

Second Language in British Columbia: Implications for EFL in Japan

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Abstract

Canada has played a leadership role in the domain of second language instruction. Since the inception of French immersion programs, researchers and educators have looked to Canada as a model for teaching French as a second language. Focusing on French as a second language (FSL) in British Columbia (BC), the author explores what is unique about FSL in British Columbia and what is to be revisited in order to reorganize and reorient language teaching discourse, which has some implications for the EFL language teaching discourse in Japan.

Federal and Provincial Scope

Canada's Official Language

Historically, some consider that the Canadian Confederation in 1867 was the inception of a policy of bilingualism in Canada (Canadian encyclopedia, n.d.). Experiencing continual political turmoil, especially in the 1960s in terms of bilingualism, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism served to help Canadian Parliament to adopt the first Official Languages Act in 1969 (Raptis & Fleming, 2004). “This Act recognized English and French as the official languages of all federal institutions in Canada” (Department of Canadian Heritage, 2008, para 7). The Official Language Act grants legitimate status to the two languages in Parliament, in the courts and in the federal administration. Most recently, in 1982, “the Constitution Act was proclaimed, further guaranteeing the status and use of the official languages of Canada in federal institutions” (Department of Canadian Heritage, 2008).

Advancement of bilingualism in Canada

The striking advancement of bilingualism in Canada is demonstrated when the initial phase

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of enactment of bilingualism is considered. According to Dion (2002), presently 24% of young Canadian high school graduates know both the French and English official languages. In 1981, only 8% of young Anglophones outside Quebec could speak French. Now, 19% of these young Anglophones speak French (Dion, 2002).

Anecdotaly, half of people in the world are estimated to be bilingual, therefore bilingualism is not an uncommon phenomenon (Dion, 2002). To learn an additional language is of importance and value for people to share each other's cultural heritage, especially in Canada, which is based on the bilingual policy. Bilingualism enables people to respect and appreciate mutual language, culture and values inside the country. Furthermore, when today's world is taken into consideration, there is increasing interaction with other countries and other cultures. Canadians' bilingualism opens doors to a wider international community and dual language skills contribute to the country's enrichment as well as to Canada's success in social and cultural endeavors.

Canada is a federal state and entrusts provinces and territories with many executive powers. The federal government in Canada maintains decentralized principles. The educational policy based on the bilingual principles in the country falls within provincial jurisdiction and largely rests on the discretion and latitude of each province and territory. So, educational policy varies in the ten provinces and three territories. Based on the Canadian bilingual policy, each province and territory decides and implements language teaching practices as well as educational policy.

Commitment to bilingualism: Federal Action Plan 2003

In an attempt to revitalize an active commitment to bilingualism, in 2003 the Canadian government released the Action Plan for official languages (officially named Momentum for Canada's Linguistic Duality - The Action Plan for Official Languages).

This federal Action Plan was "designed to renew and update the commitment to the principle of English and French as the two official languages of Canada" (Munroe, 2003, para 1). With the goal of "doubling the proportion of secondary school graduates with a functional knowledge of their second official language by 2013" (Government of Canada, 2003, Education), the Action Plan continued until March 31, 2008. Its spirit was succeeded by the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality 2008-2013 in 2008. The Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality is the Government of Canada's official languages strategy, outlining the government's major policy directions and being one of the many components making up the Government of Canada's Official Languages Program (Canadian Heritage, 2008b).

The Roadmap includes "a commitment to deliver additional funds at par with the amount allotted in the Action Plan, approximately \$137 million, toward second-language education" (Canadian Parents for French, n.d., p.2). The Roadmap as a continuum of the Action Plan is

designed to attain the initial goal the federal government set in 2003 with respect to the functional bilingual abilities of secondary school graduates. Canada is a country that enshrines bilingualism, and achieving this goal is imperative.

