Teacher Reactions to CEFR's task-based approach for FSL classrooms

Farahnaz Faez, Shelley Taylor, Suzanne Majhanovich, Patrick Brown
The University of Western Ontario
ffaez@uwo.ca / taylor@uwo.ca / smajhano@uwo.ca / brown5@uwo.ca
Maureen Smith The Ontario College of Teachers
msmith@oct.ca - Canada

Résumé : Ce travail cherche à comprendre la perception des professeurs quant au rôle du Cadre Européen Commun de Référence pour les Langues (CECR). Il analyse si ce dernier pourrait améliorer les résultats dans les programmes scolaires en Français Langue Seconde (FLS) au Canada. Des enseignants et des étudiants issus de neuf conseils scolaires différents de la province de l'Ontario ont participé à cette étude. Quatre vingt treize professeurs ont assisté à des sessions d'introduction au cadre et à des sessions de ressources basées sur le CECR. Ces ressources incluent un kit d'activités créé pour les quatre premiers niveaux de compétence du CECR. Les professeurs devaient utiliser ces activités dans leurs cours, activités qui encouragent l'utilisation de la langue cible, et devaient compléter des questionnaires avant et après l'utilisation de ces ressources en classe. Ces questionnaires cherchaient à comprendre les perceptions et les attitudes de ces professeurs envers l'importance centrale donnée à la notion de tâches. Les résultats ont révélé que les professeurs de FLS étaient généralement très positifs quant au potentiel de l'enseignement communicatif inspiré par une approche actionnelle. Ces professeurs s'attendaient à ce que leurs étudiants augmentent leurs performances dans les tâches assignées en FLS après avoir utilisées les activités basées sur l'approche actionnelle. En conclusion, cet article discute des défis et des limites de l'introduction du CECR dans les programmes de FLS au Canada.

Mots-clés : Cadre européen commun de référence (CECR), Portfolio européen des langues (PEL), Français langues seconde (FLS), Français de base, Français immersion

Abstract: This study examines the teacher's perspective of the role that the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) might play in improving language learning outcomes in programs related to French as a second language (FSL) in Canada. Participants included teachers and students from nine school boards across the province of Ontario. Ninety-three teachers attended sessions in which they were introduced to the CEFR and CEFR-based resources. The resources included activity kits for the four initial proficiency levels of the CEFR. The teachers were asked to draw on the activities and incorporate «CEFR-based instruction» (instruction geared to CEFR levels and focused on language «use») into their regular teaching. Participating teachers completed pre- and post-study questionnaires that delved into their attitudes and perceptions of the CEFR's action-oriented approach. Findings revealed that FSL teachers were predominantly positive about the potential of communicative teaching inspired by the CEFR's task-based approach in FSL classrooms. Teachers' estimates of their students' abilities to perform tasks in French increased as a result of using task-based activities. Challenges and limitations of introducing the CEFR for FSL programs in Canada are discussed.

Keywords: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), European Language Portfolio (ELP), French as a second language (FSL), Core French, French Immersion

Introduction

This article describes a project that examined teachers' perspectives on implementing the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) as a basis for instruction in French as a second language (FSL) programs in K-12 classrooms in Ontario. Due to widespread dissatisfaction with FSL programs across Canada (Lapkin, Mady, & Arnott, 2009), the Ontario Ministry of Education[1] commissioned a province-wide study to examine the role the CEFR might play in improving language learning outcomes in such programs. We begin by providing a context for FSL programs in Canada and present a brief introduction to the CEFR as well as related literature on the topic. We then turn to the study, introduce its participants, methodology, sources of data, and data analysis procedures. Finally, we present the findings and discuss issues that pertain to introducing the CEFR as well as other second language education programs in FSL programs in Canada. This discussion will be of particular interest to language educators and policy makers interested in introducing the CEFR in a variety of second (L2) or foreign language (FL) education programs.

