IS ENGLISH REALLY NECESSARY IN FRENCH IMMERSION CLASSROOMS:

A CASE STUDY

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By
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Honni Jeanne Lizee, candidate for the degree of Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction, has presented a thesis titled, *Is English Really Necessary in French Immersion Classrooms: A Case Study*, in an oral examination held on April 14, 2014. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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Abstract

This case study investigates how and why five French immersion teachers use English in a second language classroom and if other first languages are used or incorporated in the classroom. The teacher participants in this study are early French immersion teachers working in either a Grade 1 or Grade 2 classroom in a Catholic school division. Four of the teacher participants work in single-track French immersion school and one worked in a dual-track French immersion school. The data was collected via interviews, reflective journals and still photos of the participants’ classrooms.

In brief, the findings of this study demonstrate that the teacher participants use English in the classroom for a variety of reasons. These reasons can be classified into three groups: 1) personal beliefs regarding first language use, 2) situations the teacher has control over and 3) situations where the perceived needs of the students affect the choices of the teacher. In addition, the teacher participants in this study reveal that very little thought is given to the students who do not have English as their first language, nor is there an attempt to incorporate those languages into the classroom.

This thesis concludes with a discussion of possible considerations for French immersion teachers, professional development opportunities, and teacher education programs and future research suggestions.
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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my family. I have an amazing husband and four wonderful children who have supported me throughout this process. My husband’s never wavering support and willingness to take over the household when I was busy writing or researching will not go unforgotten. I also dedicate this thesis to my mother who recently completed her own thesis. Without her knowledge, support, and encouragement this process would not have been as enjoyable as I have found it to be. So, thank you very much, Mom.
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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

When you walk into a French immersion classroom, chances are you will hear English being used by teachers and students, alike. According to a handbook designed for French Second Language administrators, French immersion teachers should “use French at all times, except if the students’ safety is at risk” (Saskatchewan Learning, 2005, p.8). This philosophy is in direct opposition to what many researchers have stated throughout years of study into first language use in second language classrooms (Al-Hadhrami, 2008; Polio & Duff, 1994; Rolin-Ianziti & Brownlie, 2002). Although research has found that first language use serves a role, Al-Hadhrami (2008) posits that teachers who share a common first language with the majority of their students are often unsure of whether they should be using this language in the classroom. Researchers, such as Atkinson (1987), Cook (2001), and Turnbull (2001), do not dispute the fact that the students’ first language has a role to play in a second language classroom. However, the amount of first language used remains a highly contested issue in second language research.

Atkinson (1987) and Cook (2001) both maintain that the first language plays an important role and that it should not be overlooked as a valuable teaching tool. They argue the first language can be used in specific situations, such as grammar lessons and the explanation of difficult concepts, to help the students make connections between their first language and their second language. Turnbull (2001) is on the other side of this argument. He agrees that using the students’ first language can be an important teaching strategy but all attempts should be made to use the second language first. In other words,
French immersion teachers should not switch to English without first exhausting all second language learning strategies. Mandin (2008) goes even further than Turnbull and points out that if teachers want to improve the overall language skills of their students, explicit teaching of the vernacular language needs to happen in the classroom so students have opportunities to practice. In other words, teachers should not switch to English at the first sign of student difficulty if the ultimate goal is to promote bilingual competencies.

In provinces where English is the official language, most French immersion schools are located in areas where French is not the dominant language. In many French immersion classrooms, French may be the language of instruction for the students; however English is the language the majority of students speak and live when they are not in school. For allophone students, those whose first language is neither of Canada’s official languages, who attend French immersion schools, French remains the language taught and used in the school. These students do, however, encounter their own first language at home and English in the community and at school. The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education not only indicates that French should be the language of instruction for all subject areas, with the exception of English class, at school, it goes on to explain “la langue est un instrument de communication, un outil de pensée et d'apprentissage ainsi que le véhicule par lequel l’élève développe son savoir-agir” (Ministère de l’Éducation de la Saskatchewan, 2012, p. 6). What the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education is saying is students should be using the French language to communicate with each other and their teachers. French should be a tool that helps
students think and learn and the means by which students develops their knowledge on how to behave.

Although it is the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education’s intention that French be the language immersion students use to communicate, to think, and to develop their know-how, English continues to creep into daily lessons and functions in many French immersion classroom. The fact remains that teachers do use the majority language, English, which is frequently the students’ first language and often the teachers’ first language, in second language classrooms for various purposes (Cook, 2001; Edstrom, 2006; Turnbull, 2001). Turnbull (2001) explains that teachers are choosing to use the students’ first language in the classroom whether they are permitted to or not. If teachers are using the students’ first language in the classroom, Edstrom (2006) points out that teachers need to be aware of when they are using the students’ first language and why they are using the first language.

The purpose of this study is to understand how teachers use English, the assumed first language of the majority of the students and in some cases the teachers’ own first language, in early French immersion classroom. This study also identifies the reasons teachers give to explain their decisions to use English in the classroom. It is important to note the purpose of this study is not to understand why students use English in the classroom but rather why teachers are making the decision to use English in the classroom. This leads to the second focus of this study which is to examine how, or if, teachers respond to the needs of multilingual students in French immersion classrooms. Due to an increase in multilingual students in French immersion classroom, anglophone
students are no longer the only students in these classrooms (Dagenais, 2008a; Dagenais & Berron, 2001; Swain & Lapkin, 2005). Swain and Lapkin note the number of multilingual students in French immersion classrooms is on the rise due, in large part, to the fact that multilingual parents want their children to speak both official languages of Canada. As Dagenais (2008b) points out, it is time schools begin to look at the diversity of their student population and to reflect this diversity in the teaching strategies being used in the classroom.

Who am I?

Morrow (2005) points out that “all research is subject to researcher bias” (p. 254). With this knowledge, presenting who I am is important because my personal beliefs, interests, preoccupations and desires can influence how I conduct, analyze and present my research (Drapeau, 2002; Ratner, 2002). My interest in the area of first language use in a second language classroom springs from my experience of learning the majority of my second language, French, in a classroom setting where the use of English, my first language, was not permitted. I remember often being confused and lost because I did not understand the entire lesson and I relied on what the other students were doing to figure it out. Much of my university career was similar to these first experiences. I spent the day learning and speaking French, strictly keeping English out of the classroom. Fast forward to my teaching career and I began to notice many of my colleagues were using English in their French immersion classrooms.

I have spent my career, to date, teaching only in French immersion schools.

When I reflect on the matter of using English in the classroom, I have been questioning
my practices since I began teaching. Thinking back to when I first started teaching, I used considerably less English in the classroom because of different theories taught during my undergraduate degree. Overtime, my practices have changed to include more English ‘to help the students understand.’ When I use English, there is always a little voice in the back of my head asking if it is really necessary. Am I using English to help the children understand or am I using English to make my job just a little bit easier? Am I using English because I am frustrated and it is easier to speak in English or because my students do not understand discipline in French? Could this lesson be accomplished without using English? With these questions in mind, I found myself wondering if other French immersion teachers asked themselves these same questions.

As I began studying first language use at a graduate level, I convinced myself that using English was indeed a positive teaching tool because all the students in my classroom understood English. I remember looking briefly at different articles written by the experts in the field of second language research, such as Vivian Cook, and I formed opinions without reading the entire article in order to justify my classroom practices. Reflecting on my beliefs a little more, I began to see the errors in my thinking. I think back to one student I taught a number of years ago, who had immigrated to Canada, and my classroom was her first institutionalized experience learning either of Canada’s official languages. Every time I used English in the classroom, I could see she became confused. My attempts to help her understand French by using English were not allowing her to build connections with her first language. This experience led me to think more about the students in my classroom who were multilingual learners and who were trying
to make linguistic connections to languages other than English. These experiences have led me to question whether speaking French at all times is more beneficial to student learning or if using the common first language, English, would or could facilitate the learning process. And if I choose the latter of these strategies, should I make an attempt to include other languages into my classroom also?

**Definition of Terms**

In this section, I describe the different terms I use in this study. Each of these terms can have slightly different interpretations according to different researchers and I have chosen the definition that best suits my study.

1) French immersion program

Saskatchewan Learning (2005), currently known as the Ministry of Education, has described the French immersion program as a “second language program in which French is the language of instruction for a significant part of the day” (p.15). The Canadian Council on Learning (2007) further explains that French immersion is a program offered in schools that uses French as the language of instruction for a large portion of the subjects taught in the classroom.

2) First language / mother tongue

Given the description of the French immersion program from the Ministry of Education, I have decided to use the following definitions from the field of Second Language Acquisition. The term *first language* and *mother tongue* refer to the language children learn from their parents or guardians during the first four years of their life (Ortega, 2009).
3) Second language / target language

*Second language or target language* refers to the language that is learned after the first language (Ortega, 2009).

4) Code switching

*Code switching* is what happens when a person is speaking in one language and switches to another language in mid-speech. This communication strategy commonly occurs when interlocutors know and understand the same languages (Fakharzadeh & Rasekh, 2009).

5) Allophone student

According to Mady (2007b), an *allophone student* is a student who has arrived in Canada during their elementary or secondary school career and who is an English and/or French language learner. I would like to add to this definition that an allophone student also includes the children who were born in Canada but who do not speak either official languages, English or French, as their first language.

**A Short History of French Immersion**

St-Lambert, Quebec, is typically credited as the first French immersion school to open in Canada in 1965 but Rebuffot (1993) points out that there were other schools that opened before the St-Lambert school in the early 1960s. Rebuffot notes two immersion schools that existed before the school in St-Lambert: 1) Ecole Cedar Park in the West Island School Division and 2) Toronto French School. Rebuffot explains the St-Lambert case is recognized as the first French immersion school because of the political power of the parents that began the school, as well as the researchers with whom they were able to
The St-Lambert French immersion program began as a result of anglophone parents responding to political, social, and economic changes occurring in Quebec at the time. Due to the Quiet Revolution, a period of rapid social and political change in Quebec in the 1960s (Durocher, 2013), the French language was becoming the main language in Quebec and anglophone Quebecers were becoming concerned about their future, and their children’s futures, in the province (Government of Alberta, 2010). A group of parents received permission to begin an experimental kindergarten program where the students were taught the same content as they would have received in an English classroom but the content was taught in French (Stern & Leblanc, 2006). In 1969, the first Canadian Official Languages Act was passed declaring that English and French would have equal status in all institutions of Parliament and the Government of Canada (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, 2005). The 1970s saw the creation of a number of groups to support the goals of the French immersion program. Canadian Parents for French (CPF), a national group that has provincial organizations and local chapters was formed, as well as an association for teachers, Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers/Association canadienne des professeurs d’immersion (Government of Alberta, 2010). As the years progressed, the number of students enrolled in French immersion continued to increase, reaching a peak in the 1980s with schools offering the French immersion program in all provinces and two territories (Canadian Council of Learning, 2007).

The Canadian Council of Learning (2007) states “overall, French immersion appears to be an effective approach to fostering French-English bilingualism among
young anglophone Canadians” (p. 8). This statement points to the fact that young allophone Canadians may have been left out of the equation of the need to foster bilingualism is Canada.

[Immigrant students] are currently less likely than non-immigrant children to participate in French immersion education. On the surface, it may seem likely that learning English as a second language presents enough of a challenge to immigrant students whose first language is not English.” (Canadian Council of Learning , 2007, p. 9)

Mady (2007a) conducted an intensive review of literature involving allophone students in French Second-Official-Language Programs (FSL) and she argues that policies, dating back to the Official Languages Act, do not account for allophone students in FSL programs. Language policies that affect students in schools have three layers in Canada. Mady describes it as “a process from federal creation to possible provincial formation to district implementation: the formulation and implementation of policies travels from the federal government to the provinces, and from there to the districts, the classrooms, and finally, the students” (p. 729). Basically, what Mady is saying is that the federal government creates a policy, the provincial government then puts together a program to meet the federal government’s criteria, and the districts are in charge of implementing the program in the schools.

Looking back at the 1960s, prior to the Official Languages Act, the federal government formed the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (RCBB). Mady (2007a) explains that the RCBB proposed that all students in Canadian schools study a compulsory second official language. Problems for allophone students arise, however, because it is recommended that French becomes the official second language
for all anglophones, essentially leaving allophone students out of the picture. Throughout the years, policies continue to ignore the needs of allophone students. With the creation of the Multicultural Policy in 1971, the federal government stated they would assist immigrants in acquiring one of the official languages, but not both (Mady, 2013). Policies throughout the 80s and 90s continued to ignore the needs of allophone students with regards to having access to both official languages of Canada. The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages continued to work on policies surrounding multicultural issues however the need to address access to language learning opportunities in students’ second official language (when this language may be a third or fourth language) continued to be glossed over even in the 2000s. Mady describes how although the commissioner emphasized that English and French remain the linguistic pillars of Canada, one solution appears to be to that of attracting French speaking immigrants to Canada in an effort to maintain the linguistic duality of Canada. Even though policies encompassing multilingual matters usually ignore the needs of allophone students, according to a paper commissioned by Canadian Parents for French (2010), 40% of allophone parents who participated in the study enrolled their children in French immersion programs.

Although federal policies do not officially support, nor officially discourage, the inclusion of immigrant students in French immersion classrooms, the Canadian Council of Learning (2007) claims that French immersion classrooms provide multilingual students with many opportunities.

The French immersion classroom can provide advantages that are often not available to immigrant students in English classrooms. All students in French immersion classrooms...
immersion classrooms are learning a second language and the frequent use of visual aids, gestures and rephrasing designed to help students learn French can also help students make sense of their classroom experiences. (p.10)

The Canadian Council of Learning (2007) also claims that French-English bilingualism is just as important to new Canadians as it is to Canadian-born citizens. Dagenais and Day (1999) found similar results in their case study with an ethnographic framework of three multilingual families to the opinions stated by the Canadian Council of Learning (2007). Dagenais and Day (1999) concluded that multilingual parents enrolled their children in French immersion for a number of reasons: 1) the opportunity to learn another language, 2) spent time in a French speaking area of the country, 3) learning another language can help their child in the future, and 4) historical ties between the French language and their country of origin. In other words, the reasons for multilingual parents to enroll their child in French immersion are as varied and personal as the reasons anglophone parents have for enrolling their child in French immersion. Canadian Parents for French (2010) points out that “despite the fact that 80% of allophone parents received no information about French immersion options from the school system, and despite frequent discouragement from educators … 60% felt that learning both of Canada’s official languages would benefit their children” (p. 5).

**Conclusion**

The amount of the students’ first language used in a second language classroom remains a contested issue amongst researchers (Cook, 2001; Turnbull, 2001). My own personal experiences have affected my opinion in regards to the amount of English use I engage in and allow in my classroom and this has led me to wonder if other teachers
experience some of the same struggles and questions. In this chapter, I presented myself in order to situate myself in the research process. I also described the purpose of this study. Next, I defined the key terms I use throughout this research project. Finally, I described the history surrounding the French immersion program, how it began and how multilingual students factor into the policies that inform the program.

In Chapter Two, I present literature relevant to my research. I synthesize the literature that examines the different situations where teachers use the students’ first language, present different theories that argue why first language use should be minimized in the classroom and present studies that explain that the needs of multilingual students can, and should, be met in a second language classroom. In Chapter Three, I describe my methodology and explain how I conducted my research. After that, in Chapters Four and Five, I present and analyze the data. Chapter Four includes a description of each participant, including their linguistic background and their language beliefs, and I investigate how the participants view multilingual students and their abilities in a second language classroom. Chapter Five focuses on English language use that is under the teachers’ control and teacher use of English that students have influence over. Finally, I finish the discussion with a revision of the research questions and the findings of the study in Chapter Six. I also present my recommendations for French immersion teachers, professional development and teacher education.
CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

Fakharzeden and Rasekh (2009) state that “the objective of a language teaching program is to develop in students a capability in the language (second language) other than their own (first language)” (p. 2). According to a Ministry of Education document, the desired outcomes of the French immersion program in Saskatchewan is to create students who “can communicate effectively and completely in French and are capable of pursuing post-secondary studies in French and of being employed in a French-speaking environment” (Saskatchewan Learning, 2005, p.11). The Ministry of Education goes on to explain that teachers need to conduct their lessons in French, unless student safety is in question. Researchers have noted, however, that many teachers use the students’ first language in the classroom in order to facilitate lessons and student learning (Butzkamm, 2003; Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Rolin-Ianziti & Brownlie, 2002). This directive from the Ministry of Education seems to be in direct opposition of a large amount of research in second language acquisition that states that using the students’ first language can be an effective teaching strategy.

In this chapter, I review literature that investigates different cognitive and affective reasons teachers give for using the students’ first language in a second language classroom. I then explore studies that examine how learning environments can affect the teachers’ decision to use the students’ first language in the classroom. Next, I present research seeking to determine different reasons why teachers need to focus on the students’ second language use and why it is important to minimize first language use in the classroom. Finally, I focus on studies explaining the experiences of multilingual
students and how the numbers in French immersion are changing to reflect Canadian immigration numbers.

Even though these numbers are changing, teaching strategies used by French immersion teachers do not seem to reflect these changes, possibly marginalizing multilingual students and calling into question using English in the classroom in the first place. Although the focus of this study is the use of English, and possibly other first languages, in French immersion classrooms, I have decided to include research conducted in the fields of second language acquisition and foreign language acquisition for adults and immersion settings for children learning languages other than French. Using these fields of study will complement the findings surrounding the use of the first language in second language classrooms. Cummins (2007) demonstrates how combining research conducted across these fields leads to a broader, if not deeper understanding of second language acquisition.

**Cognitive Reasons Teachers Choose for First Language Use in the Classroom**

Teachers base some of their decisions to use the students’ first language in the classroom on the students’ cognitive abilities (Cook, 2001; Rolin-lanziti & Brownlie, 2002; Polio & Duff, 1994). Butzkamm (1998) analyzes a history lesson taught in English as a second language in a bilingual German grammar school. Findings from that study suggest that if the students’ first language is used to assist students when they are encountering vocabulary difficulties, it can become an ally of the second language. Butzkamm suggests code switching can be an integral part of the learning process and that the first language does not take over the lesson, rather it becomes a conversational
lubricant to keep the lesson flowing. As Butzkamm explains, a teacher cannot banish the mother tongue from the classroom therefore attempts need to be made to work with the natural tendencies of the students and to build upon their prior knowledge. If a child understands the concept of numbers in their first language, using that 6 3 and building upon it will assist the learning process in their second language.

The students’ first language can be used in a number of different ways in the classroom. Some of the more common reasons to use the students’ first language in regards to the students’ cognitive abilities are: 1) to explain new or difficult concepts, 2) to explain grammar, 3) to convey and check meaning, 4) to translate vocabulary (Al-Shidhanai, 2009; Cook, 2001; de la Campa & Nassaji, 2009; Kharma & Hajjaj, 1989; Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Polio & Duff, 1994; Rolin-Ianziti & Brownlie, 2002; Tang 2002). Al-Shidhanai (2009) notes in his research involving grade 1 to grade twelve teachers working with students learning English in an Arabic context that the teachers have positive views about using the students’ first language in the ways mentioned above. The most common way his participants identified their first language use in the classroom was to explain ideas, vocabulary, and grammar points. Similar findings can also be found in research conducted with adult learners. De la Campa and Nassaji (2009) conducted a study in two university-level classrooms with native speaking instructors teaching German as a foreign language in an anglophone university. They used video and audio recording, instructor interviews and stimulated recall sessions immediately following the class recordings to determine the amount, purpose, and reasons for using the students’ first language in a second language classroom. De la Campa and Nassaji
(2009) note similar findings to those of Al-Shidhanai (2009). The two most common reasons given for the instructors’ usage of the students’ first language were translating words from the second language to the first language and explaining activities.

Another reason found in the research for the use of the students’ first language in the classroom is that using the students’ first language can make the activities more efficient, therefore allowing the students to get more work accomplished. The students’ first language can help facilitate communication and can actually save time by making activities more productive (Butzkamm, 2003; Harbord, 1992). Myojin (2007) conducted a quasi-experiment and survey study with first-year university students learning English as a foreign language in Japan. He observed one instructor’s teacher talk and the listening skills of the students over a two month period and analyzed surveys completed by four different classes. The results of his study indicate the first language can be a valuable resource when used properly at appropriate times. In other words, when the first language is used to provide the students with missing vocabulary concepts, the students are able to understand the lesson better and move on to the assignment faster.

The language choice made by the teacher in the classroom is a pedagogical decision all teachers make. Choosing to use the students’ first language for the exact same reasons twice is rare. In other words, a teacher may choose to use English one day to explain a grammatical point and, during the next lesson, the students appear to grasp the concept so the teacher decides to remain in the second language for the duration of the lesson. Consequently, careful thought must be put into all situations when English is used in the classroom. Edstrom (2006) conducted a self-study of her use of the students’
first language in a second language university class and concluded that, with her university students, she still needed to be aware of why she was using the students’ first language. She stated at the end of her study that all language teachers should explore the potential impact using the students’ first language can have on the students’ ability to learn their second language.

Students’ perceived abilities and needs also play an important role in a teacher’s decision to use their students’ first language in the classroom. Al-Buraiki (2008) observed Omani teachers of English who worked with young children. The results of his study indicate there are more factors at play in a classroom than simply teachers’ individual beliefs on using the students’ first language. He explains that students’ knowledge of the concepts and students’ proficiency levels can affect the decisions made by the teacher. It stands to reason that a teacher can hardly continue with a lesson if no one in the classroom understands the concept being discussed. It is important to note that we are not discussing the students’ use of the first language but rather the teachers’ usage of the first language in reaction to perceived difficulties by the students.

Just as teachers use the students’ first language to help students understand lessons and to meet different proficiency levels, research also demonstrates that teachers use the students’ first language to ease students into the school year or to introduce new units to the students (Cook, 2001; Carson & Kashihara, 2012; de la Campa & Nassaji, 2009; Polio & Duff, 1994). Carson and Kashihara (2012) distributed questionnaires designed to ask the students’ their opinion on teacher first language use to 305 first and second year university students studying English in a Japanese university. The results of
their study indicated the students believed their teacher should know their first language because it can help them learn their second language. The students also believed their teachers should use less of the first language as their second language skills increased. De la Campa and Nassaji (2009) also noted similar findings in their qualitative study to determine the amount, purpose and reasons why two university professors use the students’ first language while teaching German (the students’ second language) in an anglophone university. They concluded the amount of first language use was higher at the beginning of the semester because the students’ proficiency levels increased as the semester progressed.

