

# FSL

FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

## A Guide to Reflective Practice for Core French Teachers

MODULE 1

### Oral Proficiency

## Acknowledgement

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## Context

This module is intended to support elementary and secondary Core French teachers in developing students' oral proficiency in French. It draws on relevant research and the experiences of Core French teachers, and provides suggestions for planning, teaching, assessment, and reflection on practice.

In numerous studies on second language learning, researchers emphasize the importance of developing oral skills. In Core French, oral tasks improve students' abilities to communicate verbally in French and develop their thinking skills. In *Content-Area Conversations*, Fisher, Frey, and Rothenberg discuss Andrew Wilkinson's concept of "oracy" and how encouraging oral communication in classrooms contributes to "increased skill in reading and writing as users of the language [become] increasingly proficient." They add that "language learners need access to instruction that recognizes the symbiotic relationship among the four domains of language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing."

## Maximizing Exposure to French

The Core French teacher establishes French as the language of communication. Students must be immersed in French to become truly proficient. Core French teachers adjust their level of oral French – including speed, vocabulary, and structures – so that it is understandable but slightly beyond the students' level of language learned.

In *Effective Literacy Practices in FSL: Making Connections* (2008), the authors acknowledge that "a judicious use of English can facilitate understanding, but ... teachers must make every effort to speak French in class given the amount of time usually available to second language learning in most school systems." Core French teachers use their professional judgment to determine what is meant by the term "judicious," for example, when student safety is a concern.

### Practical Tips

The Core French teacher:

- Begins the class with several minutes of conversation revolving around the students and their interests, activities, likes and dislikes, topics being studied in other subjects, current events, or what they just learned in French. Examples of conversation prompts are "Dis-nous une chose que tu as apprise hier," or "Qu'est-ce que tu as fait après l'école hier?"
- Concludes the class by incorporating short oral exit questions and reflection prompts to keep students engaged to the last moment and to provide opportunities for self-assessment and reflection on learning (e.g., "Quelle stratégie as-tu utilisée aujourd'hui et pourquoi?"; "Quelle était la partie la plus facile/difficile de la tâche? Pourquoi?"; "J'ai besoin d'aide pour ..."; "Je me sentais vraiment ... parce que ...").
- Teaches useful phrases so that students can ask for help and resources in French.
- Uses cooperative learning strategies, such as Inside-Outside Circle (L'oignon), Conveyor Belt (Tapis roulant), and Mix and Mingle (On se rencontre) to maximize student talk time.

**If learners do not receive exposure to the target language, they cannot acquire it.**

Ellis (2008), p. 3

See Module 4: *Cooperative Learning* in A Guide to Reflective Practice for Core French Teachers.

## The Communicative Approach

In *French Is a Life Skill* (2007), Cogswell and Kristmanson state that “The main purpose of learning a language is communication. ... meaningful and authentic communication [is] at the centre of all language learning activities.” The communicative approach to language instruction is effective in developing functional proficiency because it emphasizes purposeful communicative activities in which language conventions are embedded instead of being taught using worksheets and drills. Students are taught high frequency vocabulary and structures when these are needed to communicate in meaningful situations.

## The Common European Framework of Reference and the Action-Oriented Approach

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) highlights the action-oriented approach, student self-assessment, the use of “can-do” statements, and the development of language skills that are relevant to authentic situations. The CEFR stresses the importance of developing oral proficiency and differentiates between oral production and oral interaction. The framework endorses an attitude that values language learners’ ability to communicate while gradually increasing their accuracy with practice over time. In the early stages of language learning, the goal is to communicate the intended message in the target language, recognizing that errors in form will be evident. Language learners are encouraged to develop and use skills related to the functions of language rather than to learn *about* the language.

As described by Puren, the **action-oriented approach** has evolved from and builds upon the characteristics of the communicative approach by considering the learners as social actors who interact for a genuine purpose such as presenting a convincing argument, making a purchase, confirming travel arrangements, or discussing current events. Before students start any work, the teacher first ensures that they have a foundation of French language skills and communication strategies needed for beginning the task. While students work collaboratively, the teacher provides feedback to build their language skills.

**[I]l est temps ... de passer de l'approche communicative ... à la perspective actionnelle.**

Puren (2006), p. 44

See Module 3: *The Action-Oriented Approach* in A Guide to Reflective Practice for Core French Teachers.