FSL Programs in Canada

Canada is officially a bilingual country. Nonetheless, there is widespread dissatisfaction with levels of French language proficiency and FSL programs across the country. Language policy in Canada is decided upon at the federal level while L2 education policy and implementation are the responsibility of the provincial governments. In the public school system, French is generally offered through Core French (CF) programs in which French is taught as a subject for one class period a day, and French Immersion (FI) programs in which French is the medium of instruction for some subjects throughout the regular school day. Students in the CF program account for 90% of all FSL learners and only 3% of these students study French beyond grade nine (Canadian Parents for French, 2008). These figures are in sharp contrast with the Government of Canada's (2003, 2008) goal of doubling the proportion of high school graduates who are functionally bilingual in English and French, Canada's official languages. Calls for the development and implementation of a national framework for assessing students and providing instruction in FSL programs led Vandergrift (2006) to recommend that the Council of Ministers of Education (2010) adopt the CEFR (described in greater depth below) as a reference document. Due to the widespread global interest in the CEFR, the Ontario Ministry of Education commissioned a province-wide study to examine the role the CEFR might play in improving language learning outcomes in FSL programs.

In order to implement any new approach, it is important to understand teachers' reactions and perspectives and their strongly held beliefs about teaching, learning, and new approaches to L2 education. Teachers are central to improving language teaching and learning in any classroom and their beliefs play a significant role in the acceptance of new methodologies (Freeman, 1991; Johnston, 1992 & 1994; Prabhu, 1990). In fact, teachers have a stronger role than does the curriculum for effective change in the classroom. Thus, for the purpose of this article, we focus our attention on teachers and their reactions to CEFR's «task-based» approach. For purposes of definition, by *task* we refer to any activity in which meaning is given priority, resembles real world activities, its completion has priority, and the evaluation of performance is based on its or 'task' outcomes (Ellis, 2003; Skehan, 1998).

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

The CEFR was developed by the Council of Europe to provide "a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe" (Council of Europe, 2001 : 1). The CEFR uses *Can Do* statements to describe L2 proficiency as L2 use across five activities (listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production, and writing) at six levels: A1 and A2 (basic user), B1 and B2 (independent user) and C1 and C2 (proficient user). That is, CEFR descriptors focus on what L2 learners «Can Do» at different levels of different skills. The CEFR includes *the four skills* but distinguishes between spoken interaction and spoken production. These 'skills', renamed as *communicative activities,* are elements of overall language proficiency along with two new communicative activities, *interaction* and *mediation* (Piccardo, 2010).

The CEFR's emphasis on *interaction* deserves attention as it draws on constructivist approaches to language learning. Indeed, interaction is central in constructivist orientations to L2 learning. Swain (2000) argues for promoting interaction in language classroom, which she calls "collaborative dialogue". She suggests that collaborative dialogue (i.e., goal oriented dialogue with others) builds knowledge but, more importantly, develops "linguistic knowledge". More recently, Swain (2006) has extended the notion of collaborative dialogue to "languaging", which she defines as "a dynamic, never ending process of using language to make meaning" (p. 96). Languaging, especially in the form of collaborative dialogue, mediates L2 learning (Storch 2001; 2008; Suzuki, 2008; Suzuki & Itagaki, 2009). Thus, the CEFR's emphasis on interaction is noteworthy, given its potential for stimulating collaborative dialogue and languaging.

It is important to note that the CEFR is not unique in its theoretical underpinnings as it is grounded in a theory of communicative competence (Bachman, 1990; Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980), a theory that has been around since the 1980s. Nor is the CEFR original in its focus on learners as the notion of learner autonomy was introduced in the 1980s (Holec, 1981; Little, 1991); however, where the CEFR is innovative is in its promotion of an action-oriented approach to pedagogy and focus on learning, teaching and assessment as interdependent and interwoven (Coste, 2007; Little, 2006, 2011a). Little (2011a) emphasizes that the CEFR was designed to provide a framework for action and reflection. He further distinguishes two versions of the *learner autonomy* construct (Little, 2011b). Holec's (1981) version of learner autonomy was individualistic in the sense that it focused on the learner and his/her "ability to take charge of one's own learning" (Little, 2011b, p. 3). *Version 2* of learner autonomy presents a socio- constructivist approach to language pedagogy and is *social-interactive-collaborative* in orientation, indicating that learner autonomy requires the mediation and support of an expert other (Little 2011b, p. 4). The author presents ways in which the CEFR can be used to develop L2 curricula that is informed by Version 2 of learner autonomy (Little, 2011b).

