mr. Ahizoune. Participants were representatives of the big communication corporations interested in partnerships with Itissalat al-Maghrib.
9. This fourth session led to a round table meeting of the main participants of the event: the representative of the French government, the representative of the World Bank, the representative of the Moroccan prime minister and others.

Mounir Alaoui;

[Alaoui was a main organizer of the World Bank technology conference in Marrakesh, 1997. I asked him about the event.]

It was worst than what I expected. This is the last time that I’m doing something in cooperation with the World Bank. Next time I’ll ask for the money, and if they give the money I will do some things, but without them. They are the last people to talk about intellectual property rights. They said that they have done everything but in reality everything was done by the Moroccan side. They haven’t done

anything and it was real sham. They didn't give any credit where credit was due. We are used to do things with other universities where everyone is doing their part in a friendly manner, and everything is great. But with an entity like that I think that things have to be set up very precisely from the beginning.

Also the keynote presentations were very disappointing. Joe Stiglitz, the former economic advisor to Clinton was one. From such a man we were waiting for more impact and substance.

10.3.3 Internet service

Mr. Bouchta Banit:

[Q: in a fax I asked him about internet service in Morocco.]

— The first internet node was installed in Morocco by the ONPT in 1995. Today it gives Moroccan users access to the worldwide internet network. Users can have access to internet service either through commercial servers (of which there are 29) or directly from the ONPT through direct lines. This is in the case of big users and Moroccan universities (from a fax).

Banit said that currently the ONPT is connected to the internet with a 512 Kbps line through Italy and with double that, 2x512Kbps line, through the U.S.A.

10.3.4 ISDN (Integrated Service Digital Network) in Morocco

[General]

Mr. Bouchta Banit:

[faxed Q: What is the present and future situation of ISDN in Morocco?]

— The ONPT made available, thanks to its MARNIS network, ISDN service on a national and international level, in response to client needs. Communication costs are very attractive because there is not much difference between getting regular telephone service and getting a 64 Kbps line (From a fax.).

[MARNIS stand for Marocain Réseau Numérique à Intégration de Service.]

ISDN service is already available from the ONPT, but only in the major cities. Soon it will extend to all Moroccan cities. At the same time ISDN will not be available to rural Morocco in the near future, if ever.

Rachid Benjira, first Meeting, 5/26/97:

[Benjira produced a printed schematic describing the MARNIS project. Blue solid lines connected the Moroccan towns where currently ISDN service was available and broken lines soon-to-be-connected locations. In the drawing, Casablanca functions as the national hub of the system and its international gateway. Germany, Belgium, France and Switzerland were already connected while sixteen other international connections were soon to be connected. Benjira went on to explain how the system operates and how service is provided]

[Basic access and primary access] The ONPT provides two types of ISDN access services; basic access and primary access. The minimum line a user gets is this basic access of 144 Kbps ($2B + D_{16}$ where $B=64$ Kbps and $D=16$ Kbps. The B portion of the signal carries the user's information while the D portion is for signaling information). The primary access is 2Mbps line consisting of twelve basic access lines ($30 + D_{64}$ where $D=64$ Kbps).

[Multiplex unit — MUX] The MUX is digital equipment that combines the twelve separate data signals together on one channel and decodes them again at the destination

[Transit and local exchanges (TX & LX)] Some cities such as Marrakesh, Fez and Agadir function as transit exchanges (TX) or a hub for other local exchanges (LX). Both TX and LX units can provide service to end-users by supplying the number of network termination (NT) points needed. An NT point must be within 5km from an MUX, and for signal amplification needs, MUX units need to be within 60km from each other. The MUX units are the expensive part of the ISDN system.