When I began to use the CEFR philosophy in my classroom practice, I noticed many more of the students participated. It was clear the reason for the shift was that the oral discussions were focused around the students and their interests, personal lives, and experiences. When the topic of conversation was about them, they were more motivated to participate.

Elementary Core French teacher

## Planning and Teaching to Develop Oral Proficiency

### Authentic Tasks, Relevant Topics

The Core French teacher always strives to create a need for communicating in French. Authenticity can be a powerful motivational factor. Brown (2007) defines authenticity in the context of oral proficiency as “a principle emphasizing real-world, meaningful language used for genuine communicative processes.” In *Effective Literacy Practices in FSL: Making Connections*, the authors observe that when teachers create authentic situations in the classroom, students are engaged because they “can talk about aspects of their lives that interest them and see a purpose in using French” (Anderson et al., 2008). These conversations foster purposeful language development because they enable students to learn vocabulary and language structures while talking about things that are relevant to them.

It is remarkable how engaging Core French classes can become when students are given the opportunity to stand up and speak about whatever is important to them using cooperative strategies.

Grades 4–8 Core French teacher

Planning assessment *for, of,* and *as* learning is essential. See Module 5: *Assessment and Evaluation* in *A Guide to Reflective Practice for Core French Teachers*.

To improve students’ oral proficiency, the Core French teacher determines the students’ areas of greatest need and plans meaningful tasks to address them. The questions below can help teachers gather relevant information that includes data from observation, product, and conversation:

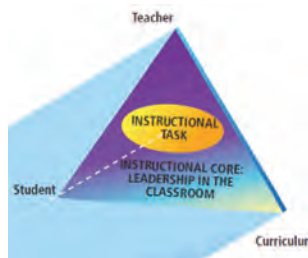
- What do we observe in the classroom? (What is going on and how are students learning?)
- What work is produced, or how is learning demonstrated? (What are students able to say/understand/do?)
- What can we learn through conversations with our students, listening to their conversations amongst themselves, and conversations we have with other colleagues who instruct these same students?

### Instructional Core Model

The Instructional Core Model presented in the *K-12 School Effectiveness Framework: A Support for School Improvement and Student Success* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010) shows that learning results from the interplay between three vital components – the teacher, the curriculum, and the students – in support of the rich tasks that form the core of classroom instruction.

When reflecting on this instructional model, the Core French teacher might consider the following questions:

- Is the task worthy of students’ time and intellect?
- Is everything I ask students to do relevant, meaningful, and purposeful?
- Do students know and understand the learning goal(s) and the related success criteria?
- Do students know which strategies to use to meet the learning goal(s) and success criteria?



- During learning, do students receive ongoing, descriptive feedback from me and from their peers based on the success criteria, and do they have opportunities to apply the feedback?
- Do I give students multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning?
- Do I give students multiple opportunities to self-assess their learning?
- Is there an appropriate amount of student talk time?
- Do tasks allow students to enter at different points according to their abilities and learning styles?
- Am I reaching every student?
- Am I presenting authentic tasks, scaffolding learning, and framing questions to promote higher order thinking?
- Am I refining my practice through continual reflection?

*Based on questions formulated by a principal*

My most recent “aha” moment happened when I decided to jump right in and try the action-oriented CEFR approach with a focus on solving a problem. Oral interaction has always been the main focus of my French classes. The problem-solving element had been missing, however, and I learned that it will make a huge difference in student engagement, motivation, and language development. Solving a problem related to everyday life is meaningful and exciting for the students. It also requires creative thinking and a variety of points of view. What really surprised me is how much the students spoke. Instead of sharing one or two phrases about what they were going to do on the weekend they argued and discussed and gave a variety of responses to their partners when presented with a scenario to discuss in pairs. They were engaged in a spontaneous discussion and I think even the students were surprised how well they communicated. I saw that this approach can serve as a diagnostic assessment to direct our next steps individually and as a class.

*Grades 4–6 Core French teacher*

## Practical Tips

The Core French teacher:

- Connects with students' prior knowledge from other curricular areas.
- Embeds grammar and language structures in contextual learning situations as tools that students use to communicate effectively in French. When students practise these structures in meaningful ways, they are more likely to understand and retain them than if they practise the structures only in exercises.
- Keeps the pace lively and the interest level high by chunking activities into shorter time periods (e.g., 45 seconds, 1 minute).

