
Approaching French-speaking cultures in the FSL classroom: The *salade niçoise* recipe

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Abstract

The most meaningful and profound elements of cultures are often hidden below the surface. This exploratory case study investigates how a sample of Ontario non-native French-speaking educators approached French-speaking cultures in the Grade 9 Core French classroom. Confident participants were often frequent travellers to francophone communities, regularly studied French to improve their linguistic and cultural proficiencies, and redesigned cultural activities with current material. The educators also experienced difficulties including lack of information and communications technology, teacher-training and experiential learning for students. The findings raise several possibilities for profound cultural exploration, such as (a) perceiving culture through a pluricultural perspective, (b) refining teacher-training initiatives, (c) following the neurolinguistic approach for oral fluency, and (d) prioritizing travel-based activities so that students can better explore francophone communities and their cultures.

Key words: French as a second language, Core French Program, non-native French-speaking teacher, culture, teacher change


Résumé

Les éléments les plus significatifs des cultures sont profonds, mais cachés sous la surface. Une étude de cas exploratoire a examiné comment un échantillon d'enseignants de l'Ontario non-natifs du français ont abordé les cultures francophones dans la classe du français de base de 9e année. Les participants confiants étaient souvent de fréquents voyageurs dans les communautés francophones, étudiaient régulièrement le français afin d'améliorer leurs compétences linguistiques et culturelles, et repensaient les activités culturelles avec du contenu mis-à-jour. Les enseignants ont aussi rencontré des difficultés notamment le manque des technologies de l'information et de la communication, la formation en matière d'enseignement, et l'apprentissage expérientiel pour les étudiants. Les résultats soulèvent les possibilités suivantes pour explorer la culture de

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manière approfondie, tels que de (a) percevoir la culture à travers une perspective pluriculturelle, (b) d'affiner la formation des enseignants, (c) de suivre l'approche neurolinguistique pour l'expression orale, et (d) de prioriser des activités basées sur les voyages pour que les apprenants puissent mieux explorer les communautés francophones et leurs cultures.

Mots-clés : français langue seconde, programme français de base, enseignant non-natif du français, culture, professionnalisation des enseignants

Research context— Une salade niçoise Madame ? Non, merci

Baguettes and *bicyclettes*. These two words frequently came to my mind as a former high school French as a second language (FSL) student when thinking about French culture. While I enjoyed eating crispy French bread, singing songs by Edith Piaf and watching the *Phantom of the Opera* in my high school FSL classes, I knew that there was so much more to French culture.

As a child and teenager, I visited my francophone grandparents every summer in Quebec; though I did not self-identify as a French speaker. Later, I became an Ontario FSL teacher. Throughout my university program, I learned about classic French literature and cinema, and refined my grammatical knowledge. However, the post-secondary curricula at the time did not offer any perspective on the modern day characteristics of a variety of French-speaking communities. I only understood French culture as a singular concept and felt inferior and unprepared to teach French-speaking cultures as a non-native French-speaker.

I experienced this programming lack, in particular, when I taught a Grade 9 Core French (CF)¹ class several years ago. I designed a francophone cuisine unit to excite my adolescent students, often disinterested to learn about French-speaking communities. In our school's home economics classroom, my students prepared a French dish of their choice for a class party. I brought a French salad, named *salade niçoise*. I already knew that most students had never tried this dish, but I did not expect such disinterest. Only a handful of courageous students tried my salad. Instead, they veered off to the familiar dessert section of croissants, eclairs, and macarons. My experience that day, is an example of the challenges that some non-native FSL educators face in approaching unfamiliar cultures of francophone communities to non-native

¹As indicated in the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) curriculum (2014), the Core French (CF) Program is an introductory level French class that is part of the overarching Ontario FSL programming, with Grade 9 as the first year of high school in the province. CF is the most popular enrolled program (Canadian Parents for French, 2017; Viswanathan, 2016), with Grade 9 CF, often, the last year of French class, with reasons including student despondence (Canadian Parents for French, 2017, 2019).

French-speaking students. Therefore, in the late fall of 2018, I conducted an exploratory case study to investigate cultural practices of Ontario Grade 9 CF educators who were also non-native French-speakers. This article summarizes my doctoral research study.

The journey for pluricultural competence in FSL classrooms

My study's focus was also shared in the SL research community. Learning about cultures motivates SL students to further their education in the target language (Mueller, 1985) and is a preferred topic for students in comparison to learning about “grammar and verb conjugations” (Sinay et al., 2018, p. 60). Unfortunately, culture is commonly characterized and introduced superficially, through such identifiers as flags, cuisine and music. These examples are part of the visible layer of a metaphorical cultural iceberg (e.g., Weaver, 1986), as outlined in Figure 1.

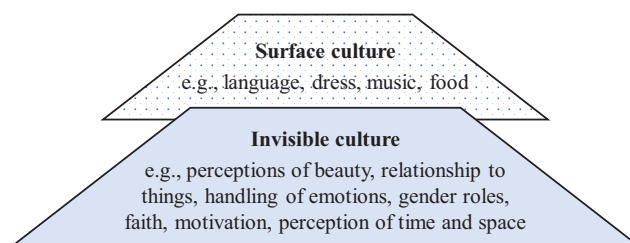


Figure 1
Cultural iceberg
(adapted from Hanley, n.d.)

Merely exposing SL students to surface culture is not enough for meaningful, cultural appreciation and interaction. Teachers should offer these hidden, cultural characteristics to students as they represent the authentic, everyday culture of different communities.

Culture has many definitions; however, for my study, I selected the term *pluriculture* (Council of Europe, 2001, 2016, 2018, 2020). According to the Council of Europe, pluriculture is multifaceted and enables the SL learner to “use all their linguistic resources when necessary, encouraging them to see similarities and regularities as well as differences between languages and cultures” (2020, p. 30). Further, viewing culture as pluriculture abandons the unattainable goal of “perfect bilingualism” (Piccardo, 2018, p. 9) and places greater responsibility on the language learner to interact with the target culture. I argue that maintaining a pluricultural perspective also allows for deeper exploration of the invisible characteristics of the cultural iceberg (e.g., Weaver, 1986) as it is a much more encompassing term for culture.

