

**Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT)**

The Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers is a non-profit professional association of over 4,000 members.

Through its research, resources and publications, professional development and advocacy activities, the association plays a significant role in increasing awareness, appreciation and understanding of the importance of second and additional language learning and teaching throughout Canada. [www.caslt.org](http://www.caslt.org)

**Official Language and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI)**

The Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute of the University of Ottawa provides instruction in Canada's two official languages provides instruction in Canada's two official languages. Through its research centre, CCERBAL, it is committed to strengthening and promoting education and research in the fields of teaching, evaluation, and language policy and planning. [www.olbi.uottawa.ca](http://www.olbi.uottawa.ca)

## Bilingualism in a Plurilingual Canada Podcast Series

### Teaching French as a Second Language in Canada: Teachers' Perspectives, by Sharon Lapkin

#### Author

Sharon Lapkin is a Professor Emerita in the Modern Language Centre and Second Language Education program of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. Her research focuses on French as a second language (FSL) education in all its forms.

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#### Summary

Sharon Lapkin share the results and implications of a national survey led by CASLT on FSL teacher working conditions.

#### Teacher Working Conditions Findings:

- Teacher respondents considered library resources, computer software and community resources to be poor. Immersion teachers in particular commented on the lack of materials available representing francophone culture.
- Close to half the teacher respondents reported that they had no classroom dedicated to FSL and no access to a consultant.
- In general school administration was perceived as very supportive, while the community was perceived to be the least supportive of FSL.
- The most frequently reported challenge in terms of teaching conditions was class diversity.
- Teachers suggested that professional development (PD) would be more accessible to them if there was more funding, a focus on relevant topics, and if PD was offered during school hours.

#### Main Implications of the Study:

1. Future research on FSL teachers and teaching would be greatly facilitated by information on the demographics of FSL teaching.
2. The greatest challenges for FSL teachers in any program is meeting expectations in terms of a high level of proficiency in French, excellence in teaching, and knowledge of experiential, interactive second language teaching approaches. Faculties of education must be made aware to ensure that FSL teacher preparation curricula take this into account.



### Podcast Series

The Bilingualism in a Plurilingual Canada podcast series is an initiative brought to you by the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI) of the University of Ottawa in partnership with the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT).

These podcasts are based on research funded through the Official Languages Research and Dissemination Program jointly sponsored by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Department of Canadian Heritage.

The goal of this initiative is to make current research in second language teaching and learning available to teachers and the general public.

All podcasts from this series can be downloaded from the CASLT and OLBI Web sites.

3. We know relatively little about recent graduates from faculties of education. Are they better prepared for the challenges awaiting them? A study needs to be done of teachers during their first years of teaching
4. There is a great need for PD activities that target areas such as upgrading French language skills and providing information on newer methodologies, among others. A collective effort among the departments of education, school boards and provincial and national associations can play a direct role in facilitating the organization of this PD.
5. There are clear needs in the area of resources. Teachers were overwhelmingly dissatisfied with the ways in which Francophone culture is reflected in available teaching materials, with library resources, computer software and opportunities for French language support in the community.
6. Negative attitudes towards French need to be changed. Agencies such as the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages and Canadian Parents for French attempt to change public attitudes; if teacher federations at the national, provincial/territorial and local levels, could partner with them, this would go a long way to improving the situation of the FSL teacher who is all too often marginalized.
7. 40 % of the teacher respondents reported having considered leaving FSL teaching. This calls for a follow-up study to discover more about their reasons and how associations might help to address this systemic problem and reduce the number of disaffected teachers.
8. A lot of instructional time is lost from short daily periods for setting up and closing the period. Longer blocks of teaching time can lead to better outcomes for core French, as can newer program models such as intensive French.

### **Further Reading**

Lapkin, S., MacFarlane, A., Vandergrift, L. (2006): *Teaching French as a Second Language in Canada: Teachers' Perspectives*. Ottawa. CASLT. Available online: [http://caslt.org/what-we-do/what-we-do-research-catalogue-teaching-FSL-teach-perspectives\\_en.php](http://caslt.org/what-we-do/what-we-do-research-catalogue-teaching-FSL-teach-perspectives_en.php)

Lapkin, S., Mady, C., & Arnott, S. (2009). *Research perspectives on core French in Ontario: A literature review*. Toronto, ON: OISE/UT Modern Language Centre. (Available from the first author by writing to [slapkin@oise.utoronto.ca](mailto:slapkin@oise.utoronto.ca))

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