

In April 2010 we worked together to produce the first issue of *OLBI Working Papers*, focusing on language immersion as formal and informal learning. We are pleased to collaborate again, this time on a thematic issue on university-level French immersion. In February 2012, the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI) and the *Régime d'immersion en français* (RIF) at the University of Ottawa organized a forum entitled “Immersion at the university level: Models, challenges and prospects” in order to celebrate the RIF’s fifth anniversary. This event brought together researchers from around the world — Finland, Switzerland, the United States and Canada. The symposium’s main focuses were immersion models, stakeholders and issues, which are explored further in this special issue. The first section offers an in-depth description of various models of French immersion at the university level, while the second section presents the perceptions of students registered in French immersion programs in Canadian universities. The issue concludes with a synthesis of the Forum’s presentations and argues for the need for a pedagogy of French immersion at the university level.

In the first article from the Models section, the Forum’s guest speaker, Aline Gohard-Radenkovic, gives a detailed analysis of the status of French immersion in the Swiss post-secondary system, with a specific focus on the bilingual university of Fribourg/Freiburg and its *Bilingue Plus* program, implemented in 2004 to meet the needs of students in the Faculty of Law.

The papers in this section describe different models implemented at three Canadian universities: the University of Ottawa’s models (dating back to the 1980s), the model implemented at Simon Fraser University in 2004 and the one designed at York University’s Glendon College in 2012. These models are meant to address different sizes of population, from twenty to several hundred students.

Sandra Burger, Alysse Weinberg and Mari Wesche begin with the origins of immersion at the University of Ottawa and describe its evolution from the initial sheltered model to the adjunct model now implemented in the *Régime d'immersion en français*. Next, Bettina Cenerelli shows how the sheltered model has been adapted to accommodate the strong experiential and community-based focus at the core of Simon Fraser University’s *French Cohort Program*. And finally, Françoise Mougeon introduces the new content-based initiative developed at the bilingual Glendon College in order to integrate language and content in an experiential learning context.

The second section of this issue, Research, features three qualitative research papers studying the experience of students registered in university-level French immersion.

Eva Lemaire used the reflective drawings technique to collect and analyze the representations of twenty-four students of French in the minority context of the Campus Saint Jean at the University of Alberta. Her findings show similarities and differences in how these students relate to language and community, depending on their linguistic and academic profiles: immersion, French school in a majority or a minority context, or a mixed experience. Sylvie Lamoureux studied how two hundred and nineteen young students registered in the RIF at the University of Ottawa experienced the transition from high school to university. She focuses on the motivations, challenges and social aspects of the student experience, and identifies the administrative and pedagogical prerequisites of a successful transition. Jérémie Séror and Alysse Weinberg interviewed twenty-four students also registered in the RIF in order to find out about the challenges, risks and rewards of taking a university-level program in a second language. They offer suggestions for the successful implementation of such programs in French.

What better way to conclude this issue than with the guest speaker's summary of the Forum's works. Aline Gohard-Radenkovic pays homage to the "pioneers", "builders" and "scouts" of university-level immersion. She identifies the many common traits and pinpoints the differences due to the varied contexts. She makes the case for a pedagogy for French immersion which would be based on the individuals' experiences and which would train them to successfully perform their job not only as students, but as bilingual students.

University-level French immersion is also a unique opportunity for researchers, since everything needs to be invented. The OLBI offers a live research laboratory and takes pride in its leadership in the field. In this issue we want to share research ideas and start an ongoing dialogue with all members of the multifaceted university-level French immersion community.

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