

Setting the Context: Literacy in FSL Introduction –

Bev Anderson, Wendy Carr, Cynthia Lewis, Michael Salvatori and Miles Turnbull. 2008. Effective literacy practices in FSL: Making connections. Toronto, Canada: Pearson Education Canada. 160 pp.

Integrating literacy practices in French as a Second Language (FSL)

teaching and learning is an effective way to motivate and engage students and to help them achieve success in French. Current research indicates that exploring a variety of aural, visual, and written texts leads to increased language proficiency in both students' first and second languages (Elley, 1991; Guthrie, 2004; Krashen, 2004). Students, teachers, administrators, and parents may all benefit from seeing more clearly how FSL contributes to and builds on students' literacy development, second-language learning, life skills, knowledge, and general education.....

When FSL students develop literacy skills in French, they become not only stronger literate learners in French, but also in English and in other languages. The FSL teacher plays a key role in helping students understand that the FSL classroom is indeed part of their literacy environment. In fact, FSL teachers *are* literacy teachers just like their colleagues in first language programs; many are already integrating literacy practices in their classes and developing students' literacy strategies.

Literacy Strategies Linking First- and Second-Language Learning

Research evidence shows how students who develop literacy skills in their second language are able to transfer these skills to their first language, and vice versa. Turnbull (1999) shows, for example, how Grade 9 Core or Basic French students engaged in a project-based and text-rich teaching approach outperform those who don't.

Additional Benefits of Literacy Instruction in FSL Learning a Language: Another Form of Literacy

Learning another language opens many doors. Those who believe that literacy extends beyond text-based literacy in the dominant language consider that learning an additional language means developing a new form of literacy—another bonus for students!

The concept of multiliteracies, a term first coined by a group of international scholars who formed the New London Group (1996), recognizes and validates the multilingual practices of citizens around the world. Multilingual citizens are more literate and better prepared than unilingual citizens to make sense of and communicate the variety of culturally specific forms of literacy available in complex pluralistic societies, such as those found in North America (Genesee and Cloud, 1998).

Organizations across Canada and around the world promote the cognitive, social, emotional, and economic benefits of learning an additional language. By promoting FSL education and helping students develop literacy strategies,

we are empowering FSL students to become stronger multilingual citizens of the world. In addition, learning French in Canada equips students to communicate with Francophone Canadians within their own country and with the over 300 million French speakers around the world. Learning French and learning about Francophones promotes an awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity, essential for full participation in today's bilingual and multicultural Canada, and throughout the world.



The Immersion File

Canadian Parents for French (York Region) - Information Bulletin No. 05



Why Study French?

Ontario's schools must enable students to build a basic foundation for later learning and successful adult life. The 3 Rs – reading, writing and arithmetic – have a high standing in our educational priorities, but there is much more to education than these fundamental skills. We expect that our students will learn about our history, our literature, our geography and our democratic way of life. We expect that they will learn to think for themselves, to develop self-confidence and to acquire moral values that will give them strength of character. In short, we expect that our schools will help young people to acquire the academic and the social foundation that will equip them to become responsible members of our society and to use their abilities fully.

