Pedagogy and second language learning:
Lessons learned from Intensive French

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Through research and classroom observation undertaken while conceptualizing and implementing the Intensive French program in Canada, many new insights were gained into the development of communication skills in a classroom situation. Five lessons learned about the development of spontaneous oral communication are presented in this article: the ineffectiveness of core French in primary school; the minimum number of intensive hours necessary to develop spontaneous oral communication; the need to develop implicit competence rather than explicit knowledge; the distinction between accuracy as knowledge and accuracy as skill; and the importance of teaching strategies focussing on language use. These lessons have implications for our understanding of how oral competence in an L2 develops and for the improvement of communicative language pedagogy.

Grâce à nos recherches et observations de classes au moment où nous avons conçu et implanté le régime pédagogique du français intensif au Canada, nous avons eu plusieurs nouvelles intuitions concernant le développement d'habiletés de communication en milieu scolaire. Nous présentons ici cinq « leçons » tirées du français intensif : l'inefficacité du français de base dans les premières années du primaire ; le nombre minimal d'heures intensives nécessaires pour le développement d'une communication spontanée en L2 ; la nécessité de développer une compétence implicite plutôt qu'un savoir explicite ; la distinction entre la précision en tant que savoir et la précision en tant qu'habileté ; et l'importance de stratégies d'enseignement mettant l'accent sur l'utilisation de la langue. Ces « leçons » ont des implications susceptibles de nous aider à comprendre comment se développe la compétence à communiquer oralement dans une L2, et susceptibles d'améliorer la pédagogie de la communication.

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Introduction

Intensive French (IF) is a new approach to the teaching of French as a second language. It consists of a change in the way French as a second language (henceforth FSL) classes are organized and taught. It is inserted into the core French program for a five-month period in Grade 5 or 6, towards the end of the elementary school cycle, when children are about 10–12 years of age (Netten and Germain, 2004b). Initially a preliminary model of IF was developed in Quebec for a short period of time. The first experiments with Intensive French were undertaken by Lise Billy, French Consultant with the Mille-Îles School District, north of Montreal, in 1975 (Billy, 1980; Netten and Germain, 2004a). Current IF programs, however, have a different and more complex theoretical base, because a new model of IF was conceived and implemented in Newfoundland and Labrador from 1998 to 2001 (Netten and Germain, 2004b). They are also different from intensive English programs in Quebec (Germain, Lightbown, Netten and Spada, 2004).

   The distinguishing characteristics of IF are twofold: administrative and pedagogical. From the administrative perspective, increased time and intensity for FSL instruction must be achieved, which entails a reduction in time for other subjects during the intensive semester. Approximately 70% of the school day in the intensive semester is devoted to activities developing language competence, increasing from three to four times the exposure to FSL, for example, from 90 hours to approximately 300 hours of intensive exposure to the language. In order to obtain this increased time for FSL learning in a concentrated period, the regular curriculum is re-organized, reducing by almost 50% the amount of time for English-language arts and other subjects. Mathematics and subjects generally taught by specialists, such as music and physical education, are usually retained in English. Although less time is given to the regular curriculum, all the learning outcomes for all the subjects for the grade are attained through the compacting of the curriculum. The change in pedagogy is also crucial. Increased time and intensity bring about an increase in the development of language competence, but major gains in French skills, as well as in cognitive and social development, depend upon concomitant change in pedagogy (Netten and Germain, 2004c).

Distinction from immersion and core

While IF has much in common with French immersion as French is the only means of communication in the classroom, it can be clearly distinguished from this program. In immersion, academic subjects are taught in French; the L2 is used as the means of instruction. Thus, students are learning subject-matter content which is taught through French, the language that they are learning; students are learning an L2 and subject-matter content at the same time. While

this may be an effective way to learn an L2, the integration of language and content makes learning difficult for some children. In particular, children have difficulty in separating teachers' reactions to content from those to language (Lyster, 1998; Netten, 1991). Also teachers, who are under pressure to cover content sometimes neglect language-learning goals. In IF, language learning is the sole objective; academic learning goals are only evaluated when instruction is in English.

IF is also clearly distinguishable from core French. Despite the fact that some jurisdictions refer to "intensive core French", IF is not just core French taught intensively. Instruction in the IF classroom is radically different from that in core French (see below, Lessons 3 and 5). IF does not have four separate syllabi as is the case in the National Core French Study (LeBlanc, 1990; Stern, 1982). A separate linguistic syllabus does not exist; language forms are not taught separately from communication, and language goals are stated as linguistic functions. In addition, general language education is developed through the transdisciplinary nature of IF rather than a concentration on metalinguistic awareness of learning strategies (Germain and Netten, 2005a; Netten and Germain, 2004c).

IF is now an official option for core French students in Grade 6 in Newfoundland and Labrador, and pilot classes are being implemented in six other Canadian provinces: in Grade 6 in Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan, and in Grade 5 in New Brunswick, Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia. There is also a pilot project for Grade 4 in one school district in New Brunswick to address specific issues in that region. Currently, there are approximately 5000 students who participated in the program from 1998 to 2005.

