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French as a Second Language (FSL)

**STUDENT  
PROFICIENCY  
AND CONFIDENCE  
PILOT PROJECT  
2013-2014**

A Report of Findings

September, 2014

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**Acknowledgements:**

*This project was funded by the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada through the Department of Canadian Heritage and directed by Curriculum Services Canada.*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the French as a Second Language (FSL) Student Proficiency and Confidence Pilot Project 2013-2014. The pilot project is one of a number of Ontario Ministry of Education initiatives focusing on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) as a reference resource to inform FSL practice.

In support of its commitment to “improving the effectiveness of FSL education,” the Ministry of Education released A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12 in February, 2013 (p. 3). This framework articulates three provincial goals for FSL, the first of which is to increase student confidence, proficiency, and achievement in FSL. With this goal in mind, this pilot project sheds light, through an external lens, on the proficiency and confidence of Grade 12 FSL learners from Core, Extended, and Immersion programs and highlights areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

In this pilot project, 434 Grade 12 FSL learners from 14 participating Ontario public and Catholic English-language school boards completed self-selected levels of the Diplôme d’études en langue française (DELFL) exam and responded to a survey examining student confidence. The DELFL, which is the exam aligned with the CEFR proficiency levels, consists of four key components that distinguish between the ability to produce and comprehend the target language, and between oral and written skills. These components are referred to in the DELFL exam as oral comprehension (OC) and written comprehension (WC), the two receptive skills, and as oral production (OP) and written production (WP), the two productive skills. The receptive skills are evaluated in the DELFL exam through the completion of multiple exercises, while the productive skills are evaluated based on a wide range of discrete sub-skills, such as use of grammatical structures and forms in context, controlled use of vocabulary, and sociolinguistically-suitable language, in order to provide a comprehensive evaluation of communicative proficiency in the productive skills. The same skills addressed by the DELFL were examined in relation to student confidence via the survey, though the student-friendly terms of listening, conversing, reading, and writing were used.

The students elected to challenge DELFL levels A2, B1, and B2. Globally, these levels can be described as follows (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 24). Level A2 represents the “basic user” who can “communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters.” Levels B1 and B2 represent “independent users.” B1 learners are able to “produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest,” while B2 learners can “interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular

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interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party” (p. 24). While B1 and B2 learners are both referred to as “independent users,” Level B2 is as far above Level B1 as Level A2 is below it (p. 35). The descriptors for B2 represent “quite a break” from the content of the descriptors of the previous levels (p. 35).

**Proficiency:** The findings of this pilot project have shown that, overall, the students’ written comprehension skills are the most advanced. Within the productive skills, the sub-skills related to the ability to follow instructions and to provide information in various ways are particular areas of strength for the students across all levels challenged. Increased focus could be encouraged, in particular, on oral comprehension and written production abilities, specifically as related to the application of grammar and vocabulary. Such application involves using grammatical forms and vocabulary items in context for specific purposes rather than treating them in isolation. The focus for improvement could potentially be related to the need to further develop learners’ competence in using grammar and vocabulary in context, their ability to translate such competence into effective performance, or both, and perhaps the need to broaden the types of pedagogical strategies and specific interventions used in teaching these skills in the various FSL programs.

**Confidence:** The students across the DELF levels challenged were found to be most confident in their reading skills and markedly least confident in their conversing skills. They are more confident in their written skills than in their oral skills and, generally, more confident in their receptive skills than in their productive skills. In terms of socio-situational confidence the students are more confident in their French skills in communication with non-Francophones than with Francophones, with individuals than in large groups, and with friends than with strangers. This holds true across the DELF levels and skill areas, an important insight as it suggests that the students’ degree of confidence is impacted more by these socio-situational factors than it is by their proficiency or by whether the communication is oral or written, whether productive or receptive. Further, interactive exposure (i.e., a measure of extra-curricular contact with French where students must actively participate in communication) primarily supports confidence in conversing, while receptive exposure (i.e., a measure of contact with French through various forms of media) has the greatest impact on confidence in writing.

These confidence-related findings suggest that, while students’ confidence is fairly well developed in certain ways, like in relation to reading, there is considerably more room for improvement in other areas. For instance, considerable gains in confidence could still be made in addressing the students’ confidence in conversing. This would be particularly important at the A2 level, where findings showed that confidence in this skill area for over two-thirds of the A2 students is well below

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their demonstrated proficiency. Further, gains in confidence could be made in relation to the types of socio-situational contexts explored in this pilot project by addressing how the students perceive the nature of and expectations present when communicating in various settings with interlocutors from different linguistic backgrounds and who have various types of relationships with the students.

**Connecting confidence and proficiency:** For the A2 students, the areas of strength involve the links between various forms of confidence and proficiency in written production, while the connection with oral skills shows the most room for improvement. For the B1 students, higher confidence in the oral skills is connected to higher proficiency in these skills, while this type of connection is not evident for written production. Finally, the B2 students appear to have a fairly uniform positive connection between their confidence and proficiency.

In summary, the findings presented in this report have responded directly to the goal of this pilot project, namely, to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement related to the French language proficiency and confidence of learners in all three French as a Second Language programs in the province of Ontario. In moving forward with the Ontario Ministry of Education's continuing initiatives to enhance learners' confidence and proficiency in FSL in order to support their related achievement, efforts could be undertaken to target those specific areas identified for improvement through this report, while current practices could be continued in those areas identified as strengths.

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# INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of the French as a Second Language (FSL) Student Proficiency and Confidence Pilot Project 2013-2014, funded by the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada through the Department of Canadian Heritage and directed by Curriculum Services Canada. The pilot project is one of a number of Ontario Ministry of Education initiatives focusing on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) as a reference tool to inform FSL practice. In support of its commitment to “improving the effectiveness of FSL education,” the Ministry of Education released *A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario School, Kindergarten to Grade 12* in February, 2013 (p. 3).<sup>1</sup> *A Framework for FSL, K-12* articulates three provincial goals for FSL, the first of which is to increase student confidence, proficiency, and achievement in FSL. With this goal in mind, this pilot project sheds light, through an external lens, on the proficiency and confidence of Grade 12 FSL learners from Core, Extended, and Immersion programs and highlights areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. In this pilot project, 434 Grade 12 FSL learners from 14 Ontario English-language school boards completed self-selected levels of the *Diplôme d’études en langue française (DELFL)* exam and responded to a survey examining student confidence.

<sup>1</sup>This framework is henceforth referred to as *A Framework for FSL, K-12*.

As the findings in this report reveal, first, the DELFL levels challenged by the students were in line with their proficiency in such a way as to allow them to perform at an overall average of 70% on the exam, with differing scores across the DELFL levels attained in each of the four DELFL components, namely oral production (OP), written production (WP), oral comprehension (OC), and written comprehension (WC). Second, the students’ confidence differed by skill area, by DELFL level challenged, and according to a range of socio-situational factors. Finally, the connection demonstrated in this pilot project between increased French language confidence and greater FSL proficiency is not straightforward, with various independent factors impacting the nature of this connection.



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# CONTEXT

## The relationship between the CEFR and the DELF

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) is “a comprehensive, transparent, and coherent framework of reference describing levels of language proficiency” and provides “a common language to assist professionals involved in the teaching and learning of languages at all levels in their respective practices and missions” (Piccardo, 2014, p. 7). The CEFR uses “positive descriptions of communicative language activities” related to “comprehension, production, interaction and mediation,” encouraging learners to perform “meaningful tasks that draw on a variety of competences, both linguistic and general” (p.7). Six common reference levels are outlined by the CEFR and form a system for determining learners’ proficiency through “can do” statements describing a wide range of language abilities. Globally, these levels can be described as follows: Levels A1 and A2 represent “basic users.” A1 learners can “understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type.” A2 learners can “communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters.” Levels B1 and B2 represent “independent users.” B1 learners are able to “produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest.” B2 learners are able to “interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party.” Levels C1 and C2 represent “proficient users.” C1 learners can “use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes.” Finally, C2 learners can express themselves “spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 24).

The DELF exam provides official certification of French proficiency for learners of French as a second language based on the CEFR levels A1, A2, B1, and B2. The exam consists of four key components that distinguish between the ability to produce the target language (productive skills) and comprehend the target language (receptive skills), as well as between oral and written skills. These components are referred to as oral comprehension (OC), oral production (OP), written comprehension (WC), and written production (WP). Receptive skills are evaluated through the completion of multiple exercises, while productive skills are evaluated based on a wide range of discrete sub-skills, such as use of grammatical structures and forms, controlled use of vocabulary, and sociolinguistically-suitable language, in order to provide a comprehensive evaluation of communicative proficiency in that area.

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## Ontario Ministry of Education’s A Framework for FSL, K-12

The Ontario Ministry of Education released A Framework for FSL, K-12 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013) in response to the ever-changing needs of FSL learners in an era of increased globalization. This framework articulates a vision in which “students in English-language school boards have the confidence and ability to use French effectively in their daily lives” (p. 8). It outlines three provincial goals for FSL, one of which is to “increase student confidence, proficiency, and achievement in FSL” (p. 9). It also discusses the influence of the CEFR in shaping FSL in Ontario, “recognizing it as a valuable asset for informing instruction and assessment practices” (p. 4).

### Historical Background

One of the first steps in exploring the role of the CEFR in Ontario was a study conducted by the University of Western Ontario in partnership with the Thames Valley District School Board beginning in 2008. This study explored how the CEFR could assist FSL teachers in planning, teaching and assessing, how it could serve to motivate FSL students, and whether its descriptors could serve as a useful self-assessment tool. The findings revealed that, after participating in CEFR-based French language activities, students reported significant increases in their FSL confidence and French language skills (Majhanovic, Faez, Smith, Taylor, & Vandergrift, 2010). The study further showed that teachers who participated in this study perceived CEFR-based instruction as enhancing learner motivation and autonomy while building confidence, promoting authentic language use and helping students to evaluate their own French skills (Faez, Majhanovich, Taylor, Smith, & Crowley, 2012).

