ICEEPSY 2022
13th International Conference on Education and Educational Psychology

EFFECTIVENESS TO FACILITATE SUCCESS FOR NEWCOMERS

Marie J. Myers (a)*
*Corresponding author

(a) Queen's university, 99 Beverley Street, Kingston, Canada, myersmj@queensu.ca

Abstract

Newcomers have reduced access to university in Canada and require support. In this study, we are examining the way students are prepared to teach French, the second official language, in an action-oriented language approach. The province of Ontario is aiming for bilingualism by 2054, so it was important to investigate the adaptation to the CEFR, currently promoted in the local context. In this qualitative study, we analysed curriculum guidelines and teaching journals, to identify what helped anchor knowledge properly. We also looked at the development of communities of practice. Results show that time is given to discuss difficulties encountered, and the most effective strategies for task completion. Students' groupings around the same L1 were intended to facilitate comprehension and learning. Collaboration is also advocated in mini-communities of practice. There is an openness to multi-languaging. Further investigations are needed to ensure the adoption of these new measures province wide. If the CEFR has brought about the development of new perspectives, the question of its proper implementation remains. There is also the danger for teachers to revert to teaching 'about' the target language rather than actually teaching the language. Overall, observed measures provided some positive results although there are still hurdles to overcome.

Keywords: Academic success in L2, improved support

1. The Problem

Canada is a country with a very high influx of newcomers, necessary for its continued development. This however also creates difficulties. According to Statistics Canada, newcomers have reduced access to higher education (Labrie et al., 2009) although the Ontario Ministry of Education (2007; 2009; 2013) is supporting them through a number of measures. The Ontario Ministry of Education and the Conference Board of Canada, a group of researchers who inform both government and the public sector on new directions for the country, have recently changed their perspective from valuing most the ability to work independently to stressing the need for collaboration in education. No doubt, this comes as a push from industry, as it has been shown that teams that work collaboratively often access greater resources, recognition and rewards when facing competition for finite resources. This becomes even more important in the context of globalization and even more so in countries with high levels of immigration like Canada. So, it is necessary not to leave anyone behind especially with local attempts at enforcing equity, diversity, inclusion, indigeneity and decolonization (EDIID).

This study investigated issues in teacher qualification courses for future teachers of French at university in Ontario. Ontario aims to be bilingual by 2054. The Ministry of Education is increasing French immersion programming everywhere. Yet language learners in these programs are seen as using language fraught with mistakes. In the communicative approach, the focus is on language use, especially from the action-oriented perspective. Measures have to be taken to improve the situation, by preparing teachers to better understand the complexity involved (Larsen-Freeman, 2018). With this objective in mind, courses were adapted and we report on a number of aspects involved in this study.

In a multicultural context all learners have had contacts with different languages, different contacts with the outside world, with other agents, confronted by diverse situations, events and objects they had to deal with, aware of their own body in given situational contexts as well as others. Through interaction, the mini-communities of practice in language classrooms are evolving and so is language use. With language use, we also change our thinking.

During group work we identify cohesion and diversion and in an effort for the coming together of minds (Olson, 2003) and we regroup again. Norms are often unformulated as is the case in turn-taking, thus for newcomers often only fragmented information is available. Cross-culturally this becomes an issue. It works well among groups of people knowing one another well, as many aspects are known implicitly (Bourdieu, 1980). One can observe social distance in some conversations, often with heavy ritualized elements. Conversations indeed rely on small, usually focally unnoticed rituals and this is also transferred to group work in classrooms.

In addition, in an effort to comprehend, we frame our representations in the mind with an effort to reduce complexity (Luhmann, 1995). We adopt patterns, to conform with what seems right and fitting and this applies to the use of different languages.

One further concern stems from teachers using in the classroom a second language with a more limited mastery level and unfortunately, errors in language use are thus going to be perpetuated and other communicative characteristics will take on a life of their own.

2. Research Question

The question then becomes, about how to manage diversity and maintain quality which are two contentious issues when also dealing with assessment, individual progress, and sharing resources, especially in an action-oriented communicative language teaching approach. This can be achieved by helping students with self-efficacy in terms of monitoring their own use of language; having them practice strategies among themselves, which in turn they will be able to implement in their own classrooms; facilitating a displacement through converting the strategies to increase metacognitive operationalization and by finalizing effective practices.

