

TRANSLATION : Text of the Presentation to the Senate Committee on Official Languages by Claude Germain, Monday, March 9, 2015

Honorable Senators,

I would like to thank you most sincerely for the privilege of participating in the deliberations of your important committee.

In order that you may fully understand the significance of my contribution, I would like to indicate that I am one of the two authors of the Neurolinguistic Approach (NLA) or *L'Approche neurolinguistique (ANL)*, known in Canada as Intensive French (IF) or *Français intensif (FI)*. The other author is my anglophone colleague from Memorial University of Newfoundland, Dr. Joan Netten. Through the implementation of this approach in all the Provinces and Territories of Canada (except Quebec), my colleague and I have been able to develop a detailed, *and unique*, understanding of FSL education because we have had the privilege of observing many classes of both Core French and Intensive French in all the provinces and the three territories of Canada.

The major characteristic of our approach is that it is based on recent research in the neurosciences, in particular, *the neurolinguistic theory of bilingualism* developed by Michel Paradis of McGill University.

Since 1997, based on the findings from this neurolinguistic research, we have conceived and developed a new understanding of the way that a second language should be taught in schools based on the way a second language is learned and used in the brain. We would like to point out to you that the distinguishing characteristic of this approach is that a clear distinction is made between two different grammars: an internal grammar (non-conscious), particularly for oral competence, and an external grammar (conscious), particularly for written competence.

Why did we need to conceive a different approach to teaching French? Because, as many people suspected at the time, for approximately 90% of the students in Core French, the program is a failure; students are unable to communicate in French, despite their knowledge about the language. We wished to put in place a program, open to all FSL students (83%), other than the 17% who are in immersion, which would be effective.

This information is to demonstrate to you that, to improve the linguistic duality of Canada, it is not sufficient just to talk about 'best practices'. A radical change in the school system, a sort of mini-revolution, albeit a quiet one, is needed to enable students to develop the internal grammar necessary to communicate in French. Immersion programs develop internal grammar; this is why they are successful. But this happens by chance, rather than design, which is why they also can be improved.

As for Intensive French, experiments were first undertaken in 1998 (from 1998 to 2004), in Newfoundland and Labrador, with the support of two consecutive three year grants from the Department of Canadian Heritage.

The positive results for oral development resulted in a rapid expansion of the program in other provinces. In 2008, New Brunswick replaced Core French with Intensive French, now compulsory for all students from grade 5 to the end of grade 10, who do not choose immersion in grade 3. This change has enabled New Brunswick to bring about statistically significant improvement in their FSL results.

At the present time, all Provinces and Territories (except Quebec) have implemented Intensive French in at least some of their school districts, which has enabled virtually all of the participating students to communicate in French.

It should also be mentioned that making these changes has not been without strong resistance from some individuals and organisations more concerned with maintaining the status quo than in bringing about an improvement in the teaching and learning of French.

The NLA has continued to expand. In Canada, experiments are in progress in several aboriginal communities using the NLA not only to improve the teaching of French and English, but also for the survival of their own languages and cultures. There are also experiments in progress at the University of Quebec in Montreal (UQAM) in teaching FSL, and also Spanish, to adults.

Further afield, since 2010, the NLA has been implemented in China, where I am right now, with young adult university students. In two weeks, accompanied by three teachers from China and two from Canada, I will be giving a training session for the NLA in Tokyo, Japan. Other developments in other countries are still in the project stage.

These applications of, and research on, the NLA demonstrate clearly that our current understanding of how to teach a second language must change, even for adults. The NLA represents a new conception, or as the experts would say, a new paradigm, for the teaching of a second language, based on a new understanding of how a second language can be learned in the school system.

For the remainder of my presentation, I must be content with simply mentioning four myths, which can be discussed later, about the learning of second languages in schools, and then finish by stating my seven recommendations. The myths are the result of a lack of information about the most recent research on language learning.

Myth 1: In order to learn a second language, 'the sooner the better'.

Myth 2: There is only one way to succeed in learning to speak a second language in school: participation in the immersion program.

Myth 3: All students who come out of an immersion program are bilingual.

Myth 4: In order to learn a second language, all that is necessary is an adequate number of instructional hours.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS:

R1: Guided by the model put in place by New Brunswick in 2008, gradually replace the core French program with an effective program, starting no sooner than grade 4, based on the recent research in neurosciences.

R2: Regroup under one single administrative unit the present associations dedicated to the teaching/learning of French as a second language, with each of the existing organisations becoming a section in the larger administrative unit. Within this framework, the practice of many provincial and

territorial representatives for French exchanging information about their challenges, already adopted in implementing Intensive French, be continued and extended to include other programs in discussions about curriculum, evaluation, training sessions, etc.

R3: With respect to the renewal of federal-provincial/territorial funding agreements, modify radically the criteria for the distribution of funds for all programs. From now on, the basic criteria for all funding should be the percentage of students attaining a particular level of competence in each program rather than the number of students registered in the programs.

R4: Suggest to Faculties of Education that research on the best means of learning a second language in a schools should be undertaken in conjunction with researchers in neurolinguistics and in applied linguistics.

R5: With the adaptation to the Canadian context of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* document (CEF), add a research-based section on the learning of a second language in schools, in such a way as to ensure that effective teaching strategies are proposed based on a solid understanding of current theories of language learning.

