

Panorama

CASLT Research Series

The Relative Effectiveness of Different Core French Delivery Models

Review of the Research

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L'Association canadienne des
professeurs de langues secondes

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The Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT) promotes the advancement of second and additional language teaching and learning throughout Canada by creating opportunities for professional development, by encouraging research, and by facilitating the sharing of information and the exchange of ideas among second language educators.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Based on a comprehensive literature search and a survey of members of the National Council of the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT) and some of its Board members, this review was undertaken to summarize existing knowledge about modes of delivery of core French across Canada. The focus was on the relative effectiveness of different formats for core French.

This review identifies a widespread concern related to the perceived inadequacy of the instructional time and intensity currently devoted to core French in school systems in every province and territory. It summarizes recent national and regional teacher surveys along with views expressed by students and, in some cases, their parents. A recurring theme in the parent and student perceptions is the failure of the core French program as it currently exists to develop effective communication skills in the second language. Several pedagogical innovations intended to provide communicative opportunities in the core French program are described. These include introducing modules grounded in the principles of drama shown to increase student motivation to stay in French (Dicks & LeBlanc, 2005). Modules geared to student interests and needs (Comeau, 2002) have also been shown to be effective at the elementary level.

The review documents another major concern, namely the marginalization of the study of French as a second language (FSL) in existing core French program formats. If French were considered more central to the school curriculum, administrators and others would be more open to experimenting with alternative delivery models. Given the many constraints in place restricting allocation of more time for French, we explore formats for core French that manipulate the concentration or intensity of instructional time.

There are relatively few Canadian studies of compact formats for core French delivery, and where careful research in this domain has been undertaken, it is in the form of case studies. Thus studies by Lapkin, Harley & Hart (1995a) including three follow-up studies (Hilmer, 1999; Lapkin, Harley & Hart, 1995b; and Marshall, in progress) are described in some detail. Compact core French formats implemented at the Grade 7 level in two Ontario boards of education and assessed in these studies document superior performance on multiple tests of French language skills by students enrolled in the compact formats. The students themselves report higher levels of satisfaction in the compact classes and reported liking the longer class periods. Teachers report having to adjust to longer instructional periods and make changes to their instructional strategies in that context. In one case (Hilmer, 1999), a teacher who had not varied her instructional strategies in compact classes reported a desire/intention to do so in the future; in another case (Marshall, in progress), a teacher found she was able to implement more communicative, project-based activities in the compacted formats.

CASLT National Council representatives and Board members could not report on research in their provinces/territories on different delivery models for core French. While there has been interesting experimentation with distance education courses to ensure access to core French instruction, no formal evaluation of these initiatives has been undertaken.

Without additional time for core French instruction, we must experiment with alternative formats, specifically compact core French programs that allow for pedagogical innovation based on students' expressed needs and interests. Where experimentation is taking place, research must be undertaken to document the effectiveness of the innovation in question.

INTRODUCTION

In 2003, the federal government released *The Next Act: New Momentum for Canada's Linguistic Duality* (Canada, 2003), announcing a new national policy to promote the two official languages of Canada. As a key element of this policy, the government set a goal of doubling the proportion of secondary school graduates with a functional knowledge of their second official language by 2013 (Canada, 2003: p. 27). To increase the number of graduates with knowledge of French as a second language (FSL) in particular, the government recommended improving core French and suggested looking into innovative modes of delivery. Canadian Parents for French also recommended investigating alternative delivery models for core French (CPF, 2005).

The need to improve core French is pressing. This is partly due to numbers – 85% of students studying French are in core French programs (Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers, 2006), and partly because of timing – the students who will graduate in 2013 are already in Grade 7 and therefore no longer able to access immersion or intensive French programs. Core French is their only avenue to studying French as part of the school curriculum.

Adding to the urgency is the fact that students across Canada are dissatisfied with the current outcomes of core French, and many drop out of secondary school French courses as a result. Two recent research reports provide details on this dissatisfaction. In the Canadian Parents for French (CPF, 2006) survey of 105 Canadian university students (99 of whom were core French graduates), the majority of participants said they were dissatisfied with their progress in learning French, and that their knowledge of French upon secondary school graduation would not afford them a bilingual job. A second study, by the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation (APEF, 2004), surveyed 2,989 students in Grade 11 who

were no longer enrolled in core French, and found that 36% said they had dropped French because of their perceived lack of progress.

The majority of participants [students] said they were dissatisfied with their progress in learning French, and that their knowledge of French upon secondary school graduation would not afford them a bilingual job.