While I celebrated the complexities of French-speaking cultures, my literature review summarized pedagogical challenges to plunge deeper below the iceberg's surface. Approaching cultures in the SL classroom can present challenges for educators (Falardeau & Simard, 2011; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Loveday, 1982). For example, Ontario FSL students often struggle to communicate in French (Rehner, 2014), even with increased programming priorities for more listening and oral communication (OME, 2013, 2014). Often, many questions arise during the programming stage as SL teachers must determine the who, what, where, when and why of the target culture. Furthermore, when attempting to follow a pluricultural perspective to culture, I questioned to what degree teachers include the student's home culture, while concurrently maintaining the integrity and purpose of learning the target language.

The language identity of the SL teacher has also been perceived as a challenge for approaching cultures in the classroom. FSL researchers have observed challenges for non-native French-speaking Canadian teachers, echoing my insecurities. For example, these educators often prefer standardized French variations, such as Parisian French in their programming (Webb, 2012; Wernicke, 2016; Wernicke-Heinrichs, 2013). Furthermore, these educators often feel insecure for not belonging to francophone communities (Viswanathan, 2016).

Often, SL educators deprioritize teaching culture while prioritizing static elements of the language such as reading and writing (Falardeau & Simard, 2011; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Loveday, 1982). Therefore, as cultures are complex, I wanted to explore how teachers can shift from merely transmitting cultural information to offering transformative cultural opportunities to disengaged, beginner-level learners.

Methodology

From late 2018 to early 2019, I conducted an exploratory case study (Guida, 2020) with the research objective to better understand how to integrate invisible French-speaking cultures in my local teaching context. I investigated how Ontario non-native French-speaking high school teachers approached French-speaking cultures in their Grade 9 CF classrooms with their revised curriculum (OME, 2014). The research questions were the following:

1. How do non-native French-speaking teachers in Ontario approach French cultures in the Grade 9 Core French curriculum (OME, 2014)?
2. How do these teachers specifically implement the added Intercultural Understanding sub-strand of the curriculum in authentic ways?

First, I distributed an online questionnaire to 50 of the province's Grade 9 CF non-native French-speaking educators. The questions explored the accessibility level of cultural resources, the meaning of culture to respondents and a general profile of Ontario non-native Grade 9 CF teachers.

Overall, the respondents obtained their FSL teaching degree in Ontario and often interacted with non-native French-speaking colleagues. The teachers recognized and respected the dynamic nature of French-speaking cultures and of their professional duty to offer culturally relevant materials to their FSL students. However, the educators identified challenges in obtaining a plethora of francophone resources and preferred a European French focus.

I then worked closely with ten of the 50 educators for a more in-depth exploration into my research problem. Table 1 outlines the remaining data collection opportunities.

Table 1

Data collection summary

Data collection type	Timeline
Interview 1	Fall 2018
Interview 2	December 2018–January 2019
Virtual focus group	January 31, 2019
Exchange of cultural resources	Volunteer basis, ongoing

The first semi-structured interview contained 17 questions to (a) extend the participants' responses from the questionnaire, (b) explore the teachers' initial cultural perceptions and pedagogical strategies, and (c) establish professional learning goals as non-native French-speaking educators with regards to francophone cultures.

The second semi-structured interview contained 14 questions to (a) promote practitioner reflection regarding their teaching of French-speaking cultures over the course of the semester, (b) determine their use of the curriculum (OME, 2014) for final cultural tasks of their courses, and (c) identify participant needs and goals.

Seven out of the ten teacher-participants joined the online focus group and responded to ten discussion questions. The purpose of the meeting was to (a) extend the participants' professional network, (b) discuss cultural approaches, and (c) review cultural growth as non-native French-speaking educators. Participants were invited to bring a sample of cultural resources to the meeting. Participants were welcome to submit cultural materials throughout the study.

Data were analyzed through a non-objective, non-positivistic lens (Lincoln et al., 2011), and through an iterative process (Lincoln et al., 2011;

Richardson, 1994, 1997) to better support characteristics of qualitative case study research. To confirm the accuracy of the data, I engaged in member checking with participants (Birt et al., 2016), structurally coded the data, established themes (Creswell, 2015) and used my conceptual framework to inform my discussion.

My salade niçoise conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of my inquiry was a *salade niçoise*. It symbolized the ideal Grade 9 CF classroom that is French, healthy, plentiful, fresh and unique. Just as culture is dynamic, a *salade niçoise* contains plentiful ingredients, with multiple interpretations to support the unique needs of each Grade 9 CF classroom. A *salade niçoise* is typically an unfamiliar meal for many FSL students as its ingredients are unique to this recipe. As a Grade 9 CF teacher, my students often prefer consuming a familiar garden salad, or exclusively learning about Paris and Quebec. Therefore, preparing a *salade niçoise* classroom requires dedication and persistence. For the purposes of this study, I only focused on the teacher-chef, eggs, green beans, and potatoes in my overall recipe. Participants were unaware of my metaphorical salad, as I wanted to primarily focus on their experiences. Table 2 itemizes each component of my *salade niçoise*.

The teacher-chef

I perceived the Ontario Grade 9 CF non-native French-speaking educator as the chef who prepares the *salade niçoise* classroom. The province's FSL teachers are professionally required to deliver the curriculum; therefore, I focus on teachers as research participants. Each teacher-chef has a variety of cultural competencies and experiences. I argue that a Michelin-star (Chef Academy, 2020) chef is one who creates the best salad for cultural exploration and should not be defined by a linguistic identity.

How does a chef prepare the best salad? I refer to the nested pedagogical orientations framework (Cummins, 2001, 2009; Cummins et al., 2007) as it respects professional judgement in programming and promotes critical literacy. Figure 2 illustrates the framework.