[Cost of service] While with a lease-line (LS), the customer pays for the distance and the bandwidth [$LS = f(d, BW)$]; with ISDN the customer pays a one-time installation fee, a monthly service charge and then, by the minute for the actual usage.

$$ONPT\text{charge} = \text{Time} + \text{Service} + (\text{Installation})$$

(One time) installation: 6000 DH (1000 DH + 5000 per NT)

(Monthly) service: 300DH (Currency exchange: 10 DH ~ \$1)

[Availability of ISDN service to Ifrane and Al Akhawayn]

It probably will be some time, if at all, before the ONPT provides ISDN service to Al Akhawayn University. It is all a question of cost and demand for the service. The ONPT will not bring ISDN to locations where there is not enough demand to pay for the expense. Because of the great distance between Fez and Ifrane, (about 70km,) a primary-access line is needed there. Since Al Akhawayn is the only possible client in Ifrane, and they need a maximum of two basic-access lines, it doesn't justify bringing the service there. We even don't know the amount of usage that the university is planning if they had ISDN. (From what I understand, the university had to discontinue their lease-line service because they could not afford it).

[ISDN connection to the U.S.A]

As of now, there is no ISDN connection available to America yet. ONPT and AT&T are working on this project now, but there are still some problems. They are doing tests and trying to solve some protocol differences that still exist. There is a talk about opening an ISDN line to America soon.

[Update]

Rachid Benjira, second meeting, 1/30/98:

The first news that Rachid gave me when we met again was that there are now two ISDN links between the ONPT in Morocco and AT&T. The tests that were in process last time we met were successful and the protocol problems that existed were solved. What that meant was that ISDN connection to the U.S. is now possible. It is available only for commercial use in Morocco said Rachid. The capacity of the present link can provide sixty communication lines of 128 Kbps simultaneously.

There is no problem in the transmission part of the ISDN in Morocco. The problem that does exist is to be able to supply ISDN service to all areas in the country. Right now, only the major cities where there is enough usage get ISDN service. Al Akhawayn University, for example, because of its remoteness, does not have ISDN service available to them. In order for the ONPT to bring a primary access line (of 2Mbps) to Ifrane, they'll have to have enough usage to make it pay for itself. The University by itself can't afford and doesn't need this size of service. All they want is one or two basic access lines (of 144Kbps), and even then, they might use it very little.

10.3.5 DE equipment:

Mr. Bouchta Banit:

ONPT has distance education equipment in their office in Casablanca, and it is available for special services provided by the ONPT. It can be used via satellite or with ISDN.

Internationally, ISDN is available from Morocco to some countries in Europe but not yet to the U.S. The ONPT, together with AT&T, are in the testing stages of ISDN connection to America. There are still some technical problems that have to be solved concerning communication protocols (see "update" p. 364).

Rachid Benjira:

One of our jobs is to test different equipment, to see how it works and to find if there are any problems. In our office the DE equipment that is available is made by a French company, SAT (Société Anonyme des Télécommunications). Their whole line of DE equipment comes under the general name TELSAT CAMERIS. This equipment is compatible with the PictureTel protocol. I can give you some literature about their DE products.

Another type of DE equipment that the ONPT has comes under the brand name of the German Siemens company. This equipment is actually made by PictureTel. It is sold to Siemens who puts their name on the machines. Another French company who makes DE equipment is SCII.

Whenever the ISDN link to America is functional we can make a test between our office and your university. As you requested, maybe we can have one of our chefs make a conference with the director of your distance education department?

10.4 DE in Morocco

10.4.1 General information

Dr. Moncef Lahlou:

Distance education is a topic that I am personally very interested in. I would like to work on something similar for Arabic, to make distance education available for Arabic. First we need to let people know that you can use modern media for learning languages. Last year in July we had a two-day symposium with the World Bank here in Al Akhawayn about DE. I gave a presentation about technology supporting pedagogy and what is being done. I've also attended two seminars, one in Austria and one, just a couple of weeks ago, in England, about distance education. It was on what is being done and on trying to make the best use we can of the technology which is there.

Dr. Haddad:

Last fall, I attended the continuous seminar by two people from the Open Universities who came to Marrakesh. It was sponsored by the British consulate and it was a very good seminar about distance learning. It was mostly about how to use video and audio in learning. They did a wonderful job.

Mr. Bouchta Banit:

Q: What DE exists in Morocco?

— As far as I know there is no DE technology yet existing or used in Morocco.

Q: Future development planned in the field of DE.

— The ONPT is participating along with the Ministry of National Education and the special organizations, UNESCO and ITU, in a study of a DE network designed for teaching at a distance in rural locations. This project has great potentials because it foresees, in the long-term, national coverage. It is also possible that other random applications of DE may soon be introduced in Moroccan faculties (from a fax).