-Canadian Parents for French Survey (2006)

Clearly, the approach to teaching core French in Canadian schools must be revitalized. As the research shows, teachers are well aware of this need. In their responses to a national survey (Lapkin, MacFarlane & Vandergrift, 2006), teachers in every province and territory reported that the instruction time available for core French is inadequate and that this negatively affects program delivery, particularly opportunities for students to develop effective oral communication skills. This last point was confirmed by Netten and Germain (2005). They found that nearly three-quarters of 289 students who had studied core French for four years could use only isolated words or expressions. The researchers concluded that in its current format, core French is doing little to develop spontaneous oral communication, one of the main reasons being lack of class time available for this purpose.

Teachers in every province and territory reported that the instruction time available for core French is inadequate and that this negatively affects program delivery, particularly opportunities for students to develop effective oral communication skills.

-Lapkin, MacFarlane & Vandergrift (2006)

Towards Improving Core French

To lay the groundwork for revitalizing core French, the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT) undertook this review to summarize existing knowledge about the various modes of delivering core French across Canada and their relative effectiveness. The findings of our review are presented below under five main headings:

- Time as a factor in French proficiency;
- Manipulation of intensity;
- Canadian core French programs;
- Pedagogical focus within core French programs; and
- Access to core French programs.

Intensive French has previously been reviewed by CASLT as one means of improving core French (2005) and will therefore not be addressed in this paper. However, given the reluctance of education authorities to take time away from programs delivered in English in order to devote more time to delivering intensive French (Lapkin, Hart & Harley, 1998; Evaluation Plus, 2002), other solutions must be investigated if core French programs are to be improved.

Methodology

For the purpose of this review, the following steps were taken in search of relevant literature:

1. **Key journals were manually searched:** *The Canadian Modern Language Review, Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics, Canadian Journal of Education, International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*. This search was limited to the period from 1990 to the present. Any article that appeared relevant according to the key words previously established (Appendix B) was further examined.
2. **An electronic search was done using the following search engines:** *ERIC, Education Full Text, CBCA Education and Proquest® Educational Journals*.

3. **Selected researchers and educators from across Canada were contacted** via e-mail and asked to share information on the core French formats in their province/territory as well as any references to research on the topic that they considered pertinent.

4. **All the articles identified through the above processes were read**, and references obtained to additional articles that were also reviewed.

5. **Decisions on all the articles reviewed were then taken.** Articles were either excluded on the grounds of irrelevance to this review or retained for inclusion.

6. **Each retained article was re-read and a summary prepared.**

7. **CASLT National Council, Board members and provincial/territorial representatives were contacted** via e-mail in order to solicit up-to-date information regarding core French delivery in their respective provinces/territories.

Definitions

For the purpose of this review, the following definitions are used to describe core French delivery.

Core French: FSL taught as a subject for one period each day, or a few times a week, throughout the school year. Known as basic French in Manitoba and FSL in British Columbia and Alberta.

Compact core French: FSL taught as a subject with the same number of instructional hours as core French but distributed over a shorter time span, usually for one semester in a school year.

Intensive French: A FSL delivery format that offers learners a concentrated exposure to French involving an increase in the allocated hours and literacy-based pedagogical strategies. Students typically have from half a day to a full day of French over one semester usually in Grade 5 or Grade 6.

1 Time as a Factor in French Proficiency

Variations in instruction time often characterize delivery differences among French programs. Time has also been linked to proficiency outcomes — the more time spent studying a language, the higher the level of proficiency attained (CPF, 2003; Turnbull et al., 1998). **In this section, we summarize research dealing with the amount of time devoted to teaching core French in Canada and its impact on the scope of classroom activities that can be undertaken. The research uncovered numerous time-related problems affecting core French in all parts of the country.**

1.1 Research on Time Allotment Nationally

Nationally, the survey of 1,305 FSL teachers by Lapkin, MacFarlane and Vandergrift (2006) posed an open-ended question about the challenges associated with teaching core French. Teachers across the country said they felt that the instructional time for French is insufficient, and that this affects program delivery, particularly activities involving listening and speaking. In addition, they complained that some of the already limited time allotted for teaching FSL is lost when the class or the teacher moves from room to room, as time is required to set up resources and take them down.

But time lost in this way is not the only issue. In her analysis of the open-ended questions in the national survey, Howard (2006) reports that teachers found 40-minute periods were too short and made it impossible to introduce certain activities in the classroom. Such difficulties would be compounded in classes where core French is delivered in 20- to 30-minute periods.

In this connection, Lapkin, MacFarlane and Vandergrift suggest that the results of research showing the benefits of devoting longer blocks of time to core French as a means of achieving better outcomes should be made available to departments of education and school board officials.

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-Lapkin, MacFarlane and Vandergrift (2006)

CASLT (2004) also discovered problems with the amount of time actually devoted to French in its study on the status of core French teachers and programs. Contacted through six teleconference focus group sessions and one national networking day, teachers reported that less than provincially/territorially mandated time in French is being delivered, and in their opinion, this is affecting student outcomes.

