Teaching Core French Through the Arts: Constructing Communicative Competence

Anne Rovers

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Abstract

This study is concerned with Grade nine Applied level students' attitudes toward learning French. The following paper provides an in-depth case study of one group of 18 students from a Core French class in a Southwestern Ontario inner city high school. Specifically students' attitudes toward learning French through the Arts were examined. Guided by the tenets of constructivism and Arts-based research, with the collaboration of the classroom teacher, French/Arts lesson plans were prepared through which students' motivation, attitudes, and enthusiasm to speak French whilst in the process of creating art could be examined. Students' comments of learning French through Art were compared with their stories of past experiences within the Core French program. Grounded theory and an emerging theme design using qualitative methods of data collection and analysis were used. Observational data, questionnaires, and focus group interviews were conducted in order to triangulate the data collection for analysis. Findings show that students' attitudes toward learning French via Arts-based activities were more positive and their enjoyment, motivation to learn, and spoken French increased.

Core French in Canada: Toward an intensive model

Students' attitudes toward the study of French in Canada are increasingly negative (Kissau, 2005; Netten, Riggs, & Hewlett, 1999). When asked how they and their peers viewed Core French courses in high school, the majority (52%) reported they had not had a good experience (Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training, 2004). According to the report *State of the Core French Program in Canada* (2004), existing Core French programs are not successful in producing functionally bilingual graduates. Of the students interviewed for this report, almost half of those who had completed secondary Core French felt unable to understand spoken French. Not only are students not learning to speak French within the established Core French program, the program itself is undermined. For example, most school boards have cut primary Core French in Ontario.

Research shows that many of the current teaching practices used in the Core French as a Second Language (FSL) program are ineffective and negatively impact on student attitudes and success with regards to functional language knowledge. For example, a recent study of Grade 11 students who had dropped out of Core French programs concludes "that a paradigm shift in methodology and curriculum content of the Core French program is required. French has to become more interesting, more relevant and more oriented toward the goal of learning to speak the language. This is the obvious first step toward motivating students to continue their study of French" (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation [APEF], 2002, p. 19). Moreover, the Canadian Parents for French (CPF) study focused attention on the need to enhance Core French education and explore alternate delivery models. In fact, the CPF association said, "It is a welcome and sorely needed initiative as there is much to be done" and further noted that, "students continue to complain of a lack of French speaking and listening practice and most felt that they were not able to hold a conversation with francophone peers" (CPF, 2004, p. 60). Additionally, enrolment numbers are declining: "Attrition between the last Grade of compulsory Core French and the last year of high school ranges from 85 to 95 per cent" (CPF, 2004). With so many secondary students not continuing with the current model of the FSL Core program in

Ontario secondary schools, and as few students actually gain functional fluency, the question is: What purpose does the Core French program serve?

Making French real

Today in Canada, the three most common French-language teaching programs are Core French, extended (Core) French, and immersion, with 90% of students enrolled in the Core French program (CPF, 2004, p. 50). *Plan 2013: Strategies for a National Approach in Second Language Education* (Rehorik, 2004) asks “how to define reasonable program goals that provide students with a real skill”? Thus a specific mandate of *Plan 2013* is to ‘make French real’. This requires program improvement and support and an overhaul of Core French programs (p. 5). This overhaul of French programming includes immersion programs, particularly at the secondary level, to encourage students to continue their studies in French. *Plan 2013* further suggests expansion of Intensive Core French and appropriate follow-up programs for the 90% of students in Core French. In their portrayal of a successful French language program, *Plan 2013*’s suggests emphasizing oral competence via interactive arts: “Students engage in interactive learning: learning French in situations that are as close as possible to real communication. They develop an understanding of the French language system and subsystems (phonological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic) by using the French language in authentic contexts thereby developing communication through games, skits, simulations and dramatizations” (p. 7). These findings are based on students’ articulations underlining the need to put more emphasis on hands-on classroom activities that would also serve to improve and promote speaking. Students recommended less concentration on verbs and grammar, and new, more exciting, high-interest resource material (p. 35).