Results of IF

The results of the program have been positive. Tests of oral and written production conducted in Newfoundland and Labrador indicate that students are able to sustain a conversation, with some spontaneity, on topics related to their level of cognitive development and interests (Germain, Netten and Movassat, 2004). This result is superior to that generally attained by core French students in the elementary grades; according to the empirical data that have been collected, the communicative ability of IF students at the end of Grade 5 or 6 is similar to that of core French students at the end of Grade 9 or 10. For writing, students in IF are able to produce a narrative composition of several paragraphs in a manner similar to Quebec Francophones at Grade 3.5; accuracy is similar to results for Quebec Francophones at Grade 3 and fluency similar to results for Grade 4 Quebec Francophones (Germain, Netten and Séguin, 2004). Testing of oral and written production has also been undertaken in five other provinces, and results are similar in all provinces in both urban and rural milieus (Netten and
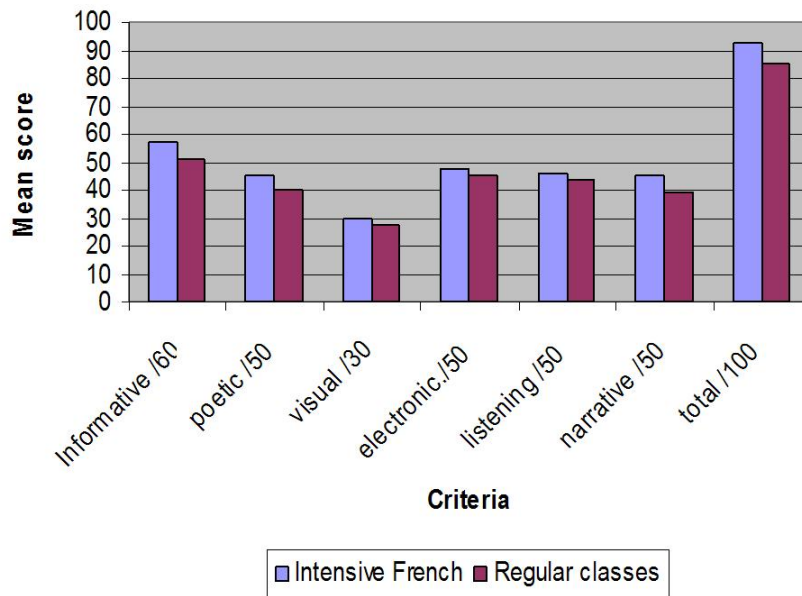
Figure 1: Comparison of results for IF and regular classes for English at the end of Grade 6

Germain, 2003a, 2003b, 2004d, 2004e, 2004f, 2004g, 2004h, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2005d, 2005e). In addition to improved French-language communication skills, students participating for five months in an IF program demonstrate an increase in self-esteem, autonomy and personal organizational skills, as well as enhanced motivation to study French (Germain and Netten, 2004a, 2004b). A survey of the number of students electing to study French in Grade 10 has been undertaken in two school districts. Preliminary results indicate that most IF students enrol in French at Grade 10, a considerable change from previous enrolment patterns. In addition, a large percentage of students enrol in late immersion programs, although this is not a goal of the IF program and remains the personal choice of the students and their families.

No negative effects on English-language skill development have been reported (Germain and Netten, 2004a). Criterion-referenced tests in English-language arts given by the Departments of Education in two provinces have demonstrated that, after participating in IF, students do not score below their peers who have not taken IF. In one province,[1] 18 classes in six different schools, of which 7 were IF, were compared. In Figure 1, it may be seen that students in IF scored higher in all of the subtests of the provincial assessment
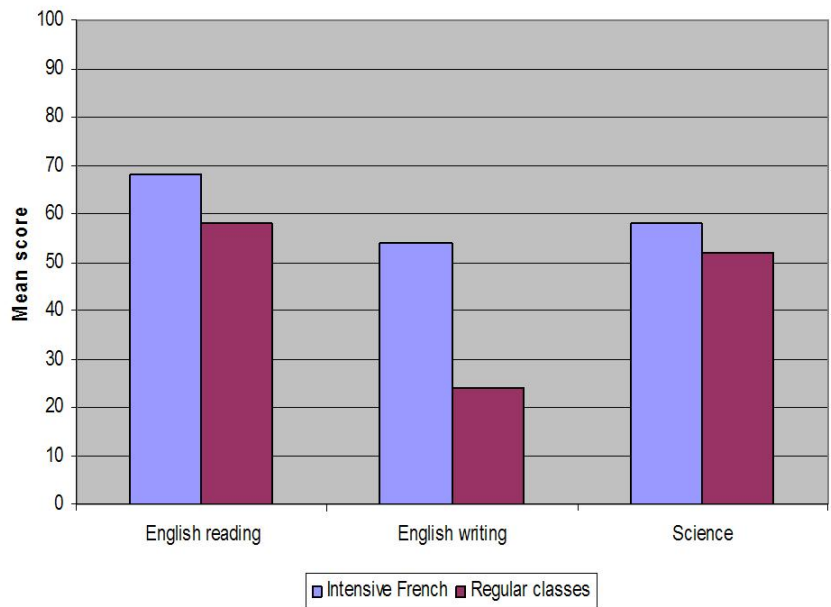
Figure 2: Comparison of IF and regular classes for English reading, writing and science at the end of Grade 5

than their peers in the regular program who spent the recommended amounts of time on English-language arts.[2]

As can be seen in Figure 2, in another province, similar results were obtained: students in IF in four schools scored higher than their peers in the regular program in English reading, English writing and science (Netten and Germain, 2004e).

In most classes included in these tests, some selection of students occurred. Parents were given the option of placing their child in IF; however, where fewer children were selected for the program than those wishing to participate in it, selection was made on a random basis or in order to maintain the profile of an average classroom. In several situations, immersion programs were also available, and those opting for IF were those parents who had not chosen early immersion for their child. Thus, while selection is a factor, results represent those of students from a wide range of ability levels. The higher scores for IF students in the results of these provincial assessments suggest that the extra time devoted to learning French in the IF program does not cause students to underperform in the attainment of the outcomes for English-language arts and science.

These results are congruent with the theory that learning a second language contributes to the development of cognitive skills (Bialystock, 2001; Cummins, 2001). In practice, the curriculum developed for IF is based on a transdisciplinary model of learning; it contains tasks modelled on those specified in other subjects of the curriculum for the grade, ensuring that cognitive processes targeted by other aspects of the curriculum are included. In addition, the language-arts approach taken for teaching the L2 in IF reinforces the literacy development of the students in the L1 (Germain and Netten, 2005a; Netten and Germain, 2000, 2004c).

This article will present five lessons learned from IF about learning and teaching FSL to children in the elementary grades. These lessons have implications for our understanding of how second languages are learned and for the improvement of oral communicative language pedagogy.

Lesson 1: The ineffectiveness of core French at the primary and elementary grades

Oral interviews were administered by the Departments of Education in two provinces. Performance was measured by the New Brunswick Middle School Oral Proficiency Interview Scale (Government of New Brunswick, 1984; see Appendix A). In one province oral interviews were given at the beginning of Grade 6 after two years of core French (180 hours). Seventy-five percent of the students (N = 25) received a rating of Novice Low (11), and 25% a rating of Novice Mid (12), that is, students can only use isolated words or expressions; there is essentially no ability to communicate.