According to Cummins (2001, 2009), teachers approach their pedagogy and build knowledge through the merging of the three orientations. Similar to culture, no classroom should be taught in the same way. Educators following the transmission orientation to pedagogy have a direct teaching style with "reading [and] phonics . . . prioritized over the pursuit of meaning" (Cummins et al., 2007, p. 38). As a current Grade 9 CF teacher, there are times in the curriculum to teach French-speaking cultures by memorizing and pronouncing expressions, presenting francophone communities and filling in missing words

Table 2
The salade niçoise conceptual framework

Component	Theoretical concept(s)	Researcher(s)
<i>Salade niçoise</i> teacher-chef	Nested pedagogical orientations	Cummins (2001, 2009); Cummins et al. (2007)
Green beans	Pluricultural competence	Council of Europe (2001, 2016, 2018, 2020)
	Action-oriented approach	Council of Europe (2001, 2016, 2018)
	Cultural iceberg model	Weaver (1986)
	Lived curriculum approach	Aoki (1999)
	Critical pedagogy	Freire (1968/1970)
	LX	Dewaele (2018)
Eggs	Neurolinguistic approach	Netten & Germain (2012)
Potatoes	ICT section of the FSL curriculum	OME (2014)
Pepper as parental support	Various school board parental guides and the Ontario FSL curricula	OME (2014)
Salt as the school administration	Transforming FSL resources	https://transformingfsl.ca/en/
<i>Salade niçoise</i> consumer-student	Learning skills of the <i>Growing success</i> document	OME (2010)

from lyrics. However, just like Cummins (2001, 2009) I argue that exclusively relying on a transmission orientation is not effective in today's classrooms.

Educators implementing the social constructivist orientation to pedagogy include “higher-order thinking abilities based on teachers and students co-constructing knowledge and understanding” (Cummins et al., 2007, p. 44). Following this orientation, I envision Ontario Grade 9 CF educators spending more time in addressing the why and how culture. Using music as an example, discussion questions would prioritize establishing student connections to French songs and their local cultures.

Cummins preferred the transformative curriculum orientation as its overall purpose is for teachers and students to gain greater “insight into how knowledge intersects with power [for] critical literacy” (Cummins et al., 2007, p. 45) and “issues of equity and social justice” (Cummins, 2011, p. 7). This action-oriented pedagogical orientation critically examines the teaching content in collaboration with the teacher and student. While the teacher is still

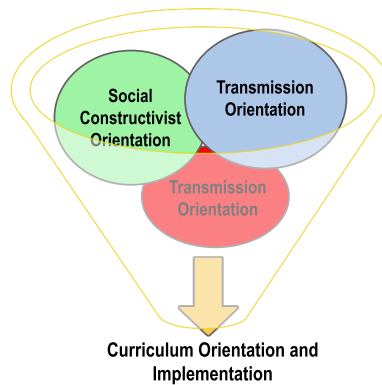


Figure 2

Nested pedagogical orientations framework

(Reprinted by permission of Pearson Education, Inc. from Cummins et al., 2007, p. 45).

at the forefront for student learning, there is an increased need for learner accountability.

I apply the characteristics of the transformative orientation to the teaching of French music. Students can explore hidden meanings and implications of lyrics for a deeper understanding and appreciation of French music that can go below visible culture. While I see the transformative pedagogical orientation as the goal, the Ontario Grade 9 CF classroom can be unpredictable and challenging for reasons including student absenteeism and despondence (Viswanathan, 2016). Therefore, for this research study, I welcomed the use of all three orientations by my participants.

Green beans

The green beans represented French-speaking cultures. I drew from a variety of research to represent this important ingredient. Aoki (1999) highlights that the curriculum, just like culture, needs to be experienced by students and not linear. I perceive linear curriculum when teachers address curriculum expectations by merely checking off programming expectations in a ministry document or covering a unit on French culture, often in a chronological order. When the topic is covered, the teacher would continue to the next curriculum expectation, never returning to prior learning. Considering Aoki's preference for an experienced curriculum perspective, FSL teachers can work towards experiencing curriculum expectations with examples including action-oriented tasks where learners are motivated to resolve problems in francophone communities such as purchasing a train ticket. In turn, FSL teachers inherently cover curriculum expectations such as using the present tense to interact with

a speaker, but are doing so naturally and by confronting francophone cultures. Essentially, FSL educators should move away from merely presenting cultural characteristics to students. It is through ongoing action-based tasks going well below visible culture where SL students apply critical pedagogy in practice.

Critical pedagogy is experienced when students and teachers rectify “social inequalities ... of the highly institutionalized educational system” and imperfect world (Keneman, 2013, p. 24). Essentially, the programming should expand the “beads and feathers” (St. Denis, 2010, p. 314) of superficial culture. Dewaele (2018) believes that language competency should no longer be perceived as compartmentalized units, illustrated by numerical labels (e.g., L1, L2, L3). He therefore replaced these labels by LX. Inspired by this theory, I understand the learning of the target culture to be a value-neutral CX as I believe that language learners should avoid thinking about cultural proficiencies in compartmentalized units of C1, C2, etc. I conceive that there should be recognition, not judgement, of a SL student’s growth in cultural understanding. In my FSL classrooms, I celebrate learning about my students’ love of baking madeleine cookies and dancing the tarantella, yet I understand that there is always room for improvement regarding cultural awareness and interaction. This means that Ontario Grade 9 CF students should be encouraged to never stop learning about cultures, just like they should continuously refine their French language proficiency.

Eggs

How should Ontario Grade 9 CF teachers teach French-speaking cultures to beginner-level students? When designing my conceptual framework, I distinguished the egg as the neurolinguistic approach (Netten & Germain, 2012). This approach best addressed my pedagogical dilemma as it focuses on internalizing the target language through engaging, oral language activities. Rooted in neuroscience research, it recognizes a time and place for both implicit and explicit competence (Germain, 2018), yet with an increased pedagogical focus for students to develop “unconscious skills” (p. 4) or internal grammar. Figure 3 illustrates my interpretations of the approach.

The root of the tree represents the approach’s focus on oral fluency development. In order to improve fluency for FSL students, teachers should include all five principles found in my tree. Table 3 summarizes my insight into the researchers’ main principles.