1.2 Research on Time Allotment in Western Canada

Teachers in the western provinces, where the study of French is optional, also complained about the insufficient time scheduled for FSL but voiced concerns about several related issues as well.

In British Columbia, in response to a gap identified in the national study of FSL teachers (Lapkin, MacFarlane & Vandergrift, 2006), Carr (2007a) undertook two surveys of the working context of FSL teachers. A key obstacle to reaching provincial outcome targets singled out by the 833 core French teachers she surveyed was inadequate and inconsistent time allotment. The B.C. teachers also commented on the undervaluing of French, as evidenced in the cancellation of French classes, reduced delivery time and late starts to French classes due to demands of the English program. To address these challenges, Carr recommends allocating a minimum of 100 minutes per week to FSL instruction in Grades 5-7 and increasing this to 185 minutes per week for Grade 8.

Teachers reported that less than provincially/territorially mandated time in French is being delivered, and in their opinion, this is affecting student outcomes.

-Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (2004)

While having the classroom teacher deliver French may be convenient for the school district, it had a negative impact on FSL as French periods were shortened or appropriated for delivery of the English program.

-Daneault (1999)

School district organization and its effect on core French was the focus of a study by Daneault (1999). After the Coquitlam School District in British Columbia reconfigured its grade distribution to form middle schools of Grades 6-8, Daneault interviewed principals and surveyed core French teachers in the 12 newly configured middle schools. He concluded that the reconfiguration had a detrimental effect on core French delivery. In this model, core French was taught as part of the core curriculum by the regular classroom teachers, many of whom had not studied French themselves since secondary school. While having the classroom teacher deliver French may be convenient for the school district, Daneault found it had a negative impact on FSL as French periods were shortened or appropriated for delivery of the English program.

In Alberta, following the introduction of the province's new FSL program in 1991, Hart, Lapkin and Harley (1996) conducted a survey of 835 Albertan FSL teachers to gather their perspectives on implementation of the program. The amount of teaching time available for FSL was a common concern raised by the teachers, who stressed that lack of time limited the learning activities it was possible for them to introduce.

More recently, the Edmonton Public School Board commissioned Evaluation Plus to conduct a program review solely for their jurisdiction using a variety of techniques including interviews with parents, teachers, students and principals (Evaluation Plus, 2002). At the time of the review, most schools offered less than the district's recommended time for teaching French. Instructional time in Grades 1-3 was in the range of 30-150 minutes a week, with 90-150 minutes being offered in Grades 4-6. Teachers stated that only

basic oral skills could be taught in the time available for FSL. Students and parents stressed that more time needs to be spent on French, specifically on speaking and reading in French. For their part, the principals warned that requiring an increase in FSL time could mean eliminating French altogether, as the time is needed for English literacy development. Evaluation Plus concluded that having 150 minutes or more a week of instruction is critical to the strength of the Edmonton Public School French program. Specifically, the research firm recommended taking time from the English language arts program in order to enhance the core French program in light of the known transfer of literacy skills from one language to another (Carr, 2007b; Bournot-Trites & Tellowitz, 2002).

1.3 Research on Time Allotment in Ontario

Ontarian teachers also voiced concerns regarding the time actually available for teaching French. Mollica, Phillips and Smith (2005) conducted a survey of 69 of the 72 school boards in Ontario to investigate the working conditions of the elementary FSL teacher. Participating teachers specifically mentioned the issue of time lost traveling from class to class, and setting up and taking down their French resources.

In summary, teachers, parents, students and researchers alike have highlighted the need to assign consistent, sufficient, dedicated time to core French. The research underscored the impact that time has on choice of activities — inadequate time can limit teachers' ability to deliver sufficient oral activities, for example. The researchers recommended increasing the time devoted to core French to a minimum range of 100 to 150 minutes per week. Lapkin, MacFarlane and Vandergrift (2006) went even further, recommending research into longer classroom periods for French.

2. Manipulation of Intensity

Over the years, most of the research into the relation between class time and successful language learning in Canada has explored increasing the length of instructional time as a means of enhancing learning (Stern, 1985). Lightbown (2000), however, in her review of language teaching practices, highlighted the importance of intensity of time with the language. **In the hope of identifying useful delivery options for regions where an increase beyond 40 minutes a day is not yet considered feasible, we examine approaches that manipulate the concentration of time without increasing the overall time allotment for core French.**

2.1 Lapkin, Harley and Hart Study

We begin with *Revitalizing core French: The Carleton case study*, in which Lapkin, Harley and Hart (1995a) compared three core French models, involving :

- the usual 40 minutes of instruction per day;
- French instruction for half of each school day (150 minutes a day) over 10 weeks; and
- French instruction in 80-minute periods over five months.