Intensive French

MacFarlane (2005) addresses an Intensive French approach to revitalizing core French. Intensive French (IF) may be defined as an enrichment of the Core French program in grades 5 or 6, in which FSL is offered intensively (approximately 70% of the school day) in a concentrated period of time (five months). During the remaining five months, students follow their regular curriculum in a compacted format (Netten & Germain, 2004b). The Intensive French program was piloted in Newfoundland and Labrador from 1998-2001 and is now widely offered in that province as an official alternative to Core French in grade 6. Since 2002, similar programs have been initiated in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. The program was introduced in Manitoba in 2005-06. The possibility that Intensive French could rejuvenate the Core French program, improve the outcomes of its graduates, motivate students to remain in Core French to graduation, and help meet the federal government's targets for 2013 persuaded CASLT to undertake the preparation of this report (MacFarlane, 2005). Though she does not speak directly to Intensive French as an arts pedagogy, MacFarlane suggests that Intensive French offer special interest courses for high school Core French (such as those being developed in Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Ontario) to meet the expectations and capture the interest of students who would normally drop out of the Core French program. Though Intensive French has only begun in eastern Catholic French school boards, the Ontario Public School Board’s Association (OPSBA) is also concerned for the Core French program. They conducted a survey beginning in 2007 on the delivery of Core French in Ontario. This survey finds Core French programs in Ontario to be problematic. They note specific causes:

The Ontario Curriculum focuses on a grammar-based rather than a communicative approach; this is particularly true at the Grade 7 level. Cultural and interactive or “fun” activities get short shrift and the opportunity for discovery and enjoyment of the language and culture through practical life experiences is lost. Although students learn the grammar and can achieve high marks in the subject, there is little development of oral proficiency and ease of communication in authentic situations. The result is that they

cannot speak French or are insecure about speaking French. One respondent expressed concern about the amount of time students must spend on reading and writing at the expense of the development of good oral language skills. This imbalance is exacerbated by the loss of primary FSL in many boards. (Ontario Public School Boards' Association, 2007).

However, the survey found that several respondents cited Wendy and Matt Maxwell's AIM (Accelerative Integrated Method) program as an effective approach to oral language development in French, increasing both oral facility and a positive attitude to the language. This program helps develop oral mastery through the use of gestures, drama and music and has yielded positive results. A number of boards have piloted this and at least one is hoping to extend its use through to Grade 9. Indeed the research points to a growing consensus toward oral language development in the goal of obtaining a functional language proficiency in French. Interestingly, Canada has no definition or benchmark of functional language proficiency in French. Laurens Vandergrift (2006) calls for a common framework of reference for languages in Canada and considers the relevance of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in the Canadian context. To be clear, the CEFR is intended to provide a common basis for defining language proficiency among the member countries of the Council of Europe, not a uniform system of language learning or teaching, nor a national curriculum. Content specifications will differ according to the target language and the context of the learning, and methodology will vary with pedagogic culture (Vandergrift, 2006). Adopting the CEFR model into Canada would therefore not mean establishing a uniform national curriculum or pedagogy, but define language proficiency among the provinces and territories in Canada. The common framework of reference focuses on CEFR's affinity for supporting diverse and dynamic classrooms "in developing multiple communicative competences in the teaching, learning, and assessing of FSL" (ibid, p. 21). Netten and Germain extol a communicative focus with Intensive French' oral skill development. They suggest that the development of a skill requires considerable sustained use, and communication in a second language is a skill that develops through the use and re-use in authentic situations of the sentences needed for communication. Moreover, speaking with spontaneity requires that students develop an internal, or automatic grammar rather than relying on an external grammar or textbook (Netten & Germain, 2009).

The emergence of the innovative approach to FSL teaching and learning called Intensive French (IF) is referred to by some as a "bain linguistique" or language bath (Netten & Germain, 2002) in which concentrated exposure to the second language is a key element: "Intensive French may be defined as an enrichment of the Core French program consisting of offering from three to four times the number of hours regularly scheduled for Core FSL in a concentrated period of time (five months) at the end of the elementary school cycle (in Grade 5 or Grade 6)" (Netten & Germain, 2004a: 283). Netten and Germain (2005) assert Intensive French is "clearly distinguishable from Core French" (p. 185). The considerable increase in instructional time in the first year of intensive French, along with the concentration of that time, allows a "language arts approach to teaching FSL" (Collins, Stead, & Woolfrey, 2006), involving a focus on communication (oral and written), literacy, interaction with others, and project-based pedagogical principles. Proving Intensive French's viability to promote oral language development, in their study of attitudes, motivation, and willingness to communicate in Intensive programs, Kristmanson & Dicks' (2007) survey results showed an increase in students' willingness to communicate (WTC) at the end of the intensive semester.

