THE WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH TO TEACHING FRENCH

THE WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH TO TEACHING FRENCH: AN EFFECTIVE METHOD FOR DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AT THE PRIMARY LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

The approaches used in teaching French as a Second Language (FSL) have changed over the years. The emphasis went from looking at the individual elements of the language, like phonics or grammar, to the uses of the language in the real world. The users of this language must be able to demonstrate communicative competence, which is now the goal of any FSL class. Scholars like Krashen feel that a language must be learned in as natural a way as possible. When children learn their mother tongue, they are not restricted by formal grammar lessons, nor are they limited to daily vocabulary exposure. They are allowed to pursue their interests and develop their language skills in their own way.

The Whole Language Approach is being advocated by the Hamilton Board of Education for all students. Since this approach is similar to the natural way to learn a language, it is a good way to develop communicative skills in the students.

In the French immersion class there is a great concern about the quality of French being produced by the students. OISE has recommended several strategies to eliminate the weaknesses shown by the testing.

Through the use of the Whole Language Approach many of these recommendations can be accommodated. A sample unit is included to show how the Whole Language Approach develops language and thinking skills in the children. They are encouraged to share their ideas and show their enthusiasm for learning. The classroom thus becomes an environment where meaningful learning experiences take place. Children want to interact with others. Therefore, this project shows that the Whole Language Approach can be an effective way to develop the communicative competence of the French immersion students.

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INTRODUCTION

Historical Background

The approaches used in teaching French in the schools in Ontario have shifted in the last twenty years. They have gone from individual skill emphasis to a communicative global perspective. The structuralists, like Bloomfield 1933, Fries-Lado (1962), and Martinet 1973, 1962, analysed second language acquisition based on phonological and morphological aspects of the language. They separated the elements of the language and examined the different parts of speech by referring to the rules governing their written form. Behaviourists, like Skinner 1974, felt that repetitive drills with positive reinforcement would eventually become habit-forming. The programmes used in the schools emphasized the grammatical functions of words used in different types of sentences.

Educators used to feel that a good grammar base to produce flawless written translations was the indication of a person competent in a foreign language. According to contrastive analysis theory learners pick up structures of the second language more easily if they are similar to those of the first language (Lado 1957). This was disproven later (Dulay, Burt, and Krashen 1982). Errors were a sign that the material was not mastered by the students.

After the war, modern technology (i.e. tape recorder, radio, television) helped second language teaching. Once oral expression became more important, audio-lingual and audio-visual programmes became very popular. Phonetic knowledge and good memories enabled learners to sound like francophones, even if they had little idea of what they were saying. In these very structured programmes, the students responded parrot-like in a series of drills and what they were saying was very contrived. The recitations were superb in the selected settings of the textbook, but in

a "real" situation, there would be no real communication. The students would be able to recite "pat" phrases in response to specific stimuli and would not be able to create or understand original sentences. The students would only be able to understand the "textbook" responses. Chomsky (1957,1965) introduced transformational-generative grammar, which added a creative aspect to language production. He proposed that the learners, via an innate "Language Acquisition Device", internalize a productive system of rules which underlie elements at the surface level. However, this has been inadequate to explain how children can produce and understand sentences that they have not heard before (Lightbown and White 1987). In a class, for example, the teacher may use a clause with a subjunctive tense. The children, never having heard the verb form before, would still understand the intent of the sentence through the context. They, in turn, may verbalize similar phrases, not knowing how to explain why they are using certain words. Besides the grammatical correctness of a sentence, the words used must also make sense to the listener.

In the last two decades, educators have become interested in theories on second language learning vis-a-vis the learners and how they would be using the language. Scholars like Piaget (1977, 1980), Holdaway (1979), Vygotsky (1975) and Schaff (1960) have looked at the child's intellectual development and how language acquisition relates to it. From the second language point of view, linguists like Stern (1984, 1983, 1967), Krashen (1984,1982,1981) and those in the Modern Language Department at OISE (1987) shift the interest in "linguistic theory towards discourse analysis, semantics, speech act theory, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics." (Stern 1983:177). The emphasis is on "real language in use". Since the goal of learning another language is to communicate, the students must be able to adapt their knowledge to real situations.

With more and more school boards offering French as a Second Language (herafter referred to as FSL) at the elementary school level, there has been a shift from the technical grammatical facets of a foreign language to those which pertain to the language learner. "La langue est considérée comme un système de symboles essentiels au développement d'un individu, ainsi qu'à son intégration à un groupe." (Pouliot et al. 1988:10)

Communicative Competence has now become the goal in more recent language programmes. Emphasis is placed on "real" situations so the learner can go into a community with the foreign language and communicate. This approach, it is believed, will enable the students to interact with native speakers in everyday situations with current and socially acceptable language.

Recent Trends

Since 1968, when Pierre Trudeau made Canada officially bilingual, parental pressure has brought about more French teaching in the schools. French immersion classes were set up in Ottawa in 1971 and have spread throughout the province. The children acquired an extensive French vocabulary because most of the subject areas, like mathematics and environmental studies, were taught in French. Although French was the principal language used in the class, the approach used to teach French per se was similar to those mentioned above, in that the individual aspects of the language were presented to the students in detached contexts.

In grade one French immersion, for example, Le Sablier was the first language programme used in Hamilton. It is similar to the behaviourist approach in that its objective is "former l'individu en vue de l'acquisition d'habitudes." The grapho-phonemic relationships are

emphasized. It has a strong phonetic base where the children must learn to speak before they read. It looks at the stages of learning a language in this way:

> L'observation du développement d'un enfant depuis sa naissance met en évidence l'ordre successif des différentes acquisitions. Ainsi, l'enfant acquiert le mécanisme de la marche avant celui de la parole. Il doit avoir une bonne expérience de la parole avant de savoir lire. Ce n'est qu'après avoir beaucoup lu qu'il acquerra un mécanisme orthographique. Finalement, il en arrivera à opérer d'une manière inconsciente sur le plan de l'analyse et de la synthèse, seulement après avoir acquis tous les mécanismes précédents. (Préfontaine 1971)

Similar to the audio-visual programmes, there are a lot of pictures and props used to help the children learn. The philosophy of this programme emphasizes the recognition of the graphemes and the phonemes first; then progress is made to word, then sentence usage. The children are expected to produce "une copie parfaite" of the words used in the "comptine" (poem) of the week and then break them into syllables. It is a very structured programme and the teachers are strongly advised to follow a certain order in their presentation.

La Méthode Dynamique was used after Le Sablier in Hamilton. It is based on the global perspective. "C'est l'apprentissage de la lecture dans le contexte du développement ou du perfectionnement de la communication verbale." (Plante et al., 1977:3) The oral language is developed first: the main vocabulary words and the principal sentence structures are manipulated orally; then the written simplified story is presented. The sentence is presented first, then broken down into its smaller elements, word groups, individual words and then syllables and letters. The children are able to read and create new words with the individual syllables, after they have manipulated the elements of the story a great deal. Both of these methods break the language down into smaller segments. The French language is presented under controlled

contexts and there are minimal "real life" experiences for the learners. The learners have the elements imposed on them and are directed in how to use them. They are limited in their vocabulary growth and oral expression. This is not a natural way to acquire a language. Krashen (1983:55) emphasizes that " Language is best taught when it is being used to transmit messages, not when it is explicitly taught for conscious learning."

The most recent primary programme used to teach the French language in my school is Cataradi. It reiterates Krashen's position. In the teacher's guide it states that:

> L'enfant doit être exposé à un bain de langue provenant de sources diverses. Ainsi, son registre de langue sera varié grâce à des situations de communication authentiques. (Pouliot 1988:21)

The children must use and see the French language used for a variety of purposes, for example, in children's literature, in actual language experiences, for specific learning, in creative activities like drama and improvisation, role-playing, rhymes and choral speaking. The language is used as a tool for communication and learning.

Since learning takes place only when the experience makes sense to the learner, Goodman feels that the language experience should also be presented in a meaningful holistic way.

> With the language they've already learned, children bring to school their natural tendency to want to make sense of the world. When schools break language into bits and pieces, sense becomes nonsense, and it's always hard for kids to make sense out of nonsense. Each abstract bit and piece that is learned is soon forgotten as kids go on to further fractured fragments. In the end, they begin to think of school as a place where nothing ever seems to make sense. That's why learning language in the real world is easy,and learning language in school should be easy, but is often hard. (Goodman 1986:8)

Communicative competence is becoming more important in FSL classes and one approach to develop this ability is the Whole Language Approach. This approach is now being advocated by the Hamilton Board of Education for French Immersion classes. Its principles as proposed by people like Goodman (1986) and Newman (1985), show that this approach is the "natural" way to learn. It develops language abilities to the best of each individual's capability and each one is evaluated according to his/her own individual progress.

I will first discuss communicative competence in second language learning and how it is measured. The Whole Language Approach will then be presented as a method to use in order to develop language proficiency. Some reference will be made to language development: first as young children learn their first language and somé second language acquisition theories for developing real communication skills.

By being more aware of how children pass through different developmental stages in their learning process, educators have changed their approach in teaching a language. To learn a second language, as well as a first, there has to be a "natural" approach. The learners must see the relevance in using the language in a specific context. Comprehension and meaning are the key points here. The students must be able to understand what is being said before they will want to interact.

Following this I will outline some of the research that the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education (hereafter referred to as OISE) is carrying out to determine the level of communicative competence of French immersion students.

Finally I will summarize how I adapt the Whole Language Approach and the recommendations from OISE to my primary French immersion class.

A sample unit will be outlined to show the possible activities for a grade one French immersion class. The problems, and the "flow" of

the class will be discussed. Some examples of the children's work will be analysed to show their communicative development.

Language development in French is the prime goal of French immersion. I hope to show that by using the Whole Language Approach the children develop a communicative competence while in my classroom.

CHAPTER ONE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

In second language teaching the emphasis is now on developing communicative competence in the learners. It combines knowledge of sociolinguistics (i.e. appropriateness of an utterance), discourse (i.e.suitability and coherence of content), strategies (both verbal and non-verbal, used to continue communication when knowledge is lacking), and grammatical use (knowledge of the grammar rules) (Harley 1984). It requires both knowledge and skill. The user must be able to use language in a meaningful way that is socially acceptable.

Communication

By separating the two elements in this term, communicative competence, we have communication and competence. Communication denotes meaningful exchanges. Savignon (1983) emphasizes that the meaning is negotiated between the people involved. Children from birth are given opportunities to communicate. They have intuitively decided that the noises produced by people around them can be related to something which they already know or which they can discover about the world. On their own initiative, they experiment with language. They learn early in life that intonation, gestures and facial expressions are other features used when conveying a message.

Beginning Language Learning

As children, they do not imitate adult language, but borrow what they need for their own purposes. Britton (1970) and Tough (1976) outline different functions of language such as: to self-maintain, to direct, to report on past and present experiences, to reason, to predict, to project and to imagine. According to Britton (1970) and Smith (1975,1983) the

infant has generated an hypothesis that the meaning they want to convey can be expressed by a single sound. They express it to test out their hypothesis, anticipating certain results. If this fails to get a certain reaction, they look for an alternative. The adults then treat the children as partners in the communicative exchange and give precise information to children to develop their language, deducing the meaning from the utterance and situational clues. If the adult says nothing or continues the conversation, then the children assume that the utterance is correct. Their one word utterances are a complete sentence or, rather, a complete thought. These holophrases are followed by two or three words together to make sentences. The first exchanges between adults and babies are usually communicated in highly constrained settings. "The child and his caretaker readily combine elements in these situations to extract meanings, assign interpretations, and infer intentions." (Bruner 1983:29)

The meaning conveyed precedes the mastery of puristic school grammar. "They [young children] learn to do things with and through words rather than learning words first and meanings after" (Yalden 1981:15). The semantic and grammatical development proceeds from the simple to the complex and becomes more refined with experience. Adults may model complete sentences, but they do not insist that the children repeat them. Nor do they correct everything the children say. They do not want to discourage their attempts.

> A child's fluency in language is vital to his general intellectual development, but it is also one of the most fragile and personal aspects of his growth....A child whose language is rejected will feel rejected himself. Reluctance to talk may be less a sign of stupidity than of lack of trust. (Smith 1975:117)

It is through an encouraging, supportive environment that children extend their thinking and use of language to further develop their communicative skills (Pouliot 1988, Tough 1979).

Children hear a full range of syntactic structures every day. They actively choose and attempt to reconstruct those that they need to convey meaning. They generate their own grammar, inventing rules which are later elaborated and refined on the basis of input from their environment. They respond to the flow of meaning, not to individual words. It is the meaning in their everyday life that develops their language, not the sounds or words in isolation. Language development starts as a whole, then is broken down. Both grammatical and semantic development proceeds from simple to complex, so children must be exposed to meaningful and structurally full language in order to develop their own linguistic system.

Communication in a foreign language

In French immersion classes children have learned since kindergarten to use the French language because language is part of most situations in which they find themselves and they learn to operate as others do because they are involved in their talk, interests and concerns. According to Smith (1975,1983) they are trying to make sense of their world. They are always looking for information that is relevant to their attempts to comprehend. It is very often children who initiate the conversations with others, especially adults, ask the questions, experiment, obtain feedback, correct their own errors and even choose to end the verbal exchange. They are in charge of their own learning and often the adults around them wisely follow their lead. Halliday and Smith (1983) state that small children use different sounds to control

the people around them. When there is nothing that can be interpreted or makes sense to the listeners, then it is considered to be noise (Smith 1975).

Language is used for communication. According to the prevalent view of linguists:

> Communication is a process involving two information-processing devices. One device modifies the physical environment of the other. As a result, the second device constructs representations similar to representations already stored in the first device. Oral communication, for instance, is a modification by the speaker of the hearer's acoustic environment, as a result of which the hearer entertains thoughts similar to the speaker's own. (Sperber and Wilson 1986:1)

They list some of the things communicated as "meanings, information, propositions, thoughts, ideas, beliefs, attitudes, emotions".

In this way the children can express the way they perceive the world. They have to produce words for others to interpret and make comprehensible. It is through communication that they develop their thinking skills (Britton 1975, Smith 1975, 1983, Tough 1979). Although the children begin communicating non-verbally, they see the need for verbal and, much later, written language in order to learn more effectively.

The role of others in communication

Language development requires language learners to interact with each other. One's effectiveness as a language user is judged by others. Communication is then a continuous process of expression, interpretation and negotiation (Savignon, 1983). The meanings intended and conveyed

are not always the same; choices have to be made by the speaker and hearer and we try our best to be understood. The meaning depends on others who may or may not interpret it as intended.

