

Let's Talk: The Communicative Language Teaching Approach in a Grade 6 Late French
Immersion Classroom

by

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This project focused on how the communicative language teaching approach can impact oral language skills to communicate in a second language. I examine the history and context that led to the development of the CLT approach, describe the influence and implications of Vygotsky's social cultural theory for learning both first language (L1) and second language (L2). I also discuss the impact of teacher talk in the first language classroom, talk in the second language classroom, French Immersion and learning vocabulary in context, and conclude with a discussion of the research in second language learning and strategies for instruction. The collection of theories, concepts and research informed my final product, a workshop for parents, entitled: "Supporting My Child in Late French Immersion." The purpose of the workshop is to familiarize parents with the communicative language teaching approach and provide them with information about how they can support student learning inside and outside of school.

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Dedication

“Queda prohibido no sonreír a los problemas, no luchar por lo que quieres, abandonarlo todo por miedo, no convertir en realidad tus sueños.”

- Pablo Neruda -

This project is dedicated to my parents who have made so many sacrifices and from whom I have learned so much. From my mom, I learned compassion, the art of working around obstacles, and to be a strong and resilient woman. From my dad, I learned to work hard, to stand up for myself, and the importance of seeing things through to the end. I am grateful to them both for being wonderful role models to me.

Chapter 1

Introduction

My Personal Journey

“The child learns a foreign language in school differently than he learns his native language ...The child learns his native language without conscious awareness or intention; he learns a foreign language with conscious awareness and intention” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 221).

In this chapter I present, my personal and professional journey that has led me to research about the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach followed by an explanation of CLT and its significance for teaching in the Late French Immersion (LFI) context. Next, I discuss the French Immersion program in the Canadian context and then make connections to the BC curriculum. I close with a few of the questions that guided me in conducting my literature review.

As a Late French Immersion (LFI) teacher with 12 years of classroom experience, I have always been interested in diverse strategies to develop oral language skills in students who are at the beginning stages of their language acquisition. I believe that creating an environment that is engaging, relevant and safe will lead to students who are more inclined to explore and collaborate in the second language (L2) classroom. When I began my Master of Education program, I knew that I wanted my final project to be focused primarily on how to motivate learners to engage in listening and speaking. At times, even with using a variety of strategies and commentary to encourage oral development, it has been difficult to gain the trust and enthusiasm of my students. My main goal in teaching is to motivate students in such a way as to develop a love and a passion for their L2. Often, it is the students who are risk takers who dominate the class conversations and activities thus developing their oral language skills the quickest. My

coursework and readings, have revealed to me the importance of student engagement in conversation. Learners need purposeful tasks that afford them with opportunities to use language authentically in meaningful contexts. I came to understand that by having students engage in conversation, it would eventually lead them to provide and obtain information, to express their feelings and emotions, and, eventually, to exchange opinions with peers in their second language.

Understanding the Communicative Teaching Approach (CLT)

During my studies, I identified the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach as a pedagogically sound way to approach the teaching of a second language. CLT is not a specific methodology; rather it is an approach to second language learning based on a series of principles to guide a teacher's instruction in the classroom. The term CLT is used in various ways in the literature. For the purposes of my paper, influenced by the work of Richards and Rogers (1986, 2001) and Nunan (1991), I define CLT as an approach which focuses on developing students' communicative competence through collaborative activities in the target language, the use of authentic texts, and incorporating personal experiences into language lessons (Nunan, 1991). A CLT approach considers how students best learn language, the strategies and tools that facilitate this learning, and the roles of the teacher and the learners in the classroom (Pan, 2013).

The CLT approach is significant in that it invites active student participation, construction of meaning in context, and student interaction and discovery. The CLT approach considers how students learn language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the role of the teacher and the learner in the classroom (Richards & Rogers, 1986, 2001). This teaching approach encourages students to negotiate meaning through real objects and

events using authentic materials and authentic experiences so students may also learn about the target culture.

As a result of my growing understanding of CLT, I integrated more interactions between students, created meaningful and purposeful opportunities for learners, and revised how and when I provided students with feedback. Drawing on my many years of experience, I noted how this approach resulted in improvements in students' confidence, oral language skills, interest and motivation. For my project, based on my literature review and professional experience, I have created a presentation that invites parents of late French immersion (LFI) students to explore the CLT approach so they may better understand this approach and the strategies used to develop oral language skills in a LFI program, and encourages them to become active participants inside and outside the classroom.

The Late French Immersion Context in Canada

The Late French Immersion (LFI) program offered across Canada begins in Grades 6 or 7 and offers students the opportunity to develop second language proficiency. Most students will have already acquired language proficiency in reading, writing, listening and speaking in their first language (L1) during the first six years of schooling in English. The developmental interdependence hypothesis proposed by Cummins (1979) explains that the L2 competency students' can attain is partially dependent on "the type of competency the child has developed in L1 at the time when intensive exposure to L2 begins" (Cummins, 1979, p. 233). As suggested by Vygotsky (1978), students use previously acquired knowledge to facilitate new understandings. As a result, transfer from English supports students' in the acquisition of French (Ma, 2013). In LFI students may take a more active role in choosing to enter a FI program. However, it should

be noted that students first entering a LFI program often suffer from frustration and stress as it is more demanding to learn a L2 through all core subject areas (Alberta Education, 2010).

The development of oral expression is the primary focus in the early years of a LFI program so that students may begin to communicate with their teachers and peers in the L2. Students then continue to build their language proficiency through to Grade 12 where many will develop functional fluency. To develop oral competency in French, students need to be exposed to authentic communication opportunities through a wide range of teaching tools and strategies.

Curriculum Connections

The Ministry of Education in British Columbia is currently reviewing and updating their curriculum documents through a series of drafts. The redesigned curriculum strives for more flexibility and encourages competency-driven and concept-based lessons while remaining inclusive of all learners in the classroom (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2013). The Grade 6 Late French Immersion curriculum focuses on developing effective communicators through holistic learning. The curriculum draft recommends that special attention be given to students' needs, motivations, and pace of learning. "Students are encouraged to interact, to interpret the meaning of the messages and implement communication strategies in [oral and written] French" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 1). Further, the Late French Immersion Program in British Columbia is strongly grounded in exploring, recognizing, and appreciating other French cultures while developing L2 (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2013). A communicative language approach to teaching LFI strongly aligns with the language requirements put forth by the Ministry. Clearly, culture and identity development of the student remain at the heart of an effective immersion program. Students who study in the French

Immersion program come to understand that language is a resource and a tool that will deepen their understanding of themselves and the francophone world around them.

The LFI core competencies are organized around four Big Ideas:

1. *L'acquisition d'une nouvelle langue permet de mieux comprendre le fonctionnement de sa langue maternelle.* [The acquisition of a new language allows students to better understand their mother tongue.]
2. *La capacité à communiquer dans une nouvelle langue s'améliore en prenant des risques dans cette langue.* [The ability to communicate in a new language is improved by taking risks in that language.]
3. *Les mots sculptent la pensée; plus on a de vocabulaire, plus la pensée s'enrichit,* [Words sculpt thought; the greater the vocabulary, the more that thinking is enriched.]
4. *Dans un récit, chaque évènement est susceptible d'avoir une conséquence sur l'intrigue qu'on peut anticiper en prêtant attention à des indices précurseurs,* [In a story, each event may impact the plot. These events can be anticipated by paying attention to clues in the text.] (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 1).

To facilitate oral language development, students should engage in activities and experiences that will encourage them to develop communication, to understand and relate to other cultures, and to become informed and involved citizens who thoughtfully listen and take risks. The communicative approach to teaching a second language offers educators the opportunity to incorporate the above criteria through engagement in conversation and purposeful tasks that afford learners with opportunities to use authentic language in a meaningful context.

