

P-2 TEACHER PERSPECTIVES ON IMPLEMENTING THE NLA

**P-2 French Immersion Teacher Perspectives on Implementing the Neurolinguistic
Approach**

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Abstract

The Neurolinguistic Approach (NLA) is a paradigm that focuses on encouraging students to use authentic and targeted language structures (Netten & Germain, 2012). The NLA reflects a shift in focus to oral language development, which has been found to propagate the development of other linguistic aptitudes (Haj-Broussard, Beal & Boudreaux, 2017). The following qualitative research study collected French Immersion teachers' perspectives on the NLA through semi-structured interviews with the purpose of gathering perspectives on what the approach is, what benefits they perceived from implementing it in their classrooms and the barriers they might have encountered while implementing it. The participants were seven French Immersion teachers in P-2 classrooms who previously received professional development on the NLA. The interview data were categorized through thematic analysis to highlight salient themes across conversations. The advantages included the NLA reaching a wide range of students, benefiting beginner French learners, increasing students' confidence and engagement and giving teachers an explicit structure around which they could plan lessons. The obstacles included time constraints in teaching, being overwhelmed accessing literacy resources, difficulty adapting the approach to older grades and some limits to organic French conversations. A fourth category of resources was added to highlight future directions for supporting French Immersion teachers when using the approach which included more opportunities for teachers to learn about the approach and more pre-made resources to address time constraints. Most teachers expressed that they saw the benefits to the approach in the beginner French classrooms but also expressed that they would benefit from more professional development, opportunities to collaborate with colleagues and

premade resources to make the approach more accessible to them and easier to integrate into their regular classroom routines.

Keywords: neurolinguistic approach, teacher perspectives, curriculum, French immersion, French as an additional language education, oral language

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Research into additional language acquisition has prioritized the importance of developing skills in oral language as a basis upon which the other skills can be developed (Beal & Boudreaux, 2017; Germain & Netten, 2013; Haj-Broussard, Hipfner-Boucher, Lam & Chen, 2015). This movement towards a focus on communication in pedagogy relating to additional language education in Canada is supported by feedback from parents and students stating that after years of participating in programs such as Core French, students could not communicate proficiently in the French language (Canadian Parents for French, 2004 ; Netten, 2016). The finding that oral communication skills are insufficient has been supported by the findings that only 60.9% of young women and 49.4% of young men who had been in at least a year of French immersion as children felt that they could have a conversation in French (Statistics Canada, 2024).

The protection of the French language and pioneering of French Education in Canada began in the 1960s with the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism followed by the implementation of the Official Languages Act in 1969 (Cooper, 2020). The two main avenues by which school-aged students learn French are through either Core French or French Immersion (Canadian Parents for French, 2019). However, there is a high attrition rate for students once they enter secondary school and French is no longer compulsory (Arnott, 2019 ; CMEC, 2015; Canadian Parents for French, 2004) and the reported reasons for leaving French include the students' perceptions of their lacking abilities, lack of perceived relevance to their lives and negative attitude towards learning French (Arnott, 2019). Retention of students and teachers in French education is necessary for the continued funding and support of these

programs, which foster the use of and respect for a minority language. Therefore, for students to feel the value of learning another language as well as valuing French culture as something they belong to, it is important that researchers consider how to make French relevant to its learners and how to increase students' confidence in their French speaking abilities.

French Education in Canada

The popularity of French learning options being available in Canadian schools increased with the adoption of the Official Languages Act in 1969 (Statistics Canada, 2024), which officially instated English and French as the official languages of Canada and required federal institutions to offer services in both English and French upon request (Cooper, 2019). In Canada, there are two popular models for French as an Additional Language education: Core French and French Immersion. In Nova Scotia's Regional Centres for Education (RCEs), French education is compulsory from Grades 4 to 8 through Core French in the English stream (NS Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2025). The availability of these programs offers a basic understanding of the French language and culture. Core French classes consist of approximately 150 minutes of French instruction weekly (Annapolis Valley Regional Centre for Education, 2025).

The second popular option for French Education is French Immersion, with two options available: Early Immersion, starting in Elementary school, and Late Immersion, beginning in Grade 7. The French Immersion model was created in response to requests from Anglophone parents to improve the quality of French Education, as they observed low performance in French among students leaving the Core French program in Quebec (Canadian Parents for French, 2013). In Late Immersion, students receive 70-75% of classroom instruction in French from

Grades 7-9. On the other hand, Early Immersion sees students in Grades Primary to Grade 2 receiving French instruction for 90-100% of the school day, with the amount of French instruction decreasing to 80-85% in Grades 3-6 (Halifax Regional Centre for Education, 2025). As of 2021, 1 in 6 children aged 5 to 17 were enrolled in French Immersion in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2024). The French Immersion program in Nova Scotia is specifically geared towards individuals who “wish to develop a greater degree of competence in French” (Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2025, para. 3), . Students in French Immersion tend to outperform their Core French peers in terms of French proficiency.

A study by Day and Shapson (1987) looked at the French proficiency of 110 early French immersion students compared to French first language speaking children. Both sets of students were almost comparable on some communicative measures such as story organization, discussion information, and comprehension which bodes well for the early French Immersion program model. However, the second language students did not compare in their grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary or fluency. Therefore, it is important to consider what practices are being implemented to consider how they might be adjusted to better address these weaknesses in French Immersion education.

The Communicative Approach

From the 1970s into the 1990s, the focus of most second language teaching was based on the communicative approach (CA) or the communicative language approach (CLT). This approach was developed in opposition to the more traditional approach that gave students direct instruction on grammar after which the students had a chance to practice using that correct structure (Richards, 2005). In the traditional approach, the students would then be expected to

produce these sentences accurately and quickly in context after having memorized how to properly form those grammar structures. The goal of the CA was communicative competence which focused on knowing how to convey meaning in the language without focusing on precise grammar (Richards, 2005; Safty, 1991). By having students focus on communication and observe the grammar structures, they could then induce or discover the grammar rules for themselves. The focus of this approach was the interaction between learners, the use of authentic resources in the target language, creating meaningful interaction through language, and experimenting with different ways of saying things. The learners were therefore further implicated and responsible for their own learning by focusing on cooperative tasks and producing sentences with the understanding that errors could be addressed later.

Using this approach also meant that students engaged in role-playing and simulations to learn how to react in different situations through language rather than engaging with others in authentic dialogue (Germain, 2024; Puren, 2006). By creating these simulations, the environment for learning became less about the interests of the learners themselves and how they might need to use the language in the classroom or in their day to day lives. Therefore, other approaches have been constructed in an attempt to introduce a level of authenticity that the communicative approach lacked.

The Neurolinguistic Approach

The neurolinguistic approach (NLA) was developed to facilitate classroom practices that encourage students to use as much oral language as possible in different contexts and consolidate familiar oral structures through reading and writing. This approach to additional language education is based on a program initiated in Canada for French education called Intensive French

(IF) (Netten & Germain, 2009), which is still used in some classrooms to date. This program has offered opportunities for Grades 4-5 classes to learn other subjects exclusively in French over a five-month period, and what they discovered was that by Grade 9, the IF students outperformed their Core French peers in terms of spontaneous communication and comfort speaking French. Encouraging reports about the program were also reported by the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC, 2015) whose focus groups with professionals across Canada found that Intensive French continued to show impressive results as well as high enrollment.

