

CORE FRENCH PILOT PROJECT
A Summary of the
Affective/Connative Assessment

Prepared for the
Bureau de l'Education Francaise

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I. INTRODUCTION

The CORE French Pilot Project was implemented during the 1980-81 school year by the Bureau de l'Education Francaise. The pilot year was initiated in selected schools on the understanding that the participating Grade 4 classes would receive forty minutes of daily French instruction.

As part of the Pilot Project, the Research Branch was requested by the Bureau to undertake two related assessments. One assessment was to deal with the implementation process, while the other was to focus on the attitudes of the Grade 4 students towards various aspects of French culture and language. The latter assessment is the basis of this summary.

The intent of the CORE program is not to produce bilingual students, but rather to provide an alternative to the French programs currently in Manitoba. The two CORE program objectives pertaining to the attitudinal assessment were as follows:

1. Upon completion students will be capable of resuming the study of French in later life; and
2. Will have developed a basic knowledge and appreciation of the culture of French-speaking Canadians.¹

The attitudinal (affective and connative) components of the above program objectives were the focus of the Research Branch assessment. As such, the research objectives of this study were:

1. To observe student attitudes towards cultural (French) activities in which they participate;
2. To observe student attitudes towards future participation cultural (French) activities;
3. To observe student attitudes towards using French; and
4. To observe student attitudes towards learning French in the future.

¹ Source: CORE Curriculum Guides, BEF.

II. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following represents a summary of the highlights of the CORE French assessment of student attitudes. This summary is based on the more detailed analysis which appears in the Affective/Connative report.

A. Operational Definitions

For purposes of this summary, the following definitions will apply.

Affective - This refers to the emotional component of attitudes.

Connative - This refers to the predisposition to undertake a certain act. It is another component of attitudes.

Conversational French students - These are students who took French, other than the CORE French program, at the Grade 4 level. The study included 368 Conversational students.

CORE French students - This refers to Grade 4 students who participated in the CORE French program within the Pilot Project. The study included 1223 CORE French students.

Culture - This was defined by the Bureau de l'Education Francaise as being "a composite of the elements of the shared life of a community. It includes its language, music, art, history, social customs, traditions and values and the physical environment." For purposes of this research it was agreed that the definition would be used as "a general orientation or guideline."

Non-French students - This refers to Grade 4 students who did not receive any French instruction during the 1980-81 school year. The study included 154 non-French students.

Statistical significance - This term is used throughout the report to indicate which groups are not likely to differ by chance alone.

B. Limitations

The reader should note the following limitations when reading this summary:

1. Due to the fact that the CORE French Pilot Project Evaluation was begun in November, it was not possible to pre-test Grade 4 students. As such, the data reported in this study reflect student attitudes at one particular point in time.
2. The CORE group, unlike the Conversational sample, received increased materials and support (financial/consultant), as well as increased instructional time. Also, as a volunteer for the Pilot Project, the CORE group may not be representative of the Conversational sample in terms of the method of selecting students, schools and teachers.

3. It should be noted that, as in any attitudinal assessment, the attitudes of their peers and parents may influence student responses. However, these extraneous influences were not taken into consideration in the study design due to various constraints.

C. Highlights

1. Student Attitudes Towards Cultural (French) Activities

- Overall, students taking CORE French had significantly more positive attitudes towards French cultural activities than did other students. The difference was greatest when comparing CORE and Non-French students.
- Specifically regarding student attitudes towards cultural activities in which they presently participate, CORE French students were most likely to have positive attitudes (58%), and Non-French students were least likely to have positive attitudes (43%). The results for Non-French students were to be expected as they are the group least likely to participate in such activities.
- Sixty-two percent of CORE French students were positive or very positive towards their future participation in cultural activities, compared to 52% of Conversational students and 44% of students who did not take French.

2. Student Attitudes Towards Learning and Using French

- Overall, approximately 65% of CORE students were positive about learning/using French, as compared to 55% of Conversational and 45% of Non-French students.
- Students, regardless of program, while professing an "emotional" commitment to speaking French, appeared to be less predisposed to actually using French outside the classroom.
- Approximately 20% of CORE students had negative attitudes towards learning/using French in the future.
- The student's desired level of French competency in the future did not differ for CORE or Conversational students.

D. Conclusions

The conclusions relating to each objective will be presented in this section. Also, implications of a general nature will be discussed at the end of the section.

The reader should remember that these conclusions/implications refer only to the assessment of student attitudes. THIS REPORT IS ONE PART OF A

TOTAL EVALUATION. THEREFORE, FOR DECISION-MAKING PURPOSES, ITS FINDINGS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THOSE OF THE "SKILLS ASSESSMENT" AND THE "IMPLEMENTATION ASSESSMENT."

If an objective of CORE French is to increase positive student attitudes towards cultural (French) activities in which they participate, the following should be noted:

- Exposure to either French program increased positive student attitudes towards cultural activities in which they participate.
- It was concluded, however, that exposure to CORE French was more likely to result in positive attitudes. On this basis, the CORE French program met this objective.

If an objective of CORE French is to increase positive student attitudes towards future participation in Cultural (French) activities, the following should be noted:

- CORE French students were more likely to have positive attitudes than were other students. Consequently, the CORE French program met this second cultural objective.
- In every group, a higher percentage of students were more positive about future participation in cultural activities, than they had been regarding their present participation.

If an objective of CORE French is to increase positive student attitudes towards using French, the following should be noted:

- CORE students more frequently indicated that they liked using French than did other students. On the basis of this objective, the CORE French Program was successful.
- The majority of all students, including those in the CORE French program, did not have positive attitudes (connotative) concerning their projected French useage. On the basis that CORE French students were less negative, the Program achieved a degree of success.

If an objective of CORE French is to increase positive student attitudes towards learning French in the future, the following should be noted:

- CORE French students were most likely to be positive about learning French in the future. On this basis, the CORE French Program was successful.
- While differences between CORE and Non-French students existed, there was no significant difference between CORE and Conversational French students' desired level of future French language competency. That is, both CORE and Conversational students indicated the same predisposition towards improving their French language skills to the level of their English ones. It was concluded that exposure to French, rather than to a specific program, was the influencing factor.

In conclusion, the greatest differences in attitudes appeared when CORE French students were compared to Non-French students. When comparing student attitudes significant differences occurred on both the cultural and using/learning French components.

When compared to the Conversational Program, it would appear that the CORE Program had more influence on the cultural attitudes of students than on their learning/using attitudes. While some statistically significant differences did appear on the learning/using component, it should be recognized that they were marginal.

Given the nature of the implementation of CORE French, (ie. the increased in-services, the support materials and the nature of teacher selection), the relative differences between CORE and Conversational students' attitudes must be carefully considered. If the CORE French program is implemented on a larger scale, without implementation procedures comparable to the Pilot Project, the attitudinal differences attributable to the CORE French program may decrease.

As no data is currently available to indicate the importance of each of the program elements unique to CORE, it might be useful to examine the effects of changing each independently. For example, rather than target for increasing the time to 40 minutes per day, the Conversational model could be implemented with the resources and supports that were available to CORE, as well as a structured curriculum akin to CORE.

In conclusion, based on the student attitudinal data, the CORE French Pilot Project appears to have achieved its objectives of increasing students' positive attitudes towards French cultural activities and towards learning/using French.