Polio and Duff (1994) also investigated teacher usage of the first language in a second language classroom at a university level also. They conducted a qualitative analysis of data gathered for a previous study by looking at classroom observations and teacher interviews. The findings of their study indicated that some teachers use more first language at the beginning of the class because the students are not familiar enough with the second language. Polio and Duff are careful to point out, however, in their research that teachers need to be cognizant of their first language use in the classroom. In the above mentioned study, Polio and Duff also found the amount of second language input presented to learners diminishes the more often their first language is used in the classroom. The over use of the students’ first language offers very little incentive for the students to use their second language skills. In other words, there is a delicate balance between using the first language to help the students and overusing the students’ first language creating a dependency on behalf of the students. Teachers need to constantly
evaluate their first language usage in the classroom to ensure it is necessary and is being used to benefit the students, not to make the teachers’ job easier. May and Hill (2005) point out this fact in their literature review on Maori-medium education in New Zealand, an education program that is similar to French immersion in Canada. These two researchers note that not only do second language teachers “need to be skilled practitioners; an important element is also their ability to reflect critically on their instruction” (p. 399).

Some researchers suggest that using the students’ first language in specific situations is more important than continuing with the second language, especially when students are struggling to understand (Carson & Kashihara, 2012; Nation, 2003; Schweers, 2009). Schweers (2009) conducted his research in English as a foreign language classroom in a monolingual Spanish university by recording one class and asking the teachers to complete a questionnaire about their attitudes towards using the students’ first language in a foreign language classroom. The findings of his study indicate that using the students’ first language leads to a positive attitude towards the learning of a second language. Schweers states that “sometimes it is more important that a student understands a concept than it is for that concept to be taught in the target language” (p. 9). That is not to say that he does not believe the target language is not necessary in the classroom, rather that there are times when it is more important for the students to feel confident in what they are learning so they will continue to learn. This point about first language use helping students to understand new concepts is supported by Carson and Kashihara (2012). They similarly conducted their research, via
questionnaires, at a university level however their participants spoke Japanese as their first language. Carson and Kashihara note that careful use of the first language in the classroom can help students make higher cognitive connections while learning the language, therefore allowing them to grasp the concept taught in class faster and easier.

Code switching can add to the enrichment of a lesson and can become an important part in the learning process (Moore, 2002). Moore examined data collected by two other researchers. The first setting was a French school where the teachers had little to no understanding of the students’ first language and the second setting was a bilingual school in Italy where the students also learned French. Moore concludes that code switching can help to close the gap in the students’ learning. As mentioned above, if students are able to actively take part in lessons because they are more comfortable and interact more authentically with the teacher, this allows the teacher to create and plan lessons that build on the existing knowledge students have and allows for more in depth lessons.

As I described in this section of the literature review, studies reveal that there are a number of cognitive reasons for using the students’ first language in a second language classroom. These reasons range from explaining new or difficult concepts to conveying and checking meaning to creating an efficient classroom so more learning can occur. Cognitive reasons are not the sole purpose for teachers’ use of the students’ first language in the classroom however. In this next section, I explore the literature that describes the many affective reasons researchers state play a role in a teacher’s decision to use the students’ first language in the classroom.
Affective Reasons for First Language Use by Teachers in the Classroom

Emotions in the classroom, whether they are the teachers’ emotions or the students’, play an important role in deciding whether the students’ first language or second language will be used. Several studies conclude that expression of feelings is one area where teachers will often resort to using the students’ first language, which is also often the teachers’ first language. Flyman-Mattsson and Burenhult (1999) conducted a qualitative study in a school where Swedish students were learning French as a second language. They worked with three teachers: two teachers were Swedish and the third was French. They analyzed 24 hours of video recordings and audio back-up recordings. Flyman-Mattsson and Burenhult identified two interesting findings in regards to affective functions of the first language in a second language classroom. The first finding is if a person only has one mother tongue then this is the language most likely to be used in affective situations. The second conclusion is if a teacher is expressing feelings of anger by using the students’ first language it is often to stress the seriousness of the situations and the students are expected to listen to the teacher.

Gulzar (2010) conducted a cross sectional survey of 406 English language teachers from different regions in Pakistan. The purpose of his study was to determine how teachers determine the function of code switching in a second language classroom. One of the findings of his study indicates that teachers switch from the second language to the first language in the classroom in order to express feelings of displeasure or pleasure. The essence of Gulzar’s argument is that a teacher would feel more comfortable conversing with the students in his or her first language when their emotions
are involved because it is easier to be more expressive while using the language with which you are the most comfortable.

Cook (2001) maintains that sometimes using the students’ first language is more natural to teachers. Using this language enables teachers to communicate like a real person rather than a second language learner. While on the outset, using the students’ first language to deal with emotions might seem like a good idea, teachers need to be attentive to the choices they are making for their students. Edstrom (2006) conducted a self-study where she examined the different ways she used the students’ first language in a university-level classroom. She concluded that using the students’ first language in the classroom can open the door to the possibility of using the students’ first language too often. Edstrom explains that expressing emotions should not be the sole reason a teacher gives for using the students’ first language while communicating with the students. On the other side of this argument is a French immersion teacher, D’Arcy Brischuk, who conducted an auto-ethnography of her English language use in her French immersion classroom (2012). She concluded that she knows how to express her emotions in English and that, when emotional situations arise, sometimes she only knows how to express herself in English. She goes on to explain that by using English, she feels she is also relieving some of the students’ anxiety.

By including the students’ first language in the classroom, the language classroom can become a more comfortable place for learners. Corcoll (2013) carried out a qualitative and quantitative research study investigating pedagogically-based code switching in a primary school with four groups of 25 students learning English as a
second or third language. The first group was taught a unit with Catalan and Spanish being used for pedagogically based code switching and the three other classes were taught with no reference to Catalan or Spanish. The results of her study indicate that using the students’ first language in the classroom can have a positive effect on students’ learning. Corcoll explains that by using the first language in the classroom, the teacher is creating a more comfortable place for learning to take place “which is probably one of the most important ingredients for successful learning” (p.42). In other words, if the students feel more comfortable in their learning environment, they stand a better chance of experiencing more academic success.

Polio and Duff (1994) conducted qualitative research inquiring about teacher usage of the first language in a second language classroom with university-level students. Their findings cite affection and empathy as one of the reasons why educators use the students’ first language in order to create a comfortable classroom. Similarly to the findings in Polio and Duff’s study, a number of other researchers (Cook, 2001; de la Campa & Nassaji, 2009; Fakharzadeh & Rasekh, 2009) have also indicated that using the students’ first language in the classroom allows the students to feel more comfortable with the teacher and helps to build relationships. De la Campa and Nassaji (2009) conducted a qualitative research study to determine the reasons why two university professors use the students’ first language. They noted that the students’ first language is sometimes used to create a supportive learning environment. Cook (2001) explains, that by using the first language, teachers are treating their students as real people rather than “an assumed second language persona” (p.416). In other words, using the students’ first
language in the classroom is a way teachers can reach out to their students to ensure they are comfortable enough in the learning environment so learning takes place.

Learning Environment and its Effect on Teachers’ Use of Students’ First Language

Not only are there cognitive and affective reasons for using the students’ first language in a classroom, but the learning environment inside the classroom also plays a role in regards to how often the first language is used. Kharma and Hajjaj (1989) conducted a field-study with 185 English as a foreign language teachers in Arabic classrooms. Via interviews and questionnaires, the participants were asked about their attitudes towards first language use in the classroom, and observed to determine their actual use of the first language in the classroom. The study determined that the first language should be “systematically and purposefully” (Kharma and Hajjaj, 1989, p. 230) used in the classroom. In other words, teachers need to put some thought into first language use before they utter any words in the students’ first language.

The students’ first language should not be used simply because it is the easiest thing to do at a specific moment. Researchers (Meyer, 2008; Tang 2002) are in agreement with the idea that the more familiar students are with their second language, the less they will dependent on the first language to help them understand the second language. Tang (2002) conducted a qualitative and quantitative research study about first language use in a second language classroom by using observations and interviews with three university professors and questionnaires their students in an English as a foreign language setting. One hundred questionnaires were distributed to students and 20 questionnaires distributed to other professors inquiring about their opinion of the use of
The results of her study indicate that using the students’ mother tongue in the classroom should only be the means to the end goal of improving second language proficiency. In other words, the more time the students spend learning the second language, the less likely it is they will need to use their first language to understand the lessons.

Studies indicate teachers need to attend to how and when they are using the students’ first language in the classroom. Edstrom (2006) recommends in her self-study on her personal use of the students’ first language in the classroom that teachers need to identify and possibly evaluate their use of the first language on a regular basis. Edstrom mentions that teachers need to look closely at the reason they are choosing to use the students’ first language and determine if it is to meet the students’ needs in a language program or if it is simply to make the job easier. This evaluation would appear to be a valuable asset to a language teacher as it will help them determine the specific reasons the first language is being used and identify areas of their teaching that should change to meet the needs of the students.

In an analysis of an English history lesson taught to 25 thirteen year old students recorded in 1991, Butzkamm (1998) concludes that if the first language is used properly and systematically, it can provide instant and uninterrupted access to ideas needed to carry on the lesson in the students’ second language. That being said, overuse of the first language can take away from the students’ learning experience and have a negative effect on the students’ acquisition of the second language. Butzkamm also concluded in
his study that teachers need to keep in mind when, where, and for what purpose code switching occurs in the classroom.

Another aspect of the learning environment that needs to be examined is the many factors that are at play in a language classroom that are outside the teachers’ control. Rolin-Ianziti and Brownlie (2002) conducted a mixed methods study with four university level French teachers in an English setting. One hundred students were divided into five equal groups and each group was taught the same lesson. Five classes were audio-recorded (one for each group of students) completing the same listening activity. They analyzed the amount of code switching that occurred during the lessons and also the reasons why the code switching occurred. Rolin-Ianziti and Brownlie conclude that “code switching is not always under the teachers’ control” (p. 423) and other influences such as teacher-student interactions can play a role in teachers’ decisions to use the students’ first language. In an elementary school setting, some of the factors involved are students using the first language and unilingual school staff such as custodians, office managers, administrators, and speech pathologists who conduct their work in the students’ first language.

In addition to the different outside factors that play a role in the teachers’ decision to use the students’ first language, day-to-day activities in the classroom also affect these decisions. Levine (2003) conducted a questionnaire study with 600 university leveled students and 163 instructors of first or second year foreign language classes. The findings of Levine’s study indicate the amount of first language used in the classroom is a personal decision made by a teacher based upon how he or she feels at a
specific moment. The teacher will take into account his or her own needs, what is happening in the classroom and the students’ needs. In other words, a teacher may decide to use the first language in a specific grammar lesson on one day and the next day, the first language is not used in a grammar lesson because it is not necessary.

Not all researchers maintain that using the first language in the classroom is a positive experience for the students. Polio and Duff (1994) conducted a qualitative research inquiring about teacher usage of the first language in a second language classroom with university-leveled student. They observed and recorded two sessions in six classrooms. Following the observations, interviews were conducted with the teacher inquiring into views regarding English in their foreign language classroom. Polio and Duff concluded that if the first language is overused, it reduces the amount of valuable input offered to the students and therefore “offers little incentive for students to initiate meaningful interaction in the target language, since that behaviour is not being modeled for them by their teachers” (p. 323). To put it differently, if students do not have the chance to hear quality input in the second language, their learning experience may be negatively affected because they will be lacking in opportunities to listen to their second language.

The learning environment also plays an important role in the teachers’ decision to use the students’ first language. In this section, I discussed how teachers need to continually evaluate their first language use, how teachers do not have 100% control over the language use choices in their classroom, and how increased second language use can positively impact student learning. Although researchers acknowledge the first
language plays a role in the language classroom, it is widely stated that the second language should be the main source of instruction (Butzkamm, 1998; Nation, 2003; Turnbull & Arnett, 2002). This argument leads to the next section of this literature review where I discuss reasons to limit first language use in the classroom.

**Reasons for Teachers to Limit First Language Use in the Classroom**

In a second language class, there are a number of steps that can be taken to ensure students are exposed to as much second language as possible. The job of exposing the students to the second language usually falls solely on the shoulders of the teacher because as Turnbull (2001) describes “teachers are the sole linguistic model for the students” (p. 532). This is an important fact to note because once students step foot outside the school doors, in most cases, they are no longer hearing or seeing their second language. Al-Hadhrami (2008) conducted a qualitative research study with four Omani grade five English teachers. He used interviews and observations to look at the effect using the first language had on the students’ second language learning as assessed by the teachers. The findings of his study indicate teachers believe that excessive first language usage in the classroom can be detrimental to the students’ second language learning.

What both Al-Hadhrami and Turnbull are saying is that teachers need to be careful not to overuse the students’ first language because it can negatively affect their second language learning.

Researchers are concerned with teachers overusing the first language in the classroom because at times it is easier for teachers to choose the path of least resistance. De la Campa and Nassaji (2009) conducted a qualitative study with two German
university professors at an anglophone university. They collected data via video and audio recordings, interviews and stimulated recall sessions to determine the reasons why these two instructors used English in their German class. De la Campa and Nassaji note that one of the instructors spoke quickly and used sentences that were too long for the students to understand. Rather than paraphrase what was spoken, the instructor resorted to translations because she noted it was easier and quicker. Teachers need to be conscious of how and when they are using the common first language and to think before each and every time they employ it. Al-Hinai (2006) conducted a qualitative study on the purpose of Arabic in English lessons and how it could be used more effectively with four teachers, one of whom was himself. He audio-recorded two lessons in his own classroom and observed and audio-recorded one lesson in the remaining three classrooms. Al-Hinai also conducted interviews with the three other teachers and two separate groups of 16 learners. He concluded that teachers need to continually question whether or not the usage of the student’s first language in the classroom supports students’ learning. An increase in second language teacher talk in the classroom can lead to an increase in student second language listening skills (Myojin, 2007). Subsequently, if the teacher speaks too much in the students’ first language, this may lead to a decrease in the students’ ability to listen and understand the second language orally.

Not all researchers agree as to when and why teachers should be using the students’ first language in the classroom. Cook (2001) notes classroom management as an acceptable time to use the students’ first language, however, this is contested by Kharma and Najjaj (1989). Kharma and Najjij conducted a quantitative research study
with 185 high school English as a foreign language Arabic teachers and 223 high school students. Observations were also overseen by the writers and seven supervisors to classes on a wide scale and extended over several months and over a two-year period, the writers interviewed with the participants. The results of Kharma and Najji’s study indicated it was not necessary to use the students’ first language for classroom management or daily routines. Kharma and Najjaj point out daily routines “are genuine opportunities for practicing the target language” (p. 228). When a specific situation occurs often in the classroom, it provides the students with the opportunity to use past experiences to help them figure out present situations.

**Increasing Number of Multilingual Students in French Immersion Classrooms**

As noted above, cognitive and affective needs and the learning environment all play a role in the teacher’s decision to use the students’ first language in the classroom. There is however more than just one first language in most, if not all, French immersion classrooms. The first language of the students in French immersion classrooms has seen a steady change in recent years. Recent data indicate the Canadian population is becoming more linguistically diverse, with 20.6% of the population having a non-official language of Canada as their mother tongue (Statistics Canada, 2011). These numbers represent a 0.9% increase from the data provided in the 2006 census. According to the Canadian Council on Learning (2007) when “French is not the language used in the home, formal instruction in school is often the most convenient option for children to learn it” (p. 3). This fact holds true for families that do not speak either English or French in the home, along with their anglophone counterparts.
As noted by many researchers, French immersion in Canada was originally designed to support the needs of the middle-class, English-speaking population (Dagenais, 2008a; Dagenais & Berron, 2001; Swain & Lapkin, 2005). With the rise in immigrant numbers in Canada and parents who have a linguistic background other than English, teachers are beginning to see a rise in the number of multilingual students in classrooms (Mady, 2007b). Swain and Lapkin (2005) note that parents who speak languages other than English or French at home, especially those living in large urban centres in Canada, are choosing to send their children to French Immersion. According to Dagenais and Day (1999), Dagenais and Moore (2008), and Dagenais and Berron (2001), the reasons are varied and include (but are not limited to) the following: the opportunity to learn another language, a symbolic attachment to the French language, promoting tolerance of others, learning both official languages of Canada, and associating the knowledge of French with higher social status. Why parents have chosen French immersion is not the issue, the fact remains that multilingual students are becoming more common in French immersion classrooms. Educators need to attend to how these students are being received by the program and the quality of education they are receiving in the program. We also need to look at how multilingual students are being affected by the use of English, the assumed first language in the classroom.

There has been some resistance to recommending French immersion to multilingual children because federal policy makers state students who are new to the Canadian education system need to concentrate their efforts on adequately learning the English language in the English dominant portions of the country or French in areas
where French is the dominant language (Dagenais & Day, 1998; Mady, 2007a). Mady (2007a) explains that national policy does not provide access to FSL education for allophone students. Mady also clarifies that language policies in Canada are created federally, formulated provincially and implemented on a divisional level.

Dagenais and Day (1998) conducted a case study of three trilingual families whose children were enrolled in a French immersion program. Dagenais and Day explain that the belief that multilingual students cannot learn French while they are learning English overlooks the fact that English is the language these multilingual children will be using in daily social interactions and there will be numerous occasions to practice the English language in their daily lives. Just as the excuse “They need to concentrate on learning English” is debunked by Dagenais and Day, Taylor (1992) points out why multilingual students should be able to succeed in French immersion classrooms. Taylor’s case study of a young Cantonese French immersion student suggests that French immersion offers multilingual students a unique experience because it allows them to begin on the same linguistic level as their peers. By registering multilingual children in French immersion, ideally these children will be learning French at the same rate as their English counterparts and the fact that they do not speak English at home should not hamper their ability to learn French in the classroom. This however may not hold true if French immersion teachers rely too heavily on English, the assumed first language of the majority of the students.

To further add to the discussion of multilingual children being discouraged from entering into French immersion programs, researchers have found evidence to suggest
that multilingual children may do well in French as a second language programs (Lapkin, Mady, & Arnott, 2009; Mady & Turnbull, 2010). Mady (2007b) conducted a study on 44 unilingual English-speaking Canadian-born students, 40 multilingual Canadian-born students, and 51 newly-arrived immigrant English as a second language (ESL) students from two urban secondary schools to determine the suitability of Core French (where French is a subject taught a few times a week) for ESL students. All students completed the same pre-test and four-part French language skill test at the end of the semester. The findings of the study indicated that multilingual students outperformed their classmates in the areas of reading and listening. Findings from this study indicate that “ESL students who arrive in Canada during their secondary school career would benefit from taking French” (p.193).

Carr (2009)’s study of English language learners in French Second-Official-Language programs found results similar to Mady’s findings. Carr conducted a three part study of English language learners enrolled in an Intensive French program, a French as a second language program where students spend half of grade five or six immersed in French. The first study was a qualitative case study spanning two and a half years and data was collected via interviews, questionnaires, meetings, classroom visits, and focus group discussions. The second part of the study, an oral and written assessment was conducted at the end of each semester for three years. The third part of the study was an English proficiency test given to the 43 English language learners enrolled in the Intensive French program and 43 English language learners enrolled in regular English classes. The findings of Carr’s study indicate the proficiency level of the English
language learners was on par with that of their anglophone counterparts in the class. Carr also noted at the end of her research that multilingual students enrolled in the Intensive French program experienced more gains in English proficiency than the multilingual students enrolled in the regular English program. These studies demonstrate that children who speak multiple languages do not need to be counselled out of French immersion programs because the language skills used to master their first and/or second language can be transferred to the study of additional languages.

Due to the increase of multilingual students, it can no longer be said that English is the only first language in a French immersion classroom (Dagenais, 2008a, 2008b; Swain & Lapkin, 2005). According to Dagenais (2008b), “il est temps que l’école s’adapte à la diversité croissante de la population scolaire” (p. 354). Dagenais explains that it is time schools began to adapt to their growing diversity of the school population. Swain and Lapkin (2005) push this discussion even farther and suggest French immersion teachers need to broaden their linguistic knowledge in order to permit students to share their first language in the classroom. By broadening teaching strategies, teachers will be able to incorporate the different first languages students bring to the classroom and to daily lessons. As Bourdieu (1982) states “la discipline dominante est dominée par sa propre domination” (p. 224). In other words, the use of English as the first language in the French immersion classroom continues to occur because it is the dominant language in society and is the language most seem to accept.

With this change in the linguistic background of many French immersion students, Byrd Clark (2010) suggest the term French as a second language needs to be re-
examined. Byrd Clark conducted a two-year ethnographic study examining the problematic nature of the construct French as a second language. She drew on the lived experiences of seven Canadian youth of Italian origin by using discourse analysis of interviews, observations and focus groups. She concluded the participants’ linguistic practices were complex and varied and that current FSL policies do not reflect this diversity. She proposed the term French as a second language should be updated to include the many people who learn French in Canada as their third, or more, language rather than just their second language. Byrd Clark suggests making the change to French as an additional language to account for this fact.

While recognition that the use of English can marginalize multilingual students has begun (Mady, 2012), many teachers question how they are to meet the needs of all students in their classroom. Dagenais and Day (1998) point out in their case study of multilingual families with children enrolled in French immersion schools that many immersion teachers are already using a variety of second language teaching strategies and these teaching strategies need to continue. These strategies include varying intonation, hand gestures, sound effects, visual aides, paraphrasing, and drawing on background knowledge (Dagenais & Day, 1998).

Developing critical awareness of the language diversity in French immersion classrooms is one area Dagenais (2008a) argues will help to include students who are multi-language users. Dagenais (2008b) carried out an ethnographic study over a period of seven years of two multilingual students enrolled in a French immersion program. She conducted interviews with the parents, the students, and the teachers, as well as
classroom observations to determine how the linguistic resources of multilingual students are validated in school. Dagenais describes a situation where a teacher could have incorporated critical awareness to promote language diversity in the classroom but did not capitalize on the chance. She explains how one teacher was not even aware that a student spoke an additional language until it was pointed out by the researchers. This is, of course, not the case with all teachers. Dagenais informs her readers of another teacher who changed an assignment once a student asked if she could write about all the languages she speaks. These two descriptions illustrate nicely the following point by Dagenais and Day (1998) in their case study of three trilingual children in French immersion classroom that describes their classroom experiences. Dagenais and Day conclude “teacher’s choices about pedagogical approaches and the types of relationships they establish with multilingual students are closely linked to their perspective on language” (p. 378). In other words, a teacher’s personal beliefs about the learning capacities of a multilingual child will greatly affect how they work with that child.