Provincial scope: British Columbia

Francophones account for approximately 63,630 or 1.5% of the total population (Linguistic Profile – British Columbia Website, 2006). In this regard, French language is still the minority language in the province. In the Anglophone mainstream of British Columbia, learning French as a Second Language (FSL) is a drive to promote bilingualism in the province. French is a language of world stature as well as the language of many compatriots in the country. Enhancing the status of the French language by teaching French to Anglophones encourages the growth of communication and respect among the people of the westernmost part of Canada.

Action Plan in British Columbia

In this context, acknowledging the importance of learning Canada's official language, the Federal Government of Canada and British Columbia finalized a bilateral agreement on Official Languages in Education (Minority Language Education and Second Official Language Instruction 2009-2010 to 2012-2013), which resulted in shaping the British Columbia Action Plan 2009-2010 to 2012-2013. This Action Plan includes promoting instruction in French and French as a second language, as well as the full recognition and use of Canada's second official language.

In the school year 2008-2009, the percent of K-12 French Immersion students is recorded as 7.3% (42,474 students). In this BC Action Plan, approximately \$8.8 million for French immersion initiatives including federal contributions is allocated, whereas approximately \$0.8 million is for Core French initiatives. The portion earmarked for Core French is far less than for French immersion initiatives. Comparing the two figures, it is obvious that the government's strategy is to promote the bilingual policy through immersion programs to the majority of Anglophones. The number and the percentage for French immersion are targeted to be raised during the life of this initiative with the federal funding, which helps to offset some additional costs when school boards offer the immersion programs. As well, the number of Core French initiatives outside the mandated years for second language study is targeted to be increased by five percent by 2012-2013.

In addition, among others, French teachers' training initiative and postsecondary French course initiatives are set out: the former includes bursaries available to students to become second language teachers, the latter the initiative to develop and offer pre-service programs or courses in French.

Bursary programs are vital for commitment to promoting the cause of Canada's official

language. Federal French Language Bursary Programs administered through the BC Ministry of Education are available to teacher candidates for French as a Second Language (FSL) and already certified teachers in the BC school system when they engage in summer French immersion programs, and credit courses offered at relevant institutions.

In the case of practicing teachers, gaining the skills and methodological knowledge to be effective FSL teachers, they can enhance and expand their professional qualifications and credentials, which may have implications for their salary classification.

In BC Action Plan, the Ministry sets a measurable target of French language proficiency that students should attain: people attaining Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) Level B1 or equivalent should increase by 10% by June 2012.

French as a Second Language (FSL)

What is Core French?

Along with such subjects as math and science, Core French is a subject taught in schools, which is “designed to enable non-francophone speaking students to begin to understand and communicate in French, as well as to experience francophone culture” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2009).

In the category of second language instruction, Core French was adopted well before the advent of the powerful method of French Immersion. According to Raptis and Fleming (2004), French study in British Columbian schools was first introduced in 1876 at Victoria High, which is the province’s first high school. Since then, French has been included as a part of elite secondary school options until well into the 1960s (Carr, 2007b). Following the adoption of the Official Languages Act in 1969, in the 1970s the federal government expedited bilingualism through funding for French education.

Carr (2007b) states:

In 1994, the BC Language Policy was enacted whereby all students in grades five to eight would study a second language, in most cases, French. This policy was followed by the development of a communication-focused curriculum, the Core French Integrated Resource Package (IRP), and in 1997 the policy and curriculum were fully implemented (p. 4).

When the curriculum of Core French in IRP is viewed, prescribed time allocations for teaching Core French do not exist. In a positive light, schools have discretion in allocating the time for Core

French under their own school's circumstances. Some schools do not provide the opportunity for students to study French legitimately. At least, Core French categorized as a mandatory subject varies from one school to another. In effect, students' French proficiency level could be affected by time allocation, which is not standardized.

Time allocation for Core French

Carr (2006) states that although it is not prescribed in the standardized curriculum document IRP, the average time allotment in Core French is around 80 minutes per week. The Ministry of Education suggests that many districts provide a minimum of 80 to 90 minutes of French per week (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2001). Many educationists maintain that the time allotment or distribution of instructional time in Core French should be increased in order to develop students' proficiency in French and making students attain the CEFR Level 1.

