ACQUIRING AND MAINTAINING SECOND-LANGUAGE SKILLS:
AN EXAMINATION OF CANADIAN FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE PROGRAMS

by

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A project submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the Degree of Master of Education at
Queen’s University
August 2013

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ABSTRACT

Research has shown that although it takes time and effort to acquire additional languages, they are valuable assets. Both teachers and learners have to be motivated, and active participation is required to succeed. Unfortunately, when active training is completed, the acquired skills seem to be easily lost.

In this project, I describe specific programs used for the purpose of language training and the goals that are set for the military and civilian second language (L2) learners within the Ministry of National Defence bilingual Canada. I also review relevant literature in order to identify ways to maintain the acquired L2 skills after active learning has ended.

During my literature research, I examined areas that pertain to language acquisition from both teachers’ and learners’ points of view. Teaching methods, testing within the government program, motivation, aptitude, and computer-assisted learning technologies were explored with respect to their use and educational value. Most of the studies that I found in my research indicate that teachers’ and learners’ motivation is an essential factor for success, that L2 is still a developing field where research is insufficient, and that many questions remain concerning retention of acquired L2 skills.

Even if little research has been conducted on the question of language retention and maintenance to find out the rate at which an L2 is lost, the impression is that to maintain the acquired (L2) skills, teachers’ energies must be focused on ways to promote ongoing maintenance habits right from the beginning.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This milestone represents the completion of a personal academic goal that has been a challenging journey of study, research, and collaboration. While it is a personal achievement that required many hours of solo work, along the way I was supported and encouraged by many people whom I wish to sincerely thank.

I am grateful to my supervisor and mentor Dr. Marie Myers. Marie, your commitment and passion for language instruction and your willingness to take me under your wing for this final project, as well as our frank and warm conversations in our mother tongue were very much appreciated. I also want to thank my original academic advisor and second reader for this project, Dr. William Egnatoff. Your role Bill in research and development towards national and international projects is truly uplifting and inspiring. I wish you well and creative new horizons as you retire.

Thank you Rebecca, Marlene, Celina and student peers for your positive support, and Dr. Jean Lord, former Director of the Language Centre at Royal Military College. Jean you have faith in me and support my endeavours, I am truly thankful.

I want to express my gratitude to all language learners, teaching colleagues, and friends who have accompanied me through my ongoing teaching and learning experience. To my colleagues, friends and students who already have Master and Doctoral degrees please know that you challenged me–sometimes unbeknownst to you–and led me to believe I could accomplish more and achieve my goal.

And to my children Tania and Francis, I offer these words: Yes you can!

De tout cœur, merci.
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The Research Problem

The focus of this project is on skills acquisition and retention in second language (L2) programs in Canada, within the context of Public Service and Military personnel.

Diverse Backgrounds

Because they come from locations across Canada, students and staff, military and civilians, in the military second language programs in which I am involved, are a diverse population. It is no longer surprising to find that some may come from the West Coast and be almost fluently bilingual and multilingual after having attended an immersion program or coming from an immigrant bilingual family background. Others may come from a bilingual province but are far from being bilingual according to government testing, yet may have had a bilingual upbringing. Of more than a thousand students in my programs, the better L2 users have come with a good background in their second language and have been able to avoid second language training altogether while working towards their bachelor’s degree. Others have had a fair L2 background but had to improve their knowledge and sometimes are exempted from language instruction after a few years while certain others struggle all along and never achieve the required standards. The latter have to receive a diploma without the highly-coveted distinction of second language accomplishment. It should be noted that this distinction is added on the diploma to denote that a graduate has achieved the four components of the program (i.e. Academic-Military-Athletics-Bilingualism).

Of the entire teaching and administrative staff in the military program concerned, many are already bilingual, though not always in French and English, but all must attain and maintain a
certain level of competency in a second official language of the country. The L2 student population in the program in which I teach is a selected group: they have been screened prior to enrolment as fit and able both mentally and physically but the language programs they come from are not equal and even bright individuals may experience hardships when learning the other official language. Increases in the number of new immigrants enrolled in the Canadian Forces (CF) as well as changes and progress made in second language education at the elementary and high school levels across the country have modified the linguistic skills data information and distribution.

To promote L2 learning, officer-cadets have recently been encouraged to sign an actual learning contract in which they reiterate their understanding of their L2 learning goals. It is no longer just a sideline in the military program and signing a contract should make a difference in their attitudes. As for the staff, bilingualism has recently been brought to the forefront with deadlines for acceptable language profile attainment or the possibility of job reclassification, or precipitated early retirement.

With the large number of employees within the Department of National Defence (DND), and the variety of course options, from short (weeks and modules) to long-term (month-long courses), on-line or on-site, in groups or one-on-one, and autodidactic training or even training accessible from anywhere in the world, DND personnel do not have to settle with “one style fits all” teaching or course offering. Learners can work independently, finding information and learning opportunities on their own, which makes it more difficult to fit them into a homogeneous group. Furthermore, work experience, family background or exposures to outside realities are also varied. Even if a group is believed to be homogeneous, such as from the same unit or element, personal motivation, attitude, and knowledge levels vary, just like it would be between administrative personnel and faculty members, or non-commissioned and commissioned officers.
According to the personal-construct theory, which promotes learners’ autonomy, Meister (2003) writes, “learning is an individual process in which learners become actively involved. The learners’ individuality and their personal ways of tackling a problem have to be considered and, as far as possible, encouraged” (p. 34). Some learners are willing and able to devote time to study before or after work, some during their work-day and others over their lunch hour. Some learners will only devote time to French during official class time while others will work on their own, reading available learning material, writing exercises, listening to the news and to music as often as possible. Some individuals may not want to see their pride compromised when learning a language with their peers and can enroll in courses offered outside the work environment and have the employer share the cost, as long as there is proof of attendance and success, just as it is done for academic endeavours.

While language needs and requirements will vary, the basic language elements remain the same. When in groups, learners must accept and work with others and see it as a positive opportunity for everyone to benefit from each other’s errors and questions. Finally, with the advent of technology and the use of electronic devices, class time can often allow for independent study because during a part of the class they can be left to work on their own, at different activities, even starting from beginners’ level with one-on-one instructional periods without witnesses or peer judgment.

The Purpose

The purpose of my study is to investigate what type of approach in content delivery in second language programs could lead to improved teaching and learning of the L2, as well as maintaining acquired skills in bilingual Canada, most specifically within the Public Service programs.
I will be discussing via a review of the literature, aspects of the field of second language acquisition and retention in relation to my research questions: What has been done? What is being done? What might be done to change or improve the current situation? I end with recommendations. My specific focus will be on language maintenance among Canadian Civil Service personnel as it relates to skills testing, with an emphasis on French as a second language.

The Rationale

Since 1995, I have been involved with Canadian military personnel as a teacher of French as a second language. I have taught officer cadets as well as officers to read, write, and speak French, preparing them for the Federal Public Service language exams. The results of these exams are expressed as letter grades that are the recognized criteria for an official language profile. For military personnel, this profile expires after five years unless the candidate obtained an E or exemption level in the specified skill. Candidates achieving low levels must be retested. Many, after having lived and worked in their mother tongue, do not regain the same grade in second language and so must return to language classes.

I carried out a literature search to identify the overall strengths and weaknesses of language programs and attitudes of participants towards these programs. In addition, I looked for ways, while also reflecting upon my own professional experience, to better understand the role played by age, aptitude, and motivation in the language learning and retention processes. I also examined the suitability of the use of electronic environments in second language distance learning and retention among Canadian civilian and military personnel.

I also examine research regarding the age factor, a “hotly debated topic” (Singleton, p.1). “Persons of any age, when given the proper resources, can learn to communicate at a comfortable level with people in another linguistic group” (Dixon et al., 2012, p.46). This finding is an
important factor to acknowledge as a fairly large segment of the Canadian population must acquire second official language skills in order to work in Canada and many will do so without having received Second Language (L2) instruction at a younger age. Learners’ attitude and motivation have a big role to play in language acquisition (Dörnyei, 2001a) but learners also value the motivational abilities of their teachers and tutors over their knowledge of the subject (Pichette, 2009).

Because technology is increasing in importance in the environment of L2 acquisition, I also look at how the new trends in technology are affecting the domain of L2 acquisition (Zhao, 2003), and how the use of technology can help reduce the level of anxiety experienced, and improve performance with in-class learning as well as online learning. Baldwin-Evans (2004) found that 93.5% reported having enjoyed the online courses they had taken.

The Definitions

Acquisition vs. Learning

At times, language educators and researchers have referred to the acquisition of a mother tongue to support their views on the acquisition of a second language. Ervin-Tripp (1974) examined mothers as good language teachers for their children, a valid example in some cases. Mothers or parents in general, are an important part of the first language learning process. The use of casual and incidental repetition is apparent and no written grammatical explanations or visual written form is used with infants and young children. In contrast, learning a second language often entails comparison and transfer of knowledge from the mother tongue. Ervin-Tripp (1974) wrote:

With some notable exceptions in which additional instructional milieux were added, research on child language has been limited to the natural settings where language is learned, but not taught, as a by-product of communicative needs. Research on second language learning has almost entirely occurred in classrooms, where language is taught
formally and where language structure rather than communicative intent is the focus of attention (p. 112).

**Second vs. Foreign Language Instruction**

I teach in a French-as-second-language program. In Canada, perhaps because of official bilingualism, French is considered the second language if the learner’s mother tongue is English and vice-versa. However, the teaching and living context where I teach being English, the methodologies to be used correspond to foreign language teaching approaches. Only if French were taught to these Anglophones in a French speaking milieu could it be considered a French-as-a-second-language teaching program.

For example, Canada has two official languages, but the language situation is complex: French is one of the two official languages although only 5,795,575 of 33,121,175 individuals report having knowledge of both French and English. Statistics Canada (2013a) reports from the 2011 Census that 8.97% in New-Brunswick, 0.337% in Ontario, and 51.78% in Québec spoke French, and as opposed to the other provinces where less than .09% of the population spoke French. In contrast, Spanish is also used within some Canadian communities but is not as frequently seen or heard by the everyday person; therefore, Spanish would be considered a foreign language. In the United States of America (USA), English is considered the national language rather than the official language. Spanish is the second most commonly spoken and most widely taught language, more so in New Mexico, where laws provide for the use of both English and Spanish. The same applies to French in Louisiana. Nonetheless, in most of the USA, languages other than English would be considered foreign.
The Context

When faced with problems, when nothing seems to work, a teacher may often seem to return to older, maybe more natural ways, rather than using innovative methods (Ariza, 2002). Ariza describes some of the methodologies used to learn and teach a language and underlines how each one presents “benefits and drawbacks” (p. 717). The Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) was developed in the forties for “rapid language learning” with drills and techniques that were mostly linear interaction between teacher and students, in order to communicate with informants during the Second World War (Myron, 1944). Later on, the Communicative Approach and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was developed in reaction to “audiolinguism” (Diffey, 1992), promising to “restore a balance between language usage and language use” (p. 209). The goal was to produce communicative competency, while reflecting natural environments and contexts.

Ariza (2002) presented the case of four American-raised English-speaking Puerto-Rican students who had to learn Spanish after being unwillingly relocated to Puerto Rico. Ariza had to look into a communicative approach to get the students to learn Spanish. She drew on her own experience as a thirty-year-old adult second-language learner to understand and help reduce the anxiety level her students experienced. She examined a variety of methods, including one of the earliest, the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) that was developed during World War II for rapid language learning. Grounded in “old school” drill and skill behavioural techniques, interactions were primarily linear transactions between the teacher and students (Samimy, 1989). Later methods such as the Communicative Approach says Diffey, (1992) were more focused on producing communicative competency by using meaningful, authentic language in order to get the learners to communicate in their own surroundings.
Those methodologies and other approaches can be exploited in regular classroom settings, in L2 studies abroad as well as in intensive domestic immersion. Freed, Segalowitz, and Dewey (2004) expand on the importance of the “quality of the experiences” (p. 298) while learning an L2, because we learn better and easier in a positive environment. Similarly, Ariza (2002) described, when encountering a difficult teaching environment, how she used the Community Language Learning (CLL) Approach (Curran, 1976). She claims the CLL Approach was “not a new language learning method” (p. 720) but one that offered the idea of “teaching and learning languages non-defensively” (p. 720), a method that allows the teacher to become a counsellor, as well as show empathy and understanding towards her students’ situation, in order to achieve results.

Ariza (2002), Myron (1944), and Diffey (1992) write about language learning and teaching methods and each one presents situations in which attitude problems and anxiety are significant negative factors in the learning process. These factors will be revisited later in this project because, no matter the age of the learner, second and foreign language learners are all confronted by the reality of life: they learn an L2 to communicate and must use it in real life settings.

Personal Experience

Teaching French as a second language was an unknown domain to me in my early teaching days. The only experience I had with second or foreign languages was learning to read and write English in high school with very little conversational practice. Because I was not fluently bilingual when it came to applying for work, some doors were closed. Therefore, the importance of the issues examined here also resonates with me at a personal level.
When I arrived in Kingston, Ontario I had a modest amount of teaching experience, from a leadership role as a youth counsellor and from a ten-month contract teaching sewing to teenagers in Senegal, Africa. However, I was fluent in French and was soon hired to teach French L2 in Ontario, where speaking French, my first language, was an asset.

I practised and learned to teach French *sur le tas*, a sink or swim experience, while I improved my own knowledge of French grammar. While working evenings, I attended Queen’s University and obtained my honours degree in Language and Linguistics. I then became employed as a teacher in a second language military program. I also continued to improve my English skills and acquired some knowledge of Spanish. Those were the early days of an interesting career that inspired my ongoing passion for languages and learning. My experience taught me about: life consequences of being bilingual; motivation and its loss; challenges adults face when learning; new and developing technologies for research and learning; how language skills are measured and tested; and just how easy it is to lose any learned language skills.

In the next chapter, I describe contextual elements in order to situate my interest for the subject: who are the learners, the qualifications they aim to achieve, the programs used to obtain the qualification, and the testing aspect to measure the language skills acquired.
Chapter 2
THE FEDERAL L2 ENVIRONMENT

In this chapter I will outline the process for twenty-first century military personnel to learn a second language. I will examine the policy on bilingualism developed in the 1960s—how it was elaborated and how its requirements have been implemented. I will also explore public service second-language programs; the tests and their results; what they mean to career officers; who the L2 students are; changes that occurred in the target population; what motivates the students to learn and the teachers to teach; and dilemmas faced by these second-language teachers and learners. Finally the chapter concludes with my suggestions on ways by which the outcomes might be improved.

The Learners

Canada is not the only country in the world to have more than one official language (OL). Belgium, Finland, Ireland and Switzerland, just as Canada, have more than one OL, as well as a bilingual military organisation (de Fourestier, 2010). De Fourestier writes: “…[and] the respect for language have become official priorities. Yet there is a difference between an official priority and an official reality.” (p. 92). De Fourestier certainly describes a Canadian reality when he uses “the language of work” phrase because, even if speaking French is required to be hired, English is the actual language of work and business in most of Canada. Even if the policy dictates that English military personnel must learn and master French L2 in order to climb the success and leadership ladders, in the end French will not be used as much as is expected to be the case and many will lose those French language skills soon after having acquired them. Would it not have
been easier, not to mention cheaper, to have learned to communicate orally in French at an earlier age?

Although Canada is officially a bilingual country, French and English languages are far from being used equally. In fact, French is not written, heard, or spoken in many parts of our large country; it could be called the second of the official languages. Even in a bilingual environment, such as during official meetings in Ottawa, our nation’s capital, bilingual interactions can quickly switch to English only, soon after the official greetings. It takes a very strong commitment to continue speaking French during deliberations when everyone is encouraged to speak their mother tongue and the language of the majority is English. If a bilingual Francophone wants to be heard and understood when time is limited, the switch to speaking English may be necessary. There should be a desire to change how bilingualism is promoted. To effect this change, the constitution and ministries of education of each province would require enhanced human and financial resources to make the necessary changes and improvements in the following areas: education curricula, teachers’ educational backgrounds, and the hiring practices for teachers. Even though the first line of the summary for Two languages, a world of opportunities (Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2009) states, “Knowledge of both our official languages is important for young Canadians as they prepare for their future” (p. III), and that “Students believe second language learning is important for them for a variety of reasons—for career and employment purposes, certainly, but also for personal development—and are looking for intensive and more varied opportunities to develop their second-language skills” (p. III), the needs and expectations do not meet reality.