An example

Different words are suitable in different situations. For example, in French the word used to say hello to someone differs according to the relationship of the speaker and the person being addressed. "Salut" is a very informal term used between friends whereas "Bonjour" is a more respectful term used especially when addressing an elder or a stranger. You are able to use "Bonjour" in informal situations, but you cannot use "Salut" in formal situations without appearing impudent. It is through linguistic competence that a social "faux pas" is avoided.

It is through different experiences that our communicative skills are developed. One must take risks in order to learn. It is through experimenting and getting feedback that progress is made. As we grow, our needs grow increasingly complex and along with them our communication efforts.

How competence is shown

Competence is dependent on knowledge and use. According to Savignon (1983) it implies an underlying ability. The manifestation of this ability depends on the cooperation of all the participants. People vary in knowledge and ability. As such, the success of the interaction reflects the speaker's competence, the listener's competence and the nature of the event itself.

Littlewood (1981) states that the more competent communicator is not the one who can best manipulate the structures of the language, but

the one who is the most skilled at processing the complete situation involving him/herself and the listener, taking into account the knowledge already shared between them and deciding on how to communicate the message most effectively. At times it may mean sacrificing grammatical accuracy for immediate communicative effectiveness.

In the classroom

By developing communicative competence in the classroom the teacher has a very important role to play. Not only does this person have to know the language being taught, but s/he also has to understand the children being taught. Children come to school already knowing how to speak. Most children have a vocabulary of 2500 words by the age of six and their linguistic system contains most of the essential features of the adults' (Britton 1970). Therefore, in the French immersion class the teacher must be conscious of the linguistic knowledge already in place in the children, even if the language of instruction is different.

The class atmosphere must be flexible, creative and responsive to the learners' needs. The language used in both written and spoken situations must be dynamic and interpersonal. The learners should see the need to use language for different functions. They would learn language that is socially appropriate in specific contexts with the correct register and style and with the correct forms of grammar actually used outside the classroom.

The teacher must be able to add to the existing programmes to make the learning experience more "real", so the learners will want to communicate. According to Savignon (1983) the most effective programs will be those that involve the whole learner in the experience of language as a network of relations between people, things and events.

The emphasis must go from the surface grammatical structures to the meaning (Ellis 1984, Krashen 1982,1981, Yalden 1981). The language is analyzed in terms of the situations and functions it serves in specific contexts. Formal exercises can be used when they accompany or follow a communicative experience based on the needs generated by the experience. The teacher must be aware of social appropriateness due to cultural influences, both of which lack explicit rules. As an interpreter, the teacher must be concerned with the personal knowledge and experiences that the students bring to the class (Brière 1980, Ellis 1984, Krashen 1982, 1981). After all, the role of the successful language teacher is "to help learners get along in real life situations, find satisfaction in the discovery of other ideas and new ways to self-expression" (Savignon 1983:116).

In the next chapter I shall outline the tenets of the Whole Language Approach as an effective way to develop communicative competence.

Chapter Two THE WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH

In real life, communication happens in whole packages, each situation demanding skills in different modes (reading, writing, listening and speaking) of communicating cooperatively. These modes are rarely used separately in real-life situations. With the emphasis on communicative competence in FSL classrooms, we need to examine different aspects of the language both within and beyond the grammatical core (Faerch et al., 1984).

Communicative competence is concerned with who is saying what to whom in what circumstances and under what conditions. The speaker must consider the choice of code, style or register to use, the topic, context and modality, as well as the age and status of the interlocutor before the message is relayed (Brière 1979). Role playing speech is far from natural spontaneous speech. There should be as much interaction with native speakers as possible, or at least "learners need the opportunity to participate in the same kinds of interactions as naturalistic learners in order to develop the capacity for what has earlier been called 'communicative speech' " (Ellis 1984:96).

For Yalden (1981), language learners must learn how to be effective when interacting. They must be able to get an idea across, make their feelings and attitudes known, present convincing arguments etc., all in unpredictable circumstances. This includes listening for all the levels of meaning as well as noticing grammatical details like verb tenses. Her recipe for the learner will bring about real communication. One needs:

> freedom to use the strategies that suit him or her best plus an environment that encourages the trial of acquired skills - conscious and intuitive - in order to get on with the job of real communication. (Yalden 1981:16)

By using the Whole Language Approach the language learners develop their language skills and make more attempts to communicate than under the traditional methods.

This chapter will outline the Whole Language Approach philosophy to show how it develops communicative competence in the learner, as well as how it fulfills the ideals of student-centered learning as presented in the Ministry of Education documents.

In the Ministry document Education in the Primary and Junior Divisions (hereafter referred to as EPJD) there are eight basic assumptions made about children and learning. (See Appendix 1 EPJD pp.15-16) The vocabulary used is very similar to that which is used to describe the Whole Language Approach. The third assumption "Learning experiences gain power if they are part of organized and meaningful wholes" is a summary of whole language. Learning through "wholes" makes the experience more meaningful.

> Whole language empowers children to take responsiblity for their own reading, writing, speaking, listening and thinking in the learning process. As they take risks to explore the function of language, they interweave each of the language arts in meaningful, purposeful, functional ways. (Fountas and Hannigan 1989:134)

What is the Whole Language Approach?

This approach uses language in a natural way. The children are immersed in an environment where they see copious examples of language in action. They experiment with the language and use different language forms to share meaning. Their environment is filled with writing to show different functions of language. Written language is also presented in

context to show the children the relationship between meaning and print. They are not taught grammar per se because

> grammatical processing will change and improve through speech and writing practice as students undertake challenging new tasks in discourse that entail modifying, elaborating and styling their sentences and that motivate revision. (Moffett 1981:18)

Whole language keeps

> language whole. The children are immersed in language as they listen, speak, write and read througout the school day. However, it is their own language upon which instruction is built. The children are given experiences that include stories, paragraphs and sentences written in natural language. Natural language ... is based on the way people talk. Letters, sound patterns and words are not used in isolation, but in the context of language that is real and whole. (Brountas 1989:57)

In this language-rich environment, children are given opportunities to control their own learning. They can learn language through everything they do, all the time and with everybody. The language they use should be so "real" that they could communicate with confidence outside the classroom walls. The classroom offers the experiences, but the children need to initiate the interaction, since learning comes from within.

> Learning, in other words, is not simply the basis of our attempts to make sense of the world; it is itself a consequence of our urge to transform uncertainty into familiarity. We do not learn by chance; nor do we passively assimilate what others try to teach us. Learning is a product of experience, and (as we shall see) is best facilitated when that experience is deliberately and systematically sought by the learner. (Smith 1975:118-119)

The learners relate new information to what they already know and impose interrelationships upon the new information. After all, they come to school with a great deal of knowledge about oral and written language. The school experience should build on the learners' accomplishments.

Children are encouraged to take risks and make mistakes, since mistakes are natural for the learning process. However, in many second language classrooms, the students are learning a language. The grammar rules have been emphasized by the teacher and the students are consciously aware of the correct forms of expression. As such, there is often hesitancy on the part of the learners to participate in conversations using this language for fear of being wrong. There is minimal communication because the students are concentrating on the form.

The role of errors

Errors are a major concern for foreign language teachers. In the Whole Language Approach the students are allowed to make errors. In writing and prepared speeches they are expected to make a conscious effort to apply the grammar rules that they have internalized, but in the oral communicative activities in class, emphasis is placed on the message they are trying to convey. Krashen (1981,1982) outlines the strategies appropriate in handling three different types of errors made in oral expression:

If the answer is incorrect, the teacher or another person makes a direct correction. This shows a lack of comprehension by the student.

If the utterance is appropriate and well-formed but the pronunciation is not correct, the teacher should repeat the correct answer with good pronunciation.

If the response is appropriate, but syntactically or morphologically incomplete, it is the teacher's reponsibility to expand the answer to show a correct, complete form. If the student's level of acquisition isn't ready for this particular rule then the expansion will be understood by the student, but not internalized for progress in grammar acquisition.

Much material has been written about second language errors. Krashen (1977) says that errors indicating interference by the mother tongue are caused by lack of knowledge: the students are filling in the gap with something they know. Others (e.g. Dulay and Burton 1982) believe that the native language can have a positive and a negative effect on the student's acquisition of a second language. Contrastive analysis has enabled linguists to predict errors that might occur in the second language due to first language interference, but in reality the main influence that the first language has on the second language has been usually seen in word order.

Other evidence of first language interference with second language acquisition may be seen in code-switching. This happens when the learners, not having enough vocabulary in their target language, use words from their first language to fill in the gaps.

Intralingual errors are similar to those made by children learning their mother tongue. They include overgeneralizations. The students, trying to apply logically what they already know, construct their own rules to predict how different items will behave. They have not had enough experience to internalize the exceptions. As a product of learning, these errors show us how the students are progressing in the learning process.

Another type of error is simplification. The students leave out items that are unnecessary to convey their intended message. Since the point is to communicate, any element not directly serving to communicate is dispensable.

In French immersion some students have fossilized errors, i.e. the errors which have become permanent features of their speech. By emphasizing communication they have realized that these errors do not

prevent the message from being understood and they have internalized them as part of their language acquisition.

The role of risk-taking

Recent studies emphasize the positive aspects of making mistakes. If the students produced only perfect utterances, communication would be minimal, since the efforts would be on form, not meaning. According to Klein (1986:108), "The more the learner knows the more likely he is to make errors." If they are at ease, the learners are willing to take risks and experiment with the language. All people learn from their errors,

> because...learners do not simply memorize target language rules and then reproduce them in their own utterances. They indicate that learners construct their own rules on the basis of input data, and that in some instances at least these rules differ from those of the target language. (Ellis 1985:9)

Since the emphasis for learning a second language is on communication, less importance is given to learning of rules. Like children learning their first language, they must experiment with the sounds they hear around them and try to make sense of them before they attempt to produce their own interpretation. Krashen (1983) feels that the goal in foreign language classes should be to provide the students with "comprehensible input" so that they would be able to understand the language outside the classroom and use the "real" world as well for progress. He feels that:

> We acquire language when we obtain comprehensible input, when we understand what we hear or read in another language. This means that acquisition is based primarily on what we hear and understand, not what we say. (Krashen 1983:1)

> The ability to speak fluently and easily in the second language emerges by itself, after a sufficient amount of competence has been acquired through input. It may take some time before any real spoken fluency develops.... Initial production is typically not very accurate. Very early speech is quite flawed, with acquirers using

> mostly simple words and short phrases. It also contains few function words or grammatical markers. Gradually more complex constructions are acquired (as the acquirer obtains more comprehensible input) and the grammatical markers are "filled in". (Krashen 1983:20)

Through the Whole Language Approach the students take responsiblity for their own learning because they find a need for meaningful communication. What is learned depends on the learners' interpretation of the situation and how they make sense of what is going on.

Language learning is a very personal matter. Children bring into the classroom different experiences, learning styles and levels of language competence. This approach accomodates these differences and allows the learners to make decisions about how to spend their own time. The teachers can work with the children following the natural direction of their development. The curriculum should be organized by topics or themes that are interesting and relevant to the students. In this way they will be encouraged to express their ideas, opinions and feelings. Language is used as the means of communication. It is not presented according to any grammatical sequence. The interest in the theme provides the motivation for the students to want to communicate. The students will be given opportunities to read, write, listen, speak and view in each theme. There should be a good rapport with the teacher and other students as s/he teaches them current and socially useful phrases in a non-threatening environment. Some would be ready for in-depth discussions and detailed story writing, while others would still be at the basic level with minimal expressive vocabulary. All efforts are valued and encouraged.

In a whole language classroom the students are exposed to three modes of learning. The first way is by being told what to do. In other situations, they may be observers where they watch a demonstration. Thirdly, they may experience something where they are actually involved

in doing it themselves. The more involved the children are in their own learning, the more meaningful the experience is. A Chinese proverb taken from the preface of our math programme recognizes the need for total involvement:

> I hear and I forget.
> I see and I remember.
> I do and I understand.

As the children become more actively involved in the learning process they realize that language has a lot of different functions. They can use it to solve problems, share ideas, plan and evaluate activities, brainstorm, make predictions, accomplish things, pose questions, explain to others, imagine and pretend and recreate things from the past. The teacher should encourage them to form hypotheses, predict outcomes, take risks, interact with others and evaluate their results. (Here are obvious parallels with the way very young children learn to communicate.) It is through these varied uses of language that the children develop their skills and knowledge.

In the Whole Language Approach the skills and themes are interwoven. Units of study flow naturally from the children's interests. It is an integrated approach where the teacher takes advantage of every teachable moment. The "classroom has to be a cornucopia of opportunities, so that no matter which way she looks, a student can see interesting connections among things, words, ideas and people" (Moffett 1968:44). Whole language teachers are able to incorporate the curriculum goals and objectives into the children's interests. After all,

> learning is something the children do, not something that is done to them. It is a multi-sensory process, which requires children's active participation in seeking and using information in an integrated manner in order to arrive at meaning." (Board of Education for the City of Hamilton 1987:3)

Activity centres are set up for the different themes, so that the children are immersed in a literate environment. Everything around them requires that they use language skills for different purposes: for example, activity cards with directions on them, language master cards for vocabulary building, oral interactions amongst peers for exchanging information or creating cooperative projects. The children are given opportunities to see reading and writing as useful tools for thinking and learning. Thanks to language they develop positive attitudes toward learning.

This language rich environment enables one to carry out the philosophy of the Ministry with regard to young children, as pointed out in the document Shared Discovery. This document operates on the premise that all children are individuals and they learn at their own rates. The learning environment should provide opportunities for the children to develop:

- the ability to make and be responsible for their own decisions
- exploration skills
- communication skills
- a respect for themselves and for others
- the skills and attitudes required for a healthy life
- a love of learning (Ontario Ministry of Education 1985:8)

in order to help them become "effective problem-solvers and sensitive decision-makers." This is also a goal of whole language experience. The children come to school and naturally try to make sense of their world. The Whole Language Approach supports and expands what happens outside of school. It combines "language, culture, community, learner and teacher" (Goodman 1986:8). It moves from the whole to parts: letters, sounds, phrases and sentences in the context of whole real language. Teachers know that when they work with it in a whole and sensible way, the parts will be taken in proper perspective and that learning will come more

easily. Grammar and sentence structure analysis come after seeing words used in meaningful sentences. After all, children learn far more about language from using it than from being told about it.

Oral Language Use in the Classroom

Although reading and writing depend on more than one mode of language expression, oral language and listening play major roles in the classroom, seeing that the children have to listen to what is going on around them and make sense of it before they will feel comfortable enough to express themselves. No one should be forced to speak. Silence may be taken as an indication that thinking is predominant. The students are actively listening and they will speak when they feel competent enough through their listening and understanding (Krashen 1981,1982). Comprehension precedes production in any situation.