The CEFR declares to be a descriptive tool, not a prescriptive framework (see also Little, 2006; Piccardo, 2010). It follows, then, that the CEFR, in and of itself, does not advocate for any particular teaching method (Coste, 2007; Little, 2006, 2011a); however, its action-oriented approach lends itself to task-based methods (Little, 2006) since, in Piccardo's (2010) view, it allows for a shift from communicative to action-oriented approaches to L2 education. CEFR's *Can Do* statements highlight attention on whether learners are able to perform certain activities using the target language and hence promote task-

based instruction. The descriptive nature of the CEFR allows practitioners to adapt it across educational contexts and purposes (Little, 2006; North, 2000). The CEFR has been introduced in various ways and to various extents in 44 countries (Piccardo, 2010). Therefore, it is no surprise that the Ontario Ministry of Education would be interested in investigating the feasibility of introducing the CEFR into FSL programs in Ontario for purposes of its international coinage alone.

The study

The questions that guided the broader study were 1) the feasibility of CEFR as a frame of reference for FSL education programs in Ontario and 2) the degree to which CEFR enhances the FSL education experiences of teachers and students in Ontario. For purposes of this paper, we only focus on the latter question and explore the teachers' perceptions of the CEFR's usefulness for FSL programs. Therefore, the sub-questions that are addressed in this paper include whether, following participation in the study, there were any links between 1) using task-based activities and teachers' general attitudes and beliefs about emphasis on teaching grammar or communication, 2) teacher use of task-based activities and subsequent view of students' abilities to perform certain tasks in French, and 3) the amount of experience teachers gain in using task-based activities and their interest in continuing to use these sorts of activities.

Two teams collaborated on this province-wide study, which involved nine Ontario school boards - a development team and a research team (current authors). The development team comprised experienced FSL teachers, FSL administrators from a few of the participating school boards, and one FSL consultant. They developed CEFR-based activity kits for each of the A1 through B2 levels. Each kit contained a series of task-based activities related to the "Can Do" descriptors at the various CEFR skill levels and incorporating the various L2 skills. Each kit also included a teacher's guide associated with each level. Both CF and FI teacher participants were suggested by FSL consultants in their respective school boards and invited to participate. Those teachers who accepted the invitation attended an introductory session presented by the leader of the development team. In those sessions, teachers were first introduced to the CEFR using the "global scale" and the "self-assessment" grid, then watched a video that illustrated the sorts of task-based activities that teachers could use in their classrooms, and finally completed related exercises to deepen their understanding of the CEFR (for example, they charted their own level of French proficiency on a self-assessment grid).

Participants

Ninety-three teachers from nine different school boards across Ontario participated in this study: 50 were CF teachers and 43 were FI teachers. The CF teachers taught grades 4, 7, 9 and 12; the FI teachers taught grades 1, 4, 7, 9 and 12. A total of 943 students in CF and FI programs from various grades and school boards took part, including 466 CF students and 477 FI students.

Instruments and procedure

As noted, the 93 participating teachers attended CEFR information sessions. Following their introduction to the study, they completed an online, pre-study questionnaire. As

the CEFR implies task-based approaches to L2 education, we developed our questionnaire based on the literature on task-based, communicative L2 teaching (Canale & Swain, 1980; Skehan, 1998).

The pre-study questionnaire began with items designed to elicit demographic information, teachers' own experiences learning French, and their prior FSL teaching experience (to find out, for example, about their French proficiency and ease of speaking the language). The questionnaire also sought information on teachers' general attitudes and beliefs about French language teaching using a four-point scale (from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*). Furthermore, 46 items explored teachers' opinions about their students' French abilities, again using a four-point scale (*not at all, sometimes, often, most of the time*). A final set of items targeted teachers' perceptions of student motivation and bilingualism.

The main purpose of the questionnaire was to gauge teachers' orientation to communicative language teaching and attitudes towards students' target language «use» prior to their exposure to the CEFR-related activities. An additional purpose was to gauge the teachers' understanding of factors in students' French language development as the CEFR was being introduced in an attempt to reach the Government of Canada's (2003 & 2008) goal of doubling the number of functionally bilingual high school graduates.

Each teacher was given activity kits geared to their students' French proficiency level(s) (e.g., A1, A2, B1 or B2). A few teachers in the higher FI grades required the B2 level activity kits. Approximately three months later, participating teachers were invited to focus-group sessions to share and discuss their experiences exploring the CEFR through the activity kits. Fifty-three teachers attended these sessions and completed the post-study questionnaire.

The post-study questionnaire was designed to determine if there was a shift in teachers' perceptions regarding task-based approaches to teaching based on their use of the activity kits. Thus, the post-study questionnaire included items that explored teachers' attitudes and understandings of the CEFR and task-based approaches. Participating students also completed pre- and post-study questionnaires; however, space limitations do not permit discussion of those findings in the present paper.

Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were used to interpret the data gathered through the pre- and post-study questionnaires and focus group sessions. Only the responses of participants who completed both the pre- and post-study questionnaire were analyzed. For purposes of this article, our focus is on if and how introduction to the CEFR and its task-based approach had an effect on teachers. We draw on the teachers' data collected through the pre- and post-study questionnaires, but our analysis and interpretation is also informed by the focus group data we gathered. The responses to the pre- and post-study questionnaires were compared using paired t-tests to determine the extent to which teachers' attitudes regarding their students' confidence and ability to perform tasks in French (i.e., the Can Do statements) changed after using the CEFR-based activities. Though emphases on teaching grammar rules and communication may be seen on a continuum, we interpreted a heavy emphasis on grammar as indicative of a traditional, grammar-based approach to L2 teaching, and an emphasis on meaning as indicative of a communicative approach to teaching.

The results of three types of analyses are presented here. First, for teachers who responded to both the pre- and post-study questionnaire, we examined whether: 1) general attitudes and beliefs about French language teaching changed from the pre- to the post-study questionnaire with regard to a focus on grammar and rules versus communication and tasks, and 2) their estimates of their students' abilities to perform certain tasks in French changed from the pre- to the post-study questionnaire. For the attitudinal measure, we began by taking the average response to 13 items that tap into attitudes about L2 teaching and learning that have a grammar-oriented versus communicative task-based orientation (e.g., "It is important for students to develop a strong grammar base before attempting to speak or listen to French" and "Role plays aid in student learning"). Responses were made on a 4-point Likert scale, with response options varying from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*. We examined the 13 items to identify whether they favoured grammar and rules or communicative tasks. For some items, it was appropriate to consider reverse-score responses. Low scores were indicative of the attitude that it was important to teach grammar and rules, while high scores were indicative of the attitude that teachers should develop students' communicative competence. This variable will be referred to as *Grammar*.

Second, for the estimates of student abilities, we took the average score for responses to a set of 46 items asking about students' abilities to perform certain tasks in French. Examples included: "retell in their own words something they have heard," "follow and understand dialogues, conversations, and presentations appropriate to age and proficiency level," and "identify the main points of TV, news items, reporting events, sports, weather, etc." Responses were made on a 4-point Likert scale, with response options varying from *Not at All* to *Most of the Time*. This variable will be referred to as *Can Do*.

The third type of analysis included responses to items that asked about the teachers' experiences working with the task-based activity kits. Such items appeared only on the post-test. Of particular interest were two sets of items that inquired about how much teachers actually used the task-based activity kits in their classrooms and how interested they would be in continuing to learn about and use task-based instruction.

Teachers' pre- and post-study attitudes about task-based approaches

The focus of this analysis was to explore whether teachers' attitudes and beliefs (as measured by the average score on *Grammar*), changed from the pre- to the post-study questionnaire. Scores for both FI and CF teacher groups are presented in Table 1. Scores are on a 4-point scale with 1 indicating adherence to the idea that FSL instruction should focus on grammar and rules, and 4 indicating that FSL instruction should promote task-based approaches and communicative competence. The mid-point of the scale is 2.5.

Table 1: Teacher attitudes towards grammar-focused versus task-based approaches

Teacher category	Pre-test ($\bar{X} \pm$ SD)	Post-test ($\bar{X} \pm$ SD)	T
Immersion (FI)	2.85 (.24)	2.88 (.18)	t (19) > 1 NS)
Core (CF)	2.76 (.32)	2.86 (.29)	t (25) = 2.026, p = .054

This question was addressed using the aggregate measure Grammar, on which lower scores indicated greater emphasis on a grammar-focused approach, and higher scores indicated greater emphasis on a communicative, task-based approach. The FI teachers' pre-questionnaire results were higher than that of the CF teachers (2.85 versus 2.76) and showed very little gain from pre- to post-study (2.85 to 2.88). For CF teachers, there was a small change that was marginally significant statistically. This change may be interpreted as suggesting that CF teachers who were exposed to the CEFR and presumably incorporated activity kits into their teaching developed a somewhat stronger feeling that task-based approaches should be used in FSL teaching, but classroom observations were outside the mandate of our research. Therefore we cannot draw on them to support that supposition.