In his Annual Report 2007-2008, the Honourable Graham Fraser, Canadian Commissioner of Official Languages (2008), wrote that French Second Language programs need to be strengthened to produce positive results and support student retention:
The Commissioner invites the provinces and territories to step up their efforts to ensure greater continuity in second-language instruction, from kindergarten until the students enter the labour market. Programs must be strengthened so that they produce positive results and support student retention. Of course, the quality of second-language courses and programs and the strengthening of these programs through opportunities for social interaction, cultural activities and exchanges are key factors for attracting and retaining young students (p. 74).

While bilingualism is mandated for the military, this objective results in adult civilians and military personnel who must learn the country’s second official language, but may not have the desire nor the aptitude. These language learners come from across Canada, where no province has a perfect L2 education system, and from family backgrounds that may not have promoted a positive attitude to second language learning. On December 31, 1985 a report on CF Bilingual Capability Requirement (Government of Canada, 2011a) stated that:

A 1975 review of military positions identified a requirement for 21,000 bilingual personnel: 6,000 Francophones and 15,000 Anglophones. At present there are approximately 10,500 bilingual Anglophones. A re-identification of all military positions will be completed during FY87/88; however, the fact remains that the requirement will be substantial.

This report was followed by others regarding the ongoing quest to motivate our Canadian Forces members to acquire second language skills. Language training in the public service is not a recently developed idea as the following excerpt from the Canadian Military History Gateway (Government of Canada, 2011b) shows:

The 1962 Glassco Report contained the germ of the principle of institutional bilingualism that would take root in the Canadian public service. One commissioner in particular, Eugène Therrien, devoted long paragraphs to the problems encountered by Francophones in the Forces, stressing the impossibility of their feeling comfortable there.

The next year saw the establishment of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. In April 1966, Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson announced a series of measures to
ensure a degree of Francophone and French-language proportional representation in federal institutions. (Government of Canada, 2011b).

The report concludes that:

While bilingualism has been a virtual Francophone monopoly, plans in the late 1960s and early 1970s allowed for Anglophones to receive French-language instruction. Unfortunately few of the objectives in this area have been reached... However, an impartial observer will readily see that much remains to be done. (Government of Canada, 2011b).

Second-language training really began with teaching English as second language because the French Canadians were under represented among the rank and file in the Canadian Forces (CF). We have not ceased to encourage French Canadians to speak English but our current efforts are also aimed at helping our Anglophone counterparts to learn French. I have first-hand knowledge of situations when military personnel enrol in language programs to achieve a certain level in their second official language in order to graduate with an additional distinction on their diploma. Another example is the Continuous French Course Level C offered to senior officers since 2003 (National Defence and the Canadian Forces, 2008):

The aim of the Military Second Language Education and Training Program (MSLETP) is to support the Department of National Defence objectives with regard to official languages. The MSLETP primary objective is to bring CF members assigned to language training to a level of language competency that will allow them to perform their duties effectively in their second language.

The Canadian Forces Language School offers many types and levels of training of which three are offered at my place of employment. The main program is for officer-cadets who do not possess a second-language profile on entry, which means they must attend five 50-minute classes per week during the school year and most will be invited to participate in at least one ten-week summer session during their four-year program of studies. A second program is for selected senior officers who attend a ten-month intensive program consisting of instruction six hours a
day, five days a week. They may spend two weeks with a French Canadian family in the province of Québec, as they attend a two-week immersion session in Valcartier. A more recent program is for faculty members and senior military personnel who receive tutoring sessions to help maintain or renew their language skills and profiles.

**The Qualifications**

Military personnel must attempt to reach skill standards enforced by the Public Service Commission (PSC) and established by the Personnel Psychology Centre (PPC). These official language profiles expire after five years. The language levels are graded with letter symbols that are opposite to the traditional academic grading system. For example, an A for the PSC is the minimum level of second-language proficiency for positions that require simple and repetitive use of the second language in routine work situations. Persons at this level make many errors and have deficiencies in grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency, which may interfere with the clarity of the message. Level B is the minimum level of second-language proficiency for positions that require a higher than routine use of the second language. A person at this level may have deficiencies in grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency that do not seriously interfere with communication. Level C is the level of proficiency for positions that require handling sensitive situations where the understanding and expression of subtle, abstract, or complicated ideas are required or where unfamiliar work-related topics must be dealt with. A person at this level will not have the ease and fluency of a native speaker and may have deficiencies in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, but these deficiencies rarely interfere with communication. E (exempt), also exists. Achieving an E in a given communication skill means further L2 testing is not required for that skill. It is not considered a proficiency level and is not listed in the linguistic profile of bilingual positions as explained in detail in the Public Service Commission (2013) website, pertaining to Qualifications Standards (see Appendix A).
Language profiles are expressed by a series of three letters that refer to specific communication skills in the following order: the first is for Reading Comprehension; the second, Written Expression; and the third, Oral Interaction. Hyphens in a language profile means that there has been no PSC test and the letter X, a failure.

**The Teaching Programs**

The National Defence and the Canadian Forces’ website (2008), and the Canadian Forces Language School, under Language Training and Programs (Appendix B), present a concise description of the language training programs in the Military Second Language Training Programme (MSLTP) for Canadian Forces (CF) members. Generally speaking, all MSLTP courses should help candidates achieve at least one performance objective corresponding to Public Sector Levels A, B, or C, (see Appendix B) and they are:

- Continuous French Course - Level B (CFCLB)
- Continuous French Course - Level C (CFCLC)
- Course with a Single Progress Level (PL)
- Specific Skill Courses
- Retention Language Services
- Preparation Services to the Second Language Evaluation (SLE)

A large range of courses available to fulfill the needs of language learners, according to the objectives and requirements of their position follows:

1. **Basic Level Course (BLC) is 750 hours, to help obtain level AAA.**
2. **Intermediate Level Course (ILC) 300-hour course, geared to students with at least an AAA profile, helps candidates obtain level BBB.**
3. **Continuous Intermediate Level, aimed at helping students achieve level BBB, is designed to last a maximum of 210 days (1260 hours)**
4. **Continuous Superior Level Course (CSLC)** helps students obtain a CBC profile. Course is 210 days (1260 hours), but can vary according to the entry profile of the candidates. The training strategy includes a two-week immersion session with a host family in a French community.

5. **Superior Level Course (SLC)**, for which general officers and senior officers with level BBB are given priority, helps students obtain a CBC profile. The course is offered at CFLS and at designated LTCs. Its maximum duration is 650 hours. The training may be intensive or in blocks of 150 hours. The training strategy also includes a two-week immersion session with a host family.

6. **Refresher Courses** with duration of 30 to 90 hours are offered in classroom groups to candidates with at least the valid level AAA.

7. **Retention Course**, a personalized course is taught using software available to all candidates with access to a multimedia laboratory with no time restrictions. The recommended entry level is BBB.

8. **GO/COL Course** is offered to officers with the minimum rank of lieutenant colonel or the equivalent who have a minimum profile of level A in oral interaction. Candidates can take a maximum of 200 hours per year, either part time on all military bases or at the CFLS, or full time (1 to 3 weeks at a time) at the CFLS Detachment St-Jean only.

9. **SUEP Course (Subsidized University Education Plan)**, 10 weeks in length, is offered at CFLS Det St-Jean to civilian university students, 1st and 2nd year RMCC Kingston students, and students on the University Training Plan – Non-Commissioned Members.

10. **OCdt Course** mainly for officer cadets from CFLRS, is offered at CFLS Detachment St-Jean and MARCOM. Its maximum duration is 33 weeks and it aims to reach level BAB. The objective and the duration of this course are currently being standardized.

11. **Block Course** is a more traditional block of intensive training lasting 10 weeks (300 hours) and covers two Progress Levels (PL). This block is a component of the basic, intermediate and superior courses.

12. **Distance Tutoring** is not strictly a course but rather a learning strategy offered by CFLS Detachment St-Jean to all candidates who have access to a multimedia laboratory or are capable of learning from a learning program. (Government of Canada, 2011)

**The Testing Programs**

My experience is that most language teachers test students with in-class quizzes and tests during and after each lesson; and also use a series of Progress Level (PL) tests that are part of the
on-site testing program and are usually administered after the completion of two Enabling Objectives (EO), also called Modules in the Curriculum de Français des Forces Canadiennes (CFFC). When required, Public Service Commission (PSC) (2013) testing is administered in order to obtain a valid profile at the beginning and, if necessary, at the end of the officer-cadets’ academic program. The same tests are administered about 40 days prior to the end of the scheduled program for the officers, in order to allow for the possibility of retesting before the end of the course.

Not surprisingly, the PSC test format has changed over the years. Skills used to be measured in four parts: reading, writing, listening, and speaking tests, with the results expressed with numbers one to four, four being the best possible result. Today, skills are tested using three tests: reading comprehension, written expression, and oral interaction with results expressed as letters. The listening and speaking skills are tested during one single intervention (Public Service Commission, 2013). According to its website, the PSC developed the Second Language Evaluation–Test of Oral Proficiency (SLE–TOP) in the context of the public service modernization of the official languages objectives. The previous Oral Interaction Test was implemented in 1984 and had been administered more than 25,000 times per year. It has been replaced by the SLE–TOP to take advantage of professional developments in language assessment and to reflect changes in language use in the Federal Public Service.

The tests have been subject to changes over time as a result of new and ongoing education research; adjustments to changing needs and requirements of students and teachers; and the occasional compromising of the tests, which might occur if a teacher has seen a copy of a test and taught to the test. Newest versions of the reading and written comprehension tests came into effect on February 11, 2013 (Public Service Commission, 2013) and a recent change has been the use of computerized technology to administer the reading (60 questions in 90 minutes) and
written comprehension (65 questions in 90 minutes) components. This new technology allows for near instant correction and speeds up test results entry. However, computerized testing does not naturally suit all language learners’ needs or circumstances, so for the time being, a pen and paper version of the test is still available under specific conditions and with a formal request for accommodations.

It is interesting to note that ten unidentified questions in each of those tests do not count towards the score. Those ten questions are included for research and test development purposes; they do comply with the test specifications, have been approved for inclusion by a multidisciplinary team of subject-matter experts, and may be used in future versions of these tests.

**Reading Comprehension Testing**

There are two types of questions in the reading comprehension tests. One is to choose the best word or group of words to complete the sentence, the other is a question regarding the meaning of the text itself. Test takers are invited to take time to familiarize themselves prior to writing the tests, with sample questions which are found on the PSC’s website (Public Service Commission, 2013).

**EXAMPLES** of question type 1, Fill in the Blanks:

Expéditeur : Pat Bégin  
Destinataire : Liste des employées et des employés  
Objet : Système informatique de gestion des congés

Bonjour,

Veuillez _____(A) que le Système informatique de gestion des congés ne sera pas disponible demain. Vous pourrez accéder de nouveau à votre compte dès mardi prochain. Vous devrez alors _____(B) vos soldes de congés pour l’année prochaine.

Pat Bégin
1. Choisissez le mot ou le groupe de mots le plus approprié à insérer dans l'espace en blanc « A ».

   1. voir
   2. marquer
   3. laisser
   4. noter

   *In this case, answer number four best completes the text. Therefore, you would select number four.*

2. Choisissez le mot ou le groupe de mots le plus approprié à insérer dans l'espace en blanc « B ».

   1. augmenter
   2. confirmer
   3. manipuler
   4. ignorer

   *In this case, answer number two best completes the text. Therefore, you would select number two.*

**EXAMPLES of question type 2: Multiple Choice**

Communiqué concernant le dépôt du Rapport annuel du ministère

Le Ministère des finances a terminé le 30 avril dernier son Rapport annuel. Ce rapport couvre toutes les activités des ministères et des agences du gouvernement fédéral en vertu de la nouvelle *Loi sur les finances dans la fonction publique* (LFFP). Dans ce rapport, les statistiques récentes de la dernière année fiscale sur les dépenses de la fonction publique fédérale montrent de meilleurs résultats. Plus exactement, 90% des ministères et des agences se soumettent à leurs engagements financiers conformément à la loi, une hausse de 6% par rapport à l’année précédente.

3. Selon le texte, que montrent les statistiques?

   1. le pourcentage de conformité à la LFFP devrait diminuer l’an prochain
   2. la majorité des ministères et des agences respectent la LFFP
   3. le pourcentage de conformité à la LFFP ne devrait pas s’accroître l’an prochain
4. la plupart des ministères et des agences ne respectent pas la LFFP

In this case, answer number two is the best answer. Therefore, you would select number two.

4. Que dit le texte sur le respect de la LFFP en général?

1. Il est en augmentation.
2. Il est en réduction.
3. Il est en stagnation.
4. Il est en alourdissement.

In this case, answer number one is the best answer. Therefore, you would select number one. (Public Service Commission, 2013).

There are only two texts and four sample questions on the Public Service Commission website. A question such as number one implies some general knowledge on the part of the test taker, Veuillez noter is a fairly common formula that would be known to most candidates. On the other hand, question number two may confuse the candidates and waste more of their limited time; they may question solde because of its different meanings—balance in a bank account, amount owing after a purchase—or a sale as in en solde. They may also question why would employees have to confirm their leave credits? Time will therefore be spent comparing the other choices, augmenter (to augment), manipuler (to handle) or ignorer (to ignore) before concluding that number two is the most plausible answer to the otherwise strange concept of confirmer le solde de congés (meaning “to confirm the remaining number of days off”). For some candidates, understanding the concepts related to leave control becomes more important than the language ability itself.

Questions three and four require a better level of understanding and, most of all, demand that candidates do not question the context. The specialized financial and statistical context is not for everyone and if candidates were specialized in accounting, chances are they may question the
underlined meaning rather than just look for the best answer. The multiple choices in the last question are also based on expanded vocabulary, *stagnation* or *alourdissement* could confuse a candidate.

In some resources available to teaching staff, I found some interesting questions such as: *L’Initiative sur les systèmes de santé en Afrique* tablera (26) ces efforts pour étendre aux mères et aux enfants l’accès aux services de santé essentiels. Que veut dire l’expression soulignée dans le texte; with choices such as: misera sur, travaillera sur, tiendra compte de, and *se basera sur*. The expected answer is *se basera sur*, if we consider that *tabler* means to ‘count on’ then a candidate would need a rather wide vocabulary to see beyond ‘table’. Other expressions found in this test for L2 learners are also rather specific, such as: *cas échéant, à l’instar de, au pied levé*. I believe that it takes a solid level of knowledge in French to succeed in that type of test when, out of 50 questions—because, as was explained previously, 10 of the 60 questions do not count in the result—28 correct answers are required for a B level and 38 correct answers are required for a C level. (Public Service Commission, 2013)

**Written Expression Testing**

Two types of multiple choice questions are also on the written expression tests. One is to fill in the blank with a word or a group of words selected from choices offered; the other type is error identification questions where the response options are bolded or underlined selected words or groups of words within the text. The task is to identify which one of these emphasised sections contains one or more errors; or if no error is detected, the answer would be *Aucun des choix offerts*.

**EXAMPLES:** 1. Choose the completion; 2. Select the error if any

1. Plusieurs personnes auront la chance d’obtenir une chaise ergonomique _______ les mois à venir.
In this case, answer number four best completes the text. Therefore, you would select number four.

2. Laquelle des sections soulignées suivantes comporte une ou plusieurs erreurs? S'il n'y a pas d'erreur, sélectionnez « Aucun des choix offerts. »

Le ministre de l'Environnement a récemment prononcé un discours dans l'assemblée générale annuelle (1) de l'Association canadienne de l'hydroélectricité. Le ministre en a profité pour souligner les initiatives visant à encourager (2) les producteurs d'énergie renouvelable, les particuliers ainsi que les entreprises (3), et à réduire leurs émissions de gaz à effet de serre.

In this case, answer number one is the best answer. Therefore, you would select number one.

Those seem to be simpler examples of questions; the information contained in the 2013 Public Service Commission’s website regarding the written tests does warn the candidates that the questions will vary from simple questions with one word to add, as in question number one, to more complex questions requiring to choose and add expressions such as à des fins de, savoir gré, and dans les plus brefs délais. Other questions will involve having to discern one or more improvements in longer sentences.