Guiding Questions

The following questions guided me in the literature review that follows in Chapter 2: (1) How may the communicative language teaching approach impact oral language skills development? (2) What are effective teaching strategies for developing oral language skills in a late French immersion (LFI) program?

In Chapter 2, I elaborate on the communicative language teaching approach, and outline the theoretical and conceptual frameworks including sociocultural theory, language learning, d/Discourse, and the influence of L1 on L2. I examine how to support vocabulary growth through topics including teacher talk in the first language classroom, talk in the L2 classroom, learning vocabulary in a FI context, and L2 strategies for instruction.

In Chapter 3, I describe the workshop presentation I created for parents. The two goals of the presentation are to: (1) inform and engage parents about the CLT approach, and (2) build rapport with parents in particular by discussing ways to support their child. Further, I explain how the content of the presentation connects with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, reflect on my learning, and suggest recommendations for further research. I conclude with a reflection on my journey through the Master's final project.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In this literature review I focus on the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach in the late French immersion classroom. The communicative language teaching approach may be best explained as a set of principles that ultimately focuses on interaction as the way to teach and learn language (Canale, 1983). In this chapter, I first explain CLT and discuss the historical context that led to the development and popularity of CLT. Following a description of the influence and implications of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory for learning both first language (L1) and second language (L2), I discuss Halliday's (1969) and Wells's (2006, 2007, 2008) work on language learning, Gee's (1989) work on d/Discourses, and Cummins's (1979) developmental interdependence hypothesis. These theoretical and conceptual foundations are followed by a discussion of the research in second language learning, especially the work by Cummins (1979, 2011), as well as the limited research on French Immersion.

Communicative Language Teaching

CLT is described as a broad *approach* to teaching, rather than as a teaching *method* with a clearly defined set of classroom practices. In fact, it is most often defined as a group of general principles. David Nunan (1991) posited five features of CLT that have been primarily accepted as the approach's core elements: an emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language; the introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation; the provision of opportunities for learners to focus on not only language but also on the learning process itself; an enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning; and an attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom (p. 279). In the classroom, CLT often involves pair and group work that

requires negotiation and cooperation between learners, and fluency-based activities that encourage learners to develop confidence. The CLT approach encourages the use of authentic material and experiences so that students may also learn about the target culture.

Several factors and influences led to the introduction of the Communicative Language Teaching approach (CLT). To begin, the Audiolingual Method was developed during World War II (under the behaviourist model of education), and was a method where students mimicked and memorized language patterns and dialogues through drill exercises (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, 2001). The emphasis was placed on teaching students to listen and speak before they learned to read and write in the L2. Unfortunately, learners had limited control over their learning as the majority of the material covered was heavily teacher-oriented and did not engage learners in the process. Theories of learning moved away from behaviourism, and Chomsky (1965, 1972) coined the term Universal Grammar to describe how core grammar is an innate component of language. Chomsky argued that learning was a predominately internal process of discovery rather than a development predicated by outside influences. As a result, because languages share the same underlying features, students with proper exposure could create language rules for themselves and generate language in configurations they may never have heard modeled. However, Bruner rejected Chomsky's notion that children had an innate predisposition for acquiring language explaining that it was the learner's socialization and interaction with others that promoted language development (Bruner & Watson, 1983). Further, Bruner (1978) posited that the material and instruction used must be at the level of the student to provide scaffolding opportunities for learning. Moreover, sharing activities and revisiting material regularly as students acquire and construct knowledge would result in deeper comprehension and longer retention (Bruner, 1960; Bruner & Watson, 1983).

The introduction of the concept of communicative competence by Dell Hymes (1966) significantly influenced L2 pedagogy and the eventual adoption of CLT in classrooms. The ultimate goal of language teaching is to convey *communicative competence* in students, the basis of which resides first in theories of L1 language learning. Hymes (2001) defined it as knowing how to interact and communicate with others appropriately in various situations, and how to make sense of what others say or do when communicating. Communicative competence can be accomplished only by understanding the different purposes and functions of language (Halliday 1969; Vygotsky, 1978), recognizing the Discourse being used in a particular setting (Gee, 1989; Hymes, 2001; Wells, 2007), understanding and producing different types of texts (Cummins, 2011), and using a variety of communication strategies to avoid communication breakdown (Gee 1989; Halliday, 1975; Wells, 2007).

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

Lev Vygotsky.

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory describes learning as a social process that evolves through the integration of social, cultural and biological elements. Vygotsky stressed that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. He believed that students learn on two levels: first, through their interaction with others in a broad range of activities, next, by reflecting on new strategies and knowledge that become integrated into the learner's mental structure (Cross, 2010). Vygotsky's (1978) work emphasizes interaction, negotiation, and collaboration amongst learners in social cultural context. A clear pedagogical implication is that students need to be engaged in activities, talk, and collaborative work no matter whether they are working in L1 or L2.

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57)

As students participate in social interactions they begin to internalize through active reasoning what they know with new ideas or concepts.

One essential feature of learning suggested by Vygotsky (1978) is the zone of proximal development (ZPD) where students play an integral role in learning by interacting and collaborating with peers. "Once these processes are internalized, they become part of the child's independent developmental achievement" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90). Language learning is a socially mediated learning process that involves experts or more knowledgeable others (MKO) and novices. Teachers should recognize that the role of expert is not limited to him or herself, as it can shift to learners who have internalized an aspect of the language. As students' ZPD are recognized, guidance and encouragement from a MKO should be provided to further students' scaffolding. According to Vygotsky (1978), students mediate their learning by collaborating, developing their private speech, and relying on gestures to communicate their ideas. It is implied by Vygotsky's work that interaction and motivation amongst second language learners increases as students begin to internalize their L2 through play and social communication activities. By recognizing a student's current state of development, educators can group children accordingly and identify specific interventions that may support the acquisition of L2.

Halliday and Wells on language learning.

The Australian linguist Halliday (1969, 1975) was also interested in language learning and he shifted the focus of linguistics by identifying seven functions of language: instrumental, used to express basic needs; regulatory, used to give orders; interactional, used to create relationships; personal, used to express feelings and opinions; heuristic, used to understand the environment; imaginative, used for storytelling; and representational, used to convey facts and information (Halliday, 1975). He described language as a system for expressing meaning in context. For language skills to improve, it is vital for learners to play with language, to practice amongst their peers and to test the rules of the language (Halliday, 1969). With respect to the imaginative function of language for example, stories, poems, role-play, and pretend play can inspire students in LFI to expand their knowledge of language.

Wells (2000), who is interested in the dialogic inquiry approach to learning and teaching, identified children's language development as a social and individual achievement. Children develop their first language by listening, sharing, and engaging with family, peers, and caregivers. As they are exposed to a variety of contexts and Discourses, they learn to recognize the forms and patterns of the language that exist in their community. "Language is not encountered or learned as an abstract system of decontextualized rules and definitions. Rather, language occurs as dialogue" (Haneda & Wells, 2008, p. 116). Because this inconspicuous teaching about language cannot be easily replicated in the classroom, children learning a second language require multiple opportunities to engage in dialogic interactions in a variety of contexts in order to access their higher mental functions (Vygotsky, 1978; Wells, 2000). Wells (2007) asserts the importance of considering the needs of the individual as well as the transactions carried out in a social environment. By participating in active verbal engagement, students may

transition from colloquial discourse to academic discourse more comfortably. “Simply by engaging in activities with others, over time children effortlessly learn how to converse appropriately and to produce and comprehend utterances that achieve their intentions” (Haneda & Wells, 2008, p. 117). As students work within their ZPD they begin to conceptualize “the many ways in which an individual’s development may be assisted by other members of the culture, both in face-to-face interactions and through the legacy of artifacts that they have created” (Wells, 2000, p. 57). It stands to reason that encouraging students to collaborate and co-construct meaning through dialogue increases the daily use of speech genres and a greater diversity in the dialogues in which students can participate. Specifically, the more exposure L2 learners have to a variety of discourses, the more they may be able to participate in spontaneous communication outside the classroom.