The DELF has been administered in Ontario prior to the current pilot project. For instance, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (2010) carried out a study related to DELF proficiency testing among their Grade 12 FSL students from Core, Extended, and Immersion French programs. The results showed that the exam scores of those students who challenged DELF Level A2 were highest for written comprehension and lowest for oral production, while students who challenged Levels B1 or B2 scored highest on oral production and lowest on written production. Further, it was shown that higher levels of student confidence in their overall DELF performance were strongly related to higher actual scores on the DELF exam.

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# METHODOLOGY

In the present FSL pilot project, the participants were all Grade 12 FSL students drawn from 14 of the 60 English-language Catholic and public school boards across Ontario. At the time of data collection, the participants were enrolled in Core, Extended, or Immersion FSL programs. Participation in the pilot project was voluntary and confidential, and written parental consent was obtained.

## Data Collection

Data collection, conducted in the spring of 2014, consisted of the administration of the DELF exam on specific dates set by the Centre International d'Études Pédagogiques. Students pre-selected which DELF level to challenge, with input from their French teachers. The oral comprehension (OC), written comprehension (WC), and written production (WP) components of the DELF exam were administered within each board on a designated day in a large group format to all students challenging a particular DELF level. The oral production (OP) component of the DELF and a student survey were administered to students individually on a subsequent designated day. Those who administered and scored the exam were certified DELF examiners from the participating school boards, but were not the teachers of the participating students.

The four-sectioned student survey, inspired by previous research in the field, but designed specifically for this pilot project, provided basic background information on the participants' experience with and exposure to French, as well as their confidence both in relation to their French language skills and to their performance on the DELF exam. The first section asked students what languages they know, or are learning, and in which FSL programs they have been enrolled throughout their academic careers. It also sought to gauge the amount of their exposure to French outside of the classroom environment through various experiences such as travelling, exchange programs, use of French media, and reading for pleasure in French. The second section asked students to rate their confidence when using French while conversing, listening, writing, or reading in a wide range of situations that included academic, work-related, and community settings; large group and individual communication; audiences composed of friends, school staff, or strangers; and Francophone or non-Francophone interlocutors. The third section examined the breadth of students' vocabulary knowledge (both active, which words the students use, and receptive, which words the students understand regardless of whether or not they use them) for two objects (i.e., car and shoes), capturing their pragmatic awareness of when and how to use the words generated. The final section asked students to report on the perceived ease of each DELF component and on how well they thought they performed on each component.

The survey asked students to provide the range of words they use for car and shoes (two objects that have been the focus of considerable sociolinguistic study and that have words differing in their social and stylistic connotations). The students were asked to indicate how often they use each word they provided, with whom, and in what situations. They were also asked to provide any additional words they know for these notions but do not use.

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The skill areas addressed in the survey mirrored those targeted by the DELF exam. However, more student-friendly terms were used in the survey in order to facilitate the students' understanding.

**Table 1: DELF and Survey Terms for Skills**

		<b>Productive Skills</b>	<b>Receptive Skills</b>
<b>Written Skills</b>	DELF	Written Production	Written Comprehension
	Survey	Writing	Reading
<b>Oral Skills</b>	DELF	Oral Production	Oral Comprehension
	Survey	Conversing	Listening

Table 1 presents the correspondence between these terms, as well as their relationship to the distinctions between written and oral skills and between productive skills (related to learners' language output) and receptive skills (related to language input received by the learner).

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## Questions, Analysis, and Presentation

The goal of this pilot project was to document students' FSL proficiency, as measured through the DELF exam, to understand their confidence, as captured by the student survey, and to examine the relationship between their proficiency and confidence, as captured by connecting the DELF and survey data. To this end, a three-phased approach to data analysis was adopted.

**Phase One** of the analysis examined the students' DELF scores to address the following:

1. How did the students perform on the DELF overall and by skill area?
2. Within each DELF level challenged, how did the students perform overall and by skill area?
3. Within each DELF level challenged, which sub-skills of the written and the oral production components were strongest and which offered the most room for improvement?

**Phase Two** of the analysis drew on the data from the student survey to address the following:

1. Overall, how confident are the students in their French abilities in each skill area?
2. Within and across each DELF level challenged, how confident are the students in their French abilities in each skill area?
3. In which communicative situations do the students in each DELF level feel most and least confident in each skill area?
4. What connections are there between the students' interactive and receptive exposure and their confidence in each DELF level by skill area?
5. What connections are there between the students' range of receptive vocabulary and confidence in each DELF level by skill area?

**Phase Three** of the analysis connected the DELF and survey data to address the following:

1. How does the A2, B1, and B2 students' confidence in each skill area relate to their scores on the DELF exam for the same skill?
2. How do the measures of interactive and receptive exposure relate to the A2, B1, and B2 students' performance on the four DELF components?
3. How is the A2, B1, and B2 students' confidence in the most/least comfortable situations for each skill area related to their DELF scores for the same skill?
4. How does the reported ease of each DELF component for the A2, B1, and B2 students relate to their scores for that same DELF component?
5. How does the self-assessed performance on each of the four DELF components of the A2, B1, and B2 students relate to their DELF scores for that component?

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To respond to these questions, the data were analyzed primarily using independent and paired tests for equality of means (z/t) (De Veaux, Velleman, & Bock, 2011), conducted by the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings are presented through numerical statistics and graphical summaries. The numerical statistics include means (average performance calculated by the addition of all values divided by the number of values) and standard deviations (degree to which the values are spread out around the mean—with lower values indicating a tighter clustering around the mean and higher values pointing to a greater dispersion around the mean). They also include medians (measure of location, with 50% of observations below the median and 50% above it), as well as minimum and maximum values (lowest and highest values in a data set and providing insight into the range of data present). Statistical significance was set at 0.05 or less, in keeping with the standards of the field. Bar graphs, pie charts, and boxplots have been used to visually represent the distribution of values.

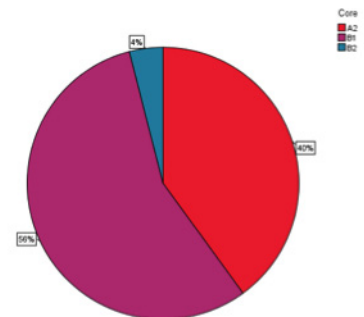
Boxplots show a five-number summary of a data set. The bolded line in the middle of the box is the median, the right edge of the box is the upper quartile (three quarters of the observations are below this value and one quarter are above it), the left edge is the lower quartile (one quarter of the observations are below this value and three quarters are above it), the small line at the extreme right is the upper bound (the largest observation or the value where any larger ones are outliers), the small line at the extreme left is the lower bound (the smallest observation or the value where any smaller ones are outliers). Any outlier data are shown as circles beyond the upper and lower bounds.

## Characteristics of the Student Sample

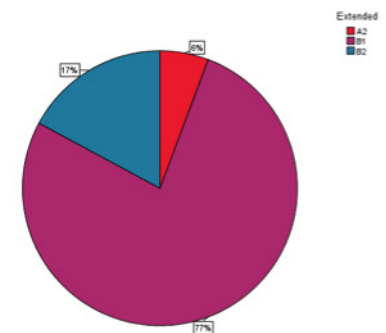
A total of 434 Grade 12 FSL students from 14 of the 60 Ontario English-language school boards participated in this pilot project. For reasons such as illness or absence, six of these students did not fill out the survey and ten did not complete the full four DELF components. Three DELF levels were challenged by the participants, namely A2, B1, and B2. Globally, these levels can be described as follows: Level A2 represents the “basic user” who can “communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters.” Levels B1 and B2 represent “independent users.” B1 learners are able to “produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest,” while B2 learners can “interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 24). Despite B1 and B2 learners both being independent users, Level B2 is as far above B1 as A2 is below it, and the descriptors for B2 are substantially more demanding than those of the previous levels.

Students from each of three FSL programs (i.e., Core, Extended, and Immersion) challenged each of these DELF levels. A total of 84 students challenged level A2, 99% of whom achieved a score of 50% or greater; 207 students challenged Level B1, 96% of whom achieved a score of 50% or greater; and 143 students challenged Level B2, 87% of whom achieved a score of 50% or greater. As illustrated in Figures 1-3, among the Core French participants, 40% challenged Level A2 (red colouring), 56% challenged Level B1 (purple colouring), and 4% challenged Level B2 (blue colouring). Among those from Extended French, 6% challenged A2, 77% B1, and 17% B2. Finally, 1% of the Immersion participants challenged A2, 35% challenged B1, and 64% challenged B2.

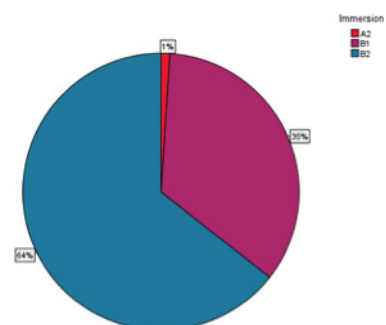
**Figure 1: DELF Levels Challenged by Core French Participants**



**Figure 2: DELF Levels Challenged by Extended French Participants**



**Figure 3: DELF Levels Challenged by French Immersion Participants**



# FINDINGS

The findings of the three-phased analysis are presented here by phase and by question, with the first phase addressing the analysis of the DELF, the second phase examining the findings from the student survey, and the third phase exploring the relationships between the DELF and student survey.

## Phase 1: DELF Exam and Proficiency

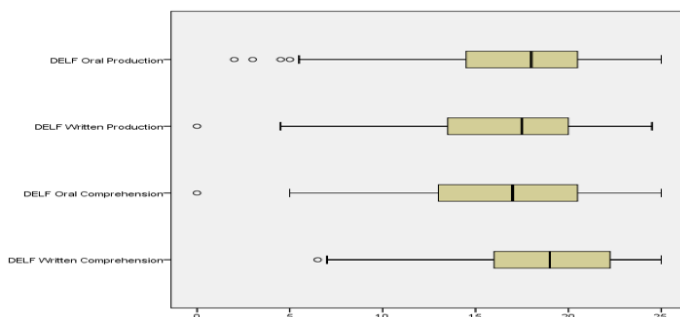
### 1. How did the students perform on the DELF overall and by skill area?