## Instilling Confidence

The Core French teacher continuously strives to help students develop confidence to use French to communicate and function on a daily basis in class. By providing an accepting and positive environment, the Core French teacher encourages students to take risks in order to speak in French and to support each other by being patient and cooperative. The Core French teacher provides students with options that promote ownership of learning and contribute to greater motivation. This leads to more spontaneous interactions in French, resulting in increased fluency.

### Practical Tips

The Core French teacher:

- Sets an enthusiastic, upbeat tone in the class.
- Demonstrates how to take risks to develop oral proficiency and encourages students to do so as well.
- Focuses on the positive, encouraging students to recognize everything they CAN say and do in French based on the curriculum expectations and specific learning goals.
- Builds a learning community where every person is a valued member of the Core French class, and supports one another.
- Involves students in setting expectations for classroom norms and behaviour.
- Establishes clear routines and ensures that students know how to follow them.
- Encourages students to help each other (*en français*) before requesting support from the teacher.
- Fosters a positive environment where students celebrate successes and congratulate each other using *des mots d'encouragement*. These can be posted in the room or distributed to students for quick reference. Students can contribute to making words of encouragement from craft materials or writing them on sentence strips in bright, bold letters.



## Error Correction

Correcting students' oral language errors is a complex aspect of second language teaching. When deciding whether an error should be corrected, the Core French teacher considers many factors such as the type of error (e.g., pronunciation, word choice, sentence structure), whether the error interferes with the meaning of the message, the goal of the activity, the complexity of the message in relationship to the student's level of proficiency and prior learning, and the student's level of confidence.

When correcting student errors, the Core French teacher considers various options. These include:

- Restating the phrase correctly and asking the student to repeat the correct form.
- Indicating an error by repeating the phrase with intonation that draws attention to the error.
- Presenting a choice that includes the correct form.
- Stating the rule and providing the correction.
- Providing a clue that would lead the student to self-correction, such as: "Tu as besoin d'un verbe/mot d'action."

By allowing students to finish speaking before drawing attention to their error, the Core French teacher avoids interrupting the thinking process. Student errors inform future instruction. The Core French teacher plans explicit lessons focused on accuracy in response to student needs and observations of problem areas.

### Practical Tips

The Core French teacher:

- Emphasizes that everyone in the Core French class is learning together and that mistakes lead to new learning.
- Encourages students to self-correct and explicitly teaches them how to monitor their language use.
- Corrects errors when it doesn't interfere with the flow of conversation or thought, and acknowledges them as a necessary part of the learning process. Providing sufficient modelling of oral communication reduces the need for error correction during conversation.
- Connects error correction to the learning goals and success criteria.

**None of the research to date advocates correcting every error that learners make. Such an approach is not feasible in the classroom and would be discouraging for learners. Too much error correction can also shift the primary focus from communication to linguistic forms. However, it does seem clear that the judicious use of error correction in the classroom can help provide an optimal environment for L2 learning.**

Loewen (2007), p. 5

## The Gradual Release Model in Oral Language Development

The Core French teacher can provide models of oral interactions by enlisting the help of colleagues or senior students to participate in brief oral exchanges that are recorded (audio or video) for later use.

We learn to speak French much as we learn other everyday tasks such as driving a car, preparing a meal, or doing laundry. In these situations, the learner typically first observes someone else performing the task, then they work together, then the learner tries it alone but with support and guidance nearby, and finally, the learner is able to complete the task independently.