Q: Who are the institutions and individuals who use or might be interested in using DE technology in Morocco?

— As indicated above, DE is aimed principally at National Education and Higher-education. Other sectors could also be interested, such as the institutes of applied technology, the schools for professional training and, in a general manner, all the establishments of teaching and training — public or private (from a fax).

Q: Who can help me to evaluate the situation of DE in Morocco and to understand the capacity of the students and teachers to adapt to DE?

— The Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Higher-education, it seem to me, would be the most capable to make these evaluations (from a fax).

10.4.2 MARWAN

[Projected Wide Area Network for educational uses in Morocco]

Dr. Mekouar:

Indeed it's taking a long time. You see, the Spanish government promised to help with this project, and it's much slower than expected. The Spanish cooperation takes state cooperation. Since we expressed

the need for the internet at the universities, they promised to do that in a number of selected places, five or six different universities. The system itself is now operational, but for the computers we [must] rely on our own means. And our own means come essentially from the government so it takes a long time.

Mr. Bouchta Banit:

The engineers of the ONPT are working on the technical design and the implementation of the MARWAN projects. [To my question, Banit responded with a general description of the proposed network.] The physical cable infrastructure is already in place but the active equipment is not available yet. It is very expensive and the funds are not allocated yet. The MARWAN project, Banit told us, is the responsibility of the Multi Media department of the ONPT. Mr. Lhor, the chief of that department, would be the one with more complete information about the project.

Mohamed Lhor:

[Mohamed Lhor is the head of the Multimedia division of the ONPT and the director of the MARWAN project.]

The MARWAN project is a combined effort of the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Higher-education and the Ministry of professional Education. The prime minister and his office are directly responsible for the project and its financing.

The name MARWAN stands for MARocco's Wide Area Network. It's a national project to be used by non-profit educational establishments throughout Morocco. Project MARWAN will serve education, training and research. The network will link universities, private high schools (écoles supérieures)¹ and other establishments of higher-education. Subsequently, it will be the responsibility of the office of the Prime Minister to make decisions about which establishments will be able to use this service.

The MARWAN network is designed to provide a high-speed trunk-line through which users will be connected to each other as well as to international networks of education and research. The network will permit sharing of resources and databases between the linked sites. Users will be able to exchange information by using advanced communication technology within their own sites as well as with others local, national and international sites.

The MARWAN network will offer its users the possibility of connecting to multimedia information resources. Several services and applications, some basic and some more advanced, are planned. Basic services will include sharing common databases, sharing software resources exchanging e-mail, etc. The more advanced services will include access to the internet, multimedia, distance education, video-conferencing, tele-labor, tele-assistance, etc.

The architecture of the MARWAN network is based, in this first stage, on providing a main high-speed trunk connecting sixteen nodes throughout Morocco. These sixteen network nodes will be

¹ Privet schools of higher education, mostly for business management and technology.

conveniently spaced throughout the country. The nodes will be connected via dedicated lines allowing a communication bandwidth of 2 Mbps. In the next stage of the project, at a later time, other cities will be added to the network. Schools and universities in cities directly connected to MARWAN will pay only local fees for the service they receive.

In the first stage, Rabat will be connected to Casablanca, then to Tanger, Fez and Marrakesh. The remaining nodes will be connected to these main ones. The Rabat node will also be the gateway to the internet. The advantage of this architecture for MARWAN users will be the possibility of connecting locally (or at least being within close range) to this high-speed reliable network. The cost to the users will depend on the type of connection to the network that they select and on how far they are from the nearest node

There will be four different types of network connection available from Itissalat al-Maghrib:

1. The regular analogue telephone line service (RTC).
2. ISDN service (RNIS).
3. Analogue leased line (LS) and
4. Digital leased line.

Users will select service according to their usage load demands and to their traffic requirements.

Initially, engineers of Itissalat Al-Maghrib (or the ONPT) will completely manage and administer the network for users. Later, some of these functions may be transferred to individual universities.

[Expected time schedule for implementing the MARWAN project]

The ONPT has set the 15th of February, 1998 as a deadline date for bids from vendors offering to supply the equipment needed for the project. Suppliers from France as well as from other European countries and from the U.S. are taking part in this bid.