Students in all three classes completed questionnaires and three sets of multi-skills French tests. The teacher kept a journal, was interviewed and was also observed. Although there were no significant differences between the groups on the first test (pre-test), both compact classes outperformed the traditional 40-minute-a-day class on the reading component of the second test (post-test). The two compact classes also made gains on five of the six test components from pre-test to post-test, whereas the traditional class made gains on only two components. Furthermore, the group in the half-day class outperformed the 40-minute-a-day class on the writing component of the third test (delayed post-test) despite their eight-month absence from French (no significant differences were found between the two classes on the speaking and listening portions of the test). The questionnaires revealed that participants in

the compact models gave a higher rating to their skills, and they attributed their perceived better speaking skills to the longer class-time. They said they liked the longer periods and thought they learned better with the new formats.

In their follow-up study, Lapkin, Harley and Hart (1995b) differentially scored and re-analyzed the speaking test results [post-test] from the above study to reveal one significant difference — the half-day group outperformed the 40-minute-a-day class. In addition, they went back to survey the teachers who taught in 80-minute periods. They found that the teachers were opposed to the longer periods, but successfully changed their instructional strategies in order to accommodate the 80-minute period.

Participants in the compact models gave a higher rating to their skills, and they attributed their perceived better speaking skills to the longer class-time. They said they liked the longer periods and thought they learned better with the new formats.

-Lapkin, Harley and Hart (1995)

2.2 Hilmer Study

In another follow-up study, for his master's research, Hilmer (1999) compared two of the three original groups, the 40-minute-a-day class and the class taking French for 150 minutes a day over a period of 10 weeks. Hilmer analyzed the videotapes of the classes to investigate teaching strategies. He found no noteworthy differences primarily because the teacher followed commercially produced lesson plans, although the teacher stated in an interview that she felt she was expected to keep the classes the same for the purposes of the study. She speculated that the longer periods would have allowed her to add a work such as a novel to her program and would have given the students more time for real communication. In her journal, the teacher recorded her perception that the students in the 150-minute class were more advanced and motivated than those in the 40-minute group. She

Multi-skills French proficiency testing showed that while all groups improved and had similar retention levels, students in the compact classes did better in listening, reading, writing and some of the speaking tests than those in the 40-minutes-a-day class.
-Marshall (in progress)

also noted that she lost a lot of time with the 40-minute group— so much, in fact, that she completed one less unit. Observations by the researchers confirmed the loss of class time with the 40-minute group and revealed that participants in that class did fewer communicative activities.

2.3 Marshall Study

Compact core French became a focus of research for Marshall (in progress) as a result of the frustration she experienced teaching French in short daily periods. During her doctoral studies, Marshall taught three Grade 7 core French classes — two had 80 minutes of French a day for half a year, and the third had daily 40-minute classes throughout the year. Marshall implemented a communicative, project-based approach with all three classes, and documented this approach in a journal. Multi-skills French proficiency testing showed that while all groups improved and had similar retention levels, students in the compact classes did better in listening, reading, writing and some of the speaking tests than those in the 40-minutes-a-day class. In her journal entries, Marshall noted her difficulty in implementing her approach with a 40-minute period. She attributed this to the time required for daily review with the students. Marshall reported that she was able to implement more communicative tasks in the two compact classes. In view of the superior results for the compact classes, Marshall recommends further research into the compact model as a means to improve core French.

2.4 Hays Study

Finally, in her doctoral research, Hays (1998) investigated concerns about students' knowledge retention given the potential gaps between study periods under the compact model. Hays interviewed 12 teachers of Spanish, French and German in the United States who taught using this format. They saw no connection between gaps in language instruction and retention of language proficiency. Rather, they believed that greater success with language learning was the key factor in greater retention. The teachers also indicated that the longer class periods afforded them the opportunity to use more student-centred, communicative activities.

In summary, the research reviewed in this section shows that compacting instructional time for French may provide a valuable alternative for improving student achievement in core French programs in face of the reluctance of administrators to increase beyond the traditional 40 minutes a day. Although the research is not extensive, the quantitative studies found that participants from compact models often outperformed participants from the 40-minute classes. In fact, none of the research found cases where the opposite was true. In addition to producing greater proficiency, the research revealed that the longer periods devoted to French allowed for additional activities that gave students opportunities to develop real communication skills.

3. Canadian Core French Programs

To obtain information on core French delivery formats across Canada, we contacted members of CASLT's National Council, Board of Directors, and certain department of education representatives by e-mail with an invitation to respond to the following questions:

- a) What core French delivery formats are available in your province at the elementary level?
- b) What core French delivery formats are available at the secondary level?
- c) Do you know of any research in your province/territory that involves innovative formats for core French delivery?