An examination of the overall DELF scores reveals that the mean score was 69.94/100 (70%). The standard deviation was 13.4, the minimum score was 27/100, and the highest score was 98/100, suggesting that some individual students challenged DELF levels well within their abilities, while others stretched themselves to the edge of their competence.

The students scored highest on the written comprehension component with a mean score of 18.98/25 (76%), a minimum score of 7/25 (28%), a maximum score of 25/25 (100%), and a standard deviation of 3.9. The students' performance on this component was statistically significantly higher than on all of the others ( $p < 0.005$  compared to WP,  $p < 0.005$  compared to OP, and  $p < 0.005$  compared to OC). The students scored second highest on the oral production component (mean 17.33/25 [69%], minimum 2/25 (8%), maximum 25/25 (100%), and standard deviation of 4.64), which is statistically significantly lower than written comprehension ( $p < 0.005$ ), but higher than the remaining two skill areas ( $p:0.011$  compared to OC and  $p:0.042$  compared to WP). Written production (mean 16.89/25 (68%), minimum 0/25 (0%), maximum 24/25 (100%), and standard deviation of 4.38) and oral comprehension (mean 16.75/25 (67%), minimum 0/25 (0%), maximum 25/25 (100%), and standard deviation of 4.63) were the skills that offered the students the most room for improvement, as they were statistically significantly lower than written comprehension ( $p < 0.005$  for both) and oral production ( $p:0.042$  and  $p:0.011$ , respectively), but not statistically significantly different from each other ( $p:0.542$ ). Figure 4 visually represents the overall scores of the four DELF components.

Boxplots show a five-number summary of a data set. The bolded line in the middle of the box is the median, the right edge of the box is the upper quartile (three quarters of the observations are below this value and one quarter are above it), the left edge is the lower quartile (one quarter of the observations are below this value and three quarters are above it), the small line at the extreme right is the upper bound (the largest observation or the value where any larger ones are outliers), the small line at the extreme left is the lower bound (the smallest observation or the value where any smaller ones are outliers). Any outlier data are shown as circles beyond the upper and lower bounds.

**Figure 4: Overall DELF Scores by Skill Area**

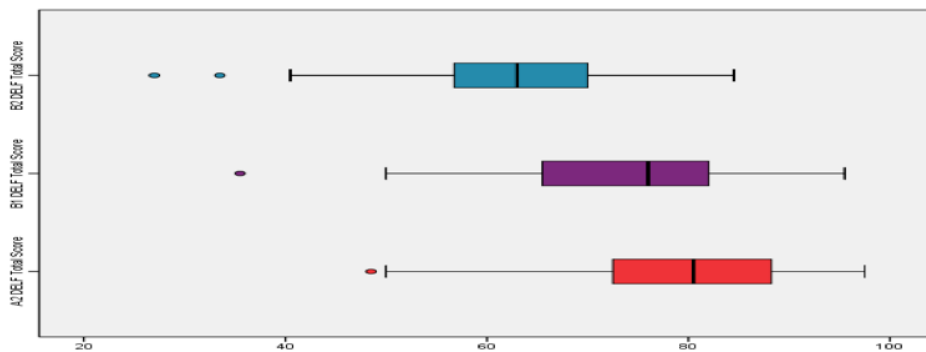




2. Within each DELF level, how did the students perform overall and by skill area?

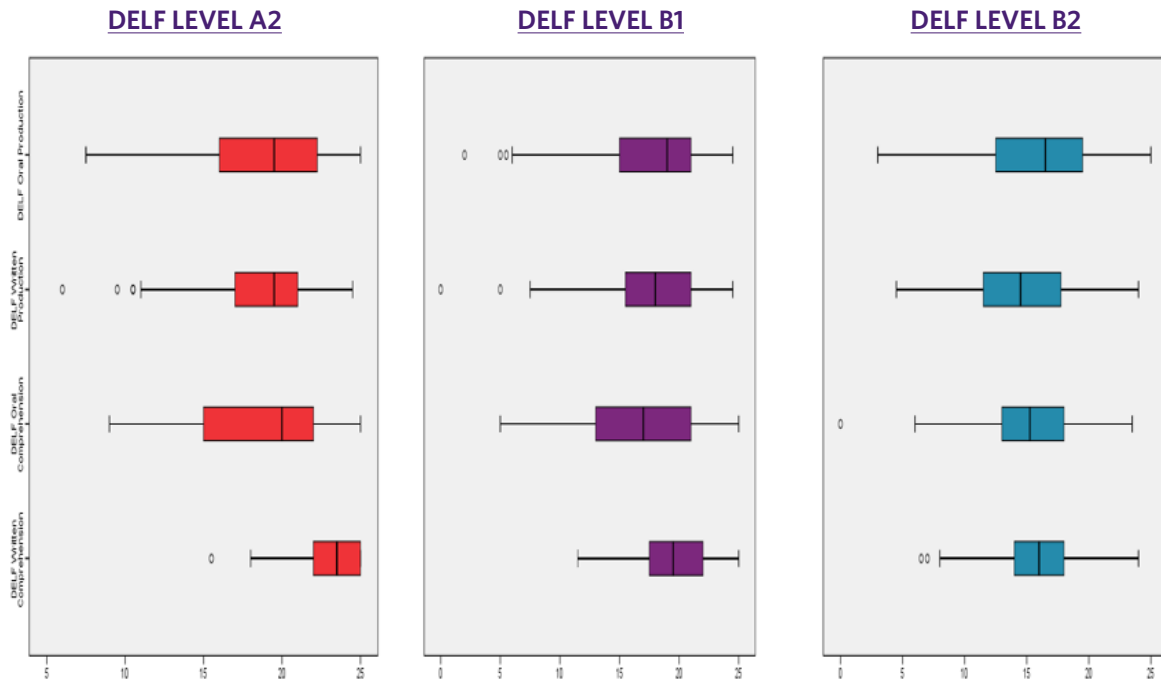
Within each DELF level, the overall mean scores were 79% for A2, 72% for B1, and 62% for B2. As Figure 5 shows, there is a steady decline in overall DELF scores from A2, through B1, to B2. This is further echoed in the linear drop of minimum overall scores across DELF levels (49%, 35%, and 27%, respectively). These findings suggest that, on the whole, those students who challenged Level A2 stayed further inside the reach of their overall FSL competence than did those students who challenged Levels B1 or B2. These findings also reflect the increased demands of the exam from Level A2 to Level B1, and from Level B1 to Level B2.

**Figure 5: Overall DELF Results by Level**



The students' performance varied for each DELF component within the three levels challenged. The mean score for those who challenged level A2 was highest for written comprehension (22.95/25 [92%]), followed by oral comprehension (18.89/25 [76%]) and oral production (18.88/25 [76%]), and finally by written production (18.54/25 [74%]). For those students who challenged level B1, written comprehension also displayed the highest mean score (19.46/25 [78%]), followed by written production (17.78/25 [71%]) and oral production (17.66/25 [71%]), and lastly by oral comprehension (16.90/25 [68%]). Finally, for those students who challenged Level B2, the two DELF components with the highest mean scores were oral production (15.96/25 [64%]) and written comprehension (15.92/25 [64%]). The B2 students had a mean score of 15.25/25 (61%) for oral comprehension and 14.63/25 (59%) for written production.

Figure 6 visually represents the performance on each DELF component for the A2, B1, and B2 students.



Comparing the mean scores for the four DELF components across the three levels reveals several interesting patterns. First, all four of the mean scores for the A2 students are within or above the 70-79% range. For the B1 students, three of the four mean scores fall within this range, while none do for those students who challenged DELF Level B2. These findings reinforce the suggestion that the students who challenged Level A2 stayed most firmly within the limits of their proficiency, while those who challenged Level B2 pushed themselves much further outside of their comfort zone. They also reflect the increased demands of the exam from Level A2 to Level B1 and from Level B1 to Level B2.

Additionally, in comparing these mean component scores across the three levels, written comprehension, on its own for the A2 and B1 students, and in combination, statistically, with the oral skills for the B2 students, is the top skill for all three levels, and is significantly higher in each level than are the other three components (A2:  $p < 0.005$  OC,  $p < 0.005$  OP,  $p < 0.005$  WP; B1:  $p < 0.005$  OC,  $p < 0.005$  OP,  $p < 0.005$  WP; B2:  $p = 0.056$  OC,  $p = 0.842$  OP,  $p = 0.003$  WP). For Level A2, the three remaining components are not significantly different from each other. For Level B1, oral comprehension is significantly lower than the other three skills ( $p < 0.005$  WC,  $p = 0.035$  OP,  $p = 0.019$  WP), while written production and oral production (as the two middle skills) are not significantly different from each other ( $p = 0.697$ ). For Level B2, written production is significantly lower than the top two skills ( $p = 0.003$  WC,  $p = 0.001$  OP), but not significantly lower than oral comprehension (0.141).

3. Within each DELF level, which sub-skills of the written and oral production components were strongest and which offered the most room for improvement?

As shown in Tables 2 and 3, the sub-skills with the highest mean scores for the A2 students, whether for the written production or oral production component, involve following the instructions given and the ability to interact (see Appendix for a description of each sub-skill). The mean scores presented for the various sub-skills have been converted into scores out of 100 to allow for a comparison across sub-skills that were graded according to different scales. Within the written production component, the second activity in which the A2 students were required to write in an informal context, displays consistently higher mean scores than does the first activity, where the students were asked to write in a formal context. For both activities within the written component, as well as for the oral component, the sub-skill that left the most room for improvement was the application of grammar (i.e., morphosyntax and spelling).