The ONPT intends to start operation of parts of the network by the first of June and to have the whole network in place and operational by the end of the year (1998). “We'll start with the line between Rabat and Casablanca. After that we will go to Fez then to Tanger and then to Marrakesh”, said Lhor. “Those are the main nodes of MARWAN.”

Later that day, after our meeting with Lhor, Youssef reminded me to take these dates with a grain of salt. “It always takes much longer than what the officials say here in Morocco. There are elections coming up and no one can tell who the prime minister will be or who will be in the ministries which are related to this project. Also we don't know when and how the privatization of the ONPT will take place and this, for sure, will affect this whole project.”

10.4.3 DE pilot project for rural Morocco

Mr. Bouchta Banit:

[Banit spoke in French while Youssef translated]

Banit's main interest was distance education and he wanted to know more about the subject. He spoke at length about the pilot distance education project for training teachers in rural Morocco.

This project, he told us, is based on an interactive television system transmitting teachings from a central studio in Rabat, and with audio line connections from the remote location back to the studio. Banit said that the use of both satellite transmission and terrestrial infrastructure-based transmission lines is being considered. In the case of the pilot project, the use of satellite-based transmission will be a more expensive option, but in the long run, when the program includes all of Morocco, transmitting by satellite will make financial sense. Banit showed us numbers, diagrams and charts representing both options, but was more in favor of possible satellite use. His opinion was that since in the long run using satellite can make sense, it should be tested and implemented as part of the pilot project.

Mr. Banit showed us a blue booklet, which contained the project design plan. It was a professional-looking document, dated 1996, which included complete technical information, budgetary details, organizational schedules and rationale for the program.

Although it is called a pilot project, explained Mr. Banit, this is the only DE plan that we have at the moment. We hope that this project will be the basis and the beginning for a larger national DE program and this is why it's called a 'pilot project'. Since last year, when we talked, we had much progress in arranging international financial support for the project mainly with the World Bank.

Banit produced some diagrams representing the overview of the project (see appendix E, pp. 377, **Error! Bookmark not defined.**). The two possibilities, terrestrial transmission and transmission via satellite were both represented in these documents. Banit explained that for now, most likely, the transmission will be via terrestrial cables since much of the infrastructure is already in place and it will cost much less to deploy. In the future, when the DE system will cover the whole of Morocco, it will make more sense to use satellite transmission, which requires one signal covering all the Moroccan sites. For this reason, the ONPT is preparing a demonstration for this project using satellite transmission.

Currently, explains Banit, the budget for the pilot project is roughly three million dollars (\$3,000,000), half of which will cover the equipment needed in the studio and at the remote sites and for the necessary training. The other half, another one and a half million dollars, will cover the ONPT cost of telecommunications, infrastructure, hardware and software.

Youssef El Jabri:

This rural DE project is the only DE project in Morocco. It is under the direct responsibility of the Prime Minister's Office. The ONPT is involved only with the technical aspect of the project.

Internationally, it is supported by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in Switzerland and UNESCO which is in Paris. The World Bank is expected to finance the project under the technical supervision of the ITU. The engineers of the ONPT are getting ready to start with a satellite demonstration for this project soon.

[The following is a translated summary from a document in French, submitted by Mr. Banit]

Title:

Project design document: A pilot DE project in Morocco.

In conjunction with UNESCO and UIT.

Distance education via interactive television for continuous training of teachers in rural Morocco.

Goal

To establish a flexible IDE (interactive distance education) system using the advanced technology of interactive television together with advanced educational methods. This system will assist in bringing Morocco closer to its educational goals. In its first phase, this pilot project will be used for training teachers, school directors and other educational staff. Later, this system could also be used to teach students.

The pilot project will be conducted in three rural provinces and will involve a sample group of teachers who will be trained in the use of the technology and in mastering advanced educational methodologies.

Objectives

1. To develop a flexible, modern DE system based on interactive television techniques.
2. To develop a training model for primary and secondary school teachers which is available in their own locale.
3. To develop a training program for the program trainers, for the administrators and for the directors. They will be trained in the technology and in the educational methods to be used.
4. To reinforce the level of education of educators, teachers and the population at large by providing them the possibility of pursuing elective continuing education while staying in their jobs.
5. To experiment with new DE technologies and with interactive television.