Those are some samples of technical wording that do differentiate between an able writer and a good writer but I question the need for questions to be so difficult, and if L2 speakers have to be writing as well as educated speakers in their mother tongue.

For the written expression tests, a B level or better is required to be considered functional in French. A minimum of 31 correct answers out of 55 (65 before omitting the ten unidentified
questions that are not calculated in the result) is required for a B level and 43 correct answers for a C level. (Public Service Commission, 2013)

It must be noted that confidentiality is very important; on its website, under Testing Information, the Public Service Commission (2013) warns:

Individuals who write PSC tests are reminded that these tests are designated Protected. Any disclosure of test content is in contravention of the Government Security Policy and the use of such improperly obtained or transmitted information could be found to contravene the provisions of the Public Service Employment Act (PSEA). Parties involved in the disclosure of or improper use of Protected test content may be the subject of an investigation under the PSEA, where a finding of fraud may be punishable on summary conviction or may be referred to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

This is a stern warning to candidates that any contravention to this warning is strongly enforced although test candidates would be unlikely to remember the exact wording of 65 questions and would avoid any disclosure knowing it would or could benefit other candidates.

The written tests are recognition tests; that is, they require test takers to fill in the blanks given several choices. Development questions such as writing a note or postcard, or asking for a reservation have been removed from previous versions of the test. However, it would be interesting to find out what the results would be if Francophones were given the same test as some of them may not do any better.

**Oral Proficiency Testing**

As for the SLE-TOP (test of oral proficiency) changes have brought about a more standardized test type with a Cartesian approach—a less natural approach to communication—but one that allows for results to be assessed in a more standardized way because the candidates are replying to uniform, computer-generated questions. Previous tests were more convivial and impromptu interactions where eye contact, body language and natural composure, without being part of the test, were positive factors for outgoing individuals but negative for the introverts. The
new SLE-TOP test is easily administered during a telephone conversation and designed to be a short but informative question-and-answer period of two to six minutes. The test administrator enters some information regarding the candidate into the computerized system; the candidate then listens to two recorded messages, followed by two short conversations that must be summarised orally in approximately seven minutes. According to information gathered during the first step, a computer program proposes three topics from which the candidates choose one and are given 90 seconds to organize their thoughts before talking about the topic for two to three minutes and answering a few related questions. A longer recorded discussion of four to five minutes is afterwards heard twice and again, a summary must be produced orally.

The Reading and Writing tests evaluate beginner to advanced learners, without the disadvantage of the added stressor associated with being penalized for wrong answers. In other words, this is allowing the possibilities that a guessed answer might be right, as supported by Bereby-Meyer, Meyer, and Flascher (2002) who write “There is obviously some probability that a guessed answer will be correct” (p. 314). Unlike past versions of the tests, note taking is now allowed and even encouraged notwithstanding that any written material must be handed in and destroyed before exiting the exam hall.

From a teaching perspective, I wonder if the tests need to be as demanding as they are, if we are reaching the goals we expect to reach. Would using a “more holistic approach” (Servage, p. 305) not be more productive? At times, would a less rigorous test, one that would be more general, over a wider variety of subjects, allow for more positive results that would encourage the learners to use their acquired L2 skills rather than discourage them and make them feel as if they will never be competent in French L2. According to Dörnyei’s description of “motivational feedback” (2001a, p. 122), it is important to “protect learners’ self-esteem and increase their self-confidence” (p. 86); that the “expectancy of success is not enough in itself if it is not
accompanied by positive values” (p. 57) because even if teachers aim to succeed at motivating the learners, the latter will still rely on the outside validation that comes with the test.

There must be a 30-day interval before any of the three tests can be re-administered, if and when results are not within the course requirements. Reading comprehension and written expression test results are not usually challenged but the SLE–TOP can be challenged through rescore by “the process whereby an assessor other than the one who administered the test listens to the audio recording of the test and makes a decision regarding the level” or a retest is given, as there is in place “a mechanism that allows for a new assessment if the test was administered under unfavourable conditions” (Public Service Commission, 2013). It is also important to consider that the stressors induced by retesting can have a negative impact on the candidate’s performance, and that the result of a rescore, for better or worse, must be accepted as it replaces any preceding results. When all else fails, candidates have been known to request to have an evaluator from the testing bureau accompany them in the course of their duties and assess their L2 skills. This approach was used when a previous student of mine, who upon re-scoring of his re-test, received the C level he required.

Members of the Merit Board examine military files yearly to assign point values towards promotions, potential training, and future postings. They take into account language profiles, education, experience and years of service as well as years remaining before retirement, although they do so with a language profile that could be either recent or nearly outdated.

An official language profile for military personnel is valid for five years after which many learners may have lost their L2 skills. Some skills are lost within months of their language training, others over longer period of time. How rapidly are L2 skills lost and how could we possibly improve teaching for a better retention process? And most of all, what can be done to
motivate our French second language learners to keep using those skills, to read, write, but mostly to speak, in French? These issues are further explored throughout this paper.

Five years is a long period of time before having to be re-tested and it is rather frustrating when military personnel are compared to their federal civilian employee counterparts. These not only automatically receive an $800 premium per year for their second official language ability, but their linguistic profiles are only challenged if and when they apply for a position requiring a higher proficiency level in L2.

I would recommend to military administration to re-test sooner, maybe every two years, as it is done for physical training (PT). L2 speakers would have less chance to lose sight of the upcoming test; many would remain motivated just like they are for PT where it is an ongoing requirement to keep fit. Such testing would not have to be through the Public Service Commission but by other performance assessment bodies that could be developed within the organisation. Initially a cost would have to be attached to such endeavours, but over time, it could help offset the need for lengthy formal language re-training.

Already, easily implementable activities promoting retention and maintenance of the L2 skills are included in the Canadian Forces English Curriculum (CFEC) also available in French under Cours de Français des Forces Canadiennes (CFFC), issued on authority of the Chief of Defence Staff (1990). Activities are listed in Appendix C, and also on the Language Maintenance pages of Canadian Heritage (2009), in Appendix D.
Chapter 3
LITERATURE REVIEW

In Chapter two, I shared my experience related to L2 learning and raised some questions I have about the process. In Chapter three, I present arguments discovered in my literature review of research findings related to the topic of second language acquisition to support my position that the age factor is not as strong an argument as previously believed; that the teachers play a very important role in the learning activity; that the learners and teachers’ motivation as well as the learners’ attitude towards the L2 are paramount to the L2 learning process, above the measured aptitude factors and the standards expected from the learners. Furthermore, though efforts are expanded in the learning and teaching processes, without sustained effort by the learner, skills will drop. Finally, new communication technologies are perpetually developing and they will facilitate retention of the L2 skills.

The Age Aspect

Singleton (2001) reviewed Tomb’s (1925), Stengel’s (1939) and Lenneberg’s (1967) early perspectives on debates regarding the age factor in second language (L2) acquisition which prior to the seventies was mostly based on anecdotes, assumptions, and folk wisdom. Singleton refers to studies (e.g., Burstall, Jamieson, Cohen, & Hargreaves, 1974; Oller & Nagato, 1974; Stankowski Gratton, 1980) that have consistently found a progressive diminution of any advantage conferred by early exposure to an L2. He states, “Investigations of naturalistic L2 acquisition yield a converse pattern” (p. 78). It was found that earlier exposure to the target language led to better performance than later exposure but, on the other hand, those with “limited naturalistic exposure to the L2 show older beginners outperforming younger ones” (Singleton, p. 78) at least early in their L2 acquisition. Other studies from the 1980s and 1990s (Scovel,
1988; Birdsong, 1992; Ioup, Boustagui, Tigi and Moselle, 1994) found evidence that in the right environment or immersion setting, older learners have been known to “attain English pronunciation ratings within the same range as those attained by native-speaker controls” (Singleton, p. 78), defying the claim that after 12 years of age an L2 learner would not achieve such results in the target language. So the “existence or nonexistence of a cut-off point” (Singleton, p. 83) to learn an L2 is still open to discussion. There are a number of important factors to be considered such as “the strength of motivation” (Singleton, p. 83), the attitude, the aptitude, and the difference in abilities between control unilingual native speakers as opposed to bilingual speakers. Dixon et al. (2012) also investigate the subject, concluding that the “younger the better” approach “should be rejected” (p. 46), strong words but very hopeful ones for the adult learners who must learn, reluctantly and even under duress. Ariza (2002) found this to be the case with her students who had to learn Spanish after being returned to Costa Rica from the USA, where they had been raised in an American-English environment. She writes, “Traditional methods of language teaching include drills and repetitions with little emphasis on communication. Students who are anxious about their listening and speaking abilities tend to maintain an affective barrier that can make language acquisition almost impossible” (p. 717). Dixon et al. (2012) observe that “older learners are more efficient but less likely to achieve native-like proficiency” (p. 46).

Singleton (2001) quotes Birdsong (1992), “15 out of 20 Anglophone adult subjects who began acquiring French as adults in France fell within the range of native speaker performance on a grammaticality judgement task” (p. 78). In my experience, I have also heard of adult immigrant workers, such as skilled manual workers from Portugal and Italy, who never achieved L2 skills in their new environment often because they were living and working with and within their own language group of origin. Wehner, Gump and Downey (p. 281) write “a student will learn only as
much vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and so on as he or she feels is necessary in order to be understood” (p. 281). Dixon et al. (2012) also argue in favour of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory stating that the cultural aspect is “extremely important and understudied” (p. 9). They express the thought that “The interaction between the L2 learners and their environment emphasized by sociocultural theory converts the traditional L2 teacher’s obsession with linguistic correctness into a concern for appropriateness” (p.34) thus “changing the role of the teacher and the goal of and strategies for L2 learning” (p. 35). Dixon et al. (2012) are not proponents of “one best way” (p. 36) to educate; they emphasize that “optimal conditions, for different populations vary according to learning contexts, pedagogical goals, program set up, learner characteristics, and interventions among these contextual variables” (p. 36).

**Teachers**

Dixon et al. (2012) highlight the characteristics of a successful L2 teacher, such as: must be competent in the L2, must desire to teach well, must have some proficiency in the L1 of the students—although a difficult situation with groups of mixed linguistic background—and must be able to set achievable goals for the learners. Previous research has shown the low retention and high attrition level among teachers, particularly for language teachers as there are weaknesses not only in their initial language training but also the recruitment process (Guarino et al., 2006; Ewart, 2009). Initial language training seems to have a poor start in many regions across Canada (Veilleux and Bournot-Trites, 2005). Furthermore, the high turnover in the teaching staff does not lead to the creation of a bond between learners, teachers and programs, according to the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages Report for 2008. Consequently, the level of competency in second language teachers is in danger of erosion (Veilleux and Bournot-Trites, 2005). L2 acquisition is really a two-way stream: teachers must be able to teach and students must want to learn. But do all L2 teachers have the potential, the aptitude and the motivation to teach an L2?
Green and Kelso (2006) surveyed adult learners and concluded that, “teachers play a very important role in the success of their students” (p. 72). Today’s teachers are looking at more recently developed methodologies for teaching without underestimating “old language learning methods” (Ariza, 2002 p. 1), and must be on the lookout for new—and ever improving—technologies to help language learners acquire the L2.

**Motivation**

Dörnyei (2001) writes about motivation and self-determination along with Deci and Ryan’s (2008) own distinction between intrinsic (internal) motivation to experience pleasure and satisfaction, or to satisfy one’s curiosity; and extrinsic (external) motivation seen entirely as a means to an end such as good grades or raise in salary. Dörnyei (2001) contends both that learners of an L2 almost always experience realms of external and internal regulatory factors on a continuum between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and that teachers have to be motivated as well although “hardly any research has been done in the past to explore this relationship” (p. 50). Furthermore, motivation is a determining factor in the strategies that will be used to learn and teach L2. Demotivation is also a concern that weighs on the teacher’s shoulders even if, as Dörnyei wrote: “we are living in an age when it is not cool for students to show enthusiasm for anything and that boredom is in” (p. 51).

Learning a second or a foreign language is a particular task that requires personal or professional interest, good attitude, aptitude, motivation and active participation. Learners and teachers may meet on a regular basis even if some of the learning happens behind the classroom scene. Notwithstanding, the reasons behind the desire to learn another language also affect the results. I have taught students who were in a burgeoning bilingual relationship and wanted to communicate with their partners in their own language as well as with their family and friends: many abandoned the task when the relationship faltered while others had discovered and
developed a new interest and kept on learning. For instance, I had language students who wanted to travel and know communities other than their own, one in particular who did well after developing an interest for the wine regions of France. Another who acquired French skills in order to better perform and move up in his professional career achieved a fluent level and even raised two daughters in a bilingual environment. In my experience, the ones who are more successful are those who have multiple reasons to learn and occasions to practice.

Although we live in a multicultural society and we claim to live in an officially bilingual country, do we really live this bilingualism? Many Canadians and new immigrants are proud to be bilingual and eager to promote bilingualism and multiculturalism while some who missed the chance themselves to become bilingual have encouraged their children to learn another language. Others are less motivated and see bilingualism as a waste of time, effort, and most of all of our tax dollars. In my professional practice, I see military cadets as well as military officers who must learn to speak and become functional in French or English, or must improve their second language skills in order to be promoted; this is the source of their motivation. Ryan and Deci (2000) have identified an innate interest that they call intrinsic motivation—motivation to learn for inherent satisfaction. These L2 learners approach language classes with a good motivation and sometimes a good background having learned the second language at school, with their family, on television or online. Other L2 learners must be convinced, almost lured to develop this new interest, their motivation being extrinsic, that is to do “something because it leads to a separable outcome” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 55); in other words, to reach an external goal such as obtaining a promotion or a pay raise. Their level and types of motivation are different; one sees it as a great opportunity the other as a chore. Nonetheless, in both cases, motivation is instrumental when financial gain is attached; for military personnel, the language profile is given a score that
adds value to their files when presented to Merit Board Members who discuss potential promotions; for Civil Servants, it is worth $800 bonus per year.

Being a second language teacher in a military program, I am in a privileged environment because it is assumed that the military students come to class motivated towards learning the L2. The value of being able to communicate with their unit members in the members’ mother tongue is a definite asset but one that is not always valued early during their career. Instrumental reasons become a more powerful tool with the possibility of receiving the additional distinction on their diploma and the commission, or a promotion.

The best students will have had both, at times intrinsic motivation and at times, extrinsic motivation. They often experience a loss of motivation after weeks of being corrected, made to repeat, and as they realize that although they can communicate and feel more fluent in their L2, they still have so much to learn. When intrinsic motivation is lost, it is no longer fun to learn. When language learning loses its appeal, they even wonder if it is at all worthwhile when they feel they will not get the coveted advantage. The language teachers must become motivators using all means and materials to have students internalize content in a manner that will retain the students’ interest.

Aptitude

Even with the best of motivation, some learners will have more difficulties than others in learning a L2 and the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) and the Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery (PLAB) were developed to measure the aptitude level. Both these tests have presented academia with challenges regarding students’ expected performance and achievement but in some cases, it has helped some learners in their quest for higher education and promotion without having to reach an expected second language requirement profile during their graduate studies.
The MLAT was developed in the 1950s by Carroll and Sapon in order to predict “how well, relative to other individuals, an individual can learn a foreign language in a given amount of time and under given conditions” in a classroom setting. The authors found that “it is assumed that under the right circumstances, everyone can learn another language” (Carroll & Sapon, 2002). Steinman and Smith (2001) found that “the MLAT measures four skills: phonetic coding ability; grammatical sensitivity; rote learning ability; and inductive language learning ability through a five sections test although at times, only three of them are used” (p. 1). With the MLAT, Carroll and Sapon have ignored personal attitude and motivation, which are important factors in language learners’ success. Sparks and Ganschow (2001) consider them as key “affective variables” although they also report that “the MLAT is one of the best predictors of FL aptitude” (p. 96).