Core French through the Arts

The present study examines attitudes, motivation, and language use among 18 Grade nine applied level Core French students in Windsor, Ontario, who learned French through the Arts. According to the Ministry of Education of Ontario (2000), applied courses focus on the essential concepts of the discipline but develop students' knowledge and skills by emphasizing practical, concrete applications of these concepts and incorporating theoretical applications as

appropriate. Over a period of three weeks students engaged in Arts-based lessons. In this study, French is the language of instruction for general Arts curricula in addition to Core French language arts. The classroom teacher and the researcher developed a series of lesson plans that would encourage students' spoken French as well as the development of their creative abilities. The three-week collaborative intervention allowed the teacher and teacher-researcher to apply an Arts-based pedagogy, and equally important, to create a meaningful learning experience for Grade nine students in the Core French program. Because the nature of this Arts-based learning is synonymous with the Constructivist literacy theory of language acquisition, this study is also guided by the tenets of Constructivism. Constructivism is defined as: "A philosophy of learning founded on the premise that by reflecting on our experiences, we construct our own understanding of the world we live in. Each of us generates our own rules and mental models that we use to make sense of our experiences (Brooks & Brooks, 1993). Black (2005) notes "Incorporating Constructivist practices into Arts classrooms is by no means a great leap: Arts educators have often practiced project-driven, problem solving, student-centered approaches, particularly when designing studio art curricula" (p. 27).

Much research in the area of language acquisition has brought teaching and learning through the Arts to the surface. For example, Deasy (2002) states that students in Arts programs repeatedly outperform other students in reading, history, vocabulary, and the language Arts and that mastering the visual and performing Arts can advance students' use of oral and written verbal forms. Similarly, in her study in a French first language classroom, Lowe (1995) explains that the integration of music and other Art forms in a third grade French first language curriculum promotes learning in language and in the Arts. Moreover, a national study (1999-2002) of the Learning Through The Arts (LTTA) program in Canada found that Grade 6 students who had participated in the program for three years scored 11 percentile points higher on tests of computation and estimation than did their peers in control groups. In a 2010 LTTA study involving over 1,200 students, teachers reported the positive effects of LTTA programming on students' engagement in learning, capacities to work collaboratively, openness to different points of view, and happiness to be at school. These effects were being transferred to students' school life and learning in general (Royal Conservatory, 2004). Although the Learning Through the Arts (LTTA) initiative did not conduct research within the Core French program, they recently doubled the number of lesson plans available on their website for French second language teachers.

There is a body of research related to the impact of an integrated curriculum on student attitudes. MacIver (1990) found that integrated program students developed team spirit and improved their attitudes and work habits. Shoemaker (1989) defines an integrated curriculum as: "Education that is organized in such a way that it cuts across subject-matter lines, bringing together various aspects of the curriculum into meaningful association to focus upon broad areas of study. It views learning and teaching in a holistic way and reflects the real world, which is interactive" (p. 5). A look at student attitudes towards the Arts further aids in advocating for an Arts-based curriculum. In their study "Learning through the Arts: French Immersion and First Language Schools: Final Report," Uptis and Smithrim (2004) asked students in focus groups if they would like more music, drama or Arts in schools. The answer was a resounding 'yes.' This question elicited the most enthusiasm of any question in the focus group interviews.

Methodology

Case study

This research relied on a type of case study used to explore situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes (Yin, 2003). Stake (1995) and Yin (2003) base their approach to case study on a constructivist paradigm. Constructivists claim that truth is relative and that it is dependent on one's perspective. This paradigm "recognizes the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning, but does not reject outright some notion of objectivity" (Miller & Crabtree, 1999, p. 10). One of the advantages of this approach is the close

collaboration between the researcher and the participant, while enabling participants to tell their stories (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). Baxter and Jack (2008) explain that through these stories the participants are able to describe their views of reality and this enables the researcher to better understand the participants' actions (see also Lather, 1992; Robottom & Hart, 1993). Case studies facilitate the investigation of complex social phenomena and are a particularly appealing design for applied fields of study such as education (Bogdan & Bilken, 2003). In this research, a qualitative case study was the most appropriate choice because it would result in a rich account of stories of how grade nine applied level students perceive learning French as a second language through the arts. Bogden and Biklen (2003) define qualitative research as having five features: 1) naturalistic; 2) descriptive data; 3) concern with process; 4) inductive; and 5) meaning. This study included the features that define qualitative research. It was naturalistic to the extent that I participated in natural conversations with students whom I taught and I collected data from on location, in the classroom. The data was descriptive, taking the form of words, not numbers. The research was concerned with process because it focused on how students developed their attitudes toward learning the French language. The research was inductive because it was through the exploration of this topic that important themes emerged. Finally, the research was also interested in meaning or how students made sense of learning French through 'hands on' artistic activities, including details about their assumptions, feelings and past experiences. Furthermore, this study was highly concerned with meaning because it was based on the principles of constructivism or how students learned through meaningful experience.