Mady’s (2013) study of 69 French as a second official language (FSOL) teachers explored teacher perceptions of inclusion of multilingual learners. She collected her data via questionnaires and interviews. The results of her research indicate multilingual instructional approaches are going to have to become part of the arsenal of strategies French immersion teachers employ. In her study, she found that teachers readily admit to using English with anglophone students. There is no evidence of teachers’ using other languages or reference to other languages to accommodate students who do not speak English as their first language. Mady recommends in order to accommodate multilingual
students, cross-linguistic transfer needs to be a strategy employed, as a whole, in the classroom to build upon the prior knowledge all students.

**Conclusion**

The literature in regards to first language use in the classroom indicates limited first language use in the classroom is acceptable but teachers need to be constantly aware of the reasons why they are using it. The following are some of the acceptable cognitive reasons for first language use in the classroom: 1) providing the students with missing vocabulary concepts therefore increasing efficiency in the classroom, 2) making new concepts relevant to the students, 3) bridging the gap for students with lower proficiency levels, and 4) incorporating students’ prior knowledge into lessons. Just as there are cognitive reasons for using the students’ first language in the classroom, there are also affective reasons: 1) expressing teacher emotions of pleasure or displeasure, 2) creating a comfortable learning environment for the students, and 3) relieving student anxiety.

Although there are many reasons why a teacher may want to use the students’ first language in the classroom, Atkinson (1987) and Turnbull (2001) point out it should remain the teachers’ main focus to use the students’ second language as much as possible, as overuse of the first language can result in a lack of desire for the students to use their second language. Over use of the students’ first language is not the only concern researchers have. Butzkamm (2003) and Edstrom (2006) also point out teachers should not use the students’ first language for reasons such as laziness or to make communication easier with the students. As May and Hill (2005) maintain in their study,
teachers need to critically reflect on their language use in the classroom to determine the reason why the first language was used.

As presented, the population in French immersion classrooms is no longer middle class anglophone students. The number of multilingual students in French immersion classrooms is on the rise and researchers are beginning to look at how their first language can also be incorporated into the classroom (Dagenais, 2008a; Mady, 2013). This literature review serves as the basis for the next chapter. In Chapter Three, I describe the methodology I followed while researching the beliefs of English use in a French immersion classroom. I describe how I selected my participants, as well as how the data was collected, recorded and analyzed.
CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

As examined in the previous chapter’s literature review, teachers have a myriad of reasons for using the students’ first language in the classroom (Atkinson, 1987; Cook 2001). The purpose of this study is to look at teacher use of the students’ first language in the classroom. Specifically, this study examines the beliefs of five French immersion teachers in regards to how they use English, when they use English, and who they believe they are helping by using English in the classroom. The questions that are explored in this study are:

1. How do teachers use English, the assumed first language of the majority of students and in some cases their own first language, in a French immersion classroom?

2. What reasons do teachers give to explain the use of English in a French immersion classroom?

3. How, if at all, do teachers respond to the needs of multilingual students in a French immersion classroom?

In order to explore these questions, I used a multi-case study with five participants. The context, participants, data collection methods and data analysis are described in the following four sections.

Context

This study takes place in Grade 1 and Grade 2 French immersion classrooms in an urban, Catholic school division in Saskatchewan. I selected these age groups because the Ministry of Education, formerly known as Saskatchewan Learning, recommends that
English Language Arts not begin any earlier than Grade 3 (Saskatchewan Learning, 2005). Because English Language Arts is not taught at these grade levels, the reasons English is used in the classroom cannot be confused with meeting curricular needs for a specific class. The teachers who volunteered to be participants in this research study work in classrooms that are located in either a single-track French immersion school or a dual-track school. The difference between the two types of schools is that in a dual-track school there is an English program that is also offered within the same building whereas in a single-track school French immersion is the only program offered.

Another key component of the context of the participants and their classrooms is that the classrooms selected for this research project are in schools that belong to a separate school division. It is important to note this distinction because the religion program taught in Catholic schools is delivered in English, as mandated by the school board. Therefore, the students do experience lessons taught in English during the day and there may be posters on the wall in English, depending upon the teacher’s choices. As Walford (2001) states, choosing research sites where important information can be discovered and comparisons can be made is an important step of any research. With this in mind, I have selected this specific school division because I am familiar with the policies and recommendations the teachers should be following in regards to the usage of the common dominant first language, English, in the classroom. I have also selected this school division because I am familiar with how the different programs (single-track and dual-track) work due to my experience in both types of schools.
Participants

The framework I used for this study follows the model described by Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007). This framework is set up in three steps. The first step is to determine a sampling scheme. The sampling scheme I followed for this study is representative or typical case sampling. Palys (2008) describes typical case sampling as using a case simply because it is not unique. I chose typical case sampling because there was nothing unusual about the participants chosen, therefore if this study were to be conducted again with different participants similar results could be yielded as there was nothing unusual about the participants. Yin (2009) explains “the lessons learned from these cases are assumed to be informative about the experiences of the average person” (p.48).

The participants selected for my study were from a pool of early French immersion teachers (Grade 1 and Grade 2) who work for a separate school division. The second step in Onwuegbuzie and Leech’s framework is to determine the sample size. I interviewed five teachers for my study. The five teachers I selected for my study were the first five participants who responded to the email that was sent out by my thesis advisor. The third step in this framework model is to choose a sampling strategy that helps to guide my data analysis. I am using a parallel sampling strategy because this allows me to treat the selected cases as a set and to compare the different cases in order to better understand the phenomenon being studied.

To select my participants, my thesis advisor sent out an email to 21 possible participants asking them if they would be interested in participating in a study. I chose to
have my thesis advisor make the initial contact with the potential participants in order to eliminate the possibility of the potential participants feeling as if they had to participate because they knew me. The participants had one week to decide if they were interested and, if they were, they were to contact me directly at the email address my thesis advisor included in the initial email. Out of the 21 potential participants, nine responded saying that they would be interested in participating in my study. I chose the first six participants to work with. The first participant was a test participant and the remaining five participants were included in the study. I began setting up interview times with interested participants once they had made email contact with me. While this sampling strategy is designed to afford better understanding, the qualitative nature of this research does not afford generalizability.

Due to the small population size that I drew from for this study and that most people in the French immersion community know each other, small facts, not relevant to the data, have been modified to protect participant anonymity. The five participants in my study all come from different backgrounds and have varying levels of experience. As de la Campa and Nassaji (2009) note in their study of first language use in a two university level German class, each teacher’s personal beliefs and background affect their decision to use the students’ first language in the classroom. Mme Kristy (pseudonym) has French as her first language and grew up in a small town Saskatchewan setting. She attended school in both a French immersion setting, as well as a francophone school setting. She has been working in French immersion schools for approximately eight years. Mme Nichole and Mme Gabrielle both have English as their first language.
Both participants attended French immersion schools for their primary and secondary education. Mme Nichole has been working in a French immersion school for 13 years and Mme Gabrielle has been working in a French immersion school for five years. Mme Sophia also has English as her first language. She did her primary and secondary education in English, studying French in a Core French classroom. She also continued to study and take classes after completing high school to continue to improve her French. Mme Sophia has approximately 20 years of experience teaching in French immersion schools. Mme Natalie is trilingual and neither French nor English are her first language. French was her second language and she learned it in a French speaking country other than her country of origin. She began her primary education in a francophone school and completed her education from approximately grade five on in an English school in Canada. Mme Natalie has more than 30 years of experience teaching. Her years of teaching experience include English schools, francophone schools and French immersion schools. A large portion of her teaching career was spent in French immersion schools.

Data Collection Methods

During this study, I am using multiple sources of evidence in order to allow for the triangulation of data (Gagnon, 2010; Yin, 2009). The three types of data collection I used are interviews, reflective journals, and a collection of still photos. Prior to starting the data collection, I received the Research and Ethics Board (REB) approval from the University of Regina (please refer to Appendix A).
Test participant.

Before beginning the interviews with the five participants that were selected for this case study, I conducted one sample interview with another participant. This participant was the first person that responded to the initial email sent out by my thesis advisor. The information collected during the interview, reflective journal and collection of still photos was used to refine the data collection process and was not included in the study. The sample interview conducted with the test participant allowed me to note the areas I needed to concentrate on to obtain the most comprehensive data possible from the interviews in order to complete my study. I conducted this sample interview in the participant’s home. This interview was rather short, lasting just over 6 minutes. After transcribing the data later that day, I realized I needed to be more specific with my questions. In particular, I needed to be certain to ask the participants to provide me with more details or to think of an example that demonstrated the pedagogical situation they were explaining. I reworked some of the questions after this initial interview in order to allow the participants the opportunity to give more data and to allow me to gather more specific information.

One area that was lacking in the initial interview was asking the participants if there were specific subject areas where they found themselves using the students’ presumed first language more often than other classes. I also gave this participant a copy of the journal I would be handing out to the other participants. I explained to the test participant that I would like her to think of a memorable time during the day where the students’ first language was used and to answer the questions provided in the journal.
Upon receiving this journal, I concluded that I needed to be certain to ask the participants to include only the days where they spoke the students’ first language and if there was a day that the first language was not used, rather than skipping that day that I would need them to complete ten journal entries in total. In other words, writing “No English used this day” would not provide me with enough data for my research.

**Interviews.**

I began setting up appointments to select a time for the interviews as soon as I received the emails from the participants indicating that they were interested in assisting me with my research project. The interviews took place over a two week period in order to accommodate the individual schedules of my participants. The interviews occurred in a location and time chosen by the interviewee and agreed upon by the interviewer. Three of the interviewees chose their own school and classroom as the site for their interview and the other two chose to have their interview take place in my classroom. Four of the interviews were conducted just shortly after the work day ended and as soon as both the participant and I were ready. The fifth interview took place on a weekend, as this was the most convenient time for the participant.

I used semi-structured interviews in order to allow the participants to include as much or as little detail as desired and to provide me with the opportunity to question the participants further on various points during the interviews. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed at a later date (Creswell, 2007). The questions I asked during the interviews were adapted from the following studies: Dagenais (2008b), Karhna and Hajjaj (1989), Levine (2003), Macaro (2005), Schweers (1999), and Tang (2002). A
copy of the interview questions can be found in Appendix B. Before the interview began, I asked the participants to review and sign two consent forms, giving me permission to use the data they provided. I kept one copy of the consent form for my files and one copy was left with the participant. A copy of the blank consent form can be located in Appendix C.

Once the interviews were completed, I spent the next couple of weeks transcribing the data. I did not wait until all five interviews were completed but, rather, I started transcribing the interviews as soon as one was completed in order to begin the back and forth analysis (Gagnon, 2010). Once the data was transcribed, I emailed a copy of the interview to each participant and asked them to review the data. I wanted to provide the participants with the opportunity to review the interview and to agree that the information I transcribed was indeed the information they provided during the interview. I also asked them to fill in any portions of the interview that were absent due to unclear speech. Also attached to the email that provided the participants with a copy of their interview was a Transcript Release Form (refer to Appendix D for a copy of the Transcript Release Form). I asked the participants to sign two forms, one that would be returned to me and one for them to keep in their personal files. After the form was signed, arrangements were made with each participant to obtain the signed form.

Reflective journal.

The reflective journal was a journal the participants kept for approximately a two-week period. The length of time that the participants kept the journal did, however, vary from participant to participant because of participants’ expected and unexpected
absences from the classroom. Due to these absences, not all the participants were able to collect the data for 10 consecutive work days. The journals remained in the hands of the participants on average for two weeks and three days. The participants were asked to complete the journal at the end of the work day, or at a convenient time for them. I provided each participant with 12 forms and instructed them to complete ten of the journal entries for me but if they felt compelled to include an extra journal entry or two, they were more than welcome to do so (see Appendix E for a copy of a journal page the participants received).

The participants received their reflective journal after they completed their interview. At that time, the participants were able to look at the reflective journal form and ask any questions they may have had. I included this step in order to minimize the amount of time the participants had to reflect upon their use of the students’ first language prior to the interview. I did not want the participants to change their practices because of any pre-conceived ideas they might have had due to the questions they would see in the reflective journal. I explained to the participants that I did not expect the journal to take more than five to fifteen minutes to complete each day. A number of the participants asked if they had to complete the journals in full sentences or if point-form was acceptable. I explained to the participants that they were free to answer the questions how they saw fit and if point form was their preferred means of explaining their usage of the students’ first language, then that was acceptable.
Still photos.

The third type of evidence I used was still photos of the classroom walls and the school walls where the students travelled in frequently. The use of a still camera, as described by Moore (2010), allows me to see what the teacher was using as visual aides during the research period, as well as the linguistic landscape the teacher worked with within the classroom but also in the school, as a community. According to Gorter (2006) the term *linguistic landscape* was first used in the field of study of multilingual societies and the languages that could be found in the community. Linguistic landscape has since developed to include the language that is presented and displayed in public spaces (Shohamy and Gorter, 2009). For the purpose of this study, linguistic landscape refers to the language that the teachers have chosen to display in their classroom and in the hallways around their classroom.

In order to take still photos of the classroom and the school hallways, I spoke with both the participant and the participant’s administration in order to gain access to the school. Each participant was already aware that I would be taking still photos of their classroom however the administrator did not know when I would be in the building or specifically why I was taking photos. One of the requirements the school board requested was that the administrator of each participant’s school needed to approve any still photos I took. To satisfy this requirement, I created a Still Photo Release Form (see Appendix F) that the administrators signed once they had viewed the files. I provided the administrator of each school with a USB drive that contained the still photos of the school hallways and the classroom(s) in question as well as two copies of the Still Photo
Release Form. Once the administrator had viewed the still photos and signed the forms, I made arrangements to pick up the USB drive and signed forms. Once again, one copy remained with the administrator of the school and I kept the second copy for my files.

**Data Analysis**

The data for this study was coded and broken down into units of information on an individual case basis as suggested by Gagnon (2010). I purged, coded and analyzed the data in a back and forth manner. Gagnon describes the purging stage as the time when you go through the data to make sure it is truly relevant to the study. The initial purge allowed me to focus on the data that would provide me with the richest data. In the interviews, I was able to eliminate situations when the participant began to go in a different direction rather than the focus of my study. In the journal entries, I was able to purge portions of the entries where the participant once again included information that was not relevant to my study. In the still photos, I was able to purge the photos that did not clearly depict the linguistic landscape the students were learning in.

The second step in the coding process is to organize the data so it is easier to analyze (Gagnon, 2010). To organize my data, I created tables where I entered the transcribed data. Each time there was a switch in speaker, a new row was entered to the table. There were two columns for each table created. The right hand side was the interview data and the left hand side was a blank column which would be used later during the data analysis process. This process was completed for each interview, so in the end I had one file for each participant. The reflective journals were organized by labelling the corner of each journal entry with the participant’s initials as well as the
numbers one to ten. For two of the reflective journals, the numbers ranged from one to twelve because those participants chose to complete two additional journal entries. To organize the still photos, I followed a similar process to that of the reflective journals. The still photos of the participant’s classrooms were each assigned a title that included the initials of the participant and a number. The still photos of the schools were assigned the name of the school and a number.

The next step I completed in the analysis of my data was to read and re-read the data until I was intimately familiar with the evidence. I listened to the original interviews one more time and also re-read the transcripts of the same data an additional time. I read through the journal entries of the five participants two more times and looked at the still photos one more time. The evidence was then broken down into units of information, which are the smallest piece of information that can be assigned to a category. I used the bottom-up approach that Gagnon (2010) describes as beginning with the information and developing a system of categories that can help describe or explain the phenomenon under study. In other words, the data collected was the beginning of the coding process and not pre-conceived notions based on theories and principles.

To code the data, I read through each interview separately and highlighted the words, sentences, and/or thoughts that were related to the topic of teacher use of the students’ first language in a second language classroom. Each item that was highlighted was then assigned a code. The code was written in the column on the right hand side of the paper. I coded all the interviews on paper first and then transferred the information to
an electronic copy. If there were more than one code assigned to a segment of speech by the participant, I created a numbered list in the coding section of my document.

After completing the coding of the first interview, I began creating a list of all the codes I used. Saldana (2009) recommends that a master list be kept of all codes developed and used during a research study. In following with this practice, I added to the list of codes as I continued coding the interviews. Each interview would add a couple of new codes to my master list. At the end of the first round of coding, I looked at this list of codes and condensed any codes that were similar. For example, during one interview I used the code “back and forth” to describe the times when a teacher switches back and forth between the students’ first language and second language and during a second interview I used the code “code switching”. I condensed these two initial codes to “code switching” as they were both describing the same phenomenon. I also went through my master list of codes and made the codes more specific. Rather than using the code “comprehension of students” as I had originally worded it, I switched it to “student comprehension” to be more succinct. The master list, as it stood at this point, was then typed out and used during the coding of the participant journals (refer to Appendix G for a copy of the Master code list).

To code the participant journals, I used the same order of participants I had followed during the coding of the interviews. I used the master list of codes that was created during the interview stage of coding however I continued to add to the list because some points mentioned in the journals had not come up during the interviews. In order to code the journals, I used sticky notes and wrote the title of the code on the label
and stuck them to the right hand side of the journal as close as possible to the line that contained the information. I also wrote a brief note on the sticky note if the code needed clarification to link it to a specific section of the journal entry. Any new codes created during the coding of the journal entries were added to the master list of codes.

The still photos were the last source of data coded. To code the still photos, I looked at the images on my computer and assigned one or two codes to each picture. As stated above, the purging, coding and analysis happened in a back and forth manner. As I looked through the still photos, there were some images that were not relevant to my study. When this was the case, I did not include the number of the photo in my code list. For each different file created of the still photos, participant files and school files, I used the name of the file and the number of the photo to identify the still photo. The lists of codes I used came from the master list of codes but similarly to the coding of the journal entries, I continued to add to the master list when the need arose.

To begin the second round of coding, I used the master list created during the first round of coding as a guide to possible codes I may use again. I did not however limit myself to this list and I was open to adding new codes if the need arose. I began once again with the interview data and I printed off new copies of the organized data to use for coding. During this second round of coding, I switched highlighter colours so as not to mix up the two rounds of coding. I followed the same process the second time as I used the first time. I highlighted any sections I felt pertained to my research study and I wrote the corresponding code on the right hand side of the paper. Once again, after completing the coding of the first interview, I began creating a master list for the second
round of coding. This master list was used during the subsequent coding of the four remaining interviews. Once the five interviews were completed, I transferred the information to an electronic copy, once again using a different colour of highlight than during the first coding.

To code the reflective journals the second time around, I used a different coloured sticky note in order to keep the information organized and so I could easily identify the different rounds of coding. I found that with second round of coding the reflective journals, the codes did not vary much from the first round of coding. The main difference between the two rounds of coding was that I had forgotten or left out pieces of information that needed to be coded. The master list of codes was updated after the five reflective journals had been coded a second time. I reviewed the still photos a second time but once again the codes did not change a great deal. Some of the codes were condensed so they were less wordy but by and by the codes for the still photos remained the same.

After the completion of the coding, I copied the codes from the master list of codes into a word document, creating one sheet for each code. I looked at each participant individually and organized the words, sentences, and/or thoughts according to the codes I had assigned to the different segments of text. In order to reference each word, thought, or sentence so that I would be able to locate it at a later time, the participant’s initial and the page number for the interview were used. For the journal entries, I referenced the data but using the participant’s initials and the journal entry number. For the pictures that were organized into the codes, I used the participant’s
initials and the number that had been assigned to the still photo during the coding process. I than organized the categories into similar schools of thought. Any of the categories that referred to the size of the group the participant was working with was grouped under the title of “Class size.” I grouped teacher fatigue, teacher inattention, teacher frustration, speed up work, and instinct together under the heading of “Teacher influences.” Once the data were looked at on an individual basis, they were also analyzed in a cross-case analysis to look for similarities and difference amongst the participants.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study is to investigate how and why the five participants selected choose to employ English in the French immersion classroom. The five participants for this study were selected according to typical case sampling allowing for the exploration of teachers who first language use is noted as not being unusual. In order to allow for the triangulation of data, I collected my data in three ways: 1) semi-structured interviews, 2) reflective journals, and 3) a collection of still photos. I purged, coded, and analyzed the data in a back and forth manner, meaning the three steps were done in a cyclical fashion to allow for a more in depth analysis. The data collected for this study was analyzed individually and then in a cross-case fashion. This next chapter will look at the participants and their linguistic background and begin to look at the findings of this study.
CHAPTER FOUR – DATA ANALYSIS PART I

Every teacher has different beliefs when it comes to English language use in French immersion classrooms including when they believe using English, the first language of the majority of students, is acceptable (de la Campa & Nassaji, 2009; Inbar-Lourie, 2010). Given that each teacher has a different set of language use beliefs, in this chapter, I describe each participant in order to provide a portrait of what may have formed their beliefs. I describe, in detail, the linguistic background of each participant, their current teaching assignment, their beliefs concerning English use in a French immersion classroom, and the linguistic landscape of their language classroom. I also explain how each participant envisions how English language learners fit into the French immersion landscape.

**Mme Kristy**

Mme Kristy speaks two languages: English and French. She grew up in a francophone family in rural Saskatchewan. Her father is francophone and her mother is anglophone. During our interview, Mme Kristy explained how she learned French as a child.

My French I learned first from my parents at home, from my mom and dad. They taught it to me. My mom actually learned French after having met my dad. My dad is French. So she learned French at the same time she was teaching us.

Mme Kristy started to formally learn the English language in school. Mme Kristy began her schooling in a francophone school for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten and then finished the next three years in a French immersion school. Mme Kristy explains the change in school was due to the proximity of the French immersion school to her house.
She then switched back to a francophone school for grade four to grade eight. Once she reached high school, Mme Kristy enrolled, once again, in a French immersion school so she could expand her friendship circle and also have more opportunities for sports teams.

