



CASLT PODCAST SERIES

Effective Practices for Improving French as a Second Language Education

The European Language Portfolio and Self-Assessment **Alina MacFarlane**

About the Author

Alina MacFarlane works as a second language consultant and a researcher for the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers. She has been involved in several projects aimed at increasing the number of bilingual high school graduates in Canada including exploring the European Language Portfolio and its potential for Canada.

Content of this Podcast

Alina MacFarlane explains what the European Language Portfolio is and why the self-assessment it promotes is of interest in our Canadian context.

Facts

- ✓ The European Language Portfolio (ELP) is an innovative language learning tool based on the Common European Framework and used by language learners in Europe to record and reflect on their language studies and cultural experiences within or beyond school.
- ✓ One of the chief aims of the ELP is to motivate learners by acknowledging their language learning efforts and making the language learning process more transparent to them. Since the ELP specifically targets student motivation, it is an innovation of great interest to Canadian French as a Second Language programs.

Functions of the European Language Portfolio:

- 1) Describe learners' language proficiency and support this description with documents such as certificates, diplomas and information about their language learning experiences.
- 2) Make the language learning process more transparent to learners.

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Self-assessment is central to the Portfolio:

- ✓ The **passport** section requires learners to assess their own proficiency using scales and descriptors derived from the Common European framework.
- ✓ The **biography** section helps learners set language learning goals and encourages them to regularly assess their progress in reaching these goals.
- ✓ The **dossier** section also encourages self-assessment because it requires learners to select their best work to showcase.

Self-assessment in the Portfolio has three distinct focuses:

- 1. Focus on the learning process** - Learners need to assess how well they are learning their target language in the particular learning situation in which they find themselves.
- 2. Focus on the learner's proficiency in communicating** - Learners need to assess how they are progressing in terms of overall proficiency using scales and descriptors which are outlined in the Common Framework of References for Languages.
- 3. Focus on the learner's linguistic proficiency** - Learners need to assess their progress in terms of the linguistic components of the language such as the words they know, the structures they can deploy and the sounds they can articulate.

Further Reading

Schneider, G. & Lenz, P. *ELP: Guide for Developers of an European Language Portfolio*.

www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/?L=E&M=/main_pages/documents.html

Little, D. & Perclova, R. *ELP: Guide for Teachers and Teacher Trainers*.

www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/?L=E&M=/main_pages/documents.html