In the Whole Language Approach opportunities are provided to use oral expression in as many different ways as possible for both getting the message across and enjoyment. The children are actively involved in class discussions and decision-making. They are involved in the planning of what goes on in their day. There is time for problem-solving and role playing, puppets and mime. The children are encouraged to ask questions and seek clarification of anything they don't understand. There are readings of chants, songs, stories and poems to help the children internalize the rhythm and intonation of the language, and to facilitate word recognition and fluency. These oral experiences also introduce the children to "book language", an important factor for early reading success.

By reading to children we can demonstrate to them that it is a common part of everyday life and that pleasure can result from it. It also

provides good oral models, showing different dialects, styles and voice types.

Long before they are able to read the printed word, children should be exposed to quantities of good oral presentations of all kinds of literature. Through poetry, for example, they learn to appreciate the rhyme, music, imagery and sound play of the language. "The love of the language is first fostered through the ear, not the eye" (Moffett 1981:154).

The experiences listed above can be applied to students of French immersion. They see the French language used for a variety of reasons. Used in different situations, French becomes "real" and takes on meaning for them. The children are able to use the French language for different functions. Everything that takes place in the class is dependent on the learner's total involvement. The children do not learn new vocabulary if the words do not make sense to them. In order to learn concepts, the vocabulary must be pre-taught, with comprehension based on ideas, not words. It is believed that through this "whole" approach to learning, the communicative abilities of the children will be more richly influenced. Therefore, through the Whole Language Approach in primary French immersion, the communicative competence of the students will benefit.

In the next chapter, the development of literacy will be discussed. This term refers to reading and writing abilities of people. Since these modes develop in a way similar to that of oral language skills, whether in first or second language learning, it is very important that positive feedback be provided constantly to encourage language growth.

Reading and writing are easier to analyze because they are more concrete in nature, since visual cues are more permanent than auditory

ones. The reading abilities depend on the printed word and the writing abilities depend on how the words are expressed on paper.

CHAPTER THREE USING THE WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH TO DEVELOP READING AND WRITING SKILLS

By using the Whole Language Approach, language learners are able to communicate with more ease. Everything they do revolves around communicating something in one form or other. I have outlined the stages that the children go through when they learn to speak. They learn how to communicate non-verbally first, then their sounds become recognizable words. As they receive more feedback, they are able to experiment with the language and eventually create sentences to convey their needs. They learn how to speak correctly by engaging in communicative interactions as often as possible.

This chapter outlines the natural process of literacy development. Since language develops basically the same way in any speech community, the practices characterizing maternal language development should be used in immersion to develop the literacy abilities in French as a second language.

Since the use of a skill improves it, the best way to learn to read and to write is to read and write. The child is bombarded with print. The children become aware of written language in their environment and recognize a great deal of it before they come to school. They know that there is significance attached to what they are reading.

Reading and writing development pass through a series of distinct stages. Before the children can actually participate in these activities, however, it is important that they witness a wide variety of uses. They must perceive a wealth of opportunities to read and write. They must see people reading and be read to. They must witness others writing and be able to use paper and pencils themselves. Their literacy growth will

develop from the literacy experiences that they receive at home. It is important that all these experiences foster a positive attitude (EPJD).

Developing reading skills

Reading is a complex process involving interaction of all aspects of language. The children come to school with a wide range of background experience. If they are read to often, they see how fluent readers engage in this activity. They see how books are handled and they become familiar with the flow of book language. They see how stories are constructed: how the characters and events change in a fictitious text and how to receive information about the world which surrounds them from factual texts. All these experiences plus their existing knowledge and preferences will influence their attitude towards reading.

Sample growth strands for reading and writing are outlined in the Ontario Ministry of Education document Shared Discovery (1985). A summary can convey the essentials of the reading stages.

At first, children start to demonstrate book handling and awareness habits. They learn how to hold a book, how to turn the pages and realize that the pictures and the script marks on the page relay meaning. They may attempt to "read" the familiar story to their audience, imitating the language and expression of their reader as well as they can (Newman 1985).

As they become more aware of directionality (i.e. left to right), they may follow the words with their finger. They eventually discover that the print flows from left to right and from top to bottom of a page. After a while they begin to recognize some of the chunks of print, and start to read the words. Over time they will expand their sight vocabulary and be able to read with meaning. When passages do not make sense due to misreading or new vocabulary they develop strategies to cope. These

approaches may be semantic (looking for other indicators of meaning), syntactic (applying grammatical rules which govern the structures in the language), or grapho-phonemic (checking the spelling and/or pronunciation of the word, if it has been heard before and recognized).

The children may go back and reread the passage or continue hoping that additional cues will clear up any doubts. Looking for meaning in each word is the semantic tactic. If this does not prove satisfactory they may substitute a known word for the unknown one to make sense of the passage. This shows an intuitive sense of the structure of the language. As the children become more sensitive to the idea that what they understand must be congruent with the print, they may reread passages after looking more closely at the graphic representations. This is the grapho-phonemic strategy.

Reading is a thinking process. With many experiences, the children learn to think critically and become sensitive to material that does not coincide with their perception of the world. They may accept the author's ideas if the material is well-written and involves non-fiction in a humourous or fantastic way.

Children read expecting the print to make sense and have a predictable structure (Hopkins 1977, Lynch 1986, Newman 1985, Smith 1975, 1983). They use freely what they know of the language and of the world in general to create meaningful messages from print. The background information that they bring to the page helps them anticipate meaning. The more knowledge they have, the less reliant they are on the printed text. They experiment with the printed language and at times show cognitive flexiblity and ingenuity in order to communicate meaning from what they are reading (Baskwill and Whitman 1988, Doake 1988, Goodman 1986, Moffett 1981, Newman 1985).

Looking for meaning

The Whole Language Approach advocates state that teachers should not insist on word for word accuracy if they are to teach their students to read for meaning. Meaning comes before form. They should help the students maintain a flow of meaning by using their existing knowledge to develop self-correcting strategies. The students would then develop their own tactics for predicting, confirming and correcting their assumptions in the text. (Is this not the hypothesis-testing process once again?) They then incorporate the new information into their existing knowledge. Teachers can have the children read a passage and then retell the story. In this way they can analyze the errors and see if the children really understood what they were reading. "Comprehension not only facilitates memorization by organizing the material to be memorized into meaningful chunks, but also improves the likelihood of subsequent recall" (Smith 1975:81).

Their misinterpretation of the cues is important to our understanding the development of the reading process. The mistakes show which strategies (semantic, syntactic or grapho-phonemic) the children are using in their reading and where the weaknesses are, since "children are independent readers when they themselves are able to orchestrate all of the cues available to them" (Newman 1985:24).

Reading programmes

Reading programmes should be child-centred, since reading is "an interactive process between the mind of the reader and the language of the text". (FWTAO 1985:11) As individuals, children bring different abilities, experience and knowledge to the class. Because all children have differences, they interpret what they read in their own way. They each have their own perception of the world and their own learning styles.

They should be allowed to develop at their own rate. The ideal situation would have an individualized reading programme for each child, who would choose what to read.

The traditional reading programmes were teacher-centred and based on "bits and pieces" of language. One approach, for example, is the basal reading programme (FWTAO 1985, Newman 1985), which emphasizes phonics and sight reading. The philosophy underlying basal readers is that the children learn to say the words and the meaning comes afterwards. The vocabulary is restricted and built upon, block by block, with ample repetition and review. The most frequently used words are emphasized. This is in contrast to daily conversations where vocabulary is not restricted when adults talk with children. There are then exercises in the workbook to complete: filling in word groups or answering questions about the reading passage. This approach falsely assumes that the teacher has acquired everything to be learned (by following the guidebook very closely) and that the children come into the classroom knowing nothing. It also assumes that everyone learns in the same way. The learning in this type of programme is highly dependent on auditory skills, even though auditory learners comprise only about 30% of the population. The basal programme makes little use of the semantic or syntactic cueing system and does not encourage the natural language of the children. The emphasis is on putting the phonemes together to make words. The children have minimal thinking to do in such a structured programme.

Since more research is now available on child development and learning theories, publishers are starting to produce basal reading programmes that allow for individual differences and that are child-centred. They realize that the activities should be meaningful and thought-provoking. Progress is being made, but the teacher must realize

that it is not the only method for teaching reading, since reading is necessary in most of the subject areas in the classroom.

The importance of first-hand knowledge

Most children have an ability to read when they come to school and their success is highly dependent on the interaction they have with others (Doake 1988). It does not depend on prescribed materials. "The sensible teacher makes reading easy and interesting, not difficult and boring" (Smith 1983:5). Since active learning motivates the children, it is important that they be actively involved with the reading material. Shared reading and language experience stories involve the children in preparing the printed passages. They verbalize their contributions which the teacher puts down on paper. These approaches show the link between spoken and written language. If s/he accepts the language as produced by the children, the teacher is showing that the message is more important than the form. The language will be meaningful to the children when it relates to something that they are interested in.

Reading becomes easier if the children are familiar with the topic (Goodman 1986, Herald-Taylor 1986, Newman 1985, Yalden 1981). Oral discussions and brainstorming sessions can bring out important vocabulary and ideas, and show what is already known about the topic. In this way the children can anticipate where these concepts may lead in their reading. Their understanding of the text depends on their being able to relate the newly acquired information to what they already know.

Predictable books

Some books establish predictable patterns through the use of rhythm, rhyme, repetition of vocabulary and repetitious story structures and common story patterns (Barrett 1982, Lynch 1986, Newman 1985). The

language is natural and easy for the children to understand. It helps the children read with confidence because they can predict what is to follow. In fact, they may wish to "chime-in" as the reader continues the story in a familiar way. It is up to the teacher to find a variety of reading materials and teaching styles that motivate the children to read. Since different approaches work for different children, the types of activities in the class must answer the needs of everyone in the whole class.

Other reading material

Books are not the only source of print (Goodman 1986, Hopkins 1977). Newspapers, magazines, comic books, letters, cereal boxes, pamphlets, forms, menus, these and any other "authentic material" that would interest the children, all show written texts for specific purposes. These are the types of material they will see in the "real world". The more the children read, the more they will learn about language and about life in general. By choosing their own reading material from a wide range provided by the teacher they become more motivated to read (Doake 1988, FWTAO 1985, Newman 1985). As their interest grows, they will want others to share in their excitement. The more they share about their readings, the more they will develop their communicative ability.

Learning to write

Children can learn to read by writing and through reading they may improve their writing skills. Once children become aware of print in the environment they develop an interest in producing their own "writing". They have "messages" to share and should be encouraged to express themselves in print. The stages in the writing process are easier to identify than those in reading, because they are similar to the way oral

language is developed. In Focus on Writing and Shared Discovery the stages of writing are outlined. It is stated that at first the children may make scribbled symbols on paper for their message. These markings soon include some identifiable letters and eventually become real words. Language awareness develops in all modes and printing is no exception. The children start sounding out words and print out ideas that can be understood by others. The standardized forms in spelling and grammatical structures appear little by little. Eventually they are able to sequence events and retell a personal experience. In the higher grades they are able to produce sequential stories with a beginning, middle and end, as well as create an expository passage that develops a problem and carries it through to its conclusion.

In School

The writing programmes in school should start at the same level where the children are (Goodman 1986, Newman 1985). As in the reading process, the children come into the classroom with different abilities. They see that print is an integral part of the environment. The teacher must accept the children's existing idioms and speech patterns when they are learning to express their ideas and thoughts. Oral language is only concerned with the "here and now" aspects of the situation, while through writing the message is permanently stated (Smith 1983). The written word "must carry the total load of meaning without any ambiguity: [it is] more formal, complex, more highly polished and crafted and posseses few redundancies" (Doake 1988:28). It can be used to verify, clarify and express ideas to avoid errors. The communicative function of writing is emphasized and error correction is done in such a way as not to distract the attention from the content of the message.

Writing is an activity that requires both thought and a graphic demonstration that thought has occurred. As in the other language skills, the writers rely on their memory to interpret an idea. They form an hypothesis about how to put it down in print and then transcribe it onto paper. During the editing process they should evaluate its accuracy to see if it makes sense, modify it if necessary and continue on.

A good writing environment encourages self-expression. Beginning writers should have freedom of choice in deciding how to begin. Some prefer to draw before doing their story, others prefer the opposite. Graves feels that talking and drawing help the children discover the meaning of what they want to write. After they write, they must then talk with others and even draw in order to clarify and correct their ideas. Children should not be expected to write about something they would not talk about. It is important to ensure that the writing task is focused on a topic which makes sense to the writers. Writing should be done every day, as long as it has a real purpose in the eyes of the children.

The importance of errors

As in reading, the errors are used as a diagnostic tool. According to Smith (1975), there are two types of errors: those that make a difference in meaning and those that don't. It is not necessary to correct everything. Beginning writers must learn to focus on meaning, not form.

Spelling and syntax awareness develop in a natural sequence. The children make a generalization of the rules and then test their hypothesis. The teacher can help by putting charts, labels, word lists etc. around the room for the students to see. As they get older, the students could keep their own dictionary or at least be advised to consult a class copy. Grammar, phonics and spelling are not ignored, but are

taught in meaningful contexts to improve the style of the students' writing. They are based on what the children already know, not on isolated incidents.

Errors are important in the learning process. They give insights into the "kinds of sophisticated decisions the children are capable of making" (Newman 1985:80) as well as indicating their specific needs. When editing with a child, the teacher must value the efforts of the student and ask permission to make corrections. The child should remain in control of the decision-making. This helps to develop self-esteem in the child and gives him/her confidence to continue writing. Throughout the year progress is measured by the improvement shown in their skills, habits and attitudes. As they become more competent the students should have more responsibility for evaluating their own writing and editing their work for display. Some (e.g. Préfontaine 1971) feel that writing should come after the oral and reading skills have been developed. If the children are aware of print in their world, they also want to contribute to this permanent style of expression. As soon as they speak, they can write (i.e. express themselves on paper). Although they require a great deal of physical coordination to print, they have ideas and experiences to share with others. Let them pick
their own topic and express it to the best of their ability.

The role of a journal

A daily journal, which explores personal emotions and experiences, is a non-threatening way for children to express themselves. They are free to take risks and write whatever they want without worrying about accuracy in form. Throughout the year one can see the progress they make in their writing efforts in their personal journal. They are not explicitly corrected, but personal comments on the content encourage communication.

The role of the teacher

Teachers must keep coordination, handedness (left-handed people need special support), legibility and conformity to conventions in perspective. They must not overly stress the children by insisting on perfect letter formation all the time. Children may deteriorate in their skills when they are experimenting with a new style. However, they don't abandon their focus on meaning and constant flow of ideas. According to Goodman (1989:19) "scribbling, reversed letters, invented spellings, creative punctuation and reading and writing miscues are charming indications of growth toward control of the language process." The message is still the essence of the communication.