Status quo: Core French teacher -Teaching practice in BC

The majority of elementary school teachers deliver multiple classes, among which Core French is included as one of their teaching subjects (Carr, 2007, November/December). According to the 2006 survey in which 612 teachers in BC participated, 61% of the teachers responded that they taught one Core French class (Carr, 2007a). This indicates that most of the teachers in elementary level teaching conduct Core French in a solo manner in his/her homeroom class. Carr (2007, November/December) claims that the majority of teachers in elementary and middle schools are generalist teachers.

Students' perception and the role of Core French

Students can hardly see the value of learning French even though their country enshrines linguistic duality. Anglophone students in BC live in a socio-cultural and socio-political environment where English is a dominant language. They can live their lives using English without any inconvenience. In the BC context, almost all the students enroll in Core French, as do those in other provinces. Core French is perceived to be less valued than French immersion and other school subjects by all stakeholders (Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers, n.d.) .

Students express their dissatisfaction with Core French by words like boring, irrelevant, and repetitious (Canadian Heritage, 2008a). Consequently, students are disappointed by the delivery and content, feeling uncertain of their possible success in learning their second official language. A less than satisfactory state of affairs makes many students opt out of the program after the four-year mandatory period of study.

Although there exist intertwined and stratified factors when the reasons of attrition in higher

grades are taken into account, prospective elementary school teachers should equip themselves with the minimum pedagogical background in their teacher programs. And improving the FSL structure for pre-service teachers in which they have opportunities to be better prepared for French could contribute to ameliorating attrition from French classes.

Carr (2007, November/December) points out that:

Secondary Core French teachers are almost specialists who possess a linguistic background, methodological training, and a passion for the language...[however, many] students drop out as soon as French is no longer mandated after grade eight [without being taught by specialist teachers] (p. 6).

Other conceivable barriers, in terms of students discontinuing studying French, are competition from other languages offered and time-tabling conflicts with other courses such as science and math, and the fact that French is not a graduation requirement (Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers, n.d.). When these circumstances are considered, the early years of French instruction affect academic sentiments and learning desires of students, and their decision-making as to whether or not they continue to study French. In order to encourage them to continue to enroll in French class, the problems of encompassing generalist teachers should specifically be addressed by focusing on teachers' proficiency and pedagogy, as well as the delivery model including distribution of instructional time.

Given that all youngsters in BC study French for four years, it is a pressing task to make Core French programs function properly. The overwhelming majority of all the students in BC are taking Core French in elementary and middle school years, while 7.3% of the student population is enrolled in Immersion classes (2008-2009 school year). In fact, more than 90% of students learning French are in Core French programs. These figures demonstrate that Core French could play a significant part regarding French instruction if the teaching and learning are better reshaped. Efforts to revitalize the learning/teaching practice of Core French becomes a great possibility to shift the low status of French and attain the goal of bilingualism in Canada.

French Immersion

"The French immersion program was initially designed for Anglophone students as an alternative to Core French" (Gérin-Lajoie, 2008, p.54). It was inaugurated in St. Lambert, Quebec in 1965 (Ito, 2004). According to the Canadian Council on Learning website (2007), parental dissatisfaction with the traditional core French programs spurred developing immersion programs,

and parents encouraged and expected their children to be bilingual. Owing to its early period of success, the expansion of French immersion is considered to have been the impetus towards bilingualism in Canada.

French Immersion in British Columbia

Even when French immersion programs were losing momentum and its enrollments plateaued, or were declining slightly in programs across the nation, the enrollment in French immersion programs in British Columbia increased owing to government initiative (Raptis & Fleming, 2004; Gérin-Lajoie, 2008).

“French immersion was first introduced in BC in 1973, in the city of Coquitlam, outside of Vancouver” (Gérin-Lajoie, 2008, p. 53) and is characterized as the programs that parallel the regular English program in structure and content (Ministry of Education, British Columbia, n.d. d). In addition, BC Ministry of Education refers to the program as a more ambitious second-language program than Core French.

