

REFUGEE-BACKGROUND STUDENTS IN FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAMS:
EXPLORING THE PERSPECTIVES AND IDEOLOGIES OF EDUCATORS ACROSS THE
CANADIAN PRAIRIES

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Stephen Davis, candidate for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in Education**, has presented a thesis titled, ***Refugee-background students in French immersion programs: Exploring the perspectives and ideologies of educators across the Canadian Prairies***, in an oral examination held on **March 13, 2024**. 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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REFUGEE-BACKGROUND STUDENTS IN FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAMS

Abstract

French immersion (FI) programs are becoming more culturally and linguistically diverse because of increased global migration to Canada. Researchers have found that multilingual families and learners are often highly motivated to learn both French and English in Canada (Dagenais & Jacquet, 2000; Dagenais & Moore, 2008; Davis et al., 2019). Moreover, multilingual learners tend to develop strong language proficiency in FI programs (Bourgoin & Dicks, 2019; Knouzi & Mady, 2017; Mady, 2015). However, multilingual learners are often excluded from FI programs on the basis of ostensibly low English language abilities (Davis et al., 2021; Mady & Masson, 2018; Roy, 2015). In the present study, I explore the perspectives and ideologies of educators with respect to refugee-background students in FI programs in eight school divisions across Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta. Adopting the theoretical perspective of sociolinguistics for change, I examine the perspectives of FI teachers, principals, and central office staff through semi-structured interviews (n=40) and questionnaires (n=126). My analysis and triangulation of data generated findings pertaining to eight areas: 1) diversity in FI programs; 2) perceived suitability of FI programs for refugee-background students; 3) perspectives on the learning of refugee-background students in FI programs; 4) challenges facing refugee-background students and families; 5) beliefs about inclusion in FI programs; 6) gatekeeping practices in FI programs; 7) perspectives on policy in FI programs; and 8) supports in FI programs. The findings of this research are presented in a manuscript-style dissertation, including an introduction, three peer-reviewed journal manuscripts, and a conclusion. In the final chapter, I discuss the contributions of this research, propose ideas for future inquiry, and advance recommendations for school divisions to create more equitable and inclusive FI programs across Canada.

Keywords: French immersion; multilingualism; immigration; language ideology; policy

Résumé

La démographie des programmes d'immersion française (IF) devient de plus en plus diversifiée, tant sur le plan culturel que linguistique, grâce à la migration globale grandissante au Canada. Plusieurs études montrent que les familles et les élèves plurilingues sont souvent très motivés à apprendre le français et l'anglais au Canada (Dagenais & Jacquet, 2000; Dagenais & Moore, 2008; Davis et al., 2019). D'ailleurs, ces élèves ont tendance à développer de fortes compétences langagières en IF (Bourgoin & Dicks, 2019; Knouzi & Mady, 2017; Mady, 2015). Cependant, les élèves plurilingues sont souvent exclus de l'IF sous prétexte que leurs compétences en anglais sont parfois faibles (Davis et al., 2021; Mady & Masson, 2018; Roy, 2015). Dans la présente étude, nous explorons les perspectives et les idéologies des éducatrices.eurs quant aux élèves réfugiés en IF dans huit conseils scolaires en Saskatchewan, au Manitoba et en Alberta. Adoptant le cadre théorique de la sociolinguistique pour le changement, nous examinons les perspectives des enseignant.e.s, des directrices.eurs et des surintendant.e.s à travers des entrevues semi-dirigées (n=40) et une enquête par questionnaire (n=126). La triangulation des données a mené à des résultats pertinents à huit domaines : 1) la diversité en IF; 2) la pertinence de l'IF pour les élèves réfugiés; 3) l'apprentissage des élèves réfugiés en IF; 4) les défis auxquels les élèves réfugiés font face; 5) les croyances quant à l'inclusion en IF; 6) les pratiques d'exclusion en IF; 7) les perspectives sur la politique en IF; et 8) les ressources en IF. Les résultats de cette étude sont présentés dans le cadre d'une thèse par insertion d'articles, incluant une introduction, trois manuscrits revus par des pair.e.s et une conclusion. Nous discutons des contributions de cette étude, proposons des idées pour la recherche à venir et suggérons des recommandations aux conseils scolaires pour créer des programmes d'IF plus équitables et inclusifs au Canada.