On the other hand, the Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery (PLAB) was developed by Dr. Paul Pimsleur and his associates from 1958 to 1966. They had grouped thirty years of studies “into seven research topics: intelligence, verbal ability, pitch discrimination, order of language study and bilingualism, study habits, motivation and attitudes, and personality factors” (pimsleur.com, 2012). Although they had first identified verbal intelligence, motivation, auditory ability and grade point average as the four most significant factors in predicting success at learning a foreign language, after field testing, Pimsleur and his associates found that these sections could be taken out of the test without affecting the predictive ability of the PLAB. Steinman and Smith (2001) questioned the age and the predicting ability of the MLAT. They wrote that the MLAT had not been modified in its forty plus years of existence and required “dated” equipment. The volunteer graduate student they tested in order to find out if the test should be updated reported that he felt that measures of motivation and personality were
important in the learning process but were not considered in the MLAT (Steinman & Smith, 2001).

Reed and Stansfield (2002) found that using the MLAT as a sole diagnostic tool has generated ethical concerns. Definitely not taking motivation into account is an issue with aptitude tests, even though Carroll as mentioned in Reed and Stansfield (2002) had written in 1981 that motivation or interest have to be “separately evaluated” although he had not included them in his MLAT. Those tests do not take motivation seriously. Second, Goodman, Freed, and McManus (1990) wrote, “It is possible that the MLAT only measures aptitude for traditionally taught courses,” while courses are now offered with more communicative methods, different approaches, use immersion settings and because as much as possible, learning establishments try their best to suit the learners’ needs. Goodman, Freed, and McManus (1990) state, “it seems prudent to discourage its use as a major criterion for exemptions” (p. 139). Consider also that students may have to or want to learn an FL despite a poor aptitude test result, as has been the case for students who had to fight the system to do so, and that teachers have had to overcome the negative consequences of poor aptitude test results.

The MLAT is a powerful tool when used as a streaming element and to decide which learning strategies are best used, notwithstanding that having a homogenous learning group with the possibility to adapt teaching content does help when teaching an L2. In my experience, I have known a student in his forties who had failed the MLAT, carried that failure to French L2 training and nevertheless succeeded in obtaining a profile of CBC, with 30 hours a week of language training over ten months. Some will not let a MLAT result keep them from successfully learning French; others will actually use the MLAT result to be exempted from the French requirement due to a psychological language learning disability but still carry on to post-graduate studies. Fortunately, the CF mostly uses aptitude tests as a diagnostic tool in order to better
identify potential difficulties and as a guide in better program selection. Furthermore, military personnel are strongly motivated to succeed in order to obtain consideration for promotion and advancement, particularly if a language profile is required.

The L2 Learning Situation

What are the rules? Who are the players? Over the years, scholars have looked at languages and their learning and teaching practices from different angles. Policy and Standards in education, Second Language certification and hiring practice for French as Second Language (FSL) teachers differ across the country as does the definition of who is or is not a Second Language learner here in Canada.

In accordance with May’s Language Policy and Minority Language Rights in the Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning (May, 2005), it is understood that minority as well as majority languages face problems of extinction, erosion and also re-birth all over the world. In Canada, discussions often revolve around French and English, almost overlooking languages that were here before French and English such as Abenaki, Algonquin, Chinook, Inuinnaqtun, Inuktitut, Mi’kmaq, Mohawk, Ojibwe, and Okanagan, or others that came in from other parts of the world such as Spanish, German, Italian, Chinese, and Korean. As the younger generations tend not to carry on the traditions, many languages are lost or become minority languages because Aboriginal peoples and newcomers must choose to be educated and work in one of Canada’s two official languages, English or French. We also see where minority languages have taken strength following the aftermath of a war, as in the former Yugoslavia (May, 2005, p. 1060) where Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian are replacing Serbo-Croat, the artificial language product of the post-Second World War.

Canadian provinces face similar issues: British Columbians are encouraging newcomers to learn English while Quebecers are working to keep French alive and well, both provinces often
ignoring the newcomers’ own culture. Some young Quebecers wanting to open doors, even to the world of new technology and online gaming, are also longing to master the current world language, the lingua mundi, English. While the Canadian government has established rules and developed guidelines for a bilingual workforce, military and civilian, provincial leaders are reducing education and language instruction budgets therefore reducing the availability of exposure for the younger generation when, it would probably be better to promote an open-minded and positive attitude towards second language acquisition. Consequently, L2 teachers will have an important role to play.

**Standards for Second Language Teachers**

Veilleux and Bournot-Trites (2005) examine the standards used by Canadian universities and British Columbia school districts to assess the language competence of French Immersion (FI) teachers in a Canadian exploratory and qualitative study that covers, among other things, the administration of entrance exams at the University of British Columbia. The results of the entrance exams determine the competence level of an applicant, to one of the five levels: Failure, Core French Elementary only, Core French Secondary or lower, French Immersion Elementary or lower, and French Immersion Secondary or lower (p. 491), and guides potential teachers to an appropriate and adequate class, where they will be expected to teach French while making use of English, or only using French. Veilleux and Bournot-Trites (2005) report that telephone interviews were mainly conducted with eight Canadian universities: their websites were consulted; information regarding Certification was obtained, and written documentation and questionnaires were sent to school districts and to a random sample of parents chosen from the association of Canadian Parents for French in the same districts. Follow-up interviews were conducted with District Human Resources personnel (DHR) and parents to further verify results.
It was noted that a homogeneous testing method was non-existent and also reported that university administrators have been pressured to lower the passing level as some (British Columbia) school districts have experienced a shortage of certified teachers of spoken French in French Immersion classrooms while other School Districts experienced a choice shortage, meaning they have numerous applicants but not the right applicants.

Prospective teachers must obtain a teaching certification through the British Columbia College of Teachers in order to teach in BC. This certification allows them to teach any subject in a school district that would hire them. The DHR of school districts has the authority to assess if potential teachers possess appropriate qualifications for their placement. With a shortage of teachers, even more so teachers of French, criteria for hiring have been relaxed. French competence is not always re-evaluated and measured at that time and in fact, a teacher could have acquired education and certification in another province, be hired and end up teaching French without being fluent in French. The lack of fluency is not the only problem, the quality is also questioned at times as Veilleux and Bournot-Trites (2005) mention the “ethical taboo” when it comes to teachers criticizing one another’s level of French in the workplace. Written and verbal comprehension and expression skills must be, but are not always, well mastered.

Compounding the lack of homogeneity in evaluation, testing and hiring processes, prospective teachers are sometimes allowed to teach without certification, and this could cause erosion in French teachers’ qualifications. Two other dilemmas arise from such a situation. First: in extreme circumstances, a school district hires teachers without proper knowledge of methodology nor adequate level of French or both, then a hired teacher obtains seniority and cannot be displaced if and when a better or fully qualified candidate becomes available. Second, this affects students’ learning experience, and may cause them to drop French; as is stated in Two languages, a world of opportunities (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, 2009)
“students’ experience at the elementary and secondary levels and the degree of second-language proficiency acquired at those levels can affect their decision to pursue second-language study at university …” (p. 20).

Dörnyei (2001a) writes that in his survey with Csizér in 1998, “participants considered the teacher’s own behavior to be the single most important motivational tool” (p. 31). Role models and teachers with enthusiasm, have love and passion for the subject matter. When the teacher is passionate, the learners become impassioned and well-versed instructors will entice their students to learn more and develop an appetite for more knowledge than one with limited knowledge, not only for French but in other subjects. This leads to other weaknesses as the youth of today will be tomorrow’s workforce in a country where government policies wish to promote bilingualism, (Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada (2009, p. 26). This major qualitative study of second-language learning in Canada’s universities includes an in-depth survey of institutions; focus groups with students and professors; and interviews with senior university officials among others. It underlines the serious gaps and unmet needs in second language education even though some institutions do offer second-language learning programs.

There is a definite advantage when it comes to teaching in an environment large enough to include many L2 teachers such as in Government Language Centres because there are information exchanges, peer and administrative support in French, possibilities to organize or attend a wide array of conferences, workshop, and professional development activities.

**Attitude**

In our society, are the professionals in the language programs in our schools skilled enough to transfer the knowledge and the desire to learn the second language if parents have not already instilled a positive attitude in their children? Will the newly acquired skills be useful and
maintained? Are the military students attending second language training for something that will look good on their resume or as something they like to do?

These are serious questions to be asked in these days of budget reductions. Lately more reviews and studies have become available in Canada probably because bilingualism has become a frequent topic of discussion with our political leaders. It is also both a uniting and a dividing factor within communities. In a similar way, our American neighbours are also looking at second and foreign language training with a newly found interest for their military operations. Kroll (2008) explains that it is not only the language needs but also knowledge about cultural diversity that are assumed to be mandatory.

I used to believe that the incentive to learn would be at its greatest with elementary school pupils, that the younger they were, the more easily they would learn. However, I have discovered through the Annual Report 2007-2008 of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, 2009) that adequate human and material resources as well as adequate funding are lacking, greatly affecting the ability to teach French at elementary schools. It is difficult to hire qualified teachers and the retention rate is low due to the difficulties encountered in the classroom. Comments in Mady (2010) illustrate the value parents perpetuate for language training when students state, “If I show my parents my French mark is 68 per cent they don’t care” or “My parents have always thought that it is not a big deal, that it is not a big part of the schoolwork” (p. 575). It seems that today’s parents may have deeply entrenched prejudice against other cultures and their attitude might negatively affect second language learning in their children. Dörnyei (2011) reiterates Gardner’s (1985) views, questioning “parental passive roles: children are well aware of what their parents really think of the L2 and its speakers” (p. 39).
When the elementary school pupils become teenagers and enter the job market, they may come to a better understanding of the value and advantage they would have if the second official language had been learned. Some of them will blame the system and act victimized, others will tackle the problem; the latter will look for classes or research possibilities to learn the L2. The Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada publication, Two languages, a world of opportunities (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, 2009), illustrates very clearly how dysfunctional the educational system is when it comes to teaching languages, even stating that:

... students’ experience at the elementary and secondary levels and the degree of second-language proficiency acquired at those levels can affect their decision to pursue second-language study at university ... (p. 20) [and that there are]

... no linkages between university language tests or requirements and public service linguistic requirements and tests (p. 21).

**L2 Skills Attrition**

Unfortunately, after all the work and effort put into learning an L2, too much is lost when the active commitment to learning ends. When it comes to L2, if the learners are not making use of their newly acquired skills, these skills appear to rapidly vanish. As Weltens (1987) questions when talking about foreign-language skills, “how much of these (often laboriously) acquired skills is retained over longer periods of time when they are not being used?” (p. 22). It would therefore make sense to look deeper into what could help in maintaining L2 skills.

Gardner, Lalonde and MacPherson (1985) examined the case of L2 learners who attended a six-week intersession course in Trois-Pistoles, Québec. (p. 523) and found that “loss occurs first with those skills which are not completely ingrained... [and] that attrition occurs primarily on those skills which were acquired or improved relatively recently... [and] attrition occurs mostly on active skills which involve interaction with speakers of the other language” (p. 529-530). The
new skills must be used, Gardner, Lalonde, and MacPherson (1985) write, “those who try to maintain their second language skills are relatively successful, whereas those who do not do so experience considerable language loss” (p. 537).

Weltens (1987) reports “that there is an inverse relation between proficiency level following training and attrition rate” (p. 27). That is, “students who have acquired a higher level of proficiency should lose less skill than students with low level of initial proficiency” (Gardner & Lysynchuk, 1990, p. 255). Forty variables were assessed in their study on the retention of French as a second-language with 128 Grade 9 students (p. 257). Other than the known variables, they asked about “Attitudes towards French Canadians, Interest in Foreign Languages, Attitudes towards Learning French, Instrumental Orientation, Motivational Intensity, and Desire to Learn French.” In the course of three testing sessions: September 1986, December, 1986 and September, 1987, the results show that “there is considerable self-perceived attrition over the 9-month incubation period” and that:

Students also experienced significant attrition on objective measures of French production but not on French recognition measures. It seems reasonable to conclude that the loss in production skills is due to the fact that these students are novice second-language learners, and thus most of the structures they are using are recently and incompletely acquired, making them more susceptible to loss (p. 267).

It must be noted that reception skills had been acquired in Grade 9 of the program while production skills would come later (Grade 12) so the incubation period for production skill had been short when tested in Grade 9. Gardner and Lysynchuk conclude that “Language aptitude was influential largely through its effect on initial learning, while motivation influenced both initial learning, and later use. In this respect, it is argued that motivation is a major factor in promoting language retention” (p. 269).
In 2000, Ducharme, Wesche, and Bourdages reused Wesche’s 1993 longitudinal study and data collection to study the effect of practice using the language (L2). They refer to attrition as the opposite of retention and associate maintenance to retention, a more positive outlook when it comes to acquired L2 skills. The authors review literature in which three categories of variables are used in promoting maintenance: initial level of proficiency, motivation in retention, and practice opportunities. The analysis infers that “higher achievers on the pre-test had achieved a proficiency level (possibly a critical threshold) that allowed them to maintain their performance despite not reading books” (p. 43). Gardner, Lalonde, and MacPherson (1985) as well as Edwards (1977) have shown the importance of motivation in maintaining language skills and the benefits of encouraging the learners to read in their L2 in order to maintain their skills. Ducharme, Wesche and Bourdages (2000) further concluded that learners who had read to maintain their skills had possibly “been practising other activities in French” (p. 43). It seems that the more L2 speakers know the more likely they are to use their skills. And knowing more would certainly elevate or facilitate the motivation to use L2 skills.

The Canadian Heritage (2009) website (see Appendix D) suggests activities that can be integrated during the learning as well as the lifelong learning process. Early in the learning process, it may seem difficult to integrate reading material such as newspaper and magazine articles but short stories can be selected and used. Music is always an asset: easy songs with numbers and body parts; for example, most will remember Frère Jacques and Alouette; later on music and lyrics will help with rhythm and integration of cultural content. Learners can retain practice habits after the active learning process has ended.

Koper and Tattersall (2004) acknowledge, “The need for better provision for lifelong learning in society is broadly recognised and is expressed in national and international policy documents. For example, the Commission of the European Communities (2000) states in its
memorandum on lifelong learning: Lifelong learning is no longer just one aspect of education and training: it must become the guiding principle for provision and participation across the full continuum of learning contexts” (p. 689).
Chapter 4
THE L2 LEARNING PROCESS

In the previous chapters, I explored certain aspects and issues associated with second language acquisition; i.e., lack of continuity, tools used to learn L2, resources required, age factor, aptitude, attitude, teacher’s and learner’s motivation as well as situations affecting the skill acquisition. In this chapter, I re-examine these points in order to find support for more effective teaching and learning of L2, and I take a look at the role played by information and communications technology when it comes to acquiring and maintaining the L2 skills.

Lack of Continuity

I posit that lack of continuity refers to disparity between what is learned at a younger age compared to later on in life. It is also common for one to change programs as well in the course of one’s L2 studies resulting in different approaches to learning. In the end, the diversity of subjects and learning approaches appear as an obstacle to learning but, in reality, they all blend together and contribute to overall knowledge.

Two languages, a world of opportunities (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, 2009) reveals that in the first of two phases of data gathering, in 2008, the firm Ipsos Reid gathered data regarding second-language-learning opportunities in Canada’s universities, through detailed questionnaires returned from 84 of the 96 institutions, members of the Association of Universities and College of Canada (AUCC). One of the few caveats has been that some questions were read with a different point of view when the respondent was a member of staff as opposed to of the student population; nonetheless the information collected was plentiful.

In the second phase of the study, focus groups and key informants from eight institutions across the country were interviewed as well as other federal, provincial, and territorial officials,
and representatives from other relevant organisations, constituting an important step as the input from organisations outside the education field would allow the decision-makers to take important steps regarding policies and funding.

Emerging from Two languages, a world of opportunities (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, 2009) is the fact that university graduates do see a real need for French as a second language. Many cited bilingualism as “a real asset for employment and career opportunities” (p. 11) and “strikingly, many student participants emphasized personal development and enrichment as their motivation for wanting to learn a second language” (p. 11). Unfortunately students’ needs, it appears, are not being fully met both prior to and at post-secondary levels.