Long term objectives

1. To improve performance of educational management.
2. To acknowledge and motivate the teachers.
3. To improve the level of teaching and decrease the rate of dropout from the educational system.

Beneficiaries

This project will benefit the primary and secondary teachers as well as the schools' management inspectors and directors. It will also benefit educational program planners and government personnel in the educational and communication ministries.

This project will benefit Morocco in general as it introduces DE and other technologies into its educational system and supports social and economic development in the country.

This project will also benefit other countries that face similar challenges and can utilize the lessons learned from this particular DE project.

Justification for the project

Although education has always been a matter of high priority in Morocco, a country where more than 26% of its budget goes to education, the government realizes the limitation of its existing educational system. The failure of the educational system is most obvious in rural and remote areas. Such areas drastically lag behind the education provided in Moroccan cities and rural enrollment has been decreasing sharply since the 80's.

Implied here is the recognition of the limitations crippling Morocco in competing in today's global open markets. It is necessary to have an educated population to foster Morocco's economic development. There is also a realization that the existing model of education can no longer be imposed on the society. A different model of education needs to be implemented which is more adaptable to the needs of the individual, particularly in regard to continuous professional training.

Strategies

A major theme of this project is decentralization. By tailoring education and training to a specific location it can be made more harmonious with the needs of the students there. Small, localized learning centers will allow customizing the teaching to the learners. The interactive portion of the system will make this decentralization possible.

Social priorities

The social priorities of this project are to bring into the educational system more equality between rural and urban areas, between boys and girls, and to bring education to those who are not eligible for additional schooling in the public system. More specifically, this project:

1. Will improve standards of the teachers and the education given to children in rural areas, and to bring it closer to the existing levels in urban areas. This is the idea of more equal education for all.
2. Will raise the literacy level in Morocco overall, especially among girls in rural locations.
3. Will raise the level of health awareness and health in rural Morocco.
4. Will reinforce pre-school education with an emphasis on Qur'an schools for young children.
5. Will provide continuing education and professional training for people who are presently ineligible to continue their education.

Objectives of the educational component of the program

1. To increased access to elementary education in rural areas especially for young girls and to improve student retention in schools.
2. To improve the quality of secondary schools in rural Morocco.

3. To improve the teaching conditions in Qur'anic pre-schools, particularly for preparing young girls for first cycle education. These pre-schools are used to prepare children to go to elementary school.
4. To improve the education of young adults by decreasing illiteracy and providing needed professional training.

Initially this DE system will be used to train teachers, local rural inspectors and school directors in how to use the system effectively. They need to learn how DE works so that they can become better distance students and better facilitators for other students who are using the system.

Later, the same DE system will be used to engage those teachers and officials in an on-going training-at-a-distance so they will be more in tune with the environment in which they are going to teach and work. Most teachers were trained in urban universities and need specific training about teaching in rural schools.

Partnerships

In Morocco, this project will be a joint venture by:

1. The Ministry of National Education (MEN)²,
2. The Ministry of Communication and its Radio and Television of Morocco (RTM),
3. The Office of Post and Telecomm (ONPT),
4. The National Institute of Post and Telecomm (INPT)
5. And the Office of Professional Training and the Promotion of Labor (OFPPT).

On the international level, the necessary involvement and partnership of:

1. UNESCO
2. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in Switzerland
3. And the World Bank.

Responsibilities of the various participants

1. The Ministry of National Education will supervise all educational aspects of the program, its direction, content and evaluation, as well as coordination between the various participants in the project.
2. The RTS (Radio and Television Schools) is the training arm of the Moroccan Radio and Television (RTM). They will be in charge of training the teachers, the officials and some of the necessary staff in effective use of the system. They, of course, will also take care of the technical realization of the broadcasting, the broadcasting itself and the production of the programs.
3. The Ministry of Communications will train the project technicians and will provide the necessary technical support, maintenance, supply of spare parts etc.
4. The ONPT will provide, maintain and support the communication network and transmission lines, both terrestrial and satellite. They will be in charge of all equipment, provide the needed licenses and permits for the broadcasting, and will be the licensee for the use of the ARABSAT satellite.
5. The INPT will train the ONPT personnel needed for the project.