Gee on discourses/Discourses.

Gee has contributed significantly to L1 and L2 acquisition by studying communication from a cultural perspective. He defines Discourse as “a sort of 'identity kit' which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk, and often write, so as to take on a particular social role that others will recognize” (Gee, 1990, p. 142). Gee (1989) defines our primary Discourses, how we talk, listen, write, read, act, interact, and value, as our original, home-built identity. Our secondary Discourses are described as the interaction, including our words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, gestures, body position, we share with the community outside our home (Gee, 1989). A French Immersion (FI) classroom provides students with the time and the structure necessary to develop language proficiency in all subject areas thus supporting the development of a secondary Discourse. According to Bialystok, Peets, and Moreno (2014), students develop language proficiency gradually as they master the structure of

language, accumulate vocabulary, and develop efficient access to words and concepts. In effect, as the learners' language develops, and their secondary Discourses expand, FI students will, ideally, with practice, confidently transfer this knowledge in a social context when communicating with those who have French as their primary Discourse. Even in the early stages of Late French Immersion (LFI) students begin developing a secondary Discourse as they experiment with the functions of language.

Strong evidence (Cummins 2011; Vygotsky 1978; Wells 2000) indicates that LFI students need opportunities to explore the language in a "real" setting, as real language cannot be learned exclusively in the classroom (Gee, 1989). In order for LFI students to truly experience the social Discourse of those whose primary Discourse is French, they will need to expand beyond the Discourses learned in the classroom and participate in authentic practicing opportunities. Clearly, the classroom alone does not provide students with the elements required to participate in such a context, therefore students need the chance to scaffold and apprentice with people who have already mastered the Discourse (Gee, 1989). The use of French needs to be practiced in multiple settings since a person cannot gain admittance into a Discourse if people do not have regular, authentic interactions in the community (Gee, 1989).

By developing fluency in L2, learners will more likely keep their listeners engaged, which will result in more exposure to the target language. For exposure to occur, Gee (1989) emphasizes that students need to be active participants in various Discourses. Doing so will result in the learner becoming fluent in several Discourses.

Most L2 learners recognize that learning a language is not based solely on motivation but also on the influence of relationships and the power in the social world (Gee, 1989). Although students desire a sense of social belonging, if there is a conflict between students'

primary Discourse and the Discourse in which they would like to participate, full fluency will not be achieved and they will continue to be perceived as an outsider (Gee, 1990). For French Immersion to be successful, the learner should participate in authentic interactions with fluent speakers of the target language.

Cummins on the influence of L1 on L2.

Cummins (1979) was also interested in the influence of relationships inside and outside of school. Specifically, he observed the differences between social and academic language and the role of L1 on L2. Cummins's (1979) developmental interdependence hypothesis (DIH) recognizes the influence first language (L1) competence has on second language (L2) acquisition. If the development of vocabulary and concepts of the L1 continue outside of school, L2 acquisition will likely be positive and not affect L1 proficiency. However, if the student has a weak understanding about language in L1, success in L2 may be limiting. Consequently, Cummins (1979) asserts that "there is an interaction between the language of instruction and the type of competence the child has developed in his L1 prior to school" (p. 233). In order to create optimum learning conditions for all students, teachers should acknowledge and be inclusive of learners' cultural identity, Discourse, and ZPD.

According to Cummins (1979), students in the LFI community may take up to two years to develop their Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). These are the skills required for basic communication and social interaction. It may take a further five to seven years of immersion before students fully develop their Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) skills. CALP is the ability to understand academic language, perform complex cognitive operations, and think abstractly. Because academic language is found primarily in texts, print access and literacy engagement is strongly related to the development of reading comprehension

skills (Cummins, 2011). As a result, second language learners need substantial time and opportunities to explore texts across a range of genres. Understanding these implications may impact classroom practice through sustained engagement, increased social interaction, and animated discussions.

Talk in the L1 Classroom

Recognizing the influence that L1 has on L2 acquisition emphasizes the importance of talk in the L1 classroom. As L1 students begin to read for deeper meaning and contribute to class discussions they may improve the accuracy of their written work, develop their vocabulary, and increase their general knowledge (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986). However, for students to create their own understanding they need to participate in dialogic discourse with teachers and peers (Wells, 2007; Wells & Arauz, 2006). In this section, I examine how dialogic discourse, specifically teacher talk, may support vocabulary growth in a L1 classroom and in some ways, by implication in a L2 classroom.

Since students learn through verbal interaction (Vygotsky, 1978; Wells, 1993), teacher talk plays a significant role in the beginning stages of second language acquisition. Two types of discourse patterns have been found to dominate most classrooms: initiation-response evaluation (IRE), and initiation-response-follow-up (IRF). The IRE format begins with teacher initiated discourse that has a known response (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). As students answer, the teacher provides positive (e.g., “Right”) or negative (e.g., “No, that is not right”) feedback/evaluation of the response. This pattern of dialogue is not collaborative since teachers decide with whom they will interact and if the response provided is valid. Wells (1993) reconceptualised the IRE pattern by changing the third part of the discourse, evaluation, to

follow-up. He reasoned that students would be able to elaborate, clarify, or confirm their answers through further discussion thus increasing student participation in classroom activities.

However, as indicated above, teacher talk can also be a form of dialogic inquiry (Wells, 2000) when teachers and students engage in a discussion to co-construct knowledge and understanding. Scaffolded teacher talk is an example of a verbal interaction where students may be guided to discover the evidence, guidance and support they need to create their own understanding. Sharpe (2008) conducted a case study in which she described the discourse employed by a middle school teacher in an introductory History class during a unit on Ancient Egypt. Participants were 25 boys aged 12-13 years who were enrolled in an independent boys' school in Sydney, Australia. Over the course of 20 weeks, excerpts from two History lessons revealed how the teacher attempted to mediate the students' learning through a number of identified talk strategies. He supported student learning by guiding them through a variety of information sources to develop essential questions and enduring understanding. "When a classroom teacher orally unpacks the 'buried reasoning' of written work, he provides his students with everyday understandings that can then form the basis of more complex thinking" (Sharpe, 2008, p. 135). Data collected included lesson transcripts, observation field notes, and notes from teacher interviews. Data were analyzed using analytical tools informed by Systemic Functional Linguistic theory (Sharpe, 2008). The findings indicated that teacher talk strategies support student comprehension in the process of historical inquiry. The strategies employed included repeating, recasting (correcting student errors by simply restating in the correct form) and appropriation (constructing meaning from personal experience and information learned) (Sharpe, 2008). As a result, students developed technical language, and modified their questioning. The

researcher concluded that teacher talk contributed to students' reasoning and creating more complex connections with the subject matter.

Through the analysis of this study several teacher talk strategies were identified as tools to improve students' investigative approaches, generate relevant questions, and appropriate vocabulary associated with a specific inquiry. Next I discuss the features of authentic oral interaction in a second language classroom.

Talk in the L2 Classroom

In the context of the communicative language teaching approach in a L2 classroom, the teacher is often regarded as a facilitator since student-to-student interaction is as important as teacher-to-student communication. The Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996) posits that students who interact regularly with competent speakers in the target language may acquire the L2 with greater ease and at a quicker rate. Long (1996) explains that as learners engage in negotiation of meaning during oral interactions, they receive feedback that allows them to modify their oral language production during an exchange. Effective interactions are authentic exchanges of ideas (Cummins 2011; Hymes, 2001; Vygotsky 1978; Wells 2000). It is through 'real' interactions that students learn to engage effectively in various Discourses (Gee, 1989).

