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Imagine you're having an engaging conversation with a friend and you're bouncing ideas off of one another without hesitation.

Now imagine that same conversation in French. Many of you would say you could only get through "Bonjour, comment ça va?".

Canada is a bilingual country, with English and French being its two official languages, and yet only around 18% of Canadians are able to speak both. Why is this the case?

In an evolving world many areas of the second language education system continue to concentrate on outdated teaching methods such as memorization, grade-focused learning, and complex grammar that does not relate to a real-world environment.

Language is about being spontaneous, taking risks, and is a fundamental tool for human interaction.

I propose we use theatre improvisation as a learning tool to increase French as a second language acquisition. Language learning is about communicating, playing, laughing, co-sharing, and improvising.

Imagine a safe, fun, and diverse space where there is room for language exploration. A learning-focused environment that imitates the real world with social interaction. Students are placed in a position where they must communicate, think critically and problem-solve.

Since January I have conducted a series of improvisation language workshops in both French at University of Guelph courses and at the high school level. My research design is based on the experiential learning cycle, the Kolb model. First is the concrete experience, improvisation games like recreating fairy tales where the priority is communication and interaction. Next, reflect on the experience and assign meaning to the activity. Then, abstract conceptualisation means gaining a new perspective of the experience, so that finally, through active experimentation, the learner applies their new insights to the real world. The cycle repeats because we can always be expanding our language skills!

My research has shown that language retention is higher when fun and play are implemented in learning. Theatrical play activates the prefrontal area of the brain that is responsible for emotional processing and personal reflection. Language acquisition is therefore more effective because of the sensory experience that improvisation brings to a learner, something you don't get sitting at a desk.

My idea is unique and important because theatre improvisation in language learning considers sociolinguistic factors. Interacting with others allows students to think about language in relation to gender, social class, race, religion and more!

In conclusion, theatre improvisation in language allows for the spontaneous, unknown and unpredictable way in which this world works.

If we want future leaders who can communicate well, take risks, think and speak on the spot, then theatre improvisation should be integrated into the French as a second language education system.