The fundamentals of NLA follow five key principles: implicit competence, pedagogy based on literacy, focusing on subjects beyond the language itself, authentic use of language, and interactive strategies (Netten, 2016). Teachers focus on enforcing simple language structures that are then repeatedly contextualized, and the students use those structures while interacting with one another. Through habitual use, the structures become a part of their implicit knowledge, which can then be used to carry out project-based tasks. The goal of the approach is to encourage spontaneous use of the target language and increase students' confidence and their appreciation of the French language by making the language relevant to students' needs and interests.

Netten and Germain (2012) believe that the teaching of grammar rules prioritized in this approach contributes to the learner's explicit knowledge of grammar. However, it is the frequent use of grammar structures in different contexts that contributes to implicit grammar knowledge, helping students move towards using the language habitually. Netten and Germain propose that proficient communication develops through the enrichment of both explicit and implicit knowledge (Netten & Germain, 2012). Following the development of the NLA by authors Netten and Germain (2012), empirical research has been conducted in support of the approach in

French. For example, researchers in China examined whether NLA strategies would support a French as an Additional Language education program at the university level. They found that those in the NLA class showed statistically significant gains compared to those in the control group (Germain, Liang & Ricordel, 2015).

The NLA has been implemented in classrooms outside of French Immersion as well. A collaborative action research study by Dressler and Mueller (2022) considered how German language teachers in Western Canada perceived their K-6 students' spoken and written language after an intensive collaborative workshop on the NLA. Some participating German language teachers found that the students gained confidence in their spoken language, and most were pleased with the amount of German that students were encouraged to speak when the approach was implemented. Another impact of taking the time to purposefully pre-plan NLA-based lessons was that the students were more interested in writing. Apart from this research, few studies have documented the perceived advantages of using the NLA in early immersion programs.

Another study, examining the use of the NLA in a context outside of French Immersion, was conducted by Bagherkazemi and Zahed Shekarabi (2023). In this study, pre-intermediate EFL (English as a Foreign Language) Learners taking online classes in Iran were recruited to either have explicit instruction in the present perfect tense using the Neurolinguistic Approach or a control group where the Present Perfect was taught using context-rich written examples and story-based modelling from the instructor. Pre-test and Post-test results on tests examining the Present Perfect Tense showed significant improvement in both explicit and implicit measures for the group that learned the tense through NLA, as opposed to the control group, which only

showed progress in explicit grammar knowledge measures and was not as significant. This suggests that NLA, through its focus on oral language and communication, targets both understanding of the connection of sound-meaning and grammar-meaning connections, and thus, learners have a more comprehensive understanding of the grammar.

In recent years, the Core French program which is mandatory for students from Grades 4 to 8 in Nova Scotia has been encouraging the use of the NLA to promote comfortable and spontaneous language use (Government of Nova Scotia, n.d.). The focus on oral language and the explicit use of simple structures that are applicable in multiple contexts also increases the amount of time students spend speaking in the target language, leading to a higher quality of language and greater confidence (Haj-Broussard et al., 2017). Elementary French Immersion teachers have also been offered some professional development and several resources to help facilitate using the approach.

Teaching French as an Additional Language

Meeting the expectations of teaching French as an Additional Language (FAL) has been a challenge, threatening teacher retention, particularly at a time when there are not enough French teachers to meet the demand (CASLT, 2020). More than half of the teachers who participated in a cross-Canada research study on teacher retention conducted by CASLT reported that they were considering leaving the profession. Some of the reasons given included a lack of resources, insufficient opportunities for professional learning, and a lack of dedicated support time. Dressler (2018) supports the idea that French Immersion pedagogy should be explored in partnership with and alongside teachers currently in the field to identify the strategies being implemented.

The Education Department in Nova Scotia has made efforts to provide training to Early French immersion teachers in the NLA. During one such professional development session, teachers learn about the origins of the NLA from Intensive French and discover strategies for teaching using the NLA over a two-day session. When implementing the NLA, teachers are encouraged to teach phrases and vocabulary that incorporate multiple integrated subject areas such as Social Studies and Health with the French Language Arts curriculum. The approach is modelled for the teachers through PowerPoint slides and games, after which they create lesson plans based on the approach that they can implement in their own classrooms and present to one another. The teachers receive documents detailing the structures they may want to teach, along with the books that incorporate those structures for reinforcement. The model PowerPoints from the presentation are also shared with the expectation that the teachers will adapt the template for the structures they plan to teach their students. Following these two-day sessions, there are no further sessions to consolidate knowledge or offer feedback on how teachers are progressing using the approach.

Situating the Researcher within the Proposed Research

This study was conceived by the researcher, who is a French Immersion teacher. Having completed training on the NLA and attempted to implement it meaningfully and accurately, I encountered barriers related to the resources available and the time it took me to create those resources. Having spoken with other teachers, I found that they were also struggling to implement the approach consistently and wanted to learn more about the barriers teachers face in implementing this current best practice and what further supports could be put in place to facilitate it.

Despite the obstacles we met, my fellow teachers and I have noticed increased use of French in early grades with the implementation of the NLA. The focus on using the same structure over a period of time, getting students to use those structures in speaking and writing and then modelling how the structure is used in different contexts has helped my students gain confidence in using those structures and understand the meaning without needing to translate directly to their first language. Therefore, I have seen great value in the use of the approach and would like to see what more can be done to facilitate its use in French Immersion classrooms.

The Current Study

The purpose of the current study was to collect French Immersion teachers' perspectives on the advantages and obstacles they face in trying to implement the Neurolinguistic Approach. Specifically, I intended to answer the following exploratory research questions through a constructivist lens:

1. How do P-2 teachers define the NLA?
2. What are the perceived benefits of using the NLA with P-2 students in classroom teaching?
3. What are the barriers to implementing the NLA in P-2 classrooms?

Some Regional Centres for Education in Nova Scotia have implemented professional development to support teachers in implementing the approach in their classrooms. This training takes place over two days, either during the summer or in the school year, and includes planning lessons using the approach, learning about how Germain and Netten developed it, and having NLA lessons modelled with teachers acting as students.

The inclusion criteria for participants taking part in this study were French Immersion teachers in Nova Scotia who received training in the NLA and had since taught between Grades Primary and 2. The intention in targeting teachers between Grades Primary and 2 was because, while Intensive French took place in Grades 4 and 5 showing significant gains, little research has been done to consider the perceived impacts of the NLA on the earliest years of French Immersion education when the students are building their foundational skills. The research done in elementary German immersion classes (Dressler & Mueller, 2022) suggested that French Immersion teachers would perceive similar benefits. Future research would benefit from investigating teacher perspectives in older grades comparing how students taught using the NLA in French Immersion have or have not shown improvement. The current study aimed to investigate P-2 French Immersion teachers' views on the NLA after receiving this training, the advantages they had seen to using the approach in their classrooms and how they felt support might be offered to facilitate the approach being used in classrooms.

Chapter 2. Methodology

Qualitative interview research focuses on gathering the in-depth perspectives of people within a specific group with the aim of understanding their subjective experiences and interpretations. The act of partaking in interview research is one that engages not only with the participant and their experience, but within and as part of a culture (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). This does not mean that the information can be generalized, but that the product of the interview is the complex interaction of researcher, the researched and the culture being considered. Interviewees in qualitative research are also seen as meaning makers in conveying their own experiences which offers a more constructivist lens to the interviews (Warren, 2002). This

research aimed to explore the effectiveness of professional development in the context of the neurolinguistic approach and identify additional resources that could support teachers in implementing this approach.