In an effort to further understand the importance of authentic interactions, Rivera (2010) conducted an action research project about the development of communication standards and citizenship. By observing the use of task-based learning, he described four samples of oral communication exchanges that occurred in English foreign language classrooms. The first exchange was script-based, the second a student survey, the third an initiation-response-feedback (IRF) exchange, and finally, a pedagogical conversation between teacher and student. His goal was to develop a set of basic criteria for educators for making informed pedagogical and

practical decisions in their EFL learning activities. Participants involved in the first three exchanges were seven Grade 6 students enrolled in public secondary school classrooms in Montería, Colombia. The fourth exchange was conducted by Seedhouse (2007) and reflected upon by Rivera (2010). Students had limited access to technology and material resources. The classes were large in size and instruction was primarily teacher-centered. As a result, the primary source of oral language exposure was from the teacher him/herself. Data were collected through non-participant, unstructured observations, lesson transcripts and audio recordings. Excerpts from the four interactions indicated that the teachers attempted to mediate students' learning through a variety of oral communication exchanges. Results also indicated that although script-based dialogue and teacher-student IRF interactions offer limited EFL proficiency growth, they remain a useful tool for pronunciation practice, developing confidence in handling the sounds of the language, and creating a controlled language practice context. Rivera's (2010) observations support the need for authentic student interaction with competent speakers of L2. The researcher concluded that for authentic oral communication to occur there must be a true, spontaneous exchange of meaning between speakers. This spontaneous exchange is increasingly important if the learner is to develop automatic language and be an active member in a language exchange.

French immersion and L2 proficiency.

Creating authentic learning opportunities where spontaneous exchanges between speakers occur is a fundamental goal in French immersion. Further, in light of Canada's historical position as a dual society, the purposes of French Immersion (FI) are to promote bilingualism as well as an appreciation for the French Canadian culture. Parental support inside and outside the classroom can facilitate learners' L2 studies and contribute to their literacy development. "Making connections between the learners' family environment and the school

seems to be necessary to add meaning to L2 study” (Castillo & Camelo, 2013, p. 56). The theory of “overlapping sphere of influence” (Epstein, 1995, p. 702) describes how school, family and community directly impacts student learning and development. Epstein (1995) explains that, “when parents, teachers, students, and others view one another as partners in education, a caring community forms around students and begins its work” (Epstein, 1995, p. 701). School, family, and teachers need to work collaboratively with the student to instil a desire to learn, to foster good literacy practices, and to model a positive attitude toward second language learning.

As parents create a nurturing, supportive L2 environment for students in the home, the FI classroom provides students with the time and structure necessary to develop language proficiency in all subject areas while encouraging learners to gradually master the structure of language, accumulate vocabulary, and develop efficient access to words and concepts in their L2. In a CLT classroom, the teacher creates scaffolding opportunities so students can interpret their rich learning experiences. As research has demonstrated, language cannot be taught in isolation (Gee, 1989; Halliday, 1969; Vygotsky, 1978). One strategy for developing oracy in L2 is through text-based literacy. In this way, students can develop their oral competency through their reading and written literacy experiences. As a result, “written literacy and oral literacy can be seen as developing simultaneously, backstrapping each other to build a more meaningful and efficient scaffold for language acquisition” (Ewart & Straw, 2010, p. 188) Next, I examine the role of text-based literacy in the development of oracy in two French immersion classrooms.

Ewart and Straw (2010) conducted a pair of qualitative case studies in two neighbouring schools where they described the pedagogical practises employed by two Grade 1 French Immersion teachers in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Participants in school A included seven boys and six girls who were enrolled in a 100% French immersion program. Participants in school B included

12 boys and 12 girls who were enrolled in a 70% French immersion program (the remaining 30% was used for English language instruction). Over the course of eight weeks, observations indicated that the teachers attempted to scaffold students' language learning through literacy instruction. Teacher A supported language learning by providing instructional scaffolding. The strategies she employed included questioning, expanding on the students' output, repetition, miming, modelling, and paraphrasing. She saw her approach as teacher-directed but student-centered. Alternatively, Teacher B viewed her role in the classroom as facilitator and "placed the acquisition of literacy in the hands of the children" (Ewart & Straw, 2010, p. 193). The strategies employed by Teacher B were student driven with learning centres, some occasional choral reading, and sporadic conversation around phonemic awareness. Teacher B believed "the children were responsible for their own learning, and they were given much freedom in deciding whether they would participate in the learning centres" (Ewart & Straw, 2010, p. 194). Data collected included research field notebooks, audio-video recordings, and audio recordings. The data were analyzed using a constant comparative method. Results indicated that Teacher A's students were significantly more competent in French. This finding could be attributed to the students being on task more regularly, and the teacher's emphasis on students speaking in French at all times. "Her children used their second language for a variety of purposes: learning to read, write, speak, and listen as well as learning new concepts and constructing new knowledge" (Ewart & Straw, 2010, p. 196). Alternatively, Teacher B's students, seemed to understand oral French but struggled with their output as "their spoken French was limited to repeating modelled sentence" (Ewart & Straw, 2010, p. 196). This study is significant as it demonstrates that integrating language across the curriculum and teaching language as a whole rather than as a separate skill may facilitate language learning. More specifically, the simultaneous development

of written literacy and oracy provides the learner access to more diverse contexts thus enabling them to develop their second-language competencies.

Although these findings are encouraging, it is important to consider the challenges that some educators face when implementing a balanced literacy-based approach in an immersion milieu. Cammarata and Tedrick's (2012) year long case study highlighted the experiences of three language teachers who had successfully completed a year long professional development program designed to expose immersion teachers to the importance of content and language in curricular planning and instruction and to provide them with valuable tools. Teacher A of this study was a Grade 4 educator who taught in a one-way (foreign language) Spanish immersion program; Teacher B was a Grades 7/8 educator who taught in a one-way French middle school continuation program; and Teacher C was a Grades 9-12 Social Studies educator who taught in a two-way (dual language) Spanish high-school continuation program. All participants had a minimum of five years teaching experience in an immersion setting. Data sources for this study included oral texts collected during two interviews with each of the three teachers involved, as well as two "lived experience descriptions" (LED) of the teacher's experience in the form of a journal (Cammarata & Tedrick, 2012, p. 256). On each occasion, participants were asked to describe one recent classroom experience where they had attempted to integrate content and language. Once these data were analyzed, the researchers extracted "incidental as well as potentially essential constituents (themes) that could be further explored in follow-up interviews" (Cammarata & Tedrick, 2012, p. 256).

As a result of this investigation, five key elements arose that defined the understanding of the three immersion teachers (Cammarata & Tedrick, 2012). First, the educators realized that they needed to see themselves as content and language teachers in all subject areas. Envisioning

themselves as content and language educators remains a significant challenge, as some concepts taught are quite complex in comparison to the limited language knowledge of the students and finding a balance between teaching new vocabulary and new concepts can be quite difficult. Secondly, all three educators indicated that they felt pressure due to time constraints, lack of resources, and school district demands and expectations. Third, the teachers expressed a clear sense of isolation. They verbalized a concern for the lack of support and understanding from other colleagues, from the program, and from the district. Fourth, teachers realized that content and language were interdependent. Finally, all three educators recognized that by attempting to balance content and language they became aware that the two needed to be taught simultaneously. This notion is strongly supported by Lyster and Ballinger (2011), who believe that non-linguistic curricular content such as geography or science should be taught to students through the medium of a language that they are concurrently learning as an additional language.

To conclude, both studies indicated that as the material becomes cognitively more challenging, so too do the linguistic demands. If students are not proficient in their language abilities, they will not be able to access or engage the content as they move up through the grade levels (Schleppergell, 2004). Finally, as indicated by Cammarata and Tedrick's (2012) case study, all three teachers expressed difficulty in identifying what language was most valuable in the context of content instruction. Determining how content and language interrelate and what binds them together is at the center of immersion teachers' concerns and is what challenges them the most.