**Table 2: DELF Written Sub-Skills Level A2 (n:84)**

DELF Written Sub-Skills Level A2	Mean	Med	Std. Dev	Min	Max
2. Follow Instructions	92.3	100	19.8	0	100
2. Ability to Interact	83.7	87.5	15.9	25.0	100
2. Sociolinguistic	82.8	100	23.9	50.0	100
2. Coherence	81.8	100	21.6	33.3	100
1. Describe	78.3	87.5	22.3	12.5	100
1. Coherence	76.6	66.7	24.7	0	100
1. Follow Instructions	76.2	100	33.4	0	100
1. Share Impressions	72.9	75.0	25.2	0	100
2. Vocab/Lex Spelling	72.9	75.0	20.9	25.0	100
1. Vocab/Lex Spelling	67.3	75.0	22.9	25.0	100
2. MorpSyn/GramSpell	62.1	60.0	19.6	20.0	100
1. MorpSyn/GramSpell	55.9	60.0	23.4	0	100

**Table 3: DELF Oral Sub-Skills Level A2 (n:84)**

DELF Oral Sub-Skills Level A2	Mean	Med	Std. Dev	Min	Max
Response	88.7	100.0	21.0	50.0	100
Introduction	86.5	91.7	17.4	33.3	100
Phonology	79.8	83.3	18.1	16.7	100
Present Topic	76.2	83.3	17.4	33.3	100
Give Info	74.1	75.0	18.9	25.0	100
Connect Info	73.5	75.0	23.1	.00	100
Vocabulary	72.2	66.7	20.1	16.7	100
Relate Socially	70.5	75.0	23.7	.00	100
Morphosyntax	67.6	75.0	19.9	12.5	100

1.: first written activity; 2.: second written activity

For Level B1, the students' mean scores for the written and oral components (see Tables 4 and 5) are highest for the sub-skills involving the introduction of information about themselves, the ability to enter into a conversation without preparation, the expression of their own opinions, and the following of instructions. The contextualized use of grammar (i.e., morphosyntax and spelling) and vocabulary (i.e., vocabulary control, tense and mood, vocabulary range, orthographic control) are the areas in which the B1 students consistently have the most room to improve.

**Table 4: DELF Written Sub-Skills Level B1 (n:207)**

DELF Written Sub-Skills B1	Mean	Med	Std. Dev	Min	Max
Follow Instructions	87.6	100	19.5	0	100
Own Opinion	77.2	87.5	19.9	0	100
Coherence	76.2	83.3	19.6	0	100
Describe	76.0	75.0	19.3	0	100
Vocabulary Range	71.7	75.0	21.3	0	100
Sentence Structure	68.1	75.0	22.4	0	100
Orthograph Control	67.3	75.0	22.2	0	100
Vocab Control	64.4	75.0	22.6	0	100
Tense and Mood	59.9	50.0	24.4	0	100
MorpSyn/GramSpell	51.5	50.0	21.1	0	100

**Table 5: DELF Oral Sub-Skills Level B1 (n:207)**

DELF Oral Sub-Skills B1	Mean	Med	Std. Dev	Min	Max
Conversation	86.9	100	24.1	0	100
Introduction	83.3	100	22.2	0	100
Unusual Sit.	79.7	100	27.8	0	100
Pres. Subj.	74.7	100	29.5	0	100
Phonology	74.6	83.3	20.1	16.7	100
Adapt to Sit.	73.2	75.0	24.6	0	100
Respond	71.4	75.0	25.5	0	100
Coherence	67.7	66.7	27.2	0	100
Vocabulary	67.6	75.0	21.2	0	100
Pres. Arg.	64.6	60.0	23.1	0	100
MorphSyn	62.2	60.0	21.1	0	100

As Tables 6 and 7 illustrate, following instructions, producing language that is sociolinguistically and phonologically appropriate, and presenting information in various ways are the sub-skills for Level B2 with the highest mean scores. The contextualized use of grammar and vocabulary are the areas that offer the most room for the B2 students to improve on the written component. For the oral component, introducing information in a coherent fashion is an area for improvement for the B2 students.

**Table 6: DELF Written Sub-Skills Level B2 (n:143)**

DELF written sub-skills B2	Mean	Med	Std. Dev	Min	Max
Follow Instruct.	79.9	75.0	23.4	25.0	100
Sociolinguistic	62.9	75.0	24.8	0	100
Present Info	62.6	66.7	19.9	16.7	100
Orthography	61.5	50.0	29.5	0	100
Defend Position	61.1	66.7	22.0	16.7	100
Coherence	58.7	62.5	21.8	12.5	100
Vocab Range	56.3	50.0	20.7	0	100
Complex Sent.	56.3	50.0	22.5	0	100
Vocab Control	53.3	50.0	23.0	0	100
Choice of Forms	46.1	50.0	23.2	0	87.5

**Table 7: DELF Oral Sub-Skills Level B2 (n:143)**

DELF oral sub-skills B2	Mean	Med	Std. Dev	Min	Max
Phonology	53.4	83.3	283.1	0	100
Precise Ideas	41.8	66.7	282.2	16.7	100
Own View	41.5	66.7	282.3	16.7	100
Defend Idea	40.8	66.7	282.3	0	100
Morphosyntax	40.3	60.0	171.9	0	100
Vocabulary	39.9	62.5	212.9	0	100
Coherence	36.8	60.0	337.5	12.5	100
Introduction	31.9	100.0	559.1	10.0	100

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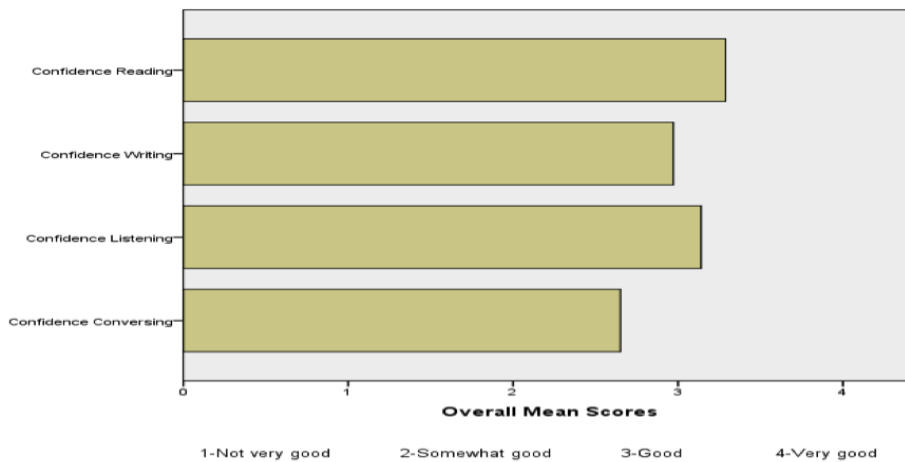
Thus, overall, regardless of DELF level challenged, the sub-skills on which the students demonstrate the greatest proficiency have to do with the presentation of information (introducing it, responding to it, giving one's own impression, being precise in the presentation of ideas) and the ability to follow instructions. Furthermore, there is the greatest room for improvement in the contextualized use of grammar across the three DELF levels, as well as in the area of contextualized vocabulary use for the B1 and B2 students. This form of applied grammatical and vocabulary knowledge differs in important ways from their treatment in isolation. The noticeable exception to these trends is for the oral component of B2, where the presentation of information in a coherent fashion proves most challenging despite the fact that their highest overall scores were for oral production. This may indicate that the B2 students were concentrating more on form than on content in this situation. Also of note is that within Level A2, for the written component, activity two (writing to a friend) is consistently better-achieved than activity one (writing to an unfamiliar person). This finding demonstrates a difference in performance when the audience changes, even if the task itself remains the same.

## Phase 2: Student Survey and Confidence

### 1. Overall, how confident are the students in their French abilities in each skill area?

Figure 7 reports the students' confidence in each skill area according to a four point scale where 1 indicates that the students thought their French abilities were 'not very good,' 2 'somewhat good,' 3 'good,' and 4 'very good.' As Figure 7 shows, overall, the students are most confident in their French reading skills (with a mean score of 3.29 and a standard deviation of 0.638), followed by listening (with a mean of 3.14 and standard deviation of 0.753), and then writing (with a mean of 2.97 and standard deviation of 0.756). (See Table 1 for how these skills align with those addressed by the DELF.) The students are markedly least confident in their French conversing skills (with a mean of 2.65 and standard deviation of 0.752). Conversing is the only skill for which the students rate themselves noticeably below 'good.' The findings for this question show that, overall, the students are more confident in their receptive skills than in their productive skills, and more confident in their written skills than in their oral skills.

**Figure 7: Overall Confidence Skill Area**



2. Within and across DELF levels challenged, how confident are the students in their French abilities in each skill area?

As Table 8 shows, the overall order of confidence by skill area remains consistent within the three DELF levels, namely most confident in reading, followed by listening, then by writing, and finally by conversing. For Level A2, the students' average confidence in all four skills is statistically significantly different from each other. The same is true for Level B1 (except for the comparison between listening and writing) and for Level B2 (except for conversing versus writing and listening versus reading).