3. The Purpose of the Study

This study was about uncovering ways of supporting all newcomers to give them the same chances for success although often through different pathways. In light of a new provincial policy, aiming for bilingualism for all in Ontario by 2054, steps presently taken in second language teaching needed investigating. The implementation of CEFR evaluation grids and language and cultural passports required examination for their adaptation to local context. In order to support newcomers, scaffolding had to be built in and as well having them work with others to facilitate their adaptation and integration especially English Language Learners (ELLs) (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013, 2014).

This meant that it was necessary to examine what it entails preparing future teachers in a Higher Education teacher training program, including a number of newcomers (ELLs), to learn about how to implement collaboration, multilanguaging and other aspects in schools for their pupils while they are learning about it themselves. This needed to be both based on theoretical tenets and practical applications. Plus, at the same time there was a need to increase effectiveness including the diverse visions and the added richness brought about by these newcomers in courses.

4. Methods

To uncover a lot of detail, a qualitative approach was chosen (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Ministry guidelines were examined to identify types of support to provide newcomers as well as teachers classroom journals entries for the same. The approach consists of a case study as one instructor's course notes and teaching journals were the object of data analysis at one university. Observational and procedural notes from three different courses were examined. The students in these courses were all five or sixth year university students having been accepted at a Faculty of Education for the professional preparation course to become teachers of French. The notes examined were all on these courses exclusively. Although numbers are not relevant here, this instructor had approximately 150 students overall.

To more closely scrutinize the data from observational note taking, we used Flanagan's (1954) critical incident technique to highlight the occurrences of situations of interest tied to the desired awareness-raising and also examined notes on group work wherever relevant using interaction analysis (Gardner, 2019). The focus was on the help provided to enable students to anchor knowledge appropriately.

The chosen theoretical framework was situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1990). Underlying frameworks include tenets around affinity spaces (Gee, 2005), communities of practice (Wenger, 1998).

As per Ministry guidelines, course activities had been redesigned in line with more emphasis required on collaboration during group work, rather than cooperation. Cooperation is opposite of standing alone or competing, and constitutes one positive first step for inclusion, but collaboration is active participation in a shared endeavor. Activities devised were usually of a three-tier action-oriented nature as per CEFR and the action oriented approach (Council of Europe, 2001), requiring task completion and to be taken to a higher level with active participation of all the members in collaboration. Collaborative tasks can include expert group types of activities with rotations across document types for completion with the objective of increased collaboration. Following are examples of two collaborative tasks carried out in class. For instance, the objective was to complete a task based on Canadian geography in a French immersion classroom with expert groups on the different provinces of the country, filling in all the information on a map of the country, or a task on anatomy with an emphasis on language use, namely a collaborative annotated body vocabulary task, including drawing pictures and contributing names and expressions in writing where relevant. This would also involve collaborative problem-solving.

The instructor appeared to have been left with a number of questions regarding how to bridge the gaps both theoretically and practically.

Students in the education program had learned about cooperative learning and because collaboration is similar, they tended to conflate the two. It was important to understand that collaboration is a coordinated, synchronous activity that is the result of a continued attempt to construct and maintain a shared conception of a problem, whereas, analyzed, cooperation is accomplished by the division of labor among participants as an activity where each person is responsible for solving a portion of the problem.

5. Findings

Results show a number of interesting aspects. Taking into account Ministry of Education guidelines and especially the importance of developing activities to have pupils communicate in the classroom, constitutes a challenge in itself. When, in addition, the future teachers who are newcomers to the country and are from varied cultural and language backgrounds, more complexity was added, however the instructor was mindful of diverse ways of being and doing, and designed a course for best practices.

In line with Ministry recommendations, the emphasis was on communication and included interaction and mediation in the classroom as per CEFR guidelines. Therefore, it was deemed to be appropriate to also apply these tenets in the teacher preparation course. The major findings uncovered from the analysis of instructor journals were, facilitating interactions by giving more time which often entailed groupings around L1, finding ways of mediating using different supporting languages through multilanguaging, and around dealing with issues in collaboration.

5.1. Groupings along the same L1

Within plurilingual contexts classroom populations are varied and same L1 groups coming together at certain times during the course was deemed to be very beneficial or when numbers did not make it not

possible, groupings around close languages achieved a similar results with also enabling connections to similar cultural backgrounds.