Ewart and Straw (2010) concluded that linguistic and conceptual skills evolve together and that a literacy based instruction approach looks promising in FI. Cammarata and Tedrick (2012) agreed with this finding explaining that while some immersion teachers of upper

elementary grades report concerns with students' language proficiency and their ability to engage in more complex academic content, it is essential to build students' vocabulary and general knowledge through a variety of activities and collaborative work. Next, I discuss possible strategies for developing and encouraging oral production in L2.

L2 strategies for instruction.

The communicative language teaching approach suggests that developing oracy is an active process where students construct knowledge through fluency and accuracy practice (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, 2001). Proper pronunciation plays a significant role in someone's ability to be understood in his or her second language (L2). Students' success at acquiring a second language is dependent on their readiness and their motivation toward improving their pronunciation (Lord, 2008). As a result, explicit pronunciation training in conjunction with varied classroom activities that stress real language use in a meaningful authentic context can be beneficial. Vidcasts, a term that comes from combining videos and podcasts and are usually distributed online through RSS feeds, are an effective tool for improving pronunciation, working on listening comprehension skills, and reviewing vocabulary. Whether students are listening to, watching, or creating a vidcast, this metacognitive experience can empower learners to develop their language skills in a self-directed manner.

Swain's (1985) theory of output, which contends that when a L2 learner fails to communicate their message they may build upon their linguistic knowledge by trying different utterances, lends itself well to the use of viddcasts in the development of L2 pronunciation skills since learners can listen to themselves multiple times, edit their output, and modify their pronunciation. Students can also receive feedback from classmates and teachers, providing them with another opportunity to reflect on newly acquired language. This output gives the learner an

opportunity to control and internalize their new linguistic knowledge.

Finally, viddcasts are a medium that can provide authentic interactions with native speakers, thus encouraging the social and cognitive development of learners. This communicative language teaching approach may help students learn about the history and culture of the target language while providing opportunities to improve listening comprehension skills, and identify new vocabulary and grammar structures (Ting, 2014). Listening to native speakers also helps raise students' awareness of the importance of proper intonation resulting in improved pronunciation and comprehensibility.

Students can repeatedly review a vidcast from the comfort of their homes, or create one in the privacy of their bedrooms. Student-generated vidcasts can be used to practice listening, speaking, and writing in the L2 (Ting, 2014). Learners value creative, authentic experiences that can contribute to their language development (Green, Inan, & Mausahk, 2014). Moreover, working in collaborative communities can improve students' attitude and motivation toward pronunciation in L2. Subsequently, vidcasts are an authentic way for students to find their voice and develop their second language fluency.

Learning through vidcasts can reduce student anxiety and create a sense of belonging in the learning community (Green et al., 2014). Green et al. (2014) conducted a study that explored the effectiveness of student-generated vidcasts in an English as a second language (ESL) classroom. Participants were 16 English language learners enrolled in a Grade 6 ESL reading class in the southwestern United States. Eight students were selected using within-case sampling, and two participants were selected using maximum variation sampling. Participants were organized into four groups of four and their task was to complete three vidcast projects. Each project was divided into four sections. In the first section, participants read a portion of the

assigned novel and collected vocabulary and ideas to explore in their group vidcast. In the second session, students held discussions and used this time for think-alouds in order to define and contextualize new vocabulary. During the third session, participants used the knowledge collected from their previous sessions and created a storyboard and script for their vidcast. Participants used the final session to shoot and edit their vidcast and post them on their blogs. In this case study, researchers used three sources to collect data: artifacts, including storyboards, note cards, and unedited videos; observations from field notes, digital video, and an observation protocol; and semi-structured interviews completed at the end of the instructional unit. Data were analyzed using the constant comparative method for grounded theory research. Results showed that students collaborated effectively when they rotated assigned roles and responsibilities. The researchers concluded that participants were motivated to prepare and revise their work more carefully because it was going to be seen by a wider audience. Also, students were motivated to learn English and develop their vocabulary because they wanted to communicate in their L2. Finally, participants valued the freedom and creativity the vidcast project allowed. This study is significant because it demonstrated that students value creative, authentic experiences that can contribute to their language development.

As demonstrated in the study above, vidcasts are an effective activity for communicating through interaction in the target language, focusing on language and the learning process, and creating meaningful language (Nunan, 1991). Next, I examine how content-based instruction, an offshoot of the CLT approach, can encourage successful teaching and learning of the target language. Brinton, Snow and Wesche (2004) define content-based instruction “as the integration of content with language-teaching aims” (p. 2). Content and formal linguistic features of the L2 are taught through the use of authentic texts (Brinton et al., 2004). This integration is

particularly important in a LFI context as all academic subject matter and second language skills are taught in French. As a result, content-based instruction allows learners to focus on acquiring information *through* the L2.

A study by Pessoa, Hendry, Donato, Tucker and Lee (2007) investigated how content-based instruction can positively impact foreign language learning. Specifically, their study examined how teachers' discursive practices can engage students in learning language and content. Pessoa et al. (2007) conducted a qualitative study in a suburban middle school where they described the pedagogical practises employed by two Grade 6 Spanish content-based foreign language teachers in Pennsylvania, USA. Participants included 25 students in Class A and 26 students in Class B who were enrolled in a daily 40-minute Spanish science class. Both classes were observed over the course of a year, and four lessons were videotaped and transcribed. Data were collected through classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student writing assessments that were evaluated using a modified version of the ACTFL presentational mode of communication rubric for intermediate learners (Pessoa et al., 2007). Through discourse analysis, the researchers attempted to isolate discourse features including language-related talk and content-talk, conversational features of interpersonal communication, the use of English, and teacher feedback and error correction (Pessoa et al., 2007). Their goal was to demonstrate how these four features shaped content-based discussion and promoted L2 development.

Analysis of data indicated that while both teachers relied on some initiation-response evaluation (IRE), Teacher A also displayed initiation-response-follow-up (IRF) exchanges by regularly asking open-ended questions. These IRF exchanges prompted students to elaborate on a topic and make meaning in Spanish. Additionally, in Class A, 33% of the tasks and discussions were related to the academic content, compared to 11% in Class B. As a result, the students of

Teacher A outperformed the students of Teacher B in every category of the writing assessment including function, text, impact, vocabulary, comprehension, and language control (Pessoa et al., 2007). The researchers concluded that educators should include explicit language objectives determined by the academic subject matter and connected to the content being taught. They also stated that teachers need to ask more open-ended questions about the academic topic thus leading to conversations with students in the L2. Finally, Pessoa et al. recommended reducing the amount of English used in class can support L2 development. According to Pessoa et al. (2007), English should be used only “to manage the class, to ensure classroom safety, and to give directions for tasks that may be too difficult in the target language” (p. 116). This study is significant as it demonstrated that content-based instruction can provide real-world context for teaching language. Further, effective content-based instruction includes discursive practices that promote and develop students’ use of language through conversation. Clearly, content-based instruction encourages the use of authentic texts, develops meaningful language to support the learning process, and creates opportunities for conversation in varied contexts that promote language learning.

Summary

As is evident by the literature review, research illustrates that following the principles of the communicative language teaching approach involves innovative approaches to teaching and learning a second language. The literature highlights the importance of communicative competence and negotiating meaning to foster meaningful communication. Overall, the research demonstrates that when teachers implement the communicative approach to their language teaching by including real-world tasks, using authentic language, promoting collaboration, and

creating meaningful and purposeful interactions, they see improvements in real communication, improved accuracy and fluency, and increased student motivation and engagement.

In Chapter 3, I describe the workshop created for parents, make connections between the research literature and the presentation, reflect on learning, and identify areas for future research.