**Table 8: Comparing Confidence in Paired Skill Areas within DELF Levels**

Paired Skill Areas	DELF Level A2			DELF Level B1			DELF Level B2		
	Mean	St. Dev.	p-value	Mean	St. Dev.	p-value	Mean	St. Dev.	p-value
Conversing	2.24	.673	<.005	2.65	.763	<.005	2.90	.673	<.005
Listening	2.99	.707		3.08	.797		3.32	.681	
Conversing	2.24	.673	<.005	2.65	.763	<.005	2.90	.673	.104
Writing	2.75	.778		3.03	.734		3.02	.756	
Conversing	2.24	.673	<.005	2.65	.763	<.005	2.90	.673	<.005
Reading	3.20	.579		3.27	.629		3.36	.681	
Writing	2.75	.778	<.005	3.03	.734	<.005	3.02	.756	<.005
Reading	3.20	.579		3.27	.629		3.36	.681	
Listening	2.99	.707	.026	3.08	.797	.003	3.32	.681	.529
Reading	3.20	.579		3.27	.629		3.36	.681	
Listening	2.99	.707	.040	3.08	.797	.496	3.32	.681	<.005
Writing	2.75	.085		3.03	.734		3.02	.756	

**Table 9: Comparing Confidence in Skill Areas across DELF Levels**

Skill Area	DELF Levels	Mean	St. Dev.	n	df	p-value
Conversing	A2	2.24	0.673	84	289	<0.0005
	B1	2.65	0.763	207		
	B1	2.65	0.763	207	348	0.001
	B2	2.9	0.673	143		
	A2	2.24	0.673	84	225	<0.0005
	B2	2.9	0.673	143		
Listening	A2	2.99	0.707	84	289	0.184
	B1	3.08	0.797	207		
	B1	3.08	0.797	207	348	0.002
	B2	3.32	0.681	143		
	A2	2.99	0.707	84	225	<0.0005
	B2	3.32	0.681	143		
Writing	A2	2.75	0.778	84	289	0.002
	B1	3.03	0.734	207		
	B1	3.03	0.734	207	348	0.451
	B2	3.02	0.756	143		
	A2	2.75	0.778	84	225	0.005
	B2	3.02	0.756	143		
Reading	A2	3.2	0.579	84	289	0.190
	B1	3.27	0.629	207		
	B1	3.27	0.629	207	348	0.102
	B2	3.36	0.681	143		
	A2	3.2	0.579	84	225	0.036
	B2	3.36	0.681	143		

For reading, the skill in which the students from all levels feel the most confident, Table 9 shows that the differences in confidence across the three DELF levels are not statistically significant, except for the comparison of Levels A2 and B2.

For conversing, the skill in which the students from all levels feel the least confident, Table 9 reveals that the students in Level B2 are statistically the most confident, with the B1 students significantly lower, and with the A2 students' confidence falling significantly below that.

For listening, Table 9 shows that the A2 and B1 students' confidence is significantly lower than that of the B2 students, but not significantly different from each other.

For writing, Table 9 reveals that the A2 students' confidence is significantly lower than that of the B1 and B2 students, whose confidence in writing is not statistically different from each other.

In summary, the A2 students' confidence in their productive skills is consistently significantly the lowest. The B1 students' confidence in their oral skills is significantly lower than that of the B2 students, while their confidence in their written skills is not. The B2 students' confidence in their conversing skills is significantly higher than that of both the A2 and B1 students.



3. In which communicative situations do the students in each DELF level feel most and least confident in each skill area?

Table 10 presents the results of the students' confidence in various types of situations with different interlocutors. The students are more confident in their French skills in communication with non-Francophones than with Francophones, with individuals than in large groups, and with friends than with strangers. This holds true regardless of the DELF level or skill area, suggesting that these socio-situational factors outweigh the impact of any difference resulting from the underlying differences in confidence documented for the skills themselves.

**Table 10: Confidence Levels in Various Communicative Settings by DELF Level**

Various communicative settings	DELF Level A2				DELF Level B1				DELF Level B2			
	Conv. Mean	List. Mean	Writ. Mean	Read. Mean	Conv. Mean	List. Mean	Writ. Mean	Read. Mean	Conv. Mean	List. Mean	Writ. Mean	Read. Mean
Community Non-Franco Friend	3.19	3.31	3.07	3.25	3.31	3.44	3.36	3.47	3.62	3.72	3.45	3.59
Individual Non-Franco	3.15	3.28	3.09	3.20	3.30	3.42	3.34	3.47	3.60	3.70	3.50	3.64
In Class with Classmates	2.96	3.33	3.08	3.27	3.30	3.45	3.36	3.41	3.50	3.74	3.39	3.54
At Work with Non-Franco	2.86	3.09	2.81	3.01	3.30	3.38	3.47	3.41	3.59	3.71	3.47	3.63
In Class during School Work	2.85	3.14	3.01	3.27	3.11	3.31	3.26	3.37	3.33	3.61	3.25	3.45
At School Outside Class Friends	2.80	3.14	2.80	3.13	3.23	3.43	3.24	3.36	3.47	3.69	3.35	3.51
Community Non-Fr Stranger	2.76	3.04	2.81	3.07	2.97	3.16	3.10	3.24	3.41	3.57	3.35	3.46
In Class with Teacher	2.67	3.34	2.98	3.29	3.11	3.48	3.23	3.42	3.30	3.76	3.26	3.41
Large Group of Non-Franco	2.54	2.91	2.68	2.85	2.77	3.13	3.02	3.17	3.10	3.49	3.23	3.33
Outside Class with School Staff	2.52	2.98	2.72	2.94	2.89	3.30	3.01	3.23	3.26	3.69	3.26	3.44
Community Franco Friend	2.47	2.77	2.59	2.82	2.96	3.05	2.95	3.08	3.05	3.33	3.02	3.25
Individual Franco	2.42	2.83	2.64	2.84	2.63	2.93	2.79	2.99	2.90	3.27	2.96	3.22
At Work with Franco	1.96	2.55	2.24	2.50	2.32	2.70	2.64	2.86	2.57	3.03	2.70	3.03
Community Franco Stranger	1.91	2.39	2.17	2.54	2.13	2.52	2.48	2.70	2.47	2.89	2.63	2.92
Large Group of Franco	1.75	2.31	2.12	2.36	1.84	2.41	2.33	2.49	2.10	2.84	2.48	2.71

Looking skill by skill, beginning with conversing, across the three DELF levels challenged, the students are most confident in their French in the following situations: with non-Francophones individually and in community and workplace settings, and with classmates in class and at school as well as outside of school. The students across the three DELF levels are least confident when conversing with Francophones in large groups and individually, and in community and workplace settings.

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The differences between conversing in the settings in which the students in each DELF level show the most and least confidence are statistically significant (A2:  $p < 0.005$ , B1:  $p < 0.005$ , B2:  $p < 0.005$ ). For listening, across all three DELF levels the students are most confident in class with their teachers and classmates, and in the community with friends. They are least confident listening to Francophones individually and in large groups, and in community and workplace settings.

The differences between listening in the settings in which the students in each DELF level show the most and least confidence are statistically significant (A2:  $p < 0.005$ , B1:  $p < 0.005$ , B2:  $p < 0.005$ ). For writing across all DELF levels, the students, generally, are most confident writing to non-Francophones in at-work, community, classroom, and individual communication and least confident writing to Francophones in at-work, community, and large group settings. The differences between these settings in which the students in each DELF level show the most and least confidence are statistically significant (A2:  $p < 0.005$ , B1:  $p < 0.005$ , B2:  $p < 0.005$ ).

Finally, considering reading, unlike the three other skills, the three DELF levels do not pattern together as cohesively in terms of the situations in which the students are most confident. The A2 students are most confident reading in class with their teachers and classmates during school work, while the B1 and B2 students are most confident reading with non-Francophones in community, work-place, classroom, and individual situations. Having noted these socio-situational differences, it is important to keep in mind that reading is the only skill for which there is not a statistically significant difference in terms of the students' overall confidence by DELF level challenged. This suggests that while the students in all three levels report being equally confident in their reading abilities, they may have had different contexts for reading in mind when judging their overall feelings, with the A2 students picturing classroom-based reading and the B1/B2 students imagining primarily extra-curricular situations. Having said this, it is important to note that the students across the three DELF levels did not differ in terms of the situations in which they feel least confident in their reading abilities, namely with Francophones in at-work, community, and large group and individual settings. Regardless of the exact nature of the pairings, the differences in reading confidence between the most and least comfortable setting are statistically significant in each of the three DELF levels (A2:  $p < 0.005$ , B1:  $p < 0.005$ , B2:  $p < 0.005$ ).

4. What connections are there between students' interactive and receptive exposure and confidence in each DELF level by skill area?

Interactive exposure was quantified as a weighted average of measured variables (Johnson & Wichern, 2007) relating to the students' extra-curricular exposure to French (past, present, or intended for the future), with large contributions from time in a French-speaking environment, time living with French-speaking people, exchange programs, and travelling. The impact of interactive exposure on confidence in each of the skill areas, however, is not shared in precisely the same fashion across all three DELF levels challenged. For the A2 (Table 11) and B2 (Table 12) students, there is a positive relationship between increased interactive exposure and greater confidence in conversing, but not in the other three skills; whereas for the B1 students (Table 13), the positive relationship impacts all skill areas except for writing.