Language is needed in everything that is carried out in the classroom. It is inseparable from the rest of the world. The four aspects of language: speaking, listening, reading and writing, involve similar processes within the brain and must be developed together, not as isolated skills (Krashen 1984, 1982, 1981), although listening and understanding precede the other modes. From birth children are immersed in language, which they receive through all their senses. They continually sort and categorize it to try to understand the world in which they live (Goodman 1986, Pouliot 1988, Smith 1983,1975). They experience simultaneously the integration of the four components of language and "learn how language interrelates as they use it in functional situations to receive or communicate meaning" (Herald-Taylor 1986:2). Language should make sense to them in content and as such, motivate them to communicate (Fallon 1987).

The Whole Language Approach emphasizes the need to provide students with many opportunities to interact with one another, to exchange information, to read, to discuss their writings and share ideas. The focus of the language is always on meaning: about events or objects,

feelings or experiences, "social distance, formality of relationships and moral stance" (Newman 1985:32). The teacher must believe that the children have the ability to communicate and encourage them to express themselves. S/he should build on their strengths and encourage them to believe in themselves and their own abilities. Language development is continuous for all students; yet it is marked with considerable differences from individual to individual.

> From what's been said, it's clear that whole language is both a force and an outcome, a process and a product.... Whole language means a person is using all aspects of verbal or written communication at his or her disposal to think - sometimes literally, sometimes inferentially, sometimes aesthetically, but always evaluatively and critically. (Jacobs 1989:36)

The Whole Language Approach develops the thinking skills in the learner by improving communicative abilities. The goals of the Ontario Ministry of Education are to produce children ready to face the future with good problem-solving, decision-making and risk-taking attitudes. Since the French Immersion programme must follow the directives set out by the Ministry, the use of the Whole Languge Approach would certainly develop these skills via a second language educational programme.

CHAPTER FOUR HOW EFFECTIVE ARE THE METHODS USED TO DATE?

The previous chapter emphasized the need for a child-centred learning experience. In French immersion the children should receive an education in which they are learning problem-solving, risk-taking and decision -making skills. These skills would help them adapt in a French speaking community, but how well would they be able to cope?

Testing Results from OISE

Since French immersion began in 1971 there has been continuous testing to determine the results of this alternate form of education. The Modern Language Centre in OISE has been the Canadian centre for much of this research. The staff is interested in the development of bilingual proficiency and communicative aspects of language teaching and learning.

The researchers look at different components of language that make up communicative competence. They examine the grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic and strategic competence. (See Chapter One for the definition of the four categories.)

The evaluation has been done in comparison with native Francophone children, because the abilities of the French immersion students surpass those found in FSL programmes. Similarly, early immersion students are more similar to native speakers of the same age in French language ability, than late immersion ones, because they have had more exposure to the French language.

To define native-like fluency this comparison is made with students the same age and similar backgrounds to show how the target language (in this case, French) would be used in natural situations.

Grammar competence

Grammar competence has been a major focus of most testing, since it is necessary for discourse and sociolinguistic competence. By the time they are in grade five or six, the early French immersion students can produce many forms which are grammatically correct; however, they still make a number of errors that clearly distinguish them from native speakers of the same age. The children may make phonological, lexical and syntactic errors when using the second language, but this does not hinder functional use. When judged by native speakers of the same age, (Lepicq 1980) there was still a significant level of acceptability. The message was conveyed and from a social point of view, the personality of the pupil judged was more important than the language ability. The French speakers wouldn't mind playing with these children.

Discourse competence

To measure the discourse competence of the immersion students, there were a variety of strategies used. The researchers found that as early as grade one, the children were able to answer questions in a conversation/interview setting. They also made use of non-verbal communication strategies (i.e. gesture or mime) to convey meaning. The interviewer assisted by rephrasing the question or providing the necessary vocabulary.

By grades five and six the listening and reading comprehensions were similar to that of native speakers. Authentic samples of the French language were used in these "receptive" tests. On the productive side, these children had written exercises to retell stories; they had to choose the correct sentences to demonstrate different functions of the language and write a letter to persuade or request something. They were evaluated on whether they were coherent, clear and logical in expressing their

ideas. They did not score as high as the native speakers, but their scores were almost as good.

Their writing competence seems to exhibit fewer errors as they pass on to the higher grades, but this is because the emphasis in the classroom is on writing. The higher the grade, the more practice they have to write French and the less they experience opportunities for oral expression.

Sociolinguistic competence

By grade six it was evident that the sociolinguistic traits were weak. The children were not able to adapt their language to the social demands of the situation. The most outstanding feature was the distinction between "tu" and the polite use of "vous". It is easy to see why: there are few opportunities in class to use the formal marker. In fact, in many immersion classes, the teacher allows the reciprocal use of "tu" between them and their pupils.

This weakness could be related to some of their grammatical problems. Their grammatical knowledge was limited because of the limited opportunities to engage in verbal interactions. Once the message is understood, the listener is, in principle, free to concentrate on form, but usually the learner stops processing once the message is understood. There has to be encouragement to use alternate means to reformulate the meaning in a precise, coherent and grammatically correct manner rather than stop once comprehension has taken place.

Another reason immersion students do not have native-like productive competence is not because their understanding is limited, but because their production capabilities are limited. Their passive vocabulary is usually much greater than their expressive vocabulary. They must have more opportunities to use the target language, especially with

native speakers. Once their message is understood, they no longer receive much critical input to amplify it. In the most recent report on developing bilingual proficiency (Harley et al. 1987) it was found that the students need more opportunities for sustained oral and written expression in order to attain grammatical accuracy, discourse coherence and socio-linguistic appropriateness.

Strategic competence

Immersion children quickly develop strategies to compensate for gaps in their knowledge of French. They may try to avoid silence in a conversation by looking for a productive way of filling it. The younger children circumvent the problem by using gestures, inserting the English word with a French pronunciation or use another French word or expression to paraphrase what they should be saying. The children may have gaps, especially in casual conversations with native speakers, because the only target language exposure the children really receive is from the teacher and in class.

Krashen (1982) feels that comprehensible input (understanding what is being expressed) is what is necessary for second language acquisition. Swain (1985) feels that this is not sufficient. She argues that comprehensible output (being able to express meaningful messages) is a necessary element of second language acquisition, independent of the role of comprehensible input. Thus she states that one must:

> provide opportunities for contextualized, meaningful use, to test out hypotheses about the target language, and to move the learner from a purely semantic analysis of the language to a syntactic analysis of it. Comprehensible output is, unfortunately, generally missing in typical classroom settings, language classrooms and immersion classrooms being no exception. (Swain 1985:252)

On testing receptive communicative competence with immersion students in grade six, she found that they perform as well as native French speakers. This shows that they understand what is being taught and can focus on meaning.

Communicative ability

In immersion classes, the students' communicative level has proven to be superior to that of the core French students, that is, those whose only exposure to French is in language courses. Although they do not reach native-like production levels in French, the immersion students are able to communicate in a French environment with confidence. As Krashen reiterates:

> The goal of the langauge class is to bring the student to the point where he or she can use the language outside the second-language classroom in understanding and communicating with native speakers. If the student reaches this level of competence, he or she can continue to improve from the comprehensible input received "on the outside"; the language class thus need not produce students who speak the second language at native levels, but ... who can use the language for real communication with its speakers. ...Their acquisition will continue as they interact with and receive comprehensible input from native speakers. (Krashen 1984:62-63.)

A number of recommendations have been advanced by OISE researchers.

Teaching Methods

Through this continual testing, it has been proven that French immersion students are able to communicate with native French speakers with more accuracy than students in non-immersion programmes. In their most recent report on the Development of Bilingual Proficiency (1987) the researchers from OISE looked at the effect teaching styles had on acquired competency. The more traditional functional approach emphasized the formal features of the language while the experiential focus that is found

in immersion classes focussed on the natural uses of language for personal, social and academic goals. Although both methods eventually showed satisfactory results in second language development, the latter, attuned to the age and interest of the students, tended to accelerate the development in some areas. But, because weaknesses in production are found in both types of classes, they recommended that there should be a combination of the two teaching approaches.

Sociolinguistic emphasis

Secondly, they recommended that more effort should be provided to deal with the sociolinguistic and grammatical difficulties which prevent more native-like fluency. There should be input to promote perception and comprehension of these formal and functional uses of French that continue to cause problems. For example, there should be continual emphasis differentiating the uses of "tu" and "vous". There should also be more opportunities to use these different forms and functions in interesting and motivating ways. In a whole language classroom they can be presented in an effective communicative manner, by using role-playing situations, puppet and drama presentations.

The need for social interaction

The researchers also found, in both types of approaches, that there was very little real interaction going on in the classroom. The curriculum focused mainly on listening comprehension, where the students provided minimal input. They recommended that there has to be more student involvement in the class. The Whole Language Approach emphasizes the need to interact and makes the learning experience child-centred.

By establishing routine activities, for example, a series of questions for opening exercises, the learners will be able to figure out

what is being said by observing how it relates to different activities and by noticing what their peers do in response. Soon afterwards the children will be able to take turns leading the class in this type of activity because everyone will know what the leader is trying to communicate. There have to be opportunities for children to ask each other questions, give commands and be "in charge". They need to feel in control of their learning.

The students also need to interact with native French speakers as much as possible. In a predominantly monolingual community there are limited opportunities for the learner to use the second language. There is the absence of peers who are native speakers. The classroom is an artificial environment for learning the language. In immersion classes the only real second language exchange is with the teachers. The children tend to interact with their peers in their native language, whenever possible, or their interactions are at an interlanguage level - where the meaning is understood at less than native-like competence. Perhaps teachers should exchange classes so that the children could be exposed to different accents and different ways of speaking, comparable to what they would meet in the real world. If visitors are not possible, French videos, records and movies can be used to provide different French speakers.

A Whole Language Approach also motivates the students to participate. By using personal interests and experiences, the teacher involves the students to show the relationship between the use of the language and the real world. Using a language should be spontaneous and creative. It is also a social process and it is important to have social interaction in the second language in spontaneous natural conversations. The message is always the most important aspect of the communication.

It is important for students to produce language to be aware of grammatical needs. Teachers correct content over form to preserve

communicative flow, but the correction of form tends to be inconsistent in an immersion class. Since the students do not receive continuous feedback on the form of their utterances, it is no wonder that some errors are fossilized. This is one disadvantage of the Whole Language Approach in an immersion classroom.

Since children usually stop speaking French outside the school yard, the feedback they receive on the quality of their language is limited to the classroom. The teacher has focused his/her efforts on dealing with meaning first, since communication is emphasized in the second language. However, according to Yalden (1981) linguistic forms and rules along with other aspects of the language that have a bearing on the communicative competence, will be best acquired when language is used as naturally as possible and where the emphasis is on the exchange of interesting and relevant information. Pupils studying in their native language receive constant feedback at home and at school, whereas the immersion students obtain input only from the classroom. If they were bombarded by meaningful language in their different environments, they would be able to produce more accurate, coherent and socially appropriate language. "Considering this limitation, their [French immersion students'] achievements are remarkable" (Krashen 1982:171).

Teacher training

Another recommendation from OISE deals with programme design, teacher training and professional development. The teachers have to break away from their dependence on prescribed pedagogic formulae and make more flexible, relevant decisions about what goes on in the classroom. In teacher-centred approaches, the students are restricted in their language production: they spend most of their time repsonding to questions that have an expected answer, they talk in isolated sentences which demonstrate

their grammatical knowledge and they have little opportunity to initiate a conversation. By using the Whole Language Approach, the child-centred environment allows the teacher to give more responsibility to the children for their own learning.

Children have an innate drive to communicate. In a second language class this is also the case when the teacher takes into account the intellectual, social and emotional development of the learners. Language learning is largely dependent on motivation and attitudes. When the children see that language is being used in a rich, meaningful way, they wish to participate fully in the learning environment.

The research at OISE has shown that the French immersion classes are a more effective way of learning French as a second language than core French classes. French is used to communicate, and the children see different uses of language. Although their receptive knowledge of the language is good, these children make production errors which distinguish them from native speakers. Although it is not fair to compare them to native French speakers, due to different amounts of exposure to the French language, it does give some idea of the language competence of the French immersion students in a French-speaking environment.

A few recommendations by OISE have been outlined which could be applied to any French immersion classroom. Although emphasis is on meaning, care should be taken to produce the correct form. Grammatical and sociolinguistic difficulties could be presented in interesting ways, like role-playing situations. In order to improve the expressive abilities of the students, there have to be more opportunities for the children to interact. This interaction can take place in small groups or in dialogues. The students must have a chance to ask each other questions.

It is important for the learners to be exposed to different French accents.

Teacher changes

The teacher also plays an important role. S/he must be more flexible and break away from the traditional methods. More responsibility must be given to the students for their own learning. By using the Whole Language Approach the French immersion teacher can incorporate many of these recommendations in the classroom.

CHAPTER FIVE IN PRIMARY FRENCH IMMERSION

The concerns expressed by OISE pertain to all French immersion teachers. The most recent report on the Development of Bilingual Proficiency (Harley et al., 1987) gives invaluable suggestions on how improvements can be made in the classroom to develop the communicative competence of the French immersion students.

Since its inception, the French immersion programme has been more successful in teaching students to communicate in the French language than other second language programmes. Examining the "natural approach" of Krashen (1982) we can see that this approach tries to simulate typical conditions for learning. He feels that immersion programmes "provide strong empirical evidence that subject matter teaching can not only teach subject matter, but the language it is taught in as well, as long as the input is made comprehensible" (Krashen 1982:172).

French is used as the language of instruction throughout the French immersion programmes. In the Hamilton Board of Education at the primary level (from kindergarten to grade three), all the academic subjects are taught in French, except English language arts. Classroom communication occurs in French, which is used as a means to an end. The learners should understand the teacher's intentions, what the situation means and, thereby, understand what the language means and how it works (Genesee, 1985). They are forced to use the language to think and to look for meaning. The learning process is emphasized, rather than its medium of expression.

The programs of French as a second language support the goals set out by the Ministry of Education by assisting students

> - to develop communication skills;
> - to begin to understand the structure and functioning of language;
> - to pursue the mastery of a complex system of knowledge and skills;
> - to acquire a sensitivity and exactness in the use of language;
> - to gain an appreciation of the French presence in Canadian life and in the world;
> - to develop sensivity to culture and to people.
>
> (Ontario Ministry of Education 1980:3)

Communication is at the top of the list. In the French immersion classes the learners are involved in genuine interactions. At the beginning stages they are introduced to French in a natural way. Through the arts, music and play, they develop listening comprehension, vocabulary and spontaneous verbal expressions. The other goals of the Ministry are integrated into the programme and are taught indirectly. Cultural awareness and sensitivity are incorporated into different activities throughout the year.