When difficulties arise, especially as is the case for newcomers, one automatically tends to revert to one's first language to alleviate some of the communicative burden. So, it made sense to organize groupings at the time given for consolidation work, i.e. the discussion of difficulties and strategies that best worked to complete a given task, around students' first language. This way of doing is respectful of all aspects of EDIID. Ladson-Billings (1995, 2014) believes in including students' cultural references in all aspects of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. Recognizing a variety of languages and the cultural strengths attached to them, encourages success and promotes open-mindedness (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). This was effectively implemented in the teacher training courses under scrutiny. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2013) advocates this approach, especially for newcomers also called English Language Learners (ELLs) stressing the importance of learning within the context of culture, a student-centered curriculum, culturally mediated-instruction, involving reshaping the curriculum.

In the Canadian multicultural context, the importance of celebrating cultural differences and nurturing the unique cultural strengths in language and cultural difference is essential to encourage success and promote an open mind and a supportive environment. This led to work through materials and also ensuring that materials were sufficiently interesting and challenging to motivate diverse students and to make everyone feel included and, in addition, allowing the use of a common language in order to simplify discussion of difficulties and successful strategies to be used.

One activity described in the notes involved a progressive information gathering and sharing of students' cultural contexts, to raise awareness. First, students were asked to list 10 characteristics of their culture and share them with the class. Next, groups were set-up with people who identified themselves for shared cultural contexts to further discuss commonalities and differences. Links to be explored on cultural awareness had been provided by the instructor ahead of class time for awareness-raising. Results of the activities were reported and further discussion ensued. Finally, students filled in their cultural star, a graph also sent to them ahead of class time, choosing five representative features for information gathering on diverse cultures.

For this group activity, students tended to be more spontaneous and creative. It was easy to verify and reinforce knowledge gained from prior to class reading assignments through the group activities. We essentially uncovered the side involving the normative beliefs concept like in Ajzen's (2002) intention model referring to the students interiorized values as confirmed by their social models and referents.

The process was sometimes slow and went through explorations, and trial and error like acquiring successful strategies through practice, in line with Dubar's (1991) findings. This needs to be crafted very carefully as one cannot monitor every group at all times.

Situational contexts showed differences in socio-economic status which could be problematic but it also allowed showing cultural artefacts found online and sharing in the groups.

Following the activity, the grouping around the same L1 had been particularly successful to engage in the discussion of difficulties with the task and sharing of successful strategies, as students also expanded on the familiar and established connections with similarities in cultures different from theirs.

There was a problematic situation for one group of students when meeting the first time as they did not know one another. Fail proof steps as regards strategies, and more course materials would need to be built-into such a teaching module. They also needed to be made comfortable with other class members, while sharing their findings, so perhaps such a module should be postponed until later in the course after some familiarity was established through prior interactions.

Identifying resources to make that cultural responsive component workable appeared more crucial when keeping in mind group building. This would require tighter control to ensure home readings are done. During the activities both theoretical and practical knowledge came into play. This should be measured for balance as the students were more interested in the practical aspects.

Motivation has to be sustained throughout and the question of monitoring if students stay on task in the class requires additional checking.

5.2. Multilanguaging

Language use is shifting thus it was important to delineate ways of adapting group turn-taking or rotations in task completion. In doing so future teachers had to learn what multilanguaging entails and in turn be able to find time for it during classroom activities. The activities required a fair amount of complexity. As the most important aspect was the learning outcomes, it was felt that strictly imposing only the L2, i.e. usage of the French language, could be limiting some of the students' access to processing all the information. The basic question examined was about how they developed as a learning organization (Senge et al., 1994) in their ways of communicating.

Before the courses the instructor sought resources, built-in reinforcement stages to transpose the activities involving rotations. The idea was to transpose an activity on vocabulary enrichment in second language teaching. Basic drawings of body outlines on large sheets of paper were placed on different tables. Groups of "specialists" of a part of the body were formed around divisions of the body, also divided in the center into female and male sides moving from table to table, adding drawings and the corresponding vocabulary…with the objective for each subsequent rotation to share knowledge, learning from others, completing, annotating and correcting. The objective was to also add idioms and collocations connected to the given topic for second language vocabulary development. For example, a group when working on the topic 'head', would make notes around the word 'the eyes', not only adding description but also expressions connected to a) physical, b) emotional and c) mental aspects, for example, 'eye twitching', 'crying your eyes out', 'in the mind's eye', 'an eye for an eye'. Students were allowed to access the different languages they knew if they could glean relevant information through them. This was especially important for the understanding of idioms and proverbs across languages.