Time allocation in French Immersion

In British Columbia, French Immersion is classified into two categories: the Early French Immersion (K or grades 1 to 12) and the Late French Immersion (grades 6 to 12) programs. As in the other provinces and territories, French immersion programs consist of instruction in English and French (Ministry of Education, British Columbia, n.d. c). The Ministry of Education in BC shows the recommended time allocations for each grade regarding the proportion of usage of French and English in French Immersion programs.

Required percentage of time in French Language instruction:

Grade	% of French instruction	% of English instruction
K-3	100	0
4-8	80	20
8-10	50-75	25-50
11-12	No less than 25	No more than 75

(British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2009: Official Languages in Education, Bilateral Agreement, British Columbia Action Plan 2009-2010 to 2012-2013)

Greater Victoria School District No. 61 has shaped the time allocation of French and English in both Early Immersion and Late Immersion in accordance with the Ministry recommendation

(Tables A and B). Other school districts implement the immersion programs with the similar time allocation as in Greater Victoria School District No. 61. There are now several types of immersion programs in the world. Regarding the amount of time spent in immersion education, the time allocation below is characteristic of French immersion models in Canada, which is based on the required percentage of time in the French Language instruction model.

Table A: How much French will my child speak in the classroom in Early French Immersion? (Reproduced from Greater Victoria *School District* No.61 website)

Grade	% of French instruction	% of English instruction
K-2	100	0
3-5	80	20
6-8	70-80	30-20
9-10	50	50
11-12	25	75

Table B: How much French is used in Late French Immersion? (Reproduced from Greater Victoria *School District* No.61 website)

Grade	% of French instruction	% of English instruction
6-8	70-80	30-20
9-10	50	50
11-12	25	75

So what it comes down to is that the characteristics of Canadian models of French immersion in terms of time allocation and the use of both French and English are, in the initial year(s) of the programs, that French is fully used in the class discourse. And the frequency of French language use tapers off year after year. Accordingly, the percentage of English as the language of instruction increases.

Challenge in provision of French Teacher: Attrition rate

The immersion education is done on a voluntary basis as desired by students or parents of the students, and is not taken by all children. “The demand for French Immersion classes has surpassed the capacity of school districts to offer the programs, even with the support provided by Official Languages in Education Program funds” (Ministry of Education, British Columbia, n.d. a., 2006/7: French Funding Guide 2007 – 2008, p.3).

Facing the teacher shortage, some advocate that standards for French competence of French immersion teachers should be lowered. However, the Ministry of Education articulates that teachers of immersion programs are required to have:

- (1) a high degree of oral and written proficiency in the French language;
- (2) a sound knowledge of the culture of French-speaking peoples; and
- (3) completed at least one course in immersion methodology (Ministry of Education, British Columbia, n.d. b).

As well, Canadian Parents for French (n.d.) advocates ensuring that “all FSL programs are to be delivered by qualified and proficient FSL Teachers” (p. 11).

As the BC Ministry of Education sets high requirements for French immersion teachers, teachers in the programs are French specialist teachers. Even when the specialist teachers undertake the French immersion classes, the issue of student attrition persists. When Table 3 is compared with Table 4 in terms of the enrollment in French immersion, the population of the students who are enrolled in the program in 2000 is 4.7% or 4.8% (Table 3). However, the percentage of enrollment at the age of 15 (grade 10) turns to 2% (Table 4). This indicates that far more than 50% of the students who were enrolled in the immersion programs dropped the program at some point.

The reason for attrition is so complex in nature that the problem cannot be solved by a single measure. Cadez (2006) categorized the reasons of student attrition from his research conducted in Manitoba as follows:

- 1) students’ language abilities, 2) quality of school programs, 3) general perceptions about the French immersion program, 4) personal endorsement of the immersion program, 5) parental influence, and 6) other areas of concern (p. 91).