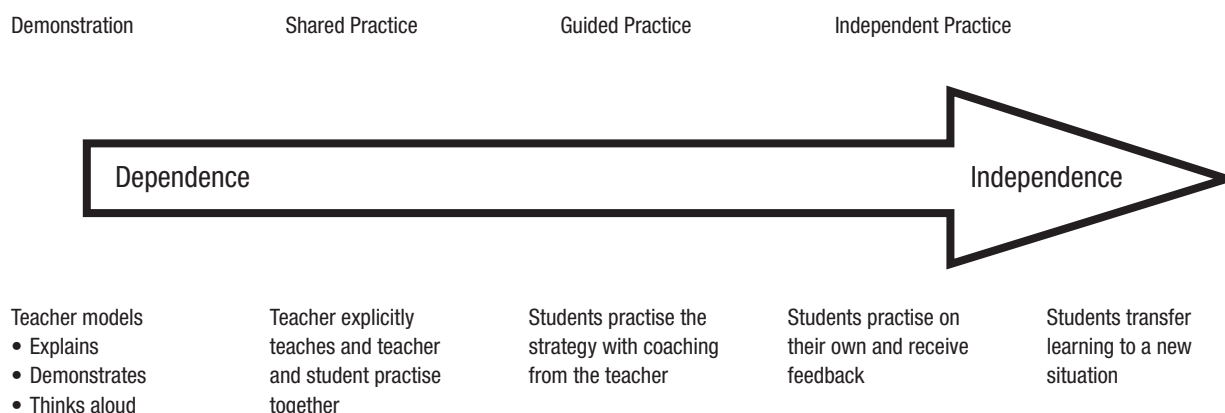
A key aspect of the gradual release model is that the students accept responsibility for learning. As a critical step in fostering this sense of ownership, the Core French teacher promotes continuous student engagement in learning tasks through the use of high-interest topics, thought-provoking questions, and humour.

The gradual release model is not necessarily linear. The Core French teacher may notice that some students would benefit from further modelling and, by using assessment *for* learning strategies, determines when students have had sufficient time to practise and to implement teacher feedback in order to experience success independently.

The Core French teacher prepares students to understand oral as well as written instructions in French so they can work independently.

It is important that the Core French teacher apply the gradual release model to oral skills as well as to reading and writing, providing as much oral language modelling and scaffolding as students require to be successful.

### GRADUAL RELEASE OF RESPONSIBILITY



Adapted from *Literacy for Learning: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario, 2004*.

## A PROCESS FOR MODELLING AUTHENTIC ORAL INTERACTION

1. **Modelled:** The Core French teacher models a brief conversation, perhaps a short series of related questions and answers about a real-life topic of interest to the students. The model should incorporate a real conversational style complete with pauses, repeating, and searching for the “right” word or expression. The Core French teacher draws attention to certain language features through intonation and expression. At this stage, the students listen and observe, knowing that they will be expected to contribute in the next step in the process.
2. **Shared:** The Core French teacher, with student input, selects a similar conversation topic, and this time elicits the help of students to pose questions, complete sentences, or provide alternative structures. The teacher checks comprehension frequently and involves as many students as possible.
3. **Guided:** The students work in pairs to conduct the same or a very similar conversation while the teacher circulates, offering support when necessary and noting points that need further explicit instruction either in small groups or as the whole class. If the Core French teacher feels that additional practice is required, the students could repeat the activity in different groupings or with slight adaptations.
4. **Independent:** By this point, the students are able to apply the newly acquired knowledge or skill to an authentic situation without further teacher instruction. The activity can be differentiated as the teacher encourages conversations of varying lengths and complexity depending on student readiness. Where technology is available, students could record themselves, which allows the Core French teacher to assess and provide descriptive, personalized feedback. By saving the audio or video files, the teacher creates a record of student progress in oral proficiency. When students work independently, they can benefit by having access to co-created anchor charts.

The Core French teacher selects a specific learning focus and develops a model conversation to demonstrate it clearly.

An “aha” moment for me would be the little ‘robot’ exercise I did with my students. One student pretended to be a robot who could not move without the proper instructional guidance from the class. Before we began, I used the improv exercise as a way to motivate and inspire the students. Each time we did a lesson, different vocabulary was introduced and placed on anchor charts. When we did the exercise, students could easily use the charts to anchor their learning through the improv exercises. In the beginning the students seemed apprehensive, but once they built up their confidence through practice, it became a fun and enjoyable activity to start their morning. By continuing this pattern, I have noticed an improvement in many of their works of writing as well as their oral ability.

*Grades 4/5 Core French teacher*

## Teacher Talk

Teacher talk is vital to developing students' abilities in Core French, because it makes the learning process observable. Joan Green et al. (2011) note that "Students' learning is enhanced when teachers model scaffolded talk ... or when they model extensions to students' conversations that are based on students' everyday social language." The Core French teacher models the thinking, planning, and monitoring of oral language that second language learners apply in various situations. The key is to model specific oral language concepts clearly and frequently and to provide students with ample opportunities to adapt and reuse new vocabulary and structures in varied, interesting, and unexpected ways until they feel confident enough to apply the new concepts independently in diverse contexts.