In another province, oral interviews were given at the beginning of Grade 5 after four years of core French (360 hours). Results indicate that 70% of the 289 students also received a rating of Novice Low (11), and 24% received a rating of Novice Mid (12), which indicates no ability to communicate in French. Only 6% received ratings higher than 12; these students came from bilingual homes. (See Appendix A for a description of levels.) Testing was also undertaken after four-and-a-half years, at the beginning of February, after 420 hours of core French. Results indicate that the students (N = 50) made no progress in five months. In fact, there was a slight regression, with the number of students classified as Novice Mid decreasing and the number classified as Novice Low increasing by almost 10%. These results suggest that core French in the primary and elementary grades has very limited ability to develop spontaneous oral communication.

There are several reasons for these results. Firstly, the development of a skill requires considerable sustained use, and communication in a second language is a skill. Short periods of French do not give students enough time to develop oral skills (Calman and Daniel, 1998; Lightbown and Spada, 1994).

Secondly, the brief exposure to French, even if it occurs daily, is interrupted by learning other subjects in English; English predominates during the school day. As a result there is no retention of French. Students interviewed said, "When you walk out of the room, you forget it." "It does not stay in your head." "I knew yesterday; the teacher told us. But, I don't remember today" (Germain and Netten, 2004a). Students in the primary grades, in particular, are not sufficiently developed cognitively to retain information to which they have had only very limited exposure. Unfortunately, the lack of progress can contribute to the development of a negative attitude towards learning French. Many students become demotivated, or even antagonistic, as they do not perceive that they have made any progress in two to five years of study. Some students in Grade 5 voluntarily offered various comments indicating their negative reactions to the program with considerable force. Brief periods of French in the primary and early elementary grades, when that language is not reinforced either inside or outside the school, seems to be an ineffective way of introducing second-language study.

These results are also important as they represent, to the best of our knowledge, the first empirical data that have been collected on such a large scale in core French programs in Canada. In 30 years, the recommendations of the Gillin Report (Government of Ontario, 1974) have been followed but not evaluated: "Current expectations have generally not been tested, and we do not know whether the expectations listed in policy documents are realistic" (Lapkin, 2003, cited in Canadian Parents for French, 2005, p. 51). A recent study undertaken in the Atlantic provinces to investigate the high rate of attrition from core French concluded that a paradigm shift in methodology and curriculum content of the core French program is required (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 2002). IF can be seen as representing such a paradigm shift.

Lesson 2: The need for a minimum number of 250 intensive hours to develop spontaneous oral communication

Research by Carroll had indicated that results for L2 learning tended to be related to the number of hours of instruction (1967). Therefore, the hypothesis was formed that more hours of instruction would lead to the development of higher levels of competence. This information was translated into the number of hours needed for a successful L2 program in the schools, primarily through the recommendations of the Gillin Report (Government of Ontario, 1974), which were widely adopted across Canada. The Report recommended 1200 hours of instruction in order to attain a basic level of communication, 3000 hours to attain a middle level and 5000 hours to attain a top level of communication. However, at this time, people did not realize the importance of the concept of intensity. The Gillin Report indicated that it was the total number

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Table 1: Number of intensive hours and results achieved

Number of hours of intensity	Descriptor
150	predictable language
200–250	short memorized utterances
250+	some spontaneity

of hours that was important, not the distribution of time: "A pupil who studies French 60 minutes daily for 3 years appears to make as much progress as one who is exposed for 30 minutes daily for 6 years" (Government of Ontario, 1974, p. 26). Consequently, in order to improve core French, extra hours were added at the beginning of the program, extending it to the primary and elementary grades, not taking into account the age factor and cognitive development of the students. However, as demonstrated in the previous Lesson, adding more time to core French in the primary and elementary grades by increasing the number of short daily periods does not develop the ability to communicate with spontaneity in French.

Important work undertaken in the last fifteen years on the effects of intensity has demonstrated that intense instruction in an L2 is significantly more effective in developing communicative ability than the same number of hours spread over a longer period of time, sometimes referred to as the "drip-feed" method (Collins, Halter, Lightbown and Spada, 1999; Lapkin, Harley and Hart, 2001; Lightbown and Spada, 1994; Stern, 1982; Swain, 1981). Our research has shown that, after 180, 360 and 420 hours of "drip-feed" instruction, elementary students cannot communicate spontaneously while, after 250 hours of intensive instruction, students in the elementary grades are able to participate in spontaneous communication. In order for early exposure to FSL to be effective, students must receive sufficient instruction to reach a level of spontaneous communication.[3] This can best be done through an intensive program.

Research on intensive programs at the elementary level up to the present time has not specified the number of intensive hours required to attain spontaneous communication. The variety of numbers of hours of instruction represented by the many classrooms implementing IF in the first three years of the project (1998–2001) at the Grade 6 level has enabled us to determine a minimum number of intensive hours required to attain a level of spontaneous oral communication. As may be seen in Table 1, there are some general patterns which are important.[4] Where the number of hours of intensive instruction was 250 or more, an average level of performance, described as being able to communicate with some spontaneity, was attained. Less than 250 intensive hours of instruction does not enable students in the elementary grades to develop spontaneous communication.

Lesson 3: The need to develop implicit competence, not explicit knowledge, to acquire spontaneous oral communication

There is considerable debate on the effect of explicit knowledge on the development of oral proficiency in the L2. Empirical data from some researchers has shown the inefficacy of explicit knowledge in communicating in the L2 (Krashen, 1981; Pienemann, 1989; Prabhu, 1987; Truscott, 1999), while other researchers indicate that explicit knowledge may have some effect on the development of oral proficiency in the L2 (DeKeyser, 1998; Ellis, 2002; Lightbown and Spada, 1999; Nassaji and Fotos, 2004; Schmidt, 1990; VanPatten, 2002; White and Ranta, 2002, for example). Our research supports the point of view that explicit knowledge (rules and practice of this knowledge) does not contribute substantially to the development of spontaneous oral communication.