Mme Kristy has been teaching for approximately nine years in a French immersion school at either the grade one or grade two level. She states she became a French immersion teacher because she enjoys working with children and French is important to her. She explains that she wanted to be certain she did something with her French language. She knows that her first language, French, is a minority language in Saskatchewan and she believes that if she does not use it every day, she will lose it.

Mme Kristy currently teaches grade one in a single-track school. She has 23 students in her classroom. Eighteen of the students speak English as their first language. Mme Kristy believes, as she is not 100% certain, that one student speaks Spanish at home and four children speak Chinese at home, as their first language. She has been teaching grade one for the last two years. Mme Kristy has set up her classroom to provide her students with as much French language exposure as possible. Mme Kristy has bulletin boards that focus on the basic vocabulary she would like her students to learn, such as the months of the year, numbers, and colours. Looking around Mme Kristy’s classroom, I can identify various posters she has chosen to display to help her students increase their vocabulary and comprehension in areas such as Math, science, and general classroom vocabulary (Photo 1). Mme Kristy notes during her interview that classroom management is one area where she finds she uses English in the classroom. Still photos of her classroom corroborate this fact as her classroom rules are written in
English (Photo 2). Similar to many early childhood educators, Mme Kristy displays her students’ birthdays on the classroom walls. She has, however, written the months in French on the balloons and the actual date of the student’s birthday is written in English (Photo 3). I cannot explain why this is because a large portion of the students in grade one French immersion do not know how to read English, so there is no benefit for the students to have this information in English.

Photo 1

Photo 2

Note. This photo has been altered to protect participant anonymity.
Mme Nichole

Mme Nichole speaks two languages: English and French. Mme Nichole grew up in an English-only speaking household. Mme Nichole learned French in a French immersion setting and then later enrolled in a Baccalauréat en éducation program in university. During our interview, Mme Nichole indicated both sets of her grandparents spoke French however, when she was young, “they would only speak French if I initiated in French.” She explained this was always how she remembered her French interactions with her grandparents occurring, throughout elementary school and as she progressed in her studies.

Mme Nichole has worked in a French immersion school for the past 13 years. She is currently working in a single-track French immersion school but she has experience working in a dual-track school also. She teaches grade two but this is her first year with this assignment. She most recently taught at the grade three level and she
has experience teaching many grade levels in an elementary school. Mme Nichole initially chose this specialization because she knew being a French immersion teacher would allow her to find a teaching position directly out of university faster than being an English teacher would. Mme Nichole concentrated her studies on high school education while in university however she has spent her teaching career in elementary schools.

Mme Nichole has 19 students in her grade two classroom. She has 18 students who speak English as their first language and one who speaks an “African language.” Mme Nichole explained during the interview that she is not 100% certain what language this child speaks however: “I have one student who, and forgive me because I can’t pronounce it, speaks an African language at home.” She also states she has two more students who study another language but this additional language of study is not the first language used in the home. One student takes Italian lessons on the weekend and the other student studies Ukrainian. Mme Nichole only learned this information midway through the school year. She explained that a university class she was taking, on the topic of second language learners, sparked an interest in discovering if any of her own students spoke an additional language.

Mme Nichole notes her current teaching assignment is much different that her previous experiences. In addition to having to switch grade levels and no longer having English as part of the curriculum, Mme Nichole claims she found herself using more English at the beginning of the school year because she was not prepared for the students’ lower level of French. Mme Nichole explains that some of the graduate-level classes she has taken have begun to shape how she feels about the topic of using English
in a French immersion classroom. Al-Alawi (2008) indicates in his research on the use of the Arabic language while teaching the English language that reading and studying language acquisition can affect teachers’ belief systems. Mme Nichole’s studies have shown her the merit of allowing the students to work through problems and questions in English, if they choose to, and to regroup in French. She explains that by allowing her students to work in this way, she believes they will appreciate the learning experience.

Mme Nichole mentions during her interview that she feels she is a language role model for the students because they do not get French outside of school. She appears to have taken this message to heart when it comes to the linguistic landscape of her classroom. Mme Nichole has created numerous posters displayed in her classroom to help the students understand the different concepts she teaches throughout the year. She provides her students with examples of what she wants to see when they are working and it occupies a prominent location in her room (Photo 4). Looking through the still photos of Mme Nichole’s classroom, English does not occupy any space on her walls except for a couple of small signs the school administration has requested all teachers have in their classroom.
Mme Gabrielle

Mme Gabrielle speaks two languages: English and French. Mme Gabrielle grew up in an English-only speaking household but learning a second language was important to both of her parents. Her dad’s family immigrated to Canada from the Netherlands just before his birth and her mom grew up in a small francophone community. Mme Gabrielle states, that as an adult, she remembers discussing with her mom the choice her parents made to encourage their children to learn a second language.

Both of them really wanted to emphasize learning a second language. So they put all four of the children in my family in a French immersion school for the specific point of learning a second language. And later on mom told me that it didn’t matter what language that school was in, she was going to get us as many languages as she could.

Consequently, Mme Gabrielle learned her French in a French immersion school setting. She also chose to complete her Education degree in French.
Mme Gabrielle has been teaching for five years in a French immersion school and currently teaches grade two in a single-track French immersion school. She has 24 students enrolled in her classroom. Mme Gabrielle has three students who do not speak English as their first language. One student speaks Vietnamese as his first language. Mme Gabrielle is not certain of the exact language of the other two students. She explains that she has overheard one student speaking to his mother in the hallway in another language but she does not know what it is. Mme Gabrielle is also not certain what language the third student speaks, as she is unable to pronounce the name of the language. This student is new to her classroom and from Nigeria. When she saw the language written on the student’s information all she could remember is that his first language starts with a “y” and ended with a “g.”

Mme Gabrielle indicates she probably uses English during every lesson but this is not apparent on her classroom walls. Mme Gabrielle uses the walls in her classroom to provide the students with additional French language exposure. While doing a visual scan of her classroom, I noticed Mme Gabrielle has posters that focus on vocabulary building, grammar, Math concepts, and classroom routines in French. One area where Mme Gabrielle chooses to display English is on posters that reflect the behavioural programs the school uses (Photo 5 and Photo 6). She explains she often uses English to discuss discipline situations with the students so it stands to reason the poster she would use during these discussions are in the language she uses during the discussion. It is important to note however that many students at the grade two level in French immersion
can not read English, so it is not apparent if these posters are for Mme Kristy’s benefit or the students’ benefit.

Mme Sophia

Mme Sophia speaks two languages: English and French. Mme Sophia grew up in a household where her mother was francophone but her father was anglophone and the main language used in the house was English. Mme Sophia recalls memories of her
mother using French when asking her to sit down or be quiet. She also remembers times when the adults in the house spoke French because she believes they did not want the children to understand what they were saying. Mme Sophia went to school in English and her only exposure to instructed French was during Core French classes. In grade ten, she decided to quit taking these classes and did not study French classes for the next few years. Once she finished high school, she began to take an interest in French again and enrolled in different classes available in the community. She then registered in a Baccalauréat en éducation in order to obtain her education degree.

Mme Sophia has approximately 20 years of experience working in French immersion schools. She worked as a classroom teacher for a number of these years but she also has experience working as a literacy teacher, in small group settings. She currently teaches in a grade two classroom in a single-track school. Mme Sophia has 23 students in her classroom this year. Eighteen of these students appear to have English as their first language. When I asked her about the students in her classroom who speak another language as their first language, she stated the following:

One boy also speaks . . . He is Filipino, he speaks three languages. A girl – Russian, three languages. Two girls . . Well one of them, I’m not sure. She does speak at home but dad is English and mom is Chinese but she goes to Chinese school as well. And the other girl’s parents are Chinese. Um, and one more, she is Filipino as well. That’s her first language. Two Chinese, two Filipinos, and a Russian. Five.

Mme Sophia strongly believes that English does not play a role in a French immersion classroom and her choices are reflected in the linguistic landscape of her classroom. Mme Sophia uses the walls in her classroom as an opportunity to provide her students with as much French exposure as possible. She has numerous posters dedicated
to enriching her students’ vocabulary (Photos 7 and Photo 8). The only English posters Mme Sophia has in her classroom are a poster with the word “Read” written on it numerous times and sentence strips from the behaviour program used in the school.
Mme Natalie

Mme Natalie speaks three languages: French, English, and a European language.

Mme Natalie spent her early years in a house where neither French nor English were the language used. At the age of four and a half her family moved to a French-speaking European country. She attended a French language school for four years before moving back to Canada. She explains that she learned the majority of her French language skills in school. At the age of ten, her family returned to Canada and her parents enrolled her in the English school in their local community. Mme Natalie talks about what it was like to learn English.

It was a grade school in a small town. It was a grade one to six in one room and I learned the language by looking at picture books at school and students, well students would point things out and I would learn the vocabulary that way. My mom and dad did have some English background … so they did have the English language but that was not their first language. But they knew a lot of English to be able to help us at home.

She recalls how her teachers informed her parents that the best way for her to learn English was to be completely immersed in it and recommended English become the only language spoken in the home. Mme Natalie remembers continuing to use her first language at home but her parents did their best to help her learn English. During the remainder of her elementary and high school years, Mme Natalie did not use her French. Mme Natalie relearned French at the university level by obtaining her Bachelor of Education with a specialization in languages, specifically English and French. Mme Natalie continued to develop her French language skills after completing her BEd by registering in six-week long intensive French programs available to teachers over the summer.
Mme Natalie has over 30 years of teaching experience. Mme Natalie has experience in many different types of schools as she began her career in a rural English school before moving to an urban centre to continue teaching in English. The school division she was working for at the time was in the early stages of developing a French immersion program and, with her knowledge and skill set, Mme Natalie was asked to be one of the first teachers. Mme Natalie also has experience working in francophone schools and French immersion schools in a French majority language community in Saskatchewan. She likens the experience of teaching French immersion in a French majority language community to one of teaching in a francophone school because the majority of the teachers spoke French as their first language. Mme Natalie’s most recent placements have been in grade one and grade two classrooms.

Mme Natalie has a grade two classroom in a dual-track school. There are 21 students in the classroom and four of those students speak another language at home. One student speaks German, however Mme Natalie is not certain how much German is used at home. Two of the students speak Tagalog with their parents and siblings and the fourth student speaks Romanian as her first language. The remaining 17 are believed to have English as their first language in the home.

Mme Natalie uses the walls in her classroom to provide students with as much French exposure as possible. She uses labels to identify different objects in the classroom, posters to explain different verb tenses, and lists on the board to reinforce concepts that are being studied. Mme Natalie also has many inspirational posters on the walls in French that encourage them to always do their best. The rare occurrence of the
English on the walls in the classroom is a poster about the Canadian Food Groups (Photo 9). The poster about healthy eating seems an odd choice to have in the classroom because it could have easily been obtained in French. This is a document produced by the Government of Canada and the subject of health is to be taught in French in a grade two classroom.

Photo 9

**Language Use Beliefs**

As noted above, each participant in this study has varying levels of experience and differing ways of learning their own second language. Due to these facts, each teacher has a different set of language use beliefs that are specific to them. De la Campa and Nassaji (2009) note there are a variety of issues that affect how teachers make decisions about how and when to use the students’ first language in the classroom. Each teacher approaches their classroom with their beliefs already set. Therefore, I describe each teacher individually and how they envision the effect their language use beliefs have on how they approach English usage in their classroom.
Mme Kristy.

Mme Kristy explains that there are two main influences on her belief system surrounding her language use in the classroom. She states that she believes subject area and her conviction that using the English can help the students recall French are her main reasons for using English. During our interview, I asked Mme Kristy when she felt she uses the English the most in the classroom and she said it happens most frequently in Math because this subject has a lot of new vocabulary for the students.

During Math, when I’m teaching those concepts. . . It’s very hard for the students to do it in French. I mean it is hard for them to understand the concept in their first language let alone their second language. So, in Math lessons I will often go back and forth between English and French.

Tang (2002) explains that using the students’ first language can be especially useful for explaining new vocabulary to students. Math is not the only subject area where Mme Kristy uses English to explain vocabulary. It is interesting to note that three of the six reflective journals Mme Kristy completed during French lessons were vocabulary related activities. I question if English is necessary in these situations because if the vocabulary is new to the students in both languages, it leads me to wonder why it needs to be taught in English as well. If the students are not making connections with a previously learned concept, then why introduce the concept in English?

The other subject areas where Mme Kristy notes she uses English is when she is discussing topics that are not often discussed at home. She explains that when she teaches Treaty Education, a program provided by the Ministry of Education, she often teaches a large portion in English, even though there is a French program available. She confesses that she finds it difficult to help the students understand such a complex topic
when they are struggling to understand the vocabulary the lessons centre around. In the following excerpt, Mme Kristy explains her position.

When we talk about treaties in the classroom or anything about First Nations that would have happened in the past, and all of their culture. This is something that is not in the students immediate surrounding environment at home, for most of the students here in this classroom. So those vocabulary words, even those in English, are completely new to them. So definitely that subject, the treaties, I use English.

Mme Kristy indicates in her interview that she thinks it is the vocabulary that is complex in studying the treaties however it is possible that she is imposing her own complex feelings on the situation. Her English use may be due to the fact that she feels uncomfortable with the topic rather than the students feeling uncomfortable with the vocabulary. English is also not necessary for teaching treaties because the linguistic connections the students would be making are often not present. In many situations, the vocabulary introduced in French is also new in English. It stands to reason that if students are able to acquire vocabulary in other subject areas, then they can also obtain the necessary vocabulary to learn about the treaties in French.

The second key influence that weighs in on Mme Kristy’s English use in the classroom is the belief that using English helps the students remember French words. During her interview, Mme Kristy explains she will use an English word here or there to help the students make a connection between English and French. Cummins’s (2007) notes in his literature review of rethinking the usage of monolingual instructional strategies in multilingual classrooms that using the students’ first language in the classroom can be an important step in scaffolding the students’ knowledge. Mme Kristy demonstrated a number of times in her reflective journals how she uses English to help
Mme Nichole.

Mme Nichole is able to identify three areas where she notes her beliefs affect the language she chooses to use in the classroom: 1) the students’ choice of language during work periods, 2) English interruptions, and 3) subject area. The first reason Mme Nichole gives for using English in the classroom is due to her recent studies on second language learners. Mme Nichole is beginning to accept letting the students work in English as long as they are not being disruptive and continue to speak to her in French. Mme Nichole describes her reasoning in the following way.

I was at a conference recently and the new research is that if students are working through a new concept or working through a new problem, allowing them to sort of work through that in English and then allowing them to transfer that knowledge into French when you are talking about it later can be a huge . . . learning experience for them. Because they are learning in both languages and they are understanding the concept better. So I have started letting them . . . the work periods go a little bit with English as long as I have that, let’s come back
together and discuss this in French and make sure we have to vocabulary to share what we are learning in French.

Swain and Lapkin (2005) point out students solve language problems by using language; this often occurs in the students’ first language. Mme Nichole believes that by allowing the children to work in English she is providing them with the opportunity to create learning experiences that will benefit their French language acquisition skills. Nation (2003) argues, however, that sometimes there is a tendency for tasks to be completed in the first language which could be done in the second language, such as conversation activities. Nation claims that simply because it is easier and more communicatively effective for second language learners to complete the tasks in their first language, this does not mean it is meeting second language educational needs. In situations like this, Mme Nichole needs to be attentive to her students and weigh in on whether or not they are benefitting academically from using English: Is she using English to help them build linguistic skills or is she simply making the task easier for those involved? Are students using English during conversational time to understand concepts more deeply, or simply to chat?

The second influence on Mme Nichole’s decision to use English in the classroom is one she was hesitant to mention during our interview. Mme Nichole points out there are many English interruptions that occur during the day and these interruptions effect how she functions in the classroom. In her school, the office manager, the vice-principal and the custodian are English-only speakers. These three individuals are often in the hallway, popping into her classroom and/or making announcements over the
intercom system in the school. In the following excerpt Mme Nichole describes how she views these interruptions in her classroom.

It’s the staffing issue. The office staff is English, so when they make an announcement over the intercom that kind of derails my classroom a little bit because the announcement is in English and I have to speak English to whoever is doing the announcement. Also our vice-principal is English and our caretaker is English and that kind of derails the whole, stay in French all the time issue. I find that the kids will speak more French if I am speaking French. So as soon as I start speaking English, they start speaking English. So as soon as I start speaking English, even if I am not speaking to them, it’s like a ticket to speak English if I am speaking English.

Mme Nichole explains that it is not just staffing that affects her decisions to use French at all times in the classroom. She also has no control over signage she has been asked to display in her classroom (Photo 10). Although Mme Nichole teaches in a single-track French immersion school, there are posters hanging in her classroom that are in English. These interruptions and signage may not interrupt her classroom everyday but they do affect Mme Nichole’s ability to decide when to allow or not allow English into the classroom.

![Photo 10](image)

*Note.* This photo has been altered to protect participant anonymity.
During our discussion about the subject areas Mme Nichole feels she uses English in the most frequently, she provides different explanations for a number of subject areas. In Science class, she states a number of reasons why she envisions herself using English, “with the science content at a grade two level, the students don’t have the vocabulary or the sentence structure or the reading skills to be able to do it on their own.” Mme Nichole explains that some of the concepts students need to know in grade two are complex and difficult for young children to learn, so if the need arises, she will use English in order to ensure the students understood the lesson. Moore (2002) points out when language skills and subject content are simultaneously being taught, using the students’ first language can help with the enrichment of the new concept and make the learning experience more pertinent for the students. In the following passage, Mme Nichole explains that subject area outcomes take precedent over language outcomes in her classroom so, if a lesson is going to serve the students better when delivered partly in English, she will do so.

If the outcomes that I am working on are language target outcomes, it is important to use the language that the target outcomes are in. In science, the outcomes are science based, so the language is less important. It becomes secondary to the science outcome, but in French language arts, the outcome is the language. This type of thinking is noted by a teacher in Schweers’ (1999) study of using the students’ first language in a second language university class. The teacher in Schweer’s study points out that sometimes it is more important students understand the concept rather than explain the concept entirely in the second language. In Social Studies, Mme Nichole explains that certain topics, such as Treaty Education, are very complex and touch on a situation that is integral to our society so she often teaches these lessons in a
combination of French and English. The following passage is Mme Nichole’s explanation about why she finds it difficult to teach treaties strictly in French.

I use English during my Treaty Education classes because it is a very complex topic and I want to encourage discussions. I read the info in French, give a short French explanation, then discuss it in English and bring it back to French to highlight the important vocabulary. This way the students learn the French vocabulary all while gaining a deeper understanding of the concept.

The way Mme Kristy describes her Treaty Education practices indicates that English is the language of power in her classroom. She has decided that Treaty Education is important and the only way the students can fully understand it is to learn it in English.

In Math class, she believes the vocabulary can sometimes confuse the students. She feels that if she re-explains a concept using English then the students are more likely to succeed with the Math lessons. Many of these points are demonstrated in her reflective journals. Out of the ten reflective journals Mme Nichole completed, three make reference to English being used in French class, another three in Math class and the remaining journal entries are distributed amongst other subject areas.

Mme Gabrielle.

Mme Gabrielle is able to identify three basic influences that affect her decision to use English or French in the classroom: 1) she is a language role model for the students, 2) daily routines, and 3) subject area. Mme Gabrielle believes her students learn by following her example. Therefore she does her best to use only French in the classroom however that is not to say she does not use English throughout the day. Turnbull (2001) explains that teachers need to be conscientious of their use of the students’ first language in the classroom and that often it is the teacher who is the sole source of the second
language for the students. Similarly to the way Mme Gabrielle describes her actions, Turnbull goes on to say that careful use of the students’ first language in certain situations is acceptable but teachers should do their utmost to use the second language as much as possible. One strategy Mme Gabrielle likes to employ is using the students to help each other. If a student asks Mme Gabrielle to help them with a word in French, she often asks the other students if anyone else knows the word. Mme Gabrielle believes by asking the students to help each other out and not giving the answers helps to maintain her credibility as a French speaker with the students. Myojin (2007) explains the less the teacher uses the first language in the classroom, the more the learner’s comprehension of the second language increases. Mme Gabrielle sees an increase in the learners’ French because the students are able to help their classmates. She believes this helps the students to see that their classmates can help them but also that using English is not always the best way to find an answer.

Another key component to Mme Gabrielle’s language usage in the classroom is that she has a portion of her day where she does not use English, nor she does she allow the students to use English either. During her morning routine, she believes the students need to be listening and responding in French and that English holds no place in this portion of the day. Kharma and Hajjaj (1989) note daily routines provide legitimate opportunities for students to practice their second language in realistic situations. As Mme Gabrielle explains, the students begin working on this at the beginning of the school year and as the year progresses she expects them to know what is going on and to fully participate in French.
Mme Gabrielle indicates she sees herself as being less tolerant in French class in regards to using English: “During French Language Arts, I am much less likely to be lenient or to give them the word in English than I would in other subject matters. But that’s not to say that I would never do it.” This statement is not however supported in her reflective journals. Of the ten reflective journals Mme Gabrielle completed, I noticed she wrote she used English more often than she anticipated in French class. It is interesting to note that although she may be using English in French class it is not to translate words for the students, as she indicated she does not do. The reflective journals show that Mme Gabrielle used English to describe how to use an English computer program, deal with a student who was upset, and inadvertently speak to a student in English because she was speaking to an English-only speaker in the classroom.

**Mme Sophia.**

Mme Sophia maintains a strict French only rule in her classroom and does not believe that English plays a role in the learning of the French language. Al-Alawi (2008) states that overall teachers accept the usage of the students’ first language in the classroom but some reject the idea of using the students’ first language in the classroom in order to create a rich target language environment. The position that Al-Alawi takes in his study examining the beliefs of five English teachers in an Oman school surrounding the use of the first language mirrors Mme Sophia’s philosophy of English use in a French immersion classroom.

She can think of two situations that have a bearing on her decision to use English or French: 1) using common, everyday words added to sentences, and 2) subject area.
The first area where Mme Sophia finds herself using English are the quick, common, everyday words she uses in her daily English life. She finds she inserts words like “buddy” or “pal” into her sentences when she is talking to the students in order to create a sense of a relationship. Cook (2001) explains that teachers may use the students’ first language in order to establish a relationship with the students. Mme Sophia depicts a situation in one reflective journal entry where she called out to a student “Good shot, buddy!” in Phys. Ed., thus making the praise feel genuine for the student and making him feel good about himself. Other words that creep into her French lessons are words such as “come on”, “okalee dokalee!” or “let’s go”. She uses these words to encourage her students to begin their work or to get back to work. Mme Sophia explains these are words she uses often when interacting with children in any situation so her usage of them in the classroom may in fact be from the influence of her own English language identity.

