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## **CANADIAN EXPERIENCE OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHERS TRAINING**

From a strictly legal standpoint, there are three major classes of languages in Canada: official or "Charter" languages – French and English – which are recognized under the federal Official Languages Act of 1969 (under provincial legislation, however, French is an official language only in Québec and New Brunswick); those that Statistics Canada terms "immigrant languages," which enjoy no official status in Canada but that are spoken as national or regional languages elsewhere (see Ethnic Languages); and ancestral languages of Indigenous peoples, which are not protected legally at the federal level (see Aboriginal Languages in Canada).

Language issues of particular significance in Canada include the learning of French as a second language (FSL) by English-speaking Canadians and by immigrants to Québec; the learning of English as a second language (ESL) by francophones in Québec and by immigrants to English-speaking Canada; the maintenance of other languages, such as those spoken by immigrants and Indigenous people; and the learning of English or French as a second language by Indigenous people [1].

If French language policies raise questions about Canadian unity and francophone-anglophone relations, the debate over English as a second language has been less political. For immigrants to English-speaking Canada, for example, learning English is a necessary prerequisite for economic survival. It was not until after the Second World War that provincial governments created language and citizenship programs for adult newcomers, that school boards established language classes for immigrant children, and that the growth of community colleges led to the development of post-secondary ESL programs. By the early 1970s, teachers of ESL had founded a number of provincial ESL associations, and in 1978, TESL Canada, a nationwide federation of associations involved in teaching ESL, was created.

No coherent national strategy concerned with the problems of immigrant adaptation has yet been formulated, and immigrant services are still provided by a complex network of school boards, universities and community colleges, and by agencies of the federal and provincial governments. Of particular significance in this area is the contribution to the difficult issues of language proficiency certification and standards of the LINC (Language Instruction for New Canadians) program. A wide variety of approaches has been developed to meet the needs of ESL students, but the field is beset by problems (which also beset FSL), such as insufficient numbers of teachers and consultants, inadequate teacher training, a paucity of appropriate curricula and materials, and the lack of clear goals.

In the late 1970s, with the wave of refugees from Southeast Asia, the inadequacies of the language-training system and of settlement services became apparent. In 1981, after a national symposium on the problems of adult refugees, the

TESL Canada Action Committee urged the development of a national policy of refugee settlement. The committee recommended a two-stage approach in which a basic three-month program would be followed by a variety of vocational options, with special provision being made for literacy training, for English in the workplace and English as a second dialect, and for special groups such as young adults, senior citizens, women and people in remote areas.

Because any federal public service must be available in either official language, many federal public servants must be bilingual. The federal public service has established its own language-training program. During the 20-year span between the early 1970s and the early 1990s more than 2,500 public servants annually received language training in French or English in language centres across Canada. The last few years have been marked by a sharp reduction in the number of courses offered directly through federal language-training centres and a move toward subcontracting second-language courses to commercial language schools.

A century ago, the most popular method of second-language instruction was grammar translation, i.e., the teaching and practice of grammar rules through translation exercises. Around 1900, the moderately successful direct method was created. It involved teaching without translation and dispensing with the mother tongue completely in class. In the 1960s, the audiolingual method (i.e., speaking and listening in rapid drills) was popular. Since then, a number of new methods have been advocated. One of these emphasized the training of listening abilities through actions (total physical response), another the use of psychological relaxation (suggestopedia), and a third the use of techniques based on group therapy (counselling learning).

In the 1970s, other second-language instruction reformers suggested that more emphasis be placed on the curriculum and on the practical needs and specific purposes of language learners. There has been an accompanying attempt to ground second-language instruction more thoroughly in the language sciences, e.g., linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and applied linguistics. The most widely used teaching approach since the early 1980s is the communicative approach, where the objective is to have students use their second language in real-life communication situations. The concept of a project is often used in these approaches because the creation of a concrete product by students (the production of a game, for instance) puts them in a situation where language is used for communication, not as a subject matter.

This is not always easily accomplished, however, and new technologies have been recruited in the search for better instructional techniques. In the 1950s, the language laboratory was created; in the 1980s, microcomputers and videocassette recorders were commonly used as teaching and learning resources. More recently, the advent of multimedia and communication technology has opened seemingly new doors for language teachers and learners. It is believed that these new technologies could go a long way toward making learners more autonomous and better equipped for their language learning challenge. Although the use of such technologies is rapidly increasing, research data are still scarce, and it is not yet clear that any of these innovations will result in a radical breakthrough in second-language instruction.

Much more can probably be expected from developments in language-instruction practices in the first decade of the 21st century. These new trends accord

central importance to differentiation, flexible teaching methods, and elimination of obstacles to the acquisition and expression of learning. Guided by the principle that students learn better when teaching activities are adapted to their own learning logic, contemporary language teachers take their learners' cognitive, social, affective, and linguistic profiles as the starting point for all lesson planning. To adapt their teaching practices to the amply demonstrated contemporary linguistic diversity, language teachers in this decade apply teaching approaches, learning situations and other methods, interactive tools and differentiation devices that respond to it. For example, these teachers prefer to employ open questions and tasks that offer students multiple entry points, to use student-generated success criteria to assess learning, and to provide learning situations in workshop format alternating with sessions attended by the entire class and grouping of students around learning centres that call for multiple forms of intelligence.

As regards the acquisition of non-first languages, and in particular the teaching of English in francophone settings and French in anglophone settings, approaches that encourage language shock, even unintentionally, are avoided. Now instructors attempt to have the first and second languages co-exist without any tendency for one to supplant the other. Current language-instruction practices thus call for a teaching approach focused on developing additive bilingualism— that is, teaching the second language in a way that does not compromise the vitality and survival of the first but instead gives both of them a larger role (bilingualism without assimilation). Based on an updated, enhanced version of the communicative approach with an action-oriented perspective, current pedagogy places the accent first and foremost on developing oral-communication skills, conveying strategies for supporting them, and creating a learning environment that is characterized by empathy and mutual respect and hence lends itself to the risk-taking that is necessary for language development[1].

As someone directly involved in pre-service and in-service teacher second language teacher education, the importance and the complexity of describing and developing language teacher competence have been recognised. In order to plan and deliver education courses and professional learning sessions that are meaningful and effective, it is essential to have a comprehensive grasp of what language teacher competence involves. According to Jack Richards (2010) [2], there are ten “core dimensions of skill and expertise in language teaching: language proficiency, content knowledge, teaching skills, contextual knowledge, language teacher identity, learner-focussed teaching, specialized cognitive skills, theorizing from practice, joining a community of practice, and professionalism.” Richards goes on to unpack each of these constructs in relation to competence and performance of language teachers. It is beyond the scope of this brief article to examine each of these elements; however, it is important to keep in mind that language competence is multifaceted and extremely complex. Language teaching occurs in a wide range of contexts ranging from the teaching of a second language as a subject (e.g., teaching French in core French programs) to the teaching of complex subject matter content, either in immersion programs or as the language of schooling to newcomers. In our increasingly plurilingual world, language teaching and learning are becoming more important than ever [3].

## REFERENCES

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