Teacher estimates of student skills: pre- to post-study questionnaire

Scores for both CF and FI teacher groups are presented in Table 2. For each teacher, we computed their average responses to 46 items about students' abilities to perform certain tasks in French, on a four-point scale. A score of 1 would mean that they estimated their students could not perform a task at all. A score of 4 would mean that they estimated their students could perform a task most of the time. The scale midpoint was 2.5.

Table 2: Teacher estimates of student skills

Student Skills	Pre-test $(\overline{X} \pm SD)$	Post-test $(\overline{X} \pm SD)$	T
Immersion (FI)	3.24 (s.d. = .56)	3.46 (.47)	t (19) = 3.975, p < .05
Core (CF)	2.33 (.60)	2.69 (.56)	t (25) = 3.527, p < .05

FI teachers offered higher estimates of their students' abilities to perform tasks in French (3.24) than CF teachers (2.33) did in the pre-questionnaire. This finding is not surprising given the purpose and intensity of FI compared to CF programs. Both groups offered significantly higher estimates on the post-questionnaire than on the pre-questionnaire (3.46 and 2.69 respectively). The effects are small, but statistically significant in both cases. The FI teachers' estimates of their students' abilities from pre- to post-study questionnaire changed by 0.22 and the CF teachers by 0.36. In the case of FI teachers, even though estimates of students' abilities are fairly high to start with, they increased significantly at the post-test phase. The CF teachers offered significantly higher estimates of their students' skills, indexed by the Can Do aggregate question, on the post-test than on the pre-test.

Experience with task-based activities and interest in continuing to use them

The focus of this analysis was to explore whether the amount of experience teachers had with task-based instruction (the extent to which they used the activity kits) correlated with their interest in continuing with this approach in the future. To answer this question, we averaged scores on the post-questionnaire items that asked about the extent to which teachers used the task-based activity kits, and separately averaged scores on post-questionnaire items that asked about future involvement with these approaches. The former set included items about the frequency of use and the amount of time per class devoted to working with the kits. The latter set included items about future in-

service opportunities with task-based orientations and access to resources based on the CEFR. Having obtained these averages, we computed their correlation coefficient.

For CF teachers, the correlation between these two measures was statistically significant (r (24) =.591,(p < .001). We concluded that the more CF teachers actually used the task-based activity kits during their participation in the study, the more they tended to embrace them and would be interested in providing task-based instruction. For FI teachers, the correlation between these two scores (experience with task-based instruction and interest in future opportunities to use it) was significant (r (18)=.493,p < .027) and indicated a "moderate" degree of correlation. We may conclude on this basis that the more teachers actually used the activity kits during their participation in the study, the more they tended to like them and would be interested in future opportunities to provide task-based instruction.

Discussion

What is evident from the findings is that introducing teachers to task-based approaches was associated with a change in their attitudes about whether the focus of classroom instruction should be on grammatical rules or on communication and interaction. This change in attitude was more significant in CF teachers compared to FI teachers. Given the current dissatisfaction with CF programs (Lapkin, et. al, 2009) and the Government of Canada's (2003 & 2008) focus on increased levels of *bilingualism*, this finding is noteworthy. In FI programs, in which language is used as the medium of instruction, most classroom activities take the form of task-based instruction by virtue of providing content instruction through the medium of an L2. Thus, it is not surprising that FI teachers started with a higher score on the variable of *Grammar* (which indicated focus on task-based approaches) and showed a lower level (as compared to CF teachers) of change from the pre- to the post-questionnaire. Even though a change in attitude does not necessarily result in change in classroom practices (Johnson, 1994, 2009), a change in practice can be attributed to a change in attitude to a large extent. Thus, in order to bring about effective change in the classroom, it is important to work with teachers and their attitudes about best practices. This change of attitude is significant given that teachers might employ more task-based activities in their classrooms to promote interaction, real use of the language, collaborative dialogue, languaging and mediate L2 learning (Little, 2011b; Swain, 2006).

The other significant change in teachers' attitudes related to teachers' estimates of their students' abilities to perform tasks in French. The average responses of FI and CF teachers on 46 items about student abilities (in the form of *Can Do* statements) provided higher estimates on the post-questionnaire than on the pre-questionnaire. Again, the change the CF teachers reported with regard to estimates of their students' abilities using task-based activities was significantly higher (indexed by the *Can Do* aggregate question) on the post-test than on the pre-test compared to FI teachers. Again, this is not surprising given the focus of FI programs whereby students are required to perform tasks in French in regular subject-matter classrooms. A possible interpretation of this finding is that teachers who used task-based activities and Can Do checklists in their classrooms came to believe in their students' abilities to perform tasks in French; presumably, the teachers' adoption of task-based approaches allowed students to become *users* of the target language (Little, 2010a).