During the interview, we discuss the different subject areas where English is used and Mme Sophia continues to state she does not translate for her students, nor does she provide the students with a review in English. She explains that she uses French for all her lessons and if the students do not understand, she finds a way to help them understand. Nonetheless, Mme Sophia is able to identify situations in the reflective journals where English is used in the classroom. The information provided in the reflective journals indicates she uses English the most during French lessons but also during Phys. Ed. lessons. Reading through the reflective journal entries, I notice that Mme Sophia remains consistent to statements made during the interview. Mme Sophia explains that her English use in the classroom it is usually one or two words and is
attached to the end of a French sentence or an emotional reaction to a job well done.

Mme Sophia describes an emotional reaction in her reflective journal: “A student made a basket in Phys. Ed. class and he realized that I saw it. I exuberantly called out ‘Good job’ so the student realized that I saw his basket and that I was proud of his work.”

Mme Natalie.

Mme Natalie is sympathetic towards students because she feels an immediate link with them given the fact that she, herself, was a language learner at a young age. Al-Alawi (2008) states the number one influence on a teachers’ decision about using the students’ first language in the classroom is their own learning experience. Mme Natalie says she tries to remain in the French language as much as possible but if she sees a child struggling, she will switch to English and does not feel guilty about it. Mme Natalie explains that she knows learning a language can be difficult and that students must work hard in order to master the language. She notes that because it is so difficult to learn a language, teachers should not make it harder on students by refusing to allow them to use English in the classroom as a resource. Butzkamm (2003) claims that one of the best resources a teacher has at their disposal is the students’ first language and it should be used systematically in the classroom to assist the students. Mme Natalie believes that there is a time and a place for English in a French immersion classroom and it is up to the teacher to use it wisely. During our interview, Mme Natalie describes a small group lesson where she verified the students’ comprehension by asking questions.

I ask the question “Où? Where does the story take place? Où se passe l’histoire?” and that is Grade 2 and Grade 3 students in the group. Now the students that I am working with are lowest level for those grade levels and of the four, five children at the table, none of them could answer “Où se passe l’histoire?”. “Où?”, and I
repeated it thinking that I would get an answer and I didn’t. So then I used English. I asked “Est-ce que vous comprenez?” and they didn’t understand so I said “Where?” and they all said “Ah. Where does the story take place?”

Mme Natalie explains that without questioning these students, she would never have known they really did not understand what she was saying.

Mme Natalie compares learning a second language to her beliefs surrounding learning the first language. She believes the teacher needs to repeat, repeat, and repeat again. She thinks the same basic principles apply in a French immersion classroom as in the home when a baby is first learning to talk. This belief is what Cook (2001) refers to as Communicative language teaching where the learning method has no relationship with the first language, it is not explicitly forbidden but rather the first language simply has no place in the classroom. Mme Natalie explains that new parents have their baby at home and when first teaching a baby to talk, parents repeat key words over and over. In the classroom, the teacher expects students to behave similarly to an infant learning to talk. Mme Natalie describes it in the following way.

It is the same basic way that you teach a baby English. You have your baby at home and I explain the same things to my students. You look at teacher and if you mimic what teacher is saying you will learn. The same way baby does at home. When papa or maman say “Papa, Papa” and the child finally says “papa” everybody is happy because he said papa. He didn’t say papa, he just mimicked it. He has no idea that he said papa but that is how you learn. Papa makes you happy so I am going to say papa again. Eventually they learn that that guy is papa, you see.

In the classroom, Mme Natalie explains that if a word is repeated often enough and the teacher continually makes reference to the object when saying the word, the students will eventually understand that “un crayon” is a pencil without having to be told outright. These first two beliefs Mme Natalie mention seem to contradict each other. On the one
hand, Mme Natalie is saying teachers need to be aware of the students’ first language
and to use it as a valuable resource in the classroom and then on the other hand she
makes it sound like the first language holds no place in the classroom and that students
will learn best if their first language is not present. The teacher simply needs to repeat
and repeat until the students understand the subject being discussed.

When I asked Mme Natalie about the different subject areas where she thinks she
uses English more often than other subject areas, she is unable to identify a specific
subject area. This is evident in the reflective journal entries she completed. Mme Natalie
noted she used English in four French lessons, two Math lessons, three Social Studies
lessons, and one Health lesson. During our interview, she explained she believes Math
would be the subject area where she uses English the least.

In Math the students are quite able to do it in French and when the harder words
come into the lessons, they are easily enough explained if you take time with the
numbers and then the students can deduce from that so I tend to stay French in
Math.

Although this is the opinion Mme Natalie expressed during our interview, it is interesting
to note that, of the two times she used English in Math class, both were to help clear up
vocabulary issues. The first journal entry indicated one student was having trouble
understanding the word “sphère” and the second journal entry revealed that many of the
students were struggling to decipher what a word problem is asking them to do. Mme
Natalie described the situation in following excerpt.

The students were working on solving written word problems. The term “manque
les résultats” wasn’t clear for the majority of the students. I tried a number of
different sentence structures but nothing was helping. I said it in English and it
clarified the problem for the students. After this all the students were able to keep
going with their work.
This shows that although Mme Natalie believes in Math class that using the numbers should help the students understand what they are being asked to do, this is not always evident in the classroom. As Levine (2003) states, what works for one teacher in one specific situation does not always work in a similar situation. In other words, just because the first time around Mme Natalie was able to clarify a situation without a translation, does not mean that in a similar situation in the future the students will be able to understand with the same clarity.

**Multilingual Learners**

As noted by Dagenais and Berron (2001) and Swain and Lapkin (2005), French immersion was originally designed for the middle-class English-speaking population but the demographics of French immersion is changing. Dagenais (2008a, 2008b) points out that English is no longer the only first language spoken by students in the classroom. Given this information, this section will look at how the five participants in this study see English language learners as students in their classrooms. This section will specifically look at the teachers’ beliefs in regards to the students’ linguistic knowledge, the languages used in the home, teacher openness to other languages and the effect of English on multilingual learners in French immersion classrooms.

Mme Kristy and Mme Natalie both comment on the students’ knowledge of their first language but both participants focus on different aspects of the importance of the language. One of the questions I asked Mme Kristy concentrated on the abilities of the students who speak an additional language to transfer those language skills over to the French language they are studying in school. Mme Kristy first answered by saying that
she thinks there were too many factors at play for her to discern whether or not the students were making any linguistic transfers. In the following excerpt, Mme Kristy explains her understanding of multilingual students and how they transfer their skills.

> It’s hard to say because just knowing another language doesn’t mean that you will be good at learning a third language or a fourth language. It just depends on the individual child, their motivation, how much do the parents work with them at home, do they have a knack for the language, are they picking up on the reading and the phonetics. I can’t really answer that truthfully. There are so many more variables that play into the success of learning a second language.

This belief goes against the finding of Dagenais and Day (1998). Dagenais and Day maintain that students who have an additional language are good language learners and more willing to take risks than their peers who are learning their second language. The essence of Dagenais and Day’s argument is that children who have learned a second language and are learning their third or fourth language have already lived through numerous linguistic experiences. They have faced a myriad of situations and have learned from those situations. Mme Kristy seems to contradict herself later on in her interview though. On the one hand she says she does not believe that multilingualism affects a student’s learning and on the other hand she claims: “maybe the more languages you have, the more awareness you have, so I suppose those students, perhaps, whether they realize it or not, are a little bit more better at observing functionality and systematics of languages.”

This second opinion Mme Kristy expressed is in line with what Mady (2012) notes in her study of the inclusion of multilingual learners in French as an official second language classrooms. Mady comments that teachers in her study indicate that students who are multilingual learners demonstrate abilities to “transfer their language-learning
skills from one language to another” (p. 12). In other words, the language skills a child learns in their first and/or second language will transfer over to their third and subsequent languages. These could be skills such as observing how sentences structures work or linguistic skills, such as noted by Mme Kristy.

Mme Natalie also talks about the students’ linguistic knowledge but from a different perspective. While Mme Kristy is unsure of whether a students’ first or second language plays a role in the learning of a third language, Mme Natalie is certain that the students’ second language, in this case English, is negatively affecting their first language, therefore their first language bares no influence on the learning of their third language. Mme Natalie points out in her interview that she believes the students in her classroom who have an additional language in the home are losing their first language and are being assimilated into English. The following passage is Mme Natalie’s opinion on multilingual students in her classroom.

I think the children who speak another language at home, their language is being assimilated also. The English is taking over their homes. I have spoken to some of the parents and I asked the parents “Are you continuing your language at home?” and they more or less say no. So no, I don’t think these students have too much interference from their other language.

Mme Natalie explains that parents feel their children are able to understand their first language when they are spoken to but they often respond in English and initiate all conversations in English. Dagenais & Berron (2001) note the children who speak an additional language who are enrolled in French immersion programs are not only living the coexistence of languages at school, but at home also. In other words, there may be an additional language spoken in the home but this does not mean that English should
not exist also in this house. It also needs to be stated that simply because Mme Natalie has spoken with some parents about this, it does not mean that all families feel their first language is being assimilated by English. Dagenais & Berron go on to explain that each household is different and the “language of communication varies within these families from one member to another and the interaction patterns differ from one family to the next” (p.152). In other words, just because Mme Natalie notes the tendency in one family to not force the children to respond in their first language does not mean that all families feel it is not necessary to continue to teach their first language to their children. According to Dagenais (2008a), multilingual children regularly switch between the languages they are comfortable with at home. Basically, what Dagenais is saying is that even though Mme Natalie notes that some parents feel their children do not speak their first language often at home, it does not mean the children are not capable of using the first language when required to.

The language students speak at home does not seem to be something that French immersion teachers are made aware of or search out themselves before the school year begins. Three participants discussed the languages their students speak in the home. During their respective interviews, all three of the participants indicated that different situations arose throughout the course of the school year that made them aware of the fact they had students who spoke another language at home. In one case, it was the student herself who brought it up in conversation. In the second case, the teacher asked her students midway through the school year due her own realization. In the third case, the teacher became aware of the fact she had a student who spoke an additional language
because another teacher mentioned it. It would seem this is not information that is passed on
to the teachers from the school administration upon receiving their class lists,
therefore making it the teacher’s responsibility to search out this information.

During our discussion about additional languages, Mme Kristy recalls a conversation with a student near the beginning of the year where she learned one of her students takes Chinese classes on the weekend. Mme Kristy explains how she took the time to talk to her student and tell her how proud she is that she is learning another language and that she thinks it is very important to study other languages: “We were able to have discussions about learning another language and I definitely motivated her about learning more languages and about how I was happy that she was doing that.” Mme Kristy explains to me that she wants the young student to be proud of what she is doing and to continue her studies. By taking the time to talk to this student, Mme Kristy is beginning to open the door to multilingual awareness in her classroom. Dagenais (2008a) points out that when a student is able to share their first language with others they feel less marginalized and no longer fear sharing their knowledge with their peers. In making this comment, Dagenais states the first step to creating multilingual awareness in the classroom is to allow other students to know their classmates’ possess this knowledge.

When I asked Mme Nichole about the students who speak an additional language in the home she admits that at the beginning of the year she was unaware of the other languages students in her classroom spoke. She explains that it was only due to a graduate class that focused on second languages that prompted her to ask her students if they speak other languages at home. It was during this discussion that she discovered
one of her students speaks an “African language” with her parents and siblings at home and that two more of her students are studying Italian and Ukrainian on the weekends. A similar situation is described by Dagenais (2008b). Dagenais explains how the teacher was not aware of the additional language the student understood and used in the home until it was brought to his attention that the student used this language at home.

Situations where teachers are ignorant of the languages their students speak would demonstrate a need for teachers to inquire about this information at the beginning of the school year, as it can have a direct influence on the students’ learning in the classroom.

This lack of awareness about the students’ additional languages is also noted in Mme Natalie’s situation. She was able to identify a couple of students who spoke an additional language at home but she was not aware of one specific student who spoke Romanian at home until it was pointed out to her. Mme Natalie was aware this student seemed to excel in French but she was not aware of the fact that she was studying a language that was similar to the language she spoke uniquely for the first four years of her life.

Dagenais (2008a) explains that a teachers’ openness to languages is one way to help students who speak additional languages feel valued in the classroom. None of the researchers suggest that teachers need to master all the languages children in their classroom speak however there is evidence to support that by being open to these languages and providing students with multilingual awareness opportunities that teachers can help to foster a community where tolerance of all languages is encouraged. Mme Kristy, Mme Gabrielle, Mme Nichole, and Mme Natalie all indicate they have opinions.
and beliefs about being open to the students’ who speak a first language that is not English. Mme Kristy and Mme Gabrielle indicate they find it hard to incorporate multilingual awareness into an already busy day. Mme Natalie believes she already is creating multilingual awareness opportunities for her students and Mme Nichole envisions how she could one day incorporate more multilingual awareness into her classroom.

Mme Kristy describes herself as being open to other languages in the classroom but that time does not always allow for discussions involving other languages. Her opinion is supported by Swain & Lapkin (2005), as they state “the target language is, after all, the immersion language and not the first languages of the students” (p. 177). In other words, it is the French language, in the French immersion context, that is important and this is the language teachers should be focusing on. Although students in the classroom may speak multiple first languages, it is ultimately Mme Kristy’s job to see that French remains the main focus of the lessons.

Mme Gabrielle notes that she would love to be able to provide students with the opportunity to use their first language in the classroom but she does not know how to fit it into an already busy day. She feels restricted by the fact she is teaching them another language already. She described it as, “I put such an emphasis on learning to speak French and using French in the classroom, it become “yes” for French and “no” for everything else.” Mme Gabrielle says that sometimes she finds French immersion teachers do not do a good job of promoting other languages. In other words, she puts such a high importance on learning French in her classroom that she feels she ignores
other languages and other cultures that could enhance the students’ learning experiences. Swain and Lapkin (2005) explain that it is important that teachers allow for the use of all the first language in the classroom and celebrate the different cultures that are represented by these languages. Mme Gabrielle further explains that she would love to be able to provide opportunities for her students for whom English is not their first language to use their first language in the classroom but she is unsure of how to go about this. One way this could happen would be to incorporate some of Dagenais’ (2008a) language awareness activities into lesson or units. The expectation is not that French immersion teachers learn the first languages of all students but rather that they create an awareness of different languages amongst the students. Dagenais suggests one activity teachers could include in their lessons is simply allowing multilingual students to become experts in the classroom. Rather than the teacher leading the students through an open-ended discussion, the teacher could ask the student to describe how it happens in their culture. Mady (2013) believes another way to help teachers feel comfortable including other first languages into their lessons is to provide professional development sessions that focus on this topic. By providing the teachers with the opportunities to develop multilingual awareness skills, teachers will be able to valorize all languages in the classroom.

Mme Natalie already implements some of Mady’s (2013) suggestions. She explains that in her classroom she finds it is important to demonstrate to the children the importance of other cultures. She describes how she uses student’s cultures to celebrate how we are all different and have lived different experiences. She explains that she tries
to make the students aware of the world around them and that there are many different languages and cultures both in the community and around the world. In the following excerpt, Mme Natalie describes how she incorporates different cultures into her classroom.

The way that I valorize, give credence to second language or another language in the home is by showing the students, as we work together, the other person’s culture and referencing that back to them learning the French culture. So that they are aware that people don’t live in a void. They are not necessarily just living English, many people are living the other languages.

Mme Natalie’s practice of using the students’ lived experiences is supported by Swain and Lapkin (2005). Swain and Lapkin explain that in a classroom it is important to “celebrate the diverse cultures represented” (p. 182) by providing students with the opportunity to share their cultural identity. In other words, Mme Natalie is helping her students understand how diverse our society is by including examples from different cultures in the classroom.

Mme Nichole’s response to the question about openness to other languages goes a little bit further. Rather than just being open to the different languages, Mme Nichole explains that if the opportunity presented itself where two students would want to converse in another language other than English or French, she would not stop them.

I think if there were more than one student with that first language, then in those situations when I allow English, then I would also allow them to speak their language. You know what I mean, if they are working through a problem or a hard concept and most of my students have a tendency to switch to English, if there were a couple of Filipino kids for example, and they found it easier to work through the problem in their language, I would not see a problem with that.

Mme Nichole’s opinion reflects what Swain and Lapkin (2005) depict in their work. Swain and Lapkin describe that learning the immersion language needs to happen mainly
in the immersion language but “solving problems or building new knowledge can occur in language production in the first language” (p. 182). Mme Nichole describes how she is open to allowing students to use other first languages in her classroom but the situation has never arrived. To the best of her knowledge, she does not remember having two children in her classroom that speak the same first language and can converse amongst themselves using this language.

A number of participants in this study do not believe the usage of English, the first language of the majority of students’, has any effect on multilingual students’ ability to learn French. Of the four participants who talked about this in their interview, only one was able to pick out a child, in all the years of experience amongst the participants, who was negatively affected by the amount of English used in the classroom. Mme Nichole, Mme Gabrielle, Mme Natalie and Mme Sophia all note that the students in their classrooms who speak another language function as well in English as the students who have English as their first language. Mady (2012) notes a number of participants in her study on teacher knowledge and beliefs about the inclusion of English language learners in French as a second language classroom do not believe the use of English disadvantages the multilingual learners in the classroom. These teachers feel the language learning techniques that they use with anglophone students work just as well with multilingual students. In other words, the students who do not have English as their first language are expected to learn French, in a French immersion school, the same way anglophones learn French because they also know English and therefore should be able to make the linguistic connections just as anglophones are able to.
Mme Sophia presents another angle to the argument of the needs of multilingual students in the classroom. She states she does not believe the multilingual students in her classroom are marginalized because they begin on the same level playing field as anglophone students. Mme Sophia’s belief is supported by Taylor (1992) where she maintains that multilingual learners begin on the same playing field as anglophones in a French immersion classroom because the language of instruction is French and the majority of students are all starting at the same point. In other words, whether the students’ first language is English, Tagalog, or Spanish, French is the language of instruction and when language acquisition strategies are used in the classroom, all students benefit. Although in theory multilingual students and anglophone students start on a level playing field, a closer look suggests the anglophone “players” are able to interact with everyone in their first language when the situation arises. The multilingual students are left to interact with the other students in the French and, more than likely, English.

Mme Gabrielle is the only participant who is able to identify a student for whom the usage of English was a hindrance to his learning. She explains that in the past she had one student who did not appear to understand her lessons when she used English. She describes the situation in the following excerpt.

I had one student a couple of years ago where he did really quite well in French and he understood the things that were happening in French but when we did have discussions in English, it wasn’t so much that I could tell that he didn’t understand but I could tell that he spaced out a little bit. And so, it often made me wonder, is he understanding as much in English as he does in French.
Mady (2012) notes that some teachers in her study view the use of English as a disadvantageous by stating that you can try to make connections for the students between the English and the French languages but the English language learners appear to be at a loss when this happens.

**Conclusion**

This chapter presented the five participants and their individual teaching situations. As noted, each teacher has their own personal belief system that guides them in their choice of using or not using English during a lesson. Many of the participants share similar beliefs in some areas but differ in other areas. In regards to multilingual students and how using English effects them in the classroom, many teachers believe erroneously these students already speak English as fluently as English-only users and that using English in the classroom does not make a difference to their success in the classroom. It is also interesting to note that a number of teachers are not aware at the beginning of the school year whether the students in their classroom speak an additional language. This is information teachers need to search out on their own and not all teachers show this initiative. In this next chapter, I look at teacher influences and student influences that affect a teacher’s decision to use English in the classroom.
This chapter focuses on reasons under the teachers’ control for using English in the classroom and reasons under the students’ influences for using English in the classroom. As described in the previous chapter, each participant is different but there are similarities that arise amongst their beliefs on how and when to use the students’ first language. In this chapter, I describe the various reasons the participants have noted for employing English due to reasons they have control over and reasons the students’ behaviours and attitudes have control over.

**English Language Use Under Teacher Control**

Teachers have the ultimate control when it comes to deciding whether they use English in a French immersion classroom. According to McMillan and Turnbull (2009), a core principle of French immersion classrooms is that teachers use French exclusively in order to help the students learn French. The data collected in this study demonstrates that although this may be the intention of the French immersion program, it is not necessarily the case in the classrooms of the teacher participants in this study. After analyzing the interviews and journal entries, I have identified four main reasons the participants in this study have given for using English in the classroom: teacher emotions, teacher habits, easing the demands of the job, and discipline.

The first reason four of the participants note for using English is that of their own emotions. Mme Kristy, Mme Nichole, Mme Gabrielle, and Mme Sophia all note that when their emotions become involved, whether it is due to fatigue or frustration, they find themselves reverting to English, which is also their first language or the language
they use at home on a daily basis, as in Mme Kristy’s situation. Flyman-Mattsson and Burenhult (1999) point out if a teacher only has one first language herself, then this is the language she will use for affective functions. Cook (2001) reinforces this point by stating that one of the main benefits of using the students’ first language when dealing with emotions, whether it be the students’ or the teacher’s emotions, is it is more natural. He explains that it is easier to deal with the real person rather than an imposed second language persona. Mme Kristy states that she finds herself using English in different situations when she is feeling fatigued or frustrated. Mme Kristy notes when her emotions are running high, she finds it easier to use English because this way there is no confusion on anyone’s behalf. In the following passage, she describes how she uses English when she is tired.

Sometimes it is just tiredness. I’m tired and I don’t feel like taking the extra energy to go grab the picture and use extra sentences to describe one word, I will just translate it for them and then make sure that this is what it is.

Mme Kristy is careful to point out, however, that this can be a dangerous practice. Nation (2003) states there are some excuses that should not be used when justifying using the students’ first language and lack of energy falls into this category. Mme Kristy explains teachers need to walk a fine line when using English because they are fatigued so they do not use this excuse too often and ultimately end up affecting the student’s learning. Mme Kristy provides a specific example of using English in one of her journal entries. The question Mme Kristy was responding to asked if she would use English again if the same situation arose and she responded “I would probably use English again. I was tired and I wanted the intervention to be quick and effective and to not interrupt the
presentation.” Mme Kristy notes that if she is getting frustrated with a situation that she will often switch to English because this indicates to the students that she is serious about what she is asking them to do. She describes a second situation in her journal entries where she was getting frustrated with a specific child because of behavioural issues.