As plenty of empirical studies verify Cummins’ interdependence hypothesis (Cummins, 1979), some websites, such as that of Sooke School District #62, describe the merit of immersion programs, noting that “on standardized tests given in English, immersion students are found to do as well as, or better than, students in the English program” (Sooke School District 62, n.d.). As such, students in the immersion programs expect that they might obtain better grades than in a regular English option. However, they do not necessarily achieve expected outcomes in the immersion programs. This may instigate their decision to drop the immersion programs.

Linguistic duality is Canada’s strategic policy and French instruction is offered in the interest of national unity. However, given the status quo of French province-wide as well as nation-wide, French remains a minority language in people’s minds, so that it cannot establish the status of a valid language. “Some parents don’t really care about French instruction, which is transferred

to their children” (Teaching Core French in British Columbia, 2007, p. 45), and “the attitude of other teachers and principals regarding French... no one is outright hostile but most are completely indifferent and disinterested” (p. 44) are expressed in the report.

Consequently, people become skeptical about investing time and energy in innovative education programs. Clearing the impediments from French instruction is the responsibility of all stakeholders, and they could share all the benefits to attain the goal of bilingualism in the province.

Table 3: Number of Students Enrollment in French Immersion in the Public School

School Year	Number of Students in French Immersion Program	% of Total Public School Students
1999-2000	29,979	4.7*
2000-2001	30,420	4.8*
2001-2002	31,135	4.9
2002-2003	31,989	5.2
2003-2004	33,406	5.4
2004-2005	35,519	5.9
2005-2006	38,009	6.3
2006-2007	39,511	6.7

Notes: Includes students in Early French Immersion and Late French Immersion.

(Reproduced from 2006/7 *Summary of key information*, Ministry of Education, n.d. d)

Table4: 15-year-old students enrolled in French immersion in 2000

	Enrolled in French Immersion	Enrolled in Immersion and had started before grade 4 (early immersion)
British Columbia	2%	50%
Alberta	4%	80%
Saskatchewan	3%	87%
Manitoba	6%	90%
Ontario	6%	57%
Quebec	22%	74%

New Brunswick	32%	39%
Nova Scotia	12%	21%
Prince Edward Island	20%	59%
Newfoundland& Labrador	7%	57%

(Reproduced from Program for International Student Assessment-PISA 2000, Statistics Canada, 2008).

Intensive French: Attempt to reorient the traditional FSL

Baker (2006) labels the Core French delivery model as ‘drip feed’ language teaching, suggesting that it can hardly contribute to producing fluent French speakers. Furthermore, Turnbull (2000) notes from others’ empirical research results that “the more compact models of instruction have more positive effects on student proficiency and that students liked the longer periods and assessed their progress in French more positively than students in the 40 minutes per day class” (p. 181).

In this context, Vancouver School Board, where the intensive language teaching approach is being implemented, refers to the rationale as follows:

“It has been shown that the most efficient way to learn another language is to spend concentrated time with it. Higher results are achieved with 60 hours concentrated into three weeks with four hours a day than with 60 hours spread over three months with one hour a day, even though the number of hours is the same (Vancouver School Board. (n.d.), Time of concentrated exposure).”

Even though Intensive French, which is being implemented across the country, is mostly categorized in Core French, this program model is a new attempt to reorient the traditional FSL, enhancing the bilingual ability. Initiated in Newfoundland and Labrador in 1998, this teaching approach arrived in the Surrey School District, BC, 2004 (Carr, 2006) as an enrichment program of the traditional Core French, in which its implementation enables students to use language in many different contexts.

In the Intensive French program, for the first half of the year students in grade six are offered French language arts intensively. For the second half of the year, the compact versions of the regular subjects are offered in English plus one hour of French a day. According to Carr (2007b), today Intensive French instruction is offered to around 250 students in BC. The characteristic of the program is that regular school subjects are compressed into the second half of the intensive year.