Finally, the teacher questionnaire results revealed that the more teachers used task-based instruction, the more they liked the approach and believed that it could bring about positive results in FSL classrooms. All participating teachers had approximately three months to use the task-based activity kits, but their reports on the intensity with which they used such activities varied. This finding is significant and is clear evidence that teachers develop their skills over time. It also speaks to the importance of professional development (PD) for teachers, and the complex issue of how PD can impact attitudes and practices in L2 classrooms. Piccardo (2010) refers to the extent to which teachers have been exposed to targeted PD and the quality of PD sessions as a significant factor and yet argues that this is a "simplified version" (p. 22) of the problem. The more significant issues, she argues, are attitudes towards the CEFR, the conceptual density of the CEFR document and the pedagogical culture of each country. Little (2010 a) also alludes to the need for targeted PD sessions and emphasizes the need to work with teachers on their beliefs about students' abilities. Teachers need to be exposed to concrete, step by step ways of implementing task-based approaches in their classroom.

We have alluded to several limitations of our findings. Because we were unable to observe participating teachers' classroom teaching or actual practices, our understanding of the extent to which they actually based their teaching on CEFR levels and used task-based activities in their classrooms is based on their self-reports. There was substantial variation in responses to the items that asked about how much teachers used the activity kits, which indicates that it is unlikely that all teachers gave the expected or right answer" (e.g., that they used the activity kits and noticed a change in students' L2 abilities). Nonetheless, though some teachers may have been tempted to give (their perception of) socially desirable responses on the post-questionnaire, given the variability in responses, it is improbable that all 93 teachers would have done so; it is reasonable that despite the limitations of the study, teachers' overall reaction to a focus on language use in FSL classrooms was positive.

Conclusion

What is clear from the findings is that teachers were generally positive about implementing instruction that incorporated a CEFR-based, language use approach in FSL classrooms; they were receptive to communicative, purposeful, learner-centered instruction; however, the way the CEFR was implemented in the present study could be characterized as a first step. Little (2006) describes the CEFR as "a descriptive scheme that can be used to analyze L2 learner's needs, specify L2 learning goals, guide the development of L2 learning materials and activities, and provide orientation for the assessment of L2 learning outcomes» (p. 167). That is, there is more to a «CEFR-based pedagogy» than task-based instruction. What is needed is a more comprehensive approach to the implementation of CEFR pedagogy for it to have a significant and lasting impact on teaching approaches and students' learning outcomes in FSL classrooms.

Little (2010b) recommends that CEFR pedagogy be situated in light of K-12 FSL teaching/learning conditions in Canada and adapted to meet the needs of Canada's specific linguistic, cultural, and contextual needs. The adapted framework should specify key learning outcomes for various stages of L2 development and use for CF and FI programs in elementary and secondary schools (Little, 2010b). Finally, key teaching and learning resources that promote classroom teaching approaches aligned with the communicative

learning outcomes specified by the CEFR need to be developed, curricula will have to be modified, and applicable resources and materials will have to be made readily available to teachers. Based on the teachers' reactions reported on in this paper, we believe that with careful adaptation and implementation of the CEFR (i.e., by addressing contextual variables and teachers' PD needs) it can contribute to the Government of Canada's (2003 & 2008) and the Canadian public's goal of increasing the French proficiency of high school graduates.

References

Bachman, L. F. 1990. *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford : Oxford University Press.

Canadian Parents for French. 2008. *The state of French-second-language education in Canada 2008*. Ottawa : Author. http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection/CP22-83-2005E.pdf [Retrieved March 14, 2011].

Canale, M. 1983. On some dimensions of language proficiency. In : J. Oller (Ed.), *Issues in language testing research*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House, pp. 333-342.

Canale, M., Swain, M. 1980. Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, vol. 1, issue 1, pp. 1-47.

Coste, D. 2007. Contextualizing uses of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Report of the Intergovernmental Forum, *"The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the development of language policies: challenges and responsibilities."* Strasbourg : Language Policy division, pp. 38-47.