Major positions in the debate

The debate centres on the relationship between implicit linguistic competence and explicit linguistic knowledge. Five positions were identified in White and Ranta (2002) and will be discussed here in a somewhat different way: no interface, complete interface, a continuum, explicit-to-implicit and a weak explicit-to-implicit position. A sixth position will also be presented.

According to Krashen (1981, 1985), in order to communicate spontaneously in an L2, learners must be exposed to a large quantity of comprehensible input. Explicit knowledge about the language can be learned through exposure to rules and practice focussing on form but this knowledge can only be used as a monitor under certain conditions — when the learner knows the rule, when the task focusses on form, and when there is sufficient time — to correct consciously what is produced unconsciously. For Krashen there is no direct connection between implicit competence and explicit knowledge.

Bialystok (1978) held a view which supported a relationship between implicit competence and explicit knowledge. Implicit competence is the intuitive information upon which the language learner operates to produce language automatically and spontaneously; explicit knowledge comprises the conscious facts the learner knows about the language and can explain. For Bialystok, by using the language in functional practising, the explicit knowledge can be transferred into implicit competence, and by using the language in formal practice, implicit competence can be transferred into explicit knowledge through inferencing. However, this view has been somewhat modified in her more recent model, the Analysis/Control model (Bialystok, 1994; Bialystok and Sharwood Smith, 1985).

In this revised model, implicit and explicit knowledge are placed along a continuum but they are still related. Implicit competence can arise out of

explicit knowledge by the development of processing control (called "automaticity" in a previous version of the model). The learning situation influences which dimension is emphasized: a grammar-based approach will develop analysis whereas a content-based approach such as immersion will develop processing control. However, at any point in time learners may possess differing amounts of analysis and processing control, which they use to perform tasks. Proficiency is described as a high level of analysis of explicit knowledge and processing control.

The "explicit-to-implicit position" has been maintained by Anderson (1990), who developed a model of skill acquisition based on a distinction between declarative knowledge (facts) and procedural knowledge (how to perform cognitive activities). Skill learning involves proceduralization, through practice and feedback, of knowledge learned declaratively. One of the characteristics of this model is that, in one of its stages of development, declarative knowledge is transformed into procedural knowledge but the declarative knowledge is not lost. This model has been applied by DeKeyser (1998) to the context of learning an L2. For explicit knowledge to become implicit competence, knowledge of language has to be learned explicitly first and then become implicit through practice.

A weak explicit-to-implicit position has been proposed by Ellis (1993) and Sharwood Smith (1985). In this position, explicit instruction plays a role in facilitating the development of implicit competence. Acquisition, that is the development of implicit competence, is the way learning generally takes place but, under certain circumstances, drawing learners' conscious attention to regularities of the target language can speed up the rate of acquisition compared to that generally achieved under natural circumstances. Thus, explicit knowledge can assist in the development of implicit competence. Gass (1991) supported this view by indicating that explicit grammatical teaching may influence acquisition through assisting the learner to notice target language features in the input. However, the effect of explicit instruction is not necessarily evident immediately (Gass, 1991; Gass and Selinker, 1994).

There is a sixth position, not mentioned in White and Ranta (2002), Paradis' neurolinguistic theory of bilingualism (2004), which is another example of the no-interface position. In this theory, explicit knowledge, which is conscious knowledge, is stored in declarative memory; implicit knowledge, which is intuitive or not conscious, involves procedural memory. Based on research on bilingual aphasics and patients with Altzheimer's disease, it can be shown that these two memories are located in different parts of the brain and that there is no direct connection between them. Knowledge that is stored in declarative memory is not available to be used in procedural memory. Based on this research, Paradis concludes that explicit knowledge cannot be transformed into

implicit competence. Explicit knowledge is not necessary for spontaneous oral production; however, implicit competence is (Paradis, 2004).

A case study

A case study was undertaken in two comparable IF classrooms to investigate the effect of teaching accuracy as explicit knowledge, that is, knowledge of grammatical forms and rules, on the spontaneous oral production of students in Grade 6. Students in two classrooms, all of whom received approximately 360 intensive hours of instruction in French, were similar with respect to socio-economic background and background in French. Teachers in the two classrooms had received similar preparation for teaching French; however, the teacher in classroom A was more fluent in French and had more experience teaching FSL. Both teachers were using the same curriculum (Netten, 2001).

During the five-month session of IF, structured observations of approximately five hours in October and January by one observer and of five half-days by another observer were undertaken in each classroom. A classroom observation grid distinguishing between teaching strategies focussing on the development of accuracy as knowledge — explanations of grammatical forms and rules — and those focussing on the development of fluency was used (see Appendix B). On some occasions strategies could not always be clearly identified as focussing exclusively on accuracy or on fluency. Teachers sometimes integrated a brief correction into a communicative discussion on a particular topic with a student. This type of intervention, because of its very short duration and its relationship to a strategy that primarily develops fluency, was not calculated in the percentage of strategies used to develop accuracy. Instead, this intervention within a communicative situation became a third category that was called "integration" because strategies for accuracy and fluency were being used at almost the same time. In effect, this strategy of integration represents, to a certain extent, that recommended by many researchers, as focus on form in a meaningful context (Lightbown and Spada, 1999; Germain and Séguin, 1995, for example). The total number and percentage of teaching strategies were calculated to determine the proportion of teaching strategies used that developed accuracy as knowledge, fluency and both together (integration) in each of the classrooms (Netten, 2001). Results are given in Table 2.

At the end of the five months of IF, an individual oral interview was given to all of the students in the two classrooms. The interview protocol was that used in the province in which the classrooms were located to assess the oral proficiency of core French students at the end of secondary school. The interview scale is given in Appendix C.[5] An average score in oral proficiency was determined for each classroom. This average score was then related to the percentage of teaching strategies used to develop accuracy, fluency or both.

