



CASLT PODCAST SERIES

Effective Practices for Improving French as a Second Language Education

Time and Intensity in the Learning of a Second Language **Joan Netten and Claude Germain**

About the Authors

Joan Netten is an honorary research professor at Memorial University in Newfoundland and Labrador and has published numerous articles on second language teaching. With Dr. Claude Germain, she co-edited a special issue of the Canadian Modern Language Review on 'Intensive French in Canada'. She received the Order of Canada for the promotion of linguistic duality in Canada.

Claude Germain is a professor at the University of Quebec at Montreal. He is well-known, nationally and internationally, for his numerous books and articles on second language teaching.

Content of this Podcast

Joan Netten and Claude Germain share aspects of their research which has shown that greater time and intensity spent on second language acquisition helps make language learning a success. Their research was central in pioneering *Intensive French*, a new approach to teaching French which is being piloted and implemented across Canada.

Facts

- ✓ Core French is taught in short periods of approximately 30 to 40 minutes once a day. This is often called the 'drip-feed method'. French programs have been based on the belief that the number of hours of instruction was the most important factor in becoming fluent.

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- ✓ Studies undertaken at Concordia University and McGill University in the grade five or six intensive English classes in Quebec demonstrated that ‘intensity’ of instruction was also a significant factor.
- ✓ Research on Intensive French (Germain & Netten) showed that students who were offered an intensive exposure of 300 hours of French in five months in grade six were able to develop communication skills equal to at least those of students in grade nine who were following the regular program.
- ✓ A minimum of 270 intensive hours is required at the grade five or six level to attain a level of spontaneous communication in five months. These 270 hours must be provided in an uninterrupted format; that is, blocked together in the morning or afternoon.
- ✓ Intensity is extremely important at the beginning of a second language program to give students a boost in communication skills. French classes are far more effective if offered in approximately two-hour blocks, two to three times a week, instead of one 40-minute period every day.

For Further Reading

The CASLT Web site features many articles by Joan Netten and Claude Germain on Intensive French. Visit <http://www.caslt.org/teachers/fslintens.htm> to download these articles.

Netten, J. and C. Germain (2005). Pedagogy and Second Language Learning: Lessons Learned from Intensive French. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*. 8(2): 183-210.

Netten, J. and C. Germain (to be published). *Intensive French in Canada. Teachers' Voices on Innovative Approaches to Teaching and Learning Languages*. M. Dooly & D. Eastment. Cambridge, Cambridge Scholar Press.