Mots clés : immersion française; plurilinguisme; immigration; idéologie linguistique; politique

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Dedication

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Glossary

Core French: Core French is an instructional program in which French is taught as a school subject. The availability of Core French programs varies across provinces, territories, school divisions, and grade levels, but students typically study French for one to three hours per week.

French immersion: French immersion (FI) is an instructional program that originated in Montreal, QC, in 1965, in which French is the medium of instruction for most of the curriculum, with the exception of English Language Arts (Lambert & Tucker, 2972). French immersion students typically become proficient or functionally fluent in both French and English. The most common form of FI is Early French immersion (EFI), beginning in Kindergarten or Grade 1. Some school divisions also offer Late French immersion (LFI), beginning in Grade 6 or 7.

Multilingual learners: In this dissertation, the term multilingual learners refers to all students, Canadian-born and newcomers, who speak multiple languages or language varieties in Canada.

Newcomer students: Newcomer students include immigrant-background and refugee-background students who were born outside of Canada. In the Canadian context, newcomer students typically refer to learners who have been in Canada for less than five years.

Refugee: The United Nations Human Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2001) defines a refugee as “someone who has been forced to flee his or her (*sic*) country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.”

Refugee-background students: Refugee-background students is an increasingly widespread term used to acknowledge that the refugee experiences of such learners do not constitute their entire identities, but are rather one facet of the complex, dynamic identities of these students.

Chapter 1. Introduction

French immersion (FI) programs represent the most renowned bilingual education model in Canada and have inspired the creation of diverse language immersion programs across the country and worldwide (Lambert & Tucker, 1972). Whereas FI programs have historically served predominantly Canadian-born, English-speaking students and families in their pursuit of official-language bilingualism, such programs are becoming increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse as a result of global migration to Canada. Notwithstanding the growing body of scholarship examining the motivation, inclusion, and learning of multilingual learners in FI (Bourgoin & Dicks, 2019; Dagenais & Jacquet, 2000; Dagenais & Moore, 2008; Davis et al., 2019, 2021; Knouzi & Mady, 2017; Mady, 2015; Mady & Masson, 2018), the experiences of refugee-background students remain unexamined. Research focusing on refugee-background students in FI programs is especially vital at this time, given the growing number of refugees and asylum seekers migrating to Canada (Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, 2023).

In the present study, I examine the perspectives and ideologies of educators with respect to refugee-background students in FI programs across the Canadian Prairies. In this introductory chapter, I provide the context and rationale for this research. First, I offer an overview of Canadian FI programs, discussing the pedagogical and political significance of such programs. Second, I illustrate the unique sociolinguistic context of the Canadian Prairies. Third, I synthesize research examining the education and integration of refugee-background learners in Canada. Fourth, I reflect on my positionality as a researcher and my experiences with FI programs and refugee-background students. Fifth, I situate the present study within the research paradigm of critical theory and the theoretical framework of sociolinguistics for change. Finally, I conclude this chapter by providing an overview of the present manuscript-style dissertation.

1.1 Overview of French Immersion

French immersion programs originated in Saint-Lambert, a predominantly English-speaking suburb of Montreal, QC, in 1965 (Lambert & Tucker, 1972). Many English-speaking parents had become disillusioned with traditional methods of French language learning through memorization and repetition and were concerned that their children would be unprepared to participate in the French-dominant society and workforce of Quebec (Swain, 1971). Through consultation with experts in language education at McGill University and the founders of the Toronto French School, this group of parents, known as the St. Lambert Bilingual School Study Group, created the first FI program (Genesee, 1984). French immersion programs were often referred to as “the St. Lambert experiment” (Lambert & Tucker, 1972) and “the trial balloon that flew” (Lapkin, 1983) and remain a strong example of collaboration amongst researchers, educators, and parents. Following the success of this experiment in Montreal, QC, FI programs spread across all provinces and territories of Canada. Today, there are approximately 500,000 students enrolled in FI elementary and secondary programs, in addition to the nearly three million citizens who have graduated from FI programs across Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022).