I was frustrated that this particular child was not prepared for the test with a pencil and eraser. I wanted to get the point across quickly that it was her responsibly to get herself prepared for the test and to sort out her own problems, ask a friend for a pencil and eraser so that we could stop waiting for her, so I used English.

Similarly to Mme Kristy, Mme Gabrielle explains that she can let the situation in the classroom influence her decision to use English. Mme Gabrielle notes that when it gets close to the end of the day and she is feeling a little drained, she does not remain as vigilant about the language she is using. It is during this time that English starts to creep into her conversations with the children. Edstrom (2006) notes that occasionally she used the students’ first language in the classroom due to laziness. Edstrom also pointed out that she viewed this as a negative reason for using the students’ first language. Mme Gabrielle’s opinion reflects that of Edstrom’s findings as she describes that she is not proud to admit this fact out loud. However, as Mme Gabrielle describes, “sometimes it is 3:27, the end of the day is fast approaching and some of the students are not packed up yet, I will use English in order to make them move faster.” Mme Gabrielle feels during these few minutes of the day she is more likely to use English to create a sense of urgency in the students and to make them pick up the pace a little.
Similarly to Mme Kristy, Mme Nichole explains she feels she uses English occasionally when she lets her emotions escalate and when she feels “like a human.” In other words, because Mme Nichole’s first language is the same as most of her students, it is not surprising, then, that this is the language she would use when her emotions are involved. In her reflective journal, Mme Nichole describes one situation in the library where the children are not following the rules that have been in place since the beginning of the school year. She was getting frustrated and described the situation as follows: “We were in the library and I needed them to follow the rules. I think I used English because I was tired and my patience was gone.”

Mme Sophia also uses English to indicate to the students that she is getting frustrated, either with their behaviour or their lack of effort. Gulzar (2010) finds that teachers sometimes switch from the second language to the first language in the classroom while expressing feeling of pleasure or displeasure. During our interview, Mme Sophia did not mention that expressing feelings of displeasure as one of the areas where she notes herself using English but it appeared a couple of times in her reflective journals. The first time she made reference to feelings of frustration leading to a decision to use English was during a small group setting. The following passage is an excerpt from Mme Sophia’s reflective journal.

The students’ group was being lazy and pronouncing the names in the book in English. I couldn’t believe it. They kept doing it. All I said were the names in English and I would do it again. The students understood how stupid it was to say the names in English.

The second incident where she used English out of frustration is with the entire class. Rather than trying to use French, the language they are studying, some of the students
were beginning their questions with “Comment dit-on . . .” and then finishing the sentence entirely in English. Mme Sophia explains her reaction to her students’ English use in the following passage.

I was mimicking what a student might say “Comment dit-on go?” or any easy word as they, as a group, have come to rely on it and I said it out of frustration. I would do this again, right or wrong, because they knew I was serious using English like that!

Reading through the examples provided by the four participants, the emotions that often prompt teachers to use English are emotions that are felt deeply by many people. The most commonly referenced emotion is frustration followed by fatigue and exuberance.

The teacher’s habits are another area that four of the participants state for using English in the classroom. Mme Gabrielle, Mme Sophia, and Mme Natalie describe how moments arise during the day when they use English because they find themselves in situations similar to situations that occur outside of the classroom. Mme Gabrielle notes in one reflective journal how a conversation with an Instructional Assistant, who spoke only English, led her to speak English with a student. The following passage describes the situation Mme Gabrielle found herself in and why she spoke unintentionally spoke English.

I had been speaking in English with the substitute IA in my classroom who only spoke English, and then turned to speak to the student next to me and didn’t switch languages. It was probably due to inattention. The student replied in English and was a little shocked. I would prefer to remain a good second language role model for my students.

Rolin-Ianziti and Brownlie (2002) point out that the use of the students’ first language is not always something the teacher can control. This lack of control certainly seems true
in Mme Gabrielle’s case as she had no say in whether the Instructional Assistant in her classroom could speak French or not.

Mme Sophia admits that a large part of her usage of the English in the classroom is habitual. She finds there are a number of small words she will add to the end of a sentence and these words serve no purpose in the day to day function of her classroom. Mme Sophia explains that these words serve as ways to encourage, motivate, and/or congratulate the students. Mme Sophia comments during our interview that she did not notice she was adding these words until she started reflecting on her English use because of our upcoming interview. She explains “I’ve been thinking lots lately and I use English when I say things like okalee dokalee, which isn’t even English or other little words I add to the end of a sentence”. In her reflective journal, Mme Sophia notes a couple ways she uses English simply by adding in one or two words to motivate and encourage.

I was in the gym and to get the game started I said “un, deux, trois, go”. There is no reason why I can’t say “allez” but I seem to have made a bad habit of using “go”. I have tried to switch to “allez” but “go” is what I say without thinking. The second example Mme Sophia provides involving encouraging her student also occurred in the gym. Mme Sophia explains “the student had knocked over the bowling pins and was proud of himself. I wanted him to know that I saw and I called out Good Shot.”

Another way Mme Sophia habitually uses English is by adding a quick question at the end of French question as noted in one of her reflective journals. The following passage is from a reflective journal entry Mme Gabrielle completed.

I was describing to the students what they should do at the end of the work period. Without thinking I said “Une fois fini, vous allez remettre votre duotang
vert, puis vous allez finir la lecture guidée. Got it?” I could easily say “Compris”.
I am becoming aware of some bad habits that I didn’t even know about.

While reflecting, Mme Sophia noted the use of English was not necessary and the
students would have understood French just fine. She explains that as much as she
concentrates on stopping these add-ons, they continue to be part of her linguistic
repertoire.

Another habit Mme Natalie and Mme Kristy both note in their reflective journals
is they occasionally find themselves using English because the students, themselves, are
using English. Both participants feel that a gateway is opened to using more English
than necessary in the classroom when their students speak English. Mme Natalie
describes one situation where she used English during a walk with the students because
that was the language she was hearing at that time.

We were on a walk in the school neighbourhood and three of the students were
not following the safety rules. I was very spontaneous in my reaction and I told
them the rules in English as I was listening to the English in the children’s
stories.

She indicates that if she had the chance for a re-do, she would have made more of an
effort to speak French. She wants the children to understand that French is not just a
language for school and people speak it in our community also.

Mme Kristy notes that occasionally she uses English as a direct response to the
students using English. She finds that the more often the students speak to her in French,
the more often she responds to them in French and the same holds true for English.

During our interview, Mme Kristy explains
The less the students speak in English, the less I do. This seems to be my general rule. When they approach me, it’s like what language are they speaking? It’s a natural reaction to respond in the language they spoke to me in.”

Mme Kristy demonstrates in one of her reflective journals how this can happen in the classroom.

We were looking at pictures of aquatic animals in a virtual zoo and the students were saying the name of the animal in English. I stopped the lesson and explained, in English, that I didn’t want them calling out the words in English.

Mme Kristy notes she should have explained in French that this was unacceptable but the students had been speaking English and she responded without thinking.

As described above, teacher emotions and teachers’ habits are two areas where teachers are choosing to use English, the first language of the majority of the students’. Another common reason that appears in the interviews and journal entries is the usage of English in order to lessen the demands of being a French immersion teacher. Rather than continuing to find a way to ensure the students’ understand in French, Mme Kristy provides the students with the opportunity to hear and use English in the classroom. In a reflective journal, Mme Kristy described her lesson.

I was explaining the vocabulary words to have students use them in the activity. I translated “weight”, “heavier than” and “lighter than” to help students complete the work sheet. Most of the students were able to complete the worksheet right away and others needed reinforcement in English to be able to figure out the worksheet.

Mme Kristy rationalizes that by providing the students with the English translation to a concept taught in French she is helping them to understand what they need to do. On the one hand, if Mme Kristy is using English as a tool to help the students, Rolin-Ianziti and Brownlie (2002) describe this is an acceptable form of first language use. On the other
hand, if Mme Kristy is using English because it is an easier way to communicate and to ensure comprehension, Nation (2003) describes this as an unacceptable way to use the students’ first language.

Mme Nichole also feels she sometimes uses English to ease the demands of being a French immersion teacher. She explains that if she is looking for a resource to help reinforce a concept and the resource is only available in English, she will use that resource. In her interview, she explains her position by stating “In science, the outcomes are science based, so the language is less important. It becomes secondary to the science outcome.” She clarifies that sometimes these resources sum up a unit nicely or help explain a difficult concept so rather than completely ignoring the resource. She explains that she will use the resource and then have a discussion afterwards in French to review the concepts and vocabulary that may have been learned through the viewing of the resource. Mme Nichole provides an example of how this works in her classroom in one of her journal entries.

We watched a movie in English in science class because the Magic School Bus makes such awesome videos for kids this age and we discussed it in French afterwards. I would use it again because it created such a good discussion and was exactly what I was looking for.

In examining this journal entry provided by Mme Nichole, it is interesting to note that the videos she refers to, The Magic School Bus, are also available in French. An online search of “Le Bus Magique” brings up different locations that the French program is available and also directs you to a number of videos easily accessible online. Mme Nichole’s choice to use the Magic School Bus in English speaks to a number of different underlying problems in French immersion: 1) resources in the school library are not
always available in French, 2) sometimes teachers need to dig a little deeper to find the best resource possible, and 3) an erroneous belief in a scarcity of French language resources. The lack of French resources may be attributed to lack of funding, to a lack of time on the teachers’ behalf or to a decision to ease the demands of a stressful job.

Mme Nichole is able to provide another situation where using English eases the demands of a French immersion teacher in her reflective journal. She describes a situation where she explains how to use a computer program in English because the commands within the program are in English.

I used English to explain how to work the program because the program was already in English and I would do it again in English if I had to. I used English because 99% of the time the kids are using this program it is in English and the buttons are in English, even though we will be working in French. By explaining the program in English the students were able to find the different fonts that they needed.

Rather than have the program switched to the French language, so all prompts are in French, Mme Nichole uses the program as is and instructs the students how to complete their assignment using an English program. The school division that Mme Nichole works for has an Informations/Technology (IT) department which is able to change the language of the program for her students.

The final, and most common reason stated by all five participants for using English is classroom management. All five participants agreed that major discipline situations always occur in English. Using English to discuss discipline matters falls in line with directives stated by Saskatchewan Learning (2005). In a handbook designed for administrators of French immersion school, the Ministry of Education states teachers should always use French, unless student safety is at risk (either for the child who is
being disciplined or other children affected by the child’s decisions). Although this is the directive from the Ministry of Education, if the ultimate goal is to create bilingual students, teachers should be making use of all situations to speak French so the children will feel comfortable using French the next time a similar situation arises, as Mandin (2008) suggests. The discipline scenarios where teachers chose to use English can vary from playground issues to hurt feeling to misunderstandings between friends. Mme Kristy says that each situation is different and therefore the situation dictates how she addresses the students. For example, if it is a serious matter where she feels she needs to ensure herself that there are no misinterpretations or misunderstandings, she will always use English. If it is a situation where a child is upset because they did not like something another student did, Mme Kristy feels the children are able to complete the discussion in French. She finds she will begin with French and only switch to English if it is absolutely necessary. During our interview, Mme Kristy described how she decided what language to use during disciple situations.

It depends on the severity of the situation. If it is something serious I switch to English, but if it is something simple like “Tu n’as pas aimé ça.” You didn’t like that, then I’ll try to do that in French. But I mean with most playground issues I’ll just deal with them in English. They come to me in English, I deal with them in English.

According to Mandin, a focus needs to be placed on common everyday French language usage so when similar situations happens children will be able to fall back on previously learned skills. A situation like Mme Kristy described is a prime opportunity to teach children about how to explain themselves in French and how to express emotions in French. An example from her reflective journal where she resorts to English to deal with
a discipline issue is when two students are misbehaving and not following the French instructions she gave them. This expert is from Mme Kristy’s reflective journal is an example of a situation when she used English.

Two students were fooling around, pushing, punching, hitting and kicking, and were not listening to the French instructions. I told them a couple times to stop in French and nothing happened so I told them to stop in English and it seemed to work. It also helped to make sure the kids around them didn’t start following their example also.

She switches to English to let the students know that she is not pleased and to efficiently explain her expectations. She explains by using English she knows they will understand and cannot use the “I didn’t understand what Mme meant” excuse. Lyster (1987) points out that one of the challenges of French immersion is that students do not have competent sociolinguistic skills. In order to improve the students’ sociolinguistic skills, teachers need to make more of an effort to use French when dealing with situations where they need to be understood rather than switching to English.

Mme Nichole notes that during discipline issues, especially when the students’ emotions are involved, she will usually use English. She explains that if she wants to be certain that the students understand and they do not repeat the behaviours, she uses English. Cook (2001) clearly states when the teacher uses students’ first language the students perceive it as a real warning and not pretend one. Mme Nichole feels by using English, she conveys a meaning of importance and helps the students to understand this specific behaviour needs to stop and should not be repeated in the future. Mme Nichole supports this claim by noting in one of her reflective journals a situation where two
students would not stop misbehaving and she used English to convey a meaning of seriousness. Mme Nichole describes it in the following way.

In our classroom we have four computers on one side that anybody can use. I had some older kids in the classroom working on the computers and some of my boys thought that they would just watch what they were doing instead of paying attention to the lesson. I asked them a number of times in French to pay attention to me but they didn’t. So I switched to English and abruptly told them to look at me and not at the computers. Switching to English seemed to convince them that I was serious and they had better listen up.

Mme Nichole notes that, in general, in her school discipline is dealt with in English as the anti-bullying program and behaviour program are instructed in English. Mme Nichole explains that because of this, when a student comes to her with a behavioural issue, she deals with the student in English, as this is how her administration has instructed her to deal with these situations. The tendency to use English in discipline situations speaks to the school-wide policies that undermine the French language by placing the English language in a position of power and authority.

Similarly to Mme Nichole, Mme Gabrielle’s and Mme Sophia’s administration has also instructed them to deal with most major discipline issues in English. Mme Gabrielle explains she uses English to deal with discipline issues that arise in the classroom, as well as on the playground, especially when the students are emotional. Mme Gabrielle describes during her interview that when she is dealing with a student’s feelings that she will often use English.

I use the students’ first language when someone is hurt or I am sorting out behavioural playground issues. This one comes up a lot, where in order for them to get across the order of the story they are trying to tell me, how they feel and everything, they need to switch into English and then for me to explain to them what needs to be done, how to fix it, let’s work on this. That also happens to be done in English.
Edstrom (2006) notes that sometimes it is necessary to use the students’ first language because the students’ needs outweigh their immediate second language learning. Mme Gabrielle feels discipline situations are not a time where she should be trying to teach them linguistic skills. She views these situations as opportunities to provide the students with comfort and to ensure they understand their needs are cared for. On the other side of the argument, Tardiff (2006) states in her address at a French immersion conference that she cannot emphasize enough the importance of providing the students with real life communication opportunities so they can practice their skills. In other words, if teachers do not provide their students with the opportunities to use French in all situations, discipline situations included, students will revert back to English because it is easier.

During our interview and in her reflective journal, Mme Sophia notes one of her main uses of English is the question “What is your job?”. This question is a direct response to the discipline program used at Mme Sophia’s school. Mme Sophia commented during our interview that she has tried multiple times to remind herself to ask this question in French but it never sounds quite right and the children do not respond the same way.

We’re still a Restitution school and certain things just come out of your mouth like “What’s your job?” and that one, even when I try in French, I still say “job” in English because it doesn’t feel the same if you don’t say job.
This phrase, and other phrases like it that make up part of the behavioural program (Photo 11), can be found on Mme Sophia’s walls. She explains that when the program began in the school the sentences where displayed so teachers and students could use them whenever the need arose.

Photo 11

Mme Sophia notes she uses English if she is giving the students “heck”. Mme Sophia version of “heck” is quick little sentences she says to the students to get the students’ attention, such as “Go sit down!” or “Let’s go!” During her interview, Mme Sophia gives the following example of when she would use one of these sentences.

I was waiting with another teacher, in the other Grade 2 classroom and I had just brought the kids back from Phys. Ed. I was saying something to her in French and some of the kids weren’t sitting down, so it sounded like, French, French, French, Go sit down! French, French, French, French.

Mme Sophia explains that when a discipline situation arises, she often talks to the student in the hallway and this is past her line (the imaginary line at her door that indicates to the students they must speak French). Littlewood and Yu (2011) note that
using the students’ first language for classroom management, such as dealing with minor or serious discipline issues, is an acceptable use. These more serious discipline issues usually involve feelings and even though she spends a lot of time working on feelings and how to express feelings in French at the beginning of the year, students still are not comfortable using French to describe their feelings when they are emotional. Mme Sophia explains that because the behavioural program used in the school is in English, the hallway is the best place for her to use English in order to keep her classroom as a “French-only” zone. While Mme Sophia is right in saying that it is difficult for young children to express their feelings in a second language, when she conducts these conversations in English, she is forcing her multilingual students to have these conversations in a language that is not their first language.

Mme Natalie sees herself as using English for most discipline situations that arise in her classroom. Cook (2001) explains teachers’ use the students’ first language in situations of classroom discipline because the students are then able to understand the severity of the issue. Mme Natalie explains that she likes to use English for discipline issues because this is the only way to ensure the students really understand her message.

I use English because I need to make sure they understand. They need to understand because if they don’t understand they will repeat the same delinquent action and I want them to understand. I feel that if I REALLY want them to understand, I go to English. Then there is no question that they understood.

Cook (2001) says that sometimes students respond better to certain phrases in their first language because they are not interpreting verb tenses and deciphering meaning. He uses the example of telling students to be quiet or they will get detention. Similarly, Mme Natalie notes that certain classroom management techniques need to occur in
English so the students understand the severity of the situation. While I agree that for the majority of the students using English does help ensure that the message has been understood. This kind of thinking, however, does not take into account the multilingual students who are still using an additional language to understand the message.

As illustrated above teachers have the most control over allowing or not allowing the English into the classroom. The most common areas noted by the participants of this study where English intruded into the classroom are teacher emotions, teacher habits, easing the demands of the job and discipline. In this next section, I look at reasons for using English due to the students’ needs.

**Student Influence on English Language Use**

As noted in the above sections there are a number of reasons under the teachers’ control for using English in the classroom. The teacher is not the only person in the classroom, therefore the students and their needs also play a role in the teacher’s decision to use English. I have identified six such reasons that reoccur in the participants’ interviews and journal entries. The reasons the participants give for speaking English due to the perceived needs of students’ are: 1) the alleged individual needs of the students, 2) students’ comprehension, 3) students’ emotions, 4) the time of year, and 5) the beginning of a new unit or concept.

The first reason three of the participants, Mme Kristy, Mme Nichole and Mme Natalie, cite for using English is the perceived needs of the students. During her interview, Mme Kristy states she watches the students’ faces to see if they understand and if they are smiling and nodding, she continues in French, but if they are looking at
her in a confused manner, either with a blank look in their eyes or they are no longer paying attention, she switches English. Once she has identified that a student is struggling, either by visual cues or by asking the student, she often switches to English. Littlewood and Yu (2011) indicate that students’ language proficiency can be a factor when the teacher is deciding to use the first language or remain in the second language. Mme Kristy says during her interview that “sometimes it is necessary to use English in order to help the student with higher needs and those who have difficulties acquiring Math or language related concepts.” Mme Kristy needs to be careful making the decision to use English with students who may be seen as having higher needs because if the decision is always made to use English with them so they understand, they will lose out on the opportunity to hear and use French. Gutierrez-Clellen (1999) points out that if children are able to attain high levels of proficiency in their first language than they should also be able to demonstrate comparable achievements in their second language. In one journal entry, Mme Kristy provides another example of using the students’ needs as a reason for using English. She explains that she is trying to teach the students about phonemic awareness so they can use it in the future.

The students’ first language wasn’t necessary with the students who had already mastered the basic de-coding skills so I only used it with the students who were weaker. What I mean is, I used English with the weaker students and the explanations were done in French for the students who were already meeting reading expectations.

Mme Nichole finds herself in similar situations to Mme Kristy’s. She explains that when students get stuck on a concept and just need a little extra help to get them moving again, she uses English. If she is working with weaker students who do not have the vocabulary
or the reading skills to complete their work, she will help them out by using English. She demonstrates this in one of her reflective journals.

While working on a Math review during bellwork, I translated a sentence for a student because this is a student who has weak language skills but is stronger in Math. I wanted her to “get past” the language deficient to allow her to shine in Math.

Butzkamm (2003) states sometimes a quick translation using the students’ first language is an effective way of keeping the lesson flowing so the students do not loose motivation. In other words, by providing the student with the translation, Mme Nichole is allowing the student to continue with her work at a comfortable pace but will not stall due to a lack of comprehension. In another journal entry, Mme Nichole describes a situation where the students’ lack of comprehension surprised her and she was not prepared to continue the lesson in French with so many students who did not understand.

I had tried miming, using different words, and drawing pictures for “Combien reste-t-il?” and I still had a few students who didn’t understand. Had I have known there would have been that many difficulties I would have had manipulatives also. I think using the first language helped those who didn’t understand and confirmed things for those who did.

Once again, in a situation like this, a quick translation was able to provide Mme Nichole with the opportunity to keep the lesson moving along.

Mme Natalie also believes English has a place in the classroom but that teachers need to be aware of their students’ needs. She has noticed over her teaching career a group of students who rely on the teacher using English in the classroom in order to put the least amount of effort possible into their work. Mme Natalie refers to these students as “the lazy students” and she tries her best to force them to use French in the classroom. She describes her views in the following excerpt:
Using the students’ first language can be a bad thing for those students that I call the “LAZY” student, the student who is looking for the easy way out and that’s typical behaviour for that student, the student who’s not really dedicated to his work, the student who will colour something in a wishy-washy way. That same student will try to get away with saying the question and answer always in English. I look at the student and I say “Non. That is not acceptable. Rephrase!” And when they rephrase they are able to find some French words. But if you allow them to be lazy, they will just continue that way. It is only by forcing, by forcing and encouraging them to go find the word that they will do it. Otherwise they will always speak use the English word. Sometimes when you speak to a Grade 7 student, they talk to you in English even though you know they know the words in French. Come on, don’t be lazy! Go and get that word, it is in your brain.