How does a language learner develop internal grammar? I use an example of learning how to dance the Cancan. While dancers may improve practice through explicit instructions, most often, the learning is inherent, implicit and subconsciously developed. It is difficult to explain to an individual how to dance—one just dances. Similarly, students should not be merely taught

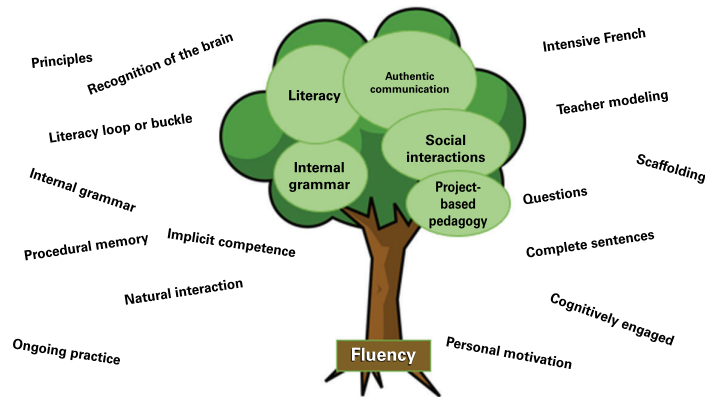


Figure 3

Summary of the neurolinguistic approach

(adapted from Netten & Germain, 2012)

about cultural concepts, but naturally integrate the material in their daily lives. This is the goal of the neurolinguistic approach—for students to confidently communicate with others by subconsciously incorporating innate knowledge. Therefore, in line with these principles, cultural content should be authentic, motivational, interactive and spontaneous for students.

Potatoes

I distinguished potatoes as the necessary Information Communications Technology (ICT) for the Ontario Grade 9 CF classroom to resolve access issues to French-speaking communities for non-native French-speaking educators. I believed that ICT would become immediate solutions for participants to bringing meaningful French cultural content into their classrooms. In fact, Furstenberg (2010) recognized the power of online cultural exchange opportunities as they can bring “the outside world right into our students’ homes and into our classrooms, providing students with direct and equal access to the complex, rich and multifaceted world of the target culture” (p. 329). I learned that the province’s FSL educators must implement ICT in their classes to access culturally rich materials from francophone Canada and on an international scale (OME, 2014). Online guest speakers, exploring communities with virtual maps, researching French-speaking communities and exchanging emails with francophone students abroad are some examples of how Ontario Grade 9 CF teachers and students can benefit from a heavy salad of ICT potatoes.

Table 3

Summary of the five principles of the neurolinguistic approach

(adapted from Netten & Germain, 2012)

Principle	Summary
Internal grammar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Procedural memory focus from the unconscious, implicit competence, automatic retention (ex. swimming) – Pedagogy of the sentence – Neuron connections by speaking in the target language – Essential for oral fluency – Complete sentences are imperative when speaking
Development of literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – It's not just, Silence, go read! – Motivating questions guide instruction and initiate each lesson – Oral communication reinforced throughout the literacy cycle (oral, reading, writing, oral) – Message priority over the grammatical form to activate student motivation to keep speaking
Authentic communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Authentic language resources – Authentic to the student's experience
Social interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Create multiple listening and speaking opportunities – Reduces anxiety – Enriches vocabulary – Activating neurons – Opportunities to correct errors in conversation with others
Project-based pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Opportunities to recycle, enrich and develop unit vocabulary – Interesting activities for the student – Each project begins with an intriguing question

Salt and pepper

Chefs know that their best dishes require that extra kick. Irrespective of an exemplary chef, abundant green beans and eggs and hearty potatoes, I recognized the influence of school administration (salt) and parental support (pepper) for a culturally rich learning experience for CF students. In the curriculum, the teacher works hand-in-hand with a supportive team of parents and administration to approach French-speaking cultures (OME, 2014). Based on my personal teaching experience, Grade 9 CF teachers receive limited funding for experiential learning and reliable ICT. Cultural opportunities such as virtual guest speakers or pen pal exchanges often require parental consent, which may not be given to teachers. Therefore, I felt it important to include the pepper and salt as seasoning in my conceptual framework. However, as my

research study directly focused on the teacher-chef, I did not interview parents or members of the administration.

The consumer-student

The Ontario Grade 9 CF student represented the consumer of the *salade niçoise*; however, directly investigating students was not the research focus of my inquiry. The student shares equal responsibility for the learning, interaction and appreciation of French-speaking communities (OME, 2014). Thinking back to my francophone party, my students could have been more respectful as they saw the *salade niçoise* for the first time. Increasing student responsibility for cultural interaction may also reduce the potential pressure for non-native French-speaking educators to extensively research francophone communities. Furthermore, the *Growing success* policy document stipulates that the province's students should work towards becoming responsible, organized, independent, collaborative, initiators and self-regulators (OME, 2010). The French teacher as the perceived cultural expert, should be represented as a cultural guide or facilitator.

Participants and their salads

The ten Ontario Grade 9 CF non-native French-speaking educators came to the study with common experiences. Table 4 presents each participant profile of my exploratory case study.

Many of the participants had positive learning experiences in French—either to improve their linguistic proficiency or to immerse themselves in francophone communities. Several teachers taught at the elementary school level; therefore, knew how to work with beginner-level French students. Additionally, the ten teachers were originally CF students; therefore, had pre-existing knowledge of the program. Eight out of ten teachers indicated a strong French language proficiency of at least B2 of the CEFR, which is at an independent user level of the language (Council of Europe, 2001). Furthermore, most teachers felt sufficiently confident to present French-speaking cultures to their Grade 9 CF students and did not feel inferior to native French-speaking educators. Many educators taught in the Greater Toronto Area and had greater geographical access to experiential learning opportunities of French-speaking cultures than educators in rural communities. Table 5 summarizes their practices and experiences.