It is frustrating for potential employees to see their hope to be hired vanish both in the public and private sectors due to a skill that could have been acquired at home or while in school. Findings are that in 2008, “in the National Capital Region, almost 65% of all positions were bilingual, [and] that nationally, almost 40% of all positions were bilingual” (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, 2009, p. 15). These statistics also explain that some positions are bilingual in nature (bilingual imperative), meaning that linguistic requirements must be met upon appointment and others are not (non-imperative), as candidates may take language training to meet the requirement after their appointment. I observed real frustration when secondary and post-secondary graduates attempted the Public Service Commission (PSC) tests. They could be fairly bilingual; they may have graduated from French Immersion Programs, have attended university in one of our Canadian bilingual universities, and even lived in bilingual communities; however, despite such backgrounds, they can find the PSC tests quite challenging. I would add, from personal experience, that the French Second Language tests are intricate, naturally because they test all levels of proficiency, and technically oriented as they seem to
cover grammatical rules often ignored or forgotten by French speakers themselves. Together with the oral test—even if a military test format has been developed and is now used—the tests reflect the Public Service terminology at its best. I find support in a comment from Two languages, a world of opportunities: “[there are]… no linkages between university language tests or requirements and public service linguistic requirements and tests” (Minister of Public Works, 2009, p. 21). This is heard again and again when it comes to testing speakers of (even more so in French) second languages. Do we need such a high level of selection to be considered bilingual? Would it not be better to have easier tests to promote pride in L2 acquisition and have speakers more encouraged to express themselves in the L2? It is just as frustrating for adult learners who can converse in their L2 but cannot achieve good results in Public Service Commission tests.

Many citizens felt that the Government of Canada needed to show national leadership and actively promote the importance and value of second language learning opportunities at university and post-secondary levels. (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, 2009, p. 26).

**L2 Teaching and Learning Tools**

My personal experience as a teacher, in the eighties, dates back to the use of Dialogue Canada, an easy-to-follow 45-lesson program with audio-visual support (cassettes and film strips). This Canadian method had been developed for Public Service personnel. It was followed by a period where FRENCH, another method with a 20-lesson book that came with exercise manual and video cassettes was used. FRENCH was more appealing to the travel-minded student. I am familiar with the Canadian Forces French Curriculum (CFFC) with audio, and its complement, a self-directed on-line course called ALLIÉS, the on-line version of the CFFC with audio-video and recording possibilities as well as many reference tools, grammars and dictionaries, and translating capability. I also know the PSC developed learning material to
acquire the more specialised vocabulary and terminology with practice tests in order for individuals to prepare for the PSC tests.

Computer programs such as “Tell Me More”, “Gift I and II”, and “French I and II” have also been used. These are self-directed programs that will accept and give one right answer to each question and will allow the learners to go forward in the lesson and ask for explanations at a later date, or on the spot if a teacher is available. It must be mentioned that the use of computer-assisted programs to teach and learn a language is an ever developing field where we have experienced the need for synchronous contact because when left to their own devices, it is easy for students to give up (Park & Choi, 2009). The use of interactive programs such as AVAYA1, Elluminate Live!2, Facebook3 and SKYPE4 has certainly allowed for a greater opportunity for L2 learners to join a group or keep in touch with tutors and peers, in synchronous or asynchronous mode. Whenever appropriate and according to the learners’ knowledge level, it is always interesting, if not a must, to add some cultural, informational extras, such as music, films, and news with any approaches or methods used in order to keep the course content current and create connections between the learners and the L2 culture. As Dörnyei (2001) quotes Gardner (1979, p. 14) “to learn FSL, a learner must become a bit French.” The learners must identify with this other culture, “handling language in the way the target community uses it” (Myers, 2013). Beyond basic implications, there are more profound ones that are not explored here as they are beyond the scope of this project.

Fortunately, changes have been made to programs that were once “mostly based on pre-established descriptions of language proficiency for different levels of a sequential program” as

2 http://www.elluminate.com/Services/Training/Elluminate_Live!/id=418
3 https://www.facebook.com/
4 http://www.skype.com/en/
Diffey (1992, p. 208) describes the American model. Diffey continues, “The Canadian model adopts a multidimensional approach emphasizing content more than terminal outcomes, and envisages the integration of language and a cultural component.” Myers (2012) goes further as she recommends “intercultural awareness training for all school personnel as a lack of cultural awareness in school personnel has been identified as a major weakness” (p. 29). Lack of cultural knowledge is also found in military language programs as they cater to different segments of the population, in that incoming language teachers are civilians with little or no knowledge of the CF and the learners are now from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Gregory and Burkman (2012) also acknowledge that managing instruction is challenging even when the students come from the same language background; and they propose to manage and organise multiple activities and create linguistic needs as a strategy to fulfil the learners’ needs. The description and extent of diverse linguistic backgrounds, which was very unlikely in military programs in the eighties, has drastically changed over the years. There are diverse language needs as within the CF itself, there are three separate elements: Air, Land, and Sea. Diverse backgrounds are tied to different work environments, trades, ranks. Members of a learning group will be involved in different interactional registers; for example, among peers, from senior officer to non-commissioned officer, as a mentor or as a chief-in-command.

From personal experience, I agree with Diffey’s description of the 1992 teaching programs. Since the eighties and the nineties, we have seen a more comprehensive impact on teaching material, bringing together both proficiency levels and terminal outcomes to the curriculum. That difference has allowed us to personalize our program to the needs of the students and has allowed us the flexibility to include a more human approach. Diffey (1992) recommends to “… take into account learner’s present or predicted communications requirements, the kind of things they are likely to want to say, read, or write in the target
language” (p. 208). I feel as a language teacher, in a small-group environment, I may at times become a confidante, a motivator, and even sometimes, a counsellor.

The American approach also seems to be changing. Blaskovitch & Hartel (2008) emphasize that “intercultural competence is critical at every level of the military, from field operations to strategic planning” (p. 2). This adapted model, with cultural and personal elements, is being introduced in order to facilitate communication and help motivation of both students and teachers. Intercultural competencies are another issue that has come to the forefront of the L2 classes. Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey (2002) wrote “intercultural competence i.e. their ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and their ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality” (p. 9).

Moreover, adding a personal touch is an asset when it comes to communication and motivation between teachers and students. Students in science and mathematics tend to be more motivated, engaged, and actively involved in the learning process (Thompson, 2001) when there are interactions with faculty members. This is even more important in L2 learning; in order to have a positive learning experience, second language learners need to feel secure and safe with the teachers and with each other. However, we must not forget that “Developing intercultural awareness is not a teaching method, but a learning process” (Altenaichinger, 2003, p. 35).

**Funding**

Funding and financial support for bilingualism were identified in the literature as problematic. Strong views were also expressed on the need for governments to champion this issue and promote it through policy statements and public communications and by bringing the different players together to take action.

As I stated in previous chapters, in order to provide a good incubation period for L2 skill acquisition, individuals should be encouraged from a young age to learn a second language, they
should be encouraged with adequately funded programs, and knowledgeable and language loving teachers. Therefore, more attention and understanding should be given to the development of sound, reliable, and practical tools for evaluating the French competence of core and immersion teachers and to encourage ongoing learning.

Again it all comes down to costs and financing, a theme that is also covered in Two languages, a world of opportunities (Minister of Public Works, 2009) when keeping in mind the heterogeneity across the country. The Canadian government has an ongoing requirement for bilingual employees, yet curricula both in schools and universities are not geared to civil service tests although the public sector is where a higher concentration of bilingualism at work is valued and rewarded.

Mady and Turnbull (2010), in their review and analysis of language opportunities across Canada, highlight: “Immigration is the most significant factor to growth in the Canadian population” (p. 1). Yet newcomers who come to live in Canada from another country, whose first language is neither French nor English, are not always encouraged to learn the other second official language. They could derive self-esteem from the L2 learning process as they are often disadvantaged when studying other school material in their initial second language. They could be on a level playing field when learning a second official language with their peers. New Ministry guidelines for French schools encourage such a vision with “communities of practice” (Myers, 2012). According to Mady and Turnbull (2010), Ontario and British Columbia, two provinces receiving a high percentage of immigrants, also have policy documents allowing provisions that can prevent newcomers in school from learning French L2 as they can be withdrawn from regular classrooms if they need intensive support in English and that the system is responsible to help them learn only one official language. These findings are alarming because the elected government claims that linguistic duality is part of the Canadian identity yet
provincial rules explicitly exclude Aboriginals and newcomers from their second language programs.

Again, it is a question of financial resources, we need more money to fund such programs; many articles refer to a lack of financial and human resources. Veilleux and Bournot-Trites (2005) write: “because of constraints of time and costs, we did not study in depths the tests and methods used by districts to screen the French competence and relied only on the DHR’s response. Therefore, the results of this study should be taken with a degree of caution” (p. 504). The third recommendation from Two languages, a world of opportunities (2009), reads “that the Government of Canada and the provincial and territorial governments establish a new fund … to develop and implement new initiatives to improve second-language learning opportunities [and that] this fund should not, however, diminish the existing support” (p. 29). A re-examination of the needs and the structures in place in order to improve the resources in personnel and material is required.

I definitely do not agree with Veilleux and Bournot-Trites (2005) when they claim that findings in British Columbia are “applicable to other provinces and to the general problem of teacher’s qualifications in specialized subjects in times of teacher shortage” (p. 489). Not all areas of our great country are experiencing the same difficulties at the same level. Statistics Canada (2013 a) reports that only the three larger provinces, British-Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec, are receiving a high percentage of newcomers.

The certification and hiring processes need to be improved and normalized across the country if the government wants to increase bilingualism. Two languages, a world of opportunities calls it a “chicken-and-egg situation” (p. 13). The Canadian population must be encouraged to learn and use a second language. Better teaching resources are needed to reach the
learning population. More money is required to fund and improve second language programs. There is a need to resolve two issues: Where do we start? How should we go about it?

**Information and Communications Technology**

Encouraging and developing the use of information and communications technology (ICT) would be a stepping stone. In Zhao’s (2003) literature review, the author looks at the application of ICT in language education and found that even in 2010, the existing literature on effectiveness of ICT was limited but positive towards its use in language education. He found that ICT is rapidly evolving and there has been “a shift away in the traditional drill-and-skill computer aided-instruction (CAI) models toward multimedia, intelligent CAI, and integration models” (p. 9) over the previous few years. A case in point: the online language training program called ALLIÉS used by the Canadian Forces (CF) has evolved with the advent of computerized voice recognition. ALLIÉS was originally accessible only from a Defense Wide Area Network (DWAN) computer but has recently been made available to all interested CF members, on their personal Internet account. ALLIÉS has proven to be useful for members who are away on operations as well as for those in remote areas where classroom attendance is not possible. The Canadian Defense Academy (CDA) is presently conducting studies on the actual use of this language program. Initial CDA studies found that the drop-out rate was high, probably just as high as that of online college and university courses but that adding the use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) and teleconferencing, such as the use of SKYPE, seems to encourage authentic synchronous, virtual face-to-face communication opportunities and is effective in retaining language learners. Zhao’s review agrees with this finding that “technology-supported independent language learning is as effective as classroom instruction, if not more” (p. 18).
Zhao (2003) also writes that “researchers of these studies were also the instructors who designed, implemented, and evaluated the technology uses” (p. 21) not unlike the current CDA studies which are gathering data from authentic experiences. In these studies, designers have been language instructors and evaluators are learners and teachers, making the results relevant; however, they are biased due to these researchers’ dual roles. Another point of interest is that ICT has also been found to reduce anxiety among L2 learners. Pichette (2009) writes that the pressure experienced in learners is greater for L2 learners, even more so nowadays when emphasis is on oral communication. The use of ICT helps reduce anxiety because the learners can benefit from being in their own environment, can speak freely without direct contact with peers, and without others listening intently and ready to comment. ICT also adds participation of a new category of learners, such as shift workers, parents or otherwise challenged learners. Today, it seems that distance learning or e-learning is still a “confused and confusing field” (Servage, 2005 p. 306), it is after all a developing domain that is being exploited not only by educational institutions but also by industries. Servage (2005) found downfalls with e-learning, pointing out that:

- it is “a mistake, to assume that the ubiquitous availability of information and learning material online will ensure the willingness of workers to spend yet more time in front of their computers” (p. 312);
- if online programs adhere to “customisation”, it is very likely an “intrusion that de-individuates”; and
- “the impressive pile of bones that represents a large number of corporate e-learning initiatives to date... should be evidence enough that these factors are inadequate... for successful workplace e-learning” (p. 313).
Nevertheless, Baldwin-Evans (2004) found that “a large majority (93.5 per cent) said they had enjoyed the courses they had done, demonstrating the range of appeal that e-learning has” (p. 272). She concludes that the economic climate was an important aspect to consider as it becomes too costly to remove employees from the workplace and send them to classroom training.

More recently, Cheng, Wang, Yang, Kinshuk and Peng (2011) wrote: “The literature on e-learning design suggests that learner control of learning and customization of learning experiences will meet learner’s needs and preferences and improve learners’ satisfaction and motivation towards e-learning” (p. 3). With the literature available, it is obvious that research and development are ongoing, and that more uniformity in terminology and better communication between researchers and developers are desirable.

A question is still left unanswered when it comes to online or e-learning: if it does reduce anxiety for some and entice others to learn, what is the actual cost? Without including ITC officially in L2 teaching programs can we definitely say that it is playing an important role in language maintenance?
Chapter 5

L2 ISSUES AND SKILL MAINTENANCE

The main issue for learners and teachers is that second language skills are easy to lose. Keeping those skills means having to work at maintaining them, sometimes in challenging environments, where effective use of technology could facilitate the retention. Having to make those environments (e.g., work station, meetings, and conferences) L2 friendly and have personnel ready to be retested after five years is a major challenge. L2 skills are lost or weakened so relearning and test preparation must occur in order to do well and achieve the required results.

Having defined the issue, in this chapter I will examine the difficulties encountered in second language learning environments. I will also explore how to best meet the needs of the L2 learners in retaining their skills. Finally I will suggest strategies for matching learning with the diversity of the learners’ backgrounds and for preparing them for language testing.

L2 Learning Issues

Many difficulties arise because some learners recall grammar rules more easily than others, their vocabulary may be sparse, and the teacher and student interaction is not always ideal. Learning in a group has drawbacks; for example, individuals may have different needs, learn at a different pace, and recollect past information at different rates. However, it can also be advantageous when learners ask questions that others may have been hesitant to express or an explanation for one may clarify points for others. With good ICT grounding and occasional timely contact with an instructor, it would become easier for individuals to maneuver by themselves in the maze of possibilities, and it would not require as much time away from ‘real’ work.
Language acquisition, adult learning, and ICT are increasingly at the forefront of research and writing. As it still is a developing field, appropriate articles to support the claim that ICT can be an effective tool for military personnel to keep up their second language skills are sparse although Monaghan (2012) forecasts that, “In a five-to-ten year period, on-line self-study courses should be available in both languages, with instruction on how to use the on-line resources according to one’s learning style” (p. 70). We should see more comprehensive research in the domain of ICT although we already know that personal motivation and self-determination are essential elements for ICT to be used successfully.

McCain (2009) writes that it is believed that ICT can work in the field of adult education. Although he did not look at it as an L2 attribute, he claims that we do not need to “start from scratch” and would gain from the use of technology in education. McCain advocates the support of the federal government in its five-step recommendations, among them: establishing a national web portal; encouraging state leadership; and supporting the development of distance learning programs. McCain concludes with a positive attitude that people can acquire the know-how for a wider and wiser use of technology. Chapelle (2010) acknowledges that it was impossible to foresee that computer technology would grow so fast and so strong, fourteen years ago. She had suggested in a previous article (Chapelle, 1997): “that research might be useful in helping applied linguists to understand how language learners interact and learn—or fail to learn—with the many new options made available by new technologies” (p. 27).

On the other hand, Servage (2005) doubts the possibility to positively influence education with ICT because a gap existed between the learner and the teacher, the return on investments was not profitable; the holistic approach used in ICT was completely askew; and learners felt that their privacy was invaded. She paints a negative picture of e-learning, starting with “the utter lack of consistency in its terminology” (p. 305), and because “significant gaps may exist between the
corporate interests and the learners needs when it comes to e-learning” (p. 305). She had also argued that an “excessively instrumental approach to e-learning generally failed to meet learning needs of workers” (p. 305); that “e-learning is a confused and confusing field, fragmented into multi-disciplines and emphases…[and] that more efforts are required to create frameworks or taxonomies of e-learning strategies, systems and activities” (p. 306).