Data collection

Interdisciplinary lesson plans were developed in collaboration between the researcher and a Grade nine applied Core French teacher. The lessons were team-taught by the researcher and the classroom teacher every day for a period of three weeks. Playing drums, singing, drawing, painting, active listening, acting, chanting, pantomime, composition, food making and tasting were the activities chosen to reinforce concepts in both French and in the Arts. The pedagogy in these Arts-based lesson plans and their impact on student attitudes toward learning French is the focus of this article. The lesson plans for this study were planned sequentially (in French) in order to build upon each other, day after day, reflecting the tenets of the Constructivist learning theory. Hands-on materials were used instead of textbooks, and students were encouraged to think and to explain their reasoning instead of memorizing and reciting facts. Of course it must be mentioned that there was reading and writing during the Arts intervention; however, emphasis was on students' spoken French. The teacher and the researcher prepared the learning environment to ensure independent learning and the use of meta-cognition skills.

To uncover the learning that emerged during the twelve-day Arts intervention, participants' attitudes about learning French through the Arts were examined, using several methods of assessing outcomes. Data was collected through multiple sources to include interview, observations and document analysis (Cresswell, 2003). Focus group interviews of 3-4 students per group were conducted with the 18 students at the end of the intervention. A questionnaire for each individual participant was also developed for this study in order to address the research questions. There were 19 short-answer opinion questions pertaining to past experience in Core French, Arts methodology, etc. Participant observation was conducted throughout the study by both the researcher and the regular classroom teacher. The classroom teacher and I communicated and commented daily via email, and held discussions before, during, and after each lesson. I also kept a personal journal.

Data analysis

With a focus on the stories emerging from the participants in this Case Study, I relied on grounded theory methods, thus data were analyzed through processes of constant comparison and triangulation. In constant comparison newly gathered data are continually compared with previously collected data and coding in order to refine the development of theoretical

categories. An emerging theme design using qualitative methods of data collection and analysis was thus used to address the research concerns of this study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Emerging themes were the observations that arose as the study progressed where data collection and analysis were conducted simultaneously. The data collection took place in April and May 2006, with the analysis beginning immediately.

The research questions included:

1. What attitudes do Core FSL students have toward French second language learning?
2. How do students feel about the Core FSL program with a focus on an Arts-based curriculum?
3. In which Arts-based language activities did students tend to speak more French?

Findings

The research questions asked in this study focus on understanding how Arts-based curriculum had an impact on French second language learning. To examine this larger question in respect to the Grade nine student responses, I analyzed and clustered four sub-themes that emerged. These topics offer lenses into the Grade nine participants' attitudes and learning processes.

Teaching French Through the Arts Enhanced Student Well-Being. Student well-being (self-esteem, pride) increased as a result of the Arts intervention. Self-esteem was expressed through students' willingness to engage (risk-taking) in the Arts-based curriculum. Also, self-esteem was exhibited through students' pride in their work as well as through facial expressions. Both the classroom teacher and researcher observed:

- After hanging all the art on the walls (following a visual arts activity), students lingered longer in class after the bell in order to observe the paintings and brag to the incoming class about their work.
- Improved student attendance and punctuality over the three-week intervention.
- Students showed pride in their artwork (paintings, skits, songs), and made a better effort to speak French during the presentations of their 'masterpieces' all the while making progress in their learning.
- Students were taking more risks in their learning.
- Students smiled more often during the Arts-based intervention.

Student Attitudes Toward Past Experience in Elementary Core French. Data revealed that 75 per cent of the students wrote that past experience with the Core French program was in some way negative. Some comments of students' past experiences in elementary Core French programs are:

- My old French teacher was kind of mean. She mostly gave us worksheets that were way too hard.
- Nobody really enjoyed French because she made everyone miserable. We could hear her cart rolling down the hallway and we would get scared.
- It was boring; we usually copied notes from the board.