Considerations: Teacher Education Perspective

French teacher shortage: in high demand

French language teachers are always in demand and the shortage of the teachers with the appropriate skills needed in a core French classroom arises. Some say that the issue of the teacher shortage stems from a small number of the French specialist graduates from education programs.

As Phillips (2002) notes, teacher training programs in Canada require students to finish both regular university programs and teacher training programs in four or five years. In British Columbia, although there are some options to be a school teacher in the BC school system, traditionally pre-service teachers enroll in a Bachelor of Education program to be certified by the Teacher Regulation Branch of the Ministry of Education. Nine universities offer teacher education programs that prepare teachers to teach in the K-12 system.

The majority of teacher candidates in elementary (K-5) and middle school (6-8) levels presently are enrolled at these post-secondary institutions. Most of these institutions do not have a specialist program for elementary core French or immersion, whereas secondary teacher candidates may elect to teach French as a major or minor teaching area (Carr, 2007c). This structure has been yielding large numbers of generalist core French teachers who are not adequately trained for teaching French.

Although Grade 5 to 8 Core French is mandated and its curriculum document (Integrated Resource Packages for second languages: IRP) has been developed, in teacher education programs at the University of British Columbia (UBC) and Simon Fraser University (SFU), students in the Bachelor of Education programs do not have mandatory courses in second language pedagogy (Carr, 2007, November/December), in which pre-service teachers learn about, and practice communicative language teaching strategies.

Accordingly, generalist teachers face the challenge of teaching Core French without pedagogical background and fluency. Teachers without sufficient knowledge and proficiency undertake the Core French class, feeling “unqualified and not confident about teaching French” (Carr, 1999, p.161).

A tiny fraction of teacher candidates who receive specialized training in French are admitted in French specialist programs after being screened with regard to proficiency in French (Carr, 2007, November/December). After completing their coursework, they become bilingual, experiencing practice in Core French or immersion classes at assigned schools. These students account for a small proportion of pre-service teachers in the teacher training programs.

French specialist teachers are in high demand so that they are mostly hired as teachers for immersion programs. Anecdotal evidence suggests that no French specialist teachers enter the teaching venue of Core French especially at the primary school level. Therefore, a shortage of

French specialist teachers continues in the Core French programs.

This vicious circle should be addressed in order to revitalize Core French. Revitalization of Core French is of great value in Canada, because bilingualism is enshrined in Canada as the nation's principle. With respect to Core French, proficiency of teachers is viewed as one of the agents of whether or not teachers can enhance students' enthusiasm for learning and outcomes. Ensuring the presence of competent Core French teachers or French specialists in classrooms is an urgent task to boost the drive in pursuit of bilingual education, so teacher training programs and the hiring practices used for hiring teachers should be reviewed along with the providers of teacher training programs.

Joint effort and collaboration

Although the space can only accommodate a small proportion of applicants, the University of British Columbia (UBC) and Simon Fraser University (SFU) have created programs for elementary core French generalists, secondary French immersion and core French specialists, in which teacher candidates can access training in FSL methodology. This could play a significant part in reshaping the landscape of classroom practices in FSL. Stakeholders in the elementary and middle schools await other institutions to follow the innovative initiatives of UBC and SFU.

In tandem with the effort made by some school districts, some professional development offerings for practicing teachers are underway. The University of Victoria's Continuing Studies in Education, in collaboration with the local school district, offers credential courses for FSL teachers in French immersion and middle years core French education. The participants are eligible for federal funding through the BC Ministry of Education. Other similar programs tailored to the needs of local teachers are offered in the UBC and SFU. When teachers participate in French programs to improve their French language or methodology skills, they can apply for the funding from their school district or individual school as well.

Mechanisms to ensure a sufficient supply of qualified French teachers should be in place. In this regard, the partnership between faculties of education and school districts / provincial Ministry of Education is a crucial element in supporting bilingual education, which is expected by all the stakeholders in education.