By making the learning process visible, teacher talk also develops learner autonomy and metacognition. Through think alouds, read alouds, and demonstrations of learning strategies, Core French teachers reveal how effective use of a variety of strategies can contribute to greater understanding of a conversation, dialogue, or video clip, for example. Teachers also strive to expose students to a variety of accents and voices, both male and female, through the use of media and technology.

I can't believe how much I've improved in French this year. With our conversations, our anchor charts, and each other helping, I not only understand so much more, I can actually speak French too!

*Student in a Grade 6/7 class*

## Practical Tips

The Core French teacher:

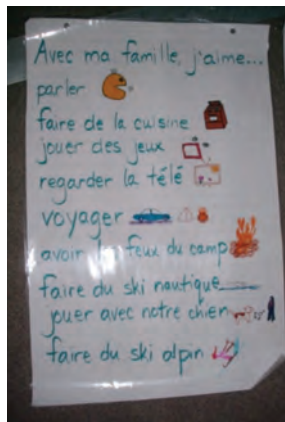
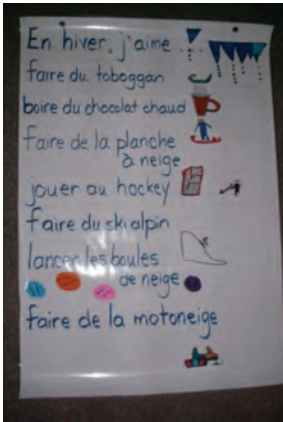
- Models new concepts and scaffolds learning.
- Explicitly teaches the use of strategies (cognitive and metacognitive).
- Explicitly teaches students how to use resources and where to access different types of information (e.g., personal dictionaries and anchor sheets, sentence starters, conversation prompts, posters, writing tools).
- Co-creates anchor charts and strategy posters with students.

### SAMPLES OF CO-CREATED ANCHOR CHARTS

Personality adjectives: *Un bon ami / une bonne amie est...*

Un bon ami est...	Une bonne amie est...
gentil	gentille
travailleur	travailleuse
respectueux	respectueuse
sportif, actif	sportive, active
créatif	créative
intéressant	intéressante
indépendant	indépendante
déterminé	déterminée
compatissant	compatissante
content, heureux	contente, heureuse
amusant	amusante
	responsable
	comique, drôle
	juste
	serviable
	sympathique

Preferred activities: *En hiver, j'aime...* and *Avec ma famille, j'aime...*



### Sample Strategies

*Pour m'aider à apprendre le français :*

- J'écoute les autres.
- Je répète en français.
- Je prends des risques.
- Je pose des questions.
- J'utilise les ressources.
- Je pense avant de parler.
- J'utilise les mots dans la question.
- Je demande de l'aide.

*Pour communiquer mon message ...*

- Je parle seulement en français.
- J'utilise les mots dans la question.
- Je peux faire des actions.
- Je peux faire un dessin.

- Involves students in the creation of lists of *expressions utiles* that can be posted or copied for each student. Students continually build on these lists.

### Examples of *Expressions Utiles*

#### *Est-ce que je peux...*

- boire de l'eau?
- aller à la bibliothèque/ au bureau /à mon casier?
- avoir un crayon?
- tailler mon crayon?
- chercher mon cahier?
- travailler avec mon ami/e?
- aller aux toilettes?
- avoir de l'aide?

#### *J'ai besoin...*

- d'un pansement.
- des crayons de couleur.
- d'une feuille de papier.

#### *Je dois...*

- chercher ma casquette.
- mettre un chandail.
- pratiquer avec mon partenaire.

### SAMPLE CHART OF FRENCH QUESTION AND ANSWER CLUES

Comment répondre aux questions	
Dans la question, il y a...	Dans la réponse, il y a...
Combien de	un chiffre, un nombre
Comment	une façon/une manière
Où	un endroit/une position
Pourquoi	une raison
Quand	l'heure/un moment/jour/mois, etc.
Que/Qu'est-ce que	quelque chose
Qui	personne/personnage

## Learning by Listening

*Ear print* is a term that can be used to describe the first step of learning French. When Core French students hear new words before seeing them, and are subsequently asked to speak and later to read, they know how the language should sound. The Core French teacher introduces new structures through oral language development before expecting students to recognize, understand, and use them in reading and writing. In the initial stage of French language learning, students are asked primarily to read and write *only* what they already understand orally. The teacher can encourage attentive listening by modelling and prompting students to wait, to allow time for thinking, and to listen to others for clues they can use when responding.