6. The OFPPT will provide the various adult training programs needed, such as illiteracy programs, continuous education programs and professional training.

As to the global organizations involved in the project, UNESCO, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the World Bank will help the project by providing funding and equipment which is not available in Morocco. They will also provide expertise in the educational and technological fields not available in Morocco.

Finally the Pilot Project Committee will oversee all activities, coordinate, analyze, evaluate and plan ahead.

Organization

Three provinces were chosen as locations for this pilot project. They are Essaouira, Ouarzazate and El Kalâa des Sraghna. These provinces were chosen because of the high level of illiteracy in their rural populations. The schools in these provinces are known to be neglected and to have high dropout rates. As part of the project organization, each local center of learning will be provided with all the audio-visual technology necessary to participate in the program. Each of the participating provinces will have five such local centers.

On the transmitting end, the programs will originate at the Radio and Television broadcast studios in Rabat and will be funded by the various participating ministries and their educational departments. When the system is not used for transmission of interactive television programs, the network will be available 24 hours a day for internet use, e-mail and transfer of educational data and software transmissions.

Scheduling

[According to this September, 1996 publication,] work on the project will start between April and September 1996 and by the end of that year the educational and the technical teams will be functional.

Budget

The total cost of this pilot project is \$US 5,977,206.

\$US 2,925,500 will come from the Moroccan government. The rest, (\$US 3,051,706) will need to be raised outside the country from international bodies and from the international private sector. The international contribution will include necessary equipment, expert advice and supervision, and other needed funds.

In general, the Moroccan government will pay for the training of the project's personnel, the infrastructure and buildings, the operating costs of the system, broadcasting costs and the educational program production costs. The Moroccan government will also finance creation of the rural learning centers and of the program center in Rabat.

² Ministère de l'Education Nationale

The international budgetary support will pay for training Moroccans abroad, for international experts who will come to Morocco both to train Moroccans and to implement the system. It will also provide for equipment purchases abroad and other such costs.

Implementation

Organization

The local learning sites will be located in existing schools and will accommodate classes of up to fifty students. They will be equipped with all the technology necessary to ensure the success of the program. This will include a television, a VCR, a telephone, a fax machine, a copier and a computer (PC). The necessary connectivity to the interactive network will be provided.

The Center of Presentations will be in Rabat, located in the RTS building. It will be the center for video productions, for transmissions and for the audio interactive part of the program. It will also house the servers needed for e-mail, internet, digital libraries etc.

Technical conception

Signal delivery will be via satellite VAST. The system will use the ARABSAT satellite (or equivalent) and will occupy a bandwidth channel of two Mbps.

[In the long term, when this DE project will support a large number of remote local learning sites, transmitting the signals via satellite will probably be most economical. As far as the smaller pilot project is concerned, it will be more economical to use a ground based cabled network. The two options, satellite vs. cable, were still being considered by the ONPT when I talked with Mr. Banit in 1997.]