**Table 11: Confidence (A2) by Skill Area as a Function of High (H) and Low (L) Amounts of Interactive and Receptive Exposure**

DEL F LEVEL A2 Interactive Exposure		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	p-value	DEL F LEVEL A2 Receptive Exposure		N	Mean	St. Dev.	p-value
Confidence	L	58	2.12	.677	.012	Confidence	L	56	2.18	.690	.226
Conversing	H	25	2.52	.586		Conversing	H	27	2.37	.629	
Confidence	L	58	2.97	.725	.662	Confidence	L	56	2.98	.700	.915
Listening	H	25	3.04	.676		Listening	H	27	3.00	.734	
Confidence	L	58	2.83	.775	.152	Confidence	L	56	2.63	.776	.039
Writing	H	25	2.56	.768		Writing	H	27	3.00	.734	
Confidence	L	58	3.19	.576	.719	Confidence	L	56	3.09	.514	.008
Reading	H	25	3.24	.597		Reading	H	27	3.44	.641	

**Table 12: Confidence (B2) by Skill Area as a Function of High (H) and Low (L) Amounts of Interactive and Receptive Exposure**

DEL F LEVEL B2 Interactive Exposure		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	p-value	DEL F LEVEL B2 Receptive Exposure		N	Mean	St. Dev.	p-value
Confidence	L	89	2.79	.665	.008	Confidence	L	97	2.91	.647	.834
Conversing	H	50	3.10	.647		Conversing	H	42	2.88	.739	
Confidence	L	89	3.26	.716	.181	Confidence	L	97	3.28	.703	.317
Listening	H	50	3.42	.609		Listening	H	42	3.40	.627	
Confidence	L	89	3.07	.766	.342	Confidence	L	97	2.98	.736	.319
Writing	H	50	2.94	.740		Writing	H	42	3.12	.803	
Confidence	L	89	3.34	.673	.603	Confidence	L	97	3.34	.675	.610
Reading	H	50	3.40	.700		Reading	H	42	3.40	.701	

**Table 13: Confidence (B1) by Skill Area as a Function of High (H) and Low (L) Amounts of Interactive and Receptive Exposure**

DELFL LEVEL B1 Interactive Exposure		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	p-value	DELFL LEVEL B1 Receptive Exposure		N	Mean	St. Dev.	p-value
Confidence Conversing	L H	137 68	2.50 2.94	.719 .770	<.005	Confidence Conversing	L H	121 84	2.53 2.82	.708 .809	.007
Confidence Listening	L H	137 68	2.91 3.44	.803 .655		Confidence Listening	L H	121 84	3.05 3.13	.773 .833	
Confidence Writing	L H	137 68	3.03 3.03	.757 .690	.998	Confidence Writing	L H	121 84	2.93 3.17	.739 .709	.025
Confidence Reading	L H	137 68	3.21 3.40	.635 .602	.047	Confidence Reading	L H	121 84	3.21 3.37	.604 .655	.069

Receptive exposure was quantified as a weighted average of measured variables relating to the students' exposure to French through various forms of media (e.g., watching television, listening to the radio) and through extra-curricular reading for pleasure. As Tables 11-13 show, the impact of receptive exposure on the students' confidence in each of the skill areas, to an even greater degree than for interactive exposure, is not shared across the DELFL levels. For Level A2, there is a strong positive relationship between amount of receptive exposure and confidence in writing and reading, but not in listening or speaking. For Level B1, receptive exposure has a positive relationship with confidence in conversing and in writing, but not in reading or listening, while there is no statistically significant relationship between amount of receptive exposure and confidence in any skill area for the B2 students.

Taken together, the analyses show that the role of these two types of exposure differs greatly according to the students' proficiency. At the lower end of the proficiency scale (A2), the results reveal that the students' confidence in their oral skills is more greatly impacted by interactive exposure, while their confidence in their written skills is more significantly impacted by receptive exposure. In contrast, at the upper end of the proficiency scale (B2), these two types of exposure have very limited, if any, impact on confidence. Interestingly, it is at the mid-point of the proficiency scale (B1) where these two types of exposure appear to have the greatest impact on student confidence.

5. What connections are there between students' range of receptive vocabulary and confidence in each DELF level by skill area?

The analyses performed in relation to this question have revealed that the students' range of receptive vocabulary knowledge (i.e., the vocabulary items they know, regardless of whether or not they use them) is not equal for two objects (i.e., car and shoes), and this holds true for the three DELF levels. However, the B2 students have a greater range of words for both objects than do the B1 students, who in turn have a greater range than do the A2 students. Interestingly, despite these differences in range across the three DELF levels, the type of connection between range of receptive vocabulary and confidence in the four skill areas appears to be fairly consistent across the three DELF levels. Specifically, as Table 14 shows, this measure of vocabulary does not appear to be significantly related to the students' confidence, except for the B1 students' listening abilities and, to a lesser degree, to the B2 students' writing and reading abilities.

**Table 14: Confidence by Skill Area across DELF Levels as a Function of High (H) and Low (L) Ranges of Receptive Vocabulary Knowledge**

DELFL LEVEL B1		DELFL LEVEL A2				DELFL LEVEL B1				DELFL LEVEL B2			
Interactive Exposure		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	p-value	N	Mean	St. Dev.	p-value	N	Mean	St. Dev.	p-value
Conf.	L	70	2.21	.657	.126	128	2.58	.759	.073	45	2.89	.775	.908
Conv.	H	11	2.55	.688		76	2.78	.759		93	2.90	.627	
Conf.	L	70	2.99	.732	.951	128	2.93	.805	<.005	45	3.31	.701	.927
List.	H	11	3.00	.632		76	3.36	.706		93	3.32	.678	
Conf.	L	70	2.76	.788	.811	128	3.03	.742	.963	45	2.84	.796	.056
Writ.	H	11	2.82	.751		76	3.03	.730		93	3.11	.729	
Conf.	L	70	3.17	.564	.309	128	3.30	.609	.302	45	3.20	.815	.052
Read.	H	11	3.36	.674		76	3.21	.660		93	3.44	.598	

### Phase 3: Connecting Confidence and Proficiency

1. How does the A2, B1, and B2 students' confidence in each skill area relate to their scores on the DELF exam for the same skill?

As shown in Table 15, the degree of connection between the students' reports of confidence by skill area and their corresponding DELF scores differs from Levels A2, to B1, to B2. Consistently across the levels, though, few students report low confidence in written comprehension, resulting in the need for a certain degree of caution when interpreting the results related to this particular skill area.

**Table 15: A2, B1, and B2 Component DELF Scores as a Function of High (H) and Low (L) Confidence by Skill Area**

DELF Results	Confidence	DELF Level A2			DELF Level B1			DELF Level B2		
		N	Mean	p-value	N	Mean	p-value	N	Mean	p-value
Oral Production	Conversing L	54	18.67	.693	84	16.16	<.005	31 108	14.09	.012
	Conversing H	29	19.06		121	18.66			16.41	
Oral Comprehension	Listening L	18	17.91	.356	41	13.74	<.005	13 123	14.65	.646
	Listening H	64	19.09		160	17.71			15.22	
Written Production	Writing L	28	17.33	.043	48	17.41	.421	32 107	13.50	.100
	Writing H	55	19.12		157	17.91			14.89	
Written Comprehension	Reading L	7	20.64	.004	19	17.68	.031	12 124	15.00	.182
	Reading H	75	23.14		182	19.64			15.99	

For the A2 students, there appears to be a positive relationship between greater confidence in the written skills and higher DELF scores for those components. In contrast, at Level A2, greater confidence in the oral skills does not translate into significantly higher corresponding DELF scores. Regarding Level B1, there is a positive relationship between greater confidence in all skill areas and higher related DELF scores, except for written production. In direct contrast to the A2 students, this connection between confidence and proficiency for the B1 students is very strong for the oral skills and weaker or non-existent for the written skills. For Level B2, the connection between confidence and proficiency is not as clear, with a significant positive relationship found only for oral production.

In interpreting these findings, it is important to keep in mind that the B2 students have challenged a more difficult level of the DELF that likely pushed them closer to the edges of their competence. Thus, it is possible that they may have passed a certain threshold beyond which it is more difficult to reflect the impact of greater confidence in exam performance.

Table 15 also shows that there are proportionally fewer students reporting low confidence for each skill among the B2 students, than among the B1, with the A2 students displaying the highest proportion for each skill level, except for written comprehension where only approximately 10% of the students in each DELF level report feeling low levels of confidence.

**2. How do the measures of interactive and receptive exposure relate to the A2, B1, and B2 students' performance on the four DELF components?**

As Table 16 shows, there is no significant relationship between interactive exposure and DELF component scores for the A2 students. However, there is a positive relationship between increased receptive exposure and higher DELF scores for their two productive skills.

**Table 16: Level A2 DELF Scores by Skill Area as a Function of High (H) and Low (L) Amounts of Interactive and Receptive Exposure**

DELFL Component	Interactive Exposure					Receptive Exposure				
		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	p-value		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	p-value
Written Comprehension	L	59	23.17	2.18	.168	L	57	22.92	2.26	.885
	H	24	22.39	2.34		H	26	23.01	2.24	
Oral Comprehension	L	59	18.72	4.38	.626	L	57	18.38	4.67	.100
	H	24	19.27	4.61		H	26	19.98	3.71	
Written Production	L	59	18.53	3.70	.995	L	57	17.97	3.99	.030
	H	25	18.54	4.06		H	27	19.72	3.04	
Oral Production	L	59	18.50	4.17	.177	L	57	18.28	4.18	.039
	H	25	19.76	3.70		H	27	20.13	3.52	

For the B1 students, Table 17 reveals a significant relationship between greater interactive exposure and higher DELF scores for oral production and a relationship with higher oral comprehension scores that approaches significance. On the other hand, receptive exposure is significantly related to the B1 students' DELF scores for written production.

**Table 17: Level B1 DELF Scores by Skill Area as a Function of High (H) and Low (L) Amounts of Interactive and Receptive Exposure**

DELFL Component		Interactive Exposure				Receptive Exposure				
		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	p-value	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	p-value	
Written Comprehension	L	135	19.59	2.987	.350	L	120	19.58	2.975	.475
	H	66	19.18	2.922		H	81	19.27	2.960	
Oral Comprehension	L	135	16.45	4.805	.060	L	120	16.99	4.780	.754
	H	66	17.82	4.814		H	81	16.77	4.952	
Written Production	L	137	17.72	4.066	.721	L	121	17.28	4.221	.027
	H	68	17.94	4.039		H	84	18.53	3.689	
Oral Production	L	137	17.02	4.495	.008	L	121	17.38	4.901	.342
	H	68	18.89	4.802		H	84	18.00	4.322	

For the B2 students, Table 18 shows that there is no significant relationship between interactive exposure and DELF scores for any of the skills or between receptive exposure and DELF scores for any skill except for oral comprehension.

In general terms, these findings, along with those from Phase 2 connecting these two types of exposure to confidence by skill area, suggest that for the A2 and B1 students, increased interactive and receptive exposure is to some degree positively connected to gains in confidence and in proficiency for specific skills. In contrast, the connections between these types of exposure and the students' confidence and proficiency are much more limited for the B2 students.

