

# **Reducing Student Anxiety by Using Mobile Technology in the French Immersion Classroom**

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## **INTRODUCTION:**

### **RESEARCH FOCUS:**

Currently, the grade 6 provincial 2018-19 assessment results for Anglophone School District-East (ASD-E) reports 45.9% of late immersion students are operating at an appropriate and above level for reading literacy in French. Petitcodiac Regional School is assessed at 32.6%, a deficit of 13.3% in comparison to the ASD-E result. The goal for both the district and in turn Petitcodiac Regional School is to have 90% of students operating at an appropriate and above level in French as a second language (FSL) reading literacy by 2025. I believe at the 6<sup>th</sup>-grade level, a great deal of peer anxiety exists. In the Fall of 2018, 34% of the girls and 11% of the boys, in Petitcodiac Regional School (grades 6-8) had moderate to high levels of anxiety. The Canadian norm for girls is 29% and for boys is 16%. I have looked at the next steps for Petitcodiac Regional School (PRS) in both their School Improvement Plan and their Positive Learning and Working Environment Plan. I suspect there is a relationship between the below average reading score for French as a Second Language (FSL) and the below national average of students feeling accepted and valued by peers. Only 57% of the girls and 67% of the boys in Petitcodiac Regional School (grades 6-8) had a high sense of belonging. The Canadian norm for girls is 68% and for boys is 74%. First, and foremost, based on my preliminary research, Second Language Acquisition requires a safe and non-judgmental learning environment where students feel they can practice their French-speaking and reading abilities. A group of Albertan teachers who had integrated mobile devices in their French as a Second Language classrooms, "unilaterally reported that student engagement was heightened when the mobile devices we're embedded into instructional practice students were excited to use the devices and showed increased pride in their accomplishments when using the tools...reluctant speakers experienced less anxiety and less stress due to their increased levels of risk taking using the iPods and iPads and the tools ability to facilitate multiple attempts at oral language tasks ." (Gaudet, 2012, p. 5). Secondly, the language demographics among the students of Petitcodiac Regional School show that 92% of students speak only English at home, which does not allow students the adequate practice time that is required to truly acquire French as a Second Language. This is the focus area of my action research proposal.

### **AIMS:**

The focus of this research will be to determine if using mobile technology in my 6<sup>th</sup>-grade late French Immersion classroom will reduce the level of student anxiety associated with French language practice.

### **RESEARCH QUESTION:**

*Will integrating mobile technology into my 6th-grade late French immersion classroom at Petitcodiac Regional School reduce the level of student anxiety in French language practice?*

## **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

### **USING MOBILE TECHNOLOGIES IN FI CLASSROOMS: ENRICHING SLA BY GERRY GAUDET**

To accommodate a growing diversity in the French Immersion program at École Edwards, the school received a grant enabling 19 FI teachers the use of mobile technologies in their SLA classrooms. Via the embedding of 4-5 iPods and an iPad into each of the 19 classrooms, young language learners became part of an action research project to determine if the ease of access and use of mobile technology would increase their practice and thereby their proficiency in their SLA studies. Risk-taking and oral communication increased as students had the opportunity to formatively self-assess the recorded practice of their second language. Writing proficiency also increased primarily due to the increase of engaged peer sharing both in the recording of readings as well as reviewing of individual written work. Mobile technology use allowed for UDL and differentiation among the students and gave way to a varying level of entry as well as reducing anxiety and peer stress for reluctant students. The timeliness of feedback for assessment was positive; however, teachers did struggle with managing the sheer volume of artefact presented by the students via the recordings on the mobile devices. The fossilization of error is the primary concern stemming from this study. Using technology means the teacher is no longer the only model of the French language in the classroom, allowing for the possibility that students would practice errors until the errors would become challenging to catch and correct. The overall takeaway is that the use of mobile technology significantly increased the engagement level of the students in the Early French Immersion classroom and allowed for greater risk-taking and assessment (self and formative). Peer judgment lessened and even the most reluctant SL student increased in their confidence and use of their newly acquired language. While this action research project studied the use of mobile technology in the Early French Immersion classroom (grades K-4), I believe embedding the use of mobile technology into the Late French Immersion classroom would prove equally valuable. Since peer judgment seems to peak in the middle years of schooling, lowering the risk-factor would be a positive change.