This access to other languages increased motivation. Observational and procedural notes taken during the processes yielded the following information. The sharing of information was the easiest aspect to observe in the space. Some students found it difficult to give up control to others. Some were more quiet as in the group setting they appeared more vulnerable. Because of such concerns, no grades should be attached to such group activities with the ultimate goal being limited to task-completion. Multilanguaging can be considered to be 'messy', it could either improve over time or be bound to fail depending on certain factors which should be investigated further, namely dominant personalities and lack of interest. Some

students were lacking self-regulation (Bandura, 1997) and tended to complain about inclusion although the intent through multilanguaging was to make them all feel that they belonged.

Overall, great results were achieved through multilanguaging, although some tension was identified. This, in turn, made the students take more notice, which, in fact, is desirable for learning. The present phase could be compared positively to earlier examples of progressive exploration of community building, starting from one language only group building, followed by multilanguaging group building (Lave & Wenger, 1990; Wenger, 1998). One of the questions that needs to be explored further is whether with more on-line interactions in the future, there would be sufficient community building or if Tony Bates' claim (2017), that on-line university teaching requires anchoring to the institution with an added plus, for 'branding' in the form of a few face-to-face meetings for on-line course participants, and in this case, we recommend that multi-languaging should be a possible built-in feature.

5.3. Collaboration

Recently the perspective changed in education from valuing mostly the ability to work independently to stressing the need to collaborate. This may come as a push from industry, as it has been shown that teams that work collaboratively often access greater resources and achieve more recognition and rewards when competing. Within the action-oriented approach this entailed collaborative problem solving.

Collaboration requires awareness, motivation, self-synchronization, participation, mediation, reciprocity, reflection and engagement, so the question of how to increase collaboration among student participants required serious pondering. One theoretical issue was the fact that students often conflated cooperation and collaboration in learning tasks. This misuse is acknowledged in the literature, and very clear distinction are made. Collaboration enables individuals to work together to achieve a defined and common purpose.

To this end the instructor put emphasis on group activities to foster collaboration. The idea was to develop mini-communities of practice (Lave, 1988; Lave & Wenger, 1990; Wenger, 1998). To engage everyone at the whole class level the instructor devised chain activities, like for instance collaborative story telling either using past or future tense in small groups.

To reinforce topics covered, in the design the instructor connected similar topics to help with learning. For instance, setting-up activity centres around a central topic but involving various different activities proved very successful. With five or six groups per class, each group prepared a seven minute activity for their table involving a task completion, with a rotation from one activity centre to the next during class time. Students devised activities around the use of conditional tense around discussions about winning the lottery, their dream house etc.

An additional incentive to motivate the students was to devise a few games to break the rhythm although they also involved serious content. For instance, students were to prepare questions on content to be mastered, in preparation of a subsequent test with the class divided into teams. Not only did they have to review the previous lessons but they also had to concentrate on the more difficult aspects as questions could be asked on them. This was very successful at bringing the team members to collaborate.

Great care was taken to avoid activities that were deemed to slow down learning, like for instance word associations, as they did not provide communicative practice.

Out of classroom activities were encouraged, like for instance a treasure hunt where many messages requiring reading comprehension involving more difficult language structures plus requiring an answer (for instance using the subjective tense in French) were taped in different locations, with students given 'a road map'. The motivational aspect of this activity showed increased collaboration, which was discussed after their return to class

6. Conclusion

Further investigations are needed to ensure the adoption of CEFR measures province wide. If the CEFR has brought about the development of new perspectives, the question of its proper implementation remains. There is also the danger for teachers to revert to teaching 'about' the target language rather than actually teaching the language, both with the idea of L1 grouping and multilanguaging, as teacher might find them to be easy solutions. Overall, though, measures taken as reported in the teaching journal provided some positive results

Great ideas were generated although through some tension. The difficulty added to the tasks made participants take more notice and it hopefully added to their learning, otherwise the tasks would have been too easy to complete and not allowing for language development.

Ultimately, the students also learned that they needed to respect other people's roles, thoughts and contributions, which is important in both collaboration and cooperation.

