

**BEYOND TIME ON TASK IN SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING
AND LEARNING: A CASE STUDY OF COGNITIVE
PROCESSING IN INTENSIVE FRENCH**

by

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ABSTRACT

Core French students in New Brunswick typically do not achieve a functional level of competency after many hours and at least ten years of French instruction. To begin to address this situation, a pilot project called Intensive French presents a unique language learning experience for Grade 5 students in Anglophone school districts. This approach, based on Cummins' theory of common underlying proficiencies and Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism, is characterized by an increase in instructional time for the learning of French (Intensive French) and a decrease in time for other subject matter (the Compacted Curriculum). This pilot project can contribute to students' language learning experience by giving them the intensive boost needed to be able to participate in richer, more communicative language learning experiences in subsequent grades. In this thesis, the research questions focus on the relationship between time, tasks and cognitive processing of students in this unique learning environment.

Using a qualitative case study approach, I observed learners constructing knowledge of both language and content. I also collected data through interviews and questionnaires with other stakeholders such as teachers, principals and parents. The observational data form the basis of descriptive and interpretive accounts of the learning environment and the learners' cognitive processing. Field notes describe the learning journey taken by these young language learners and show how these observations evolved throughout the process.

Through an analysis of both the literature and the data, I propose a framework that describes and interprets the interactive roles of task, teachers, peers, and self in the language learning process. This framework contributes to a better understanding of the

link between interaction and cognition. A simple increase in exposure to the target language is not enough to create an optimal intensive language learning environment, nor does any one type of task appear more effective than another. Rather, the key lies with teachers who prepare students cognitively and linguistically to engage in carefully scaffolded, interactive tasks in a positive learning environment. Although peers can play a role in linguistic and cognitive development, too much undirected, independent, lengthy group work can impede the full achievement of curriculum objectives. Some similarities are identified between the cognitive processing occurring in Intensive French and the Compacted Curriculum.

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