Gathering teacher perspectives is crucial to providing educators with a voice in the policies and initiatives implemented within the education sector. Given that the research aim was to obtain rich, detailed information on teachers' perspectives, semi-structured interviews were conducted to create a collegial and conversational atmosphere.

Data Analyses

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was conducted to categorize the data collected from participants into themes. The guidelines laid out by Braun and Clarke regarding how to conduct thematic analysis deliberately and rigorously were followed as detailed below:

1. The researcher will familiarize themselves with the data through reading and rereading.
2. Initial codes will be generated.
3. Codes will be grouped into themes.
4. Themes will be reviewed.
5. Themes will be named and defined.
6. The report will be created by the researcher using the finalized themes and analysis.

During the coding process, the themes and child nodes within those themes answered the questions of the study: how P-2 French Immersion teachers defined the NLA, what were the perceived advantages and what were the perceived obstacles in implementing the approach. The consent form (see Appendix A) and semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix B) were

written with the goal of directing discussions with participants towards answering these three leading questions. As this research was exploratory in nature, the coding was expected to bring to light new themes that fall outside of the initial research questions, or the semi-structured interviews included questions outside of the initial question set that shed light on new information. Themes and codes were named using the words of participants as directly as possible to avoid misinterpreting participants' meaning and ensure accuracy in conveying participants' thoughts.

Participants

Purposeful sampling was employed in this study, as the topic being examined was specific to French immersion teachers in P-2 who had received the NLA training. Recruitment was completed through invitations to participate on French Immersion teacher Facebook pages. I aimed to include approximately 30 participants, with ten participants in each of the following grades: Primary, Grade 1, and Grade 2.

By the end of the study, seven teachers participated in interviews. All of these teacher participants had taught Grade Primary, Grade 1 or Grade 2 since receiving training on the neurolinguistic approach. The teachers varied in regards to how much professional development they had received in the NLA with some of them having participated in professional development in other provinces or at multiple points throughout their career. The majority of participants had experience teaching Grade Primary since receiving the PD and some participants had taught Grades 1 and 2 since the training.

The rationale for choosing this specific grade level of P-2 was due to the relative recency of professional development in the NLA focused on training teachers who guide students through the early stages of speaking French. Therefore, very few students had progressed to Grades 4 to 6 since the training was received and future research directions would benefit from gaining perspectives on the impact of the NLA in older grades and its effect on students' confidence in speaking French. The research in Intensive French also took place in Grade 4 and 5 classrooms showing great gains, but more research is needed to see the positive impact it might have in earlier grades. There is also a distinction between Grade 2 and Grade 3, where the amount of French instruction decreases from 90-100% to 80-85% with the introduction of English Language Arts to the curriculum. Therefore, in Grades Primary to 2, oral language use and comprehension are especially important.

Participants communicated with my thesis supervisor through their personal email and once they had reached out to express interest in participating, a consent form was distributed using the participant's provided personal email. A pseudonym was assigned to ensure the participants' anonymity throughout the study and analysis. The pseudonyms were maintained by me when the interviews were conducted. Participants' pseudonyms were entered into a draw with the chance to win a \$150 digital gift card to Michaels, an art and craft supply store.

Methods of Gathering Information

During the recruitment process, I collected information on participants' perceptions of the NLA based on interviews. After consenting to participate, the participating teacher completed the consent form (see Appendix A), which also contained questions that verified that the participant was eligible to take part in the study

The semi-structured interviews (see Appendix B) were conducted over Zoom. These interviews were recorded and transcribed to facilitate future coding on the NVivo 15 software. The transcripts were reviewed for prevalent themes, with codes being discussed with committee members and my supervisor to facilitate intercoder reliability. Intercoder reliability refers to the agreement between researchers on how data should be coded, providing consistency in coding practices, clarity for the audience on how codes were determined, and an opportunity for reflexivity and dialogue among qualitative researchers (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). The aim of discussions about coding between researchers was to identify areas that needed clarification and determine whether the codes were distinct enough from one another or might have needed to be combined.

Procedure

Interviews took place over Zoom for 30-60 minutes. The researcher posed eight open questions to the participating teacher, and their answers were both recorded and transcribed. The participants were informed of when the recording started and were verbally debriefed, reminding them that they may withdraw from participation at any point. Identifying information that might have revealed the identities of the participants was removed from the interview transcripts before coding began.

The primary investigator uploaded the anonymized transcripts to the NVivo 15 software and then familiarized myself with the data before starting the initial process of coding and identifying themes. During this process, I discussed the initial codes with my thesis committee and determined which themes needed to be altered, combined or clarified with two themes being considered as additional comments. These two comments were considered important when

looking at teacher retention and students' engagement in French but because the comments were from one participant each and did not fit into the other overall themes, they were excluded from the larger themes of the study. After reviewing, naming, and defining the larger themes, they were finalized before beginning the written analysis.

Chapter 3. Data Analyses

Following interviews with the first few participants, I began to note some of the most commonly recurring and relevant topics of conversations and created initial categories for the salient topics of conversation that answered the three research questions in a Microsoft Word document before coding officially began. While the subsequent interviews took place, these initial emerging themes were revisited and revised based on how the information fit in with what other participants shared about their experience using the NLA. Some themes from the first few interviews conducted were later consolidated or renamed to reflect the participants' own wording, such as one theme initially called "direction" which was renamed to "explicit structure" to reflect a participant's wording. Once all interviews had been completed, I used the NVivo 15 software for coding and started by creating categories named after each research question which were thus titled: Defining the Approach, Perceived Benefits to the NLA, and Barriers to Using the Approach. Using the initial emerging themes document, I read the transcripts with those themes in mind and created new categories when salient topics in the transcripts did not fit into a theme detailed in the emerging themes document.

Outside of the three research questions, the participants were also asked about what further resources might help to support them in implementing the NLA. The intention of this questioning was to offer a direction for future research and administrators who wish to support

their teachers who are either implementing the approach or wish to. This support is crucial in a time where it can be difficult to retain teachers and French Immersion teachers have reported not having enough resources (CASLT, 2020). The resulting data pertaining to resources did not fit in either the barriers or benefits sections, and so a new category of resources was included in the final analysis. This theme was included to better understand what more these teachers perceived that they might need to feel better equipped to implement best practice using the NLA and offered a future direction for how barriers could be minimized. After the themes were revised, I spoke with my two committee members regarding how the information was organized to ensure that the codes felt distinct and clear. Once revisions were made to one of the Barrier to Using the Approach category to allow for more cohesion between sections, the themes were finalized and the process of interpretation began.

When answering the question of how participants defined the approach, I looked to the first interview question asking, “How would you describe the Neurolinguistic Approach and its purpose?” The finalized themes demonstrated how teachers saw the approach as authentic to the students and context, prioritized oral language in the language loop, and participants also shared that their understanding of the approach included using pictures more than words in teaching language structures. These teacher participants expressed that they had learned about the NLA through various professional learning opportunities both in Nova Scotia and in other provinces encouraging use of the approach.

The theme of Benefits to Using the Approach included two subcategories of benefits for students and benefits for teachers. The benefits for students were considered to be any of the gains teacher participants perceived for their students such as how it benefitted beginner French

learners, how it built confidence, how it was engaging for students and how it could reach a wide range of students with a wide range of abilities. The Benefits for Teachers category included any gains for teachers in their planning and execution of the NLA which were having an explicit structure when lesson planning and the fact that the approach felt intuitive to the way the teacher participants thought additional languages should be taught which made the NLA easy to incorporate into their teaching.