Table 2: Effects of teaching strategies on the development of oral communication

Classroom	A	B
Number of students	29	31
Number of hours	363	372
Teaching strategies (%)		
Accuracy	58	31
Fluency	5	15
Integration	37	54
Results		
Oral communication (/25)	17.1	22.1*

Note: *$p < .05$

The findings indicated that 58% of the teaching strategies in classroom A focussed on the development of accuracy as knowledge. In classroom B, only 31% of teaching strategies focussed on accuracy as knowledge. In classroom A, the average rating for oral production (17.1) was significantly lower than the average rating for oral production (22.1) in classroom B. Students in the classroom where 58% of teaching strategies focussed on accuracy as knowledge scored significantly lower when using the target language during a real communication situation (an oral interview) than those who had received less explicit instruction. These findings were contrary to our expectations as we hypothesized that the results in classroom A would be superior to those in classroom B because of the teaching strategies used.

Discussion

In the case study described above, students in classroom B with very little explicit knowledge were able to communicate spontaneously with considerable accuracy (22.1 on the scale used); students in classroom A, with considerable explicit knowledge, were significantly less able to engage in spontaneous oral communication. We hypothesize that the explicit knowledge learned by students in classroom A was not helpful in developing implicit competence. Of the six models described above, three would seem unable to explain what occurred. According to Anderson (1990) and Bialystok (1978, 1994), explicit knowledge can be transformed into implicit competence by formal practising. This process of transformation did not occur in our case study. Paradis' theory suggests that such a transformation is not possible (Paradis, 2004).

It appears that Krashen and Paradis are the only two models presented here that give a plausible explanation of what happened in the two classrooms in our case study. The explicit knowledge that the students in classroom A possessed did not have an effect upon their ability to communicate spontaneously. The

two capacities seem to be quite separate. If this were not the case, the results in classroom A would have been higher. This is congruent with the theories of Krashen and Paradis.

The positions of Paradis and Krashen are similar with respect to acquisition; however, there are major differences which cause us to favour the view of Paradis. Krashen's theory does not entirely explain the development of implicit competence, which is operationalized as spontaneous oral production, in this case, as he neglects the importance of output; Paradis' position reinstates its importance. There is a further aspect of Krashen's theory which is problematic: the contention that implicit competence will gradually become more and more accurate. There needs to be a focus on form through correction, feedback and repetition by the students in order to develop oral accuracy.[6] This aspect is in the category "integration" in our case study, where a focus on form is provided in the context of a meaningful situation, giving learners the opportunity to reuse the utterance correctly, and thus begin the development of implicit competence through proceduralization of the correct utterance, not the rule. Therefore, Paradis' theory is the one that best explains our results: implicit competence develops while using the target language in authentic communication. However, attention also needs to be paid to the development of accuracy through correction.

This position has a link with Ellis (1993) and Sharwood Smith (1985) who indicated that explicit instruction can play a facilitating role in an L2 acquisition. However, for us, explicit instruction contributes to the acquisition of accurate language, rather than to the acquisition process itself. Once learners have acquired some ability to use the target language, even with a minimal degree of accuracy, explicit instruction may assist them in noticing their errors and refining their interlanguage through use so that it becomes more accurate. The role of explicit instruction is not to facilitate acquisition as such but to assist in increasing the degree of accuracy of the language that is being or has been acquired. This point of view does not contradict Paradis' theory, as Paradis accepts the role of explicit knowledge as a monitor to correct the interlanguage acquired implicitly by the learner. The point for Paradis is that when explicit knowledge is being accessed, it is being accessed consciously and the learner is no longer in the realm of implicit competence.

In the light of these considerations, we conclude that:

- acquisition can take place in a classroom if the learning conditions in the classroom replicate as much as possible an authentic communication situation, as has been done in IF in Canada;
- acquisition requires output on the part of the students (Paradis, 2004; Swain, 1985); and
- oral correction plays a crucial role in the development of accuracy.

These conclusions caused us to re-examine the current conception of accuracy, defined as explicit knowledge, which underlay our case study (see Lesson 4).

Lesson 4: The need to distinguish between accuracy as knowledge and accuracy as skill

One goal of language instruction is spontaneous communication which is both fluent and accurate. When talking of language use, these two concepts are skills. It is widely accepted that fluency is a skill but, in general, accuracy is not conceived of as skill; rather it is seen as declarative knowledge, that is, the accurate knowledge of forms or rules of language (Brumfit, 1984; Riggenbach, 2000). This definition of accuracy does not permit us to explain what happened in the case study described above. The results of this case study, which are congruent with Paradis' neurolinguistic theory of bilingualism, suggest that there is no direct relationship between accuracy in spontaneous communication and accuracy taught as declarative knowledge. This finding led us to re-examine the usually accepted definition of accuracy as knowledge. While we accept that this definition is an appropriate one when describing language, such a definition of accuracy does not take into account the accurate use of language when engaging in spontaneous communication. According to Paradis (2004), declarative knowledge cannot be accessed by procedural memory during conversation. There is a fundamental distinction between knowledge and skill. While knowledge stored in declarative memory can be explained explicitly and accessed consciously, a skill refers to an implicit competence that cannot be explained explicitly or accessed consciously (Paradis, 2004). What Paradis makes clear is that students do not proceduralize language rules; what is proceduralized is the actual language used by the students. For example, in the spontaneous use of an expression such as *J'ai fini* ('I have finished'), what is proceduralized is the utterance *J'ai fini*, not a rule that says that verbs, like *finir*, are conjugated with *avoir*. Students do not need to be aware of the rules of language in order to acquire oral language forms in order to communicate.

Therefore, we propose that accuracy be defined not only as accurate knowledge of language forms or rules, but also as the ability to use language correctly during authentic communication without prior declarative knowledge of rules or forms, and thus a skill. In order to be more congruent with the paradigm of communicative language teaching, two types of accuracy need to be distinguished: accuracy-knowledge and accuracy-skill (Netten and Germain, 2002, 2005f). It is important to make this distinction for two reasons: firstly, because these two types of accuracy are quite separate and not interdependent, and secondly, because the distinction has important implications for communicative language pedagogy. Accuracy-knowledge is stored

in declarative memory whereas accuracy-skill is stored in procedural memory, and there is no direct connection between the two; accuracy-knowledge is learned through explicit instruction, while accuracy-skill is developed as implicit competence. Accuracy-knowledge cannot be accessed unconsciously in spontaneous communication while accuracy-skill is produced unconsciously. Lastly, accuracy-knowledge cannot be transformed into accuracy-skill. Students must use and re-use language in authentic communication situations in order to develop accuracy-skill. This conception of accuracy-skill can explain what happened in the case study in the previous Lesson. Accuracy-knowledge did not have a major influence on the development of spontaneous oral communication. Accuracy in classroom A is accuracy-knowledge, but accuracy in classroom B is accuracy-skill.