Guided by my conceptual framework, the ten teachers all became Michelin-star (Chef Academy, 2020) chefs in training. With their overall ambition and desire for students to better experience francophone cultures, the teachers demonstrated beginning attempts to include all ingredients of the ideal *salade niçoise* recipe. They metaphorically prepared the following salads

Table 4
Participant profiles

Participant pseudonym	# of Grade 9 CF classes	School type & geographical region	Teaching experience ^{a, b, c}	Teacher-traveler to French communities	French language experience	Priority for cultural content	Sufficient knowledge of French cultures	Native speaker teacher preference
Manno	1 section of Grade 9 academic CF	Catholic school in the GTA	30+ years Taught IB French Former elementary school FSL teacher	YES	Former CF student B2 level of the CEFR	Mostly true	True	Somewhat important
Camille	1 section of Grade 9 academic CF	Catholic school in the GTA	20+ years Former elementary school FSL teacher for 10+ years	YES	Former CF student C1 level of the CEFR	Untrue	Mostly true	Somewhat important
Carla	2 sections of Grade 9 applied CF + 3 sections of Grade 9 academic CF	Public school in the GTA	20+ years Former elementary school FSL teacher	NO	Former CF student CEFR level not stated	Mostly true	Mostly true	Somewhat important
Claire	2 sections of Grade 9 academic French	Public school in Central Ontario	20+ years Former elementary school FSL teacher	YES	Former CF student C1 or C2 level of the CEFR	True	Mostly true	Not important
Yvonne	1 section of Grade 9 academic French	Public school in Southwestern Ontario	15+ years Former elementary school FSL teacher DELF training	YES	Former CF student C1 level of the CEFR	Mostly true	Mostly true	Somewhat important

^a Information and Communications Technology; ^b DELF (<https://del-f-dal.f.ambafrance-ca.org>); ^c CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001).

(con't d)

Table 4 (con'd)

Participant pseudonym	# of Grade 9 CF classes	School type & geographical region	Teaching experience ^{a, b, c}	Teacher-traveler to French communities	French language experience	Priority for cultural content	Sufficient knowledge of French cultures	Native speaker teacher preference
Rosina	—	Catholic school in the GTA	9+ years IB teaching experience in Spanish DELF exam corrector	YES	Former CF student B2 or C1 level of the CEFR	Mostly true	True	Extremely important
Helena	1 section of Grade 9 academic CF	Catholic school in the GTA	6+ years Former elementary school FSL teacher with AIM teaching experience DELF exam corrector	YES	Former CF student B2 or C1 level of the CEFR	Mostly true	Somewhat true	Extremely important
Nora	1 section of Grade 9 academic CF	Private school in Southwestern Ontario	2+ years Former elementary school FSL teacher	YES	Former CF student CEFR level not stated	Untrue	Somewhat true	Not important
Rachel	2 sections of Grade 9 academic CF	Public school in Southeastern Ontario	2+ years Core and French Immersion teaching experience	YES	Former CF student C1 or C2 level of the CEFR	Mostly true	Somewhat true	Extremely important
Christina	1 section of Grade 9 pre-IB academic CF + 1 section of Grade 9 academic CF	Catholic school in the GTA	1+ year Current high school FSL teacher	YES	Former CF student B2 level of the CEFR	Mostly true	Mostly true	Not important

^a Information and Communications Technology; ^b DELF (<https://delF-dalF.ambfrance-ca.org>); ^c CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001).

Table 5
Summary of participants' cultural approaches

Participant	Manno	Camille	Carla	Claire	Yvonne	Rosina	Helena	Nora	Rachel	Christina
Cultural approaches — Interview 1:										
Dynamic definition of culture	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Standard French	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
ICT		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student research projects		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Travel theme		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Music theme		X	X	X		X		X		X
Food	X	X		X		X	X		X	
Comparing student lives with French communities		X	X	X	X			X	X	X
DELFCEFR		X		X	X	X	X			
Recounting travel to students		X		X	X			X		
Controlled short activities				X			X			
Requirement for ample prep time	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
English use		X	X			X				

(con'd)

Table 5 (con'd)

Participant	Manno	Camille	Carla	Claire	Yvonne	Rosina	Helena	Nora	Rachel	Christina
Cultural approaches — Interview 2:										
Dynamic definition of culture	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
Standard French					X	X	X			X
ICT		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student research projects		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Travel theme		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Music theme		X	X	X		X	X	X		X
Food							X			X
Comparing student lives with French communities	X				X			X	X	X
DELFC/CEFR	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X
Recounting travel to students								X		
Controlled short activities	X									
Requirement for ample prep time			X	X				X	X	X
English use		X		X					X	X

in their FSL classrooms:

- lightly-coloured green beans;
- runny eggs;
- small and bland potatoes; and
- under-seasoning of salt and pepper.

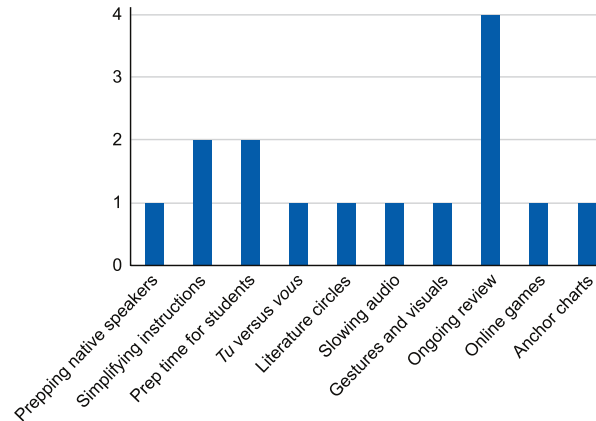
As a result, I perceived their students to be nourished student-consumers of the *salade niçoise* as they did metaphorically eat all of the necessary food and seasonings. However, the students would benefit from having more prominent francophone culture focus (i.e., darker coloured green beans), greater opportunities using the neurolinguistic approach to improve speaking (i.e., cooked eggs), increased opportunities for ICT in the FSL classroom (i.e., bigger and hearty potatoes), and increased support from parents and stakeholders to implement a greater number of cultural opportunities for students (i.e., greater amounts of seasoning). A more thorough explanation of how the participants' salads looked like is explained in the succeeding section.

Michelin-star teacher-chefs in training

Throughout the study, participants diligently learned about French-speaking cultures as non-native French-speakers and increased their overall confidence as sound educators. For example, the teachers listened to French music (Carla and Christina), played online vocabulary games (Rosina), frequently redesigned cultural units (Camille), and conducted greater research on francophone communities for final assignments (Carla, Christina, Claire, Helena, Nora, and Rosina) despite feeling overwhelmed with research. Helena underwent training to become an accredited DELF exam corrector (DELF/DALF, 2016). The participants continuously sought to move away from previously unauthentic and ineffective FSL curricula and French textbooks, as they did not find cultural relevancy of learning about ants (Camille) in French for an entire pedagogical unit.