When the children begin, they are not forced to speak in French, but do so when they feel comfortable with these new sounds. (This approach is in line with Krashen's "silent period".) They participate in real speech and literary events. All the children can participate regardless of language ability and together they learn. The younger children are not self-conscious and reproduce sounds without realizing they are speaking another language. They accept very matter of factly that the language at school is different from that of home.

> Children do not learn by instruction; they learn by example, and they learn by making sense of what are essentially meaningful situations. Children have been learning since birth. They learn when they hear adults talking to them or to each other...they learn by example, because it makes sense in their environment. (Smith 1975:9)

The Hamilton Board of Education advocates the child-centred philosophy which reflects the Whole Language Approach. When the children are genuinely interested in what they are doing, they are totally involved. This brings about true learning. In class they use the inquiry method naturally (See Appendix 2), which resembles the young native language learner's hypothesis testing at the initial stages of speaking. Emphasis is placed on communication with peers and with the teacher. "For the child, communication begins in experience.... Communication allows children to remember, relate and share information and ideas" (Ontario Ministry of Education 1975:27). After trying out their ideas they evaluate their results and attempt new approaches. This cyclical process continues.

The role of the teacher

As a grade one French immersion teacher, I take on an important role in the classroom. I become a facilitator, developmentalist (that is, a person who believes in definable stages through which all children progress), communicator and kid watcher, rather than a controller as in earlier approaches. Since every experience can be turned into a language experience, I use it to develop language to its fullest potential.

Facilitator

As a programme facilitator I ensure that the board curriculum is being implemented, but at the same time I must take into account the different learning styles of the students. There may be auditory, visual and kinesthetic learners, all of whose needs must be met. In the Whole Language Approach there are many different experiences in the classroom to take into account the different styles.

The children work in small and large groups as well as independently. Activity centres are set up in the classroom to

> meet the learning needs of elementary children by encouraging exploration and manipulation. They promote group and partner activities. They allow individual interests, skills, experiences and learning styles to develop. And they help to maintain a high level of interest in learning. Centres promote more learning because they encourage choice and decision making. They allow more individual contact with the teachers. They stress such skills as group interaction, time management, self-evaluation, peer assistance and peer evaluation. They improve the individual's chances for success, thereby improving self-concept. And they promote individual pace, choice and growth. (Lawson 1989:3-4)

Most of the activities are open-ended to account for individual differences. That is, there is no one right answer and a child's uniqueness is valued.

To develop and yet challenge the language skills of the children, I initiate activities to encourage spontaneous language interaction. This could include drama, creative writing and role-playing. Anything which exploits different speech acts found in every-day situations is encouraged. There should not be conditioned responses, which were so common in second language classes based on behaviourist theories. Some activities can help in analyzing the language. We have games for developing linguistic awareness, whether phonetic (rhyming words), semantic (categorizing or substituting words) or syntactic (completing sentences). These help the children understand the language and how it works. Also activities for language interaction (i.e. show and tell, "Simon Says") help the children understand the importance of words and word order.

Developmentalist

As a developmentalist I am aware of the different stages of development of the children. I work with the children where they are and do not try to fit them into a grade mold. Whole language teachers view their students in a positive way: they build on their strengths and emphasize the progress being made. The learners come into the classroom with different abilities and need to be encouraged to develop these abilities. It is important for the pupils to feel successful, because they have to be interested in what they are doing before any learning can take place.

The learners acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes based on their experiences. The activities must be planned so that the concepts being presented build on the already existing knowledge of the children. These experiences must ensure that frustration and discouragement do not set in. However, risk-taking is encouraged and I help the children see that mistakes are part of learning and feel confident to try again. Their curiosity must be evoked so that there is an increase of comprehensive and expressive strategies being developed. I am constantly evaluating and revising what is going on when activities are being planned to ensure that maximal learning is taking place.

Communicator

Since communication plays a very important role in this system, it is imperative that I have good communication skills. First of all, in the class I often have "chats" with the children as they are participating in their activities to help guide or assess their learning. The children learn through example, so they must see that talking is permitted. To help them think on their own, a complaint is answered by a question to help them identify who "owns" the problem and how they can solve it. Since

it is seldom the teacher's problem, I direct the children to confront their own problems and interact with each other. If I am busy with one child and another one seeks help, I encourage them to seek assistance from their peers or from other resources in the classroom. They are learning to ask each other questions. Opportunities for decision-making and problem-solving become more frequent when the children become involved.

As was stated in the previous chapter, children need opportunities to communicate with native French speakers. Although the opportunities are limited in Hamilton, I welcome high school and university co-op students who are studying French, as well as adult volunteers into my class. They work with the children on an individual or small group basis to practise their French. Their conversations with the children show the use of French in different situations.

It is imperative that the parents be informed of what is going on in the classroom. I send home a bi-weekly newsletter to outline the class activities, the themes being studied and specific concepts being dealt with at the time. The parents can extend the learning at home to show their children that there is a connection between school and the "real" world.

Report cards are one means of demonstrating that emphasis is placed on anecdotal comments and not on grades. This meaningful description must show the development and progress of the children in different areas of the curriculum. It will include what the children can already do well, the strategies they are experimenting with and practising and what they will be expected to do. If the child is experiencing difficulty with different concepts, strategies will be suggested to help improve the weak areas. Their accomplishments are compared to those of their previous report. For example, if the child is unable to recognize

initial consonant sounds in the fall and by March is able to sound out words, this is an accomplishment.

Since there is no one right answer in most areas, the creative, resourceful aspects of learning must be emphasized. The learning processes and progress that take place are more important than the end product (Ontario Ministry of Education 1985). This must be articulated very clearly to the parents, since it seems contrary to "traditional" beliefs. The significance of "the basic skills" has changed from learning the three R's to learning-to-learn. Problem-solving ability, reasoning, skills, independence and responsibility, social awareness, conceptualization and analysis form the goals of the curriculum and are also necessary skills for day-to-day living.

Kid-watcher

The teacher's kid-watching role is the most important of all. Observation and evaluation of the students go on daily. Teachers need a very precise tracking system in order to help children finish one task before beginning another one. In incidental, informal and formal situations, I document the behaviour of the children as they engage in various language activities. I am constantly interacting with the students and keeping copious notes of my observations of their progress. I usually listen to five or six children read every day. Each child also has a personal portfolio to store dated work samples. By keeping writing samples and taped reading excerpts throughout the year I am able to show the growth in language that has taken place. Since learning is an individual process the evaluation must reflect this.

There are many different ways of doing informal observations and each teacher must work out for his/herself the method that is most suitable. Look Hear is a book put out by the North York Board of

Education (1983) which outlines many ways of observing children. A checklist could be used to verify which skills have been covered. By using a clipboard or file folder with stick-it notes the teacher is able to construct an "at-a-glance" book. The more formal observations could be recorded in a noebook or kept on cards in a recipe box for future reference. Through all these methods one could see the learning styles, interests, social relationships and intellectual and physical development of the children over a period of time.

Evaluation helps me discover how to encourage the children to achieve more. Some children are very capable, but just need a gentle push. Through evaluation I am able to assess the validity and effectiveness of the programme and to see how much progress is made (Baskwill 1988:22).

I am constantly learning from what the children are trying to do. Since the use of language in the "real" world is unpredictable, I allow for creative, unpredictable interactions from the students. The children are encouraged to express themselves and to progress step by step. The children build on what they know and need to verbalize ideas before they are asked to write. The children develop their own strategies for language learning and I help them value these strategies and show them how they can achieve more.

> Learning is what the brain does naturally, continually. Children may not learn what we want them to learn. Learning is the brain continually updating its understanding of the world. We cannot stop the brain from doing this.... We can demonstrate one thing quite unintentionally when we actually think we are demonstrating another. (Newman 1985:39)

Therefore, I recognize that every child's ideas are important.

I am really pleased to see that the children feel at ease in the classroom and try to speak French whenever possible. We are able to enjoy a play on words or a good joke. They are also able to make a good effort

to talk with visitors in French. Everyone is able to participate to the best of his/her own ability.

It is the good teacher who gives time to the children to get where they are going. Since they learn to do a thing by doing it, they must be given time to read, write, speak and listen in the class. Especially at grade one level, I have found that they need a lot of time to formulate their ideas and then put them down in print. Teachers must remind themselves that the process is more important than the end product. The children must be allowed to experiment and try out their own ideas in open-ended activities set up in the classroom.

Conferences are an important part of the learning process. I take time regularly to discuss and evaluate the children's language progress on an individual basis. I work with the children on their reading and their writing. The writing process becomes more refined as the children start to edit and evaluate their own work. When the children become more confident they can share their work with each other for feedback. They enjoy presenting puppet plays and reading to each other. The focus is always on meaning and clarification of ideas is assured. The more the children interact, the more their communicative skills will develop.

Caveats

Since this approach sounds so ideal, why is it not being used by all teachers? There are many reasons, the most important of which I shall discuss.

Time

First, it is very time-consuming for the teacher, not only at the planning stages, but right through to the evaluation level. With respect to planning and organizing the classroom, the ideal whole language class

has 200 activities available at one time for the children (Newman 1985). The teacher must be organized and spend a lot of time and energy in her classroom. Since the younger children need more guidance in French immersion, I usually set up ten centres at a time. The students are free to pursue their interests within the confines of the classroom.

With independent workers, this system works well; however, some look for the "easy way" out and need some direction in order to achieve their potential. Since this method seems less structured, the weaker students spend more time engrossed with their classmates' activities and less time on their own activities. They require more teacher supervision and stronger guidance in order to work up to their potential.

I feel that this system separates the workers with initiative from the others. Some children become very creative with the suggestions of the teacher and display an active learning experience, but it is up to the teacher to plant the seed.

Limited Vocabulary

In the first year of primary French immersion the limited language of the students presents a problem that first language learners do not have. All the vocabulary that most children hear in French comes from the school. They are not "enriched" in the real world in other situations. In spite of the whole language philosophy I find that a lot of my time is spent on teaching vocabulary. The children do not have a large bank of words at their finger tips when they are first learning a second language. They are able to express a lot of ideas in English, but are very restricted in French. Interestingly enough though, the children learn a lot of incidental vocabulary if the topic appeals to them. This is where the Whole Language Approach comes into play. When the interests of the children are pursued, true learning is inevitable.

Materials

Finding suitable material is a problem encountered in equipping the Whole Language classroom. First, authentic French materials are difficult to find in a predominantly English speaking community. Secondly, the French print that is usually available is intended for Francophones and the language is much too difficult for the immersion students. The teachers end up translating a lot of materials for use in their classrooms. Fortunately, the publishing houses are now starting to address the need for French immersion material. Books are finally available for the beginning immersion students. The Whole Language programme uses a lot of reading material. Unfortunately, the French books are usually more expensive than English materials. Since the resources are limited, the language exposure is also.

Teacher education

Since most teachers were not trained in the Whole Language Approach, they see no harm in using the methods which they received. After all, who can argue with success? Since many teachers were not instructed in how to carry out this type of programme, they see it as more work, chaos, noise and mess. Some do not like change and are not comfortable with "new" ideas. Change , One Step at a Time is a book put out by the Faculty of Education at the University of Toronto (1981), which helps teachers adapt to a more activity-based, child-centred classroom. The key is in the title: gradual modification ensures that a teacher will feel comfortable with the less authoritarian approach.

The teacher training philosophy is also to blame. It should require teachers to re-train every seven years to become familiar with the innovative approaches being advocated for the classroom. Furthermore, with specialists' advice they would feel more comfortable adapting their

methods. Team-teaching and team-observation would help bring about familiarization with methods and current practices used. Teachers should be willing to share and help each other for the benefit of their students.

More workshops should be given by teachers to show what goes on in their classrooms and to illustrate how the skills are being acquired. Teachers must help the parents understand how child-centred learning develops the children individually and to the best of their potential. Also, wherever possible, parents should be asked to help out in the class. After all, parental attitudes and their interest in their child's progress inevitably affect the child's response to education.

Curricula have been set up by each board of education. The concepts can, nevertheless, be covered using the Whole Language Approach. Before, "integrated studies" and "global approach" were the key words in education; now the Whole Language philosophy carries the same idea a step further. A theme is used for a period of time and the children see how language is used to develop it. Mathematics, environmental studies and language arts can all be developed using the same topic. The difference in the Whole Language Approach is that there is more allowance made for individuality. Children are not all expected to do the same thing at the same time.

Although large blocks of time are given for skill development, the teacher worries that the students may not develop basic skills needed for the following year. At times it is very frustrating for the teacher to allow an individual pace when the year seems to be moving by very quickly. However, we know that children cannot be rushed in their learning. Skills are learned cumulatively, only when the children have mastered the preceding ones.

The children learn to speak, read and write the language by being actively involved in the process. They learn by doing. Their comprehension

of the French language increases immensely. The vocabulary growth of the children in a year is enormous. They are allowed to progress at their own speed and to pursue their own interests; therefore they vary in what they can express. This approach is certainly a vast improvement over the graded readers which limited word exposure and selected the topics to be studied. Through integrated activities, the Whole Language Approach produces confident, articulate second language users.

The next chapter will outline a sample unit which I used in September when my children were starting grade one. There will be an array of activities presented to reinforce the Whole Language philosophy. At this stage the children were encouraged to "picture" read for their independent reading. "Word" reading came to most by the end of October.

CHAPTER SIX LA RENTREE: A SAMPLE UNIT

Level: Designed for the first year primary level, this unit takes into consideration the variation in pupils'abilities. The activities are usually open-ended because we operate a non-graded system. There is no right or wrong answer. The end-product depends on the ability of the child. Because children are allowed to develop skills at their own pace, the end results will vary. Since this is the first theme that the grade one French immersion students encounter, the vocabulary is limited and the expectations will be listed with this in mind.

Time Frame: Three to four weeks.

A typical day is divided into quarters of approximately 75 minutes each: entry to morning recess, after recess to lunch, after lunch to afternoon recess and recess to dismissal time. Ideally, each day will be set out as follows:

First quarter: before nine o'clock the children can finish any work in their desk or quietly chat with their neighbours. They are encouraged to speak French.

Opening Exercises: the children take turns asking about weather and date facts for the calendar and lead in the singing of O Canada.

Show and Tell: the children share things about themselves, their families and what is important in their lives. Their classmates ask them three questions to find out something more.

Class discussions daily for: values
brainstorming
sharing ideas
writing up chart stories
problem solving.

This quarter helps them get used to the French language once again after being away from it overnight. Most of the language type activities are included in this quarter.

Second quarter: Mathematics activities.

After lunch: Environmental studies activities.

The last quarter includes "itinerant" subjects like physical education and music. The children go to a different classrooms for these subjects and are taught by different teachers.

Each day the children are read to and should be given time for silent reading. Time must also be allowed for clean-up.

The order of these activities may vary from day to day depending on outside factors, like school assemblies or classroom visitors.