Now additional students await the opportunity to study in the better programs. Ensuring that every child has the opportunity to learn his/her second official language is vital for developing Canadian identity. The Ministry of Education and school districts are to make further systematic and concerted efforts to ensure there is a sufficient number of specialist teachers in order to realize the goal of doubling the number of bilingual Canadians by 2013.

Implications for EFL in Japan

Viewing the parallel circumstances of French instruction in British Columbia and English instruction in Japan including newly mandated curriculum items such as English Activities, some forms of analogous and contrasting structures regarding class delivery models, pre-service programs, and time allocation of class are observed.

Viewing the French instruction mainly in the BC context, noticeable points to be found are: (1) The successful Canadian practices place an emphasis on intensive contact with the target language in given periods. (2) The successful discourse in language instruction necessitates that teachers are proficient in the target language. Growing French immersion programs in BC are upheld by a high level of teachers' proficiency. The BC Ministry of Education set a high level of requirements for French immersion teachers, namely that French specialist teachers are bilingual. (3) In order to achieve the goals of education, pre-service teacher training programs have great significance. As for language teachers, they are to receive sufficient language training so that they can help provide students with functionality in the language.

Since the social context of language education in Japan differs from that in BC, Canada, these successful traits in BC are not necessarily applicable to Japan. However, these points have implications not only for the understanding of foreign language instruction in Japan but also for the improvement of EFL programs in Japan.

When English education in Japan, especially at the elementary school level, and French in BC, Canada are viewed from a comparative perspective, some contextual differences are summarized as follows.

Newly rolled-out “English activities” is not a subject but non-subject matter like moral education, while French in BC is a compulsory subject in the school curriculum. English is a foreign language in EFL context while French as a second language is an official language stipulated in the Canadian constitution. Although there exist such contextual differences, some challenges facing both teaching venues in Japan and British Columbia are shared.

Most importantly, each needs to refurbish infrastructures such as the teacher education system and, a supporting system of professional development, including funding to those who are in service and pre service. Also, the delivery model labeled as ‘drip feed’ along with teachers’ unconfident feelings and anxiety conducting the class is to be addressed.

In BC, in order to invigorate French instruction, a new model, Intensive French has been included since 2004. Now in 2012, BC boasts 16 schools, in which the innovative approach of traditional Core French is implemented. This approach is “a compact version” of currently and widely exercised regular Core French, which means the total instructional time allocated in the

program is approximately the same as the regular Core French. Needless to say, the appropriate teachers with the pedagogic background conduct the class, followed by successive follow-ups ensuing terms and years. This style of delivery is an empirically successful model, having been practiced across Canada, and the schools and school districts implementing the program are steadily increasing in number year after year.

The primary concept of this program is based on the “blocking schedule,” which can allow the extended period of class and task- project type of class.

The “blocking schedule” is also widely practiced in the elementary and secondary level in Japan, especially in the scope of outside the academic subjects [Ryoiki] like Comprehensive Studies. It could also make it feasible to underline the intensity of language teaching when it applies to foreign language classes.

According to the curriculum guidelines for elementary schools (MEXT, 2010), the rationale of “English Activities” is “to form the foundation of pupils’ communication abilities through foreign languages,” not to teach English language skills, even though it does not necessarily deny the importance of the language skills.

This ambivalence is reflected in that some schools seeking earnestly what is the best practice in English Activities tend to include English skills areas.

Once-a-week “English Activities” in the fifth and sixth grades has been implemented as the curriculum item outside the academic subjects, whereas in the specially designated schools, some are implementing “English” as an academic subject, not “English Activities,” in light of research and experimental purposes. In neighboring countries in Asia, English education in elementary schools is under way. The sea change in terms of English education is unlikely to occur when seeing the trend to introduce the language instruction at the grade level. In the foreseeable future, “English Activities” might be moved up to be part of academic subjects, shifted from the less prioritized curriculum item. The deliberations among policy-makers and the huge debate between the pros and cons in this matter are expected in the coming years and it is hoped that the curriculum reexamination and reorientation to focusing on the intensity of language teaching will be included on the agenda.

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