R6: For training teachers for Intensive French (NLA), use the format already established at the beginning of such training, in 2000, offering summer professional development sessions of two weeks duration, comprising three aspects: pedagogy, linguistic competence and culture.

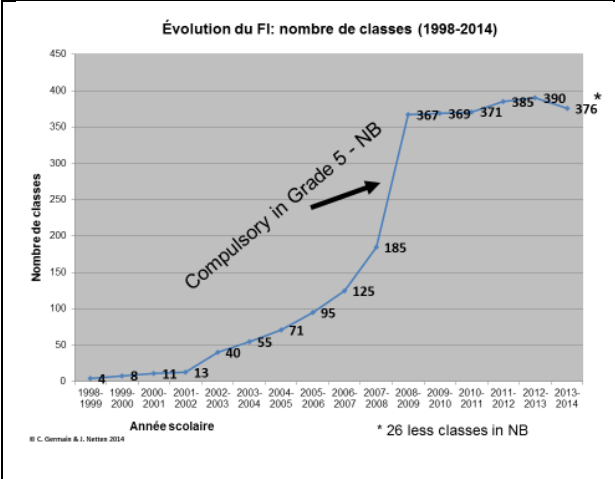
R7: With respect to the promotion of the official languages in a context of either linguistic duality or plurality, sensitize the public to the results of the most recent research in second language learning to put an end to the widely disseminated myths about the learning of languages (possibly by using, for example, messages under the title, *Some Urban Legends about the Learning of Second Languages*).

Il me fera maintenant grandement plaisir de répondre à vos questions.

Claude Germain, Ph.D.

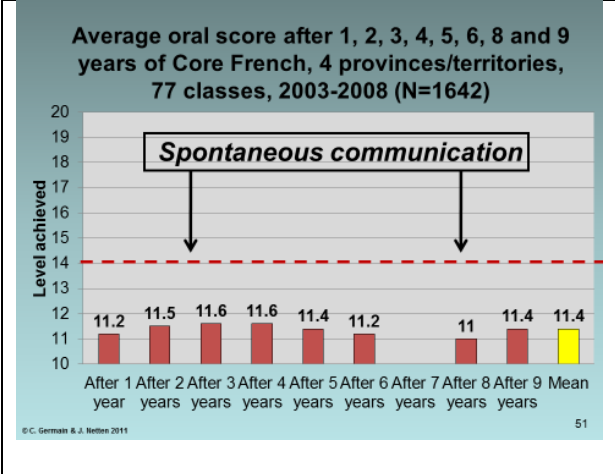
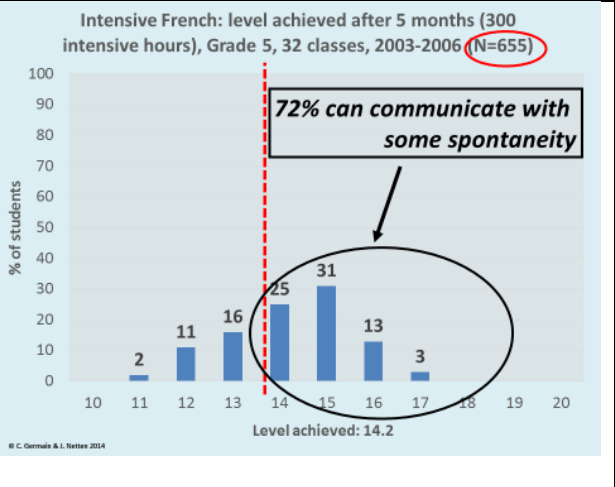
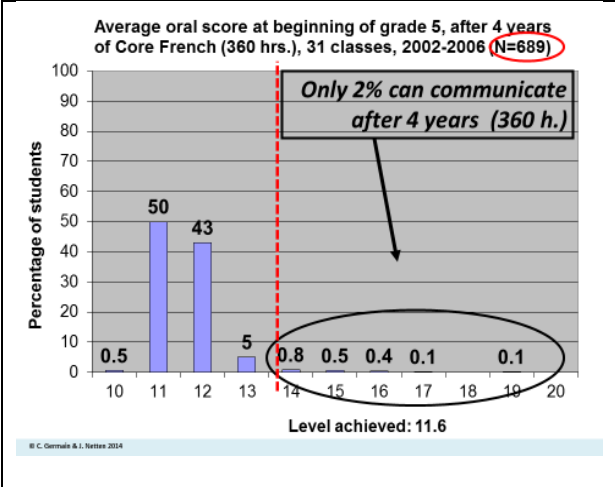
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Pre-IF, IF and Post-IF in Canada 2013-2014

	Number of classes	Number of students
Pre-IF (Grades 4/5)	219	3 954
IF (Grades 5/6)	373	7 039
Post-IF (Grades 6/7 to 12)	765	22 957
TOTAL	1 357	33 950



	Expected Results			Expected Results		
Pre-IF	Gr. 4			Pre-IF	Gr. 5	
IF	Gr. 5	14	Basic low	IF	Gr. 6	14 Basic low
	Gr. 6	14.5			Gr. 7	14.5
	Gr. 7	15	Basic mid		Gr. 8	15 Basic mid
	Gr. 8	15.5			Gr. 9	15.5
Post-IF	Gr. 9	16	Basic high	Post-IF	Gr. 10	16 Basic high
	Gr. 10	16.5			Gr. 11	16.5
	Gr. 11	17	Intermed.		Gr. 12	17 Intermed.
	Gr. 12	17.5				