Seventy-five per cent of the students also listed 'non interdisciplinary' pedagogical activities as the reason for their negative attitude toward Core French in elementary. In the focus groups, the majority of students constantly referred to how learning through the Arts was fun and interesting. When asked: "Can you tell me about one of your favourite past experiences in French class in elementary school?" the answers all referred to hands-on experiences where students were actively involved and/or doing Arts-based activities:

- Christmas French play
- Making sculptures outside in the snow
- Outside time during French
- Detective game
- Etienne concert

- Songs
- Picnics
- Assembly about France
- Puppets
- Food

Students further revealed their desire for the Arts when asked: “In your opinion, what could French teachers do to help make learning French more interesting”? All the students answered on their questionnaires that they wished French class could be taught through the Arts (music, movement, visual Arts, and drama).

Student Attitudes Toward Speaking French. All data sources indicate that students were learning and using the French language. For example, the classroom teacher often noted students’ progress in both oral and written activity. The experience in the Arts transcended mere entertainment allowing learning to begin. Students learned to distinguish abstract art from realist art and could make comparisons between these art forms using the French language. Furthermore students learned to draw and paint in these different styles and could present a tableau to their peers using the French language. Students also learned to distinguish different rhythmic patterns, and could create and describe rhythms (using various drums from around the world) to their classmates, all in French. Students learned to describe a variety of songs through both illustrations and the French language. Moreover, students learned new vocabulary by acting out short skits and short plays.

Students composed short sentences and skits, learned new vocabulary, applied rules of grammar, spoke and read with ease and comprehension and deepened these skills as the study unfolded.

With less pressure on perfecting the small details of language through writing, it was observed that students made a greater effort in their use of oral language. In the activity that elicited the most spoken French, the ‘Planning a Surprise Party’ dramatic skit, students worked in pairs to plan a party ‘over the telephone’. Students improvised many lines from a script to make the skit more meaningful to their personal lives. For this activity students made many choices, from whom to invite to what music would be played. Students made the greatest effort to speak French throughout this activity. When I asked the students why this might be, most students commented:

- Because it was something we might write, we felt more confident.
- Getting up and acting is so much more fun than sitting in our desks doing work.

For the skit, students did, in fact, create much of their own dialogue. It was also observed that students felt very comfortable performing this skit because they could relate the experience to their own personal lives. When asked to explain why drama helps to use the French language, some replies were:

- Skits can happen in real life, and when you’ve acted it out, it’ll come easier.
- Yeah, because what good is a word when you don’t know what it means.
- It’s easier to speak French when you’re pretending to be somebody else, it’s not as scary.
- When you are talking you have to act it out, so you have to know the meaning.
- Because it makes you challenge yourself.

In fact, the classroom teacher stated: “Wow, they’re [the students] really making an effort to speak French with you.”

Students Attitudes Toward One Another. Through direct observation, the classroom teacher and I observed that students related better to one another through the Arts projects. Indeed the Arts-based Core French intervention helped to foster students’ tolerance of one another. Not only were students attempting to speak French, but shy students blended more easily into the classroom culture due to the nature of the curriculum. For example, in the poster project, students were asked to represent their favourite music through (French) words and illustrations. This was the favourite activity for 90 per cent of the students. Because students were sharing themselves through art with their classmates, this encouraged empathy development among

individuals and groups. In the focus group questions, one student commented, “Learning through Arts helped me express myself (in French) and to learn about the others.”

Discussion

The findings of this study illustrate that the interdisciplinary (French, Arts) pedagogical strategies planned, developed, and utilized by the teacher and researcher during the intervention contributed to not only the success of the teaching, but to increased students’ attitudes, motivation toward learning French, and a shift in tolerance among the students. Student well-being (self-esteem, pride) increased as a result of the Arts intervention. As explained by Gardner (1993) in the article *Teaching for Understanding*: “When you’ve encountered an idea in your own way and brought your own thinking to bear, the idea becomes much more a part of you. It isn’t something that you read about from 3 o’clock to 3:15 and then forget: it’s a part of your own experience” (p. 6). In fact, the activities planned in the study, besides promoting the learning of French through the Arts, helped to develop creative, motivated, and well-rounded Grade nine students. Students were proud after engaging in a creative endeavour. Student pride contributed to positive student attitudes toward speaking French. In fact, even the shyest girl in the class, who refused to do oral presentations in either English or French, made an amazing effort in her oral presentation of her self-portrait. For her effort, she received applause from her classmates. “Again, we acknowledge the power of the Arts to increase self-esteem and to reach the child in the depth of his emotional being thus, enabling him or her to learn” (Lowe, 2003, p. 26).

