



Major Challenges Related to Second Language Research in Canada

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Major challenges

- Teacher shortage
- Teacher qualifications
- Lack of prestige of FSL
- Revitalization of core French programs
- Intensity of instruction in core French
- Fluency/accuracy balance in French immersion
- Teaching resources in French immersion
- Adoption of a common assessment tool
- Inclusion of allophones in FSL programs

Teacher shortage

- Serious FSL teacher shortage, particularly in core programs
- Many teachers leave for the French Immersion classroom or other subjects
- Recent survey showed that nearly 40% of FSL teachers have thought about leaving FSL teaching in the last twelve months



Challenges facing FSL teachers

- High level of French language proficiency
- Excellence in teaching
- Knowledge of interactive, experiential second language teaching methods

Teacher competency profile

- Describes the knowledge, qualifications and experiences ideally required of FSL teachers
- Develops common understanding FSL teaching qualifications for purposes of self assessment, program assessment and review, teacher preparation and recruitment, and professional development
- CASLT currently working on such a profile and the pathways teachers can take

Lack of prestige of FSL

- Negative attitudes have long been documented
- Policy makers, superintendants, principals and guidance counsellors need more information about the importance of linguistic duality in Canadian society
- Need publicity campaign to change public attitudes
- Example of Edmonton Public School Board demonstrates that change is possible

Core French (CF): Program revitalization

- Negative attitudes to French (CF in particular) lead to demoralized and marginalized teaching community
- Need for a national CF study
 - to reevaluate delivery of CF
 - to reevaluate what is taught and how it is taught

Core French: Program intensity

- Longer blocks of teaching time can lead to better learning outcomes for students in CF programs
- New types of programs such as Intensive French can give students a boost in communication skills that motivates them for continued language learning

Intensive French/English

- In effect in Québec for many years now but a relatively recent initiative as Intensive French in the rest of Canada
- Collapsing Grade 5 curriculum into one half of the year
- Experiential task-based learning and literacy development in second language for other half of the year
- Excellent results in terms of language outcomes and motivation

French Immersion: Resources

A recent national survey revealed:

- an overwhelming dissatisfaction with the way in which French culture is represented in current teaching materials
- an urgent need for teaching materials adapted to the language level of their students
- the quality and quantity of library resources and computer software is deemed to be poor

French Immersion: Fluency vs accuracy

- Challenge to encourage fluency in expression and still develop accuracy
- FI students possess a remarkable degree of fluency compared to their counterparts in CF; however, many errors remain uncorrected and fossilize
- Need more classroom-based research to determine the types of feedback that are most effective for oral and written production

National framework for languages: Need

There is no common tool to:

- define language proficiency at identified levels of communicative competence on a continuum across languages and contexts
- compare individual progress in language performance along a continuum
- provide a common understanding in Canada about what it means to possess functional proficiency in another language and objectively tracking progress towards that goal

National framework for languages:

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

- can be used by each province and territory as a point of reference for language teaching and assessment, without imposing a particular curriculum, teaching methodology or standard for achievement
- can provide a bridge between formal education systems, employers and cultural institutions across Canada and beyond into the international arena

National framework for languages: Future

- Approval by the Council of Ministers in Education (CMEC) as a pan-Canadian project
- Develop and promote this project to teachers by means of workshops and website dissemination by CASLT
- Individual provinces are moving ahead on their own projects
- Align frameworks currently in use in Canada with the CEFR
- Explore incorporation of the CEFR level descriptors into the census

Allophones in official second language programs: Current policy

- National and provincial/territorial policies most often do not allow for access to FSL for allophone students
- Allophone students are encouraged to first develop English language skills
- Decision for exclusion is often based on intuition and hearsay evidence, not empirical research

Allophones in official second language programs: Potential

- Allophones appear to be more favourable to linguistic duality than anglophones
- Research shows that allophone students want to study French, have parental support to do so and can be successful
- This information needs to be communicated to policy makers

Major challenges: Summary

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