### Practical Tips

The Core French teacher:

- Recognizes the importance of developing effective listening strategies as part of language learning, and explicitly teaches how to listen for different purposes (e.g., for key words, for certain sounds).
- Establishes a purpose for listening and provides students with multiple opportunities to listen to new language.
- Checks comprehension frequently and clarifies any misinterpretations. Assessment *for* learning in Core French involves frequent checks to verify that all students are progressing toward the learning goal. Student feedback combined with teacher observations can be used to inform next steps in instruction.
- Uses the “sandwich technique” if absolutely necessary to clarify meaning, particularly in relation to abstract concepts. By “sandwiching” the equivalent English expression between two repetitions of the target French expression – for example, “*plus tard*, later, *plus tard*” – the Core French teacher places more emphasis on the French expression.
- Provides opportunities for students to listen to and to discuss increasingly complex, authentic oral texts (e.g., commercials, newscasts, shows).

## Learning by Speaking

The Core French teacher establishes a balance between teacher talk and student talk. Learning a new language requires students to listen and speak to the teacher and to each other.

There are numerous ways to increase student talk time as they actively practise French language skills while engaged in a variety of cooperative learning tasks. The Core French teacher uses flexible groupings, taking into consideration ability, interest, or learning profile when students work in pairs or small groups.

The Core French teacher gives clear instructions in French and sets high standards for the quality of the talk by modelling language structures, scaffolding learning, and closely monitoring student talk. When planning lessons, the Core French teacher incorporates explicit teaching of the vocabulary students need to know in order to understand the task and what they are expected to do.

As students work on a task, the teacher moves throughout the class, providing timely descriptive feedback and checking comprehension frequently, thereby maximizing the quality of the student talk. When students collaboratively create authentic conversations, they are required to use higher order thinking skills. Discussions before and after reading, viewing, and writing also enhance students' literacy skills.

These conversations in Core French may initially be quite brief with a very specific focus to enable students to use French only to express their thoughts. The Core French teacher provides appropriate scaffolding and structure for the task, depending on a number of factors, such as the relative complexity for the grade level. Gradually, as students develop their language skills and become accustomed to conversing only in French, the length of student small-group discussions can be increased.

### Practical Tips

The Core French teacher:

- Teaches and practises signals to end oral group work, and rehearses acceptable voice volume with students.
- Allows for wait time. Real conversations include pauses for thought, repetition, questioning for clarification, and searching for the “right” word or expression. Language learners need extra time to recall vocabulary and to plan their message.
- Supports learners when first introducing new expressions and vocabulary through activities where all students speak in unison, either as a whole class or in a variety of groupings (e.g., all students with brown hair, with red shirts, or whose birthday falls in a certain month).
- Encourages students to build on memorized language structures to communicate original messages.
- Explicitly teaches students how to monitor their speaking, providing strategies and tools that promote self-correction.
- Encourages students to “Essaie de le dire.”
- Encourages students, as they advance, to refine their speaking skills, use precise language and more complex sentence structures and language conventions.
- Creates, with students, reference tools such as sentence walls and anchor charts.

Core French teachers may wish to consult the *On est capable!* video series for examples of effective practices for improving student proficiency in oral French.

## Incorporating a Variety of Oral Interactions

Core French students benefit by practising their oral skills through a variety of activities and tasks, including oral production and oral interaction. In the early stages of oral production, the student usually gives prepared or memorized presentations or practised answers. These sometimes include non-spontaneous oral interaction. While this type of interaction contributes to the development of oral skills, it does not fully prepare students for real-life situations. Spontaneous oral interaction, on the other hand, involves two or more people interacting in authentic situations, such as discussing their interests or solving problems collaboratively. The Core French teacher plans a variety of interconnected activities to increase student engagement and to provide numerous opportunities during a lesson for them to practise the language in meaningful contexts.

A veteran teacher had taught Core French for more than 20 years before adopting a more communicative and kinesthetic approach. She noticed a difference in her students. They were more engaged and she couldn't believe how much they actually spoke in French!