### **USING MOBILE DEVICES IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM BY R. GOODWIN-JONES**

The main focus of this paper is the advocacy for classroom use of mobile technology devices, particularly in SLA. It argues several positive outcomes for students and teachers when mobile technology is used sagaciously in the language classroom. By using mobile technology in the SLA classroom, teachers are putting apps that students are familiar with to good use by integrating learning and life. It is recommended that the mobile technology device be used in short stints, allocating only a small fraction of the classroom time. The hope is that the learner will recognize that the power to acquire language skills is, literally, in their hands. In SLA, practice is the key to success, mobile devices allow students to practice in real life. Using mobile devices as tools for teaching and learning changes the instructional focus from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered learning. The teacher takes on the new role of facilitator and guide. Using mobile devices for language learning is within the realm of my project. Teachers can use this technology to encourage their students to go beyond the confines of the classroom and engage in actual, real-life use of the language they are striving to acquire. Practicing vocabulary, grammar, reading, writing, listening, and speaking is of utmost importance in (second) language acquisition, working from the premise that mobile technology will help students do just that is to everyone's advantage.

### **DIGITAL DOCUMENTATION: USING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES TO PROMOTE LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY BY M. PELLERIN**

This text explored the use of technology as a support for differentiated instruction, interestingly other data was discovered. The teachers who participated in this CAR project found that using technology in the classroom made student learning visible. It shifted student assessment from 'of' learning to 'for' learning. It also allowed for self-assessment and student reflection. Digital technology allowed learners to document their learning and thinking. It enables them to be active participants by developing student awareness, peer sharing, and the use of the revisiting process, all of which inform future teaching and learning. Teacher reflection on student learning in the target language, as well as seeing cross-curricular achievement, allowed for scaffolding when necessary. In connection to my project, the observation of a Grade 4 teacher participating in the CAR explained that for some of her students, reading aloud to the class or the teacher is stressful, and their shyness overcomes any display of oral abilities. The use of iPads encouraged and enabled the weaker students to read and record. These findings are in support of using technology to aid late immersion students in high-risk factor classroom environments to strive for and achieve SLA.

### **INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES AND SLA IN EARLY FRENCH IMMERSION BY BIRGIT HARLEY**

This text focuses on a variety of teaching strategies used to teach Early French Immersion learners. It analyzes the strategies that have proven effective as well as revealing problematic issues within the strategies themselves in terms of SLA. Experiential (focused on meaning) and Analytic (focused on grammar) are two examples often used in conjunction. Common mistakes can be found and generally all lead back to a misstep in instruction. All is not lost; so-called fossilized errors can be undone. This article emphasizes that further research can/should be done. The instructional strategies for SLA are vast, and there's no one way to teach second language learners. A combination/variety of instructional methods best ensures the desired outcomes for SLA. Concerning my project, I would propose that several instructional strategies could be employed simultaneously via the use of digital technology in the French Immersion classroom. Errors made within the convergence of instructional strategies could be averted, as the FI teacher could potentially rely on the digital recording apps for formative assessment purposes. Errors would be found early, and corrections made.

### **USING TECHNOLOGY TOOLS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CLASSROOM BY ROSE YOUNG**

Digital technology is readily available within our homes and schools. Teachers have the opportunity to enhance their teaching by putting to good use of the many innovative technological tools at their disposal. Incorporating technology into the classroom allows for teacher collaboration with students and other teachers worldwide. It also provides for inclusion within the classroom. When technology is used correctly by properly trained (and receptive) teachers, there is an increase in student motivation and engagement during the classroom lesson. At-risk students increased their engagement as well, and their academic results improved. Strong and previously engaged students saw no improvement or decline, as they thrive regardless. In connection with my project, technology in the classroom, no matter the subject, helps to motivate and engage students during instruction. It is a tool to enhance literacy, and for many students, it

is a game-changer. Teachers must place technology into the hands of their students. While the teacher's use of technology during teacher-centered lecturing is colourful and graphically pleasing, to enhance literacy, the student-centered approach with technology is where real change can happen, and where a higher level of proficiency takes place. The bones of my research project are this: Technology and SLA go hand in hand. When we improve the method of practice, increase opportunities for practice, and reduce the risk-factor of peer judgment, I believe second language literacy levels will improve substantially.