1.1.1 Pedagogical Significance of FI

In terms of the pedagogical significance of FI, the emergence of such programs embodied an evolution in approaches to language education across Canada and around the world (Genesee, 1984; Lapkin et al., 1983). Whereas traditional methods of language education were predicated on decontextualized memorization and rote learning, the immersion approach was pedagogically groundbreaking insofar as the target language was not only taught as an object of study, but rather as the medium through which curricular content was instructed (Lambert & Tucker, 1972). Thus, immersion is often considered a content-based approach to language education because of

a greater focus on curricular content than on linguistic form (Lyster, 2007, 2011; Snow et al., 1989; Swain, 1996). The most common type of FI program is Early French immersion (EFI), which begins in Kindergarten or in Grade 1; however, some school divisions also have Late French immersion (LFI) programs, which typically begin in Grade 6 or 7 and often merge with EFI students in Grade 8 (Genesee, 1984). Furthermore, FI programs can also vary with respect to instructional time in French and English. Notably, in total immersion programs, the curriculum is taught entirely in French until English is introduced as a subject in Grade 3; conversely, in partial immersion programs, instruction is split evenly between the two languages (Genesee, 1984).

Notwithstanding certain differences pertaining to starting ages and instructional time between languages, immersion programs share several important tenets that distinguish them from different approaches to language education. In this vein, Johnson and Swain (1997, p. 6-7) identified the following eight common traits that characterized FI programs across Canada:

1. The L2 is a medium of instruction.
2. The immersion curriculum parallels the local L1 curriculum.
3. Overt support exists for the L1.
4. The program aims for additive bilingualism.
5. Exposure to the L2 is largely confined to the classroom.
6. Students enter with similar (and limited) levels of L2 proficiency.
7. The teachers are bilingual.
8. The classroom culture is that of the local L1 community.

Whereas the above characteristics might have accurately described FI programs as they were first developed, several such tenets are now inaccurate in light of the growing cultural and linguistic diversity today. For instance, enumerating languages as L1 and L2 presupposes shared first and second languages, English and French respectively, which ignores the existence and linguistic repertoires of multilingual learners for whom English and French might be third, fourth, or fifth languages (Roy, 2008). By extension, the third trait is also inaccurate for multilingual learners, insofar as their home and heritage languages are not supported in FI

programs (Swain & Lapkin, 2005). Moreover, the eighth characteristic is equally erroneous because it underscores the problematic notion of a common, homogenous culture (Mady, 2015). Subsequently, Swain and Lapkin (2005) critiqued and revised the aforementioned characteristics of FI programs to better reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of students in such programs. Nevertheless, I include the original traits here to illustrate the extent to which FI programs were originally designed with English-speaking students in mind. Indeed, the above traits reflect unexamined Anglocentric ideologies in FI programs, which I believe are still pervasive today.

1.1.2 Political Significance of FI

It is important to understand the political context from which FI emerged. The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism of 1963 sought to determine policy for official-language bilingualism in Canada and faced opposition from different communities. For instance, Quebec leaders opposed official-language bilingualism on the grounds that the province should have greater authority to promote French, whereas leaders of predominantly English-speaking provinces, including the Canadian Prairies, opposed bilingualism in order to uphold English (Hayday, 2005; Kjolseth, 1977). Moreover, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism also faced significant opposition from cultural and linguistic communities beyond the imagined binary of English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians, including Indigenous nations and immigrant communities who spoke languages other than English and French (Haque, 2012). Former Prime Minister Trudeau embraced the Royal Commission of Bilingualism and Biculturalism's recommendations for official-language bilingualism and the Government of Canada adopted the Official Languages Act of 1969. However, Trudeau rejected the notion of biculturalism and implemented the Multiculturalism Policy in 1971 in response to rising pressure from other ethnic groups and communities across Canada who rightly felt overlooked and

marginalized by the notion of biculturalism (Haque, 2012). Through the Official Languages Act and the Multiculturalism Policy, Trudeau advanced the notion of “multiculturalism within a bilingual framework” (Haque, 2012).