The Theme

The theme of this unit is taken from our environmental studies unit and is called, "New Faces, New Places". The goals of this unit are:

- to help the child bridge his/her senior kindergarten experience, e.g.
- become more comfortable in a new classroom
- feel independent and secure in a larger school environment
- to help the child develop spacial awareness through the construction and use of models and maps

(Hamilton Board of Education 1984)

The objectives and the evaluation of the different skills will be outlined with the activities at the end of the chapter.

Using the Whole Language Appraoch

The Whole Language Approach emphasizes reading and writing with meaning. It is important that the children feel comfortable doing their activities, so that the learning is meaningful to them. Since process is

emphasized over product, daily observations by the teacher are very important.

To set up the atmosphere for Whole Language development I began the year talking in French. Everything I did with the children I verbalized as well, so that they would get used to hearing the language and would begin to associate certain words with certain activities and/or objects. Having followed the kindergarten French immersion programme, the children were expected to ask permission in French. (Puis-je aller à la toilette? Puis-je boire de l'eau?) Although they are not expected to verbalize continually in French, most of them repeat automatically any French translations offered for their English words. I encourage them to repeat and speak in French whenever possible.

During the opening exercises the children take turns playing the role of the teacher. After the first few days most of them could verbalize our calendar questions. (i.e. Quelle est la date aujourd'hui? Quel est le mois? Quel jour est-ce aujourd'hui? Quel temps fait-il? Comment est-ce qu'on écrit --? Quand est la fête de --? Combien de jours avant la fête de --?) The child in charge either asks the questions or asks the class for questions and answers them. Some children who are not able to do either use another "teacher" strategy. They ask the class for questions and then ask other people for answers. Their commentary is then "Oui, c'est correct", or "Non, ce n'est pas correct".

As the children master more expressions I notice that my side comments become part of their active vocabulary. Sometimes I would have to say "On a déjà dit cela." By the end of September several children used it while playing teacher.

The Whole Language Approach allows for individual differences. During the opening exercises one can see who is able to cope quite well with the French language and who has limited vocabulary. While the

"teacher " child is drawing the appropriate picture and number on the calendar I do a chart story with the class to review what they have just said. I begin each day with "Aujourd'hui c'est (le jour, la date et le mois). Qui fait le calendrier aujourd'hui?" For the first couple of weeks I had to repeat the questions heard earlier to write down the information. After a while the children were able to contribute freely. Now, after four months, they are adding personal news to our daily chart story. Often they are able to express most of their ideas in French. At times I have to tone down their enthusiasm because I like to limit these stories to one sheet. We then read the story together. Most remember what has been said and are able to recite the passage quite well. When I have accumulated twelve of these stories I distribute them to groups of two. We then circle words like: aujourd'hui, c'est, septembre, il fait, le calendrier etc. If we were working on a particular letter or sound, we would circle all that we could find.

After the singing of O Canada one group of five students presents their Show and Tell. The class now asks the individual, "Qu'est-ce qu'il y a dans le sac/ derrière le dos/ dans les mains?" The child responds, "Une surprise pour la classe, posez-moi trois questions". The class then asks questions like, "De quelle couleur est la chose? Quelle est la forme? Qui t'a donne l'objet? Qu'est-ce que tu fais avec cette chose? Est-ce que c'est grand ou petit? Quelle est la première lettre de cet objet?"

If the child has brought nothing to show, the class asks, "Qu'est-ce que tu as fait hier à la maison?" S/he then must explain one thing in French, if possible.

All these experiences are open-ended. The children who express themselves say words that they understand. Their efforts are accepted and no one is criticized for one word utterances. If clarification is

necessary I would then ask, "Est-ce que tu veux dire...?" and the child would then say " oui" or "non". Each child expresses him/herself the way that s/he feels comfortable. Each one feels successful in his/her own way. The language experience is based on their personal interests and activities. They find different purposes for language and use it and expand their vocabulary as necessary.

The curriculum per se is laid out by the Hamilton Board of Education. Our basic reading programme is based on the Luc et Martine series of the "Méthode Dynamique". The mathematics text is Découvertes and we have six units to cover in the environmental studies curriculum throughout the year.

Although certain expectations are laid out, it is up to the teacher to expand and enrich the programme to fill the needs of the students. Our first reading passage, "Luc va à l'école" ties in well with our environmental studies theme, "New Faces, New Places". The whole overall theme deals with going back to school (la rentrée).

Since this is their first full-time school experience, the children must learn to adapt to a more structured environment than they had been used to. They have their own desk and locker to organize their belongings. For some this transition is difficult. They are not used to sitting still and working independently for long periods of time. In September more time is given to play than later on in the year. The level of concentration and the interest increase as the year goes on because the children are maturing and are able to cope with more academic type work. They are now writing and doing mathematics exercises.

Sample Activities

At the end of the chapter is a description of some of the activities done during this theme. Their objectives will be listed under

three categories (See Appendix 3). Knowledge emphasizes the cognitive skills that are being developed. Skill indicates what the child is actually going to do, and affect explains the social and emotional goals. The language activities are divided according to the four modalities: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The children do a little of each every day.

I also begin independent reading in September. There is a series of wordless picture books Chantal et Nicolas which I borrowed for the fall term. I give each child one, going through the story with him/her. S/he is then expected to retell the story at home with parents or other siblings and return the book. I expect them to narrate with confidence a story that is coherent. This shows an understanding of events that take place in sequence and shows a link between the beginning and the end of the story. If they are able to use French words, I am impressed. At the beginning of the year I do not insist that they retell the story in French, although I pose questions to assess their comprehension in French. By using picture books, they must rely on picture clues for their story line. This is a coping strategy to develop for later when they will read words that they do not know.

Each child is expected to make a journal entry at least once a week. I begin by writing the date on the board. If something special has taken place, I would write that down as well. I try to encourage the children to write original ideas in their books. Some prefer to draw first and write afterwards, others print the date and title first. If they do not know what to write, I question them about their drawing and we make up a sentence together.

Book reading and class discussions bring out many different ideas that can never be predicted.

Evaluation

Keeping the objectives in mind, the teacher evaluates daily. S/he circulates during the activity periods and observes the children in their social skills, work habits, enthusiasm and skill development. Informal conversations take place to determine if the children are on track and doing the activity. If the children are able to accomplish the skills stated, they are judged to be successful. If they show difficulty, more work is needed to improve the weak area. The teacher acts as a guide and a catalyst on many occasions. The children will not be expected to cover all activities and will often have a choice.

A tracking sheet which outlines all the activities involved, shows what has been attempted by the pupils (See Appendix 4). Each child is expected to finish at least one activity in each time block. Some children are easily distracted or are just slow but steady workers. Such individual aptitudes and personalities will be taken into account when the evaluations are written up.

Since this is the first unit of the school year, many of the students' contributions during discussion time will be made in English. As their teacher I will translate their ideas and put them down on paper, but I do not force them to correct themselves and speak French.

Although I strongly favour activity-based learning and individual progress over teacher - controlled instruction, I have found that there is a need for both whole class and small group experiences. Each subject area session begins with a whole class experience. The activities are then given out. Those experiencing difficulty will work in a small group with the teacher. During math time, most of the activities involve hands-on manipulatives, (that is, objects that the children can handle, e.g. blocks, abacus, balances). There are very few pencil/paper tasks. Different concepts are reinforced with the wide variety of manipulatives

available in the classroom. The children usually work in small groups using these materials.

During the environmental studies period the class is divided into five groups. One group goes to the library to learn library and research skills. The other four groups are given different activities to do, like building a model or writing a booklet, activities to broaden their thinking skills. When they are finished the assigned task, they have the choice of other things to do, like word search or dot-to-dot.

With open-ended activities, each child has an incentive to do his/her best. I look for creative, original ideas. However, some children are not yet able to make up their own minds about how to proceed, and require much guidance. In fact, since they assume that there is a right and wrong way to do everything, it takes some time for them to attempt to think for themselves. This is especially true in creative writing.

Whole language encourages using the interests of the students to develop more vocabulary. Reading a book on "School" each day brings out different ideas. Since vocabulary in books may be new to the children I have to explain some of the ideas. This may open up unpredictable discussions. For example, explaining the word "araignée" led to a discussion on spiders in the house and an impromptu teaching of the song "L'araignée Tiki".

Brainstorming sessions at the beginning of the theme bring out some interesting points of view. I am always amazed at the children's perception and keen sense of observation. They are able to offer information about school: how they are now here all day, how the teachers in the primary wing have changed, how their friends from last year are in two other classes, how they see more adults in a week (i.e. the gym teacher, music teacher and librarian), how the layout of the class is different from the kindergarten room and how they have their own place in

the class. There are many interesting points expressed during our introductory discussion, which give starting points for other discussions throughout the theme.

Tomorrow's adults will, more than ever, need to think creatively, have good problem-solving techniques and be risk-takers. It is also important that they learn how to cooperate and be responsible for their actions. I hope to promote these characteristics in my class and the teaching strategies used in the unit are designed to do this.

In the next chapter samples of different students' work are reproduced in reduced size. Abilities and attitudes start to show through in the first few weeks of school. Journal writing samples are analyzed along with some work from my strong, average and below average children. To protect their identities I have called them student A, B, C. I have also included some later work to show their development through the year.

Conclusion

In the few months that I have been putting the Whole Language Approach into practice I have noticed a great difference in the literacy development of my children compared to other years.

After the children read the wordless picture books in their independent reading, I started passing out word-picture books to read. Some were able to attempt unfamiliar words using picture clues and grapho-phonemic associations. It was interesting to see how memory played an important role for many of the beginning readers. They would rhyme off pat phrases (based on our "Luc va à l'école" story) when they recognized the first word of a sentence without really looking at the words that followed. Different letters had to be pointed out to them and together we tried to sound out the words.

I try to interest them in books right from the beginning of the year to build up their confidence and show them that they are able to

read. This is the first year that the children have read before November. After six weeks most children can now read our Luc et Martine stories with no difficulty. The saying is true: children learn to read by reading.

The silent reading period is becoming longer as the children begin to focus on print and actually read the words in their books. The first few times lasted five minutes because they glanced at the pictures and turned the pages quickly. They had very little interest in what they were doing. Now we have more class-made books around as well, and the children enjoy reading them. They are able to point out words that they recognize, especially the names of their peers, and practise reading them aloud. They enjoy sharing their reading material with their peers.

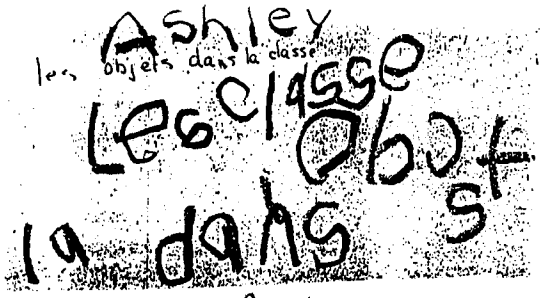
Although I would consider my group as having average intelligence, their literacy skills are certainly developing much more quickly than I could have imagined based on past experience. By using the Whole Language Approach, I develop their interests and promote reading and writing whenever possible. Their active vocabulary is growing quickly and they attempt to put more of their words into print. I am pleased with their skill development.

There are occasions when some structured exercises are used. This happens when I expand on one of their ideas. For example, for our poem writing we used the colour "rouge" as our base. The framework of the poem went like this : Rouge, rouge. Qu'est-ce qui est rouge? Rouge, rouge, l'école est rouge. Rouge, rouge, la pomme est rouge. Rouge, rouge, le livre est rouge. etc. The children internalize the colour word plus the structure of the sentence. The Whole Language Approach incorporates the skills and drills of the other approaches as needed. It is not all inventive spelling and original thinking. The children do learn the correct way of saying things but are given freedom for self-expression. The more they use French the more competent in it they become. Admittedly, I have several who need a lot of encouragement to discover

what they can really do with the French language. Since they have to communicate meaning in everything they do, I feel that the Whole Language Approach is proving to be a very effective way to develop this ability.

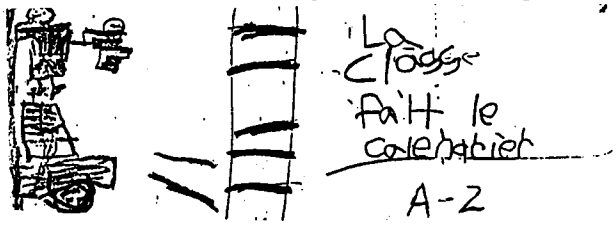
CHAPTER SEVEN WHAT DID THE CHILDREN LEARN?

Student A is a child who is beginning to show literacy awareness. She is not yet able to identify all the letters of the alphabet. Her printing shows a visual awareness of letters, but letter formation and syntactic relations are not yet developed. She is able to copy the words, but has difficulty reading them. Her memory and active French vocabulary are very limited. At this point most of her printing is a mechanical exercise and she copies what she sees, even if the order is not correct. (See sample A-1.) Notice the extra strokes made to give the letters "h" and "n" tails. I write the correct version for her to see beside her work to show the correct order.



A-1

When she is given freedom to draw and write her ideas, she is able to read back what she has copied in French. She had given the original sentence in English orally because she could not remember the French equivalent. (See sample A-2.)

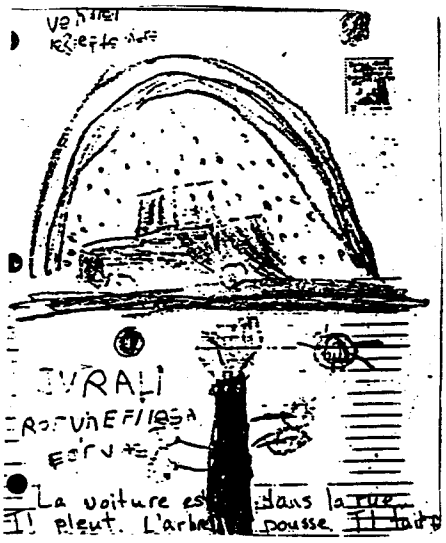


A-2

It is interesting to watch her do her silent reading. She traces under the words as she "reads" with her finger. She is able to recite the letters she knows and pretends to "sound out" the words she sees.

When she is encouraged to do creative writing, she enjoys putting into print the letters she knows. When she is asked to read what she wrote, her answer is "You said to do pretend writing - I don't know what this says." (See sample A-3.) After a brief discussion, I write down what she says.

A-3



Student B is your average student. He is developing a good literacy awareness. He is able to copy sentences and read them back. He is starting to show an understanding of word spacing and syntax. When asked to create his own books, he is able to write some words that he can copy from the class charts. One of his coping mechanisms with this unit is shown in this book. If there is no sentence applicable to his picture, he prints the words he knows that represent it. When he reads his work with the teacher, s/he can help fill in the gaps (See sample B-1.).