### **SUMMARY**

Specifically addressing the connection to my project, based on the literature review, we learn mobile technology use allows for UDL and differentiation among the students and reduces anxiety and peer stress for reluctant participants. It argues several positive outcomes for students and teachers when mobile technology is used sagaciously in the language classroom, including students going beyond the confines of the classroom and engaging in actual, real-life use of the language they are striving to acquire. Integrating technology enables students to participate in ways that allow them to overcome their shyness. It reveals abilities that are often stifled by the added stress associated with in-front of the class performance. The bottom line, there is no one way to teach second language learners. Using a combination of instructional methods best ensures the outcomes we are looking for as educators. Integrating technology into the late French Immersion classroom provides a platform upon which all students can participate in French oral communication. Mobile technology can motivate, engage, encourage, enable communication, and enhance learning for all students. These powerful tools can unlock inclusive and unbiased erudition.

## **Resources**

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Young, R. (2008). Using Technology Tools in the Public School Classroom. [pdf] *The Graduate School University of Wisconsin-Stout Menomonie*. Retrieved March 5, 2020, from <http://www2.uwstout.edu/content/lib/thesis/2008/2008youngr.pdf>

## **CONTEXT:**

This study will be conducted in my 6th-grade late French immersion classroom at the Petitcodiac Regional School located in the village of Petitcodiac, New Brunswick. First settled by a family of English loyalists in 1786, Petitcodiac remains a primarily English-speaking community. I believe it is essential to note English as the maternal tongue of my students as my study is looking to improve the amount of student anxiety while learning/practicing French as a Second Language. The Petitcodiac school is a K-12 public school with 638 students. It offers both English and French Immersion programs. My 6th-grade late French Immersion classroom consist of 21 students, and myself. The curriculum used in my classroom follows the late French Immersion curriculum for 6th-grade developed by the Curriculum Development personnel and subject specialists of the Anglophone sector. This study will include all 21 of my students. I will inform the parents of my study as I will be integrating mobile technology into my classroom. I will give them the basics of what I hope to accomplish as well as assure them their children will not be exposed to risks. I will advise parents of the controls I have put into place on the devices the children will be using.

## **METHODOLOGY:**

A 12-question student survey will measure the existing practice in my classroom. The survey will question the students on their current methods for participating in oral communication in French and their comfort levels/anxiety related to said participation. I will also keep a teaching journal to record and reflect on the observable moments of practice and participation within my classroom. I will note how the students are responding to the various participation opportunities. I will be looking for students speaking French during discussion opportunities and social interaction times within the classroom experience. I will take note of student confidence and of those who regularly speak in their second language. I will also note those who refrain from participating by holding back during discussion/share times, whether it is because of a lack of motivation or shyness/anxiety. Recording a few classes where I know there will be enhanced opportunities for oral communication in French would be beneficial for observation purposes. Therefore, I will intentionally incorporate such opportunities once per week over a 12-week time frame. As I review the recordings, I will add my observations to my teaching journal. Data collected over the 12-weeks will be inserted into a table streaming the data into a format that will enable me to compare the before and after of my research with ease.