The implications for the teaching of an L2 for communicative purposes are that strategies must focus primarily on language use. Learning to use language accurately in spontaneous communication requires teaching accuracy-skill rather than accuracy-knowledge. Such a view leads to a change in the role and importance of teaching rules for developing spontaneous oral communication and emphasizes the importance of language use and communication in the classroom. Researchers have realized for a long time that knowing declaratively the language forms does not ensure that the students are able to use these forms in spontaneous communication. As indicated by Ellis (1997), after six years of studying English, much of which was taken up with the teaching of grammar, "many of these [Japanese secondary] students leave school with no procedural ability to communicate in English" (p. 75, note 10). Language use is essential in order to develop implicit competence or implicit learning (N. Ellis, 2002).

This is why it is important to use teaching strategies that focus on communicative language use in the classroom. In effect, this is the change in pedagogy that we have attempted to implement in the IF program. Results of oral and written testing of 577 students indicate that this kind of change in pedagogy is feasible and creates the conditions to develop a high level of spontaneous oral communication and considerable ability to write a sustained narrative (Germain, Netten and Movassat, 2004; Germain, Netten and Séguin, 2004).

Lesson 5: The impact of teaching strategies focussing on language use for learning to communicate in an L2

Both theorists and practitioners have indicated the importance of the type of teaching strategies used in the classroom in order to develop the communicative abilities of students (Brumfit, 1984; Brumfit and Johnson, 1979; Johnson and Morrow, 1981; Littlewood, 1981). Some research has been done to show the beneficial effect of interactive teaching strategies, but most of this research

has been conducted on a relatively small scale (Pica and Doughty, 1985). Seven years of observation in IF classrooms from 1998 to 2005 has enabled us to see a relationship between the teaching strategies used and the learning outcomes achieved by the students in Grade 4, 5 and 6. Learning outcomes were measured, for spontaneous oral production, by the use of an individual interview and, for written production, by the use of a narrative composition (Germain, Netten and Movassat, 2004; Germain, Netten and Séguin, 2004; Netten and Germain, 2003a, 2003b, 2004d, 2004e, 2004f, 2004g, 2004h, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2005d, 2005e).

Observations focussing on the teaching strategies were made by the two researchers in all of the classrooms where the students were evaluated. These observations were undertaken at least twice in the five-month period of IF, once early in the program (mid-September to October) and once later (November to mid-December) to give a minimum of three hours of observations per class. A grid was used to determine the classification of the teacher according to the strategies used (see Appendix D). The relationship between the two, teaching strategies and learning (operationalized as ability to communicate spontaneously and measured by individual oral interviews), enabled us to categorize teaching strategies into three groups: highly effective, effective and less effective.

Less effective teaching is defined as the use of strategies which focus on the learning of vocabulary, rules and exercises. *Effective teaching* is defined as the use of strategies which focus on vocabulary, rules and exercises but also includes some activities where students are occasionally encouraged to communicate with some spontaneity in the L2. *Highly effective teaching* is defined as the use of strategies which focus on language use (modelling, using and correcting) in spontaneous communication throughout the lesson, without previous practice of vocabulary or forms (Germain and Netten, 2005b).

Two case studies undertaken in two schools (four IF classrooms), at Grade 5, indicated that the type of teaching strategies used made a significant difference to the oral communication results of the students. This conclusion was confirmed by an analysis of the oral results for all the students in 65 classrooms from Grades 4 to 6 in six provinces.

Case study 1

In the first study, the same teacher taught IF in the same school (School A), in two non-consecutive years, 2002–2003 (henceforth year I) and 2004–2005 (henceforth year III).[7] Students (n = 29) in year I (2002–2003) received 372 intensive hours while those in year III (n = 29) received 317 hours, a decrease of 55 hours. Characteristics of the students in both classrooms were similar. A pre-test of oral production showed no significant differences between the two classrooms (11.4 and 11.8). According to our classroom observation, in
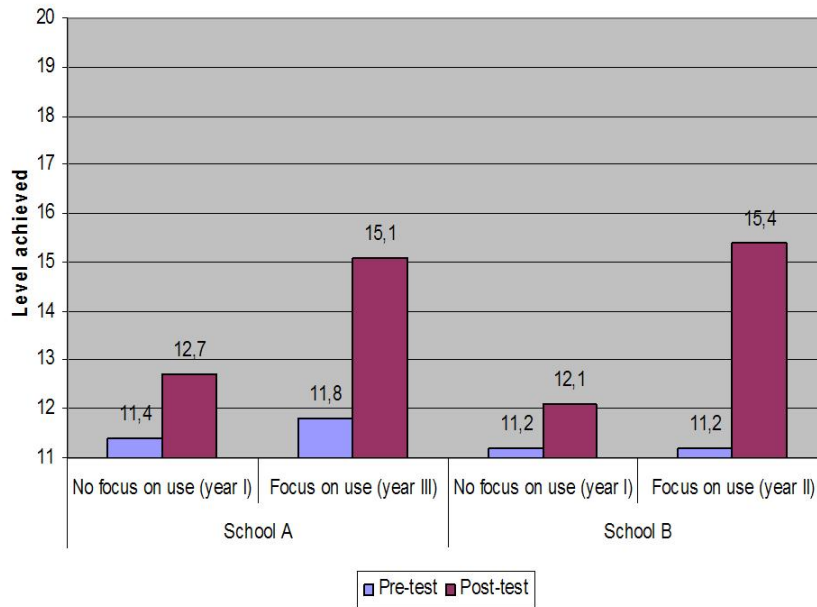
Figure 3: Pre and post-test results for oral production according to teaching strategies used

year I the teacher used less effective teaching strategies. In year III, after the teacher had participated in a Summer Institute focussing on the development of teaching strategies to enhance communication, the teaching strategies used were categorized as highly effective. The level of oral production achieved by the students in year I, as measured by the New Brunswick Middle School Scale (see Appendix A), was significantly higher (12.7) than that achieved in the pre-test (11.4) due to the intensity of the program, but only by one level on the interview scale. However, the level of oral production achieved by the students in year III (15.1) was two levels higher than at the end of the intensive period in year I, a gain of 3 levels (despite the reduction in the number of hours). This may be seen in Figure 3.