The category entitled Barriers to Using the Approach pertained to any of the obstacles teacher participants spoke about in their interviews when trying to implement the approach in the way they had been instructed during professional development. This category was also separated into the barriers related to teachers implementing the approach and students being taught using the approach. Regarding students, the teacher participants expressed that students could sometimes still have a challenging time producing organic French when they needed to speak using structures they had not yet learned in conversations. The students also sometimes still would not be able to be reached by using the approach whether because they struggled with language skills in their first language or due to struggling to “put the pieces together” to speak, read and write in French. For teachers, some found that the approach was time consuming, putting much of the work on them to create resources which for a few teachers meant that as a result they were not using the approach regularly in their routine. Some teachers also expressed that they found it difficult to adapt the approach to older grades once the topics and structures were more complex, and it became harder to align oral structures with grade level texts. Finally, some participants also mentioned that they found it difficult to access literacy resources provided

by their Regional Centre for Education expressing that they found it so overwhelming that they often would not try to access resources there.

The category of resources pertained to any support that the teacher participants believed could be or had been useful in helping them implement the NLA in their classrooms. This category was related to the interview question which reads “Is there any resource, tool or training that you feel might help you better implement the NLA in your classroom?” The resulting comments were categorized into supports that were opportunities and supports that were pre-made resources for teachers. The opportunities that some teacher participants believed were useful included a literacy coach and opportunities to observe other teachers. The majority of participants said that more in-person professional development and opportunities to collaborate had already been or would be beneficial to their implementation of the approach. Regarding pre-made resources, teacher participants wanted to see more relevant age-appropriate texts, a toolbox of possible games and activities as well as a scope and sequence based on grade-level needs. Participants shared that these resources would be especially important for incoming teachers just starting their teaching careers given that having these opportunities and resources could offer them more direction.

Chapter 4. Interpretation

Defining the Approach

When participants were asked how they defined the neurolinguistic approach, all participants identified that the NLA places a strong emphasis on oral language. One participant described their understanding of the philosophy behind the NLA in regards to the two other

major components of the language arts curriculum, reading and writing, asserting how “before we can expect students to read or write certain structures or vocabulary in French that it's important that they can, speak it and understand it first.” Another participant demonstrated their support for the approach by stating “I just think it’s a wonderful approach and it’s really important because the oral component is extremely important with the language.” The importance of oral language in the classroom was further asserted by another participant who said “the oral component is huge right because that’s how they communicate with us, they communicate with each other and we are speaking in French I want to say 98% of the time.” As this participant suggested, early French Immersion classes spend 90-100% of their time engaging in French and what the participant asserts is that not only does oral language target their own ability to speak French, but their ability to understand and engage with one another. A participant connected the way that students learn French by focusing on speaking and listening in the Immersion classroom to a child’s early development in their first language.

When you're thinking of a child acquiring language for the first time, in their mother language, they start through that auditory processing, they're hearing it, they're being exposed to that language and associating things. I think [it] is really intuitive.

Seeing as students report leaving French due to perceiving their own abilities as insufficient and seeing French as irrelevant to their lives (Arnott, 2019), increasing French engagement between students in early years and offering a chance to learn the language in ways that feel intuitive may offer students an improved perspective of French.

Most participants described how the NLA is focused on authenticity to the students and the context in which they live and speak French. One participant asserted that using the approach

“has helped to really produce... authentic, speaking opportunities, authentic topics.” Most participants were able to identify that the goal of the NLA is to encourage authentic conversation and encourage as much opportunity for students to speak as possible. A participant reasoned that when the sentence structures are personalized to the students and their interests “they feel special and they’re more up to talk about themselves, share, it’s just that they need the necessary vocabulary.” Another participant spoke to the reason why authentic sentences specific to students’ interests matter asserting that, when the sentences are true to them, they are easier to remember. “They’re offering an opinion, and it’s authentic to them because it’s theirs. And because it’s their own idea, they’re able to remember it more, they’re connecting more.” Another participant spoke to the ownership of what is being said and how important that is when teaching a second language because the authentic use of language structures moves them “a little bit more towards that organic conversation later on.”

Some participants also described how in the NLA, teachers are encouraged to show pictures without the use of words when introducing new language structures and vocabulary. “I do remember from the training it was at that point kind of suggested that there be a lot of pictures and not necessarily vocabulary to go along with it.” They explained how the intention behind this is not to overwhelm the child with the words and pictures but instead to start by creating the association between the word and the object/concept. “I remember them saying, like, present pictures, no text, like, just give them the vocabulary, don’t, like, overload them with info.” A participant described how the training they received influenced their teaching practice saying, “But in the past, I may have introduced a new vocabulary word and associated an image with it, as well as a word right away instead of having that be an oral foundation...So it has changed my

practice in that way kind of how I introduce things.” This concept of introducing vocabulary and structure through pictures before introducing the words is relevant to the structured PowerPoints that were used to model the approach in the training these participants received.

Perceived Benefits of the NLA

The themes which emerged regarding the advantages of using the NLA in the classroom have been categorized into the benefits for students and the benefits for teachers in using the approach. The category of benefits for students were any comments related to how the teacher participant perceived the NLA impacted students' French ability.

For Students

Most participants mentioned in their interviews that they felt the approach was beneficial specifically to beginner French learners. When speaking to the benefits of the approach to early French learners, participants specifically mentioned their experience teaching Grade Primary, Grade 1 and Core French using the NLA with one participant speaking to the benefits they had seen in all three: “I personally, see ANL, like, really effective for grade primary, grade 1 in Core French.” Another participant spoke generally to the NLA’s value to new learners of French as an additional language saying, “I would say, my biggest thing is that, like, I see for a beginning level of French, it's so effective, so valuable.” For the majority of participants who had taught Grade Primary and Grade 1 since receiving training on the NLA, the approach was perceived as greatly beneficial overall.

Some participants also perceived the approach as something that helped their students improve their confidence. One reason cited for how the approach improved their confidence was

by allowing opportunity to speak and engage in French with their friends in a low-stakes environment. One participant described the value of “just focusing on the speaking part, so it's not about, can you read, can you write, it's just about interacting. I do find it builds their confidence a little bit quicker”. Another participant explained that the approach allowed them to see their less confident students engage in French when they otherwise might not have because they could see their students “wanting to engage the same way that their more comfortable, more confident peers were.” One participant spoke to the difference between the years they had not been using the approach compared to when they had started to use the approach, noting the difference in their confidence and comprehension. “My primaries the year after I did it evolved like, night and day that I was like, wow, these kids are leaving with a lot more skill and confidence and comfortability and understanding.” According to this participant, there was a notable change in her students’ abilities from one year to the next, and they attributed this increase in confidence to the fact that they had started implementing the approach.

Some participants also noted that their students’ engagement levels had increased as a result of implementing the approach in their teaching routine. One participant spoke to their perspective that the approach “does target a lot of students who learn through movement and are kinesthetic learners”. Another participant believed that the reason the approach increased student engagement so much was because it targets students’ own interests which offered students a sense of “ownership and pride” when sharing with the class. This participant went on to say: “Their engagement went up so much...it always circled back to them and their own interest, and then they were so excited to share that with the class.”