Generally, industry leaders have been more interested in profits, productivity, and return on investments rather than in the well-being of the workforce. Furthermore, because e-learning activity is so traceable, learners are irritated knowing that work follows them home after work hours, sometimes leading to invasion of privacy, resentment and burnout. Poor decision-making and spiritual depletion may be a result of rapid technological changes. Even when programs are customized to the learner they are accompanied by intrusion that de-individuates. Servage (2005, p. 305) concludes that a more holistic approach is required when a significant investment is to be made in e-learning. The positive side is that more work needs to be done to have e-learning strategies aligned with other learning models and be better used. Park and Choi (2009) claim that lower dropout rates could be achieved if “online program developers or instructors found ways to enhance the relevance of the course” (p. 207); and if employers and family better supported the learners. They found that “social integration and academic integration produced stronger student commitment” (p.208), and that “if courses are designed to stimulate their active participation and interaction and meet their expectations” (p. 215).

All in all, according to Servage (2005), ICT was a lost cause that had progressed too rapidly for its own good but since 2005, both learners and teachers have evolved and today’s young adult learners are those who were raised with techno toys. Anderson (2008) supports and even envisions the use of multimedia and streaming audio, chat, Web conferencing, instant messaging, hand-held and wireless technologies, peer-to-peer file sharing, wikis, virtual worlds,
digital games, and learning objects to enhance the learning and retention experience. Egnatoff (2006) emphasises that “youth are inventing new forms of social interaction mediated by hybrids of the Internet, cell phones, MP3 players, and cameras” but cautions that “These Third Wave media are affordances for activities that range from the extremes of cyberbullying to international projects that promote peace, goodwill, well-being, respect for nature, and mutual understanding. This wave is hardest for educators to catch because change is too rapid to follow, let alone to comprehend” (p. 10). ICT is indeed a new approach to teaching and learning. Pedagogically sound old teaching methods must be modified to be exploitable with newer technology; and newer communication equipment and hardware often must be purchased and replaced because of the increase in capacity requirements.

I experienced both roles in the ICT realms of learning: as a learner with Elluminate Live! where participants are their own identified persona and have the floor in sequence; and as a teacher with AVAYA in which all participants are personalized avatars, visual clues and body language are limited and oral interactions were spontaneous but sometimes simultaneous. In both cases, time had to be spent to learn and practice language using the hardware and the technology, to adapt the teaching resources to the technology, using PowerPoint and Adobe programs; and to deal with glitches sometimes before or during meeting times. Time had to be spent to ensure that all connections worked properly, to have tutorials just to learn the ins-and-outs of the program and the transfer of teaching material. One of the strengths was to be able to adapt the course content to the interest of the group, and having participants actively prepare for class. For example, in AVAYA, teachers and students took turns presenting an interesting place to visit, a memorable holiday, a favourite pet, a delicious recipe. Fortunately, all participants were computer literate, even a student discovered and explained some short-cuts within the program itself such as pressing down two keys to run rather than just one key to walk. As AVAYA is a
distance learning system, it was difficult as a class leader to remember some particulars on students. I had to adjust to not seeing them sitting in mostly the same place in class, even sometimes wondering who they were in real life. Those experiences led me to believe that technology was not yet for everyone but that it is taking on an ever-increasing role.

**Meeting Learners’ Needs**

When I mention that my profession is to teach French, the comment that I often hear from so many, from local taxi drivers to overseas technical support staff to store clerks, is their yearning to be able to speak French, how they were not enticed to learn when young, and how the system failed them. They learned and remember to say *Bonjour, Comment vous appelez-vous?* and then they abandoned learning French. Why? Some learners will learn and become quite proficient, they will be thrilled to say “I speak French!” then soon switch to speaking English; others will have mastered the second or even foreign language to a point where I may even enthusiastically ask, “How did you do it?”

Why are there such differences? In reality, what truly keeps us from learning and using a second language? Are there ways to maximise the human, physical, and financial investment for teachers and for learners?

Even if, as previously mentioned, a large spectrum of possibilities to take L2 courses is available, military personnel are not always able to partake in in-class courses regularly, unless they are full time students or are sent on full-time language training. Not only is full-time training itself costly, units have to manage without a full staff complement while some personnel are attending language training. Even when offered time to attend on-site L2 classes, during their work day, their workload remains the same and the work is added at the end of the day or the week. Generally, unlike civilian employees, military personnel do not leave work on schedule, and they do not need to be asked to remain at work after regular office hours to allow time to
complete their regular workload. Suggesting attendance in evening classes is not a solution for everyone as many will be attending work-related events or meetings, travelling for work, or on operational training. The lack of attendance caused by these absences makes it difficult for individuals to re-enter the L2 group and it also affects the group dynamics as well as the teaching plan. In addition, many men and women, military and civilians do pursue higher education, online or otherwise, while holding full-time jobs, raising families, doing volunteer work, and physical training. Nevertheless, L2 training should have a higher priority in the lives of everyone because the Defence Administrative Orders and Directive 5039-0 (National Defence, 2011) states:

To comply with the letter and spirit of the Official Languages Act, DND and CF must implement this Act in all components and are committed to:

- ensuring equality of status for the use of English and French throughout the organization;
- ensuring that the public can communicate with and receive services from DND and/or CF, in Canada or abroad, in either language, where such an obligation exists under the Official Languages (Communications with and Services to the Public) Regulations;
- ensuring that, in bilingual units, the work environment is conducive to the effective use of both official languages;
- ensuring that Francophones and Anglophones have equal opportunity for employment and career advancement within DND and CF;
- ensuring that DND and CF workforce tend to reflect equitably the existence of the two official language communities in Canada; and
- promoting the vitality of English and French linguistic minority communities by supporting their development, as well as fostering the full recognition and use of both English and French in Canadian society.

Therefore there is a need to provide language training to all involved and it must fit in the daily commitments in order to fulfill those requirements.
Group Strategies

Placement tests should be administered upon enrolment in order to have the groups distributed more or less equally, in numbers and L2 strengths, preferably prior to the first class meeting. Since we are talking about the workforce within the federal government, the language needs should be relatively similar: reaching better official linguistic profiles or maintaining L2 skills. When weaknesses and problems are diagnosed, by an experienced group of teachers, some specialists may take on particular responsibilities such as explaining specific language points, or helping with pronunciation; teachers do not have to be allocated to a specific group nor to one group only. Teachers who are more confident doing writing exercises could do those with the learners; and the great conversationalist and listener could take on the oral interaction activities.

More specialized subjects, such as technical or administrative writing, could be undertaken with groups sharing the same needs. Research and preparation time would have to be allowed for teachers in order to research a specific domain. Another suggestion could be to organize workshops with visiting French-speaking professionals from a different milieu: researchers, chemists, teachers, librarians, technicians and others. They could meet and talk about their professions, distribute relevant reading material such as brochures in French and the learners could afterwards write an account of their experience. In-class time is valuable for the basics, explaining and learning grammar rules, practicing them with added vocabulary, reading aloud and listening to other speakers or recorded stories, news or audio-videos. Many activities should be made available that would contribute to meet the needs of the students. These activities could complement each other and build on the experience of the learners.
As mentioned before, L2 learning also happens through activities outside the classroom. Activities such as recommended in CFEC as well as CFFC, issued on authority of the Chief of Defense Staff (1990) to encourage teachers and learners to develop routines to use the L2 as soon as “trainees have reached a level of language proficiency that permits them to understand the speech of native speakers” (p. 2B-9), as listed under List of Socio-Cultural Activities in Appendix E. This field practice is helpful because sometimes the desk between the teacher and learners can act as an armour that needs to be taken down; simply walking with the group, (with adjustments depending on the numbers), helps to engage in more natural and casual conversations. Excursions to museums or places of interest can also provide great conversation opportunities as well as writing and reading, both in preparation for a visit by a guest, and after the visit in the form of writing a report.

Within groups, learners’ and teachers’ shared feedback is a valuable asset because one person may not see the needs that another would easily perceive, and the team of language professionals can better support the learning experience and improve the skills acquisition process.

A claim often made is that language skills acquired in school are not applicable in real world situations. Furthermore, for military personal and Public Service employees, the French taught in schools is not quite the French seen on the exams one must take in order to be declared a functional or non-functional bilingual person. The Minister of Public Works Canada (2009) states “There are no linkages between university language tests or requirements and public service linguistic requirements and tests” (p. 21) but learning an L2 has to start somewhere, with time, practice, and effort allotted to it. Both learning and maintaining the language skills acquired are necessary because just as with other skills, the abilities may be lost if they are not used.
Even if the research shows that there have been improvements, more can and should be done. Research must lead to a better understanding of the interests, the attitudes and the varied motivational factors learners have as they enter L2 classes. Today’s learners are learning differently and the L2 programs are rapidly becoming outdated. That being said, the basics remain the same; all that was acquired earlier in life needs to be developed, used, and improved upon as the L2 learners progress through regular L2 programs covering vocabulary, grammar, and rules. French learned in school does not have to match French usage in the workplace. L2 learning is an ongoing, cumulative process. Basics have to be mastered before the whole language-use aspect can be improved. Advances in technology may not be applied completely successfully to L2 programs, but updating is ongoing.

Activities that support language use in authentic contexts should be promoted for L2 learners; for example, sharing of information through virtual modes or partial immersion; temporary job swapping; summer-school immersion programs; on-the-job training and temporary deployments. Communities of learners can be developed and encouraged to interact in the workplace, with interesting activities such as:

- regular L2 lunch tables;
- weekend visits and excursions to areas of interest;
- L2 on-site seminars or workshops or online discussion forums; and
- movie viewing in their original format with subtitles.

Appendices C and E show that teaching material such as the Canadian Forces English Curriculum, as well as Canadian Forces include and promotes the integration of the L2 skills into the work environment.
The sociocultural aspect of a language is an important part of teaching and learning an L2. Vygotsky (1962) wrote: “Sociocultural theory (SCT) is an emerging theory in psychology that looks at the important contributions that society makes to individual development. This theory stresses the interaction between developing people and the culture in which they live” (Vygotsky, 1962). According to Vygotsky’s concept, language is the most symbolic tool provided by society. Language is an element in mediation. In-person and possibly virtual social interaction are therefore an important part of language learning. Through interaction, children learn gradually and continuously from parents and teachers and so do adult learners. It is important to note that Vygotsky’s theory emphasizes the dynamic nature of social interaction. “Society doesn’t just impact people; people also impact their society” (Vygotsky, 1962).

In the previous discussion, I examined the problems facing second language learners, not only in acquiring their skills but also in retaining them, and offered possible solutions for consideration. In the specific work environment that I describe, the teachers’ goal is also to prepare the learners for mandatory testing of their L2 skills. In the following section, I will expand on the problems that I see with this assessment process.

**Testing**

Emphasis is now placed on testing competencies in the workplace and the results of such testing are often used to screen candidates. I will briefly examine some issues from my experience with L2 competency testing. Being an adult learner myself and teaching an adult population, I have found that the acquisition and evaluation of knowledge acquired later in life is not simple. I examined the expectations and the results achieved by adult learners, specifically in second language acquisition. A common misconception is that L2 acquisition can be achieved through contacts with native speakers (teachers, friends, and neighbours), thinking that listening should be sufficient; and that if babies learned to speak, it can’t be that difficult. Another
misconception is that learners only want to learn to speak without interest in the reading and writing aspects of a language. Many forget the early stages when a child is speaking gibberish, forgetting about the misplaced words or the confused meanings. We forget the years it took to improve our capacity to speak, through spelling, memorization, dictations, and practice. We forget the difference we may have appreciated between the youngster’s speech and that of a teenager, or the contrast between the young adult’s proficiency, who later became the remarkable speaker we occasionally hear. It takes time and effort to improve those skills in our own mother tongue and even more in L2.

We encounter a similar situation when we want to learn and maintain L2 skills, sometimes even not so late in life. And after learning, comes testing, as it is the case with candidates to the Public Service Commission (PSC) tests, or unofficial tests as when people are placed in real life situations. In Canada, maybe because of expected bilingualism, it appears that adults want a clear measurement of their knowledge; our prospective employer wants to know about our skills; we do not want to make fools of ourselves and are more conscious of our abilities or lack thereof when faced with testing. Where do we stand after sitting in class, after writing and repeating exercises? We may just be at the babbling stage, or we may behave like the shy teenager. When do we become the proficient adult, if not the admired speaker? What happens in the interval between the desire and the results?

Communities of Learners

Competencies are expected, measured, and compared in today’s workplace. Almost every possible asset is a plus in one’s resume and being gainfully employed no longer means that a person can relax, not expect any changes and forget about acquiring new skills or improving on existing skills. We live in a rapidly changing world. Learning may occur on a formal or an informal ongoing basis (Eaton, 2010). It could come from communities of practice that are
informal and voluntary. Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) write that members of communities come alive and share knowledge. They expand on seven principles that are not recipes but rather embody our understanding of how the elements of design work together. These seven principles, which to some extent are already applied to the programs offered within the Public Service Commission (2013), are:

- Design for evolution,
- Open a dialogue between inside and outside perspectives,
- Invite different levels of participation,
- Develop both public and private community spaces,
- Focus on value,
- Combine familiarity and excitement, and
- Create a rhythm for the community (p. 3)

Unlike Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002), I believe that communities of practice could also be involuntary because in an informal setting, ideas are also brought forward, answers to dilemmas are proposed very informally, and there is sharing of knowledge. This informal sharing of knowledge may have been the forerunner to the voluntary sharing that would occur on a more organized basis that Wenger, McDermott and Snyder are talking about, without the obligations attached to it. While on the subject of knowledge acquisition at work, the aspect of corporate learning, a very well planned and organised sharing of knowledge, is also an important factor. Margolis (2010) expanded on a not-so-new concept of a culture-specific sharing of knowledge, such as in corporate universities and learning institutions, that cover material unknown in other sectors; for example, specialized material adapted and fine tuned to the needs of workers in the technological environments. Individuals must have graduated from an
accredited college or university program to be employed in many organizations, but they must hone and adjust their skills to the employer’s specific needs. The same theory applies to second language learning.

**How to Measure Success**

Acquired knowledge or competencies must be measured and evaluated. A name must be given to the competency, a line added to the resume. The specific Second Language Training program discussed in this document takes different forms to suit different situations as it is not always possible for learners to completely leave work to immerse themselves in a language course. For some employees, it is not possible to devote more than a few hours a week to L2 learning, while other designated public service employees could be allowed paid leave to master the use of a second language. Language learning is a time consuming and expensive endeavour as (Canadian Heritage, 2009): “Success at a second language evaluation (SLE) is made possible through the ongoing practice of one’s second language skills.”

It is an ongoing process that requires dedication and commitment. Communicating in a second language demands practice on a regular basis, both during and after training. After having learned a language, particularly in the public sector, an official assessment has to prove the competency levels. Even if a person is comfortable with reading, listening to, and speaking the language in everyday activities, the test results, which are not always a true picture of actual knowledge, are the accepted measure. In the context of Public Service Commission tests, teachers and learners often put the test performance under scrutiny. The government, through the publication, *The Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada* (2009) keeps revisiting the question because our federal government wants to promote bilingualism and yet finds difficulties in instituting proper learning, teaching and testing methods. Elementary, secondary and post-secondary education does offer second language classes yet when it comes to
being tested outside the school system, the acquired knowledge is different from the tested knowledge. What is taught is not what is tested. And as Roy (2010) maintains, even when individuals learn to speak French, they do not speak as the French do. There is a contradiction in what is possible and what is expected in the testing programs.
Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

Future Pathways

“Lifelong learning” aptly depicts of how society now regards additional education or training at any age or stage of life. We do not stop learning. We learn in various ways, in various circumstances. In this concluding chapter, I will further reflect upon the challenges and opportunities available for improved outcomes.

Actual Experience

The education system is developing different paths to educate the adult population. Program and curriculum planners are developing theories to correct and enhance an aging system. The transfer of knowledge is ongoing notwithstanding that it is taking different formats.