Chapter 3

Workshop Guide: Parental Support in Late French Immersion

Parents naturally want to support their children in a late French immersion program and establishing strong parental participation and collaboration in the classroom can lead to a stronger community of learners. “Effective parent community and school involvement programs should involve two-way communication, enlist support of the community, and expand opportunities for parent involvement” (Castillo & Camelo, 2013, p. 59). Appendix A features the PowerPoint workshop entitled: “Supporting My Child in Late French Immersion” which encourages parents to become language learning advocates and generous supporters of their children’s school experience. The aim of the workshop is to inform parents about the communicative language teaching approach and how they can support student learning inside and outside of school. In this chapter I explain the rationale that led to the creation of this PowerPoint presentation and describe how it will be implemented. Next, I describe how the workshop’s content and activities are consistent with the predominant aspects of the literature review in Chapter 2, particularly on talk in the classroom, French immersion and L2 proficiency, and L2 strategies for instruction. Finally, I conclude with a reflection on what I have learned from developing this product and identify implications for future research.

Rationale and Design of the Presentation

Research has demonstrated that parental support inside and outside the classroom is an integral part of L2 literacy development (Caesar & Nelson, 2013; Castillo & Camelo, 2013; Gerena, 2011). Parents of students studying in a L2 often feel confused and nervous about how they can best support their children. This workshop will alleviate some of the confusion by

guiding parents through a communicative activity, explaining the main goals of the communicative language teaching approach, and providing parents with strategies and resources. The 60 minute workshop is designed for first year late French immersion parents. It will be presented during the ‘Meet the Teacher’ evening held at the beginning of the school year. This time has traditionally been used to connect with parents, explain school and classroom expectations and procedures, and set the tone for the year.

Connecting Practice with Theory: PowerPoint Slide Descriptions

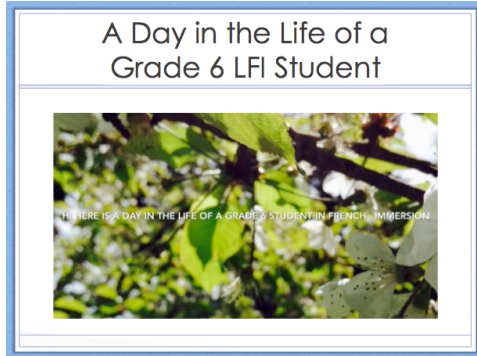
Building a positive relationship with parents at the beginning of the school year involves communication, active listening, and trust. By working collaboratively, teachers and parents can create a partnership that will ensure a student’s sense of community and learning.

Slide 1: Introduction



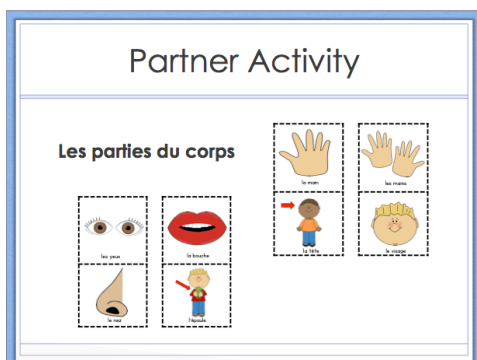
The opening slide will appear on the screen as parents are welcomed into the class. This title was selected to highlight the importance of the parent-student relationship. My goal is to have parents reflect on the role they play in their children’s overall learning and specifically in L2 acquisition. I would like them to envision themselves as equal partners in meeting the needs of the L2 learner by providing encouragement and support.

Slide 2: Video



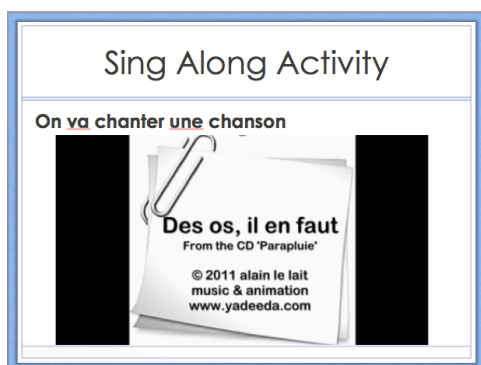
The presentation will begin with a four-minute video entitled “A Day In The Life Of A Grade Six Late French Immersion Student” created by the 2014/2015 Grade 6 LFI class. The intended audience was the Grade 5 students entering late French immersion for the 2015/2016 school year and it was presented at an open house in June, 2015. The purpose of this video is to reveal to parents a typical day for a LFI student, which includes learning all core subjects in French, and participating in exploratory classes like art, dance, and outdoor education in English. Further, the video includes an activity that develops communicative competence through engagement, communication and collaboration (Hymes 2001; Richards & Rogers, 1986, 2001). Once parents have viewed the video, I will explain that they will be participating in a few activities that will demonstrate the types of activities LFI students partake in on a daily basis.

Slide 3: Partner Activity



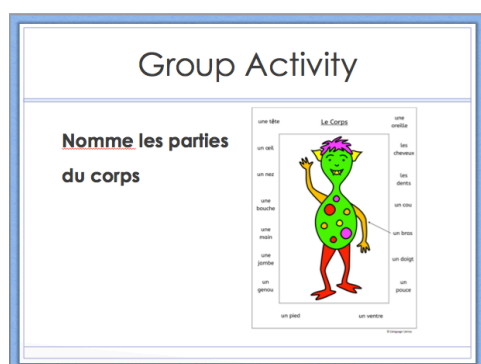
I will begin by explaining that the late French immersion program is designed for students who have little or no prior knowledge of French. As a result, although I begin with basic vocabulary to build student knowledge and confidence, the students progress relatively quickly into more sophisticated language and concepts over the course of the year. In the first activity we will look at the different parts of the body in French. Each parent will receive a card with the name and image of a body part. Parents will be asked to turn to a partner and pronounce the body part they are holding while I circulate and model correct pronunciation. I will also observe parents' body language and comfort level with the activity – this observation period will allow me determine who may need more support and encouragement as the activities progress. Next, I will bring the group together in a large circle and we will review the body parts as a group. Parents will mime and mimic the pronunciation of the body part by pointing to it on their bodies. Finally, I will ask parents Qu'est-ce que c'est (What is it?) and point to a body part. Here, the enduring understanding for parents is that learning new vocabulary can be an interactive process where emphasis is on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language (Nunan, 1991).

Slide 4: Sing Along Activity



Our next activity involves listening to a song about the different body parts where parents will be asked to listen carefully to recognize new vocabulary words. I will explain that this song would be ‘the song of the week’ and that we would sing it as a class everyday. The song would also be posted on the class blog and parents will be encouraged to visit the post regularly to sing along with their child. The goal is to demonstrate to parents that there are short, simple, entertaining activities they can do with their child at home that encourage learners to develop confidence (Nunan, 1991). The hope is that this building block will lead to better communication about what is happening in the class.

Slide 5: Group Activity




In the last activity, parents will work in groups of two or three to label the body parts on the alien. Parents will be reminded that I will continue to circulate listening for pronunciation and helping them along as needed. I will explain that during a typical lesson, we would end with singing a nursery rhyme like “Head and Shoulders” (en français) or playing Mme Dit (Simon Says). I will also explain that LFI applies a spiral approach to the curriculum since language is continuously reintroduced through varied approaches and learning is distributed over a longer period of time (Bruner, 1960). This regular revision of language and concepts should lead to better long-term mastery of vocabulary and language skills. The enduring understanding for

parents is that vocabulary words and grammatical concepts are taught through spiral learning (Bruner, 1960). Students will have multiple opportunities to develop and implement their L2 skills and concepts.

Slides 6 and 7: Learning About Second Language Acquisition

What do we know about second language acquisition?

- students, parents and teachers need to devote sufficient time to literacy instruction and practice
- motivation to learn French contributes to learner's success
- a learner requires 3-7 years to reach second language proficiency




continued...

