**403 Final Project: Representing (Lesson Plan)**

**Introduction**

The lesson plan that I’ve attached is one that I plan on doing with my Intensive French 6 class. I have chosen to do my final project on this topic because 1) it will be beneficial for me in the future, 2) there is a lot of debate around its curriculum.

The philosophy of the curriculum of Intensive French is quite different than that of Core French and French Immersion. In Intensive French, the emphasis is placed on the students’ oral skills. Students learn to talk about themselves, share personal experiences and talk about real things. When we personalize speech, we become more engaged and can more easily talk “avec aisance” (BC Intensive French Curriculum). Instead of explicitly teaching grammar to students, they learn to write down what they say. Everything is taught in a way for the students to be able to learn implicitly and through watching the teacher model. While I think that this is fantastic for French learners, there are still some problems with the curriculum today, mainly: 1) the difficulty of teaching a year of Intensive French without teaching students grammar, and 2) the allocation of French teaching time in the program (1st semester 80%, 2nd semester 20%).

**Teaching Grammar**

This is the number one issue that arises when I’m teaching French to my class. According to the BC Intensive French Curriculum, teachers are not supposed to explicitly teach grammar to students, but instead have students implicitly pick up on the grammar through speech (much like native speakers do). This is challenging at times, because I am constantly having to correct simple grammar mistakes of students all the time (ie: simple verb conjugations: *avoir*, *être*, *aller*). My SA and I have frequently negotiated on this topic of teaching grammar, and have even contemplated on preparing a lesson entirely dedicated to teaching simple verb conjugations to students. I think this will be a hot topic of debate in the future, as more and more schools acquire the Intensive French program and realize that teaching gramar is a constant struggle.

**Time Allocation**

Because IF is not Immersion, the big subjects, mainly Science, Socials, PE, Art, Math etc. are not taught in French. Students do 80% French and 20% Math in English in semester one; and 20% French and 80% all other subjects in English in semester two. By semester two, the students are spending almost the entire time in English; and by grade 7, they have forgotten a lot of what they’ve learned in grade 6. When I first learned of the time allocation of IF, I found it to be very akward. While I see huge benefits of this program in teaching “French to a speaking level” to students in just one semester, I see a lot of potential setbacks that may occur from semester two onwards to grade 7. The challenge is to negotiate and try to find a better solution to the curriculum. Should we have more French in semester 2? Teach a few subjects in French? Or simply just merge it together with the Late Immersion program? One thing I’ve noticed is that the IF program has frequent meetings and brain-storming sessions with all its teachers on a regular basis to look for ways to improve the program. I look forward to hopefully being a part of the solution to this problem.

**My Lesson Plan**

The parts that I have highlighted in red in my lesson plan are the parts where I am most likely to run into difficulty during my lesson. Both the highlighted parts have to do with grammar, which the students are assumed to have learned implicitly.

While students have mastered orally the 1st person conjugation of *avoir* and *être*, they still struggle with 2nd, 3rd person conjugations (singular and plural) of these verbs. They fail to distinguish that there are different conjugations for each of the three perspectives and tend to always use the 1st person singular conjugation for all situations. I spent a lot of time last week teaching the students how to differentiate “D’où vient” for singular words versus “D’où viennent” for plural words. Without giving them worksheets on grammar, I was only able to explain it orally on the blackboard and hope that they understood what I meant.

Like conjugations, teaching students the verb tenses are also quite challenging. Without showing them explicitly, I constantly model the correct use of future and past tense to students so that they may pick them up based on my speech. While students quickly learning to use *“je vais…*”, they struggle to understand the necessity of conjugating to “*tu vas*; *il va*; *nous allons* etc.” depending on the situation. To combat this problem, my SA urges me to model more frequently the correct conjugations and to allow more time to students to practice among themselves.

Overall, I planned my lesson so that it is very engaging to students and contains a lot of time for students to speak orally. I spend less time explaining things to students, but instead allow them to discuss, brainstorm and share personal experiences among themselves or with the entire class. In the pre-activity, activity and post-activity, you can see that after every question or new idea, I have allowed time for students to talk about it over with a partner. This is really at the core of the philosophy of the curriculum- personalizing speech.

**Teacher Qualifications**

Being a potential Teacher Candidate for Intensive French in the future, I want to talk about the qualifications for this program in this last section. The two resources that I have consulted are the BC Intensive French Curriculum package and Shulman’s three “knowledges” (Shulman, 1986. Those Who Understand: Knowledge Growth in Teaching). Shulman mentions that every teacher should be knowledgable in *Content Knowledge*, *Pedagogical Knowledge*, and *Curriculum Knowledge*. I think that this is especially true when it comes to Intensive French. While mastery of the French language is a necessity for the program, knowing how to teach it according to the IF philosophy (Curriculum Knowledge) and knowing how to model good French speaking (Pedagogical Knowledge) is far more important.

In a program where we do not teach grammar, knowing how to represent your content knowledge by using analogies, good modelling, illustrations, examples etc. is absolutely vital. I think a great IF teacher will dig deep and find many strategies to counter this challenge. Another important idea, is knowing what content to show the students, because as grade 6 students, they are much more mature than what their French level may indicate. Even though their French level is that of a grade 1 student, their maturity is that of a grade 6. It may not always be the best idea to show students childish picture books.

Curriculum Knowledge is really about understanding the philosophy of the program and knowing where to find all the available resources to help you. I think if a teacher struggles with not being able to teach grammar or thinks that too much time is spent on oral French, then the program may not be a good fit for him/her. It is hard to teach well if you are not a believer of what you are teaching. I think If you are a strong believer of the program, than you are more likely in the future to discuss and come up with ways to improve upon it. With the new wave of inquiry-based approach to teaching, this is really the ultimate goal or inquiry I have towards the IF program.

**References**

Shulman, L. (1986). Those who understand: knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher*, *15*(2), 4-14

BC Intensive French Curriculum (2005)