On the one hand, it is good to have teaching materials already designed for a military segment of the population and to which teachers are free to add extra activities in order to hone student’s skill to have them better prepared for the official evaluation. However, combining them with a testing component outside the teachers’ control elevates the frustration experienced by the teaching personnel because not everyone is open to finding those extra activities and also students may see extra material as useless and would prefer to be taught to the test. On the other hand because of the imposed level testing exams, students must exert frustrating efforts because it is a well-known fact that not everyone is intrinsically motivated and will easily reach the required language designation. They are mostly having what Hortwiz (1988) describes as “only moderate levels of … integrative motivation for language learning” (p. 291). Is there always a difference in results between students who possess intrinsic motivation, the innermost desire to acquire an L2, and those who are driven by instrumental motivation?
When only extrinsic motivation exists, it can create a burden for learners and teachers alike. As an example, the military program under scrutiny here has been the host to a Continuous Superior Level Course (CSLC) since 2003. Its initial mandate was to enable selected officers with up to 20 years of experience to obtain a targeted promotion by attaining or surpassing the CBC levels (the first C in reading comprehension, the B in written expression and the last C in oral interaction). To teach these senior officers who had already obtained a B level in all three skills has been a frustrating task at times as the CBC level is the aim and the teaching tools are the same ones used with officer-cadets yet the senior officers are different, older and more mature and often better motivated. The teachers must show flexibility and versatility while adhering to and sometimes drifting from the program to enrich it and make it more authentic by, for example, searching out a current global event and preparing to expand on the subject. The teachers’ motivations can be both intrinsic and extrinsic: intrinsic, because they enjoy the task and have a passion to share their knowledge of language and culture with the learners and extrinsic, because the programs are under scrutiny and there is a real need to be successful to keep hosting the CLSC program locally to keep their positions.

Today, there is a real need for L2 programs for career officers. Earlier in their careers, language needs and requirements were different and other elements of their training were emphasized; the younger generation is now being more aware of L2 expectations and have better access opportunities. Not having the required L2 skills means a lack of possibilities for promotion in many fields. As Ahl (2006) puts it “one has to offer more money (or other rewards that may be valued [as] rational decision makers… act rationally and in their own self-interest” (p. 3). In the CF, incentives are real, as there are advancement possibilities and even the risk of becoming redundant, thus raising the anxiety factor for learners during L2 training and assessment periods.
What Can We Glean From Theory?

Ahl (2006) writes that Nobel Laureate Herbert Simon critiques the concept that humans act rationally because, among other reasons, humans do not always have access to complete information or make the best choice, or would make the same choice in the same situations. Humans do not have crystal balls; humans do not know how things will turn out. Humans make decisions to the best of their knowledge, at the time the decision has to be made. Most researchers (e.g. Mady, 2010; Servage, 2005; Sparks & Ganshow, 2001; Park & Choi, 2009; Veilleux & Bournot-Trites, 2005; and Whener, Gump & Downey, 2011) I have read in the context of this study have lamented the limited and insufficient research data available to them as regards pedagogically sound integration of new technologies. Teachers are experimenting and adapting old and proven methodology to new technology, while keeping the students motivated and at ease in their new language environment, developing and maintaining a trusting atmosphere (our translation) *maintenir un climat de confiance* (Myers, 2004). This literature review only skimmed the surface of an array of research areas related to second language acquisition, from teachers’ and learners’ points of view. Each topic about teaching, motivation, testing and maintenance in L2 has been a study in itself but over the years, as needs changed, perspectives changed. As early as 1944, Myron was proposing teaching FSL students to think like French speakers, Myron wrote: “With patience, good will, a touch of humor, a love of humanity, with a bit of talent and a lot of training-plus the method, they will learn” (p. 351). There is general agreement that L2 teaching and learning are demanding tasks.

**What Practical Applications Can Be Suggested**

Gregory and Burkman (2012) presented differentiated strategies that can be applied to actual and future teaching experiences. They emphasized dealing with the aspiration we, as
teachers and leaders, must have to instil the desire for continuous learning around us, and how to apply it to all segments of learners. Teachers and learners alike must be prepared for lifelong learning; acquiring organizational skills through simultaneous learning activities; becoming independent learners. Technological literacy can be used to support this learning process because technology has become without a doubt the accessible, quasi-universal medium of choice when it comes to finding information. Gregory and Burkman (2012) address the teachers directly and ask them to question the future for which they are preparing their students. They list three gifts a teacher can offer students: “respect shown in all interactions with students; permission to think for themselves; and the gift of literacy because this last gift allows students to become lifelong learners” (p. 183). Being able to offer those three gifts should be an essential—but at times forgotten—quality of those who desire to become teachers.

The level and source of motivation as explained in Ryan and Deci (2000) will also vary among any given group of people, from individuals who have an intrinsic interest in learning and those who want to teach, because of their own personal desire or for the pleasure to expand their horizon, whereas some others will demonstrate a completely extrinsic interest, showing a “because I have to” attitude.

When they arrive in our classrooms, all learners know English and many even have worked in a bilingual environment; others may have some knowledge of one or more foreign, even unusual languages as I remember a student who could converse with the Gurkhas (Nepal). Because of their common English background it may seem easier to compare and make associations between the French and English grammar but the teacher must understand that many English speakers have limited grammatical knowledge in English. When it comes to learning vocabulary, there are “friends and foes”; giving a French twist to an English word does not make it French. For example, not knowing that the French verb “demander” (“to ask” in French) and
the English verb “to demand” are different can create a tense real-life situation. A language passport, as implemented in the European Union, to recognize all language skills and less crippling attitudes on error in bilingual contexts would be helpful when, for example, someone erroneously says “demand” for “ask”, unaware of the different connotations. Also if learners specify that they are L2 speakers of the language, the interlocutors should have a more lenient attitude. We must teach tolerance but also adjust testing to reflect what L2 learners can do comfortably and not expect of them what we would expect of native speakers. For instance, summarizing is generally considered to be a demanding task for native speakers (Myers, oral communication 2013). Is it then realistic to get L2 learners to summarize a rather long conversation in a test when it is known that, in addition, working memory in L2 is shorter?

When it comes to organizational skills, adult L2 learners taught in Federal military programs are successful individuals who have developed their own learning and organizational strategies. They know, or believe they know, what works for them in learning and teaching environments as many have taught courses themselves. As language teachers, we have to respect, and encourage those strategies but we also have to help the students develop other learning tools and bring them to accept that acquiring L2 skills is not at all like a tactical or operational skill. “On the one hand, students have to learn the foreign language; on the other hand, they have to become aware of their own learning and have to learn how to learn” (Meister, 2003, p.35).

As teachers we must help learners to find the best path to learning to read, write, speak and listen as well as integrate those four skills in everyday contexts. For example, students are encouraged to listen to a French radio station on their way to and from class in order to be ready to discuss the latest news. Teachers might have to explain the different accents among the interviewees and the newscasters, a rule or even a choice of vocabulary item, and when necessary, supplement the information they heard with reading news online or on paper,
sometimes stemming from a different country for a different point of view. Teachers answer questions that arise from material and give homework in order to make the learners reuse the acquired skills as they apply to their life and work experience. Whenever possible, invitations to take part in French Second Language (FSL) activities outside the classroom must be extended, such as attending a French conference where learners may know of the subject or have heard of the speakers; or a play or a movie in French to encourage them to include L2 activities to their schedule, while they are learning in order to create the habit of using the L2 outside the classroom. Within a language program, students could prepare a presentation on their workplace activities or an unusual military operation for their peers who can ask questions and make comments, a good way to introduce them to impromptu questions and learn to defend their point of view in a controlled environment while hopefully acquiring confidence to reproduce the experience outside the classroom, in the real work environment. Those activities may not always be appropriate for every student, if a student cannot participate in the extracurricular outings because of family or other commitments, there are other options for practice: they may be able to record stories in the L2 for their children or engage in shared learning with older children, some could exercise or jog while listening to French singers; the possibilities are endless but there must be the motivation to be engaged and active participation is required from all involved.

Gregory and Burkman (2012) state that: “one of the greatest gifts a teacher can give students is the ability to organize their environment at school” (p. 194) to which I add, and outside of school. I like to think that we are giving the students in our program the ability to organize and transfer their French language skills to external environments, giving them the chance to experience the sociocultural communicative aspects of language use, just as Vygotsky promotes in his writings.
Devising different activities for different learner groups for use during class time is also of interest because in order to give each learner some one-on-one time, appropriate and pertinent activities should be available at every skill level for personal skill development. Working on their own or with a smaller group within the whole class gives the learners the occasion to self-regulate their learning and look for answers from their peers (Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2011).

Using learning prompts such as: “Say it out loud. Does it make sense?” “Does it look (sound) right to you?” “Put in a word that makes sense to you.” and “Have you seen this word before?” are all good questions in second language learning contexts and help develop independent learners. Additionally, students need to retain and strengthen their L2 skills and to do so, they need to prepare a plan even if it is a known fact that even the best plans are not always achievable and that life can get in the way. Having an existing plan, from the start, maybe, keeping a personal notebook for example, to which the L2 learners have adhered while in class, is a step in the right direction. Knowing where and how to find pertinent information while in the classroom will be of assistance to the learners when they are away from a language classroom setting and most of all will help maintain the sometimes painstakingly acquired skills. Teachers are always encouraging learners to look for ways to keep using the L2 after class has ended, through multimedia. Without promoting specific tools such as Skype, Facebook, Elluminate Live!, Avaya, Second Life, etc. presenting a Choice Board to learners, as shown in Appendix F, gives ideas for projects. One example that advances Vygotsky’s concept of knowledge construction is the creation of a blog because the social process is crucial to students’ learning and the synchronous and asynchronous blogging methods can benefit the language learner after the course has ended. Ferdig and Trammell (2004) note that when blogging, the learners become subject-matter experts, it increases their interest and ownership in learning, gives them legitimate
occasions to participate, and provides them with opportunities for diverse perspectives, within and outside the classroom. They conclude that, “Blogs, therefore, represent the potential to promote interactivity, provide opportunities for active learning, increase student and teacher relationships, increase higher-order thinking skills, and improve flexibility in teaching and learning” (p. 14). We also know that today’s learners are sometimes better technologically minded than in the past. They can for instance improve upon basic activities as a learning and teaching opportunity. This boosts their self-esteem, without their ego being bruised by being corrected by the teacher.

McCombs (1991) associates lifelong learning to motivation: “The motivated person is a lifelong learner, and the lifelong learner is a motivated person” (p. 117). Among other things, McCombs also defines learning as active, internally mediated, facilitated by social mediation, as well as corresponding to results from prior learning and interpretation of external experiences. McCombs continues with the idea that feeling safe is essential to learners and that their self-esteem and motivation levels are heightened in the right environment. She ends her definitions of terms with: “Human behavior is basically motivated by needs for self-development and self-determination” (p. 119). A lifelong learner would then be a person who is secure, motivated and at the right place at the right time. For the students in our program technology will help expand the possibilities to be a lifelong learner to those who are secluded because they will be able to access learning environments that may not be otherwise accessible.

This is supported by Gregory and Burkman (2012)’s statement that: “Technological Literacy prepares us for the twenty-first century by helping us become more knowledgeable and adaptive lifelong learners” (p. 162). As we saw through the literature, teachers of learners with both diverse and similar linguistic backgrounds face challenges; they will have to use diverse organizational skills while also using simultaneous learning activities in their classrooms, in
order to support their students in becoming independent learners. In this way, learners will know where to look for answers as long as we have not let them believe that there is only one reliable source of information. There is no doubt technology is and will continue to be an important medium in education and lifelong learning journeys.

**Final Remarks**

The question researched here, in the context of Public Service L2 programs, is based on my professional interest in improving teaching, learning and maintaining skills in a second language. I explored different aspects of teaching and learning more specifically in the sphere of second language learning (L2) such as: the motivation required on the part of the teachers and the learners involved, the teaching tools used in the context of bilingual federal employees, the strategies to maintain the acquired skills, and the potential of using information and communication technology to learn and maintain the L2 skills. I also proposed some research initiatives to survey the attitude, background and prior L2 knowledge of Canadian military language students as compared to their counterparts in the Federal civil service; I also suggest a study on ways to integrate the maintenance of an L2 over the years in bilingual environments be carried out.

The following aspects of L2 acquisition were uncovered or placed under a new light during my study:

- As students learn, the habit of applying those learned skills again and again must also be engrained because of the dedicated and continued process required to maintain the acquired skills.
- Learners must be acquainted with lifelong learning processes and given adequate tools to be responsible for their own learning.
• Right from the start, the need to interact and speak in one’s own language or in another language is a societal activity, especially in the case of the second language if it is to be used in the workplace.
  - We may want to learn an L2 by ourselves using books and recordings whether we are aware of our blunders or not; in the end, social interactions must take place in order to grasp and consolidate the extent of our knowledge.
  - The difference between results achieved alone and accomplishments with the help of others, especially when interaction with others is what will be tested during workplace L2 use.

• Learning is consolidated through the interaction between people and the culture in which they live. Learning a language is a microcosm of a cultural environment.
  - Language teachers and learners play roles; we expect the teacher to teach and the learner to learn.
  - In reality roles can be reversed, learners can teach each other, especially where L2 retention is concerned in specific military contexts with diverse specializations and their corresponding language registers.
  - L2 learners further learn as they interact with native speakers in their everyday environment.

Teachers must endeavour to motivate students and students themselves must be motivated to learn. From personal experience when there is a lack of motivation, self-determination must take over, to meet the L2 job qualification requirements, until motivation is built up again, if at all possible. While it is agreed that language skills acquired earlier in life have a better chance to become internalized or ‘percolate’, in a sense, the age and aptitude factors should not be an issue.
in language learning because researchers whose works I reviewed have demonstrated that it is possible with the right attitude and motivation to attain a comfortable level of proficiency in a L2 later in life. It all depends upon the level of proficiency required.

A partial answer to the challenge of best practices in the use of new media, resides in the possibility of using technology to remain lifelong learners and successfully maintain learned L2 skills. For example multimedia and streaming audio, chat, Web conferencing, instant messaging, hand-held and wireless technologies, peer-to-peer file sharing, wikis, virtual worlds, and digital games look very promising.

The quest for better language teaching and learning methods has been occurring worldwide in order to meet the needs of the global economy, and the use of adapted technologies will enhance the development and maintenance of the interactional and social aspects of language learning. The possibilities keep expanding with the World Wide Web, and present opportunities to seize the moment when it comes to the sharing of information.

I looked at different facets of L2 learning, and compared some points of view regarding second language instruction within my own country, Canada. I looked at how we teach and learn languages as well as how language testing is conducted, concentrating mostly on the Public Service Commission testing. I also provided insight on the effect of the age factor as it is often believed that to be truly bilingual, an individual must have learnt the second language at an early age. Thankfully, research shows that it is not so: Singleton (2001) found that the learning approach is different and the results comparable.

The influence of aptitude on success remains debatable concept because it seems that regardless of aptitude test results, the recurring theme and most important factor in L2 learning seems to be the motivation seen in teachers and learners. Aptitude tests have their value but should not be taken as indicative of the future level of success in L2 learning. Both teachers and
learners must be motivated and have a positive attitude towards the other culture and the language in which they want to effectively communicate.

Because the chief lament after having learned a L2 is that L2 skills are easily lost, my research expanded not only on ways to teach and learn but on ways to retain L2 skills. My research revealed that the use of computer technology, a fast-changing and relatively new tool, could prove to be a valuable asset for L2 acquisition and retention. More human and financial resources should be devoted to computerised software and programs in order to reach a wider range of learners who are geographically dispersed and otherwise engaged. Cheng, Wang, Yang, Kinshuk, and Peng (2011) wrote: “learner control of learning and customization of learning experiences will meet learner’s needs and preferences and improve learners’ satisfaction and motivation towards e-learning” (p. 3). Having control of the learning environment generates a means to learn and to return to already acquired skills in the individual’s own time frame availability.

That personal control over the time frame available is opening the way to lifelong learning, and to an ever-expanding field of research. In its memorandum to the Council of Europe, the Commission of the European Communities (2000) writes that “Lifelong learning is no longer just one aspect of education and training: it must become the guiding principle for provision and participation across the full continuum of learning contexts” (p. 3). It thus extends L2 learning to outside curricula, outside classroom sessions, and with the use of computer technologies, breaks down physical barriers and frontiers.

