EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Preparing for L2 and FSL Teaching

A Literature Review on Essential Components of Effective Teacher Education for Language Teachers

Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers

Association canadienne des professeurs de langues secondes

CASLT commissioned this report to review research literature about essential components of teacher education for preparing second language (L2) teachers, with a focus on French as a second language (FSL) teacher candidates. The aim of this report is to examine the preparation needed for language teachers to enter the field with strong professional teacher identities and solid grounding for professional well-being in their practice.

Given the complexity of teacher learning and the dynamic process of developing a teacher identity, we see teacher *education* as more than imparting specific skill sets (i.e., teacher *training*). Our conceptual framework is rooted in a vision of teachers as active learners involved in developing different skills, knowledge funds, networks, experiences, and attitudes within an institutional setting, such as a Faculty of Education (Abboud, 2015; Burt, 2014; Dunn, 2011; O'Neill, 1986; Tchimou, 2011).

In other words, we understand L2 teachers as being "shaped in and through their experiences as learners, the cultural practices of teacher education, and the particulars of their teaching context, all embedded within larger sociocultural histories yet appropriated in individual ways" (Johnson & Golombek, 2016, p. 4). Accordingly, fostering a culture of collaborative professionalism has

been fundamental to supporting L2 teachers' professional practices (Jacquet & Dagenais, 2010; Kristmanson et al., 2011) and a key component of lifelong professional learning for teachers of all disciplines (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2016).

Developing effective L2 teachers means they have the professional knowledge to enter the field and the confidence to perform as language teachers. Central to their success upon graduation is the development of a strong FSL teacher identity. As this is a lifelong endeavour for teachers, developing and maintaining a professional identity is crucial for in-service teachers as well.

In this report, we adopt a holistic perspective on developing teacher competence across four key pillars for success: **1) target language proficiency, 2) intercultural competence, 3) pedagogical knowledge, and 4) collaborative professionalism**. These pillars are based on relevant research detailing the specific knowledge, skills, and experiences required for FSL teachers to teach FSL effectively (Salvatori & MacFarlane, 2009) and the collaborative professionalism that contributes to such professional learning in teacher education programs (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2016). We take these pillars as the foundational base for developing professional competence and responding to the preparation needs of teachers of

FSL, English as a second language (ESL), and other modern languages. These pillars do not stand alone; rather, they are interdependent. Efforts to improve one pillar will likely impact the others in unpredictable ways, affecting teacher candidates' cultural and linguistic proficiency, professional knowledge, and sense of self.

Given the chronic shortage of FSL teachers (Masson et al., 2019; OPSBA, 2018), effective Teacher Education programs and language teacher preparation can and should address attrition and retention in the field. FSL teachers, for example, have expressed feelings of de-professionalization and disenfranchisement from their practice (Karsenti et al., 2008; Knouzi & Mady, 2014), which contribute to a "leaky pipeline" effect (Masson, 2018).

Establishing strong, reliable Teacher Education programs and language teacher preparation can also become a tool for language teacher recruitment. In this report, we will explore what the research tells us about developing each of these four pillars for promoting effective language teacher education. Ensuring that we patch the leaky pipeline by preparing newly recruited language teachers to enter the classroom with confidence is paramount to ensuring the continued success of FSL, ESL, and all modern language programs in Canada.

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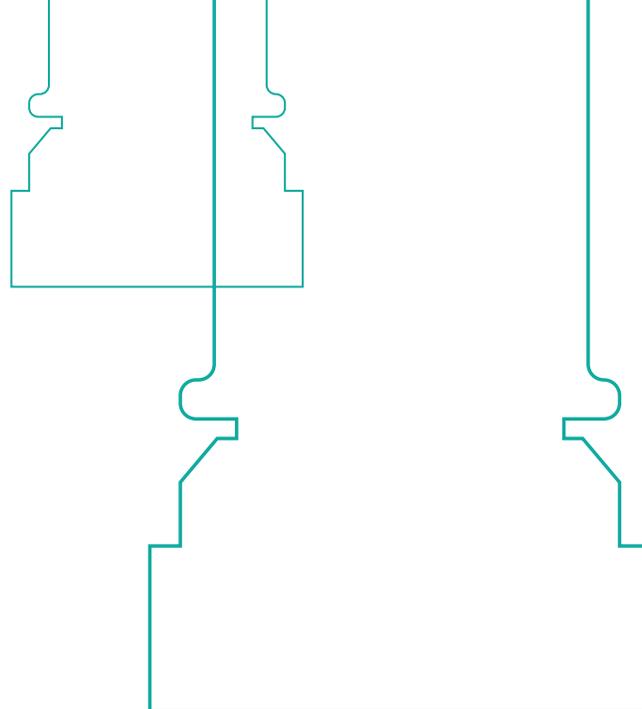
Pillar #1 – Target Language Proficiency