Learning a second language is part of this foundation. It is part of being Canadian. Between 5 and 6 per cent of Ontario's population is French speaking. French is the mother tongue of one quarter of all Canadians and one of Canada's two official languages. French is also one of the international languages of the world and one of the six official languages of the United Nations. If we want young people to mature into well-rounded and responsible adults, it is important that they be given opportunities to learn about their nation and to broaden their horizons by exploring the French language and culture.

~~~Extracted from "*Ontario's FSL Programs*" ~ Ontario Ministry of Education.

## Perspectives

“Why Learn French?” To ask this question is also to ask another, more fundamental, question – “Is learning a second language important?” The answer most surely is “Yes”, particularly when that language is one of Canada's two official languages. The achievement of personal bilingualism within an officially bilingual nation enhances the sense of “belonging” in all parts of the country. The advantages of being a bilingual Canadian can be examined from the “common good” perspective, and from the perspective of the individual.

### THE “COMMON GOOD” PERSPECTIVE

Throughout the world, English speaking North Americans have had the reputation of being reluctant to learn other languages. Because English has achieved a certain pre-eminence among world languages, it has long been the language that other people learned as a matter of course during their school years. Without a command of that language, non-English speakers were virtually denied access to important sources of goods, information and decision-making processes vital to their well being. It is not surprising that many English speakers came to believe that there was no need to learn other languages.

Time passes, however, and the world changes. Many English speakers have begun to realize that while their language is one of the most important in the world, all unilinguals are denied access to information and economic and political processes which can affect them. They have also come to understand that children should not be educated to participate in the world as it was in the past, but in the world as it will be in the future. This future world, while remaining one of many languages, will be one where modern communications technology and ease of travel bring people into closer contact with each other.



## ***Learning English and French Opens Doors To Tomorrow***

### ***The Immersion File - Canadian Parents for French (York Region)***

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If Canada is to maintain a strong presence in the world, it must remain active in diplomatic and economic affairs. Canadians who speak two or more languages will be able to work with business people and government representatives of other countries, using the new communication technologies. Canada as a nation would benefit in many ways if more of her citizens were bilingual. Economic activity both at home and abroad would be enhanced. Canada's international political presence would be strengthened by the development of a broader base of people who have a facility with our two official languages. It is in the national interest to have an outward-looking and articulate population interested in playing an active role in the world.

Internally, bilingualism could create better understanding between Canadians of the two official language groups. Canadian citizens could better understand their own history and culture, a condition necessary for national cultural harmony and understanding.

#### **THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE INDIVIDUAL**

Learning a second language improves one's writing and thinking skills. This process also has important benefits for mother tongue skills, as well as providing facility in a second language. No matter how we earn our living after the school years, each of us must be able to think and express our thoughts clearly. Learning a second language helps in doing both. Knowing a second language gives each of us access to a larger pool of information and a wider area in which to seek employment and cultural enrichment. These factors are very important for those who aim to develop a national perspective in professions such as journalism, sociology, history, architecture, literature, engineering, science, medicine, music and dance. They are equally important for people who will be working directly with people, whether at the management level or in the service sector of travel services, the hospitality industry, health services and government services. Mastering a second language allows each of us to have more flexibility not only with regard to the kind of employment we find, but also in the way we do the job. Knowing a second language enriches the quality of life. Not only do we gain a better understanding of who we are and where we come from as Canadians, but we also have better access than unilingual persons to music, literature, theatre, art and cinema. Learning a second language provides individuals with the opportunity to develop the kinds of learning skills and discipline that are useful throughout their entire lives. Acquiring a second language, especially early in life, facilitates learning a third language and indeed a fourth or fifth language. Speaking a second language increases the level of respect and understanding of "other language" speakers and other world cultures.

## LEARNING ENGLISH AND FRENCH OPENS DOORS TO TOMORROW

### HOW WILL FSL EDUCATION AFFECT MY CHILD'S ENGLISH-LANGUAGE SKILLS? – CPF document

#### **No negative effects on English-language skills**

English skill levels are not compromised by French immersion instruction, and researchers report that “the effect of learning a second language on first language skills has been virtually positive in all studies.” Students can add French to their repertoire at no cost to their English-language competence. This is known as *additive bilingualism* and it is possible for two reasons:

- (1) English is reinforced and promoted in the family and community; and
- (2) Language skills are interdependent and can be transferred from one language to another. In other words, language skills developed in French are available for learning and using in English and, similarly, language skills learned through English are available for learning and using in French.

### WHAT ARE THE ADDITIONAL BENEFITS OF LEARNING A SECOND LANGUAGE?

#### **Adopting new perspectives**

The *Neurolinguistic Theory of Bilingualism* suggests that bilingual individuals understand each language directly. Much like the idea of “thinking in French,” they organize their mental representations according to the meaning of each language and have the ability to adopt two perspectives. This theory suggests that there is one common conceptual system in the brain that manages language learning. When learning a second language, this system permits bilingual students to understand each language and its subsystem separately, allowing them to recognize existing concepts and form new ones in their thought process.

#### **Mental flexibility**

Studies show that bilinguals perform better than monolinguals on tasks that require mental manipulation and reorganization of visual patterns. Bilinguals are original in verbal expression, demonstrate non-verbal intelligence, and are able to provide a variety of answers to a question. Also, they more freely answer open-ended questions than their monolingual peers. This flexibility is also a function of *heightened metalinguistic awareness*.

#### **Increased sensitivity to others; heightened awareness, receptivity, and language appreciation**

Students with two well-developed languages have an increased sensitivity to communication. They are better able to take the role of others who are experiencing difficulties, to perceive their needs, and to respond appropriately to these needs. They are able to monitor the appropriateness of language use and correct their errors faster than monolinguals. In addition to communicative sensitivity, bilinguals develop cultural sensitivities as well. Through curriculum content and exposure to cultural differences, the second language opens the mind to respecting differences between people and their culture and allows them to communicate with a large variety of people.

#### **Employment**

Employment is another significant advantage to learning a second language. Bilinguals have access to a wider range of national and international jobs. Thousands of Canadian businesses operate in both French and English. The airlines, import-export companies, and other international businesses require employees with French language skills. About 40% of all positions in the Public Service of Canada about 67,000 jobs—are bilingual. In addition, the Federal Student Work Experience Program recruits students for federal departments and agencies to fill approximately 7,000 temporary student jobs each year.