The findings of my inquiry revealed greater importance for teachers to be cultural pedagogues rather than native French-speaking educators. For example, Figure 4 presents various techniques that the teachers used to approach cultural vocabulary, with ongoing review as the most popular strategy.

For example, Camille stressed the importance to be patient and simplify authentic French to beginner-level FSL students, which is echoed in research (McNeill, 2005; Newcombe, 2007). Camille also prioritized oral communication over cultural education with the following statement:



Note: The scale represents the number of occurrences of each strategy, with zero (0) to no reference, to four (4), reflecting four times indicated in the research study from the participants.

Figure 4

Frequency of participant vocabulary strategies

Do they need to know what the different meals are in Senegal in order to learn French—no they don't! Does that make it more interesting for them, yes! . . . The goal is to teach them French, get them to love French, feel like they can make themselves understood in that language and they can understand what they are seeing and hearing. . . . If you ask me what is my job, it is for them to speak! (October 31, 2018)

Rosina added that a native French-speaking educator is not a cultural expert of every francophone region. However, several participants stressed the importance of frequent travel to French-speaking communities for all FSL educators (Christina, Rachel, Rosina, and Yvonne).

Most of the participants' resources and pedagogical techniques reflected the social constructivist orientation to pedagogy (Cummins, 2001, 2009; Cummins et al., 2007). For example, many teachers used Eurocentric French variations in their classrooms to ease comprehension issues for students, or, based on teacher-preference. Towards the end of the semester, more participants extended the French varieties (Camille, Claire, Helena, Nora, Rachel, and Rosina) by researching the different accents (Christina) or adding French variations in assignments (Camille, Claire, Rachel, and Yvonne). Essentially, the teachers evaluated alternatives in what is presented in education (Cummins et al., 2007).

In my perception, Claire demonstrated more examples of the transformative approach of the framework. She designed a superhero assignment, which is illustrated in Figure 5.

Les Super-héros autour du Monde

Quand tu dessines ton super-héros, imagine un modèle qui t'inspire et qui démontre une diversité qui reflète toi et ta culture.

- Quelles qualités / traits de personnalités et de culture sont importantes pour toi?
- Quels pouvoirs sont impressionnants?
- Quelles sont les causes défendues?

Meet Mgozi, Marvel Comics' first truly African superhero



<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-entertainment-chibok/watch-out-wonder-woman-nigerias-chibok-girls-inspire-marvels-new-superhero-idUSKCN18H1HG>

<https://www.bransouthafrica.com/investments-immigration/afrainews/meet-ngozi-marvel-comics-first-truly-african-superhero>

Nightrunner — The Batman of Paris

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nightrunner_\(comics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nightrunner_(comics))

Nightrunner est un super-héros français qui est un personnage de l'univers DC. Son vrai nom est Bilal Asselah. Il est un jeune homme d'origine algérienne qui vient de Paris. Il a fait sa première apparition en 2010 quand il a été recruté par Batman pour représenter Batman Inc en France. Son pouvoir est le parkour. Bilal peut escalader les murs et se déplacer ultra rapidement dans les villes. Il est moins fort que Superman, mais il aussi vite que Spider Man. Il est le premier super-héros dans la mythologie DC/Marvel. Qu'est-ce qu'il fera dans l'avenir?

Figure 5

Superhero assignment

Claire's students drew superheroes inspired by their home cultures after reviewing francophone superheroes from Marvel Comics (<https://www.marvel.com/comics>). They had to make connections amongst cultures and establish common characteristics of what it means to be a superhero. This project enabled students to think about "social realities" of superheroes and how "these realities might be transformed through various forms of social action" (Cummins, 2011, p. 7).

Lightly coloured green beans

Throughout the inquiry, the ten educators recognized the importance of teaching French-speaking cultures to students. I did not use the term *pluriculture* (Council of Europe, 2001, 2016, 2018) with participants as to be open to their unique interpretations of culture. The teachers interpreted culture as multifaceted. Several educators presented the cultural iceberg (e.g., Weaver, 1986) to students to illustrate the importance of invisible characteristics of francophone communities. Culture was taught to teach respect and to gain multiple perspectives of society. These goals closely matched the participants' FSL curriculum as it states that students should “enhance their understanding and appreciation of diverse French-speaking communities, and will develop skills necessary for lifelong language learning” (OME, 2014, p. 58).

The teachers prepared for cultural content through a predominantly action-oriented approach (Council of Europe, 2001, 2016, 2018) and with a lived curriculum perspective (Aoki, 1999). Direct references to the curriculum document were few and far between as the educators prepared activities grounded in student interest (see Table 6).

Table 6

Example cultural techniques from participants

Participant	Activity or resource	Description
Helena	Garage sale activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – vocabulary building opportunity (e.g., clothing, money, furniture) – students read garage sale ads, then composed their imaginary sales – spontaneous oral interactions with other Grade 9 CF classes who bought the garage sale items, used fake money and had authentic materials
Manno	<i>Ma passion, mon talent</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – structured mini-essay with pre-taught writing techniques (i.e., final task) – no electronic devices were permitted – students referenced francophone cultures associated with their passion – optional oral presentation of their paragraphs to their peers and teacher – interested students brought in artefacts, such as origami, to represent their passion
Helena	Field trip to a Toronto restaurant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – waiters spoke to students in French – students became waiters in their respective groups for role-plays

... (con'd)

Table 6 (con'd)

Participant	Activity or resource	Description
Helena (con'd)		– students experienced a drumming activity from an African dancer – Helena shared her funding strategies through a grant to offset the costs
Rosina	<i>Chef à l'école</i>	– a French-speaking chef who visited the school and cooked in her classroom
Claire	African drummer guest visitor	– a performer visited “once per semester” for all of the school’s Grade 9 CF students
Carla	Impressionist lesson from a guest French-speaking visitor	– her goal for her future Grade 9 CF classes
Rosina	Designated cultural days of the week	– <i>Lecture lundi, musique mardi, montre-moi mercredi, jeux jeudi, and culture vendredi</i> ^a
Rachel	Ideal trip activity	– students discussed their ideal trip based on a cultural attraction
Camille	<i>Voyage virtuel</i>	– a virtual travel unit that was crafted from a student complaint about the ineffectiveness of cultural presentations – students filled out a simplified French passport application and role-played passing through customs, taking taxis, etc.
Claire	<i>Artiste de la semaine</i>	– a weekly activity whereby students discussed song themes with their class to explore the meaning of lyrics
Claire	<i>Faire la bise</i>	– a video activity that demonstrated kissing acts across French-speaking cultures