Council of Europe. 2001. *Common European Framework of References: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. 2010. *Working with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages in the Canadian context: Guide for policy-makers and curriculum designers*. Ottawa, ON: Author. http://www.cmec.ca/Programs/assessment/Documents/CEFR-canadian-context.pdf [Retrieved March 14, 2011].

Ellis, R. 2003. *Task-based learning and teaching*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Freeman, D.1991. « To make the tacit explicit « : Teacher education, emerging discourse and conceptions of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, n˚ 7, pp. 439-454.

Government of Canada, Canadian Heritage. 2003. *The action plan for official languages 2007-2008: The next act: New momentum for Canada's linguistic duality*. Ottawa : Canadian Heritage. http://www.pch.gc.ca/pgm/lo-ol/pubs/plan/2007-2008/index-eng.cfm [Retrieved March 14, 2011].

Government of Canada, Canadian Heritage. 2008. *Roadmap for Canada's linguistic duality 2008-2013: Acting for the future*. Ottawa, ON : Author. http://www.pch.gc.ca/pgm/slo-ols/pubs/08-13-LDL/index-eng.cfm [Retrieved March 14, 2011].

Holec, H. 1981. *Autonomy and foreign language learning*. Oxford, UK : Oxford University Press.

Johnson, K. E. 1994. The emerging beliefs and instructional practices of preservice English as a second language teachers. *Teaching & Teacher Education,* vol. 10, issue 4, pp. 439-452.

Johnson, K. 2009. Second language teacher education: A sociocultural perspective. New York : Routledge.

Johnston, S. 1992. Images: A way of understanding the practical knowledge of student teachers. *Teaching & Teacher Education,* n° 8, pp. 123-136.

Lapkin, S., Mady, C., Arnott, S. 2009. Research perspectives on core French: A literature review. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, vol. 12, issue 2, pp. 6-30.

Little, D. 1991. *Learner Autonomy 1: Definitions, Issues and Problems.* Dublin: Authentik.

Little, D. 2006. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Contents, purpose, origin, reception and impact. *Language Teaching,* vol. 39, issue 3, pp. 167-190.

Little, D. 2010 a. Issues in learner autonomy. *Keynote speech for TESOL Academy webcast*. http:// www.tesolacademic.org/keynotes0810.htm#572106897 [Retrieved March 14, 2011].

Little, D. 2010 b. What does it mean to "implement" the CEFR? *Réflexions, vol.* 29, issue 2, pp. 20-21.

Little, D. 2011a. The common European Framework of reference for languages: A research agenda. Language Teaching, vol. 44, issue 3. *pp. 381-393.*

Little, D. 2011b, in press. Learner autonomy, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, the European Language Portfolio, and language teaching at university.

North, B. 2000. *The development of a common framework scale of language proficiency.* New York : Peter Lang.

Piccardo, E. 2010. From Communicative to action-orientated: New perspectives for a new millennium. *Contact, vol.* 36, issue 2, pp. 20-33.

Prabhu, N. S. 1990. There is no best method-why? *TESOL Quarterly,* n° 24, pp. 161-76.

Skehan, P. 1998. A framework for the implementation of task-based instruction. *Applied Linguistics,* vol. 17, issue 1, pp. 38-62.

Storch, N. 2001. Comparing ESL learners' attention to grammar on three different classroom tasks. *RELC Journal,* n° 32, pp. 104-124.

Storch, N. 2008. Metatalk in a pair work activity: Level of engagement and implications for language development. *Language Awareness*, n° 17, pp. 95-114.

Suzuki, M. 2008. Japanese learners' self revisions and peer revisions of their written compositions in English. *TESOL Quarterly,* n° 42, 209-233.

Suzuki, W., Itagaki, N. 2009. Languaging in grammar exercises by Japanese EFL learners of differing proficiency. *System,* n° 37, pp. 217-225.

Swain, M. 2000. The output hypothesis and beyond: Mediating acquisition through collaborative dialogue. In : J.

Lantolf (Ed.), *Sociocultural theory and second language learning*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, pp. 97–114.

Swain, M. 2006. Languaging, agency and collaboration in advanced language proficiency. In : H. Byrnes (Ed.), *Advanced language learning: The contribution of Halliday and Vygotsky* (pp. 95-105). London : Continuum.

Vandergrift, L. 2006. *Proposal for a common framework of reference for languages for Canada.* Ottawa : Department of Canadian Heritage.

Notes

[1] We are grateful to the Ontario Ministry of Education for providing funds for this project.