Table 3.1 summarizes the details of their responses outlining current formats for delivery of core French in Canada.

The third question is not included in the table since the CASLT informants could not report on specific research in their provinces/territories on different delivery models for core French, but some did identify innovative practices in online teaching and learning or the development of new programs of study reflecting current trends. For example, Alberta has completed a new 9-year FSL course sequence (begun in September 2005) and a new 3-year course sequence (beginning in September 2009), both influenced by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) proficiency levels. The absence of information highlights the need for research in provinces and territories that involve innovative formats for core French delivery.

Given that education is a provincial responsibility, the variation in time allocations for French is not surprising, although most provinces continue to deliver French in short periods of 30-40 minutes. Interestingly, informants from two provinces chose to reveal a lack of compliance with provincial ministry time requirements. Examples

CASLT informants could not report on specific research in their provinces/territories on different delivery models for core French. The absence of information highlights the need for research in provinces and territories that involve innovative formats for core French delivery.

of non-compliance are also cited in other sources, notably the national survey by Lapkin, MacFarlane and Vandergrift (2006) and CASLT (2004). The findings of this part of our review highlight the need for further research. Specifically, although some provinces are implementing innovative formats on a small scale, such initiatives have yet to be formally documented and shared.

Given that education is a provincial responsibility, the variation in time allocations for French is not surprising, although most provinces continue to deliver French in short periods of 30-40 minutes.

Table 3.1 Core French Delivery Models in Canada

TA = Time Allocation RTA = Recommended Time Allocation by Provincial/Territorial Ministry of Education

Prov./Terr.	Core French Status	Elementary Core French Delivery Models	Secondary Core French Delivery Models
AB	Provincially optional with local jurisdictions' ability to implement a mandatory requirement.	Grade 1-6: TA depends on school jurisdiction. RTA = 150 min./week = 95 hours. Grade 5: Intensive French local pilot in one school district. Distributed learning (online delivery/print) available. Grade 7-9: RTA = 95 hours/year. TA depends on school district.	Grade 10-12: RTA = 125 hours/year. 5 credit course. Video conferencing and distributed learning (online delivery/print) available. 2 program choices: with Grade 10 start or continuing program.
BC	Optional	Grade 5-7: 40-min. periods/2 x week or 20-min. periods/3 x week. Grade 8: Average 185 min./week.	Grade 10-12: 75-min. periods, every second day, semestered or 60-min. periods, every second day, all year; 2 hr./day for 1/4 of the year.
MB	Optional	K-Grade 3: RTA = 20 minutes per day. Grade 4-6: 30 min./day or 3-4 periods/per 6-day cycle. Grade 7-9: 35 min./day or 4 periods/per 6-day cycle. Grade 6: Intensive French Pilot in one division, and two divisions offering Intensive French Pilot and Enhanced French as follow up.	Grade 7-12: distance education courses available. Grade 9-12: Online courses available. Online option for senior high school credit. Grade 10-12: 110 hr. per credit, usually semestered.
NB	Compulsory	K-2: French culture and language modules English Prime (non-immersion program choice) Grade 3: French culture modules. Grade 4: 150 minutes per week in blocks of 50-60 minutes. Grade 5: Intensive French Program. English Prime with Post Intensive French. Grade 6-8: 200 minutes in 2 or 3 concentrated blocks each week.	Grade 9-10: one course per year with Grade 10 oral proficiency test. Grade 11-12: eligible to take FSL courses in any available subject.
NL	Compulsory Grade 4-9. Optional programming in Grade 1-3.	Grade 4-9: 10% of instructional timetable, many schools operate on 6, 7, 14-day cycles, can be in blocks from 30-60 minutes. Grade 6: Intensive Core French Program. option available.	Grade 10-12 (Level I-Level III) 3 French courses (2 credits) offered. Can be offered via synchronous and asynchronous online delivery through the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation (7 online & 3 offline 60-min. classes / 14 days throughout the year). Expanded Core French program as follow up to Intensive Core French.
NS	Compulsory Grade 4-9	Regular Program: Daily 30 min. periods. Grade 5-8: Small-scale Pilot offering compact blocks in several schools in two districts that are seen to be successful. Grade 6: Intensive French Pilot with 9 classes. Grade 7-12: Integrated French – CF plus 1 subject area integrated and taught in French. (Grade 7 curriculum document in final stages).	Grade 10-12: 110 hours instruction per course. Grade 10 online course in development (where numbers do not warrant regular delivery). Grade 12 online course is presently offered (where numbers do not warrant regular delivery).
NT	Optional: French is one of 9 official languages that is compulsory.	Grade 1-6: 30-40 min. periods, 2-5 x week. Grade 7-8: 40-min. periods, 3-5 x week. Grade 6: Intensive French Pilot in one school. Grade 7-8: Enhanced French 40 min/period, 3 periods per week.	Grade 9: 80-min. periods, possibility of semestered course. Grade 10-12: 80-min. periods, 5x week, semestered.
NU	Optional	Offered only in Inualuit. Grade 1-9: 30-40 min periods, 5 x week. Intensive French Pilot program in one school. Cambridge Bay offers French when teacher available.	Offered only in Inualuit. Grade 10-12: credit courses, 1 credit = 25 hours.
ON	Compulsory Grade 4-8 with optional programming before Grade 4.	Grade 4-8: 30-40 min. periods, 3-5 x week – Min. 600 hours by end of Grade 8. Extended: optional program, CF plus 1 subject area taught in French, 75-80 minutes, 3-5 x week – Min. 1,260 hours by end of Grade 8. Compact: One school in southern Ontario reports success with 2 double periods/week. Grade 5-6: 4 school boards with Intensive French Pilots.	Grade 9-10: Two course types – academic or applied, 110 hours full credit course. Grade 11-12: Two course types – university prep or open, 110 hours full credit course.
PE	Compulsory Grade 4-9	RTA = 120 min./week. Increases to 150 min./week for middle school. Grade 6 - Intensive French Pilot in one school district. Grade 7-8: Enhanced French Pilot – block scheduling of same TA where possible.	Grade 7-9: RTA = 33 to 39 minutes per day or equivalent. Grade 10-12: 110 hr. per credit, elective.
QC	Compulsory from Grade 1 through Secondary V for all students enrolled in an English language school.	Determined by the schools, much variety in the programs offered. Grade 1-6: Approx. 175 up to 450 min./9-day cycle.	Determined by the schools, much variety in the programs offered. Grade 8-9: (Secondary I-II) Approx. 450 min./9-day cycle. Grade 10-12: (Secondary III-V) Approx. 300 min./9-day cycle.
SK	Optional	RTA = 120 min./week. Increases to 150 min./week for middle school. Grade 6: Intensive French Pilot in one school district.	Grade 7-9: Follow up to IF Pilot (français approfondi). Grade 10-12: 110 hr. per credit, elective. Grade 10-12: Core French correspondence/ distance education course operated through Central i School.
YT	Optional K - Grade 3 Mandatory Grade 4-7, but not always possible.	K-3: RTA = 90 minutes. Grade 4-7: RTA = 120 minutes. Grade 5: Intensive French Pilot in two schools. Grade 6-7: Français approfondi in same two schools. Some home schooling support available, on request basis.	Grade 8-9: Mandatory requirement in some schools. Français approfondi beginning in one school. Grade 8: 40 min., 3 to 5 times per week. Grade 9: 80-min. periods on average, semestered. Grade 10-12: 80-min. periods, 5x week, semestered. Distance education courses available through BC. Some home schooling support available, on request basis.