^a ‘Reading Monday, music Tuesday, show-and-tell Wednesday, games Thursday, and cultural Friday’

While there was frequent recognition of the cultural iceberg (e.g., Weaver, 1986), I did not observe multiple examples of profound cultural content, below the iceberg’s surface. The majority of the French cultural content was superficial, research-based and lacked interaction with native speakers. However, my participants often reminded me of pedagogical challenges that impacted their cultural depth. For example, participants often cited onerous planning time for authentic culture, student disinterest and lack of student maturity. However, as Table 6 indicates, the teachers did offer creative, cultural opportunities.

Runny eggs

Respecting the small scope of my doctoral research, I did not introduce the neurolinguistic approach (Netten & Germain, 2012) to participants. I merely referred to the approach at the data analysis stage of this inquiry as a starting point in its application to the teachings of French-speaking cultures. I connected the teachers' ongoing vocabulary review using online games as well as the transition of units (e.g., beginning with all about me, body parts, money, garage sale day) with Netten and Germain's principle of internal grammar. This is because the two examples offered student sufficient practice time with the target vocabulary for eventual internalization.

Participants remained respectful to student interest in the presentation of authentic cultural content. For example, Carla included classroom surveys to identify student preferences. Yvonne discussed wedding practices in Europe and in the Middle East, simply based on a student's recount of a marriage ceremony in her home country.

All participants observed student enjoyment of at least one cultural activity. Several teachers such as Camille and Helena, asked students to resolve a meaningful task from purchasing a train ticket in a foreign country, to selling an item at a garage sale. These examples add to the discussion of project-based pedagogy and the social interaction principle of the neurolinguistic approach (Netten & Germain, 2012) as students had to frequently listen, react, mediate through problems and communicate thought processes. I felt that Camille's final assignment for her Grade 9 CF course, best reflected principles of the approach (Figure 6).

For this final project, students had to spontaneously interact with a small group of peers and Camille in a simulated role play. Students selected two of the problem scenarios, which were travel based. On the presentation day, Camille role-played with students and concurrently assessed the group, challenging students to continue speaking in French.

Her project was predominantly oral-based, which is a fundamental principle of the neurolinguistic approach (Netten & Germain, 2012). It was conceived based on student interest as she observed her students' love of travel. Furthermore, it was a project that required students to revisit practiced vocabulary. Therefore, while my participants were not exposed to the teachings of the neurolinguistic approach, it was evident of its possibilities for Grade 9 CF cultural programming.

Small and bland potatoes

The ten teachers used ICT for a variety of cultural opportunities. Figure 7 illustrates each opportunity, with multisource websites referenced sixteen times by the participants.

SEMESTER ONE CULMINATING TASK

STUDENT'S NAME: _____ January 8-11, 2019

COURSE: FSF1D PERIOD: 4 TEACHER: _____ TOTAL MARKS: _____

Partie A: Préparation en classe

Objectif : préparer à parler spontanément dans une interaction authentique

Tu commenceras à travailler seule pour la première période. Puis, tu travailleras en groupe de deux à trois personnes à préparer une interaction authentique et spontanée selon un des scénarios suivants. Tu seras capable de parler de toi-même, de tes goûts et de tes activités préférées, de ce que tu as fait et de ce que tu veux faire à l'avenir, etc. Tu auras accès à tous tes notes de classe et un dictionnaire.

Partie B: Dialogue simulé ou jeu de rôle

Objectif : parler spontanément dans une interaction authentique

Le jour de la présentation, le groupe présentera un des deux scénarios, choisi par Mme. L'interaction sera authentique et pas lu, donc l'élève n'aura pas accès aux notes pendant la présentation orale. Mme jouera le rôle de quelqu'un inattendu dans le scénario.

Jour 2

En groupe, choisissez deux des scénarios suivants :

- Entrevue à la douane dans l'aéroport - un membre du groupe est le douanier qui questionne une famille qui entre le pays choisi.
- Planifier un voyage avec un agent de voyage - un membre du groupe jouera le rôle de l'agent de voyage et l'autre jouera une personne qui cherche à acheter les billets.
- Acheter quelque chose pour un voyage - un membre du groupe jouera le rôle du vendeur ou vendeuse et l'autre jouera la personne qui veut acheter quelque chose pour le voyage
- Discussion de famille pour les vacances d'été - les membres du groupe joueront une famille qui discute où aller pour les vacances d'été. Personne n'est d'accord.
- Demander et donner des indications à l'hôtel - un membre du groupe jouera le rôle du réceptionniste de l'hôtel, l'autre sera la personne qui leur demande de l'aide à retrouver un tel endroit.