B-1

B-2

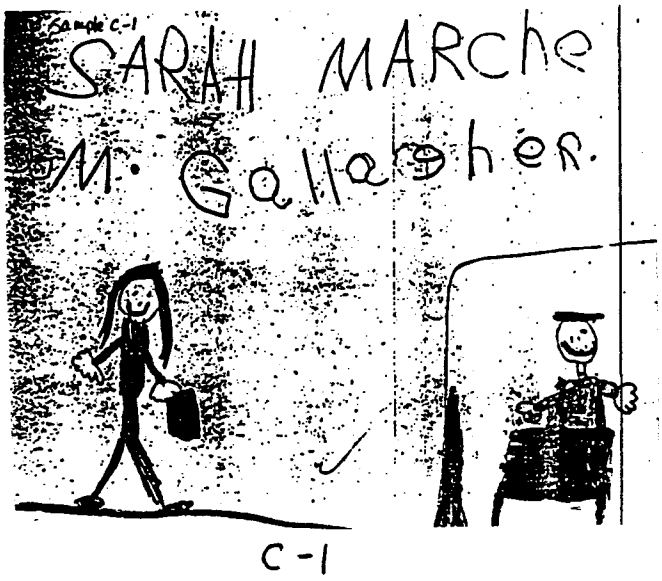
With a little encouragement he is able to sound out words and write the word the way he hears it. (See sample B-2.) I do not correct the spelling if the word is legible.

For creative writing, the children's efforts must be respected whenever possible. As they grow older they learn how to edit, but first

attempts need encouragement. If this were going to be published, then we would correct it together, reviewing our graphic-phonemic knowledge.

He is a good reader and is developing good phonic word attack skill. Being left-handed at times causes reversals in his letter and number formation. When he has to glue a sequence he begins at the right, if he is not corrected in time.

Student C shows good literacy awareness. She puts forth a good effort to speak French and is keen to learn. She is able to use the vocabulary she knows and apply it to new situations (See sample C-1.).



C-1

She is developing a good phonic base and tries sounding out new words when she reads. Since inventive spelling is new to her, she requires a lot of encouragement to write something. In the journal she uses her knowledge of English words to write her sentences. (See sample C-2.) I then translate the ideas for her into French.

C-2

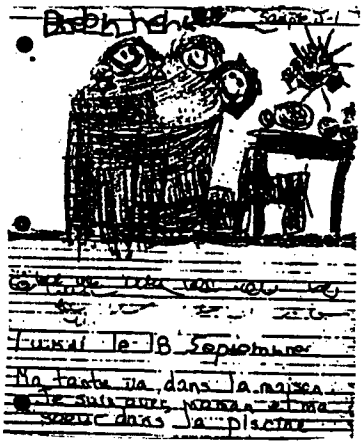
I feel that literacy development is more important than insisting that the children write in French. Together we explore the vocabulary

that she would need to express these ideas in French. She then reads the translation and writes it in her book. By the end of the unit she was turning to the picture dictionaries to look for the words. When she cannot find what she is looking for, she asks for assistance. Once she becomes more confident she will be able to write on her own.

Journal Writing

Journal writing is best way I have found to record the development of the child. Ideally speaking, the children should be working in their journal every day, but as that would be too time consuming, we do it weekly. In this way the children can highlight one activity for the week. I write the date and possible topics (after a class discussion) on the board; the children are then required to draw a suitable picture and copy the date and title into their books. They then have to write a suitable sentence to describe their picture. I encourage inventive and/or make-believe spelling, just so the children will not feel stressed.

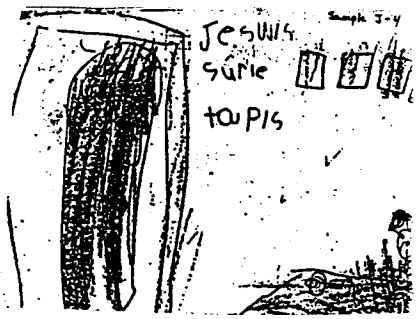
In the samples reproduced one can see that there are children who are aware of letter and word formation. They copied the date and then were allowed to illustrate whatever they wanted. In the make-believe writing examples, one sees the child who is aware of the spacing between words (See sample J-1) and the other who is not (See sample J-2). At least when they were doing this, they both displayed a sense of directionality.



J-1

There are some children who are resourceful enough to use the words in the classroom and the words they know in order to write their sentence. (See sample J-4.)

Some of them show a phonic base, others write letters because they know that words contain letters. (See sample J - 3.) Spacing seems to come with practice.



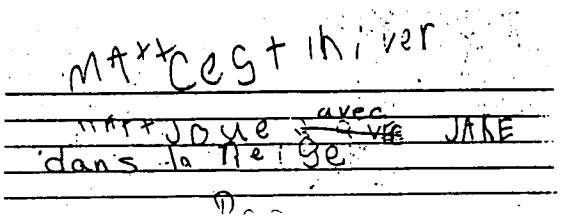
J - 4

It is my hope that some will be writing paragraphs by Christmas.

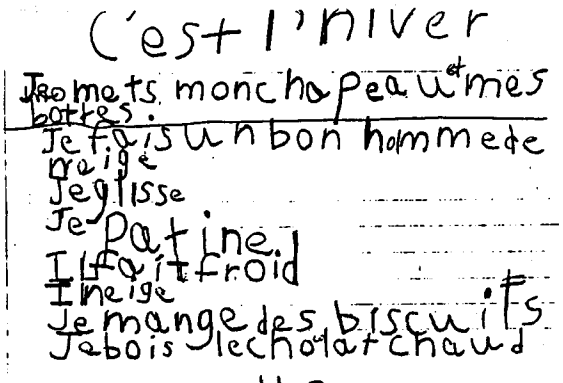
After Four Months

As the year progresses it is interesting to see how the literacy awareness develops. Most children are conscious of sentence structure. They know that there are spaces between the words and that there are capital letters at the beginning and periods at the end of each sentence. We talk about these things before each writing period, but from the samples one can see that sometimes these points are forgotten when the children are writing.

With an insistent teacher, the children are learning that a sentence does not consist of one word. Most children are able verbally to express sentence ideas, but need coaxing to write down all their words (See sample H-1). When they read their work back, they are sometimes able to find their own mistakes in word omissions or incorrect spellings.

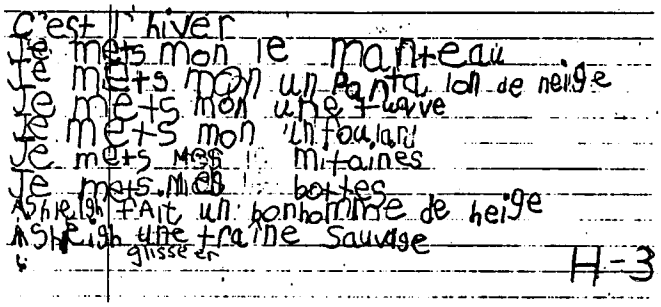


H-1



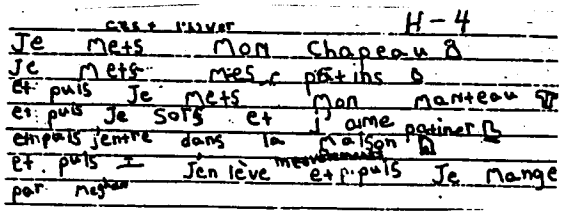
H-2

Some of the weaker students are able to copy the skeletal sentences off the blackboard (See sample H-2). We had written ideas down as a class and this child spent the next twenty minutes copying the story. He was able to read most of the words through memory. Notice the capital letters and the occasional period. His words still need spacing.

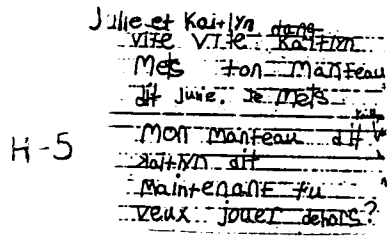


H-3

In sample H-3 one can see the progress that is made in syntactic awareness. This child has taken the ideas that were presented and has written her own story using a repetitive structure. Since we had learned the words for winter clothes and had practised "putting them on", this child emphasized each article of clothing by stating "je mets...". She knew that the possessive "mon" went with "je", but forgot to omit the indefinite article. Notice that her words are spaced and each line begins with a capital letter. Although she could read the story, she was not aware that her story shifted from first person to third person by the end of the story.



Sample H-4 shows vocabulary development. This child is becoming very literate in the French language. She speaks French whenever possible and shows an extensive active French vocabulary. One of the incidental words that she has picked up, "puis" is used continually in this story to show that one thing happens after another. Her story shows a logical sequence of events and she is able to read it without any difficulty. When she wrote the story she had left out "mes vêtements" and realized when she read the story to me that it had not been printed on the paper. She was able to find her own omission.

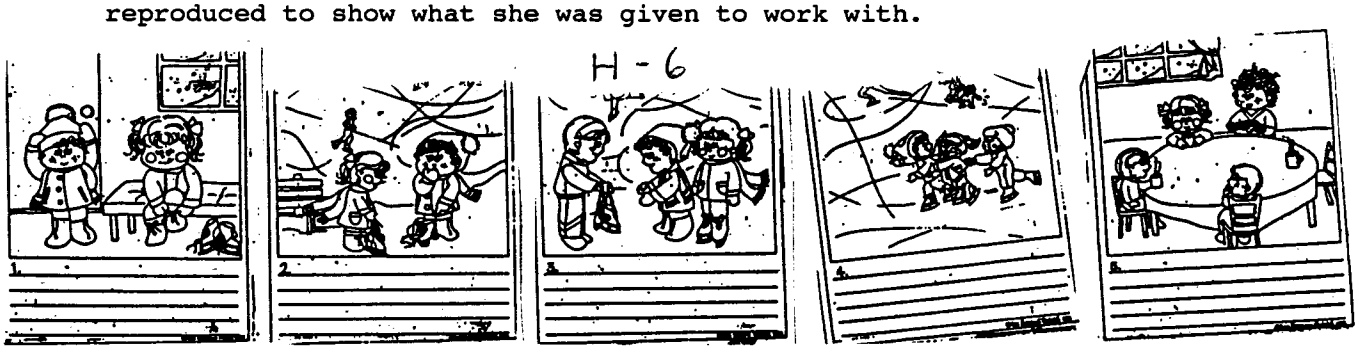


H-5

In sample H-5 the influence of the independent readers is evident. This child wrote a dialogue on a winter theme between herself and her sister. Although there are no quotation marks, one can easily follow the ideas presented. She enjoys using the word "dit" in her stories.

The last example (See Sample H-7) is the product of a child who was given a picture book for which she was to write a text. Sample H-6 is reproduced to show what she was given to work with.

H-6

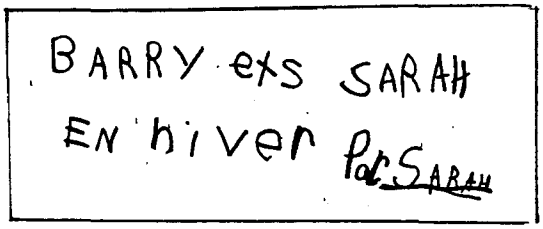


Since she is developing good literacy awareness I asked her to read the story to me. She personalized the story to be about her brother and herself. The front page contained the title and the author. While

she was reading I saw how her letters illustrated a phonetic awareness. Her inclusion of the occasional period and some spacing indicated that different syntactic rules were being absorbed. For example, in sentence 2 she has the correct negative construction "ne...pas". When she read this orally she included the correct form of the adjective "nouvel ami" athough through the printed representation one would not surmise that she knew it (sentence 4: "Le nuv ame"). The last sentence (explained below) contains a connecting adverb, plus a sentence that comes up in most of our daily chart stories. She is using what she knows and tries to put it down on paper. Notice how her spelling of the same word varied (i.e." est", "patin"). She used a lot of her English phonics to help her (i.e. "ame" for "ami" , "tu" for "tout").

This is how she read the story to me:

Barry et Sarah en hiver. Par Sarah



H-7

1. La petite fille, le nom est Sarah. Le petit garçon, le nom est Barry. Sarah et Barry vont à la patinoire.

2. Barry et Sarah arrivent à la patinoire. Barry n'a pas de patins.

3. Un ami donne les patins à Barry.

4. Le nouvel ami patine avec Sarah et Barry.

5. Maintenant tout le monde est content.

Since the story made sense I did not correct the spelling and praised her efforts on writing her own book.

Some children are learning how to use inventive spelling and the different resources in the room. Others need personal guidance from the teacher to ascertain that the spelling they are using is correct. I feel that when their confidence has increased, they will feel more comfortable experimenting with words and letters and will be able to write their stories without so much adult reassurance.

CONCLUSION

In this project I have outlined the process that children undergo when they are learning to speak French in an immersion programme. They seem to have an innate ability to learn the language of their environment. They acquire language in a natural way, by taking the whole linguistic system and interpreting it in their own way in order to communicate. They formulate and test out their hypotheses. With the feedback they receive, they evaluate their utterances and continue to experiment. Communication is their number one goal, so the emphasis is always on conveying meaning to their audience.

When reading and writing, the children pass through several stages. In the classroom the emphasis should always be placed on meaning before form. The children need lots of encouragement to be motivated to continue their efforts. Through continual practice they will gradually improve their skills.

When students learn a second language in school, researchers like Krashen (1982,1981) feel, the approach to teaching a second language should be more "natural" than it has traditionally been. With emphasis in foreign language classes now on communicative competence, students should be encouraged to express their views, not be confined to participate in predictable routines of model dialogues and structural drills. Theories of communication emphasize that a high degree of unpredictability is characteristic of natural language use. Communication must have a purpose - the giving, receiving or requesting of information. If the information is already known in advance, the motivation to communicate tends to be rather weak. One aim of communicative language teaching is to engage learners in activities in which the message is

reasonably unpredictable, in order to develop information processing skills in the target language from the earliest possible stage.

It was feared by the behaviorists, for example, that creative uncontrolled language use might lead to many errors which would be difficult to eradicate. According to contemporary approaches including the Whole Language Approach, errors are viewed as a positive and necessary step in the active process of hypothesis formation and learning of the target language.

The Whole Language Approach emphasizes language use for communication. If the children are afraid to express themselves, for fear of making errors, mainly grammatical ones, or for fear of being wrong, they will become like robots, acting in a controlled, highly limited manner.

The teacher in the Whole Language classroom is aware of the differences in children. S/he carries out a programme adjusted to the individual needs of the students. Each child comes into the class with different levels of ability, varied interests and background experiences. These all must be taken into consideration when planning a programme and especially when evaluating the students' development. Progress is more important than the end product and the children must be encouraged to advance to the best of their ability.

