

## Editorial

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This special issue, Trends in Second Language Teaching and Teacher Education, emanates from the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers' (CASLT) 2nd annual Languages Without Borders Conference in Montreal in April 2011 and the Canadian Association of Applied Linguistics (CAAL)/CASLT's 3rd annual Teacher Education Symposium in Fredericton in June 2011. Each provided opportunities for rich learning, sharing, and interaction among teachers, teacher educators, scholars and others about innovative ideas, projects, and research.

Submissions were invited from participants of both conferences, and this issue features eight articles (five in English, three in French) presenting diverse perspectives on some common themes as well as some topics that are not linked to those themes but, rather, to other distinct topics of interest to language educators. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) provided a point de départ for five of the articles, and this offers teachers and teacher educators some very interesting and timely explorations of what it means to experience a paradigm shift in framing how we learn, teach, and assess languages. As David Little points out, in the May 2010 issue of CASLT's *Réflexions*, "the route from the CEFR to the language classroom is [anything but] straightforward and direct" (p. 20). Key elements within the Framework, such as learner autonomy, an action-oriented approach, intercultural understandings, not to mention the implications of integrating the Framework for the work of teachers and teacher educators, are woven throughout several of the articles in this issue.

The first article by Farahnez Faez, Suzanne Majhanovich, Shelley Taylor, Maureen Smith, and Kelly Crowley (University of Western Ontario) examines a topic that is being explored to varying degrees by many teachers and teacher educators across Canada at present; that is, the integration of the CEFR into French as a second language (FSL) education programs. The author reports on Ontario FSL teachers' perceptions of the strengths and challenges of using CEFR-informed instruction (an action-oriented approach) in their classrooms and whether it enhances the educational experience of teachers and students. Ninety-three teachers and 943 students participated in the three-month study and, among other findings, Faez underscores the power of "Can Do" statements to promote student confidence and motivation as well as increase their sense of autonomy and awareness of their abilities.

Enrica Piccardo (University of Toronto, OISE) describes a project, *Encourager la culture de l'évaluation chez les professionnels*, that involves European language educators evaluating how the CEFR informed their teaching and assessment practices. She points out that educators need support as they integrate a new conceptual framework into their

understandings and practices and that, even though the CEFR is a rich resource, it takes sustained effort and a great deal of time to fully realize this integration. Focus groups of teachers were held in several countries to explore how the Framework informed teacher evaluation practices and to document perceived advantages and disadvantages. The article concludes by calling for a paradigm shift that would create the conditions for implementation of a Framework-based approach to evaluation.

The focus on teacher examination of their own practices involving the CEFR continues in an article by Paula Kristmanson, Chantal Lafargue, and Karla Culligan (University of New Brunswick, L<sub>2</sub>RIC) in which they describe an action research project involving secondary teachers using the principles of the CEFR and an adapted language portfolio in a variety of second language classes. The professional learning community context within which this collaborative research was conducted allowed teachers to engage in informed and reflective professional conversations that furthered their understandings of the CEFR and language portfolio. The authors emphasize the importance of reflective practice as key to developing understandings and, among other findings, they note the impact this had on the teachers' pedagogical practice as revealed in the key themes of increased student ownership, goal-setting and intercultural awareness.

Learners' identities and voices are explored in Terry Lamb's (University of Sheffield) article based on a study of secondary students of French and German in the UK. Given the learner focus of the CEFR and its aim of developing independent thought, judgment and action, Lamb's research tracked students in a school program that emphasized self-directed learning, -setting of objectives, -selection of materials, and -assessment. He describes student responses to this approach and the effect it had on their sense of identity as well as their motivation to learn languages. The use of students' voices to track their experience during the two-year study underscores the sense of shifting identities and emerging autonomy and, over time, shows the effect of having control and influence over their own learning. Lamb highlights the need for pedagogies that support autonomy and suggests that these require teachers to critically question their assumptions about teaching.

The formation of pre-service teachers is a critical component in sustaining and renewing the field of second language education. It is also an ideal opportunity to inculcate the values and principles that will serve new teachers in an ever-changing professional landscape. Educators, at any stage of their career, are not blank slates, and this is particularly evident in the area of intercultural understanding/competence, a key component of the CEFR and the focus of Karen Ragoonaden's (University of British Columbia, Okanagan) article, *La compétence interculturelle et la formation initiale : le point sur le CEFR et l'inventaire de développement interculturel*. Using an instrument designed to measure intercultural sensitivity with L2 teacher candidates, followed by interviews with three of them, the author exposes a disconnect between their perceptions of their own intercultural competence and the 'objective' measurement of it. Given the multicultural nature of Canadian society and the focus on plurilingualism and pluriculturalism in the CEFR, the author underscores the importance of incorporating intercultural awareness into preservice education.

Meike Wernicke and Monique Bournot-Trites (University of British Columbia, Vancouver) consider the influence of the CEFR on provincial curricula by analyzing a 2010 draft document created by the BC Ministry of Education as well as that province's language education policy. They examine how the articulation of language programs in schools is

linked to the CEFR's view of plurilingualism and juxtaposed with Canada's official bilingualism and multiculturalism policy, suggesting that there are competing social/linguistic and historical/political forces at work. These are detailed through a comparative thematic discourse analysis of curriculum and policy documents. Even though the draft curriculum document was replaced in 2011, this article problematizes the integration of the CEFR in Canada and how official and non-official languages are positioned in Canadian curricula and policy.

The perspective now shifts to two articles concerning different topics of interest for second language teachers: the teaching of idiomatic expressions and the implementation of a particular instructional approach. Linda de Serres (Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières) writes about the important role of idiomatic expressions in the learning and use of a second language. The article begins with a definition of the term and then explores the nature of various expressions along with several pedagogical models for teaching them. The author posits that language teachers who hope to lead learners to a natural, flexible use of the target language cannot ignore idioms or idomaticity.

Finally, Stephanie Arnott (University of Toronto, OISE) explores the roles of teacher agency and experience in the implementation of a popular instructional approach for core French, namely the Accelerative Integrated Method (AIM). She investigates the suitability of AIM across age levels through multiple interviews and classroom observations in eight teachers' classrooms. It was apparent that teachers shaped and adapted the method in the light of their own experience and their perceptions of students' needs. Thus the implementation of AIM (and any method) is dynamic so as to accommodate teacher initiative and agency in the particular teaching conditions and sociocultural context.

It is with great pleasure that we invite you to read the articles in this special edition. They are a wonderful reflection of the diversity of research interests and depth of engagement within the community of scholars and educators in the Canadian Association of Applied Linguistics and the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers.

Until we meet again at the next Teacher/Teacher Educator Symposium!

#### References:

Little, D. (2010). What does "implementing" the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) mean? *Réflexions*, 29(2), 20-21.