Bandwidth allocation

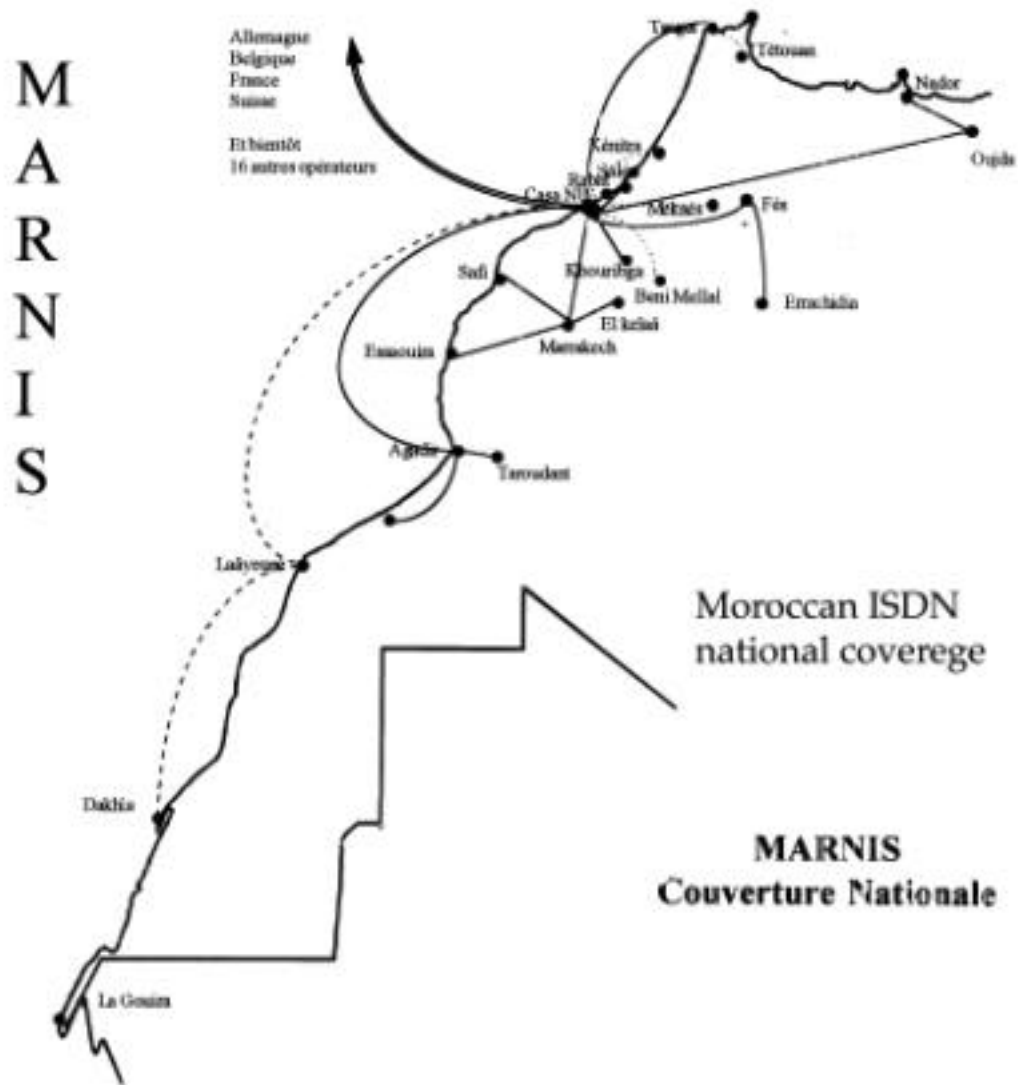
1. The total bandwidth rated at 2 Mbps allocated for transmission will be divided as follows:
2. The distribution channel: the audio visual programming signal will be transmitted digitally via TV broadcasting when available, through satellite or through other available channels. The transmission will be unidirectional compressed signal at a rate of 1664 Kbps (26x64Kbps).
3. The interactive channel: the interactive audio channels will operate between each learning site and the center in Rabat. They will be a bi-directional compressed signal at a rate of 192 Kbps (3x64Kbps).
4. The interactive data channel: the interactive data transmission channel will be a bi-directional line at a rate of 192 Kbps (3x64Kbps) and will be used for down-loading of software, internet access, e-mail etc.

Training

1. The teachers will be trained in the use of the DE systems, in DE practices and methods, in the use of computers, in the use of internet, and in basic audio-visual and interactive techniques.
2. The training for the technical support personnel will be oriented toward the use of interactive DE software (IDES) and all other tools related to this project.
3. Most of the training will be done in Morocco in governmental and private institutions, but some key personnel (coordinator, software engineers etc.) will be trained in other countries and in places where similar programs are already in effect.