What do we know about second language acquisition?

Students learn a second language best from having:

- strong support at home for literacy practices
- opportunities to use French in various settings
- teaching practices/strategies that are well-implemented and thoughtfully-designed



Parents will partner up for a few minutes and share how they believe language is learned. Subsequently, I will share a few salient points of what the literature says about second language acquisition including the importance of providing time, patience and support in and outside of school. The essential understanding I wish to convey in these slides is that students need time and opportunities to work within their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Also I wish to convey that in the LFI context, learners expand their understanding by interacting and cooperating regularly with people who are more knowledgeable than themselves (Halliday, 1969; Vygotsky, 1978; Wells, 2000). As described in Chapter 2 children learning a second language require activities that engage them in varied dialogic interactions, that encourage collaboration and social interaction, and that provide opportunities to explore new language (Cummins, 2011; Halliday, 1969; Vygotsky, 1978; Wells, 2000).

Cummins (1979) suggests that students in the LFI program may take up to two years to develop their basic communication and social language skills, and a further additional five to

seven years to develop the ability to understand academic language, perform complex cognitive operations, and think abstractly. In the beginning of a LFI program, students depend on others with more experience in the L2. Building a relationship and working together is vital as it may influence cognitive and linguistic mastery (Vygotsky, 1978). As a result, the enduring understanding I hope to share with parents is the importance of employing positive language about LFI and maintaining a supportive attitude about their child's progress throughout the program. An emphasis will be placed on the idea that strong L1 literacy skills support L2 acquisition (Cummins, 2011), and it is essential for parents to continue encouraging their children to read and write in English regularly.

Slides 8 and 9: Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)




Communicative language teaching (CLT) is an approach to teaching a second language that places an emphasis on students' ability to communicate through collaborative activities, the use of authentic texts, and incorporate personal experiences into language lessons.

What is CLT?

A communicative language teaching approach encourages students to:

- **engage** in meaningful and authentic communication
- **communicate** in a variety of purposes and functions
- **collaborate** with others to solve real-world tasks




As we look at slides 8 and 9, I will ask parents to think about which statement resonates the most with them and ask for a few volunteers to share their thoughts with the group. Next, I will attempt to expand parent background and understanding on the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach. My objective is to demonstrate that as students' language develops their discourse will expand and students will eventually transfer this knowledge to communicate in various social contexts (Gee, 1989). I will explain that it is important for students to learn more than *school* French. Their exposure should include a variety of secondary discourses

through music, visits from French native speakers in our community, and through field trips. I will elaborate on how classroom activities are designed to invite student participation, incorporate authentic materials and experiences, and negotiate meaning and meaningful communication (Nunan, 1991; Richards & Rogers, 1986).

Slides 10 and 11: Why Use the CLT Approach?

Why CLT?


- students learn to communicate through realistic and meaningful interaction in the target language
- students use authentic texts to learn about the functions of language
- learners rely on their personal experiences to contribute to their learning



continued...

Why CLT?

- students attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom
- students focus on developing language and reflect on how they best learn
- activities are often engaging which leads to students being motivated to learn French



Research has demonstrated that communicative approaches to language and learning are effective in content-based instruction (Pessoa et al., 2007; Richards & Rogers, 1986, 2001). Effective content-based instruction is important as LFI teachers often teach French, Math, Social Studies, and Science. The text on slides 10 and 11 describe how using the CLT approach may positively impact student learning. The essential understanding I wish to convey in these slides is that the CLT approach offers flexibility and adaptability for learners in various curricular areas. As learners engage in interactive tasks in various subject areas, their communication strategies and interactional skills should improve (Pessoa et al., 2007; Richards & Rogers, 1986, 2001).

Slide 12: Considerations in Implementing CLT

Some important consideration
in implementing CLT


- listening to each student and giving individual feedback can be time consuming
- acknowledging that CLT may be challenging for students first acquiring the L2 due to their lack of vocabulary
- addressing each and every language problem that students may have during spontaneous exchanges can be difficult

The text conveyed in slide 12 acknowledges the concerns and challenges that parents may have regarding the CLT approach. My intention is to address issues, such as finding time to listen to each student daily, by explaining how I structure the class and how I use the few hours of educational assistant support each week. This time is also an opportunity to find parent volunteers who speak French. Members of the community willing to interact regularly with students in the target language will help them acquire the L2 with greater ease and at a quicker rate (Long, 1996). As learners engage in negotiation of meaning during oral interactions, they receive feedback that allows them to modify their oral language production during an exchange (Long, 1996). The intention is to build a community of parents and learners who will support and participate in learning about the French language and culture. Epstein's (1995) theory of "overlapping sphere of influence" (p. 702) explains that school, family and community directly impact student learning and development. It is essential for parents to understand that we need to work collaboratively with students to instil a desire to learn, to foster good literacy practices, and to model a positive attitude toward second language learning.

Slide 13: CLT in the Classroom

What does CLT look like in the classroom?

- **working collaboratively** to communicate
- **participating** in interactive activities like role-playing
- **engaging** in project-based learning
- **connecting** content to students' lives and interests




In a CLT classroom, instructional structures often include pair and group work that requires negotiation and cooperation between learners. This approach relies on authentic materials and experiences to teach students about the target culture in a meaningful way. As discussed in Chapter 2, teachers and students can also engage in discussions to co-construct knowledge and understanding (Wells, 2000). Moreover, it is through authentic exchanges of ideas and interactions (Cummins 2011; Hymes, 2001; Vygotsky 1978; Wells 2000) that students learn to engage effectively in various Discourses. As I move on to slide 13, I will ask parents to reflect on a middle school experience where they felt engaged in their learning and ask them to describe it to their neighbour. My expectation is that I will hear comments like, “I enjoyed working with a partner,” or “I loved making projects,” or “I made a great presentation on our trip to Seattle and the class loved it.” As we discuss the more positive experiences we have had in school, I would like parents’ enduring understanding to be that the communicative approach encourages collaboration, participation, student engagement, and making personal connections.

Slides 14 and 15: Suggestions for Supporting Your Child

How can YOU help?

- provide support by designating a nightly time and place for studying and homework to foster good literacy practices
- work collaboratively with your child to instill a desire to learn by doing the activities and singing along to the songs posted on the class blog
- model a positive attitude toward second language learning




continued...

How can YOU help?

- be positive about your child's progress and their commitment to learning a second language
- encourage your child to read and write in English regularly
- learn about French culture through music, movies, and eventually student exchanges
- remind your child that you believe in them and that they are courageous for embarking on this new language journey

The importance of relationship building between community and school can not be overstated as this relationship directly impacts students' learning attitude and motivation (Castillo & Camelo, 2013; Epstein, 1995; Gerena, 2011). The essential understanding I wish to convey in these slide is that parents play a significant role inside and outside the classroom and that they can instil positive attitudes towards learning French. As was evident in Chapter 2, research has confirmed that parental involvement impacts language-learning attitude and interest, two aspects crucial to learner development (Castillo & Camelo, 2013; Epstein, 1995; Gerena, 2011). Finally, I will like parents to leave the presentation believing that our partnership can positively impact their children's success in the LFI program and that I hold their children in high esteem.

Slide 16: Parent Resources

Parent 

Castillo, R., & Camelo L.C. (2013). Assisting your child's learning in L2 is like teaching them to ride a bike: A study on parental involvement. *GIST - Education and Learning Research Journal*, need volume (7), 54-73.

Epstein, J. L. (1995). School/Family/Community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 76(9), 701-712.

Alberta Learning. (2011). Yes, you can help! Information and inspiration for French immersion parents. Retrieved from <https://education.alberta.ca/media/6573982/yesyoucanhelp.pdf>

Before ending the presentation, I will provide parents with an opportunity to ask questions, clarify any misconceptions, or comment on what we have discussed. I will end the presentation with a brief list of articles and websites I find particularly interesting and helpful. The information deals specifically with how parents can support their second language learner.