Case study 2

In the second case study, two different teachers were observed in two consecutive years in the same school (School B). Students in the two classrooms were comparable, and pre-tests of oral production showed no significant differences between the two classrooms (11.2 and 11.2). Students (n = 18) in year I (2002–2003) received 378 hours of intensive instruction and students (n = 18) in year

II (2003–2004) only 320 intensive hours, a decrease of 58 hours. In year I, according to our classroom observations, the teacher used less effective teaching strategies. The level of oral production achieved by the students in year I was 12.1 on the interview scale, a gain of less than one level. In year II, with a different teacher who had participated in a Summer Institute focussing on the development of teaching strategies to enhance communication, classroom observations indicated that highly effective strategies were used. The level of oral production achieved by the students was significantly higher (15.4) not only than that achieved in the pre-test (11.2) but also than that achieved in the post-test in year I (12.1) despite the reduction in the number of hours. These results are also summarized in Figure 3.

Composite analysis of results

In the third study, a composite analysis was made for the results from 1998 to 2005 for 65 IF classrooms (N = 1689). An average level of performance for each classroom was calculated, based on the scores achieved on the New Brunswick Middle School Oral Proficiency Interview scale (see Appendix A). The number of intensive hours of instruction for the 65 classrooms was comparable as indicated in Table 3. It is to be noted that differences of less than 50 intensive hours of instruction did not have a significant effect on performance.

Table 3: Number of intensive hours of instruction

	Number of classrooms	Number of intensive hours
Grade 4	6	275
Grade 5	30	290
Grade 6	29	300

The findings indicate that where a teacher was classified as using less effective communicative teaching strategies, the class as a whole is very limited in its development of communicative ability. The average level of performance for the classroom is within Novice Mid (12 to 12.9), which indicates that students advance only one level on the oral interview scale, whatever the grade (4, 5 or 6). As indicated in Figure 4, students do not reach a level of spontaneous communication.

Where a teacher is classified as using effective communicative teaching strategies, the class as a whole is still limited in its development of communicative ability but performance is two levels higher on the interview scale (Novice High: 13.1 to 13.9); this finding is also true whatever the grade level. While students advance about two levels they still do not reach a level of spontaneous communication. Where a teacher is classified as using highly effective
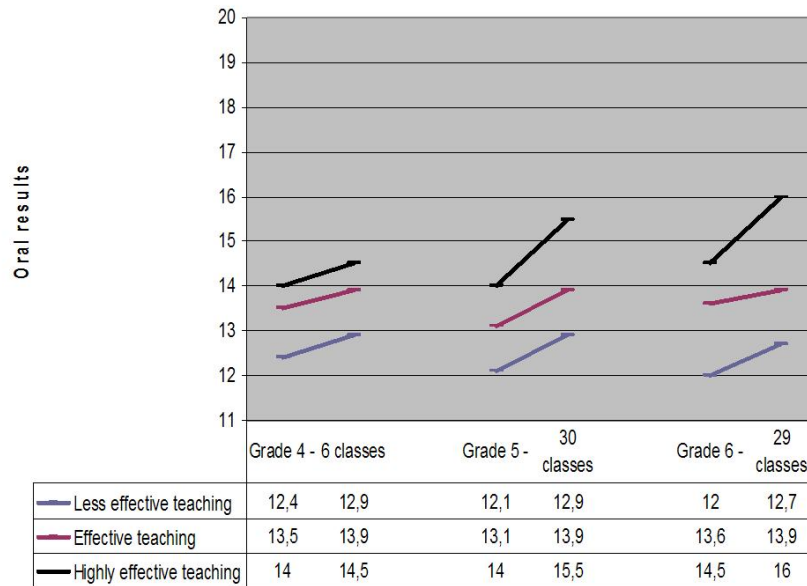
Figure 4: Relationship between teaching strategies and learning in IF

communicative teaching strategies, the average level of performance begins at Basic Low (14), that is, spontaneous communication, and extends as high as Basic High (16). The lowest average level of performance (14) is similar to the highest level of performance (13.9) for the other two categories; students are more able to reach their potential for developing communicative ability. However, at this level, there is a difference between the grades: the maximum score for Grade 4 students is 14.5, which is between Basic Low and Basic Mid; the maximum score for students in Grade 5 is 15.5, between Basic Mid and Basic High; and the maximum score for Grade 6 is Basic High (16). These results appear to indicate that cognitive development related to age of the students mitigates the maximum level of performance that can be achieved.

Our conclusion is that teaching strategies are an important factor in the achievement of spontaneous communicative ability in L2.[8] The pattern appears to be that less effective communicative strategies enable students to advance one level on the scale, whatever the grade; effective communicative strategies, two levels, whatever the grade; and highly effective strategies, three to five levels, depending on the grade. There are two other factors that can affect these results: number of intensive hours of instruction and composition of the class. Where number of intensive hours of instruction is lower by more

than 50 intensive hours, results will also be lower, in spite of the use of highly effective teaching strategies. Also, where there is a very high proportion of academically challenged students in a classroom, results will also be affected negatively. While number of hours and intensity are important factors in improving core French, teaching strategies used which encourage authentic use of language are also crucial in order to attain spontaneous communication.

Conclusion

There are many points of view about the way second languages should be taught. In developing and implementing IF, many of these assumptions have been examined and reassessed, and our point of view about FSL has been refined. In this paper we have shown that:

- Core French in the early grades is not an effective way to develop the ability to communicate spontaneously (Lesson 1).

- FSL programs of less that 250 hours of intensive instruction in the elementary grades are not capable of enabling students in these grades to reach a level of spontaneous communication (Lesson 2).

- Explicit knowledge is not necessary in order to be able to communicate spontaneously; implicit competence is (Lesson 3).

