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INTERACTIVE METHODS IN TEACHING FRENCH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AT A2–B1 LEVELS: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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Abstract: *This thesis examines the theoretical underpinnings and pedagogical implications of interactive methods in teaching French as a foreign language FFL at the A2–B1 proficiency levels as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages CEFR. Drawing on Vygotskian socio-constructivism, the communicative approach, and the CEFR's action-oriented perspective, the study argues that interactive methods—collaborative tasks, role plays, project-based learning, and technology-enhanced activities—constitute a principled and effective means of fostering communicative competence, learner autonomy, and intrinsic motivation. Key implementation challenges and evidence-informed recommendations for practitioners are also discussed.*

Keywords: *interactive methods, FFL, CEFR, A2–B1, communicative competence, action-oriented perspective, collaborative learning, learner autonomy, motivation.*

Over the past four decades, foreign language pedagogy has undergone a fundamental paradigm shift from teacher-centred, grammar-translation approaches towards learner-centred, communicatively oriented methodologies. This transformation has been substantially shaped by the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages CEFR, which conceptualises language learning not as the accumulation of grammatical rules but as the development of the capacity to act communicatively in socially meaningful contexts Council of Europe, 2001.¹⁸

The present thesis focuses specifically on the A2 and B1 proficiency levels, where learners must navigate everyday communicative situations with increasing independence. Bridging these two levels demands pedagogical approaches that prioritise purposeful, authentic interaction over passive reception. The central research question addressed in this thesis is: To what extent do interactive methods provide a theoretically grounded and practically effective framework for developing communicative competence at the A2–B1 levels of FFL instruction?

The theoretical basis for interactive language learning is rooted in the socio-constructivist framework of Vygotsky who argued that higher cognitive functions develop through social interaction before being internalised by the individual. His concept of the Zone of Proximal Development ZPD—the gap between what a learner can achieve

¹⁸The CEFR defines the A2 learner as able to “communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics” and the B1 learner as able to “deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 24).

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independently and what they can accomplish with scaffolded support—provides a compelling rationale for collaborative and dialogic learning activities.¹⁹

When learners negotiate meaning, co-construct discourse, and receive scaffolded support from peers or instructors, they operate within their ZPD, thereby accelerating linguistic development Lantolf & Thorne. This insight positions interaction not merely as a vehicle for language practice, but as a constitutive dimension of language acquisition. Applied to FFL instruction at the A2–B1 levels, this implies designing activities that systematically place learners at the outer edge of their current competence, providing structured opportunities for supported communicative risk-taking.

The communicative approach, developed in the 1970s–80s, prioritises the learner's ability to use language for authentic communication over rote grammatical knowledge. Central to this approach is the concept of communicative competence, which encompasses grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic sub-competences.²⁰

Building on this foundation, the CEFR's action-oriented perspective reconceptualises the learner as a “social agent” who uses language to accomplish real-world tasks Council of Europe. For A2–B1 learners, this implies instruction organised around tasks that mirror authentic communicative demands—service encounters, collaborative problem-solving, opinion exchange—wherein interaction functions simultaneously as the medium and the objective of learning.

Collaborative group work enables learners to engage in authentic communicative exchange while jointly constructing knowledge. Empirical research demonstrates that such tasks promote negotiation of meaning, peer scaffolding, and output modification—mechanisms identified as critical to second language development Long, Swain. Role plays and simulations complement collaborative work by situating learners in contextually meaningful scenarios: A2 learners may conduct simple transactional exchanges, while B1 learners navigate opinion expression or interpersonal conflict resolution. Beyond linguistic accuracy and fluency, role plays develop pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence, enabling calibrated language use.

Task-based language teaching TBLT organises instruction around communicative tasks with non-linguistic outcomes, closely aligned with the CEFR's action-oriented perspective. Project-oriented approaches extend this principle across longer timeframes through activities such as producing a class publication, preparing a multimedia presentation, or conducting a peer interview series. Such projects sustain intrinsic motivation, promote learner autonomy, and integrate multiple language skills in ways that replicate real-world communicative demands. Dörnyei notes that project work increases learners' sense of ownership—a key predictor of sustained engagement.

¹⁹Vygotsky's concept of the ZPD has been extensively applied in second language acquisition research. See Lantolf & Thorne (2006) for a comprehensive review of sociocultural theory in L2 development.

²⁰The term “communicative competence” was first introduced by Hymes (1972) in critique of Chomsky's notion of competence as purely grammatical knowledge, emphasising instead the social rules governing language use.

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The integration of digital technologies opens new dimensions of interactive FFL learning. Interactive platforms, synchronous online communication tools, and multimedia resources provide access to authentic language input and extend interaction beyond the classroom. Research in computer-assisted language learning CALL indicates that technology-enhanced interaction reduces communicative anxiety, broadens participation, and delivers immediate, individualised feedback. For A2–B1 learners, digital tools serve as bridges between controlled classroom instruction and the unpredictable demands of real-world communication.

Despite their substantial benefits, interactive methods present identifiable implementation challenges. Heterogeneous proficiency levels can complicate task design; institutional curricula may restrict time for extended activities; and learners from educational backgrounds privileging passive reception may initially resist participatory formats. These constraints must be acknowledged and systematically addressed in instructional planning.

To overcome these challenges, practitioners are advised to: scaffold interactive tasks carefully, ensuring learners possess the linguistic resources required for meaningful participation; differentiate tasks to accommodate varying proficiency levels; establish transparent assessment criteria that value communicative effort alongside accuracy; and cultivate a low-anxiety classroom environment that encourages communicative risk-taking. Sustained professional development in task design and feedback provision is equally essential.

This thesis has argued that interactive methods constitute a theoretically principled and empirically supported approach to FFL instruction at the A2–B1 levels. Grounded in Vygotskian socio-constructivism, the communicative approach, and the CEFR’s action-oriented perspective, these methods align instructional practice with the communicative demands learners encounter beyond the classroom.

The convergence of theoretical frameworks and pedagogical research strongly supports the integration of collaborative tasks, role plays, project-based learning, and digital interaction into the FFL curriculum. The principal contribution of this thesis lies in demonstrating that interaction, understood as a socially constituted and cognitively generative process, is not merely a supplementary activity but the central mechanism through which A2–B1 communicative competence is most effectively developed. Future empirical research should investigate the differential effects of specific interactive task types on distinct competence dimensions across diverse instructional contexts.

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