Atkinson (1987) describes such a situation as a possible effect of overuse of the students’ first language. He explains if the first language has been overused, students can begin to feel they do not understand a lesson until it is translated into their first language. Mme Natalie claims when she is working with these students, she does not allow them to sit there and wait until English is used. She encourages these students to try a little harder and she is not satisfied with the age-old excuse “I don’t understand French.” When she hears this response, she encourages the students to try a little harder and to do their best to come up with a few more words in French. She finds when the students are pushed this way, more often than not, they are able to find more French words in their vocabulary.

Three teachers, Mme Nichole, Mme Gabrielle and Mme Natalie, cite student comprehension as an acceptable time to employ English in a French immersion classroom. Mme Sophia is on the opposite side of the fence in this argument and she feels it is her job to continue to look for ways in French to help her students understand without using English. Similar views can be seen amongst researchers in regards to
utilising the students’ first language in the classroom due to student comprehension also. Rolin-Ianziti and Brownlie (2002) find that using the students’ first language is an effective strategy to simplify the lesson in order to accommodate the learner’s comprehension level. On a similar note, Meyers (2008) points out that using the students’ first language when introducing new concepts can be one way of making new material relevant to the students. On the other hand, Turnbull (2001) argues that teachers need to first try as many different second language teaching strategies as possible before resorting to the students’ first language, as we see with Mme Sophia.

Mme Gabrielle claims student comprehension plays an important role in her decision to use English in the classroom. During her interview, Mme Gabrielle states “I don’t think it is necessarily a bad thing when a child isn’t getting it and you give them that one word in English and they can make that link and then all of a sudden they are fine.” Mme Gabrielle describes such a situation in one of her reflective journals. During a Math lesson, one student did not understand the vocabulary being used so she sat beside the student to help walk her through it. She tried to use different second language teaching strategies but none of these were successful so she used English to try to help her understand. The following passage is from one of Mme Gabrielle’s reflective journals.

I had tried different ways of explaining the concept to the student but she still didn’t get it. I switched into English to help her out and by the end of the discussion she was able to complete the assignment. My only concern is that next time she needs to use this information she will need me to translate it for her again.
Mme Gabrielle points out something interesting at end of her journal entry. She stated she was concerned the student will always need English assistance to finish her work. According to Carson and Kashihara (2012) one of the quickest ways for a student to make cognitive additions to their second language is by associating the second language to their first language, such as in situations where new vocabulary is introduced. Although Mme Gabrielle is conflicted by the end result of this lesson, it would stand to reason that if the student was able to understand in English then during the next lesson she may be able to associate the French words to the English words and begin to learn the necessary vocabulary to complete the lesson in French. Mme Gabrielle also noted that not only did this one student benefit but that by the end of the discussion there were other students listening also. In this case, her usage of the English language also seemed to help a couple other children who were close enough to hear the explanation. Mme Nichole’s beliefs are similar to those of Mme Gabrielle. Mme Nichole explains during her interview that student comprehension is one of her main reasons for using English.

One reason is purely comprehension with students that are especially weak. I will often give an English word or a quick explanation in English so that we can move on with the concept in French because they seem to get sort of stuck and then need something extra to help them move on.

Mme Natalie also uses English in the classroom for reasons dealing with student comprehension but in a slightly different manner. She describes how in the following passage.

I use the students’ first language to clarify. To clarify and to make sure that the kids know what is going on. I often find that the kids are just going along, going along with the French teaching, when the teacher is teaching French and they don’t understand. So I clarify.
Later on during the interview, Mme Natalie describes how she used English to clarify a point during a science lesson. The students were working on a lesson about clouds and they had just finished reading a passage from the textbook together. In the following excerpt, Mme Natalie describes how she clarified for students.

I asked the students “What did you just read?” and they replied “les nuages” but they didn’t seem to get what a “nuage” was. There were pictures in the book so I told them to look at the pictures and some still didn’t get it. They can read but they just don’t know what they are reading. So I told them a “nuage” was a cloud and they all seemed to understand after that.

Mme Natalie also uses English in one-on-one situations when she sees a student does not understand their work. During the interview, she describes how she pulls a student to the side in order to make sure they understand the concept and what they need to be doing.

If I see a child who is in difficulty, who is not doing the assignment properly, I will take them one-on-one and say “Qu’est-ce que c’est?” Usually they understand “Qu’est-ce que c’est que tu ne comprends pas?” but if they don’t I’ll ask them in English and they will say that they don’t understand. So, if I have to, I will explain it in English to that one student to help them understand.

Turnbull and Arnett (2002) indicate that although a teacher needs to do their best to support the students in their second language, there are times when using the students’ first language is what is in their best interest. In this case, Mme Natalie felt it was in the students’ best interest to re-explain in English so he could complete the work properly in French.

As noted above, Mme Sophia does not believe that a lack of comprehension on the students’ behalf is an excuse for her to use English in the classroom. She states in her interview that her job is to help the students learn French and that she needs to do
whatever is necessary to accomplish this goal. Mme Sophia explains that using the language orally is a key component in her classroom. If a student does not understand, she will try to help them out and she will call on the other students to help them. Mme Sophia explains that she encourages the student to put their new French language skills into practice right away as a way to help them remember what they have learned. Turnbull (2001) points out that by limiting the first language usage in the classroom and encouraging the second language, the students are able to experience the usefulness of the language immediately, rather than at some point in the future. Mme Sophia is a supporter of this theory as she explained a number of times during her interview that she believes the students need to French if they want to learn French: “If you don’t have to use it you never will” and “Because it is hard. Because unless you force yourself, you won’t pick it up. They won’t pick it up unless they have to.”

Four of the participants mention using English when the students’ emotions are involved as the third reason. De la Campa and Nassaji (2009) indicate there are more than just pedagogical reasons for using the students’ first language. Social reasons also play a role in a teachers’ decision to use the students’ first language when they are trying to create a supportive environment within the classroom. Polio and Duff (1994) identify empathy towards students as one of the eight categories where first language use is often seen in the classroom. Mme Kristy finds she uses English frequently when the students’ emotions are involved and they need to describe their emotions. During her interview, she was very specific when she described different situations when she uses English. She explains “when feelings are involved, anything to do with feelings, I use English”. When
I questioned her further on this she explains “when I am addressing the students on any issues that are dealing with their emotions, I need to ensure that there are no misinterpretations or misunderstandings between the message and the meaning, so I use English.” Mme Kristy was clear to point out however that if the child is “having issues with something simple, like tu n’as pas aimé ça, you didn’t like that? Then I’ll try to use French but most of these issues come to me in English, so I deal with them in English.”

Mme Nichole did not specifically talk about using English during her interview when her students are expressing different emotional responses however she describes a situation in her reflective journal where she used English because of an emotional response.

I was working with the students during a Lecture guidée lesson and I used English vocabulary to support the French vocabulary in the lesson. I tried other strategies with the student and they weren’t working. The student was getting very frustrated, she even had tears in her eyes.

Mme Nichole goes on to describe that if a similar situation arose again in her classroom that “I would do it again because of the student’s emotional reaction to her lack of comprehension.”

Fakharzadeh and Rasekh (2009) claim by choosing to ignore a student’s first language in the classroom, the teacher can de-motivate the student in their linguistic learning process. Fakharzadeh and Rasekh claim supports Mme Nichole’s decision to use English because in this case, the usage of the students’ first language allowed the child to understand the concept and feel better about herself and the learning experience.

As seen above, Mme Kristy states that anything to do with feelings is typically done in English in her classroom. Mme Sophia explains that while she does use English
when dealing with students’ emotions in the classroom, she does her best to provide the students with the skills and vocabulary necessary to explain themselves in French first.

Mme Sophia explains her view on using English and emotions.

I have little posters around the room (Photo 12), the poster with the little faces that explains the emotions (Photo 13) so that the students can express the basics of the basics. Because even if they are a little bit upset or a little bit frustrated, from fights with friends, it’s like they have that primal instinct to talk to you in English.

Mandin (2008) points out that because most, if not all, of the students’ French instruction happens in an isolated context, the children do not feel comfortable describing their feeling in French and often switch to English as soon as possible. Mme Sophia goes on to explain in her interview that even though she tries to encourage her students to explain in French, it is not always possible.
They are kids and kids are not good, well people are not good, in a second language talking about their feelings and whatever. That just doesn’t come naturally. Often if it’s the kids’ emotions and they are upset, you can’t do that in a second language, especially in Grade 2.

After Mme Sophia explained she does use English to deal with some emotional issues, she very clearly pointed out that discussions like this always takes place in the hallway so that the English does not impose on her French immersion classroom.

Al-Hinai (2006) suggests at the end of his study on the use of Arabic in elementary English classrooms that teachers often find it “easy to explain classroom practice without examining circumstances more thoroughly” (p.6). He goes on to question whether teachers are justifying first language use without questioning whether it leads to learning or not. In the case of using English to deal with emotional situations, are the participants of this study using English because it is easier for them or for the students involved? Another question that needs to be looked at is how do teachers expect students to get better at expressing their emotions in French if the automatic response of the teacher is to switch to English? Al-Hadhrami (2008) concluded in his study of the role of the first language in four English as a Foreign Language classrooms in Oman that overuse of the first language can be detrimental to the students’ second language acquisition. In other words, by continuing to use the English, French immersion teachers are keeping the students from valuable second language input that could indeed help them to speak about their emotions with more confidence.

Mme Natalie also uses English if the students’ feelings are involved. Mme Natalie explains in one of her reflective journal entries that sometimes using French does not carry the same weight with the students as using English.
We had been talking about having respect for one another and the students said that they get offended when somebody calls them a name. The kids said that if a teacher says to the “Il ne faut pas appeler les personnes par des autres noms” it doesn’t seem as bad as the teacher saying in English that you can’t call other people names.

Mme Natalie says she does not feel as if the two phrases are compatible nor will they get the same reaction out of the students. Cook’s (2001) statement reinforces this idea when he states that sometimes using the students’ first language seems to carry more weight with the students.

Time of Year is another influence in the participants’ decision to use English in the French immersion classroom. Mme Gabrielle comments during her interview that at the beginning of the year, she finds she switches more often because the students are just settling back into the routine of school and many of them have not used their French language skills over the summer. She explains her position in the following excerpt.

I use more English particularly at the beginning of the school year and they need a bit more of an explanation of what is going on. I will switch languages and a lot of the time it is with a child individually, when I am trying to help a specific kid understand what is going on.

Gulzar (2010) states teachers employ the students’ first language in order to create a sense of belonging and positive attitude towards learning. In other words, by using English, Mme Gabrielle is letting the students know she is genuinely interested in them as people and she wants them to feel they belong in the classroom. Mme Gabrielle is careful to point out during her interview that as the year progresses, she uses less and less English because the students’ linguistic skills in French are increasing and they are more comfortable with her as their teacher. Meyer (2008) states it is acceptable that
teachers use the students’ first language at the beginning of the year but students should be gradually weaned off of the first language as the year progresses.

Mme Kristy’s beliefs follow closely along Mme Gabrielle’s. During her interview, Mme Kristy explains how she uses English at the beginning of the year and how it evolves throughout the year.

At the beginning of the year, I use a little bit more when I am setting up the routines, getting them to learn what their place is and what is expected of them in the classroom. But then after a while, you switch so there is more French and once you have identified the needs of the students you start using English with only those who you know need it and French with those who don’t.

Fakharzadeh and Rasekh (2009) point out that using the students’ first language can lead to a sense of security and help create a classroom atmosphere that becomes supportive and harmonious. As Mme Kristy describes it, at the beginning of the year students are in the early stages of learning and as the classroom teacher it is her job to lay the foundation, not only for the current school year, but also for their entire education. In other words, Mme Kristy is making sure her students feel comfortable in their learning environment by using English at the beginning of the school year and then slowly removing it. She explains that she feels she can remove the English because the students are more comfortable, they are learning more and she feels she needs to continue to push them in order to help them to learn their second language, French.

Mme Sophia is on the other side of this argument. She states she believes the students are capable of beginning the year in French and they can also develop a relationship with their teacher in French. One teacher in Al-Alawi’s (2008) study has similar beliefs stating it is more important to create a rich target language environment
for the students to learn in than it is to use the students’ first language in the classroom.
Mme Sophia says that if the students are going to learn another language, then they need
to use and hear the language as much as possible. Because of this belief, Mme Sophia
tries her best to minimize her use of English in the classroom from day one. At the
beginning of the school year she spends all of her time with the students when they are in
the classroom. If it is lunchtime, she eats with them and talks to them in French. If it is
an indoor recess, she stays in the classroom playing games with them and conversing
with the students in French. Al-Shidhanai (2009) points out that to increase the learners’
exposure to the second language, most teachers believe teachers and learners, alike need
to use the second language as much as possible. Mme Sophia believes this demonstrates
to the students that it is possible to speak French all the time and that French is more than
just a language used at school. She firmly believes students need to be using, hearing and
learning French from the beginning of the school year on.

As noted above, some participant use more English at the beginning of the school
year and these same participants believe their usage of English is also higher at the
beginning of a unit then it is at the end of the unit. Mme Gabrielle and Mme Kristy both
believe their English usage is higher at the beginning of new concepts. Mme Gabrielle
explains during her interview that she finds with many of the harder concepts introduced
in Grade 2, such as Interdependence in Social Studies, she uses English at the beginning
of the unit to ensure all of her students will be able to participate equally in the lessons to
come. She says she often sits the children down in a large group and takes the time to
introduce the vocabulary and talk about anything the students already know about the concept. In the following passage, Mme Gabrielle describes her actions.

I find that in Social Studies where there are “big questions” like the units on Interdependence or needs and wants, the students don’t have the vocabulary in French to be able to do it confidently. So generally, at the beginning of those units, I would sometimes have a short conversation in English of this is what we are talking about and what are your experiences. Then when we switch into French, they can re-tell the same experiences but have the confidence of knowing what we are talking about.

Mme Gabrielle’s practices are supported by Atkinson (1987) when he indicates in his review of the literature that using the students’ first language can provide the students with a chance to articulate their thinking during work periods and assignments. By providing the students with this opportunity, Mme Gabrielle is taking the time to ensure that all the students will be able to participate and understand the discussions. Mme Gabrielle explains that these discussions does not take place 100% in English and she encourages the students to continue to try to use French, that a discussion such as this is not permission to the students to speak English simply because it is easier but rather for the sake of comprehension.

During her interview, Mme Kristy explains that she sees herself using more English at the beginning of a unit or when she is teaching a new concept in order to help the students learn the meaning of key vocabulary. Cook (2001) suggests teachers use the students’ first language to verify the meaning of words or ideas taught in the second language. Mme Kristy indicates that she uses an English word after the French word or concept has been introduced in order to establish a link between the word the students are learning in French and the word they know in English.
When activities are new to the students and they are more complicated, there are more steps to the activity, I will often paraphrase at the end in English, just to make sure that they have understood. But there is always some that don’t, it doesn’t matter what language you use.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the reasons the participants of the study have given for using English, the first language of the majority of students, in situations where the teacher is in control and in situations where the student needs have control in the classroom. It is apparent that although each teacher has individual beliefs concerning when they should use English in the classroom, there are commonalities between and amongst the participants in this study. Some of these commonalities are discipline, teacher emotions, student needs and student comprehension, amongst others. The participants in this study have provided evidence that the teacher is not the only influencing factor in deciding whether or not English is used in the classroom. The needs of the students can outweigh an individual teacher’s beliefs and force them to use English in order to ensure that a quality education, based on their belief system, is occurring for all students. These findings, as well as the findings in the previous chapter, provide the framework for the final discussion.
CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSION

After presenting the data in Chapters Four and Five, I now offer a conclusion for this study. I begin by re-examining the findings of this study and answering my research questions. Secondly, I look at the implications of this study in regards to my personal growth as a French immersion teacher, for the participants of this study, and for professional development opportunities for French immersion teachers. I also provide suggestions for the school division where I conducted my research, as well as recommendation for all French immersion teachers. Next, I present the limitations for this study. Finally, I propose questions for future research that were brought to light during this study.

Research Questions

The goal of this research project was to understand how and why the five participants used the students’ first language in their French immersion classroom. Throughout this study, I looked to find answers to the following questions:

1. How do teachers use English, the assumed first language of the majority of students, in a French immersion classroom?

2. What reasons do teachers cite to explain the use of English in a French immersion classroom when there are a number of strategies available to maximize second language use in the classroom?

3. How, if at all, do teachers respond to the needs of multilingual students in a French immersion classroom?
In response to the first question, the participants appeared to have the intention of using English, the assumed first language of the students, in order to help them understand their second language. The five participants in this study all indicated during their interview that they never plan on using English in the classroom. In other words, when they sit down to plan their day, they do not consciously go through each lesson and look for situations where English may be incorporated in order to assist the students. All the participants indicated that their use of English happens spontaneously during the day and is usually prompted by their perceptions of students’ needs.

In order to answer the second question I posed, I refer back to chapter four and five. The five teachers involved in this study all had different language use beliefs they apply to their pedagogical practices. Having noted that each teacher is different, it is still possible to find similarities in their pedagogical practices. Many of the participants noted the following reasons as reasons why they use the students’ first language in the classroom for pedagogical purposes: 1) introducing new units, 2) ensuring comprehension, 3) clarifying vocabulary, and 4) responding to students’ needs. In is important to note that pedagogical reasons are not the only reasons provided by the participants for using the students’ first language in the classroom. Affective reasons were also provided by the participants. Some of the affective reasons stated by the five participants were: 1) ensuring the students’ understood the severity of the situation, 2) comforting the student, 3) expressing feelings of displeasure or pleasure, and 4) creating a sense of familiarity in the classroom.
The third question was an area where the five participants had not previously put a lot of thought. Many of the participants knew which students spoke another language, but they were not always aware of what that language was. Another common response the participants provided was they believed their students were all able to function in English, the common first language in the classroom. Because of this belief, the teachers did not see that it as important to incorporate any other first language into the classroom. Of the five participants, only one of them indicated they incorporated any form of multilingual awareness into the classroom. Mme Natalie indicated she incorporated other cultures into some lessons so the students understand many people spoke multiple languages. In answering the question, the participants do not respond to the needs of multilingual students. Not only do they not respond to the needs of multilingual students, in most cases, the participants seem completely unaware that these students’ needs might different from those of anglophone students.

Study Findings

The findings of this study can be divided into three categories: 1) reasons under the control of the teacher, 2) reasons under the influences of the teachers’ assessments of the students’ needs and 3) multilingual students and their needs. In order to present the findings of this study, I review the findings covered in Chapter Four and Five and I question the beliefs and practices of the five participants.

Reasons Under the Control of the Teacher.

Looking at the findings of this study, it is apparent that teachers do not have complete control over what happens in their classroom. Having stated that, there are a
number of things teachers can control and it is important teachers continue to evaluate their practices. The first area of first language use that appeared among the participants is using the students’ first language when teacher emotions become involved. As Flyman-Mattsson and Burenhult (1999) point out, a teacher only has one first language herself and thus it is the language she will be inclined to use for affective functions. It is important to note the first language of most of the participants is the same as the first language of the students because this study took place in an anglo-dominated region. Two of the participants indicated that English was not their first language however it is the language used the most frequently now in their home lives. All of the participants were able to point out situations where they used the students’ first language due to reasons of frustration or fatigue. Although researchers such as Flyman-Mattsson and Burenhult and Gulzar (2010) indicate pleasure is also reason to use the students’ first language, only one of the participants referred to this in either their interview or reflective journal. This presents an argument that teachers can remain in the students’ second language to express frustration if they are able to express pleasure in their second language.

Another area many of the participants indicated they find themselves using the students’ first language is when their instincts become involved. Rolin-Ianziti and Brownlie (2002) indicate that sometimes outside influences can affect a teacher’s abilities to remain in the students’ first language but I argue that responding instinctually might fall into the category of a negative excuse. As Turnbull (2001) points out, it is a French immersion teacher’s job to provide second language opportunities for the
students. In order to provide those opportunities, a teacher needs to use the second language as much as possible. In following Turnbull’s advice, a teacher needs to keep their instincts in check and to constantly evaluate why they are using the students’ first language prior to using it. Similar recommendations are made by Edstrom (2006) in her self-study of first language use. She recommends that teachers continually look at the belief system and evaluate it regularly to see if it corresponds with their practices in the classroom.

Teacher habits and easing the demands of the job seem closely related in this aspect. If teachers regularly check to see if their practices are in line with their beliefs they may begin to recognize situations where they are employing the students’ first language simply to make things a little easier. Nation (2003) points out that although there are many acceptable reasons to use the students’ first language in the classroom, there are also reasons that are unacceptable for using the students’ first language in the classroom. According to his suggestions, using the students’ first language simply to ease the demands of the job is not a good enough reason. Atkinson (1987) similarly explains that this can become a slippery slope that no teacher wants to slide down. Mme Kristy pointed out in her interview that is aware of how easy it can be to use English in the classroom and that she tries hard to remain in French as much as possible in order to avoid falling into the trap of overusing English in the classroom. Mme Nichole, on the other hand, seems to already be caught up in what can be referred to as overuse of English. Mme Nichole’s opinion of language objectives being secondary to subject objectives indicates that she is already sliding down the slope that Atkinson refers to
when he describes using the students’ first language too much. In a French immersion classroom, where the second language is the language of instruction, I would suggest, as does Laplante (2000), that the language objectives should always be on par with the subject objectives.

Discipline is the last area the participants noted as an area where they use the students’ first language. All the participants noted they used the students’ first language because they wanted to be certain the students’ understand the severity of the situation and they do not repeat the action. Cook (2001) describes how using the students’ first language seems to convey a message of importance and the students’ put more stock into discipline situations if they are delivered in their first language. It is interesting to note however that some of the participants explained that for minor discipline situations they would try to conduct these situations in the second language. Dealing with the students in the second language for minor issues reflects the findings of Kharma and Najjaj’s (1989) study. These researchers indicate that using the students’ second language in such situations can allow the students to see two things: 1) their second language can be used in realistic situations and 2) future situations can be handled using similar vocabulary. By providing the students with authentic second language learning situations, teachers are allowing the students’ to understand that their second language is not simply a classroom language, but rather a language that can be used anywhere.