4. Pedagogical Focus Within Core French Programs

Although not a delivery model, changes in pedagogical approach have the potential to enhance the outcomes of core French teaching, particularly oral proficiency.

4.1 Communicative-Oriented Pedagogy Approach

For example, the value of changing to a communications-oriented pedagogy was emphasized in the Edmonton Public Schools program review by Evaluation Plus (2002). In that study, almost half the principals and just over half the teachers stated that they now placed greater emphasis on oral fluency development as essential to student success. One practical strategy suggested by Evaluation Plus to provide real communication opportunities — the use of e-pals — was considered a valid means to improve student achievement by 72% of the teachers and 55% of the principals. Other practical recommendations included offering classes that mirror real-life communication through the use of games, skits and simulations.

On a broader scale, change in pedagogical practice is currently being embraced by 2,500 schools across Canada where core French teachers are following the instructional approach of the Accelerative Integrated Method (AIM). Created by Wendy Maxwell (2001), this systematic approach is centred on five essential components:

- teacher use of pared-down language;
- provision of meaningful contextualization;
- scaffolded activities;
- use of gestures; and
- opportunity for second language production by the students.

To date, three qualitative studies have investigated the use of AIM: Maxwell (2001), Carr (2001) and Arnott (2005). Maxwell's study with Grade 2 private school students discovered that those with AIM experience outperformed those from the traditional core French format on diagnostic interviews. Second, Carr found that Grade 1 private school students with exposure to the AIM

Almost half the principals and just over half the teachers stated that they now placed greater emphasis on oral fluency development as essential to student success.

-Evaluation Plus (2002)

approach exceeded provincial core French curriculum expectations when the interviews focused on the plays under study, but not when the focus was on spontaneous speech. Third, after conducting both observations and teacher and student interviews in her case study, Arnott concluded that the success of the AIM approach is teacher-dependent.