- Making a distinction between accuracy-knowledge and accuracy-skill is essential in order to have a better understanding of oral language learning in the classroom, thus improving communicative language pedagogy (Lesson 4).

- Teaching strategies focussing on language use are essential in order for learners in the elementary grades to develop spontaneous communication in the L2 (Lesson 5).

These conclusions have implications not only for the understanding of second language acquisition in the classroom but also for the improvement of FSL programs in Canada. The federal government has established a goal of increasing to 50% the number of students graduating from high school who are functionally competent in their second language by 2013 (Government of Canada, 2003). New Brunswick, the only officially bilingual province in Canada, has set its goal for functionally bilingual graduates at 70% of high school graduates by 2013 (Government of New Brunswick, 2003). These goals cannot be reached with the current organization and pedagogy of core French. The conclusions reached from our research give some indication of changes that should be made in current practices in order to make core French a more effective learning experience at the elementary school level: more time provided through at least 250 hours of intensive instruction and a change in pedagogy

focussing on language use in authentic communication. It is only by the development of more effective core French programs that the expressed goals of governments can be achieved.

Notes

[1] The ethical agreement that we were required to sign in order to collect data in the schools does not permit us to identify students, teachers, schools, school districts or provinces. This is why this information cannot always be provided.

[2] These results were significant. See Netten and Germain (2002) for details.

[3] One of the reasons Early Immersion is effective is because it is an intensive program and students develop a level of spontaneous communication very quickly.

[4] Results are not directly proportional to the number of intensive hours of instruction (Germain, Netten and Movassat, 2004); teaching strategies are also a significant factor (see Lesson 5).

[5] The descriptors for the scale and the scale are different from those of the New Brunswick Middle School Scale previously mentioned.

[6] Explicit teaching of the aspects of language specific to writing is required; declarative knowledge can be used in performing written tasks as time constraints are not present, as is the case in oral production.

[7] In the intervening year, the teacher was on leave.

[8] Teaching strategies include the type of curriculum resources provided to the teacher because the materials give an orientation to the strategies chosen by the teacher.

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Appendix A:
Description of Levels

Novice Low	11	Isolated words or expressions. Essentially, no ability to communicate.
Novice Mid	12	Rehearsed phrases, not sentences. Frequent long pauses. Ability to identify simples objects (colors, clothing, numbers . . .). No autonomy of expression.
Novice High	13	Can satisfy immediate needs, ask questions and make statements, but only with memorized phrases. No flexibility or spontaneity.
Basic Low	14	Ability to use simple sentences, ask and answer simple questions and maintain a very simple face-to-face interaction with spontaneity.
Basic Mid	15	Ability to maintain simple conversation about autobiographical details, leisure-time activities, daily schedule, etc. with some spontaneity.
Basic High	16	Ability to initiate and sustain a simple conversation with considerable spontaneity. Ability to create with language by combining various learned elements.

Adapted from New Brunswick Middle School Oral Proficiency Interview Scale
(Government of New Brunswick, 1984)

Appendix B:
Observation Grid for Teaching Strategies

Accuracy:	Vocabulary
	Morphosyntax
	Pronunciation
	Sound-symbol relationship
	Spelling
	Error correction
	Other
Fluency:	Meaning-oriented
	Individual oral participation
	Personalization
	Interaction (student–student)
	Open questions
	Negotiation of meaning
	Other

Appendix C:
Interview Scale

Level 1 (11 to 13)	Able to identify basic objects, colors, clothing, etc. No ability to cope with simple situations. Majority of utterances consist of isolated words or short phrases. Syntax is fragmented. Inflections and word endings frequently omitted. Frequent long pauses.
Level 2 (14 to 16)	Can ask questions or make statements with reasonable accuracy only when using short memorized sentences or formulae. Can handle simple situations but no real autonomy of expression. Some concept of present tense forms of the regular and common irregular verbs, but use limited to first person singular and plural, second person plural. Some use of article, but many mistakes. Frequent long pauses still occur.
Level 3 (17 to 19)	Can initiate and sustain simple dialogue. Can use language creatively. Able to show some spontaneity. Syntax in simple declarative sentences is generally correct, as is placement of most common adjectives. Some grammatical accuracy in subject-verb agreement, noun adjective and gender agreement for familiar vocabulary, present tense of regular and common irregular verbs.
Level 4 (20 to 22)	Can initiate and sustain general conversation. Able to show considerable spontaneity. Can use most question forms. Word order generally correct except in complex sentences. Ability to describe and give precise information in present tense. Some narration in present, past and future. Some control of past tense forms and basic reflexive verbs. Use some direct and indirect object pronouns, although syntax may be faulty. Considerable fluency.
Level 5 (23 to 25)	Able to communicate on concrete topics relating to interests and special fields of competence. Can narrate, describe and explain in present, past and future; some errors still occur. Can communicate facts and explain points of view, but cannot coherently support an opinion. Able to use the partitive (affirmative and negative), demonstrative adjectives, most expressions of quantity, most adverbs and some idiomatic expressions. High degree of fluency.

Source: Adapted from a provincial Oral Proficiency Interview Scale (see note 5)

Appendix D:
Observation Grid for Highly Effective Teaching in the L2 Classroom

	Observations/Comments

Oral Communication:
    Modeling of complete sentences
    Use of complete sentences by the students
    Re-use of sentences by the students
    Exclusive use of French
    Use of 'intention d'écoute'*	

Correction of Oral Errors:
    Repetition of the correction by the students
    Use of the corrected form in a complete sentence
    Immediacy and consistency in error correction	

Interaction:
    Authentic teacher–student interaction
    Encouraging student–student interaction
    Linguistic preparation for the task
    Use of group work	

Reading:
    Oral preparation and discussion
    Anticipation
    Guessing general comprehension
    Indicate correct sound-symbol relationship
    Follow-up exploitation of a passage	

Writing:
    Oral preparation
    Modeling
    Use of the writing process
    Accent on specific forms for writing	

Project:
    Authentic communicative goals
    Mini-projects to final project
    Sequencing of activities
    Cognitively demanding activities	

Note: Adapted from Anderson, Netten and Germain (2005).

*Use of questions to ensure that students are attentive to messages from their peers.