*Secondary Core French teacher*

See Module 4: *Cooperative Learning* in *A Guide to Reflective Practice for Core French Teachers*.

## Practical Tips

The Core French teacher:

- Uses cooperative learning strategies to help vary the length and type of activities and to maximize student engagement and participation.
- Varies the groupings used for oral interactions – pairs, small groups, moving around the classroom to find new partners – as well as the methods used to choose partners and groups.
- Integrates technology that affords opportunities for students to speak and listen to others at remote sites.
- Monitors language strengths and areas to focus on by paying close attention to verbal content.



## Building Vocabulary

The Core French teacher helps students gain knowledge of high frequency vocabulary (e.g., *le, la, je, et, j'ai, je peux*). Students learn to recognize common words and phrases by sight and to use them to anticipate the following word in a sentence. It is important for the Core French teacher to use these words in context to help students understand what they mean. Reusing and practising these words and phrases in different situations is essential so that students can develop a clear understanding of the words and can use them independently with confidence.

It is easy to fall into the habit of using the same terminology for commonly discussed topics, even though there are usually several ways of expressing the same idea. Core French students, who do not always have the opportunity to read in French outside of class to further develop their vocabulary, depend entirely on their Core French teachers to expose them to a broad range of vocabulary and expressions that they can use to speak authentically. This could mean varying the phrases used to express or discuss similar ideas. When students learn a concept such as basic weather vocabulary, the Core French teacher can begin replacing simple questions such as “Quel temps fait-il?” with “Avez-vous entendu les prévisions de la météo?” and replace common responses such as “Il pleut” with more sophisticated alternatives such as “Il y a un risque d’averses” and other authentic phrases used in weather forecasting. If students have always been asked “Comment t’appelles-tu?” they may not know how to respond to “Comment vous appelez-vous?”, “Quel est votre nom?”, or “Quel est votre prénom?” When speaking about birthdays, students can be taught to use terms such as “anniversaire,” “date et lieu de naissance,” and “Où es-tu né(e)?”

Helping students build a range of vocabulary also entails using synonyms frequently and interchangeably; for example: “Qui a un vélo? Une bicyclette – on dit aussi *un vélo*.” Students can contribute to a growing list of synonyms posted in the class or kept in their notebooks.

### SAMPLE SYNONYMS

#### **Noms\***

une bicyclette – un vélo  
 une auto – une voiture  
 le stationnement – le parking  
 le docteur – le médecin  
 le week-end – la fin de semaine  
 un ami – un copain  
 le début – le commencement

#### **Adjectifs**

renommé – célèbre  
 favori – préféré  
 horrible – affreux  
 terrible – épouvantable

\*Note that the definite or indefinite article is always taught when new vocabulary is introduced.

#### **Verbes**

convaincre – persuader  
 finir – terminer  
 redonner – rendre

#### **Adverbes**

puis – ensuite  
 tranquillement – doucement  
 vite – rapidement

Only when students are given a variety of opportunities to practise listening and speaking with others can they develop [oral proficiency] ... the affective filter that prevents many students from risking a wrong answer in front of the whole class is offset, and a student who isn't sure can immediately hear the correct response modelled in the team where s/he can rehearse the answer with little embarrassment.

High (1993).

It is important to build in review from previous years to keep vocabulary and structures fresh in students' minds. One way of doing this is to encourage students to provide responses that are increasingly detailed. For example, students can ask each other "Où habites-tu?" followed by: "Parle-moi de ta maison ou de ton appartement," or "Qu'est-ce qu'on peut faire dans ton voisinage?"

#### **TU AND VOUS**

Students generally use the "tu" form with each other, so it is critical that they also have ample opportunity to practise using "vous" forms and learning how to determine when it is proper to use these pronouns. This can be accomplished through role play and by insisting that they use "vous" when speaking to the teacher, the principal, and other teachers and visitors to the class. In addition to practising the "vous" form of verbs until these come naturally in conversation, students benefit from opportunities to use other aspects of formal dialogue, such as "Je vous en prie," "Serait-il possible de...," or "Pourrais-je vous demander...?"