The only quantitative study of AIM to date, by Mady, Arnott and Lapkin (2007), compared the French proficiency of two groups of Grade 8 public school students — those with two years' exposure to the AIM approach and those with no such exposure, using a multi-skills test. Quantitative test results showed no significant differences between the groups. The significant number of schools using AIM combined with the limited research highlights the need for further research.

In the Atlantic provinces, the importance of focusing on communication opportunities as an integral part of FSL teaching practice was stressed by secondary school students in the APEF questionnaire survey (2004). Disillusioned with their inability to speak French, they suggested that more emphasis be placed on actually speaking and less emphasis on linguistic aspects (grammar) to improve the program and thus enrolment, and that more opportunities be created to interact with francophones. The report recommends embracing approaches that maximize speaking opportunities.

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-APEF Survey (2004)

4.2 Drama for Learning Approach

In response to the APEF report, Dicks and LeBlanc (2005) prepared two modules grounded in the principles of drama for learning with a view to increasing student motivation and thus retention. Secondary school participants studying with four different teachers filled out a competence and attitudinal questionnaire before and after taking the drama modules. The results of the two tests were generally similar but showed that after completing the modules, students enjoyed French more, viewed French as more important and said they would be more likely to study French if it were optional. This project also included teacher interviews. The four participating teachers expressed satisfaction with this drama-based approach, which they felt contributed to their ability to meet program objectives.

Students (in the drama modules) enjoyed French more, viewed French as more important and said they would be more likely to study French if it were optional.
-Dicks and LeBlanc (2005)

4.3 Teacher Guided Workshop Approach

Comeau (2002), in a doctoral study as teacher-researcher, found advantages to implementing modules at the elementary level. He divided 104 participants, all Grade 4 students, into four groups — two groups received teacher guidance in instructional workshops of four or five students, whereas the two control groups worked independently without teacher guidance. Comeau's transcribed audiotapes revealed that the participants spoke more French in the teacher-guided workshops. Comeau also discovered that with the experimental groups, the teacher's use of language served a scaffolding purpose whereas in the control groups it served an organizational purpose. He claims that such scaffolding allowed the teacher to support the students' actual language needs.

In New Brunswick, Rehorick et al. (2006) proposed new pedagogical approaches to help the province achieve its target of having 70% of high school graduates functionally bilingual. In their brief to the Department of Education, the authors advocate the use of a project-based pedagogy that balances oral and literacy approaches. Specifically, they recommend the use of modules in Grades 1-3 and a contextualized integrated pedagogy in Grade 4 prior to the implementation of intensive French. At the secondary level, they recommend enhancing French courses by offering drama for language learning as well as conversational French, and by developing online courses.

Also in New Brunswick, in their study of existing French programs in the province, PricewaterhouseCoopers (2000) emphasized the importance of oral activities as a means of improving the core French program. One of the recommendations for core French was to increase the time on task, specifically the time spent on oral program components. For the secondary level, the report suggested a non-semestered core French program for Grade 9 and 10 students on the grounds that insufficient time on task was one of the major weaknesses of the present program. This recommendation has yet to be adopted. Lastly, the report noted the limited availability of French courses at the secondary level.

In summary, a number of pedagogical changes intended to provide oral communication opportunities in the core French program are reviewed in this section. These include innovations such as modules grounded in the principles of drama for learning (Dicks & LeBlanc, 2005), those closely geared to student interests and needs (Comeau, 2002) as well as a non-semestered core French program at the secondary level in order to improve time on task (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2000).

5. Access to Core French Programs

Overall, the number of students studying French in Canada has seen no increase in 10 years (Canadian Parents for French, 2007). Clearly, the issue of access to FSL courses is crucial.

5.1 Access to FSL Courses

Evaluation Plus (2002) reported that students pointed to difficulty in scheduling at the secondary level as one of the main factors influencing their decision not to take French. Similar difficulties were experienced by 25% of the respondents in the APEF study (2004), who indicated that they did not continue with core French due to timetabling issues or the fact that French was not offered at their school. Alberta Learning (2003) also recognized that high school students have limited access to French due to scheduling problems.

Beyond limitations of a timetable, Mady and Turnbull (in press) recognized obstacles to access to FSL for allophone students. In fact, with the exception of Quebec, no provinces or territories ensure access to FSL for allophones. On the contrary some provinces — Ontario, British Columbia and the Yukon — highlight means for allophone students to be exempt from the study of French. In congruence with the provincial policy documents highlighted by Mady and Turnbull, in their annual state of French second language education report (2006) Canadian Parents for French judged the absence of a plan to integrate allophone students into French second language programs as a weakness in need of response.