The sky is the limit. There has been a lot of on-going research conducted since then and there is still room for more in depth research when it comes to developing methods and tools, as well as verifying the results achieved when learning and retaining an L2.
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Appendix A

QUALIFICATION STANDARDS

Introduction

These qualification standards apply to positions requiring the use of both official languages—English and French. They define the levels of proficiency for each of the three language skills:

- Written Comprehension in the Second Official Language
- Written Expression in the Second Official Language
- Oral Proficiency in the Second Official Language

There are two types of language qualifications for bilingual positions:

- General second official language qualifications: A, B, or C
- Specific language qualifications requiring Code P

Official language qualifications are identified objectively and are relevant to the duties and responsibilities of the position as it relates to communications with and services to the public and language of work.

The web-based tool, Determining the Linguistic Profile of Bilingual Positions, is available to help managers establish the linguistic profile of positions. A printable final report presents the profile and the functions associated with a particular position.

Application

These standards apply to all institutions subject to Schedules I and IV of the Financial Administration Act.

Related Requirements

Institutions also apply the following requirements:

- **Policy on Official Languages for Human Resources Management** – for institutions subject to Parts IV, V and VI as well as section 91 of the Official Languages Act

  *Directive on the Staffing of Bilingual Positions* – for institutions subject to the Public Service Employment Act

  *Directive on the Linguistic Identification of Positions or Functions* – for institutions subject to Schedules I and IV of the Financial Administration Act
General Second Official Languages Qualifications

Second official language qualifications and proficiency levels are identified objectively and are relevant to the duties and responsibilities of the position as it relates to communications with and services to the public and language of work.

Tests used to assess proficiency levels for general second language qualifications – A, B, or C – in written comprehension, written expression and oral proficiency are prescribed by the Public Service Commission.

These tests and standards apply to all occupational groups.

There are three levels of proficiency for general second official language qualifications:

A (lowest)
B
C (highest)

They are cumulative:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can accomplish:</td>
<td>Tasks at level A</td>
<td>Tasks at level A</td>
<td>Tasks at level A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tasks at level B</td>
<td>Tasks at level B</td>
<td>Tasks at level C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When a skill is not required, a dash ("-") is used in the linguistic profile instead of a proficiency level.

There are also two additional possible language test results: X and E.

Individuals obtaining an X are demonstrating that their performance does not meet the minimum requirements for Level A for this ability.

Individuals obtaining an E are exempted indefinitely from further language testing for this ability. It is granted to persons whose second language test performance indicates that they can be expected to maintain their second language proficiency at Level C indefinitely.

An exemption is not a proficiency level and is not listed in the linguistic profile of bilingual positions.

Written Comprehension in the Second Official Language, Proficiency Level A

Standard Description

Level A is the minimum level of second language ability in written comprehension for positions that require comprehension of texts on topics of limited scope.

A person reading at this level can:
fully understand very simple texts;
grasp the main idea of texts about familiar topics; and
read and understand elementary points of information such as dates, numbers, or names from relatively more complex texts to perform routine job-related tasks.

A person at this level would not be expected to read and understand detailed information.

**Examples**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>A person at this level can read:</strong></th>
<th>internal communications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>email messages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>routine forms (e.g., requisitions, invoices)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>very simple texts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>In order to:</strong></th>
<th>file</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>distribute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pick out specific units of information (e.g., dates, numbers, names)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>process routine requests (e.g., requisitions, work orders, invoices)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fully understand very simple texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>understand the general idea regarding familiar, work-related topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>carry out routine, simple actions (e.g., understand photocopying instructions, order office supplies, read a meeting agenda)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Written Comprehension in the Second Official Language, Proficiency Level B

**Standard Description**

Level B is the minimum level of second language ability in written comprehension for positions that require comprehension of most descriptive or factual material on work-related topics.

A person reading at this level can:

grasp the main idea of most work-related texts;
identify specific details; and
distinguish main from subsidiary ideas.

A person at this level will have difficulty reading texts using complex grammar and less common vocabulary.

**Examples**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>A person at this level can carry out the activities</strong></th>
<th>reference materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Written Comprehension in the Second Official Language, Proficiency Level C

**Standard Description**

Level C is the level of second language ability in written comprehension for positions that require comprehension of texts dealing with a wide variety of work-related topics.

A person reading at this level can:
understand most complex details, inferences and fine points of meaning; and
have a good comprehension of specialized or less familiar material.

A person at this level may miss some seldom-used expressions and have some difficulty with very complex grammatical structures.

**Examples**

| A person at this level can carry out the activities at levels A and B and can also read work-related: | policy papers  
research papers  
technical reports  
books  
complex contracts or specifications  
legislation or regulations |
|---|---|
| In order to: | ensure completeness and accuracy  
exttract details for action or interpretation  
review for meaning and tone when it was prepared by others  
obtain an in-depth understanding of the content  
assess implications  
provide comments |
Written Expression in the Second Official Language, Proficiency Level A

**Standard Description**

Level A is the minimum level of second language ability in written expression for positions that require writing simple units of information in the second language.

A person writing at this level can:

- write isolated words, phrases, simple statements or questions on very familiar topics using words of time, place or person.

A person at this level is expected to make errors of grammar, vocabulary and spelling. These errors are acceptable as long as the message is understandable.

**Examples**

| A person at this level can write: | isolated words  
simple phrases  
simple messages  
lists (e.g., items, names, activities)  
titles or subject headings  
b brief notes |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| In order to:                   | fill out a form or report related to one’s duties  
note simple point-form messages  
complete an index or table of contents  
request and provide simple information  
use templates in familiar situations |

Written Expression in the Second Official Language, Proficiency Level B

**Standard Description**

Level B is the minimum level of second language ability in written expression for positions that require writing short descriptive or factual texts in the second language.

A person writing at this level can deal with explicit information on work-related topics since they have sufficient mastery of grammar and vocabulary.

A person at this level will communicate the basic information, but the text will require some corrections in grammar and vocabulary as well as revision for style.
Examples

| A person at this level can carry out the activities of level A and can also write work-related: | short, routine messages  
short texts  
short descriptions  
brief comments  
simple, factual correspondence or directives |
|---|---|
| In order to: | adapt templates by adding a few words or slightly modifying the content  
request or provide information, explanations or instructions  
explain or request that action be taken  
formulate observations  
present conclusions  
summarize a text or meeting in point or note form |

Written Expression in the Second Official Language, Proficiency Level C

**Standard Description**

Level C is the level of second language ability in written expression for positions that require writing explanations or descriptions in a variety of informal and formal work-related situations.

A person writing at this level can:

write texts where ideas are developed and presented in a coherent manner.

A person at this level will use vocabulary, grammar and spelling that are generally appropriate and require few corrections. A person at this level can also modify or correct texts to improve meaning, tone, clarity and conciseness

**Examples**

| A person at this level can carry out the activities at levels A and B and can also write work-related: | correspondence  
briefing notes  
memoranda  
reports  
recommendations  
research papers  
comprehensive summaries |
|---|---|
In order to:
- provide or request detailed facts and reasons
- provide information or comment on contentious issues

Oral Proficiency in the Second Official Language - Level A

**Standard Description**
Level A is the minimum level of second language ability in oral proficiency for positions that require simple and repetitive use of the second language in routine work situations.

A person speaking at this level can:
- ask and answer simple questions;
- give simple instructions;
- give uncomplicated directions relating to routine work situations.

Persons at this level make many errors and have deficiencies in grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary and fluency, which may interfere with the clarity of the message. Since they may have problems understanding speech spoken at a normal rate, repetitions by others may be required for them to understand what is being said.

**Examples**

A person at this level can carry out the following activities:
- ask and answer simple questions about names, addresses, dates, times or numbers
- make requests to colleagues or other employees and respond to such requests about simple and uncomplicated matters
- give and follow simple directions and instructions
- provide short, repetitive answers or information
- exchange common courtesies (e.g., thank you, you’re welcome, have a nice day)

Oral Proficiency in the Second Official Language - Level B

**Standard Description**
Level B is the minimum level of second language oral proficiency for positions that require departure from routine use of the second language.

A person speaking at this level can:
- sustain a conversation on concrete topics;
- report on actions taken;
give straightforward instructions to employees;
provide factual descriptions and explanations.

A person at this level may have deficiencies in grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary and fluency that do not seriously interfere with communication.

A person at this level would have a limited ability to deal with situations involving hypothetical ideas.

A person at this level should not be expected to cope with situations that are sensitive or that require the understanding or expression of subtle or abstract ideas.

**Examples**

**A person at this level can carry out the activities of level A and can also:**

give and follow straightforward instructions or explanations about how work is to be done, what information is needed and what steps or alternatives are to be followed

give factual accounts of actions taken or events that have occurred

handle requests for routine information from other employees or members of the public, either by telephone or in face-to-face conversations (e.g., about such things as services, publications, or staffing actions)

take part in departmental or interdepartmental meetings regarding factual, concrete and non-routine topics, and/or informal meetings or work sessions

deliver presentations on concrete topics, and answer factual follow-up questions

answer the telephone, understand simple requests, redirect calls as appropriate, and/or explain to others how to complete a form

---

**Oral Proficiency in the Second Official Language - Level C**

**Standard Description**

Level C is the level of second language oral proficiency for positions that require handling sensitive situations where the understanding and expression of subtle, abstract, or complicated ideas are required or where unfamiliar work-related topics must be dealt with.

A person speaking at this level can:
support opinions; and

understand and express hypothetical and conditional ideas.

A person at this level will not have the ease and fluency of a native speaker and may have deficiencies in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. These deficiencies rarely interfere with communication.

**Examples**

**A person at this level can carry out the activities at levels A and B and can also:**
give and understand explanations and descriptions involving complicated details, hypothetical questions, or complex and abstract ideas

give and understand detailed accounts of events, actions taken, or procedures to be followed
discuss or explain policies, procedures, regulations, programs and services relating to an area of work
deal with situations requiring persuasion/negotiation and complex arguments, and/or the seamless exchange of ideas in both official languages
deliver presentations on complex topics, and answer follow-up questions and/or conduct training sessions
counsel and give advice to employees or clients on sensitive or complex issues
participate as a member of a selection board, interview board, or assessment team as an integral part of the job functions

Technical or Specialized Language Skills – Code P

General
Code P is for bilingual positions requiring the use of technical or specialized official language skills.

These skills are normally acquired through specialized training or experience.

Code P is not necessarily a second official language requirement. For example:

If a position requires the editing of texts written in French, Code P would be required for reading and writing in French, and therefore it would be:
a first language requirement for candidates whose first official language is French; and
a second language requirement for candidates whose first official language is English.

There are five categories of technical or specialized language skills:

Dictatyping and dictation
Professional writing
Editing
Translation and interpretation
Teaching and testing

The table below lists specific and detailed technical or specialized language skills for each category.

To satisfy the requirements of the Qualification Standards, code P is restricted to these or similar skills.

The specific skill or proficiency itself should be identified as "Essential Qualifications" on the Statement of Merit Criteria.
Linguistic Profile

A "P" in the linguistic profile indicates which language (English and/or French) and which language abilities (written comprehension, written expression and/or oral proficiency) require the technical or specialized language skills.

Code P supersedes any general second official language qualification and is used instead of levels A, B, or C for that particular ability.

Imperative Staffing

The *Public Service Official Languages Exclusion Approval Order* specifies that, regardless of their first official language, all candidates must satisfy all qualifications designated by code P in order to be qualified for a position. Imperative staffing is therefore required for any qualifications designated by code P.

Language Training

Imperative staffing requires applicants to meet the position’s linguistic requirements. Language training is not offered following an imperative staffing action.

Language Testing

The Second Language Evaluation (SLE) tests prescribed by the Public Service Commission are not used to evaluate code P qualifications.

Departments and managers are responsible for identifying and developing the appropriate assessment tool to assess Code P.

Evaluation of Language Skills

The second language evaluation (SLE) tests prescribed by the Public Service Commission are not used to evaluate skills requiring the use of code P.

Institutions and managers are responsible for identifying and developing the necessary evaluation tools for code P.

The P result is not transferable from one position to another.
Appendix B

LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Military Second Language Training Programme (MSLTP) for CF members
Generally speaking, all MSLTP courses should help candidates achieve at least one performance objective corresponding to Public Sector Levels A, B, or C:

Continuous French Course - Level B (CFCLB)
Continuous French Course - Level C (CFCLC)
Course with a Single Progress Level (PL)
Specific Skill Courses
Retention Language Services
Preparation Services to the Second Language Evaluation (SLE)

Retrieved on March 26th 2013
From: http://www.cfls-elfc.forces.gc.ca/pro-ser/index-eng.asp
### Appendix C

**ACTIVITIES**

A-P3-050-SLT/PH-H02  
ANNEX B, CHAPTER 2  

ANNEX A, 4705-22 (DGRET)  
DATED 13 SEPT 90

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASE</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>- Help to organize community activities, events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Supervise cadets, scouts, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Present a show or play in the second language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration into the Work</td>
<td>- Give a course in first aid or survival for a civilian organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Participate in, organize activities in co-operation with service clubs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>- Help out in various ways at local schools: sports, library, fundraising, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE

Maintaining your second language skills doesn’t always require a formal language training program. There are many ways to practise second language skills without even leaving the comfort of your own home! Listen to the radio, watch a television program or play a word game in your second language. Consult the "Practising second language skills" practical tool for a wide variety of suggestions designed to help you improve your second language skills.

Retrieved on March 29th 2013

Practical Tool: Practising second language skills

Learning and maintaining a second language requires the opportunity to practise newly acquired language skills. Formal language training often involves a structured approach, but practising a second language may be done through many informal and innovative ways. The list below divides various languages skills into groups and offers some suggestions for practising the particular language skill. The methods are simple and may be easily incorporated into your daily activities.

Language skill

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second language (SL) skill practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Read a newspaper or book in the SL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Subscribe to a magazine in the SL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Try an activity in the SL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Play a board game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Read and prepare a new recipe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing (grammar and vocabulary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Correspond with a &quot;pen-pal&quot; in the SL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use dictionaries, grammar guides, effective writing guides when doing any written work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Refer to and bookmark websites that provide online dictionaries, glossaries, writing tips, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Take advantage of online grammar exercises or games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Listen to the news on a radio station in the SL
• Watch a television program or sporting event in the SL
• Listen to music in the SL
• Watch a movie in the SL
• Attend a cultural performance in the SL, e.g., theatre and concert

Speaking and listening
• Visit a museum or go to a restaurant in the SL
• Take lessons or classes taught in the SL
  o tennis or dance lessons
  o cooking classes
• Join a club whose membership is in the SL
  o a sporting activity such as a cycling club
  o a book club
  o a bird watching group
• Practise speaking the SL with colleagues at work - ask them to correct you if you make an error
• Try a CD-Rom or other computer software focusing on oral SL communication skills
  Consider taking your next vacation in a region that speaks the SL

Retrieved on March 29th 2013
Appendix E

LIST OF SOCIO-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

LIST OF SOCIO-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES SUITABLE FOR DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE AT EACH PHASE OF LEARNING

1. The outside activities suggested are suitable for both officers and NCMS. They should be selected on the basis of the needs, interests and linguistic competence of the groups in question.

2. Outside activities are considered to be socio-cultural activities and should be introduced when trainees have reached a level of language proficiency that permits them to understand the speech of native speakers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASE</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>- Visit a newspaper office, a local radio/TV station, a business or industry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Visit attractions in the region: aquarium, planetarium, old forts, museums, port, stock market, historic buildings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Take a short course in the target language on a subject of general interest: wine-making, painting, sports, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Participate in a cultural event (cabane à sucre).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Organize a cultural day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- See a film or play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Organize/take part in a variety show.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Organize theme days.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Go on a cultural or historical outing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Visit the court house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consolidation and Expansion of Communication Skills</td>
<td>- Organize/participate in a scavenger hunt, car rally, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Get involved in volunteer work: visit hospitals, supervise activities for children.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F
CHOICE BOARD

Differentiated Literacy Strategies for English Language Learners, Grades 7–12

Figure 6.9 Choice Board for Technological Literacy—Production*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prompt: Create a company to market a product people will really need for work or entertainment. This example would work well in Business, Career Exploration, and Technology classes.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create a documentary film clip about your company and product.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build an electronic model of how your company produces and markets the product.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write and sing a jingle to advertise your company and product. Then conduct research to determine the effectiveness of the marketing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: For more information on this topic, see Tom March (2004) and the website [http://webquest.sdsu.edu](http://webquest.sdsu.edu).

From Gregory and Burkman (2011)