#### **NATURAL CONVERSATION**

Core French teachers help students develop the ability to sound natural when speaking French by explicitly modelling and teaching the use of conjunctions and expressions that students can use when they need "think time" (e.g., donc alors, effectivement, ainsi, ensuite, c'est intéressant) or to indicate attentive listening (e.g., moi aussi, moi non plus, c'est vrai?, incroyable, c'est intéressant).

## Differentiated Instruction

As students develop oral proficiency, it is important that the teacher take into account the need to differentiate instruction. Not all students learn at the same pace, so differentiated instruction is “an effective way for teachers to offer meaningful instruction delivered around challenging content and designed to meet the needs of students at their appropriate levels and to help them achieve maximum growth” (Theisen, 2002).

For more information on Differentiated Instruction, see “*Learning for All – A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12*, Ontario Ministry of Education, 2011.”

The Core French teacher considers learning styles and interests when planning activities, and determines what students know and are able to do before starting a unit of instruction in order to describe the content, process, or product, and to provide options that best meet the needs of the students. To support oral comprehension by all students, the Core French teacher may elect to use actions, gestures, or props when speaking to facilitate understanding of vocabulary, always double-checking to ensure that students have no misinterpretations.

By breaking tasks into smaller components, the Core French teacher can more easily provide appropriate levels of support required for all students to be successful at each step. For example, in order to describe an injury, students must be able to identify body parts, describe actions in the past tense, express physical symptoms, and use the expression “avoir mal à” correctly. Each of these tasks can further be broken down; for example, “describing actions in the past tense” requires students to use the *passé composé* and *imparfait* correctly.

## Practical Tips

The Core French teacher:

- Designs varied activities to involve and reach all learners and to allow them to capitalize on their strengths.
- Allows some choice of activities to accommodate differing learning styles, levels of readiness, and interests, and encourages students to contribute ideas for discussion topics and different learning options.
- Provides quiet time for students to plan and reflect.

Core French teachers may also wish to consult the article “Teacher Reflection on Oral Language Instruction” in *A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6, Vol. 4: Oral Language*, Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 20.

## Reflective Practice

Thoughtful reflection is an important part of the teaching/learning process that helps Core French teachers assess their pedagogical practices, deepen their professional learning, and maintain high expectations for student success.

Core French teachers can use the following questions to guide their reflection with regard to developing students’ oral proficiency and to make adjustments to their practice, as needed.

### SCAFFOLDING SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

- ✓ Do I provide sufficient supports, such as anchor charts and visual aids, so that my students feel able to take risks?
- ✓ Do I explicitly teach and review strategies for communicating in French?
- ✓ Do I use the gradual release model to teach new concepts, skills, and strategies for listening, speaking, reading, and writing?
- ✓ Do I provide time regularly for my students to reflect on communication strategies?
- ✓ Do I draw attention to error correction in a manner that fosters proficiency and self-correction?
- ✓ Do I monitor oral language while students are working and provide descriptive feedback?

### PROMOTING STUDENT TALK

- ✓ Do I create a need for students to talk every day?
- ✓ Do I value and promote oral language as a critical component of the learning process?
- ✓ Do I provide sufficient opportunities for individual, partner, and group talk to maximize the development of oral skills for every student?
- ✓ Do I provide sufficient opportunity for spontaneous dialogue so students can experiment with their French language skills and apply their knowledge and skills in new contexts?
- ✓ Do I give students opportunities to talk about themselves and their interests?
- ✓ Do I time my comments and suggestions for students in a manner that does not impede the flow of the oral interaction?

### SETTING CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

- ✓ Do I maintain high standards for my students?
- ✓ Do I present clear and understandable learning goals that students can articulate?
- ✓ Do I co-create success criteria with my students?
- ✓ Do I give specific descriptive feedback that will enhance students’ ability to progress with confidence?
- ✓ Do I make sure all students understand their next steps and how to achieve them?

### ENGAGING STUDENTS THROUGH RICH, DIFFERENTIATED TASKS

- ✓ Do I embed new vocabulary and language structures in meaningful contexts and interesting, relevant topics?
- ✓ Do I vary activities and tasks and provide options to meet everyone’s needs and strengths?
- ✓ Do I provide rich tasks that include choice, opportunities for critical thinking, and spontaneous oral interaction?
- ✓ Do I ask myself the purpose of the activities and tasks when planning lessons?
- ✓ Do I create authentic, action-oriented tasks?
- ✓ Do I reflect on lessons and tasks and making adaptations for improvement?

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