Finally, a few participants believed that through implementing the approach, they were able to reach a wider range of students. One participant spoke about how the approach was beneficial for students who needed explicit teaching of a structure and practice with peers. Another participant believed that the approach specifically helped their struggling students. "... I think it helps, like, all students, but specifically for students who...might have a harder time... It, like, scaffolded them and just gave them so many opportunities to be successful." To this participant, the approach's focus on repetition was what helped reach students by giving them repeated exposure to the same structure and more chances to succeed. Learners who are intimidated by the idea of speaking up in class also benefited from the approach according to another participant. "I just feel like it took down the pressure of, like, speaking in French." They continued on to say that the students who might feel less comfortable speaking up had the option to only share with their peers one to one, share with the class once they were comfortable or not share out loud with the class at all if they so choose. These participants who expressed that the approach helped them reach a wider audience overall described how it offered chances for students to feel included who otherwise might not have previously through other oral language strategies.

For Teachers

The majority of the participants expressed that the approach helped them to be more explicit in their lesson planning. Being mindful of teaching an oral structure that would then connect to their reading and writing helped the teachers to be intentional with their planning. Some of the participants who shared this belief spoke about how the NLA influenced their morning meetings:

It sort of gives you a direction, and because you're streamlining it...they're able to actually say it on their own. When you get to the end of that that period...now the scaffolding is removed, and they're able to say it on their own. Whereas when you do this, just this sort of morning meeting, sharing circle, they're just saying things, and you're just translating it, and they couldn't repeat it back to you the next day.

Similarly, teacher participants expressed that while the approach helps anchor their planning, it also helps anchor the students' learning goals for the week. Another participant shared how the approach offered guidance in their morning meeting saying, "this gives you sort of, like a little bit more direction in terms of, you know, we're not necessarily just going to share one thing that we want to share today." A morning meeting without the NLA might include students having to produce their own sentences that they want to translate into French but that are too difficult to translate on their own. Participants explain how these kinds of morning meetings often result in the students repeating back what was said but not engaging with and manipulating the language on their own in a meaningful way. A participant also mentioned the value of the structure provided by the approach for new teachers who might have less of an idea of what to teach because it "gives you a really good starting point." One person expressed that once they understood the steps on how to teach using the approach, it made their planning overall easier as well which is vital for both new and experienced teachers to reduce cognitive load.

Most teacher participants also expressed that when they received the training and learned about the approach, it felt like an intuitive method of teaching. Some of these participants expressed that although they would not have called it the NLA, they were using the techniques and prioritizing the same learning targets as the approach prior to receiving the training. "I kind

of feel like when you do a second language and you're teaching that low, you are kind of instinctually almost doing the neurolinguistics, so when we went for PD, it wasn't, like, that mind-boggling". Another participant noted that the approach makes a lot of sense when teaching another language: "A lot of it, the training, I did find somewhat intuitive, teaching French as a second language." The participants who agreed that the approach felt intuitive found it easy to incorporate the approach into their teaching routines either because it fit well into their already established routines that were similar to the approach or because the approach aligned well with their understanding of how we learn languages.

Barriers to Using the Approach

Another focus of this study was to consider what barriers teachers face in trying to implement the approach. These barriers were categorized into any obstacles regarding students and any obstacles that were specific to teachers and their duties. The barriers for students included the fact that there are students for whom the approach still does not help, and that sometimes students can still struggle to produce sentences in organic conversations. The barriers for teachers included a feeling that the approach could be time-consuming to implement, the view that literacy resources provided by RCE's were overwhelming to access and the perspective that the approach could be difficult to implement in higher grades.

For Students

The majority of teachers spoke about how they could still sometimes struggle to reach specific students using the approach for varied reasons. One reason a teacher reported was that they were navigating accessibilities related to a student who was nonverbal and trying to include

them in approach activities. “I have a student that isn't able to communicate orally with us. And so that's been an interesting dynamic as well, trying to figure out how to be inclusive of this student, and still try to use the approach.” A few teachers also cited having some difficulty reaching certain students learning an additional language whose first language was not English. Both teachers emphasized that learning with a different first language than English does not necessarily impact a student's ability to learn French using the approach. One of the teachers explained that there were “cultural elements that are different, and so... sometimes there's a bit of a barrier in understanding what is meant...” while the other teacher mentioned how there can “sometimes be a difficulty trying to explain certain things when they don't have a good solid grasp of their own L1”. Some participants also spoke about students who generally “are finding it hard to put the pieces together” when learning an additional language. These students might have a learning disability or undiagnosed difficulties with encoding, decoding and sentence structure and the participants reported that these students are not enjoying themselves in French education: “They are finding it hard to put the pieces together to form a sentence or just not into it and feel really bad because some of them are ...they're just not happy”. Participants reported that for those outlier students, the approach was not enough to impact their French overall.

Some participants also mentioned that it could still be hard to produce organic French that was not reliant on previously learned structures. “It's not as helpful for conversational French, unless that's been explicitly taught. So, you know, if you're just kind of having a conversation back and forth about what a student did on the weekend, they may or may not have the language”. This participant's criticism of the approach that the approach can be limited in regards to how students then use language organically is of concern given that spontaneous and

authentic conversation is one of the main goals of the approach. Another participant shared similar concerns:

It doesn't always feel authentic,... it's really sort of...taking a step back and thinking, how can I make this as authentic of a structure as possible? We don't necessarily go from speaking in everyday, authentic situations, to...to reading than to writing. because oftentimes, like, in everyday situations we're just conversing.

The participant argues that what sometimes adds to the inauthenticity is the difference in voice and purpose between how we speak a language and what we read or write. While communication is the goal behind writing and speaking, the way we speak organically is not always the way we write, and our writing, with all its conventions, might not accurately reflect how we would have conversations about that topic.

For Teachers

Most teacher participants expressed that an obstacle to using the approach was that it was time-consuming to commit to incorporating into their routine. The participants who continued to incorporate the approach expressed that they had front-loaded the work or shared the load of creating resources with other same-grade teachers and seeing as they now teach the same grade, they are able to access the resources year to year. “It was a lot of work at the start, like, it sounds... I'm like, that was a lot, but now I have my approach folder.” The same participant described what took the most time saying, “it was a little bit of work at the start to, you know, find the right pictures that I wanted, or edit them as I needed.” Another participant pointed out that not only were the personalized slideshows time-consuming, but the activities and games

needed to help reinforce the language structures take a long time to create. A participant who shared that they do not often implement the approach as it was modelled in the training explained: “it's really great in theory, and I've done little bits and pieces of that when I...Have time, or time allows, but... I think just...The prep time for creating those, maybe, would be the only barrier.” This participant was not using the approach regularly because of the time commitment they felt was necessary to make the PowerPoints and resources required to incorporate it into their routine.

Some participants also mentioned that they found it overwhelming to access literacy resources provided by their regional Centre for education (RCE). One participant mentioned that their being overwhelmed was due to finding it difficult to find resources on the website as they felt it was not the most user-friendly. “I do find, like, the teaching and learning site with the literacy resources to be not the most user-friendly, and some stuff can be hard to find.” One participant said that they find the literacy resources so overwhelming that they no longer even try to access them: “I... can truthfully say that I'm, like, way too overwhelmed to even go on to it.” Another teacher participant claimed that they do not try to navigate the website anymore because “there's too much, and it makes it more challenging to be able to decide what you're going to access.” One person explained that although they feel that the literacy resources are difficult to navigate, the math resources are intuitive, and activities are easier to pull from the website and use.