**Table 18: Level B2 DELF Scores by Skill Area as a Function of High (H) and Low (L) Amounts of Interactive and Receptive Exposure**

DELFL Component		Interactive Exposure				Receptive Exposure				
		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	p-value	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	p-value	
Written Comprehension	L	88	16.09	2.824	.431	L	96	15.87	3.075	.886
	H	48	15.56	4.122		H	40	15.97	3.932	
Oral Comprehension	L	88	15.10	3.795	.791	L	96	14.64	3.994	.008
	H	48	15.29	4.055		H	40	16.43	3.282	
Written Production	L	89	14.54	4.257	.923	L	97	14.19	4.209	.121
	H	50	14.62	4.410		H	42	15.45	4.419	
Oral Production	L	89	16.25	4.307	.241	L	97	15.46	4.524	.106
	H	50	15.25	5.105		H	42	16.88	4.734	

In interpreting these findings, it is important to note that, as shown in Tables 16-18, across all three DELF levels there are substantially more students who report low amounts of interactive and receptive exposure, than those reporting higher amounts. Thus, it may be that higher amounts of these types of exposure would be needed to document a more consistent pattern of connections between exposure and confidence/proficiency.



3. How is the A2, B1, and B2 students' situational confidence in the most/least comfortable situations for each skill area related to their DELF scores for the same skill?

As shown in Table 19, situational confidence for the A2 students in each of the four skill areas in the contexts in which they feel most and least confident is not significantly related to their DELF scores for the same skills, with the possible exception of written production. The A2 students who reported higher confidence in their writing in their most comfortable situation (namely with an individual non-Francophone) appear to display higher DELF written production scores than do those A2 students with lower confidence of this type. It must be borne in mind, though, that very few students (regardless of DELF level) report low confidence in the situations they find most comfortable. Thus, a certain degree of caution is called for in interpreting the results for these contexts.

**Table 19: A2, B1, and B2 DELF Component Scores by High (H) and Low (L) Situational Confidence in the Contexts in which Students Report Feeling Most and Least Confident in their French Skills**

DELF Component	Context by Conf.	Sit. Conf.	A2			B1			B2		
			N	Mean	p-value	N	Mean	p-value	N	Mean	p-value
Written Comprehension	Most	L	8	23.50	.435	10	17.65	.061	5	16.50	.585
		H	75	22.89		188	19.53		131	15.88	
	Least	L	45	23.21	.285	95	18.81	.004	52	15.88	.955
		H	37	22.66		105	20.03		84	15.91	
Oral Comprehension	Most	L	6	17.91	.577	20	13.60	.001	3	16.83	.369
		H	77	18.96		180	17.27		133	15.13	
	Least	L	47	18.81	.947	105	15.66	<.005	43	14.50	.231
		H	35	18.88		95	18.22		92	15.40	
Written Production	Most	L	13	15.61	.029	24	15.95	.105	10	15.75	.342
		H	71	19.07		170	18.00		129	14.48	
	Least	L	55	18.32	.500	115	17.40	.130	69	14.52	.892
		H	28	18.94		88	18.26		70	14.62	
Oral Production	Most	L	14	18.71	.882	31	15.43	.020	6	14.75	.643
		H	70	18.90		171	18.05		130	15.80	
	Least	L	71	19.00	.563	163	17.33	.031	99	15.94	.836
		H	13	18.19		41	18.89		40	15.76	

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For the B1 students, Table 19 shows that situational confidence by skill area is significantly related to corresponding DELF component scores for five of the eight contexts: the least comfortable situation for written comprehension (with a large group of Francophones), oral comprehension in the most and least comfortable situations (in class with their teacher, and a large group of Francophones, respectively), and oral production in the most and least comfortable situations (in a community setting with a non-Francophone friend, and with a large group of Francophones, respectively). Finally, for the B2 students, Table 19 reveals that situational confidence for each of the four skill areas is not significantly related to the students' DELF scores for the same skills.

Taken together with the fact that socio-situational confidence has been shown to be shared in highly similar ways across skill areas and DELF levels challenged, the additional finding that socio-situational confidence is not strongly tied to the students' proficiency for two of the three DELF levels suggests that it may be the characteristics of the situations, rather than the students' French proficiency, that are more strongly connected to the students' confidence. In other words, in order to improve students' socio-situational confidence, work addressing how the students interpret different kinds of situations might be needed in addition to skill-based proficiency work.

**4.** How does the reported ease of each DELF component for the A2, B1, and B2 students relate to their scores for that same DELF component?

As presented in Table 20, for the A2 students there is a strong positive relationship between reported ease of the oral comprehension, written comprehension, and written production components of the DELF exam and the students' scores on these sections. However, only a small number of A2 students reported finding these three components difficult. While this means that a certain degree of caution is needed in interpreting these statistical results, such low numbers indicate that, generally, the A2 students tended to feel that most components of the DELF were not too difficult for them.

Considerably more students, however, reported finding the oral production component difficult. Interestingly, those A2 students who reported finding this component harder did nearly as well as those who reported finding it easier. These findings suggest that, among some of the A2 students, there may be a lack of confidence in oral production skills that is out-of-step with their demonstrated proficiency.

Table 20 also shows that there is a strong positive relationship for the B1 students between their reported ease of each of the four DELF components and their scores for each of these sections. As for the B2 students, the table reveals a strong positive relationship between the reported ease of the two comprehension-based DELF components and the B2 students' scores on these sections. The numbers of students reporting finding particular DELF components difficult also reveal important information about the B1 and B2 students. A considerably larger proportion of students from both of these levels reports finding the oral-based components difficult, compared to the written components. This finding is interesting (particularly in light of the findings for Level A2), since these students' oral production scores surpass their written production scores, despite their perceptions of difficulty to the contrary. The B1 and B2 students' perceptions, though, of greater difficulty of the oral rather than written comprehension component are more in line with their relative scores.

**Table 20: Reported Ease of DELF Components and DELF Scores**

DELFL Results	Ease of DELF	DELFL Level A2			DELFL Level B1			DELFL Level B2		
		N	Mean	p-value	N	Mean	p-value	N	Mean	p-value
Oral Production	Conversing L	38	18.77	.841	83	16.18	<.005	508	15.30	.179
	Conversing H	46	18.95		116	18.72		5	16.34	
Oral Comprehension	Listening L	19	16.05	.001	104	14.49	<.005	100	14.54	.001
	Listening H	63	19.88		92	19.52		36	16.90	
Written Production	Writing L	9	16.11	.039	20	15.97	.037	281	13.91	.344
	Writing H	74	18.87		180	18.07		11	14.73	
Written Comprehension	Reading L	3	19.33	.004	32	18.46	.027	459	14.621	.001
	Reading H	79	23.12		167	19.66		1	6.53	

5. How does the self-assessed performance on each of the four DELF components of the A2, B1, and B2 students relate to their DELF scores for that component?

Table 21 reveals that there is a very strong, very consistent positive relationship between the A2, B1, and B2 students' self-assessed performance on each DELF component and their score for that section. All such comparisons produced a statistically significant result, except for oral production for the A2 students. As was the case with their reports of perceived ease or difficulty of the oral production component of the DELF, the oral production DELF scores of those A2 students who felt they had not performed well on this component are not statistically any lower than those of the A2 students who felt they had performed well. This finding further strengthens the earlier suggestion that, among the A2 students, there are individuals whose confidence in their oral production skills is clearly not in line with their demonstrated proficiency in this skill area.

**Table 21: DELF Scores by Level as a Function of High (H) and Low (L) Confidence in DELF Performance**

DELF Results	Confidence in DELF Performance	DELF Level A2			DELF Level B1			DELF Level B2		
		N	Mean	p-value	N	Mean	p-value	N	Mean	p-value
Oral Production	Conversing L	57	18.80	.821	111	16.49	<.005	62	14.984	.013
	Conversing H	27	19.01		88	19.15		72	16.903	
Oral Comprehension	Listening L	32	17.28	.006	123	14.96	<.005	97	14.505	.001
	Listening H	50	20.09		75	20.05		38	16.895	
Written Production	Writing L	16	16.09	.027	52	16.49	.013	43	13.105	.005
	Writing H	67	19.16		150	18.28		95	15.242	
Written Comprehension	Reading L	9	20.22	.016	68	18.42	.001	56	15.018	.006
	Reading H	73	23.32		132	20.00		79	16.576	

In summary, there is a very close relationship between the students' actual DELF performance and their reported confidence as related to the difficulty of the exam and how they felt they had performed on it. The only exception is related to oral production for A2 students, where over two-thirds of these students report DELF-related confidence that is out-of-step with their actual DELF performance.

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## CONCLUSION

An overview of the main findings highlights the areas of greatest strength related to the students' proficiency and confidence and the connections between the two, as well as the areas for potential improvements. Any considerations of ways forward would be best designed to focus on changes in those areas identified as ones for possible improvement.

With respect to proficiency, Table 22 shows that, overall, the students' written comprehension skills are the most advanced. Within the productive skills, the sub-skills related to the ability to follow instructions and to the provision of information in various ways are particular areas of strength for the students across the levels challenged. Table 22 also shows that increased focus could be encouraged, in particular, on oral comprehension and written production abilities, specifically as related to the application of grammar and vocabulary. Such application involves using grammatical forms and vocabulary items in context for specific purposes rather than treating them in isolation. The focus for improvement could potentially be related to the need to further develop learners' competence in using grammar in context, their ability to translate such competence into effective performance, or both, and perhaps the need to broaden the types of pedagogical strategies and specific interventions used in teaching these skills in the various FSL programs.

With respect to confidence, Table 22 reveals that the students across the DELF levels challenged were found to be most confident in their reading skills and markedly least confident in their conversing skills. They are more confident in their written skills than in their oral skills and, generally, more confident in their receptive skills than in their productive skills. In terms of socio-situational confidence the students are more confident in their French skills in communication with non-Francophones than with Francophones, with individuals than in large groups, and with friends than with strangers. This holds true across the DELF levels and skill areas, suggesting that the students' degree of confidence is impacted more by these socio-situational factors than it is by their proficiency or by whether the communication is oral or written, both productive and receptive. Further, interactive exposure primarily supports confidence in conversing, while receptive exposure has the greatest impact on confidence in writing.