They also learned that they needed to trust, which in fact is needed for both cooperation and collaboration. During cooperation, each student's participation is identifiable and instructors can grade each student separately whereas the result of collaboration does not single out individuals, the final product is evaluated. A lack of trust could have been the root cause making collaboration so difficult. Given the fact that many of these students had a competitive streak, as they wanted to stand out on their own, this aspect of their personality could also be harmful. This aspect will be difficult to mediate. There is no doubt that to make the students embrace all aspects of EDIID will take time and effort.

The causes underlying this situation could be traditional institutional thinking, and could be remedied by including people with different belief systems, different values, and from different walks of life. We can be optimistic that inclusionary thinking will foster a true culture of collaboration.

Despite the fact that the instructor provided various materials for class preparation such as videos, charts and tables, articles with theoretical and practical contents, classroom activities to become familiar with, models and samples, some students did not fully engage in preparation. Although the idea was to provide sufficient diversity to accommodate a variety of learner styles, it was obvious that unprepared students also could not fully participate in class. Some students remained on the side lines. In the context of situated learning, peripheral participation is legitimate. However, this does not allow collaboration to be enacted.

True collaboration is hard and is not compromise or consensus. The added richness brought about by newcomers is invaluable in the context of education. It is our hope that with more practice over time, all

groups will be able to fully collaborate in these courses as this also is a requirement for teachers in the school system in Ontario.

References

Ajzen, I. (2002). Perceived behavioural control, self-efficacy, locus of control and the theory of planned behaviour. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 32*, 1-20. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2002.tb00236.x

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: the exercise of control*. W.H. Freeman.

Bates, T. (2017). Oral communication during a workshop at Queen's University.

Bourdieu, P. (1980). *Le sens pratique* [The Logic of Practice]. Minuit.

Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment.* Council of Europe.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches.* SAGE.

Dubar, C. (1991). *La socialisation. Construction des identités sociales et professionnelles* [Socialization: Construction of social and professional identities]. A. Colin.

Flanagan, J. C. (1954). The Critical Incident Technique. *Psychological Bulletin*, *54*(4). https://doi.org/10.1037/h0061470

Gardner, R. (2019). Classroom interaction research: the state of the art. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, *52*(3), 212-226. https://doi.org/10.1080/08351813.2019.1631037

Gay, G., & Kirkland, K. (2003). Developing cultural critical consciousness and self-reflection in preservice teacher education. *Theory into Practice, 42*(3), 81-87. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4203_3

Gee, J. P. (2005). Semiotic social spaces and affinity spaces: from the Age of Mythology to today's schools. In D. Barton, & K. Tusting (Eds.), *Beyond communities of practice. Language, power and social context* (pp. 214-232). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511610554.012

Labrie, N., Lamoureux, S., & Wilson, D. (2009). *L'accès des francophones aux études postsecondaires en Ontario: Le choix des jeunes* [Francophone access to postsecondary education in Ontario: Youth choices]. Centre de recherche en éducation franco-ontarienne [Franco-Ontarian Education Research Centre].

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Education Research Journal, 32*(3), 465-491. https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312032003465

Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: a.k.a. the remix. *Harvard Educational Review*, *84*(1), 74-84. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.84.1.p2rj131485484751

Larsen-Freeman, D. (2018). Looking ahead: future directions in, and future research into, second language acquisition. *Foreign Language Annals, 51*(1), 55-72. https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12314

Lave, J. (1988*). Cognition and practice: mind, mathematics and culture in everyday life*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511609268

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1990). Situated learning: legitimate peripheral participation. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511815355

Luhmann, N. (1995). *Social systems*. Stanford University Press.

Olson, D. (2003). Psychological theory and educational reform: how schools remake mind and society. Cambridge University Press.

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2007). English language learners: ESL and ELD programs and services. Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools – Kindergarten to Grade 12. Retrieved August 10, 2021 from edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/esleldprograms/esleldprograms.pdf

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2009). *Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy*, p. 5 (Internet). Retrieved August 10, 2021 from edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/equity.pdf

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2013). *Culturally responsive pedagogy. Capacity building series.* The Queen's Printer.

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2014). *Collaborative inquiry in Ontario. Capacity building Series*. The Queen's Printer.

Senge, P., Kleiner, A., Roberts, L., Ross, R. B., & Smith, B. (1994). *The fifth discipline fieldbook: strategies and tools for building a learning organization.* Doubleday.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: learning, meaning, identity*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511803932