Finally, some participants expressed that they found it difficult to adapt the approach to teaching older grade levels who do work beyond the beginner French level. A participant who expressed seeing the value of the NLA in younger grades and received training specific to Grade

Primary explained: “It's always great when you're introducing something, like, brand new. And they don't have maybe the vocabulary or the sentence structure, but I don't know how to, like, necessarily, like, challenge my students to go further.” The teacher participant expressed that they would love to understand more about how to deepen their conversational skills as the students' French abilities increase beyond the need to focus on a one sentence question and a one sentence response. Another participant expressed similar concerns: “we've built those... those language structures, so kind of differentiating and pushing from there, I found a little... a little more challenging.” This participant also expressed that in their experience teaching P-2, they found the approach more effective for Grade Primary than any of the other grades. Another concern was that it is difficult to find mentor texts to go alongside the approach in older grades.

I think in a French immersion context, sometimes there's a little bit more... deeper learning that takes place. So, sometimes, sometimes even in a Grade 2 setting, it just didn't necessarily work with the curriculum that we had, or we didn't have texts that sort of aligned with that, or it was really digging for... For texts that sort of authentically would create, authentic conversation.

Another participant expressed the same concerns regarding mentor texts that are relevant to the curriculum. At first describing their experience teaching beginner French learners, the teacher said, “we spoke it, then the students read it, then they wrote it. Like, everything was connected, which is so nice.” However, they followed up this comment by referring to their current experience teaching Grade 2 where they found it was “much more difficult at a grade 2 level to find those mentor texts.” These participants expressed that, once students have mastered the

basic structures in French commonly found in texts, it can be hard to keep them engaged in a meaningful way that meets their more advanced language needs.

A comment of interest that did not fit into any specific category stated above concerned the difference between the English and French stream regarding resources available. The participant expressed that in French Immersion, it feels to them like we are always “three steps behind” when it comes to language arts and literacy.

There’s a lot of great resources out there it’s just I think that teachers have to, especially French Second language, they have to do their own research, their own digging and they’re kind of finding out what works best for them and for their students.

The participant also said that compared to the English stream teachers, French Immersion teachers need additional steps to accomplish tasks due to the additional language component which it makes it more difficult to execute. The extra time required to execute tasks in French Immersion contexts and the lack of resources specific to French are two of the main reasons French Immersion teachers have cited for why they have considered leaving the profession (CASLT, 2020) which is further supported by this participant’s comment.

Resources

In addition to considering the benefits and barriers, it was important when considering teacher retention to investigate what teachers believed could help them to better implement the approach in their classrooms. These resources were considered by participants to be important regarding overcoming the previously mentioned barriers. The majority of participants who were implementing the approach felt that it was their responsibility to create the resources they

needed. “I felt like after I got my PD, then it was like...like, up to me to create everything. There wasn't... A whole lot available.” For some participants, they expressed that they preferred to make their own resources as they could target it towards their students and their interests while others felt it was too time-consuming. Nearly half of participants expressed that they occasionally circle back to the resources they have received while the other half admitted that they were not using the resources with a few saying that they were unaware of the resources that existed. Ensuring that resources are accessible and visible to teachers is important for them to feel supported when implementing new initiatives. The useful resources suggested by participants fall into one of two categories: opportunities or pre-made resources.

Opportunities

The majority of participants said that they would like to see more in-person professional development opportunities to help them implement the approach. Participants expressed the importance of the PD being in-person where they would have a chance to practice activities that they could implement in the classroom and connect with teacher colleagues. A participant shared that they received training in the approach when they taught a younger grade but found it hard to apply what they had learned in their training with the older grade they were presently teaching. “As a grade 2 teacher, I would love more PD on how to implement it when I'm trying to get, like, so much more, like, just richer...conversation, like, more details out of my students.” One person suggested that if the PD was offered multiple times throughout the year, it would offer more time to look at lessons, look at resources and “see what other school boards are doing”. The participant shared that they have received multiple opportunities for PD on the NLA and each time they attended, they learned more about how to use the NLA effectively.

I do think for PD to be effective for teachers to, like, build their skills, to build their confidence, to build their, like, scope and sequence of how to effectively use a strategy throughout the year, the PD would be best delivered throughout the year, so that...Teachers are having the chance to, like, share what they practiced.

Some participants emphasized the importance of more opportunities for PD for new teachers in offering them direction when starting their careers.

I think the training is extremely helpful for brand new teachers... coming into the job... you're a baby bird, and you get, like, kind of thrust out of the nest, and you're just like, oh my gosh, now I'm doing this on my own.

Another opportunity that was helpful to a participant at the start of their career was having a literacy coach while receiving the NLA PD. They said: "I feel very lucky that I had someone to kind of follow up with me in that area." They were able to have lessons modelled for them by the coach and brainstorm ideas of how to implement the approach in their own classroom.

In addition to observing a literacy coach, a few participants expressed that they would like more opportunities to observe other teachers. "I like to see things being done, so I love to watch a teacher do a really good...neuro-linguistic lesson, and then, like, I take notes and stuff, so I think having more opportunity to do that." Having other colleagues model the lessons also offers opportunity to see how that teacher incorporates the NLA structure into their daily routine and gives teachers an opportunity to consider how that routine would or would not work for them.

The resource that the majority of participants cited as being important to feeling supported in implementing the approach was an opportunity to collaborate with colleagues. Many of the participants had already collaborated with colleagues before and were still using the same resources with slight modifications every year. By working with colleagues, the teachers were able to share what they were using and reduce the load of having to create resources themselves. They were also able to collaborate on which language structures to prioritize teaching for their grade:

We really did collaborate there on a lot of those like, structures and what we were teaching, like, what was appropriate when, which was really nice, because although we didn't have a scope and sequence, that kind of everyone working together [was helpful].

Participants expressed that professional learning communities (PLCs), team meetings and opportunities to share resources that worked or did not work would all be ways to collaborate that would help them or already had helped these teachers better implement the NLA in their classrooms.

Pre-made Resources

Directly related to one of the barriers, a few participants shared that they were interested in more relevant and appropriate texts. One participant shared how they felt when they did receive some books that they were able to use from another school board. "I was like, these books are what we've been needing, what we've been, like, wanting more so, and I wish there were more of those, to be honest." The participant went on to explain that some French books for early readers have large, undecodable vocabulary and do not seem like they are suited to beginner French learners. These participants saw books that contain the structures teachers need

to teach as very useful given that reading the structure is one of the steps in the “language loop” they learned about in their training. A participant shared that, while there is a list of books that contain the structures, “the books at school are not always the most recognized, or you might not have as many, or even the ones on the list available to you.” The same participant described what they saw as ideal qualities in a book that is suited to the NLA.

It would be nice to have books that... were somewhat decodable and followed, like, a structured literacy approach, but also had these like, frequently used structures that we're working on... Organized by, like I don't know, difficulty or differentiated by grade somehow? That would be lovely.

Given that reading the structure in authentic texts is one of the key components of the NLA, it is important that teachers know which texts contain which structures when they start their planning. If students are expected to read the text containing the structure on their own, the participant argued that those books need to be decodable. A participant made a suggestion for how that list might look suggesting that “a scope and sequence with a set of, like, books that went with it, that would be lovely.”