**Table 22: Summary of strengths and areas for improvement related to student proficiency, confidence, and the connections between the two**

Focus	Levels	Strengths	Areas for Improvement
<b>Phase 1: Proficiency</b>			
Overall proficiency	All	Written comprehension	Oral comprehension
Proficiency by level	A2	Written comprehension	Written production
	B1	Written comprehension	Oral comprehension
	B2	Oral prod. & written comp.	Written production
Proficiency by sub-skill	A2	Following instructions	Use of grammar in context
	B1	Following instructions, information	Grammar and vocabulary in context
	B2	Following instructions, information	Grammar and vocabulary in context
<b>Phase 2: Confidence</b>			
Skill-based confidence	All	Reading	Conversing
Situational confidence	All	Non-Francophones, individual communication, friends	Francophones, large groups, strangers
Interactive exposure supports confidence*	A2	Conversing	
	B1	Conversing, listening, reading	
	B2	Conversing	
Receptive exposure supports confidence*	A2	Written skills	
	B1	Productive skills	
	B2	--	
Range of receptive vocabulary	A2	--	Narrowest vocabulary range
	B1	--	--
	B2	Widest vocabulary range	--
Connection between receptive vocabulary range and confidence*	A2	--	
	B1	Connected to listening	
	B2	--	
<b>Phase 3: Connecting confidence and proficiency</b>			
Confidence and proficiency	A2	Written skills	Oral skills
	B1	Oral skills	Written production
	B2	Oral production	--
Exposure and proficiency*	A2	Productive skills	
	B1	Oral skills	
	B2	--	
Situational confidence and proficiency	A2	Written skills	Oral skills
	B1	Oral skills, written comprehension	Written production
	B2	All skills	--
Ease of DELF and proficiency	A2	Written skills, oral comprehension	Oral production
	B1	All skills	--
	B2	Receptive skills	Productive skills
DELF confidence and proficiency	A2	Receptive skills, written production	Oral production
	B1	All	--
	B2	All	--

\* The results related to the impact of exposure and vocabulary range on confidence and proficiency do not lend themselves well to a distinction between strengths and areas for improvement. As such, they are not divided in this way in the table. The double dash (--) indicates a focus for which the findings do not point to a clear strength or area for improvement.

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In summary, these confidence-related findings suggest that, while students' confidence is fairly well developed in certain ways, like in relation to reading, there is considerably more room for improvement in other areas. For instance, considerable gains in confidence could still be made in addressing the students' confidence in conversing. This would be particularly important at Level A2, where findings have shown that confidence in this skill area for over two-thirds of the A2 students are well below their demonstrated proficiency. Further, gains in confidence could be made in relation to the types of socio-situational contexts explored in this pilot project by addressing how the students perceive the nature of and expectations present when communicating in various settings with interlocutors from different linguistic backgrounds and with various types of relationships to the students.

For the connections between increased confidence and greater proficiency, Table 22 demonstrates that for the A2 students, the areas of strength involve the links between various forms of confidence and proficiency in written production, while the connection with oral skills shows the most room for improvement. For the B1 students, higher confidence in the oral skills was connected to higher proficiency in these skills, while this type of connection was not evident for written production. Finally, the B2 students appear to have a fairly uniform positive connection between their confidence and proficiency.

Thus, the findings presented in this report have responded directly to the goal of this pilot project, namely to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement related to the French language proficiency and confidence of learners in all three French as a Second Language programs in Ontario. In moving forward with the Ontario Ministry of Education's continuing initiatives to enhance learners' FSL confidence and proficiency in order to support their related achievement, efforts could be undertaken to target those specific areas identified for improvement through this report, while current practices could be continued in those areas identified as strengths.

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# APPENDIX: DESCRIPTION OF SUB-SKILLS

## DELFL Written Sub-Skills Level A2

(1.= First written activity; 2.= Second written activity)

2. Follow Instructions: Able to apply their writing skills to the situation proposed and follow the instructions provided regarding minimum length

2. Ability to Interact: Able to write a simple personal letter to express thanks, apologize, etc.

2. Sociolinguistic: Able to use levels of language appropriate for the context. Can use common forms of greeting and leave-taking

2. Coherence: Able to write a simple and coherent text. Can link sentences with common connectors

1. Describe: Able to describe in simple terms everyday aspects of their environment, events, past activities and personal experiences

1. Coherence: Able to write a simple and coherent text. Can link sentences with common connectors

1. Follow Instructions: Able to apply his/her writing skills to the situation proposed and follow the instructions provided regarding minimum length

1. Share Impressions: Able to briefly describe impressions, explaining likes or dislikes

2. Vocabulary/Lexical Spelling: Able to use basic vocabulary with respect to the situation proposed. Can spell with relative phonetic accuracy but not necessarily with the correct lexical spelling

1. Vocabulary/Lexical Spelling: Able to use basic vocabulary with respect to the situation proposed. Can spell with relative phonetic accuracy but not necessarily with the correct lexical spelling

2. Morphosyntax/Grammatical Spelling: Able to use simple grammatical structures and forms relating to the situation proposed, but continues to systematically make basic errors

1. Morphosyntax/Grammatical Spelling: Able to use simple grammatical structures and forms relating to the situation proposed, but continues to systematically make basic errors

## DELFL Oral Sub-Skills Level A2

Response: Able to answer and respond to simple questions. Able to manage a simple interaction

Introduction: Able to establish social contact, introduce themselves, and describe their everyday life

Phonology: Able to express themselves sufficiently clearly, sometimes asked to repeat themselves

Present Topic: Able to present an event, activity, project, etc. from a familiar context in a simple way

Give Information: Able to ask and provide information in simple everyday exchanges. Can make, accept or turn down suggestions

Connect Information: Able to connect the information provided clearly and simply

Vocabulary: Able to use a limited but adequate repertoire of vocabulary to manage everyday situations

Relate Socially: Able to enter into social relationships simply but effectively, using common expressions and following basic usage

Morphosyntax: Able to use simple grammatical structures and forms, meaning is clear despite systematic presence of basic errors

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## DELFL Written Sub-Skills B1

Follow Instructions: Able to apply their writing skills to the situation proposed

Own Opinion: Ability to express own ideas, feelings and/or reactions and give their opinion

Coherence: Able to connect a series of short, simple, distinct elements in a discourse that flows

Describe: Ability to describe facts, events or experiences

Vocabulary Range: Has a sufficient vocabulary to write about current topics, paraphrasing if needed

Sentence Structure: Good control of simple sentence structures and the common complex structures

Orthographic control: Lexical spelling, punctuation and layout are accurate enough to be followed easily most of the time

Vocabulary Control: Demonstrates good control of basic vocabulary, but major errors still occur when expressing more complex thoughts

Tense and Mood: Demonstrates good control of tense and mood with noticeable mother tongue influence

Morphosyntax/Grammatical Spelling: Agreement in gender and number, pronouns, verb endings, etc.

## DELFL Oral Sub-Skills B1

Conversation: Able to enter into a conversation about a familiar subject without any preparation

Introduction: Able to speak confidently about themselves, give information, reasons, and explanations that relate to their areas of interest, projects, and actions

Unusual Situation: Able to cope without preparation with somewhat less routine situations of everyday life, appropriately responding to the situation and sociolinguistic codes

Present Subject: Able to present the topic simply and directly

Phonology: Able to express themselves without help, despite a few problems with formulation and occasional pauses. Pronunciation is clear and intelligible despite occasional errors

Adapt to situation: Able to adapt their acts of speech to the situation

Respond: Able to respond to the other speaker's comments. Can check and confirm information, comment on other speaker's point of view, etc.

Coherence: Able to connect a series of elements in speech that is clear enough to be followed without difficulty most of the time

Vocabulary: Has enough vocabulary to discuss current topics, paraphrasing if necessary. Major errors still occur when expressing more complex thoughts

Present Argument: Able to present and explain the main points of a personal point of view with reasonable precision

Morphosyntax: Good control of simple sentence structures and the more common complex structures with noticeable mother tongue influence

## DELFL Written Sub-Skills B2

Follow Instructions: Responds appropriately to the situation and the type of written production required. Can follow the instruction regarding minimum length

Sociolinguistic: Able to adapt their written production to the situation and the reader, adopting a formal level of language that is appropriate under the circumstances

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Present Information: Able to relate facts, events, and situations clearly and precisely

Orthography: Can produce clearly intelligible continuous writing and spelling is reasonably accurate but may show signs of mother tongue influence. Able to correctly spell most of the words whose use is expected at this level

Defend Position: Able to develop an argument, appropriately emphasizing important points and relevant details

Coherence: Able to connect the ideas expressed in a fluid and coherent form. Can follow the rules for page layout and punctuation is reasonably accurate but may show signs of mother tongue influence

Vocabulary Range: Able to use a sufficient range of vocabulary in spite of occasional lexical gaps, which lead to paraphrasing

Complex Sentences: Able to use a variety of constructions appropriately

Vocabulary Control: Able to use vocabulary that is generally appropriate, though some confusion and incorrect word choice does occur without hindering communication

Choice of Forms: Has a high degree of grammatical control. Non-systematic errors may still occur, but do not lead to misunderstanding

## **DELF Oral Sub-Skills B2**

Phonology: Has acquired clear and natural pronunciation and intonation

Precise Ideas: Able to confirm and qualify their ideas and opinions and provide clarification

Own View: Able to present a point of view, pointing out significant elements and/or relevant examples

Defend Idea: Able to respond to another's arguments and statements in order to defend their position

Morphosyntax: Has good grammatical control, despite minor errors in syntax

Vocabulary: Has a good range of vocabulary to vary their formulations and avoid repetition. Vocabulary is precise but gaps in vocabulary and word confusion persist

Coherence: Able to clearly communicate relationships between ideas

Introduction: Able to identify the topic of discussion and introduce the debate