**Reasons Under the Influence of Teachers’ Assessments of Students’ Needs.**

Teachers are not the only factor in using English in the French immersion classroom. Teacher assessments of students’ needs and demands also play a role in a
teachers’ decision to use English in the classroom. I am not talking about students’ speaking English but rather teachers’ using English to help the students’. The first area a teacher will use English is when a student is struggling to understand a concept in French. Mme Gabrielle describes a situation in Math class where she is trying to explain a concept and the student does not understand. She exhausted a number of second language acquisition strategies and the students still did not understand. In situations such as this, teachers use English in order to help the student understand the concept and continue on with the lesson.

Teachers need to careful that they have indeed exhausted all avenues prior to switching to English, as in the case of Mme Nichole. She describes one situation where she was underprepared for a Math lesson because she had not envisioned needing manipulatives to teach the lesson. In this situation, a lack of preparedness resulted in Mme Nichole using English to help her students understand the lesson. When these types of situations happen, teachers need to take responsibility for their language choice and not place the blame the perceived needs of the students. Littlewood and Yu (2011) explain that sometimes a teacher needs to take into account the students’ proficiency level and factor in whether or not the student will understand the lesson if the teacher continues in the second language. On the other side of this argument, Turnbull (2001) points out that if a teacher uses this strategy too often then the students begin to expect their first language to help them out. Mme Sophia agrees with Turnbull and she does everything in her power to ensure that she uses the students’ second language in class,
even if she perceives them as “weaker” students. She claims the students will not get stronger if they do not put their new found skills into practice.

Student comprehension is another area where the participants of this study noted English use. Student comprehension differs from the needs of the students in the fact that it is usually a quick fix to keep the students moving. The needs of the students refer to the different proficiency levels found in a classroom. Mme Gabrielle explains how she does not see using English as a negative thing if she is using it to help out a student so they can continue to work in their second language. Her opinion is supported by the findings of Rolin-Ianziti and Brownlie (2002) and Meyers (2008). These researchers explain that using the students’ first language can be a way of simplifying the lesson and allowing the students to make a direct comparison to their second language. Once again, Mme Sophia is on the opposite side of this argument. She believes the best way for students to understand their second language is to use it.

The participants of this study also note they used English when the students’ emotions were involved. Polio and Duff (1994) note “empathy” as one category where first language use happens and de la Campa and Nassaji (2009) claims there are more reasons than just pedagogical reasons for using the students’ first language. Mme Kristy, Mme Nichole, Mme Sophia and Mme Natalie all note that when the students become emotionally involved in a situation often times they will revert back to the students’ first language. Mme Sophia and Mme Kristy said they will try using French first but they are open to using English because feelings are hard to explain in a second language.
The last two areas presented in this study where the participants view themselves as using the students’ first language is at the beginning of the school year and at the beginning of new concepts or new units. Many researchers view this as acceptable stating that often the students’ first language is used in the beginning and slowly removed so the students are developing their second language skills (Atkinson, 1987; Fakharzadeh and Rasekh, 2009; Meyer, 2008). Mme Gabrielle and Mme Kristy indicate they use English at the beginning of the year in order to create a sense of belonging and to establish relationships with the students, as noted in Gulzar’s (2010) work. Mme Sophia believes this is not necessary and attempts to begin her year using as much French as possible. Her opinion is supported by Al-Alawi’s (2008) work where he indicates the best way to develop students’ second language skills is to use those second language skills.

**Multilingual Students and Their Needs.**

Reviewing the findings of this study, I believe that it is apparent the needs of multilingual students need to be brought to the attention of French immersion teachers. A number of the participants, Mme Nichole, Mme Kristy, Mme Natalie, and Mme Gabrielle, all noted during their interview that they viewed the students in their classroom who are multilingual students as being able to function equally well as their English-only speaking counterparts. While this may be true, it is important to point out these students are not English-only speaking students and they already possess second language acquisition skills that may not be present amongst their English-only speaking counterparts. In Mme Natalie’s case, for example, she did not know that she had a
student who spoke Romanian at home. Knowledge of this students’ linguistic background could have been valuable information for Mme Natalie to incorporate into her classroom due to the similarities in the two languages.

This brings me to my next point. As indicated above, Mme Natalie was not aware of the fact that one of her students spoke Romanian at home. It was not until our interview that she became aware of this information due to my knowledge of the student. Mme Gabrielle also had a student in her classroom that spoke a language other than English and she was unable to provide the name of the language. She indicated that she had seen the language once but she did not remember it because she could not pronounce it. Given this information, it would be difficult for her to incorporate this language or aspects of this language into her language classroom.

Researchers do not suggest that French immersion teachers need to learn the first language of each child in their classroom but rather they need to be aware of these languages and to create and awareness amongst the students and draw on these resources. Dagenais (2008a) explains teachers need to be aware of activities that promote language awareness and implement these activities into the classroom. Gutierrez-Clellan (1999) points out that “children who experience negative attitudes regarding their home language my refuse to use it and eventually lose first language proficiency” (p. 293). Mme Natalie was the only participant who indicated that she included language awareness activities into her classroom. She described that due to the fact that she had a new student arriving from Egypt that she would take the time to talk to the students about different cultures and languages. This is the type of activity Dagenais (2008b)
describes in her study on French immersion classrooms and promoting language diversity. Teachers can go even further than language awareness or the celebration of the existence of other languages to the development of what Cazden (1974) describes as *metalinguistic awareness*. According to Cazden, metalinguistic awareness is the ability to create connections between languages and understand the differences. In French immersion, we help Anglophones by talking about cognates and false friends. In the case of the Romanian student in Mme Natalie’s class, the opportunity was missed to look for cognates between French and Romanian.

Mme Gabrielle implied that she would like to be more open to other languages in her classroom but she finds that such an importance is placed on the French language in French immersion that it sometimes feels like that is the only important language. She describes it as saying “no” to other languages because she is so busy saying “yes” to French. Mme Nichole also indicated that she is open to other languages. In her situation it seems however that she would be more open to including these languages if there were more than one who spoke that language in the classroom. She describes how she would let the students use their first language similar to the way English is used is there was more than one child who spoke that language.

**Future Considerations**

Several ideas for future considerations have evolved from this research. There is a need for all French immersion teachers to continually evaluate their own English use practices to determine if they align with their personal beliefs. There is also a need for more responsibility to be taken on behalf of multilingual students in French immersion
classrooms. This responsibility lies not only with the teacher but also with the school, the school division and those who educate future teachers. I begin with an explanation as to why I believe teachers need to continually self-evaluate their language practices.

The first recommendation I have is for French immersion teachers. It is important that French immersion teachers self-evaluate their usage of English in the classroom. I recommend that, at a minimum, this self-evaluation be conducted at least once a year. Brischuk (2012) also recommends that teachers take the time to critically reflect on their usage of English in the classroom and determine if English is playing a pedagogical role or not. In many school divisions, teachers are already completing professional development plans for the year with their administrators and I recommend that a question be added about English use in French immersion classrooms. If teachers do not want to have this discussion with their administrator, because they fear a negative response if they suggest a response other that 100% second language use, writing down this self-evaluation at the beginning of the year is a good option. At the end of the year, I suggest the teacher re-reads the self-evaluation to see if they were true to their plans or if adjustments need to be made to the following year.

The key question teachers need to ask themselves is “Am I using the English to help them or to help myself?” and they need to answer the question honestly. I believe that a number of teachers may ask themselves this question but they may not be willing to listen to the honest answer. Situations like when Mme Nichole used English to help her students with a Math problem because they did not understand seem on the surface like an acceptable reason to use English. However, when you dig a little deeper and
discover that she did not use all possibilities in French, such as using manipulatives, it
takes apparent that not all teachers are being honest with their reasons for using
English in the classroom.

I also recommend that this step go further and French immersion teachers take
the initiative to look at their unit plans and critically determine where and when they
foresee themselves using students’ first language. If a teacher is able to determine a
lesson where they envision first language use, is it possible to put second language
acquisition strategies into place in order to allow the students to continue to learn in
French. Some examples of determining lessons where strategies could be in place are: 1)
having manipulatives on hand for Math lessons, 2) hanging posters in the classroom for
difficult vocabulary concepts, 3) displaying common sentences that are often said
incorrectly, and 4) providing students with opportunities to practice new concepts.

As noted in this research, the needs of multilingual students need to be brought to
the attention of the stakeholders in education. Starting with the schools, I recommend
that a question be added to registration forms asking if the student speaks another
language and to indicate what the language is. In Regina, if a student immigrates to
Canada, this information is passed on to the teacher via Welcome Centre forms.
However, if the child was born a Canadian citizen, it is assumed their first language is
that of the dominant society around them, in this case English. This information will
provide the teacher with the knowledge of how many multilingual students are in the
classroom. I also recommend the teacher not rely solely on the school to provide this
information. If the school does not have this information, it falls on the teacher to
determine this information. Many teachers already ask their students and parents to
provide a bit of information about the student at the beginning of the year and this could
be a simple addition to these conversations or forms.

Another recommendation I have is to provide more professional development
opportunities for French immersion teachers in regards to language awareness activities
and different ways languages other than French can be incorporated into the classroom.
Professional development opportunities exist for teacher in this domain but the needs of
French immersion teachers are different than those of main stream education. French
immersion teachers are already focusing the majority of their time on another language
in the classroom. School divisions and teachers need to search out professional
development activities that are offered in person or on-line that will allow them to better
meet the needs of multilingual students. Of the five interviews that I conducted, only one
participant mentioned any professional development on the topic of multilingual
students. All the participants believed the students’ first language, when it was not one of
Canada’s official languages, did not play much of a role in their learning abilities in the
classroom. These beliefs are contrary to what has been noted in research (Dagenais,
2008a, 2008b) and if personal beliefs are what classroom teachers are basing their
teaching practices on, professional development in this area is needed.

My last recommendation is for teacher education of future French immersion
teachers. I recommend that university educator programs continue to include, and
potentially expand upon, lessons about multilingual students so that new teachers are
prepared to incorporate language awareness strategies into their lessons. Obviously this
is happening, as noted in Dagenais (2008a) but based upon my past experience this is an important topic that will need to be continued going forward. As we have seen, the demographics of French immersion are changing and English is no longer the only first language spoken in the classroom.

**Limitations**

It is important to note that there were limitations to this research study, as there often are with qualitative case study research. To conclude this thesis, there are four limitations that need to be highlighted. The first limitation is in regards to sampling. The participants selected for this study volunteered which therefore excluded any possible participants who may not have wanted to share how English was used in their classroom for fear of being judged. The second limitation to this study is that of the sample size. Only five participants were used in the study and assumptions cannot be made based upon these participants opinions. Therefore the results of the study cannot be applied to the wider population of French immersion teachers. The third limitation to this study was the time of year the study was conducted. The participants in the study indicated during their interview that they noticed their use of English in the classroom was higher at the beginning of the year. This could not be supported via the reflective journals however because the study was conducted near the latter portion of the school year. The final limitation to the study was that these participants were my colleagues and therefore may have been afraid that their responses would be judged negatively. If this was the case, the participants may not have provided accurate data in order make themselves look better when the data was analyzed.
Future Research

This study has opened my eyes to future research that can be conducted in the area of using the students’ first language in a second language classroom. The first study I foresee is working closely with teachers who are evaluating their use of English in the classroom. Teachers would create an action plan at the beginning of the school year in regards to their first language use intentions. Then throughout the year, they would conduct a re-evaluation numerous times and at the end of the year re-evaluate again to see if they were true to their plan. This will give researchers an idea of how second language teachers prepare at the beginning of the year and whether or not their English functions change throughout the school year.

The second area where I see this research paper guiding me is in the area of multilingual students. More work needs to be done with French immersion teachers and their attempts to work with multilingual students. Do French immersion teachers treat multilingual students like English-only students? If yes, does this affect multilingual students in the classroom? Are there ways of incorporating other languages into French immersion classrooms? As noted, the number of multilingual students is on the rise and teachers can no longer assume that everyone who steps foot in a French immersion classroom has a working knowledge of English, the dominant language in the community.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I have learned there are many reasons a teacher may choose to use English in the classroom. These reasons can have pedagogical functions, they can have
affective functions or they can be due to teacher failure. By teacher failure, I mean lack of attention to language objectives during other subject areas, lack of preparedness, and lack of exhausting all pedagogical avenues. I have also learned that French immersion teachers need to be constantly aware of the choices they are making in the classroom as these choices directly impact the students they are teaching. Teachers need to constantly be aware of the position they are taking so they do not create a dependency on English on the students’ behalf. Using English in the classroom can become a slippery slope and teachers need to remain at the top of that slope.

Throughout this study, my own personal and professional views on English usage have changed. I began this process believing that using English in the classroom was acceptable and I could not see many situations where it would be viewed as a negative choice. My views have evolved to include critically evaluating English language use in the classroom. I now find myself reflecting on my use of English in the classroom even before I speak the words out loud. I often ask myself “Is English really necessary right now or am I just taking the easy way out?” If I answer this question honestly, I would have to admit that there are many times when I answer the question by saying “Really, they do not need English right now.” I have found that the quality of French in my classroom has dramatically increased due to the numerous articles that I reviewed and the lived experience of my participants. I have rediscovered that the benefits of using French in the classroom seriously outweigh the benefits of using English to help the students.
Not all situations in the classroom warrant English use and I believe a teacher needs to exhaust all second language strategies first. Having stated that, I do not view all English use as negative and in different situations, different responses are necessary. This study has opened my eyes to acceptable and non-acceptable English usage in a French immersion class. I have also learned that the needs of multilingual students are not met in many French immersion classrooms. Prior to beginning this study, I would have included myself in the group who believed that most multilingual students function just as well in English, the assumed first language of the classroom, as their English-only speaking counterparts. This study has allowed me to understand that multilingual students already have a language acquisition skill set and their knowledge can be helpful to the other students in the classroom.
REFERENCES


Appendix A – REB Approval

DATE: March 26, 2013

TO: Honni Lizée
4622 E. Pincherry Place
Regina, SK S4V 1N1

FROM: Dr. Larena Hoeber
Chair, Research Ethics Board

Re: The Use of L1s in a French Immersion Classroom: How and Why Teachers are using the Student's L1 (File # 74S1213)

Please be advised that the University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed your proposal and found it to be:

☐ 1. APPROVED AS SUBMITTED. Only applicants with this designation have ethical approval to proceed with their research as described in their applications. For research lasting more than one year (Section 1F). ETHICAL APPROVAL MUST BE RENEWED BY SUBMITTING A BRIEF STATUS REPORT EVERY TWELVE MONTHS. Approval will be revoked unless a satisfactory status report is received. Any substantive changes in methodology or instrumentation must also be approved prior to their implementation.

☐ 2. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO MINOR CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the concerns to the Chair of the REB.** Do not submit a new application. Once changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

☐ 3. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the concerns to the Chair of the REB.** Do not submit a new application. Once changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

☐ 4. UNACCEPTABLE AS SUBMITTED. The proposal requires substantial additions or redesign. Please contact the Chair of the REB for advice on how the project proposal might be revised.

Dr. Larena Hoeber

cc: Dr. Andrea Sterzuk – Education

**supplementary memo should be forwarded to the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at the Office for Research, Innovation and Partnership (Research and Innovation Centre, Room 109) or by e-mail to research.ethics@uregina.ca

OFFICE FOR RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND PARTNERSHIP
MEMORANDUM

Phone: (306) 585-4775
Fax: (306) 585-4893

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Appendix B – Interview questions

1. Reflecting on your use of English in the classroom, how and for what purpose do you use it?
2. When you are planning your day, do you specifically plan when you will use English or is it something that occurs during the lessons? Please explain. Can you tell me a story of a time when you used English when you had not planned for it?
3. How often do you find yourself switching from French to English during the day?
   a. Can you tell me of a time when you found yourself switching languages?
   b. What factors are involved in your code switching practices?
4. What strategies and techniques do you use to maximize the use of French in the classroom?
   a. Can you provide examples of when you use these strategies?
5. How do you respond to students using English in the classroom? Do you find yourself responding in English or in French? Please explain.
6. Do you believe that the use of English in a French immersion classroom can be an obstacle to the students’ learning? Please explain.
7. Is there any time during the day that you refuse to use the students’ L1? Why do you feel it is not appropriate to use English to be used in this situation?
8. For the students who do not speak English as their first language, do you use their first language in the classroom?
   a. Have you seen the use of English as a hindrance or a help to their learning? Explain.
   b. How you think that children who speak multiple languages could be further motivating by including their other languages into the classroom?
9. When you reflect on your past practices in regards to the usage of the first language in the classroom, have your beliefs changed over the years? Why or why not?

Biographical information

1. How many languages do you speak?
2. What was your linguistic landscape growing up?
3. Did you learn French through a French immersion program or in a different manner? Please explain how you learned French if it was not through the immersion program.
4. How long have you been teaching in a French immersion classroom?
5. What drew you to the career of a French immersion teacher?
6. Reflecting on the students in your classroom, can you identify any other first languages other than English spoken by your students? What are these languages and what portion of your students speak these languages?
Appendix C – Blank Consent Form

Project Title: The Use of L1s in a French Immersion Classroom: How and Why Teachers are using the Student’s L1

Researcher(s): Honni Lizee, Graduate Student, Department of Graduate Studies, University of Regina, h.lizee@rcsd.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Andrea Sterzuk, Department of Education, Language and Literacies Education, (306)585-5607, Andrea.Sterzuk@uregina.ca

Purpose of the Research:
• The purpose of this research is to understand why teachers in French immersion classrooms choose to use the students’ first language while teaching a second langue.

Procedures:
• The data gathering will consist of one interview, lasting in length of approximately one hour, keeping a reflective journal for 10 consecutive work days, and a collection of photographs of the walls of the classroom and of the school hallways. The interviews will take place in a location that is agreed upon by both the researcher and the participant. The interview will also be audio-recorded for transcribing at a later date.
• Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study or your role.

Confidentiality:
• The data will be collected in the interview process on a hand-held digital voice recorder. You may request that the device be turned off at any point.
• The data will be transcribed. After the interview, you will be given the opportunity to review the transcript of the interview, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as you see fit.
• The data collected will be analyzed and reported in a thesis.
• Because the participants for this research project have been selected from a small group of people, all of whom may be known to each other, it is possible that you may be identifiable to other people on the basis of what you have said.

Storage of Data:
• The data will be stored in a lock filing cabinet in the researcher’s residence.
• When the data is no longer required, the data will be destroyed.

Right to Withdraw:
• Your participation is voluntary and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.
• Should you wish to withdraw for any reason your data will be removed from the research project upon your request and destroyed.
• Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until results have been disseminated. After this date, it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.

Follow up:
• To obtain results from the study, please contact the researcher, Honni Lizee, at h.lizee@rcsd.ca

Questions or Concerns:
• The researcher can be contacted by using the information at the top of the page.
• This project has been approved on ethical grounds by the UofR Research Ethics Board on (insert date). Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the committee at (585-4775 or research.ethics@uregina.ca). Out of town participants may call collect.

Consent

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my/our questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

I grant permission to be audio taped: Yes: ___ No: ___

I wish to remain anonymous: Yes: ___ No: ___

I wish to remain anonymous, but you may refer to me by a pseudonym: Yes: ___ No: ___

The pseudonym I choose for myself is: ______________

You may quote me and use my name: Yes: ___ No: ___

Name of ParticipantSignature

__________________       ____________________

Researcher’s Signature       Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.
Appendix D - Transcript Release Form

Transcript Release Form

I, ____________________________, have reviewed the complete transcript of my personal interview in this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my personal interview with Honni Lizee. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Honni Lizee to be used in the manner described in the Consent Form. I have received a copy of this Transcript Release Form for my own records.

________________________________________________________________________
Name of Participant                        Date

________________________________________________________________________
Signature of Participant                      Signature of researcher
Appendix E – Reflective Journal Form

Reflective Journal on the Use of the Student’s First Language (L1) in the Classroom
Please reflect on a memorable situation where you used the first language of the students today in the classroom and fill in the following form. Please provide as much detail as you are capable of. If you would like to add extra information that does not respond to a question specifically answering, please include it at the bottom of this form. Thank you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Subject being taught:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time of Day:</td>
<td>L1 used during the lesson:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do you think you used the L1 in this specific situation?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you were given the opportunity to redo this lesson, would you use the L1 again or would you try something different?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was the outcome of using the L1 in the classroom?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was it the outcome you were looking for?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you believe the use of the L1 in your lesson benefited all students? Where there any students who didn’t appear to understand the L1 that you used?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F - Still Photo Release Form

Still Photo Release Form

I, ________________________________, have reviewed the still photos that were taken at ______________________ (name of school), and have been provided with the opportunity to request the removal of any still photos that I do not find appropriate for the research project. I acknowledge that the still photos taken accurately reflect the information and items that can be found on the walls in the school. I hereby authorize the release of these still photos to Honni Lizee to be used in the manner described to Mr. Ray Pitre in the Request for Research Application. I have received a copy of this Still Photo Release Form for my own records.

_________________________    _________________________
Name of Principal     Date

_________________________    _________________________
Signature of Principal     Signature of researcher
Appendix G – Master Code List

- Additional languages
- Struggling students
- Serious issues
- Subject area
- Planification (fr)
- “as much L2 as possible”
- L2 exposure
- Visual cues
- Teacher fatigue
- L2 teaching strategies
- Languages used
- Use of L1
- “back and forth”
- Code switching
- Student comprehension
- Student L1 use
- Response to L2 use
- Playground
- L2 emphasis
- Small group
- Whole group
- Student needs
- Interpretation of needs
- Feelings
- L1 use beliefs
- Attitude
- Research
- Language awareness
- Teacher openness
- L1 use explanation
- “day-to-day”
- Reactions
- “one word”
- Specific kid
- Injuries
- Teacher frustration
- Behavioural issues
- Reward system
- NO L1 use
- Student stories
- Staffing
- English interruptions
- Discipline
- “out of habit”
- Restitution
- L2 evolution
- Expectations
- “easier for teacher”
- Lack of L2
- More preparation
- Instinct
- Regret
- Teacher “inattention”
- L2 model
- L2 retention
- School policy
- Safety
- Dual-track
- AR contest
- L2 reinforcement
- Signage
- Religion