Reflection and Future Implications

My review of the literature has significantly influenced my understanding of the communicative language teaching approach and especially all of the undergirding concepts that make up CLT. While a wide breadth of information is available regarding L1 and L2 acquisition, finding research papers dealing specifically with language acquisition in French immersion was quite challenging. Further, it was difficult to locate primary sources dealing specifically with oracy in the middle school classroom and in French immersion. This lack of literature demonstrates that further research in language acquisition and oral language development in French immersion is required. Specifically, studies could examine how teachers apply the CLT approach in a late French immersion classroom and explore how a student-centered approach to oracy development can increase language acquisition in the LFI classroom.

In Chapter 1, I explained that my interest in pursuing a Master of Education was to reinvigorate my best practices to motivate students in such a way as to develop an appreciation and excitement for their second language. Through my coursework and readings, I recognized that the communicative language teaching approach fits naturally with my philosophy of teaching and determined that my final project would focus on how the CLT approach can provide effective guidelines in a LFI classroom. My goal was to create a presentation that would inform and engage parents who would like to know more about the CLT approach. Developing a presentation for parents, who are often as anxious and excited as their children entering LFI,

made sense and was incredibly satisfying. It was an opportunity to connect with parents who commonly ask, 'How can I help, I don't speak French?' and address the helplessness experienced by many. Designing this product required me to consider the needs of my parents and create a presentation that would be easy to understand and informative. I feel confident that the final product will allow me to demonstrate to parents, in a non-threatening manner, what an experience in LFI looks like, indicate some ways they can support their learner, and remind them that they are still a significant part of their child's learning community.

Completing this project has allowed me the opportunity to create a stronger learning community. Inspired by the literature, my professors, and notably my supervisor, I was able to create a presentation that will benefit parents and myself, and that I am proud of. The CLT approach has impacted my teaching practice in that I now focus on incorporating student experiences and voices into classroom activities, providing opportunities for collaboration with French speakers in the community, and creating meaningful contexts for communication. I have learned that, while the destination is important, it is the journey that truly teaches. I hope to continue developing my pedagogy and use my knowledge and understanding of the communicative language teaching approach to inspire and support second language learners.

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Appendix A

PowerPoint Presentation for Parents of LFI Students

Slide 1: Introduction


Supporting My Child
in Late French Immersion

By Valeskca San Martin

A photograph showing a family of four sitting around a wooden table. A woman on the right is pointing at a book titled 'COUPS DE PÂTE'. A man on the left is also looking at a book. Two children are sitting between them, also engaged with the books. The scene is set in a kitchen or dining area.

Slide 2: Video

A Day in the Life of a
Grade 6 LFI Student



HI THERE IS A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A GRADE 6 STUDENT IN FRENCH IMMERSION

A close-up photograph of green leaves and white flowers, likely cherry blossoms, with a soft focus background. The text 'HI THERE IS A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A GRADE 6 STUDENT IN FRENCH IMMERSION' is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

Link to “A Day in the Life of a Grade 6 LFI Student”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qoo80r1OHqU>

Slide 3: Partner Activity

Partner Activity

Les parties du corps

The slide displays six dashed boxes, each containing an illustration of a body part and its corresponding French label:

- Top-left: Illustration of two eyes, labeled "les yeux".
- Top-right: Illustration of a single hand, labeled "la main".
- Middle-left: Illustration of a mouth, labeled "la bouche".
- Middle-right: Illustration of two hands, labeled "les mains".
- Bottom-left: Illustration of a nose, labeled "le nez".
- Bottom-right: Illustration of a head with hair, labeled "la tête".
- Bottom-center: Illustration of a face, labeled "le visage".

Slide 4: Sing Along Activity

Sing Along Activity

On va chanter une chanson

Des os, il en faut
From the CD 'Parapluie'

© 2011 alain le lait
music & animation
www.yadeeda.com

Slide 5: Group Activity

Group Activity

Nomme les parties
du corps

Slide 6: Learning About Second Language Acquisition

What do we know about second language acquisition?

- students, parents and teachers need to devote sufficient time to literacy instruction and practice
- motivation to learn French contributes to learner's success
- a learner requires 3-7 years to reach second language proficiency


continued...

Slide 7: Learning About Second Language Acquisition

What do we know about second language acquisition?

Students learn a second language best from having:

- strong support at home for literacy practices
- opportunities to use French in various settings
- teaching practices/strategies that are well-implemented and thoughtfully-designed



Slide 8: Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)




Communicative language teaching (CLT) is an approach to teaching a second language that places an emphasis on students' ability to communicate through collaborative activities, the use of authentic texts, and incorporate personal experiences into language lessons.

Slide 9: Communicative Language Teaching

What is CLT?

A communicative language teaching approach encourages students to:


- **engage** in meaningful and authentic communication
- **communicate** in a variety of purposes and functions
- **collaborate** with others to solve real-world tasks

A word cloud graphic with the word "Engagement" in the largest font, surrounded by other related terms like "Collaboration", "Communication", and "Connections".

Slide 10: Why Use the CLT Approach?

Why CLT?

- students learn to communicate through realistic and meaningful interaction in the target language
- students use authentic texts to learn about the functions of language
- learners rely on their personal experiences to contribute to their learning


An illustration of two orange stick figures standing on blue puzzle pieces, symbolizing collaboration and learning through interaction.

continued...

Slide 11: Why Use the CLT Approach?

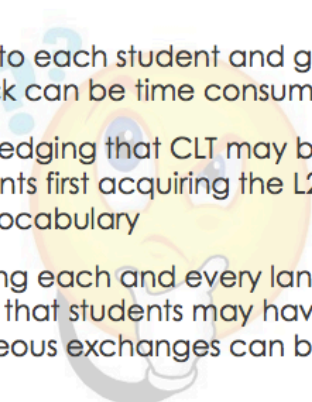
Why CLT?

- students attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom
- students focus on developing language and reflect on how they best learn
- activities are often engaging which leads to students being motivated to learn French

An illustration of two orange 3D human figures standing on blue puzzle pieces. One figure is on a single puzzle piece, while the other is on two puzzle pieces that are connected to each other. The puzzle pieces are scattered around them, suggesting a process of building or connecting ideas.**Slide 12: Considerations in Implementing CLT**

Some important consideration in implementing CLT


- listening to each student and giving individual feedback can be time consuming
- acknowledging that CLT may be challenging for students first acquiring the L2 due to their lack of vocabulary
- addressing each and every language problem that students may have during spontaneous exchanges can be difficult

A large, faint watermark of a smiling face is visible in the background of the slide. The face is yellow with a wide, open-mouthed smile and is surrounded by light blue circular patterns.

Slide 13: CLT in the Classroom


What does CLT look like in the classroom?

- **working collaboratively** to communicate
- **participating** in interactive activities like role-playing
- **engaging** in project-based learning
- **connecting** content to students' lives and interests

**Slide 14: Suggestions for Supporting Your Child**

How can YOU help?

- provide support by designating a nightly time and place for studying and homework to foster good literacy practices
- work collaboratively with your child to instill a desire to learn by doing the activities and singing along to the songs posted on the class blog
- model a positive attitude toward second language learning



continued...

Slide 15: Suggestions for Supporting Your Child

How can YOU help?

- be positive about your child's progress and their commitment to learning a second language
- encourage your child to read and write in English regularly
- learn about French culture through music, movies, and eventually student exchanges
- remind your child that you believe in them and that they are courageous for embarking on this new language journey

Slide 16: Parent Resources

Parent



Castillo, R., & Camelo L.C. (2013). Assisting your child's learning in L2 is like teaching them to ride a bike: A study on parental involvement. *GIST - Education and Learning Research Journal*, need volume (7), 54-73.

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