In a second language class, the personality of the students varies. The more successful ones show a tendency to be adventuresome, assertive, curious and extroverted. Wanting to communicate with others, they strive to "crack the code" of the new language. With proper coaching they have a high level of self-esteem and are willing to take risks. As such, they display a tolerance for ambiguity. They develop active learning strategies to continue improving their knowledge of the second language, i.e. they exploit every opportunity outside the class to use the language

and develop communicative strategies because they are aware of the linguistic limitations of the classroom.

Immersion classes give more opportunity to students to communicate in French than other FSL classes, since it is the language used most of the day by the teacher. By providing comprehensible input, the teacher helps the students acquire vocabulary to deal with the various subject areas in the curriculum. Meaning and communication are emphasized and the students soon show native-like abilities in their receptive competence. However, their productive abilities reveal weaknesses that native speakers do not possess.

Therefore, more opportunities for active learning are necessary. In the whole language classroom the teacher encourages pupil interaction and much practice is given to developing communicative skills.

Since communicative competence now seems to be the focus of most foreign language classes, this learner-centred environment offers meaningful language experiences to facilitate the acquisition of another language.

The activity-based Whole Language Approach has received some criticism (Harley et al., 1987, and Stahl and Miller, 1989). They feel that drills and structured exercises may be necessary from time to time in order to reinforce a concept so that it is mastered by the students. Stahl (1989) concedes that the Whole Language Approach is excellent for the beginning stages of reading, but claims that there must be a more systematic and direct practice of skills in order for the children to master the sound-symbol correspondence. The Whole Language Approach does not exclude these types of exercises however, but emphasizes that they must be used in context, in order to be meaningful to the children. The teacher is the most important factor in making the learning experience as significant as possible.

As a teacher in the grade one French immersion classroom, I find this approach the most effective way to expose the children to a rich French vocabulary. Some children are acquiring an extensive active vocabulary when they speak and are trying to express it in writing. I feel that this approach builds on the strengths of formerly used approaches and shows that we all need to teach using "un peu de tout".

from Education in the Primary and Junior Divisions

Assumptions

In summary, the following assumptions about children and learning are basic to the curriculum set forth in this document:

- Children are curious. Their need to explore and manipulate should be fulfilled through handling real things that involve more than one sense. The more all the senses are involved, the more effective the experience.

- Most human activity is a purposeful search for pattern. This includes organizing new information and relating it to previously developed concepts. Incongruity between old patterns and new experiences stimulates questioning, observation, manipulation, and application in a variety of new situations. Maintaining the right balance between novel and familiar experiences in learning situations is one of the most vital tasks in the art of teaching.

- Learning experiences gain power if they are part of organized and meaningful wholes.

- Children have an intrinsic need for mastery over situations, a need that they express by using their experiences to search out the significant patterns in reality and thus reduce uncertainty.

- Children find self-fulfilment in successful learning, and are not motivated merely by external rewards and approval. Pupils engaged in self-rewarding activity with a sensitive, consistent teacher who makes demands appropriate to their own level are having a happy experience.

- Play is an essential part of learning. It is free from the restrictions of reality, external evaluations, and judgement. Children can try out different styles of action and communication without being required to make premature decisions or being penalized for errors. Play provides a context in which the teacher can observe children's handling of materials and social situations, assess their stage of development, and encourage experiences that further their growth. The teacher should know when to intervene unobtrusively, when to add to or change a play situation, when to provide a toy telephone, a costume, a question, or a suggestion that will further the fantasy or broaden the experience.

- Children learn through experience with people, symbols, and things. Things may be objects, events, processes, or relationships.

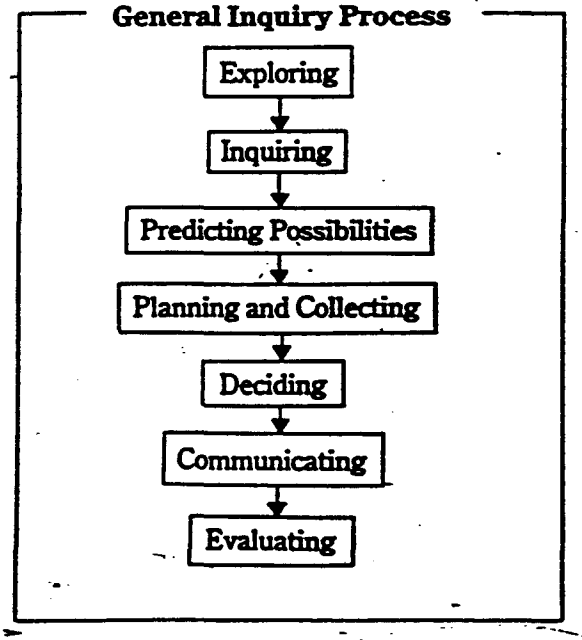
- The symbolic process for children develops through a sequence of representation. Initially children must understand that a real object can be represented by such symbols as a spoken word, gesture, dramatic movement, toy, model, picture; ultimately they must understand that an object can be represented by the printed word. The development of symbolism underlies the communication, recording, and coding of experience in a condensed and systematic form. Full understanding of symbols, however, is slow to emerge.

from Shared Discovery

Learning Through Inquiry

Children arrive in school with open, inquiring minds. They are already familiar with the inquiry process through their experiences with play, and their most important need in the Primary years is to have opportunities to continue their natural inclination towards inquiry learning. In this regard, their ability to make and be responsible for their own learning decisions will ensure both their growth and their refinement of the inquiry process.

The accompanying diagram presents the seven main stages of the inquiry process. The descriptions of these stages, which follow the diagram, are based on a child's play with blocks and indicate how the inquiry process occurs naturally in children.



Exploring. Children learn by exploring materials and events through the use of all of their senses. For example, when children build with blocks, they observe the characteristics of the blocks. As they select different blocks for various purposes, they classify by colour, shape, and size. As they introduce patterns into their models, they separate blocks by differences. When they match blocks that fit together, they learn to make correspondences.

Inquiring. Children ask questions of themselves and of others to clarify an issue or pose a problem. For example, while constructing a garage, they may wonder which blocks are best suited for building a ramp.

Predicting possibilities. Children can think of a range of reasonable possibilities to answer a question or solve a problem. For example, in building a ramp, they select a variety of possible shapes that might be suitable.

Planning and collecting. Children collect information about each predicted possibility. Thus, in making the ramp, they will try each different block shape until they discover the shape that works.

Deciding. Children arrive at a conclusion by deciding, on the basis of the information they have gathered, which possibility provides the best answer to the question or solution to the problem. When they discover a type of block that works, the children decide to use that type for the ramp.

Communicating. Children choose the best way to present their findings. In the case of the ramp, they may show other children how a vehicle's wheels will ascend and descend the ramp.

Evaluating. Children check whether their decision was correct. Thus, if the ramp works well, the children know that they have made the right decision.

Appendix 3

LISTENING

Type of Activity	Knowledge	Skill	Affect
The Children Will:	The Children Will:	The Children Will:	The Children Will:
a)listen to stories about a school day (Virgule va a l'ecole) or safety (Virgule a bicyclette)	-understand a story	-operate a tape recorder -listen with others -recall favourite part and draw a picture of it	-cooperate with others at the listening centre
b)listen for enjoyment the stories created by his peers	-understand a story	-recall information	-share parts of private lives with others and ask questions/ answer about the story
c)use the language master to reinforce vocabulary	-recognize words on the language master cards	-operate a language master machine -read and repeat words	-work independently
d)listen to a variety of songs related to the topic	-understand the meanings of various songs	-listen to and do suitable actions for the songs	-work cooperatively in a group situation

Type of Activity	Knowledge	Skill	Affect
The Children will:	The Children will:	The Children will:	The Children Will:
a)participate in role playing situations	-recognize specific events in a day	-mime different activities and the class will guess the activity	-share a personal part of their life with others
b)use puppets in dialogue situations	-know how to use puppets in a dialogue	-present a dialogue for others to hear	-show respect for self and others by being a part of a courteous audience
c)contribute in class discussions and chart stories	-donate pertinent information to the class	-participate orally in a group situation	-work cooperatively with others
d)be given the opportunity to ask and answer questions	-know how to ask questions and responses	-verbalize questions correctly and to give accurate responses	-take and perform various roles within a group

Type of Activity	Knowledge	Skill	Affect
The Children Will:	The Children Will:	The Children Will:	The Children Will:
a)write books for peers on morning activities	-know what their activities in a day are	-relate some personal thoughts about a typical day in writing	-work independently -share personal thoughts with peers
b)contribute to poem writing	-know what a poem is	-imitate a literary model	-share ideas with others
c)write a story to show four sequential events in their lives	-know what they do during the day and in what order	-relate four events in chronological order	-work independently and share personal experiences
d)apply new vocabulary to pictures	-know the names of 10 classroom objects	-match up words with pictures	-help classmates find suitable words
e)write a description of their painting	-recognize what activity they have painted	-copy key words to describe their paintings	-work cooperatively at the paint centre -share their work with others
f)write in their journal	-know what they did in a week	-write two or more sentences on a topic of their choice	-work independently

Type of Activity	Knowledge	Skill	Affect
The Children Will:	The Children Will:	The Children Will:	The Children Will:
a)read a variety of materials for information on the theme	-gain further knowledge by picture reading	-use visual clues to gain further information	-share information with the teacher
b)read peers' books for enjoyment	-know more about peers	-interpret pictures and words	-share feeling with others
c)read chart stories	-become better acquainted with different French words	-identify and pronounce different French words in chorale reading	-read cooperatively with a group
d)read and sequence a series of pictures	-know the chronlogy of different activities in a school day	-seriate pictures after conferring with others in group.	-help formulat group conclusions

Type of Activity	Knowledge	Skill	Affect
The Children Will:	The Children Will:	The Children Will:	The Children Will:
a)understand and illustrate one-to-one correspondence	-understand matching	-match things to people, objects with other objects etc. on a one-to-one basis	-share materials with peers
b)use one-to-one correspondence to determine if groups are more/less/same in number	-understand the concepts of plus, moins and meme	-place objects in groups -determine whether to label them plus, moins or meme	-work independently and collaboratively with peers
c)sort and classify different objects using one or more criteria with a partner	-know that the same objects may be grouped in a variety of ways	-classify objects according to characteristics chosen by themselves	-participate in decision-making -work cooperatively
d)do different types of graphing	-know what a graph is	-collect data and record it on a graph form be it a pictograph, horizontal,vertical, or people graph	-analyze data and express orally a conclusion
e)compare lengths of different objects	-know that objects have different lengths	-measure different objects and order them according to length, using a common base line	-follow rules established by the group -work independently
f)pattern using cut-outs of different school objects	-know what a pattern is	-glue shapes on a strip of paper in a repetitive order	-share materials with others in their group

Type of Activity	Knowledge	Skill	Affect
The Children Will:	The Children Will:	The Children Will:	The Children Will:
a)be given a tour of the school	-know that the school and its different rooms have identifiable characteristics	-observe the different characteristics of the rooms in the school	-show respect towards property and others while on tour
b)classify observations according to given headings	-see above	-classify according to pre-determined headings	-observe and participate in class discussions
c)discuss with peers different objects in the school, where they are found and who uses them and why	-know that the school has parts and that each part has a function	-identify different objects and their functions in different areas of the school	-share observations with the class
d)play a game matching a given set of objects with the room in which they are found	-see above	-see above	-work cooperatively in a small group
e)assemble a mobile of classroom objects	-know the French words for at least five classroom objects	-trace and cut out five different classroom objects	-work independently -make individ decisions
f)paint a mural in groups of four or five	-know different activities that take place throughout the school	-use paint to depict a school scene	-work cooperatively -share in decision-maki and problem solving

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES (continued)

Type of Activity	Knowledge	Skill	Affect
The Children Will:	The Children Will:	The Children Will:	The Children Will:
g)construct a model of a room in the school in groups of four	-know that the essential elements are in a specific room in the school	-use available materials to create a 3-D model of a room -present the end results to the rest of the class	-work cooperatively -share in the decision-making process -be proud of their efforts
h)read and help label a map of the school	-know that a map can represent real places in the environment	-interpret a pictorial representation of the school and be able to name the different rooms in the school	-share in the problem solving
i)read a map of the class and talk about the use of space	-know that maps show information	-label their desk in the classroom and trace out different routes that can be made	-share in decision-making and problem solving

Type of Activity	Knowledge	Skill	Affect
The Children Will:	The Children Will:	The Children Will:	The Children Will:
a)learn about the different parts of the library and routines necessary for book exchange	-know that the library is an important part of the school -know that it has a function	-review procedures for sign out -fill in a sample sign out card	-cooperate with others -follow rules
b)learn about the care of books	-know that there are different parts to a book	-label an illustration of a book	-work cooperatively with others
c)learn about the care of books	-know how to care for books	-care for books	-demonstrate respect for property
d)listen to a story and draw their favourite part	-know what a fiction book is -know what their favourite part is	-listen for information -identify their favourite part	-work cooperatively in small groups

Type of Activity	Knowledge	Skill	Affect
The Children Will:	The Children Will:	The Children Will:	The Children Will:
a)sing pre-recorded songs about school life	-understand the meaning of certain songs	-sing along with Matt and Suzanne Pinel and do suitable actions	-work cooperatively with the class
b)create new songs using familiar tunes	-know tunes of familiar songs -know French words suitable for the school theme	-contribute suitable words to create a new song	-cooperate in a class activity -enjoy participating in the end product

Type of Activity	Knowledge	Skill	Affect
The Children Will:	The Children Will:	The Children Will:	The Children Will:
a)use Kids on Keys and Early Games on the C-64 Computer	-know how to use the keyboard to play the computer games	-identify the necessary keys to press in order to carry out the game	make decision for him/herself -work independently

Appendix 4 TRACKING SHEET

ACTIVITY		La Rentrée attempted	Mon nom commentary
Speaking:	a) role-playing b) puppet dialogue c) calendar		
Listening:	a) Virgule va à l'école b) Virgule à bicyclette c) language master cards		
Reading:	a) peers' books b) chart stories c) sequencing story		
Writing:	a) booklet on morning activities b) poem writing c) ma journée à l'école d) les objets dans la classe e) à l'école (to go with painting) f) mon journal		
Mathematics:	a) one-to-one correspondance b) plus/moins/ même c) sorting and classifying d) graphing e) measuring lengths f) patterning		
Environmental Studies:	a) object matching b) mobile of classroom objects c) mural painting in groups d) a model of a classroom e) map of the school f) mapping two routes in the class		
Music:	a) singing songs b) creating new songs		
Library:	a) learn about parts of books b) listening to a fictitious story		
Computer:	a) Kids on Keys b) Early Games		
Extra Work:	a) Word Search b) Bingo c) Maze d) dot-to-dot (1 to 10)		

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