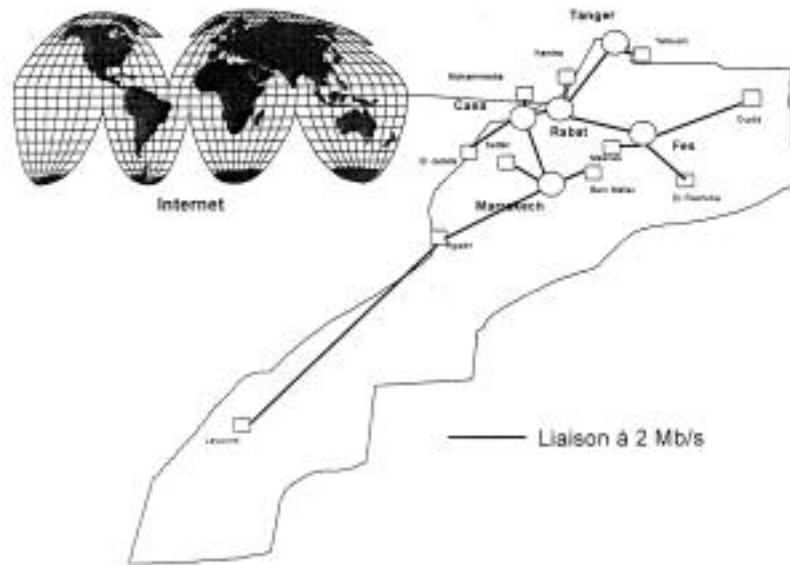
Appendix E
MAPS AND DIAGRAMS

Moroccan ISDN:

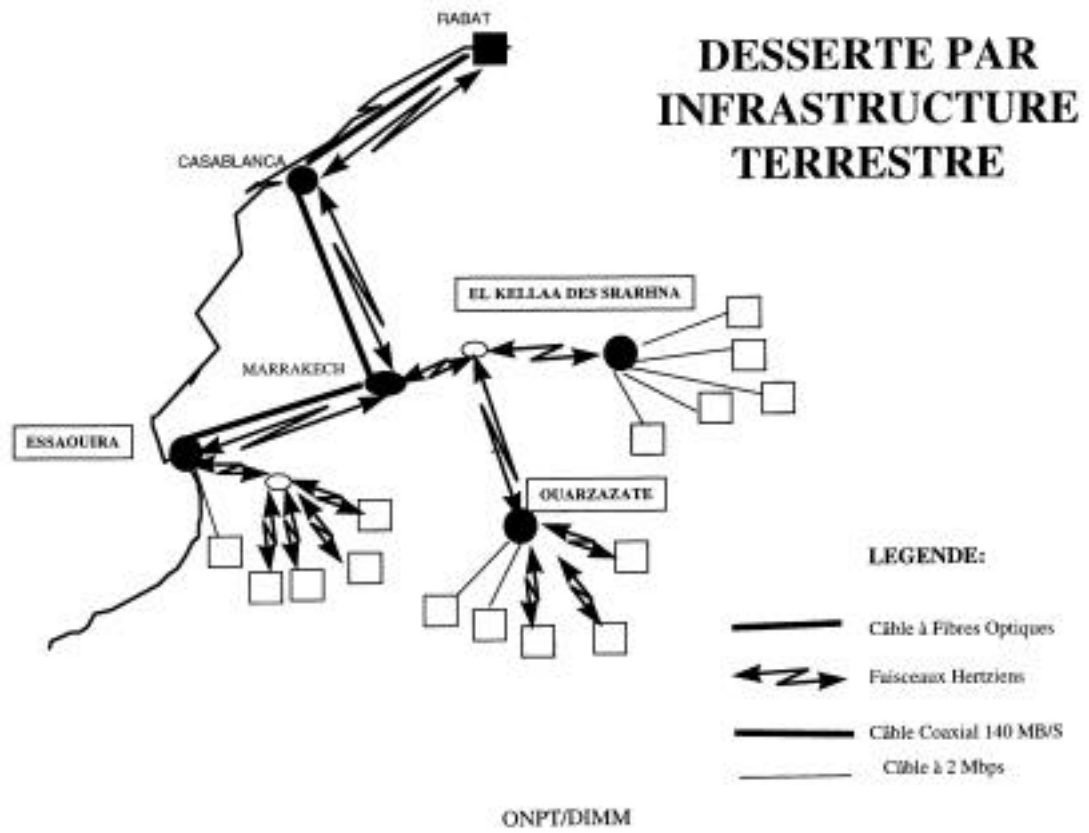


The MARWAN network:

L'architecture du réseau est comme suit:



DE terrestrial transmission option:



DE satellite transmission option:

