

AUTHENTIC TEXTS IN THE HIGH SCHOOL FSL CLASSROOM

by

Emily A. Kung

B. Ed (Sec.) The University of British Columbia, 2008

B. Comm. (Marketing) The University of British Columbia, 1999

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses research focused on the ways in which authentic texts can support language learning in a second language classroom. Traditional methods of language learning which depend on bottom-up instruction are heavily reliant on the teacher, grammar-based worksheets, and memorization of vocabulary and grammar rules. Research identifies that by carefully structuring a lesson around an authentic text that is by chunking the reading into the three phases of pre-reading, reading and post-reading with appropriate activities, teachers can use authentic texts to support students' second language learning. The research shows that instructional activities done in conjunction with an authentic text are an extremely important aspect of using authentic texts with beginning second language learners. Research identifies that with teacher guidance and carefully designed activities authentic texts can support second language learning at all levels including beginners. Finally, research suggests that if students are to benefit from engagement with authentic texts then such texts should be introduced (with appropriate teacher support) sooner rather than later.

This paper examines what the research has to say about incorporating authentic texts into the FSL (French as a Second Language) program in a beginner to intermediate classroom at the Grade 8 or 9 level. What was learned from this review of the literature is used to develop a unit plan based on three authentic texts and connections to practice.

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Motivation for the Project

Developing the right activity to assist students in acquiring a second language is easier said than done. Students depend on their teacher to provide interesting and engaging activities, opportunities for interaction, and scaffolding in order to further their ability to communicate in the L2. My aim as a teacher of French as a second language is to provide learners with strategies that will aid them towards communicative competence and I believe that it can be best achieved through meaningful input such as interesting authentic texts and authentic activities which are placed in communicative contexts. A common practice is to provide students with form-focused (Long, 1991) worksheets to practice grammar concepts or worksheets with comprehension questions based on a short passage they read. These can be useful tools if they are provided at the appropriate time; however, when students are provided worksheet after worksheet without a real context or purpose, do they truly learn what situation or with whom these sentential structures are appropriate? Yule (1995) reported that “there continues to be a substantial mismatch between what tends to be presented to learners as classroom experiences of the target language and the actual use of that language as discourse outside the classroom” (p. 185). I selected this topic because I felt a need for change in my own practice. I felt that the communicative needs of my students were not being met through the use of traditional textbooks and repetitive work sheets. Authentic documents can be used in different ways and on different levels in order to develop communicative competence. Meaning in language is context sensitive. I believe it is important to help learners cope with the uncertainty and variety of learning a second language by teaching meaning-making and interpretation strategies through the use of authentic texts and authentic activities.

Significance of the Project

According to Gilmore (2007), the use of authentic texts in the foreign language classroom has a long history. He refers to Henry Sweet, one of the first linguists of the nineteenth century, who stressed the advantages of using authentic texts to teach a foreign language. During the twentieth century, several other language learning theories and methods appeared; however, the issue of authenticity and authentic texts reappeared in the 1970s between a debate between Chomsky and Hymes, which led to “a realisation that communicative competence involved much more than knowledge of language structures, and contextualised communication began to take precedence over form” (Gilmore, 2007, p. 97). This attitude towards language learning, also known as Communicative Language Teaching, is still significant in today’s foreign language classrooms.

Allen, Bernhardt, Berry, and Demel’s (1988) paper confirms that the incorporation of authentic texts as early as possible within a language learning programme benefits the students’ development of interpretation strategies and grammatical and communicative competence. Integration of authentic texts within a second language programme is an important area of study as it does not simply focus on form or isolated grammar concepts. An authentic input allows learners to focus on a whole language approach, which allows them to notice a wider range of language features than would a traditional or form-focused approach. Although there are benefits to using authentic texts (Adair-Hauck, 1996; Adair-Hauck & Donato, 2002; Gilmore, 2007; Swaffar, 1985), language teachers do not always take advantage of opportunities to use authentic texts in the classroom to improve students’ language proficiency because they feel that an authentic text would be too challenging for their students’ abilities thus underestimating the abilities of what their students are capable of. Several studies (Allen et al., 1988, Bacon, 1992;

Lacorte & Thurston-Griswold, 2001) have demonstrated that authentic texts should be used in the classroom as the benefits include overall language development, as well as improvements in comprehension and interpretation.

Question for the Project

What does the research say about incorporating authentic texts into the FSL program in a beginner to intermediate classroom?

Background to the Problem

The definition of authentic texts used in this paper is taken from Morrow's (1977) definition: "An authentic text is a stretch of real language produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort" (p. 13). Swaffar (1985) explains that the relevant consideration of these types of texts is that there is an "authentic communicative objective" intended for the native speaker of the language or for a language learner group. Traditional approaches adopt a form-focussed approach to teaching a second language. For example, during the practice phase of a lesson, drills in the form of work sheets are given to students to practice a grammatical concept. Based on my observation of the relationship between students and worksheets to practice French grammar, I have noticed that students find worksheets tedious, which seems to decrease their motivation for learning the second language. Although there are benefits to providing worksheets to practice form, this method according to the research (Gilmore, 2007; Swaffar, 1985) does not always guarantee students acquire the target language because meaning is neglected during this practice phase and boredom and lack of motivation result.

Purpose of this Paper

The purpose of this paper is to explore the literature on the effectiveness of using authentic texts in the teaching of French as a Second Language (FSL); identify what activities and strategies, aimed at beginner FSL learners might be used by teachers using an authentic text; and the development of a unit plan

Theoretical Framework

In his book entitled *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*, Krashen (1982) maintains that input is one of the conditions required for language acquisition. He states the following in his work:

We acquire, in other words, only when we understand language that contains structure that is "a little beyond" where we are now. How is this possible? How can we understand language that contains structures that we have not yet acquired? The answer to this apparent paradox is that we use more than our linguistic competence to help us understand. We also use context, our knowledge of the world, our extra-linguistic information to help us understand language directed at us. (Krashen, 1982, p. 28)

Krashen's input hypothesis is important; however, it cannot stand alone in terms of adequate language acquisition. Second languages are not learned in the same way as first languages. In settings where a second language is learned, students do not receive sufficient input in order to acquire the language therefore it is not sufficient to rely on input alone. Students must also learn the structures, and then practice using them in communication in order to develop their ability to utilize what they have learned. The input and output are both important in language acquisition. And students need to use the input for something useful. The ability to produce the language fluently will demonstrate itself over time after the student has received sufficient input and

opportunities to practice. Swain's (2005) Output Hypothesis maintains that although input is important, learners require opportunities for output by speaking or writing in the target language. "Negotiating meaning needs to incorporate the notion of being pushed toward the delivery of a message that is not only conveyed, but that is conveyed precisely, coherently, and appropriately. Being 'pushed' in output... is a concept parallel to that of the $i + 1$ of comprehensible input. Indeed one might call this the 'comprehensible output' hypothesis" (pp. 472-473). "The implication of Swain's theory is that teachers need to provide opportunities for output that is meaningful, purposeful and motivational so that students can consolidate what they know about the language and discover what they need to learn" (Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 22). Through interesting authentic texts and activities which allow students to practice their output, students are able to practice using what they have learned.

What is important for beginner learners of a second language is their ability to pay attention to formal details within the input. Schmidt's (2001) Noticing Hypothesis explains that "noticing is the first step in language building, not the end of the process" (p. 41). Ortega (2009) mentions that "in order to learn any aspect of the L2 (from sounds, to words, to grammar, to pragmatics), learners need to notice the relevant material in the linguistic data afforded by the environment" (p.63). Does this mean that a learner's brain needs to be able to notice and register new material regardless of whether they understand how this element functions? Not according to Schmidt (2001), who states that "what is noticed or apperceived is not the raw data of the input (the phonetic stream of speech) to which attention is directed, but input as interpreted by existing schemata" (p. 41).

In addition to the Input and Output Hypotheses, there is an additional framework of thought which is a very important factor in language learning in the classroom. Vygotsky's

(1978) Sociocultural Theory states that language learning is a social process where interaction with other students is crucial to learning and development. In Vygotsky's view, however, learning "creates the zone of proximal development; [it] awakens a variety of internal development processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers. Once these processes are internalized, they become part of the child's independent development achievement" (p. 90). In a French class of beginner or intermediate learners, students may require assistance to perform a task for a period of time; however, through independent problem solving and social interaction, students operate within what Vygotsky calls the Zone of Proximal Development where they can perform a task with the assistance of the teacher or another capable peer or in groups but are not able to perform it alone.

There are many benefits to using authentic texts in the second language classroom. Kienbaum, Russell, and Welty's (1986) study on French, German, and Spanish second year college students at Purdue University revealed several benefits of the use of authentic texts in the second language classroom. In this study, it was found at the end that the majority of the students in general were highly self-motivated and produced above their own expectations. In addition, students were quite capable of drawing their own inferences from the authentic texts rather than relying on the teacher's personal experiences or interpretations. Students were active in their learning and gained confidence in their ability. In addition, students in the experimental group agreed that the authentic texts "fostered respect for new points of view and broadened students' views greatly" (Kienbaum, et al., 1986, p. 27). Authentic texts can be used to teach cultural elements of the second language from the perspective of respect and understanding of others while preparing students to participate sensitively in the target language's culture. Suddenly, the

students' views about French culture are no longer just about the Eiffel tower, French beret, and French brand names.

In another study conducted by Seunerinesingh's (2010), the participants, who were on average 10 years old, benefited from the wordiness of authentic texts used in the study. Seunerinesingh found that the use of authentic texts did not hinder or interfere with beginner second language learners' comprehension of a text. Because of the wordiness and possible longer length of authentic texts, learners do not have time to pay attention to the word-for-word meanings of each word in the text and will thus use clues within the text to understand the context, content and relationships expressed within the text.

Crossley, Louwse, McCarthy, and McNamara's (2007) study revealed that authentic texts are better at demonstrating cause-and-effect relationships and developing plot lines and themes than simplified texts. The lexical variance in authentic texts is greater than simplified texts. Although Crossley et al. reported that authentic texts contained more ambiguous words, simplified texts contained more concrete words, which limited the discourse structure of the text. This led to texts that did not "elaborate, extend or enhance the ideas of the texts to the full degree present in the authentic texts" (p. 25). Teachers may presume that because a text is simplified it means that many of the linguistic features in the text will be easily understood by the readers due to the possible simplification of linguistic structures, but this was not the case in Crossley et al.'s study.

When an authentic text is given to students, it would be beneficial if the reader's role of constructing meaning in the reading process is emphasized instead of word-for-word comprehension. According to schema theory, comprehension is achieved through several dimensions. The reader constructs meaning based on his or her previous knowledge or

experiences. When the learner reads the text, there is an interaction between the reader and the text which creates meaning. Schema theory states that “knowledge consists of basic patterned units of memory, or schemata, which are related to one another and potentially embedded in each other. Existing knowledge is used to give meaning to new knowledge, and vice-versa” (Young, 1991, p. 1125).

Although the advantages to using authentic texts are manifold, the incorporation of an authentic text will require extra preparation time for selecting and preparing suitable activities. If articles or authentic texts on the Internet are not used, Modern Language departments will require continual acquisition of up-to-date materials which can be costly. Authentic texts may require resources that are extensive, expensive, and technological which may not be available to the teacher.

Application of the Project

A unit plan has been designed to demonstrate the incorporation and use of authentic texts within an FSL programme. Within this unit plan, I plan to incorporate a sequence of activities and strategies that are based on the authentic text with the aim of developing the student’s linguistic and language competence in the L2 while using a method that concentrates on meaning. I also plan to incorporate assessment methods and a rubric to aid in formative and cumulative assessment.

SECTION 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditional methods of teaching a second language relied heavily upon the teacher to provide the input in terms of the content followed by an explicit method of instruction where direct teacher explanations of grammar rules is followed by mechanical and decontextualized grammar exercises for practice. In a typical traditional reading lesson, a passage is given to students to read which includes a list of vocabulary words and a set of comprehension questions for which students simply copy the text based on the matching words in the question. A common assumption teachers make is that if students learn the vocabulary words and are able to answer the comprehension questions, they are able to comprehend the text in the second language. What is excluded from this learning model is the pedagogy of the communicative and sociolinguistic features of the second language. Swaffar (1985) writes that structural translation approaches ask students to “undertake the reading task as a word for word or sentence for sentence decoding procedure, the success of which is measured by a standard of successful manipulation of language forms” (p. 15). Many students have experienced this phenomenon in FSL classrooms. Walz (1989) appropriately describes this process as follows:

[many] exercises that allow for language practice are mechanical; the textbook (or teacher) presents a sample phrase or sentence in the target language, then requires that the learner make changes that may be automatic. Other exercises and activities necessitate an understanding of sentences by the learner or even permit a certain amount of free response. Generally, the range of language forms is very limited so that the learner will ‘see’ the morphological or syntactic pattern, understand, practice, and learn it. (p. 160)

Walz adds that “almost twenty years after the profession began discussing communicative competence, very few textbooks have enough activities to allow communication to dominate class time” (p. 165). As an FSL teacher, I have observed the disengagement and lack of interest in students when they are given reading passages accompanied by comprehension questions and grammar worksheets as opposed to opportunities to practice the language in a communicative manner.

An implicit grammar instruction rejects the requirement for explicit teaching of rules and form. Children do not learn their second language in the same manner as their first language. The explicit and implicit methods of instruction are dichotomous approaches to language instruction. Traditional approaches and approaches based on Krashen’s hypothesis share deficiencies. Adair-Hauck and Donato (2002) explain that both approaches fail to acknowledge the role of the teacher to negotiate and construct explanations of how the new language works. Both approaches also fail to recognize the “contributions and backgrounds that the learners bring to collaboration with the teacher in constructing an explanation” (Adair-Hauck & Donato, 2002, p. 268). Neither of the approaches acknowledges the learning that occurs when students interact with one another (Vygotsky, 1978). Teaching approaches in FSL have focused on decontextualized mechanical exercises where the focus is on the bottom-up processing of fragmented discourse. In this paper, I intend to reappraise our teaching orientation towards a more communicative and whole language approach using authentic texts. According to Swaffar (1985), “communicatively oriented teachers share the precept that learning a foreign language should not be conducted as ‘an acquisition of new knowledge and experience but as an extension or an alternative realization of what the learner already knows’” (p. 16).

Effectiveness of Authentic Texts: What the Research Says

In this paper, I define authentic texts in the same way as Morrow (1977): “An authentic text is a stretch of real language produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort.” I would like to clarify that the purpose of this paper is not to argue that authentic texts are the only texts that should be used in language teaching. If the aim of a language teacher is to produce learners who are able to communicate competently in the second language, teachers should use all types of texts that would help students achieve this goal. However, according to the research, there are several reasons why authentic texts can meet the needs of language learners, in particular beginner language learners. Swaffar (1981) even argues that “[the] sooner students are exposed to authentic language, the more rapidly they will learn that comprehension is not a function of understanding every word, but rather of developing strategies for selecting and identifying multiple verbal and nonverbal cues, strategies essential in both oral and written communication” (p. 188). Schiffrin (1996) writes that contrived materials present learners with a bare and often distorted sample of the target language. This deficiency fails to meet learners’ communicative needs. Gilmore (2007) adds that authentic materials offer a much richer source of input which makes it possible for the teacher to use the authentic text to scaffold learning through activities on different levels to help learners develop their communicative competence in the second language. This is particularly important for beginner learners. Tyacke and Mendelsohn’s (1986) diary study showed that lower-level students depended much more on their teacher and the linguistic code than did the higher level students. This calls for a need in differentiated instruction provided by the teacher. Bialystock (1981) found that formal practice with rules and forms became less effective as students advanced; however, functional practice through the use of authentic texts did not impose

a limit on students' linguistic competence development. In Hamp-Lyons' (1985) small-scale classroom-based study, she discovered that the "text-strategic approach," a term she devised in her research to refer to a strategy which focuses on helping students develop strategies to focus on any text, was more effective than the "traditional method" of focusing on the bits and pieces of a text. Her research tested student progress with a pre-test and post-test and found that the students who received the test-strategic approach improved significantly and also scored a mean score that was higher than the students who received the traditional approach.

Authentic texts, although they need scaffolding and reflection guides from the teacher, allow students to experience the second language naturally. Gilmore (2007) justifies this claim when he states in his article that "authentic materials are inherently more interesting than contrived ones because of their intent to communicate a message rather than highlight target language [...]" (p. 107). Allowing learners to discover that they are able to cope with an authentic text can be considered as an intrinsically motivating force towards achievement. It is also a confidence builder. According to Kienbaum, Russell, and Welty (1986), teachers should "minimize his or her role as 'authority' and encourage the students to respond to the direct contact with the culture. By means of authentic material, students are quite capable of drawing inferences from the material rather than relying on the instructor's interpretation or personal experience" (p. 26).

It is understandable that beginner learners of a language will not be able to understand an entire text word for word. Widdowson's (1998) research has argued for the use of simplified texts. Claims that authentic texts are too difficult for students in second language classrooms are widespread. "What is often overlooked, however, is that there are a number of things in most passages which even beginning students can find meaningful" (Villegas Rogers, 1988, p. 470).

Villegas Rogers adds that what allows students from different ability levels to access an authentic text depends on the purpose, focus, and sequence of the tasks that they are asked to perform. Gilmore (2007) is also in agreement. He states that another way to “control for difficulty in authentic materials, which has become increasingly important since the 1980s and the emergence of the ‘strong version of the communicative approach [...] is to vary the task rather than the text’” (p. 109). Task selection and sequencing are part of the authentic text equation. Allen et al. (1988)’s study examined the extent to which secondary students studying French, German, and Spanish can cope with authentic texts in the second language and also the appropriateness of assumptions which strongly affect the teaching and assessment of reading in the second language high school-level classroom. Their study revealed that the subjects in the study could clearly cope with an authentic text and that “as learning time [increased], so does the ability to gather ever-increasing amounts from text” (p. 170). This finding is considered important by Allen et al. since foreign language educators have the tendency to underestimate the abilities of second language learners and feel that they need to “spoon-feed” their students. Allen et al.’s study has also revealed that even beginner learners were able to cope with authentic texts that are 250 to 300 words long without “experiencing debilitating frustration” (p. 170).

In order for an authentic text to be useful for the second language classroom, the role of the teacher must shift from explicit teaching and input provider to that of a facilitator. Scaffolding through “a creative construction of language and communication between a novice and an expert” (Adair-Hauck, 1996, p. 254) is necessary for learners to work in their zone of proximal development in order to reach the stage where they can practice and use the language competently and confidently on their own. This creative co-construction is an important stage that often gets replaced by worksheets and comprehension questions otherwise known as “busy

work.” Deyes (1974) discovered through his own teaching that students in his class had little time for communicative activities as much of their time was spent in grammar activities and focus was on form. He suggests that as much time as possible should be allotted to allow oral participation as possible. I might add that oral participation should have a meaningful purpose.

When creative co-construction around an authentic text and a specific context is permitted in the classroom, this provides students with an opportunity to guess, take risks, hypothesize, predict, make mistakes and either self-correct or receive further feedback. In order for learners to participate in these events, it is imperative that 1) opportunities for communicative practice be allotted into the lesson plan and that 2) the activities built around an authentic text be divided into a pre-reading, reading and post-reading phase with specific purposes and targets for learning in each phase followed by a phase where focus on form based on content from the authentic text or the errors frequently made by the students is the input used to co-construct linguistic knowledge. Focus on form is defined by Long (2000) as “those form-focused activities that arise during, and embedded in, meaning-based lessons; they are not scheduled in advance,[...], but occur incidentally as a function of the interaction of learners with the subject matter or tasks that constitute the learners' and their teacher's predominant focus” (p. 185). And form-focussed instruction is defined as

an umbrella term widely used to refer to any pedagogical technique, proactive or reactive, implicit or explicit, used to draw students' attention to language form. It includes focus on form procedures, but also all the activities used for focus on forms, such as exercises written specifically to teach a grammatical structure and used proactively, i.e., at moments the teacher, not the learner, has decided will be appropriate for learning the new item. (p. 185)

Within each of these phases, students need time to make mistakes and notice gaps in their knowledge. In addition, Gilmore (2007) and Willis (1996) state that tasks designed around authentic texts should focus on meaning first followed by form. Skill-using should come before skill-getting in the zone of proximal development (Adair-Hauck & Donato, 1994). Adair-Hauck and Donato (1994) state that “teaching in the ZPD requires a reordering so that higher level actions give functional significance to the procedural or mechanical skills” (p. 538). In other words, meaning making activities should come first before students focus on form. Gilmore (2007) writes in his research that teachers should not ask learners to analyze form and meaning simultaneously. When an authentic text is used, learners are exposed to a wider range of linguistic features. Gilmore adds that the noticing of these features has beneficial effects on learners’ development of communicative competence.

One of the great advantages of implementing authentic texts is that authentic texts can be selected and used by the teacher within an existing unit of study. The teacher can decide what authentic text would be best for the class in terms of interest or needs of the students which might thereby increase the students’ motivation to participate. This is a first-step towards changing the practices around reading. Teachers may at first implement authentic texts to have students read for “global information patterns” (Swaffar, 1985, p. 18). Authentic texts are ideal for gradually implementing student reading behaviours that will help students tackle chunks of meaning segments within a text. Young (1991) states that the first step is for students to unlearn the practice of reading and mulling over every word that they do not understand in an authentic text. The reading behaviours that students need to re-learn in the second language in order to confidently read an authentic text include skimming for information or redundancies, creating hypothesis predictions, and *chunking* phrases or sentence parts or phrases for meaning (Swaffar,

1985). These reading behaviours are habits that require practice and scaffolding by the learner and teacher respectively. Young (1991) adds that these skills are not automatically transferred to the second language from the first language and need to be re-taught in order to decrease learner anxiety and frustration in face of a challenge such as the reading of an authentic text.

What does the research say about what teachers should do with an authentic text?

When a teacher decides to use an authentic text in a reading activity, what might be done with the authentic text to linguistically benefit the language competence of beginner learners? In order to answer this question, I will discuss and comment on the activities and strategies that the research and the studies suggest would be effective in the foreign language classroom. Generally speaking, the three phases of reading can be divided into: pre-reading, reading, and post-reading. In each phase, students are prepared for the reading and activities they are about to embark upon. Research identifies that this type of scaffolding is extremely important, especially for beginner learners (Young, 1991).

Pre-Reading Phase

In the pre-reading phase, it is important to tap into the background knowledge of students. Background knowledge has been demonstrated to be an important factor for a learner's comprehension of an authentic text as it frames the text within a context. Adams (1982) reveals in her study that it is important to prepare learners for what they are about to read. Adams suggests that teachers need to consider the background and experiences of their students when they select authentic texts. Authentic texts that are selected for beginner learners should be chosen carefully to reflect topics with which these beginner learners are familiar thus eliminating the frustration level and dependency on the word for word translation of the text. "Research in schema theory suggests that making these connections explicit facilitates the reading process and

retention of textual information” (Swaffar, 1985, p. 18). By starting off with the learners’ background knowledge around the topic presented in the authentic text, learners will feel more confident about tackling the complex features of the text. The results in Barnett (1988), Levine and Haus (1985), and Adams’ (1982) studies confirm that it is important for students to consider context and their background knowledge first before reading an authentic text: “Students who effectively consider and remember context as they read understand more of what they read than students who employ this strategy less, or less well” (Barnett, 1988, p. 156).

In Young’s (1991) article, she suggests activating learners’ existing schemata by asking what they know from experience about characteristics of the topic presented in the authentic text. As students reveal what they know, Young suggests writing these ideas on the board in the target language although the students are not required to express their ideas in the target language. This is important for beginner learners as it lowers the pressure placed on them to produce linguistic output in the second language with which they may not yet be comfortable. After the ideas have been presented, Young suggests having the students rank these in order of importance. In the second phase of pre-reading, Young suggests that students be given one minute to skim the article, read the title and subtitles, and look at the pictures (if any) after which they are expected to communicate what they think the article is about. Most of the time, students are able to come up with an idea of what the article is about but in the case where they are still unable to, Young suggests that it is the teacher who must ensure that the proper schemata are activated by bridging the gap in the students’ knowledge by directing their attention to specific parts of the text that will assist them or by simply providing a description of the text. These pre-reading activities are low-stakes, highly collaborative, interactive and low stress. The key is to share ideas and to come up with as many ideas as possible based on what the students know. Swaffar (1985) states that

“such a ‘trivial’ assessment of textual subject matter as a pre-reading or global exercise has enormous implications for competent reading since it delimits the range or scope of reader speculation” (p. 19).

Adair-Hauck (1996) suggests that pre-reading activities might include *Total Physical Response* to introduce new vocabulary, “*thinkbanks*” that encourage students to brainstorm possible vocabulary that might be encountered in the text or prediction or forecasting activities where students try to predict what might happen or what kind of information might be uncovered in the authentic text. These activities can be done in the first or second language. Later on, students will be asked to confirm if their predictions were accurate. In this manner, students are engaged in constructing meaning with the teacher and the text. For the *thinkbanks* and *forecasting* activities, I would suggest using *graphic organizers* to group the information into categories. In a study conducted by Swaffar (1985) on students studying German in their first year at the University of Texas at Austin, Swaffar gave students a similar activity where students scanned the text for 20 seconds to determine the subject of the authentic text based on the language within the text. Students were then asked to identify vocabulary words within the text which were representative of the topic of the authentic text. Students were allowed to comment either in German or in English. It was their choice to choose which language to use based on their comfort level. They were then asked to identify the genre of the text and based on these pieces of information, students were asked to guess the intent of the information presented within the authentic text.

During the pre-reading phase of an authentic text, it is important for the learner to understand and distinguish between the purpose of the teacher, the author, and their own personal goal for reading the text on top of understanding the subject matter of the text. Once

these have been established in the reader, they will be able to read the authentic text for meaning (Swaffar, 1985). In addition, Swaffar adds that it is “pedagogically useful for the student to establish logic patterns for information detail prior to commencing to read” (p. 22). In other words, during the pre-reading phase, having students predict the type of information that will be found in the text will narrow their chances of not understanding the text and decrease the word for word focus within the text while increasing expansion on the global meaning of what they are reading.

Reading Phase

Young (1991) suggests that the reading can be completed either in class or at home. When students complete the reading in class, they are forced to get as much meaning as possible from the authentic text in a set period of time. Young says that students must be allotted a sufficient amount of time to complete the reading. The advantage to having students read at home is that they will have more time to spend on the reading; however, there may be some students who may not do the reading outside of class.

Swaffar (1985) states that during the reading phase, “text-extrinsic factors can impede comprehension if they are not carefully separated from text-intrinsic ones, because they can easily precondition or distort textural messages. The extrinsic affective judgment that ‘this is boring’ or ‘I don’t have the background to understand this’ soon becomes the failure to identify text-intrinsic information” (p. 19). Readers need to be able to separate textual messages from their own preconceptions of what they cannot do or what knowledge they do not possess (Swaffar, 1985). In this regard, students need to be reminded to read the authentic text for meaning instead of translation. Students need to accept from the beginning of the reading phase that some of the sentences and structures may be unfamiliar to them.

Adair-Hauck (1996) states that during the reading phase, the teacher tells the story using tools such as illustrations, props, gestures, and mime. These tools would be appropriate if the authentic text were a narrative and short enough to engage the attention of the beginner learners. Adair-Hauck suggests that the teacher “recycle” the story using *Total Physical Response* and role-playing activities to deepen comprehension and increase student participation. She also encourages the use of graphic organizers to hold the learners’ attention while the story or text is being read followed by a collaborative activity where students share and agree upon the order of the events in the story.

During the reading phase, Villegas Rogers (1988) suggests that teachers guide students by asking them to read either for general information or for specific details. She also suggests that students could be asked to read and locate certain types of words such as food items, numbers, sports or to identify words that are used for sequencing such as first, secondly, then, next. The Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990) is at work in this activity as students read. Once the reading is complete, the learners should share their findings with a classmate and then share and discuss their findings as a class. Swaffar (1985) suggests that once students are able to verbalize the meaning of the text in the target language, they will then be ready to express their impressions and opinions about the text’s message.

Devitt (1997) discusses an ongoing research project which explores a pedagogical approach to reading called “Multilayered Interactive Reading.” This project examines the “interactions that occur among learners as they cooperatively work their way through a series of activities that start from and lead to an authentic [Italian] text [...], while focusing alternately on meaning and form” (p. 464). The participants in this project were beginning learners of Italian. It was unclear how the words were obtained; however, the first step involves the learners writing

the words (from the authentic text) onto sticky papers. After this step, the learners then categorize these words based on categories that they decide upon. The purpose of this task is to generate discussion among the learners about which word belongs in which category. This activity might be used in conjunction with Villegas Rogers' activities above.

Post-Reading Phase

Post-reading activities and strategies are an opportunity for students to collaborate and utilize the understandings they obtained from the authentic text and the previous two phases. Students come together to reconstruct the meaning of the story. During this phase, Adair-Hauck (1996) suggests that *graphic organizers* become useful to assist students in organizing their thoughts and ideas. In her paper, Adair-Hauck also suggests starting the post-reading phase by playing a game called "I Have: Who Has," which is a listening comprehension game. In this game, the teacher poses a number of questions pertaining to the text setting, major events, final conclusion or outcome, and characters or people involved and the student who has the correct answer reads the answer and asks the next question.

During the post-reading phase, it is important for students to engage in critical thinking activities with their peers. *Mapping*, *webbing* and *inter-textual* activities are valuable in the post-reading phase according to Shrum and Glisan (2010). *Intertextual activities* require a higher level of critical thinking skills as learners work in groups to "analyze the components of stories by juxtapositioning texts or stories" (Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 235) by using Venn diagrams. Alvermann (1991) suggests *Discussion Webbing* as a post-reading activity as it moves students to focus on why certain events happened in the authentic text and then to draw conclusions about the story. He suggests that this activity be conducted collaboratively and cooperatively. After the learners have drawn conclusions, they try to agree on the best reason to explain why the

particular events they discussed occurred. During this phase, learners should be communicating in the second language in order to communicate their ideas. Teachers may question the ability of beginner-level students to be able to communicate in the second language to express these higher-level critical thinking skills. Adair-Hauck (1996) suggests that teachers emphasize sense-making in these types of activities where students construct meaning. She suggests that later on, the teacher can attend and focus on form, grammar, and address errors that were frequently made in the previous phases or activities. Swaffar (1985) suggests that the teacher can help students in their communicative objectives at this point by “correlating production assignments with a brief review of grammar topics” that would be relevant, helpful, and would have particular likelihood of frequency within the development of the learner’s output, whether it is written or oral.

During these critical thinking activities, learners will use cognitive processes to perform comparisons, contrasts, analysis and synthesis of new information with their background information. “According to Vygotsky, instruction (assisted performance) leads to development (unassisted performance)” (Adair-Hauck, 1996, p. 258). Teachers will need to scaffold students’ linguistic competence in order for learners to participate in these higher-level thinking activities, encouraging sense-making in students’ output but also offering comprehension checks and creating scenarios where students perform clarification requests.

Young (1991) suggests that the post-reading phase be completed in class or at the beginning of the following class. During this phase, she suggests that the teacher ask the learners to recall everything they remember from the reading in either the first or second language. Students will share these details with the class and as the details are provided, the teacher will relay the same information back to the class in the target language as well as write this information in the second language on the board. After the information has been transferred to

the board, the teacher and learners will compare their predictions to what the authentic text was actually about.

Young (1991) also suggests using true and false exercises. She suggests that this type of exercise is particularly effective for beginning language students since it is probable that these types of students understand much more than they are able to communicate in the target language. Other activities that she suggests in her article include: multiple-choice items (for example, students select the best summary or most appropriate paraphrase), matching activities, definition of key words in the text based on information from the text, ordering events in chronological order as they appear in the text, paraphrasing and summarizing of text, and writing descriptions of the characters or people implicated in the authentic text. The importance of implementing an authentic text is to receive the input in the foreign language and to have them participate in higher level tasks than to have them regurgitate what they have read (Young, 1991).

PACE METHOD

Worksheets are not encouraged to teach form. Based on my past experience, I have found that students consider worksheets as a form of “busy-work” or work that is not so meaningful or interesting and they treat it as a chore that has to be done. Often times, I feel that the content of the worksheet is not fully absorbed or learned by the student and in some cases, students copy the work of other students just to get the work sheet done and out of the way. Another method called the PACE method exists to teach grammar. PACE is an acronym for a method that was developed by Donato and Adair-Hauck (1994). The PACE Method focuses learners to understand and concentrate on meaningful form and would be beneficial to students once they have read and understood an authentic text. Within the PACE Method, the teacher is

collaborating, facilitating, and scaffolding student learning. The first letter of the PACE acronym represents Presentation, followed by Attention, Co-Construction, and Extension activities.

Presentation has occurred through the three reading phases described above. In order to focus on a particular form, the teacher may select a feature that is prevalent within the authentic text for this portion of the lesson or may focus on a form with which students struggled during the post-reading activities.

The above discussion has focused on meaning making of an authentic text. As mentioned previously, once students have seized the meaning of a text, focus on form and linguistic structures becomes possible. Gilmore (2007) suggested in his research that comprehension and focus on form should not occur simultaneously. What kind of activities could be implemented to focus on the form of the second language? Eventually, students' attention needs to be directed towards correct usage. Swaffar (1985) adds that "rule learning is tedious and less productive if taught in the abstract, i.e., not linked to output" (p. 27). Shrum & Glisan (2010) argue that learners are able to pay attention to syntactic clues after they have attended to the semantic clues or meaning of the text. As stated earlier, focus on form can take place after the learners have understood the authentic text and can start with the simple activity of the teacher highlighting a particular grammatical feature that will be discussed and studied. The purpose of this phase, according to the authors, is to have students notice the grammatical feature through the teacher's "responsive and graduated assistance" (p. 225). Noticing can occur through comparison between what students know and the new linguistic form. Overhead transparencies and Power Point slides can be useful in this phase to make the language visual.

Through Co-Construction dialogues, learners reflect upon the form, meaning and function of the new grammatical structure. It is crucial to remind students to practice the

strategies of hypothesis-making, prediction, and generalizing using graphic organizers as the teacher asks specific, clear and direct questions to direct students to notice in order to construct the grammatical explanation. Although it is not possible to predict in advance what questions will be necessary to guide students, Shrum and Glisan (2010) suggest asking questions types such as “What pattern do you see in this group of words?” and “How do certain words change as their meanings change?” During this phase of co-construction between the teacher and learners, “teachers elicit students’ observations, understandings and misunderstandings and respond with their own observations or assisting questions” (p. 226). In order to meet the needs of all learner levels in the classroom, it may benefit all students to work in groups first before the co-construction process between the teacher and class. To ensure all students participate, the teacher should explain the expectation that every member in the group must be able to explain the reasoning of the group’s discussion since one person from each group will be selected by each group to explain the group’s response. Once the grammar explanation has been constructed, activities using this new form can be assigned to students. Shrum & Glisan (2010) suggest information gap activities, role-play situations, games, authentic writing projects, paired interviews, class surveys or simulations or real-life situations.

Summary

Students would benefit from an earlier exposure to authentic texts coupled with strategies and activities which help them cope with processing of multiple verbal and non-verbal cues. It is important for students to “unlearn” the practice of trying to figure out the meaning of every word within the authentic text. Reading behaviours that students must re-learn such as skimming for information and predicting must be taught to students in order for them to be able to confidently read an authentic text. Authentic texts allow students to experience the second language

naturally. By allowing students to see that they are capable of coping with an authentic text, Gilmore (2007) has suggested that students may see this as a motivating force towards achievement.

Although many teachers may feel that authentic texts may be too complicated for beginner to intermediate learners of a second language, the research reviewed for this paper has indicated that students are able to cope with an authentic text. What is often overlooked is the importance of the level of the activity that is given to the students along with the authentic text. What is important, as Gilmore (2007) has suggested, is to vary the task rather than the text.

In addition to giving students an authentic text and varying the activities that go along with it, the teacher's role to scaffold through a co-construction is necessary for learners to work in their *zone of proximal development*. Co-construction allows for student participation, guessing, risk-taking, hypothesizing, predicting, self-correction and also allows opportunities for the teacher to facilitate feedback. It is important for teachers to offer opportunities and activities where students are practicing communication in the second language. It is also important, according to the research that the reading process is divided into three phases. In the pre-reading phase, the students' background knowledge on the topic of the authentic text is activated in order to create a context. By activating the students' existing schemata, students will be able to understand the authentic text. During the reading phase, the students are reminded to read the text for understanding and meaning instead of translation. Various activities can be incorporated into the reading phase to assist students construct their understanding of the authentic text. During the post-reading phase, the students engage in critical thinking activities. Graphic organizers can be used to organize their ideas and thoughts. Once the meaning of the authentic text has been established, focus on form and linguistic structures become possible. Focus on

form and meaning should not be done simultaneously. The *PACE* method is a method which may be applied in order to teach a linguistic structure or form. Again, scaffolding still occurs as it is up to the students to notice and co-construct the linguistic knowledge with their teacher.

In the following section, I take what I have learned in this literature review and develop a unit plan for a Grade 8 or 9 FSL class.

SECTION 3: CONNECTIONS TO PRACTICE

Description of the Community

This Unit Plan is tailored to encourage students to think, and use their background knowledge to express themselves in French. The lessons within the unit plan do not require special equipment and resources aside from the materials that may be found in a standard classroom such as a projector, a computer with Power Point software, chart paper, markers, and a white board. This Unit Plan was designed to meet the needs of students who attend an inner-city school; however, it can easily be used in any classroom as its focus is on the student and his or her interaction with the authentic text.

Resources

Students are provided with a text book and a work book at the beginning of the year. The teacher may or may not use the corresponding Teacher's Guide to deliver the lessons. There are also CD's for listening activities that go along with the textbook series. Students are required to pay a nominal fee for the workbook. Inside the workbook, there are form-focused exercises where students practice the grammar points of the lesson. The instructions of all of the exercises are provided in French even at the beginning level.

The teacher may not have access to a class set of authentic books or story books unless they come from his or her personal collection or if they are readily available through the library or department. If an authentic text were to be used, it would either have to come from the Internet or the Department would have to purchase a class set which would remain in the classroom for all groups to be able to use them. Due to the cuts in the scholastic budget, teachers may not be able to purchase a class set of authentic texts. However, if there were resources

available, there is the option to purchase picture books or other easy to read material that may be suitable for the Grade 8 or 9 level.

Languages Spoken

Students I work with come from a multitude of ethnic backgrounds. Language spoken at home include: Chinese, Hindi, Spanish, Korean, among others. There is a large population of students whose families immigrated to Canada from China, India, and Korea.

Role of French

High school students are required to take French 8, but after Grade 8, a second language is optional. Students decided to take a second language in high school traditionally because a language to the Grade 11 level is required for university entrance.

Range of Young People

Students I work with are between the ages of 12 and 15 years old. The students attend secondary school from Grade 8 and they normally come from the feeder elementary schools within the area. Some of the students may have a lot of exposure to French and some may come from a Grade 7 classroom with minimal exposure to the French language. There is a large range in ability, knowledge, vocabulary, and skills as every elementary school teacher may approach the instruction of French differently. There may even be students who were former French Immersion students who have been placed in the FSL class. It is also possible to have students who speak English as a Second Language.

Background & Demographics of the Students

The majority of the students come from working-class families. Some of the students may have parents who do not speak very much English; however, education and academic success are emphasized in the home.

Unit Plan: Les Fables

Level: Grade 8 / 9 (FSL)

Duration: 3-4 weeks or 8-10 classes

Objectives

- To arrange a sequence of lessons to achieve meaning making based on an authentic text
- To divide the learning process into three phases (pre-reading, reading, post-reading) where each phase's activities will prepare the student for the next phase
- Students will be able to use the strategies and activities learned and apply these to any authentic text and draw meaning from it
- Students will be able to talk about the authentic text in French using simple sentences
- Students will work in groups to socially construct meaning of the text
- Students will think critically and express their opinions in a written piece
- Students will use the strategies and activities learned to focus on form
- Students will eventually be able to use the strategies and scaffolding activities to work on their own to interpret a fable.

Rationale

As Swaffar (1985) suggests, when students are exposed to authentic texts sooner rather than later, even at the beginning level, they may benefit from the fact that comprehension of a text does not depend on the dissection of the meaning of every word in the text. Reading an authentic text and drawing meaning from it is the combination of using one's own previous knowledge, background, and experiences and combining them with the interaction with the authentic text. Students need to be reminded that the strategies that they use in their first language can also be used in their second language. This unit plan serves as a reminder that the teacher is not simply the input and worksheet provider, but also the facilitator and "scaffolder" in the classroom. Students need to be able to practice French in a safe environment which allows them to make mistakes without being penalized. Their attention needs to be drawn towards

noticing the different ways of expressing themselves in French. Students need time to practice and make mistakes in order for them to notice something about their learning in the second language. Students may be better able to focus on form after they have made meaning with the text. The unit plan which follows will start with activities that lead up to a point where focus on form may occur.

Prescribed Learning Outcomes (PLO)

It is expected that students will be able to:

- Ask for information, permission, and clarification
- Share information about activities and interests
- Participate in familiar activities (real or simulated)
- Classify events as past, present, or future
- Derive meaning in new language situations
- Extract, retrieve, and process specific information from French-language resources to complete authentic tasks
- Express acquired information in oral, visual, and written forms

The Prescribed Learning Outcomes (PLO) above were obtained from the British Columbia Ministry of Education Website. The learning outcomes specified above represent the PLO's for Grades 8 and 9. Students will use the strategies described below:

- Recognize known French and cognates in new contexts
- Ask for specific words, if necessary, while continuing communication
- Listen to and practise pronunciation of the written word
- Group new items into categories that are personally meaningful
- Self-evaluate progress by comparison with earlier performance or against personal goals
- Continue to record new vocabulary and phrases
- Recognize and use common patterns
- Adjust the message in order to use known expressions and vocabulary
- Use word webbing charts, tables, and other graphic organizers to support oral and written expression

- Reflect on learning by recording personal goals, successful strategies, and new vocabulary and phrases
- Listen, view, or read selectively to focus on key information
- Tolerate ambiguity of meaning when unable to understand fully
- Transfer and adapt known structures to convey meaning in new contexts
- Use a variety of writing processes to convey personal meaning
- Plan ahead for communicative activities by anticipating language and resources needed

The language learning strategies specified above were obtained from the British Columbia Ministry of Education website.

Materials:

- “Le corbeau et le renard” (Photocopies)
- “La grenouille qui veut se faire aussi grosse que le boeuf” (Photocopies) + overhead
- “La cigale et la fourmi” (Photocopies), (Power Point with images. See Appendix M)
- Chart paper
- Markers
- Computer
- Overhead projector
- Overhead Screen
- Handouts (Refer to Appendices)

Note: Each fable should be divided into several classes. It is entirely up to the teacher to decide how he or she sees it best to incorporate the phases into her daily lesson plan. It will also depend on the students’ needs as well.

Prior to the study of the fables, it may benefit students to know who Jean de La Fontaine was, what he wrote, and it may also benefit students if they knew a little bit about 17th century France. Prior to starting the unit on the fables, the teacher may assign a short reading about the history of the 17th century France and a brief biography of La Fontaine. Before beginning the pre-reading activity, it would put the study of these fables within a particular context and thus benefit the students if the teacher did a quick survey of the 17th century France, the monarchy, social classes, the mentality of the people during this century and describe and explain who Jean de La Fontaine was.

This section can be extended to a short research project about the 17th century France which may allow a cultural study (art, music, literature, architecture) of France and its people during this century; however, for the purpose of this unit plan, I will leave this optional and to the discretion of the teacher.

Fable No. 1: “Le corbeau et le renard”

This fable was selected because it is a very famous fable about a raven that is holding a piece of cheese in its beak and a hungry fox that deceives the raven in order to get the piece of cheese. La Fontaine’s version of this Aesop fable can be found online.

Purpose: To expose students to a variety of strategies that will help them extract details and construct meaning of an authentic text using La Fontaine’s version of the Raven and the Crow.

Pre-Reading Phase

The teacher poses the question “What do you know about FABLES?” to the class and has students participate in a *Think-Pair-Share*. (They think to themselves first and then write down their thoughts. After a sufficient amount of time to write down their thoughts, the teacher prompts them to share with a partner and add to their list based on new knowledge that their partner might have.)

After the students have shared with their partner, the teacher prompts the class to share their information by writing down the students’ findings on a large chart paper at the front of the class. The teacher will write down the students’ ideas in point form in the target language. The ideas do not need to be correct. The teacher should still write out all of their ideas. The teacher will then prompt the class by asking them if they agree if all of the ideas are applicable to FABLES. Students may vote on each one and the teacher can record the number of hands for each idea.

The teacher will then ask students to skim-read the title and the fable and look at the picture. The students will be prompted to write down in a graphic organizer (Appendix A) what they think the fable is about. If the students are having difficulty, the teacher may direct their attention to the illustration and then have students think about what might be the relationship between the crow and the fox.

After this exercise, the teacher will have students do a “*thinkbank*.” She will ask students to forecast what vocabulary might be in the text. This can be done in the first language. The teacher will write out the words and the students will also be completing a graphic organizer (Appendix B).

It might be worthwhile to have students reflect on the purpose of the author, the teacher, and their own in the reading of this authentic text. A simple 3 column chart can be used for students to jot down what they think is the purpose to this exercise and what their goals are. (Appendix C)

Reading

Remind students that the fable will be read for meaning and not to focus on any words they do not know. Since this is the first fable of the unit, it may be best suited to students' needs if it were read together. While the fable is read, the students should circle the words that they recognize from their previous knowledge or from cognates. (The teacher reads the text.)

The teacher will ask students what they think is happening in the text. The students will write out what they think happened and then share with a partner. The teacher will then ask the class to share what they have learned from the text.

Regardless of whether students have achieved an understanding, the teacher should play the clip http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZd_EcCgcjw and have students check to see whether they have understood the text.

Post-Reading

During the post reading, the focus should be on critical thinking. Have students recall what happened in the story in the second language by using a graphic organizer (Appendix D). Again this should be completed in the *Think-Pair-Share* format, ending with the teacher checking in with the students to provide the chronological events of the fable in the target language.

It may engage students more if the teacher asked students to think about and share how the fable applies to their own life. For example, do they know people like the raven or the fox? Examples? Description?

The students should be prompted to compare if their predictions were the same as what actually happened in the story.

Divide the class into groups of 2. Have each group ponder the qualities of the fox. Ask the students to describe the fox and have students characterize each adjective as a strength (*une force*) or a weakness (*une faiblesse*). Have the students do the same for the raven. If they can, they should use the target language but if they cannot, use their first language, but do advise them to do as much in French as possible. This information should be shared with the whole class on large chart paper.

After this discussion, students should reflect on their own first and then with their partner, what the moral of the fable was by answering the following questions using Appendix E:

1. Pourquoi croyez-vous que le corbeau a laissé tomber son fromage? (Why do you think the raven dropped his cheese?)
2. Qu'est-ce que le corbeau a appris à la fin de cette fable? (What did the raven learn at the end of the fable?)
3. Quel conseil donneriez-vous au corbeau? What advice would you give the raven?)

Have one person from each group come up to the corresponding chart paper for each question and write down their thoughts for that question.

Using their findings which were recorded in Appendix E, students will write a post card to the raven, where they give him advice on what he should do and what they learned from his experience. (This can be used as an evaluation). (Appendix F).

At the end of the post-reading phase for this fable, have students complete the “Réflexion” section in Appendix C. The topic of their reflection is: the reading strategies and approaches used for this fable. What did they like and what they found challenging?

Fable No. 2 “La grenouille qui veut se faire aussi grosse que le boeuf”

This fable is about a frog that is envious of the size of the ox standing next to her. The frog tries to inflate herself to the size of the ox but bursts in her attempt to do so. The moral of the fable is that all creatures cannot make themselves as big as they might think they can. The fable is a representation of the foolishness and greed in mankind to desire to be something more than he is capable of handling. La Fontaine’s version of this fable can be found online at <http://www.lafontaine.net/lesFables/afficheFable.php?id=3>.

Purpose:

- Students will notice the language of comparison
- Students will learn how to make comparisons and similes in French

Pre-Reading

The teacher may start the pre-reading activity by posing the question to students of when do people compare themselves to others? What are the situations? What are the comparisons? These questions should be posted on the board in the target language. Ask students to discuss with a partner for 2 minutes and then have the students share these with the class. The teacher will write these on the board with the translation in French.

Using these sentences, the teacher may then ask the students what words are used for comparisons. Circle the words in a different color on the board on both the English and the French. Allow time for students to look at the structures (i.e., do not rush through this).

Have students scan the title, picture, and the words to determine what this fable might be about. Ask them to predict what might happen and what might be the moral of this fable. Use the graphic organizer in Appendix A. Each student will have their own predictions.

Reading

The teacher will read the fable out loud, using actions, intonations in order to denote who is speaking.

Ask students to work with a partner to determine the sequence of events: hand out an envelope with sentences on slips of paper (Appendix G) which describe the events in the fable. The teacher will cut these up and place them in two separate envelopes. One envelope will contain the lines of the poem and the other envelope will contain the chronological description of the events in the fable. Partners will put together the fable and the descriptions in the proper order. The teacher will then go through the order of the sentences together with the class on the board.

Now that the students understand what happened in the fable, ask them to re-read the fable with their partner and pay attention to certain words in the text and also to think about the qualities of both of the characters in the authentic text:

1. Ask students to underline words that they feel are used to compare.
2. Have students circle adjectives
3. Ask students to think about the qualities which define the frog and the cow.

Students will also be asked to share what words they circled and underlined as well as the qualities they came up with for the frog and the cow. These will be placed on the board with the French word. Students should copy these words in their notes. The teacher should also have an overhead of the poem so that he or she may circle and underline as the students share their findings.

The teacher will also go over the words and expressions which were used to compare.

In groups of 2, students will try to guess the meaning of vocabulary words based on the context and verify the predictions they made in the pre-reading phase.

For homework, students are to re-read the poem and come up with themes from the fable. Students will use the new vocabulary words that they copied into their notes and form sentences using this new vocabulary. They should submit these for feedback.

Post Reading

Have students share their sentences with the class. Write out the sentences on the board, providing feedback to students on the board. Ask students to make note of the sentence on the board and to make corrections in their notes. This provides feedback to students in a non-threatening way as they notice and correct the differences without being penalized.

Have students share what they came up with for the themes of the fable. Write these on the board with the French translation if necessary.

To reinforce the vocabulary attached to each of the themes that the students may have come up with, the teacher may wish to incorporate a drama activity such as *tableaux*. Some students (such as male students) may engage better in the content when they are moving. This activity may be one way to teach vocabulary where students associate movement and poses with a word. “A

tableau is frozen three-dimensional picture of a person or group of people, representing their understanding of a particular context. Although it might be abstract, it represents concretized thinking” (Miller & Saxton, 2004, 159).

In groups of two, have students discuss in French the following questions:

1. Why did the frog compare itself to the cow?
2. Why didn't the cow compare itself to the frog?
3. What was the moral of this fable?
4. Can you think of people like the frog in society today? Examples?

Depending on the class, the teacher may wish to discuss some of these questions with the class to ensure understanding.

If the students seem confident and comfortable answering the above questions, the teacher may present the following activity:

Using what they have discussed with their classmates, students will write out in French their responses to the above questions. They will hand in their work for feedback. These paragraphs should be reviewed in preparation for the PACE lesson where they will be handed back.

PACE

P

Now that the students have an understanding of the fable, the teacher may draw their attention to the forms that were used in the fable for comparison. The Presentation occurred during the first three reading phases. The following activity draws their attention to the form.

A

The teacher will write sentences such as:

- The title: “La grenouille qui veut se faire aussi grosse que le boeuf”
- “Elle, qui n’était pas grosse en tout comme un oeuf [...]”
- “Pour égaler l’animal en grosseur [...]”
- “Tout bourgeois veut bâtir comme les grands seigneurs [...]”

to draw students’ attention to the form.

C

During construction activities, students work together to construct the principal elements of the story. The focus here, according to Alvermann (1991) turns to why something happened instead of what happened. This has somewhat been accomplished above during the post-reading phase.

Have students review these sentences and note what key word is used to compare.

What is being compared?

Hand back the paragraphs which were completed during the post-reading phase. Allow time for students to read over your comments and to make changes where required.

Have students utilise the forms that were used in the PACE lesson in their paragraphs. These should be submitted again for feedback. The teacher should review these and hand them back as soon as possible.

E

Students have studied two fables.

In groups of 2 students will select a character from both fables and choose a celebrity to explain how they are similar and how they are different.

In order to organize their ideas, they will use the Venn diagrams in Appendix H.

Their written piece will be graded using the criteria in Appendix I.

Review

Review the strategies and steps that we have covered to read the first two fables on the board. Have students recall the steps used towards understanding the fables.

Fable No. 3 “La cigale et la fourmis”

This fable is another famous fable about a grasshopper and ant. The grasshopper sang throughout the summer season while the ant was hard at work, collecting food for the winter. La Fontaine’s version of this fable can be found at <http://www.lafontaine.net/lesFables/afficheFable.php?id=1> for example.

Purpose:

- Based on the strategies covered with the first two fables, students will gradually use the strategies on their own
- This lesson has students working with a partner before working on their own in the assessment task
- Students will develop strategies to deal with the meaning of the text even though they may not know what every word means

Pre-Reading

Note: Do not hand out the fable during this phase

Using the picture which goes with the fable, have students state what the fable is about. Write the title of the fable on the board. Students will know what the word “la cigale” and “la fourmi” are at this point.

Have students brainstorm the characteristics of the grasshopper and the ant. Ask them in French what are the characteristics of both animals?

Ask students to brainstorm the types of words they might see in this fable. Write these on the board in French.

Reading

Note: It will be noted when it might be best to give students the fable handout.

During the reading phase, the teacher will tell the fable using images in Power Point and *Total Physical Response*. Students will look at these images during the reading phase.

The teacher may then post the entire fable on the overhead and ask students what they notice about the rhyme scheme. The teacher may label each line AA, BB, CC to denote the couplet

After the reading, distribute the fable hard-copy. Students will

1. Read it out loud with their partner
2. Each student will take the perspective of the grasshopper or the ant and analyze the couplets of the poem to determine how the ant and the grasshopper felt.

The examples below should be shown to students to demonstrate the activity. It will be up to them to take on the roles of the characters in order to complete the table in Appendix J

Example:

La cigale, ayant chanté Tout l'Été	La cigale was enjoying himself, having fun in the summer time Maybe the ant was doing the opposite? Working hard?
Se trouva fort dépourvue Quand la bise fut venue.	The grasshopper found himself lacking food and the necessities required to survive in cold weather...

Although my examples are in English, have students use as much French as possible. Have students use the organizer in Appendix J.

3. Students will join another group of two to compare their analyses and then come up with a moral for this fable.

After the sharing of the analyses, the teacher will assign a section of the poem to each group for which they will present their findings to the class. During this time, the students will state their findings in French (to the best of their ability) and the teacher will be writing these on the board in French.

The teacher will then ask each group to share what they think is the moral of the fable.

Vocabulary Enrichment Activities (for homework): Some or all of these may be assigned for homework to students:

Ask the class to find and circle the words in the fable for which students might feel there is an opposite or for which an opposite word exists in the fable.

Have students try to find the French word for the following:

- A fly
- An insect
- Borrower
- fault
- To Lend
- Lender
- Neighbour
- North wind
- To sing
- To borrow
- A Worm

Post-Reading

Through scaffolding in the previous activities and fables, the students will be able to answer the following questions in as much French as possible in their discussions with a partner. The questions will be written on the board in French. Before the students work on these questions in their groups of two, the teacher should go over each question to ensure everyone understands what is expected of them. With a partner and then with the class, students will brainstorm and discuss:

- A. Why did the ant refuse to help the ant?
- B. How would you describe the ant's response to the grasshopper's plea for help?

Students will create a *mind map* for these two questions.

Using the Discussion Web (Appendix K), students will brainstorm the following:

1. Place this question in the center of the Discussion Web in Appendix K: Do you feel the ant's response was just? Why or why not?
2. What conclusions can you make based on this fable in terms of the causes and effects of the grasshopper and ants actions?
3. An example in society based on current events or your personal experience or observations of when this type of situation may have occurred.

Students will individually submit their responses to answer questions A, B, 1, 2, and 3. (Rubric in Appendix L). Depending on the level of students, the teacher may need to do one or more of the following:

1. If the teacher wishes to complete the above in the format of a mini-essay, they may need to teach students the parts and formats of an essay. Because it is in a different language, students may need some reminders of what goes in each paragraph (intro, topic sentence, development of ideas and examples, conclusion).
 - a. If an essay is going to be used as the final product, students may need to choose one or two of the questions.
 2. Students may use the ideas they came up with in their Mind Map and Discussion Web to write 5 separate responses to each of the questions.
 - a. If the teacher selects this option, it could be used as a precursor to an essay writing lesson next.

Depending on the needs of their students, the teacher may need to adapt or change this activity.

SECTION 4: CONCLUSIONS

This paper examined the research around using authentic texts in the French language program in a beginner level classroom. I found that the teaching methods used with authentic texts places the teacher in the role of facilitator as the students create their knowledge through interactions with their peers and then a group interaction with the entire class. Through scaffolding activities, the teacher gradually guides the students towards autonomous use and practice of the language based on their collective work around an authentic text. The discussions and written work that result from their study of an authentic text enriches students' learning of the language, the culture, and can also include the history of the French language. There are many opportunities to branch out into different areas.

I also found that it is important to teach students to “unlearn” the practice of trying to decipher each word they encounter within an authentic text. By encouraging students to focus on the global meaning of a text first, students can then focus on the form or other linguistic details rather than be held back because of particular words. In order to achieve a global understanding of an authentic text, the teacher may benefit from using a variety of methods to help students with their understanding of the text. Using a student's background knowledge to frame the context of an authentic text is an important first step in approaching the reading of an authentic text. If students lack the background knowledge to engage in meaning making with a particular authentic text, it may be wise to abandon that text and select a text for which students do have the background knowledge. Teachers may benefit also from the use of discussions around images, physical actions such as *Total Physical Response*, images displayed in Power Point to teach vocabulary during a reading phase, brainstorming sessions, and drama activities for variety. Having students sitting and writing out responses to grammar-based exercise worksheets

is a bottom-up approach which according to the research has been shown to have limited success in second language learning (Adair-Hauck & Donato, 2002). I have also observed this phenomenon in the classroom, that is, students complete worksheet after worksheet without really being able to use the language. Research also underscores the importance of graphic organizers, which allow students to work collaboratively with a classmate organizing information.

In the future, I am contemplating introducing authentic texts earlier in the school year with the thought that the reading strategies taught then can be utilized by my students throughout the remainder of the academic year. By using the three phases of pre-reading, reading and post-reading, students will be able to apply these practices when they are faced with other texts. I also wish to incorporate strategies for more active learning. To that end I will be including more drama activities based on authentic texts. Additionally, in order for students to learn about French culture I would like to identify and use authentic texts which come from different francophone countries. This would facilitate students making observations and comparing their own cultures with that of other francophone cultures.

Meaning making is an important skill which opens up many opportunities for exploration. Once a student has achieved an understanding of an authentic text, the teacher may then focus on form. The class also has the option of looking at other similar texts and making inter-textual comparisons. The possibility to explore in the second language suddenly widens from form-focused grammar exercises to exercising critical thinking and meaning making activities. Based on what I have learned from the research, I plan to incorporate more authentic texts and activities in the FSL classroom where students will collaborate with their peers to construct linguistic knowledge in a collaborative setting.

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Appendices (removed for brevity and file size)