There were a number of participants who shared that they would love to see a scope and sequence showing the structures that can be taught based on grade-level needs. One participant expressed that a scope and sequence based around different themes at different times of the year would be especially helpful to new teachers: “it would be really helpful for them if there was some sort of kind of like a guide broken down into how to get started.” The same participant went on to say:

If it were to come to the neurolinguistic approach if there was like a guidebook or something that would kind of lay it out for us a little bit easier as to what to do and I find it's almost...too broad? Because it's you can kind of just 'talk about what you want' or you know there's so many amazing ideas out there but I think it can be overwhelming for teachers if they're not quite sure.

This participant felt that when the teacher was left to decide what structures to teach, it added unnecessary pressure to their workload when a guide would give them more direction when deciding what to teach when. A list of suggested structures and themes based on grade level would also help teachers to scaffold the structures that their students are learning from more basic structures to building upon those into conveying more complex thoughts later on in the year. Another participant shared that their ideal for a guide on how to teach the NLA would not say what has to be taught when but would offer "just something to use as an example, because oftentimes we're just using our professional judgment on where to go and what we're doing". This participant was interested in a scope and sequence that offered suggestions of what structures could be taught when but did not require that they be taught without any flexibility or ability to use your professional judgement.

Finally, nearly half of the participants said that they would like to see a toolbox of possible activities whether it be physical resources collected at schools or online. One teacher participant suggested that "even just very simple games" would be helpful in order to "really incorporate the oral and have the children be super engaged and enjoying it." Participants expressed that these would need to be pre-created games and activities that were easy to pull from the toolbox and incorporate into lessons. Speaking specifically about having a website

where digital resources could be compiled a participant explained “it would be nice to just have a place where that can be added into.” Regarding physical resources, a participant shared what was done at their previous school: “I’ve had it in other schools where you have, like, a little...resource kit in the library... it is nice to have things collected and consolidated in a building.” Time constraints and a lack of resources were two of the reasons cited by teachers for why they were considering leaving the profession (CASLT, 2020) therefore a collection of activities whether physical or digital that is easily accessible is something that may help to resolve this issue threatening teacher retention.

Another comment of interest outside of the main categories was that of creating an environment at school in which French is valued and prioritized. One participant who had worked in another province shared that “There was much more of an emphasis and a... school-wide goal to speak French wherever, everywhere. Our announcements were in French, our music and phys ed were all in French.” The participant noted that this school-wide goal to speak in French allowed students to see the value of learning French or learning another language. The participant also shared that French activities were planned that were connected to the culture itself such as celebrating holidays that are recognized in Quebec. The participant explained: “I think... building a culture of celebrating French language...I think... we can find ways to celebrate French culture and help create an appreciation for, young learners to see the benefits of a French immersion program.” By observing what other provinces are doing and communicating with other teachers, we gain insights into what priorities we can consider implementing in our own schools across Nova Scotia to make French valuable and relevant to students.

Chapter 5. Discussion

This study aimed to collect teachers' perspectives on the neurolinguistic approach regarding how they defined it, the benefits they perceived from using it in their routines, and the obstacles to using the NLA in their teaching. Nova Scotia and other provinces are encouraging the use of the NLA in French education classroom, but little research to date has investigated the benefits to the approach in early immersion programs. Teachers in this study defined the approach as being authentic to students, prioritizing oral language, and focusing on associations with pictures rather than words. Participants believed that incorporating the approach into their routines helped them to reach a wider range of students, build confidence, and increase engagement. With lower student retention in French programs due to students' confidence in their abilities and a negative attitude towards French (Arnott, 2019) and with reports of students being unable to communicate proficiently after leaving French programs (Canadian Parents for French, 2004 ; Netten, 2016) finding strategies to build confidence and improve students' perception of French is important to show students the value of a French education. Most teachers interviewed also found it easy to incorporate the approach into their routines because it felt intuitive to how one learns a language, and it gave them an anchor to explicitly structure their lessons around when lesson planning.

French Immersion is one of the ways that the French culture and language have been revitalized and respected in Canada since the Official Languages Act in 1969 (Statistics Canada, 2024). This program offers opportunities for children to engage in French starting from Grade Primary where most classroom subjects and time spent in the classroom happen in French making oral language and comprehension vital to their early experience of school. Participants in this study who taught Grade Primary or other beginner levels of French previously considered

the NLA a valuable tool in improving their students' oral language and comprehension.

However, the teachers who taught older grades wanted to know more about how to extend their students' learning in a similar way that could help them meet their students' needs. Teachers in this study also reiterated some of the concerns raised in prior research (CASLT, 2020) regarding the need for more time dedicated to collaboration and professional development.

For the teachers interviewed who had a harder time incorporating the NLA into their routine, they found that the approach was time-consuming to create the necessary resources or they had difficulty adapting the approach to a higher grade level from Grade 2 and up. Time and resources are vital to teacher retention (CASLT, 2020) making it important that teachers be able to easily access resources such as a scope and sequence, pre-made activities or grade appropriate decodable texts to effectively teach with current best practice in mind. Access to materials also requires that teachers be made aware that these resources exist and making the resources easy to find when navigating the website where they are stored. Collaborating with colleagues helped the participants reduce their workload and consider new ideas to incorporate into their lessons based on other teachers' first-hand experience. One method through which teachers are able to share their experience and ideas is through opportunities for professional development and most teacher participants shared that they wanted more professional development to continue their learning in regard to the NLA and other programming that is being promoted by their Regional Centre for Education. Insufficient professional development was also mentioned by the Canadian Association of Second Language Teaching (CASLT) (2020) as a threatening factor to teacher retention which emphasizes the fact that teachers across the country are interested in more professional development.

The perceived benefits of this research include offering insight to professional development providers into how teachers currently implement the neurolinguistic approach and how they may be better supported in implementing the approach in the future. The insights gained are important contributions to the literature on the NLA and how to effectively implement effective training on the NLA on a provincial scale to additional language instructors. The interviews also offered the participants a chance to feel heard and have their opinions shared in a way that could bring about change in the resources offered to French Immersion teachers which corresponds with Dressler's view (2018) that French pedagogy be explored in partnership with teachers. Given the difficulties in acquiring resources for and difficulty retaining French Immersion teachers (CASLT, 2020), supporting teachers will be important in ensuring that they want to continue teaching and offer their students high quality research-backed education in French. Highly engaging content that improves students' confidence is also important to retaining students in the French program and helping them perceive themselves as competent in French. However, teacher participants in Nova Scotia still felt that there was more support that could be offered to help them better incorporate the NLA into their lessons and adapt the approach to older students.

Future Research

Future research would benefit from exploring a number of concerns raised by teacher participants in this study. One area that deserves further investigation is that of French resources being available "three steps behind" their English counterparts and considering how this might be improved. Another area of interest is that of school-wide goals for French and how these goals are implemented in different schools and provinces to help engage students in French

language activities and culture. Some of the teachers who participated in the study also mentioned feeling that the approach in the way they were instructed to teach it could sometimes lack an organic nature to how the students could engage in conversation outside of the structures learned. Given that authenticity and spontaneity are vital pieces of the NLA, the fact that these teachers believe that students sometimes still lack an ability to engage in organic conversation is concerning and future research might want to look at the root cause of this deficit. It would also be important to consider how to help teachers incorporate the NLA into the older grades or consider what different approaches might be more beneficial for older grades as they are required to read and convey more complex thoughts.