Figure 6
Final travel dialogue task

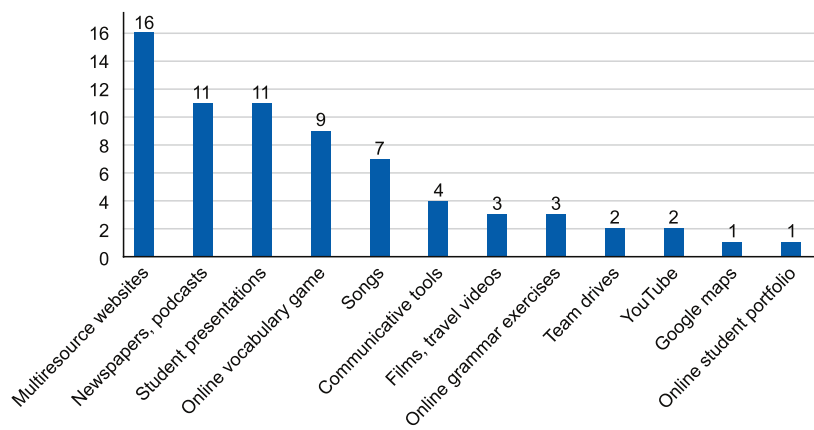


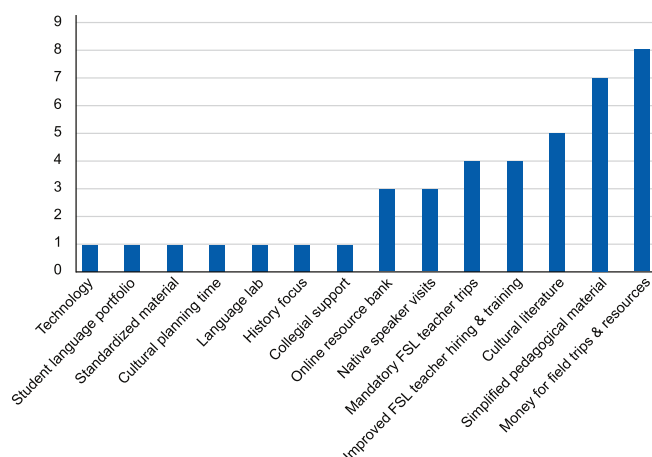
Figure 7
Frequency of participants' ICT use

One-stop-shop resources were the preferred options for participants and included *TV5Monde* (<https://langue-francaise.tv5monde.com>) and *Idello* (<https://www.idello.org>). Yvonne summarized her use of such websites for listening comprehension activities and specifically, to explore different French accents.

Unfortunately, the majority of ICT tools presented superficial, cultural content such as PowerPoints, YouTube to listen to music, or online vocabulary games rather than interact with francophone speakers. Manno justified her limited reliance on ICT resources due to her school's fear about their dangers such as privacy issues. Furthermore, many participants presented challenges in obtaining ongoing equipment such as Chrome books, which mirror similar access issues in Canadian FSL classrooms (Cooke, 2013; Milley & Arnott, 2016; Mollica et al., 2005).

Under-seasoning of salt and pepper

There was some discussion about parental and administrative support. Half of the participants designed cultural activities with their FSL departments, added cultural content in final assessments and divided cultural research time. Nora, who taught at a private school, was permitted by her principal to Skype with native French speakers in her classroom, yet was the only participant who shared this opportunity. Therefore, as illustrated in Figure 8, financial support for cultural, extracurricular opportunities and resources was requested eight times by the educators.



Note: The scale begins with no cultural request (0), to eight responses (8) that money for field trips and resources were requested by the participants.

Figure 8
Participants' cultural requests

Participants overwhelmingly wanted additional, experiential learning opportunities for students to directly interact with native speakers. Camille was challenged by departmental hierarchy, excessive documentation and funding issues. Helena was worried about the impact of limited professional learning opportunities for non-native French-speaking educators, in particular, regarding their understanding and ongoing implementation of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001). There was no reference to parental support (i.e., pepper), which is a prompt to further research studies.

Nourished student-consumers

Overall, the ten teachers observed student engagement with French cultural content, so their learners metaphorically consumed the French salads. According to the educators, their students used play food to make French sandwiches and actively participated in garage sales (Helena), followed francophone artists on Instagram (Christina) and produced travel brochures (Carla and Rachel). Helena stressed, however, of the professional responsibility for Grade 9 CF educators to *give them the tools* to become enthusiastic towards francophone communities at this beginner-level of French (Interview January 29, 2019).

The participating students were primarily responsible for their own learning. Students also learned about effective research skills to ensure cultural accuracy. Camille shared her experience in navigating fraudulent websites with students:

I do a lesson, at the very beginning of the year, and it's all in English, the website that I use ... Martin Luther King.org ... The first thing you're going to do, is type in Martin Luther King Junior in Google and the very first thing that comes up, is Martin Luther King.org. ... it looks like a completely legit website ... I click on one of them. It's run by a neo-Nazi ... It is all lies about Martin Luther King Jr.! (January 16, 2019)

Therefore, for many of the cultural activities, the learners determined the content, format and were reminded to be scholarly researchers to respect the cultural accuracy of francophone communities.

Limitations, delimitations, and future directions

My research study had several limitations; however, remained beneficial to stakeholders. Firstly, it was a small-scope research project with ten participants. Further, I only explored non-native French-speaking Grade 9 CF educators. I did not observe classrooms and nor did I directly investigate parents or administration.

However, my case study was still beneficial as I provided greater insight into the Grade 9 CF classroom and current experiences of the non-native

French-speaking educator. Furthermore, my findings added to the discussion of respecting the integrity of CF programs and of non-native French-speaking educators as sound pedagogues. Having learned a variety of pedagogical strategies from my participants, I am inspired to conduct an action-research inquiry to explore how cultural exploration and interaction look like in my future Grade 9 CF classrooms. My goal would be to thoroughly apply the teachings of the neurolinguistic approach (Netten & Germain, 2012) as it was not introduced to the participants of this inquiry (Guida, 2020).

Future studies should expand the focus to all elementary and secondary FSL teachers to provide a larger research context of how cultures are approached in the province's FSL classrooms. Considering the global pandemic which has thoroughly changed where and how educators teach, I believe that there should be more work to explore how cultural interaction is experienced in hybrid, face-to-face and fully online classroom settings.

Moving forward, I recommend that Grade 9 CF educators:

1. think of culture as pluriculture (Council of Europe, 2001; 2016; 2018);
2. work towards becoming a cultural pedagogue and not an expert;
3. pursue ongoing, cultural research initiatives;
4. consider following the neurolinguistic approach to help students confidently communicate in French through engaging opportunities (Netten & Germain, 2012); and,
5. consider beginning with travel as a motivational unit for students.

I end this paper with Manno's love of francophone cultures:

What is francophone culture anymore with this global migration and the social media and this digital world. ... I just want the kids to appreciate and find pleasure in learning about something besides their own, isolated little community [to become] this other sort of francophone self

Regardless of one's language identity, the love of teaching and learning is imperative for bringing cultures into the SL classroom. *Bon appétit!*

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