

Bilingualism in a Plurilingual Canada Podcast Series

Thinking Outside of the Box: Overcoming Obstacles in Core French,
by Callie Mady

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

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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

Author

Callie Mady is a professor at Nipissing University in North Bay. Her research interests include additional language learning, inclusive classrooms, French as a second language pedagogy, and teacher beliefs.
calliem@nipissingu.ca

Summary

Callie Mady explores ways to deliver more effective core French programs that improve students' language proficiency.

A Few Definitions

Compact core French: French taught as a subject with the same number of instructional hours as traditional core French, but distributed over a shorter time span, usually for one semester in a school year.

Intensive core French: An FSL delivery format that offers learners a concentrated exposure to French with an increase in the allocated hours. Students typically have from half a day to a full day of French over one semester - usually in Grade 5 or Grade 6. In one semester, 60 to 75 percent of instruction occurs in French.

Facts

- Intensity of time, length of time and their impact on programming are obstacles to improving core French outcomes in locations where it is delivered in short daily periods.
- Compact and intensive core French are solutions to the lack of time and intensity.
- Research on compact core French shows that compacting instructional time may provide a valuable alternative for improving student achievement in core French programs, especially when faced with reluctance to increase beyond 40 minutes a day.



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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).

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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.

- Research reveals that longer periods devoted to French allow for additional activities that give students opportunities to develop real communication skills. The considerable increase in instructional time, along with the concentration of that time, makes it easy to focus on communication (oral and written), literacy, interaction with others, and project-based pedagogical principles.
- Research shows improved student achievement where more intensive formats have been implemented, be it compact or intensive. Not only can they improve student outcomes, but such innovations can also improve teacher job satisfaction, since teachers can focus their attention on fewer students each day.
- Alternative, teacher-controlled solutions that are proven to improve student achievement include using collaborative activities in the core French context, introducing group work with a focus on drama, the Accelerative Integrated Method created by Wendy Maxwell, using e-pals, simulations, modules, drama and conversation, etc.

Further Reading

Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers. (2005). *An Examination of Intensive French: A Pedagogical Strategy for the Improvement of French as a Second Language Outcomes in Canada*. Ottawa.

Carr, W. (2007a). *Teaching Core French in British Columbia: Teachers' Perspectives*. Vancouver: British Columbia Association of Teachers of Modern Languages.

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

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