Conclusion

In order to support the French language as one of the two official languages of Canada, it is vital that students partaking in French education feel that French is relevant to them, and teachers feel supported in their role as facilitators of the language. According to teacher participants in this study, the neurolinguistic approach is a valuable tool to encourage students to use authentic language personalized to their interests and make students confident in their abilities. This finding that teachers perceived their students' as having greater confidence aligns with findings in previous research in K-6 early German immersion (Dressler & Mueller, 2022). Teachers using the approach also gain an intuitive base around which to structure their lessons as well as the reading and writing their students participate in.

As Nova Scotia and other provinces encourage their teachers to use the NLA, it is important to consider how to best support teachers in implementing the approach especially as French teachers report a lack of resources as one of the reasons they consider leaving the

profession. While teachers reported seeing a great deal of value in the NLA for early French learners, some found it difficult to adapt to older grades and time-consuming to create their own resources. Protective factors for teachers who were implementing the approach included opportunities for collaboration and multiple opportunities for in-person professional development which allowed teachers to discuss their ideas and experiences with colleagues. On a larger scale, teachers proposed that the creation and sharing of pre-made resources such as a scope and sequence, level-appropriate texts and a toolbox of possible activities would reduce the load on teachers and make the approach easier to incorporate into their routine.

As it becomes more difficult to retain teachers and fill position in French classrooms (CASLT, 2020), it is important that teachers be given a voice and the potential to implement change in their school system. Gathering teachers' perspectives offers the opportunity to understand what is working and not working within the context of the classroom in practice. Based on the current study, the neurolinguistic approach is an approach that is working for some teachers and not working for others despite the gains that most of the teachers in this study reported having seen. One participant in the study expressed how they felt that "nobody seems to ask teachers on this kind of stuff" which was part of their motivation in participating. Research in the sphere of education would benefit from considering how to incorporate more teacher voices to make research-backed programs more accessible to classroom teachers and encourage current best practice.

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Appendix A

Consent Form

Study Title: P-2 French Immersion Teacher Perspectives on Implementing the Neurolinguistic Approach

Study Investigators

Cheryl Chisholm

Cheryl.Chisholm6@msvu.ca

Invitation to Participate

You are being invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Cheryl Chisholm as a part of her Master of Arts in Literacy Education Thesis project. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and can be revoked at any point in the process with no consequences to the participant including entry into the draw for the \$150 Michaels gift card. The following information details what will be asked of you in this study, the purpose of the research as well as any possible risks or benefits. Please read carefully and ensure that you reach out if you have any further questions about the research to the email or phone number of the investigator given above.

Purpose of the research study

The following proposed research study aims to collect teachers' perspectives on the implementation of the neurolinguistic approach. The purpose of the research is to gather information on how teachers in these grades define the approach, what benefits they perceive from implementing it and the barriers they might encounter while trying to implement the NLA strategies. An example of a question asked in the interview may include: What aspects of the NLA do you incorporate into your lessons?

What you will be asked to do

The main portion of this research will be a semi-structured interview lasting 30-60 minutes about your experience of the Neurolinguistic Approach (NLA) in your own classroom detailing your experience of the NLA since receiving Professional Development. After your consent form is received, the primary or co-investigator will reach out to you to determine the best time for an interview and assign you a pseudonym that will be used to keep your identity anonymous for the remainder of the study.

Who can participate in the study?

French Immersion teachers who have taught Primary to Grade 2 teachers since receiving training in the NLA.

Possible Risks and Benefits

Risks: There are no perceived risks of taking part in the study.

Benefits: This research may lead to more resources being offered to teachers in using the NLA in their classrooms. If the NLA is being implemented effectively by teachers in Nova Scotia, the training may also be offered in other centres for education or other provinces to improve students' oral language.

Privacy and Confidentiality

All copies of documents will be identified only by code/pseudonym and identifying information will be removed from the audio and the transcripts. Participants will not be identified by name in any of the final reports of the completed study. No identifying information will be revealed to anyone outside of the research team unless required to by law.

Reporting Results

The results of the research findings may include publication in a scientific journal, sharing data through presentations and the creation of new resources for teachers using the NLA. Data from the study will be conveyed holistically with some general quotes that lack any identifiers and thus no participants will be identified in the sharing of our findings.

Withdrawing from the study

You can withdraw from the study at any time including beyond the point at which you have already given consent to participate. There will be no consequences to removing yourself from the study and compensation will still be possible. Under these circumstances, the researchers will do their best to remove your data from the research though once it is anonymized after the interview session, it may not be possible to remove all data. Withdrawal will be possible until the deadline of May 2026 when this Masters Thesis will be defended.

Conflicts of Interest

None of the researchers have conflicts of interest in this study.

Questions and Contact Information

If you have any questions about the study or want more information, please contact:

Amna Mirza

Amna.Mirza@msvu.ca

Cheryl Chisholm

Cheryl.Chisholm@msvu.ca

Phone: (XXX)-XXX-XXXX

Signature Page

Project title: P-2 French Immersion Teacher Perspectives on Implementing the Neurolinguistic Approach

Lead researcher: Cheryl Chisholm

Statement of Consent

By signing this form, I agree that:

The study has been explained to me

All my questions have been answered

Possible risks and benefits of this study have been explained to me

I have been told that my personal information will be kept confidential

In addition, I understand that:

I have the right not to participate and the right to stop at any time

I may refuse to participate without consequence

I have a choice of not answering specific questions

I am free at any point to ask any questions about the study

No information that would identify me will be released or printed

I will receive a signed copy of this consent form

You can still participate in the research if you select no:

I agree that I may be quoted directly and anonymously

Yes No

I agree that the interview may be audio recorded

Yes No

I agree that my answers to the interview can be included in the results of the study.

Yes No

I agree that I am a French Immersion teacher in Nova Scotia.

Yes No

I have received training in the neurolinguistic approach and how to implement it in classrooms.

Yes No

I have taught a grade between Primary and Grade 2 since receiving PD on the NLA.

Yes No

I would like to receive the results of this study.

Yes No

Name	Signature	Date

Please provide your personal email address below for correspondence with the investigators of the study.

Email address: _____

Signature of the person obtaining consent

By signing this form, I attest that:

I have explained the study to the prospective participant

I answered all their questions

I provided a copy of this consent form to the participant

The participant seemed to understand the consent form and agreed to participate

Name	Signature	Date

Appendix B

Semi-structured Interview questions

The recording is currently in progress. If at any point you would like to stop participating in the interview, you are free to do so with no consequences to leaving. I'd like to thank you very much for participating in my thesis research. I am going to ask you a series of questions relating to the Neurolinguistic Approach (which I will sometimes call the NLA). You are free to answer in as much or little detail as you would like, and you are also able to skip or not answer questions if you choose.

- 1) How would you describe the Neurolinguistic Approach and its purpose?
- 2) What aspects of the NLA do you incorporate into your lessons?
- 3) Have you noticed a difference in your student's French abilities since implementing the approach? Please explain.
- 4) Do you often use the NLA resources provided by your RCE and do you find that these tools are sufficient? Please elaborate.
- 5) What (if any) barriers do you face when trying to use the NLA in your classroom?
- 6) Is there any resource, tool or training that you feel might help you better implement the NLA in your classroom?
- 7) Do you find the NLA useful in your classroom? Please explain why or why not.
- 8) I do not have any further questions for you, but I would like to open it up in case you would you like to know anything more about the research or if you have any other questions for me.

Thank you very much for your time and have a great rest of your day. (End recording).