



CASLT PODCAST SERIES

Effective Practices for Improving French as a Second Language Education

Use of the L1 in the L2 Miles Turnbull

About the Author

Miles Turnbull is an associate professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Prince Edward Island and the current President of the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers. His research has focused primarily on French as a Second Language, teacher development, teacher belief systems, project-based and experiential learning and educational technology.

Content of this Podcast

Miles Turnbull explores the use of students' first language in second language learning.

Facts

- ✓ We know that it's not always easy to use only French in FSL programs. We sometimes feel the need to use a learners' first language! Making a selective and grounded use of the first language is acceptable and even useful in core French as a Second Language courses.

Maximizing the use of French:

- Repeat often.
- Speak clearly and slowly.
- Use the intonation of your voice to attract the students' attention on important words.
- Use pictures and photos to illustrate what you are talking about.
- Bring real objects to class to illustrate what you are talking about.
- Rely on demonstrations and models to support instructions given in French.
- Don't forget your gestures and facial expressions.
- Help students understand and accept that they don't have to understand EACH word that they hear or read.

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Using your students' first language in a limited and sound manner:

- Everyone's attitude towards English and all first languages is key. Why not ask the students' permission to speak in English? Why not require that they in turn ask "Est-ce que je peux parler en anglais?"
- Do not translate right away—allow a waiting period so that your students can react and assimilate what they hear or read.
- Avoid literal translations—start by translating key words, difficult words and unknown words. Giving an English equivalent to a complex or abstract vocabulary word can help with memorizing and remembering that word.
- Of course, there are exceptional cases involving discipline or an emergency. You can also use your students' first language when a student is visibly frustrated.
- Agree to use English if tasks and activities are cognitively complex.
- Identify, quickly, the differences and similarities of difficult grammatical structure in French and English.
- Make quick clarifications in English to save time and maximize French learning.

Further Reading

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