Preparedness

1. Language teachers can benefit from immersive experiences during initial teacher education or in-service training to improve their language proficiency (e.g., volunteering, home-stays, study abroad programs).

2. Even if teacher candidates are successful on their entrance exams into teacher education programs, they still need continuous language support and training in specific areas (such as content vocabulary, communicative competence, etc.).

3. Language teachers need to develop their general language proficiency and their classroom language proficiency.

Practice

4. Experience teaching in the target language in the classroom increases language teachers' self-efficacy.

5. Language teachers' self-efficacy beliefs correlate positively with their perceived target language proficiency.

Identity

6. Target language proficiency can influence language teachers' sense of self.

7. Language teachers can be positively or negatively impacted by the language hierarchies associated with the target language they are teaching.

Pillar # 2 – Intercultural Competence

Preparedness

1. Greater emphasis is needed on developing language teachers' own intercultural competence in initial teacher education.

2. There are conflicting findings about whether international study abroad/volunteer experiences can increase intercultural competence and sensitivity (however, the majority point to benefits).

Practice

3. Language teacher candidates need to develop a reflective practice that accounts for the linguistic/cultural diversity in Canadian classrooms.

4. Language teacher candidates experience difficulty in translating intercultural competence as a practice in the classroom and in their ability to teach intercultural competence.

Identity

5. Language teachers can develop and challenge their concept of "other" by developing intercultural competence.

6. Language teachers don't always understand their roles and responsibilities in terms of linguistic and cultural reproducers/models.

Pillar #3 – Pedagogical Knowledge

Preparedness

1. Language teachers with low self-efficacy beliefs towards their sense of preparedness for teaching have difficulty applying their knowledge in the classroom.

2. After only a few years of training and minimal teaching experience, the make-up of novice language teachers' pedagogical knowledge is similar to that of experienced language teachers.

Practice

3. Implementation of pedagogical knowledge and the types of pedagogical knowledge that language teachers focus on depend on how long they have been teaching.

4. Pedagogical knowledge, which is complex and multidimensional, develops through a critical self-reflection process and evolves with teaching experience, including practicum.

5. There is a disconnect between theory learned in teacher education and implementation in practice.

Identity

6. Language teachers' identity and personal experiences have a strong influence on shaping practical knowledge.

Pillar #4 – Collaborative Professionalism

Preparedness

1. Teacher training programs should prepare teacher candidates for collaborative professionalism by stressing the importance of communicating openly with their collaborating teachers.

Practice

2. Novice language teachers receive key support from many sources, including self-reflection, associate teachers, mentors, and parents, each touching on different areas such as strategic, emotional, and pedagogical support and self-efficacy beliefs.

3. Teacher-led observations are an integral part of mentorship programs to facilitate collaborative professionalism.

Identity

4. Building teacher leadership is an important component of teacher education to promote developing collaborative professionalism throughout their careers.

5. Teacher candidates can develop their sense of self as collaborative professionals through their work with mentors (such as collaborating teachers and associate teachers) who model rich collaborative exchanges.

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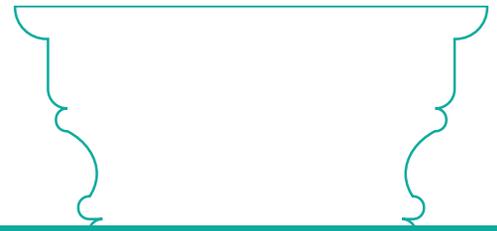
This report reviews research literature about essential components of teacher education for preparing second language teachers, with a focus on French as a second language teacher candidates. It examines the preparation needed for language teachers to enter the field with strong professional teacher identities and solid grounding for professional well-being in their practice. This report adopts a holistic perspective on developing teacher competence across four key pillars for success: 1) target language proficiency, 2) intercultural competence, 3) pedagogical knowledge, and 4) collaborative professionalism.

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