Students pointed to difficulty in scheduling at the secondary level as one of the main factors influencing their decision not to take French.
-Evaluation Plus (2002)

5.2 Distance Education

According to Canadian Parents for French (CPF) reports over the years on the state of FSL education in Canada, some provinces and territories have made progress in addressing accessibility concerns through the use of distance education. The 2002 report indicated that Alberta and Manitoba were offering distance education courses for core French, the Northwest Territories and Saskatchewan were investigating the integration of new technologies for distance education, Newfoundland and Labrador began designing web-based courses for secondary school students and British Columbia was initiating innovative approaches to FSL although they had yet to be evaluated. The ranks of those offering core French courses through distance education expanded with the addition of Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador as noted in the 2003 report, and New Brunswick as noted in 2005. In its 2006 report, CPF investigated what progress the provinces were making toward the Canadian government's national goal for 2013. As a means to ensure accessibility to FSL, eight provinces/territories indicated that they were promoting distance education courses (Alberta, British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador, the Northwest Territories, Nova Scotia, Nunavut, Saskatchewan and the Yukon).

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-Canadian Parents for French (2006)

CDLI is able to group students together in virtual classrooms in numbers sufficient enough to sustain the necessary teaching units. In essence, schools receive extra teaching units at no cost to the school.
-Murphy (in progress)

Currently, the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation (CDLI) in Newfoundland and Labrador offers distance FSL learning to 178 students. Many small rural schools exist where populations are shrinking and specialist teachers are in high demand. CDLI is able to offer courses that schools would not necessarily be able to offer locally, allowing students the same choices as those in larger urban schools. Furthermore, teachers that work with CDLI are specialist teachers. This may not always be the case in rural areas where teachers are faced with teaching in curriculum areas that often extend beyond their area of expertise. CDLI is able to group students together in virtual classrooms in numbers sufficient enough to sustain the necessary teaching units. In essence, schools receive extra teaching units at no cost to the school. Online French in the province has been so successful that there has been ongoing deliberation to offer it to students in larger urban schools where they experience difficulty in scheduling programs that conflict with other courses for which students are registered (Murphy, in progress).

Rehorick (2004) recommended the development of distance education courses to be offered nationally to improve the retention of students in core French.

Such innovations in core French are supported by Rehorick et al. (2004) in her Plan Twenty Thirteen (2013) report. For this report, Rehorick gathered an expert consultative group in order to propose concrete ideas to meet the 2013 goal. Specifically, Rehorick recommended the development of distance education courses to be offered nationally to improve the retention of students in core French. She further recommended enhancing French programs with classroom technology such as wireless access.

In summary, lack of access to FSL courses is one of the main concerns for students wanting to learn French. Evaluation Plus (2002) underlined this concern, reporting that students pointed to difficulty in scheduling at the secondary level as one of the main factors influencing their decision not to take French. Some provinces and territories have countered this problem by promoting distance education courses. The Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation in Newfoundland and Labrador for example offers distance FSL learning to students in rural areas, allowing students the same choices as those in larger urban schools (Murphy, in progress). In fact, the development of distance education courses nationally could improve the retention of students in core French (Rehorick et al., 2004).

CONCLUSION

Research from across Canada highlights not simply the need to allocate an adequate amount of time for core French, but the importance of making optimal use of the available time and implementing pedagogical innovations, including, for example a project based syllabus. Assigning consistent, sufficient and dedicated time to core French, and increasing class periods in compact core French formats are avenues that can be taken to improve the core French program. Further research into the compact class model as means of lengthening class periods is recommended.

Furthermore, the studies corroborate the importance of a communications-oriented pedagogy and provide practical suggestions of e-pals, simulations, games, skits, drama and conversation as means of implementation. Again, longer periods devoted to French can facilitate additional activities that give students opportunities to develop real communication skills.

In addition to continuing this communicative focus at the secondary level through drama and units based on student interests, the research recommends such innovations as the use of distance education models to supplement the limited classroom course offerings and ensure access for students in rural and remote areas. The development of distance education courses could thus improve the retention of students in core French across Canada.

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APPENDICES A & B

A. Journals that were searched manually:

- *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*
- *Canadian Journal of Education*
- *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*
- *The Canadian Modern Language Review*

B. Key words used to search electronic databases

- French as a second language and delivery models
- French as a second language and drip feed
- French as a second language and compact core French
- French as a second language and electronic format
- French as a second language and video format
- French as a second language and timing
- French as a second language and blocked scheduling
- Core French and delivery models
- Core French and drip feed
- Core French and compact core French
- Core French and electronic format
- Core French and video format
- Core French and timing
- Core French and blocked scheduling

APPENDIX C

C. List of contacts made via e-mail

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