In Ontario, most students entering high school in Grade nine come from different public schools. Although some students came from the same feeder school, participants in this study had varying experiences of elementary Core French as a second language instruction. Regarding the elementary program, most students listed 'non interdisciplinary' pedagogical reasons for their negative attitudes toward Core French in elementary. One possible reason for the positive attitudes found in this study, is that the students' liked their teacher. Moreover, the students knew their teacher would be teaching them again in Grade ten. This seemed to play an important role in their continuing on in French. Wright et al (1997) document that the most important factor that affects student learning is the teacher. Clearly the homeroom teacher was well liked which contributed to positive student attitudes toward continuing on with the Core French program. When discussing the popularity of the applied Core Grade ten French course, the classroom teacher said: “It’s almost unheard of in Ontario, most schools do not even offer Grade Ten Applied French.” What’s more, the classroom teacher’s enthusiasm was obvious and overt, and contributed to the success of the study. This positive influence transmitted directly to the students who held their teacher in very high regard. With less enthusiasm, students might have read their teacher differently and might therefore not have been as willing to try the new Arts activities or to speak French. Further research of the role of the teacher in the Core French classroom on student learning is necessary.

Within the present study’s practical Arts-based lessons, students were challenged to move beyond memorizing facts (as is a characterizing activity of the ‘current’ Core French classroom) to pursue a topic in more depth and to see patterns and relationships. Students were encouraged to construct knowledge rather than to simply gain information. While being engaged in interdisciplinary creative French/Arts activities, students made connections between language and arts skills and constructed the new knowledge acquired from hands-on experience. With less pressure on perfecting the small details of language through writing, it was observed that students made a greater effort in their use of oral language. In their study, Dicks and Leblanc (2006) found that students are more motivated and have more confidence in their language ability when they are engaged in highly interactive, imaginative, language rich, and student-centered activities. The experience is more meaningful since students take control and responsibility for their own learning. Moreover, this study reveals how valuable it can be to create a French environment in the classroom in order to simulate real-life situations, which in turn make language learning meaningful (Flewelling, 2007, personal communication).

Conclusion

The teaching of French through the Arts intervention was beneficial in many ways to all participants, and did enhance student motivation towards learning French. Overall, students made a greater effort to speak French and enjoyed coming to class and all students supported the idea that there should be more Arts in the Core French classroom. Teaching Core French via music, movement, drama and visual Arts is beneficial to French language learning and also acknowledges the non-academic benefits such as: the development of creative abilities; enhanced student well-being and self-esteem; and development of positive attitudes towards the teacher and towards speaking French. Furthermore, because students were fully engaged in their learning, an obvious decline in negative classroom behaviour was noted. In this study, the strong presence of the Arts contributed to greater enjoyment of the Core French program. Furthermore, it was observed in the Grade nine Core French classroom that when teaching French through Art activities, there was more interaction, that is, students spoke French to one another during Art projects. Because the French teaching was presented through the arts, the Grade nine applied level students were drawn into an embodied and oral participation, and increased their sense of accomplishment. A shift in classroom culture was also noted because students worked collaboratively, thus an increase in tolerance among students was noted. Data also supported the significance of the classroom teacher on students' attitudes toward learning French.

Although teaching French content via Arts pedagogy may not appeal to every teacher and requires professional development in the Arts, it is a method that teachers should consider. Not only for dealing with classroom management, motivational and achievement reasons, but also for retention in the program - encouraging students to take French beyond Grade nine. Educators may resist an integrated approach to language learning because they may not have a strong background in the Arts and thus do not feel comfortable engaging in art, music, and drama. However, this resistance may be due to the fact that an interdisciplinary approach to learning would demand a shift in teaching methodology, curricula content, and in ways of viewing assessment. Additional professional development in the Arts for Core French teachers could help to mitigate this resistance.

A follow-up survey with the classroom teacher to see whether or not the Arts intervention had long-term effects on teaching practices would provide valuable information on the efficacy of this alternative program. Moreover, a longer period of time during which to introduce and evaluate the effectiveness of the Arts-based activities is recommended.

Ultimately, this study is in keeping *Plan 2013*: “Not only can the students do more, and therefore find French more interesting, but the teachers find themselves with a much more positive teaching situation” (Rehorik, 2004, p. 40).

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Anne Rovers, born and raised in Tecumseh, ON, is a PhD candidate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. She completed her Master's research at the University of Windsor in 2007. Her passions for language learning and the arts have led to her current doctoral research examining the role of discourse and the arts in creating National identity. Anne is currently a French instructor at the University of Toronto at Scarborough. anne.rovers@utoronto.ca