I will place the mobile devices into the hands of my students once I have planned a workflow establishing where I will save their work as they use the mobile devices, have chosen three apps to build around, and have determined how to work within the school's network firewall. Duolingo and Beelinguapp are two language apps that provide French as a second language practice and interactive platform. I will combine the use of the two apps with the recording apps found on mobile devices. The two apps have the potential to enrich student vocabulary and provides another source for modeling the French language shifting the focus from myself (the teacher) as sole language model in the French Immersion classroom. The recording apps will enable me to capture the students' increased practice as they create content to share with their peers. The app will also record completed assignments ready for assessment/evaluation. Using mobile devices in this way has the potential to motivate and encourage my students to partner together in their social (classroom) environment. Part of the desired outcome is to have my students take the initiative to work outside of the classroom on their projects using their French language skills, thereby increasing their confidence and reducing the anxiety levels for my students. I will continue to record my

observations in my teaching journal as the students interact with their mobile devices and each other. The integration of mobile devices into my classroom also enables a greater possibility for artefact collection. The mobile devices will record real evidence of student participation. At the end of the 12-week post mobile technology integration, I will once again administer a student survey. I will create a table to stream the data into a format that will enable me to compare the before and after of my research more efficiently. I will conclude my data collection by gathering a focus group of 6 to 8 students from my class. I will have them provide feedback by answering the following questions, "What did you think about using mobile technology in your French Immersion classes?" and "What did the use of mobile technology do for you?".

I believe the methodologies I have chosen are appropriate for this study as they measure both student opinion and practice with classroom observation. As I collect and process the data after the two 12-week collection periods, I hope to see evidence showing improvement in student participation and a reduced anxiety level. Student motivation will be demonstrated by an increased willingness to participate in French oral communication inside and outside of the classroom by my students. If my intervention has been effective, increased participation will be evidence of reduced anxiety, which will be easily observed by anyone inside my classroom. I will use this data to demonstrate the effectiveness of mobile technology integration in the late French Immersion classroom for the purpose of reducing student anxiety. If the integration of mobile technology is successful, I will continue to integrate mobile technology into our French Immersion class time. I will also share my results with my colleagues.

### **REFLECTION:**

As I was putting together my action research proposal, the value of such research became increasingly evident. This experience has shown me how action research awards the opportunity for classroom teachers to effect real change in their classrooms as well as their students. By taking the time to focus on our current practices, it will enable me to think about how my students are truly doing. This process allows the teacher to identify areas in the classroom for improvement, whether it is organization, academic, or instructional. I can reflect on how I am doing as a teacher and do better. Action research provides a structure for organizing data collection methods and recommendations. I see the immense value of this research method in terms of sharing my findings with colleagues. Action research is a powerful tool for transforming the classroom, for ensuring I am being the most effective teacher I can be and doing the most I can for my students. As I continue to grow professionally, I will use action research in my classroom.

# Action Research Methodology: Annex

























Students' Attitudes Survey: This is a sample of a survey that I would offer to my students in French. I would use 12 of the questions shown on this survey. (striking 8, 9, 11, 12 & 14). I would also raise the questions to a 6<sup>th</sup>-grade level and incorporate the word 'anxious'.

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**Appendix**













**Students' Attitudes Survey<sup>22</sup>**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

	1) I am good at my schoolwork.			
	2) I like my classmates.			
	3) My classroom teacher likes me.			
	4) My Chinese teacher likes me.			
	5) My classmates like me.			
	6) I am a good student.			

<sup>22</sup> National K-12 Foreign Language Resource Center, Iowa State University – Chinese TCY10

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	15) I like my Chinese teacher.			
	16) Learning to speak Chinese is important.			
	17) Learning to read and write in Chinese is important.			

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	7) I like Chinese.			
	8) I like English.			
	9) I like math.			
	10) I like reading.			
	11) I like school.			
	12) Going to school is important.			
	13) I feel safe at school.			
	14) I like my classroom teacher			



## Oral Communication Level of Engagement Checklist

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Observation Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Statement	Never	Sometimes	Always
Speaks clearly and precisely communicates ideas			
Stays on task and communicates opinions freely			
Uses a varied vocabulary with no interjected maternal language			
Responds appropriately to questions within the discussions			

### Focus group questions:

1. Do you feel anxious when thinking about participating in class activities whether in a small group or as a class in our French Immersion classroom?  
Can you tell me why?
2. Did using mobile technology in our French Immersion classroom help you feel less anxious during whole class participation? Small group participation? Can you tell me why?