The concept of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework privileges English and French to the detriment of other linguistic communities in Canada (Haque, 2012). Kubota and Bale (2020) argued, “the Multiculturalism Policy confirmed that for Indigenous or other immigrant groups, culture must be cleaved from language. In other words, Indigenous and immigrant groups could have legitimate claims to their culture, but not to their languages” (p. 775). Thus, this framework established and reinforced a hierarchy of cultures and languages in Canada. Moreover, Kubota and Bale (2020) explained that the “multiculturalism-in-a-bilingual-framework has had profound consequences for language education policy in Canada. The priority became – and has remained – the teaching and learning of English and French, particularly in *minority* contexts” (p. 775). In the context of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework, language education initiatives promoted French and English language education programs to the detriment of Indigenous, heritage, and non-official immigrant languages. In light of this reality, Indigenous, heritage, and non-official immigrant languages remain unsupported in French and English language programs in Canadian schools.

The extent to which FI programs were pedagogically and politically engineered for English-speaking families is also reflected in the early research conducted in such programs. Perhaps unsurprisingly, researchers were interested first and foremost in the French language learning of FI students (Cummins, 1986; Genesee, 1976, 1981, 1984; Harley, 1984; Lyster, 1987). Moreover, researchers also examined the English language learning and academic achievement of FI students (Genesee, 1978; Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Shapson & Day, 1982).

Few scholars explored the language learning of multilingual learners in FI programs (Bild & Swain, 1989; Taylor, 1992), and the experiences of such learners would not become an important area of research until the turn of the millennium. In the literature review chapter of this dissertation, I synthesize post-millennial (2000-present) research examining language-in-education policy, motivation, language learning, and the perspectives of educators with respect to multilingual learners in FI programs.

1.2 Languages across the Canadian Prairies

In addition to examining the historical, pedagogical, and political significance of FI programs in Canada, it is important to understand the linguistic context of the Canadian Prairies. The Canadian Prairies are a region of Western Canada consisting of three provinces: Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. While there are some distinctions with respect to the languages spoken across the three provinces, the Canadian Prairies represent a particularly English-dominant region of Canada with low levels of French relative to other provinces and territories (Statistics Canada, 2021). Furthermore, over half of First Nations people in Canada who speak Indigenous languages live in the Canadian Prairies, and the highest population of Métis people live in this region of Canada as well (Statistics Canada, 2023a). In this section, I provide an overview of languages across the Canadian Prairies, focusing on official languages, non-official immigrant languages, and Indigenous languages in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. In the Canadian context, official languages include French and English; non-official immigrant languages include all languages of immigrant and settler communities that do not have official status in Canada (languages other than French and English); and Indigenous languages refer to the languages and language varieties of Indigenous communities throughout Canada.

1.2.1 Languages in Alberta

Historically, the province of Alberta included a significant number of French-speaking residents as a result of the fur trade expanding to Western Canada (Marsh, 1999). However, the arrival of many English-speaking colonists transformed the linguistic landscape of the province. Moreover, the North-West Territories government declared in 1892 that English would be the only language used in schooling across Alberta, which marginalized French, other immigrant languages, and Indigenous languages (Marsh, 1999). When the province of Alberta was officially created in 1905, French could only be taught for one hour each day in elementary schools (Marsh, 1999). Following the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism of 1968, schools in Alberta were permitted to teach French for half of the school day (Hayday, 2005). Consequently, several predominantly English-speaking families began to enrol their children in French language schools between 1968 and 1982, which would eventually be considered FI schools (Levasseur-Ouimet & McMahon, 2007). Nevertheless, French is not widely spoken in Alberta today, either as a first or additional language. In 2018-2019, only 7.0% of school-aged children in Alberta were enrolled in FI programs, the lowest percentage of any province and territory across Canada (Canadian Parents for French, 2019). Furthermore, only 6.6% of Albertans report a knowledge of both English and French (Statistics Canada, 2023b). In summary, despite the historical importance of French in Alberta and the growing interest in FI programs across the province, Alberta remains a highly English-dominant province of Canada.

Whereas rates of official-language bilingualism are quite low in Alberta, multilingualism is re-emerging across the province with respect to non-official immigrant languages and Indigenous languages. In 2021, 13.0% of Albertans reported speaking a first language that is neither English nor French, which marks the greatest increase of any province or territory since

the previous census (Statistics Canada, 2021). The most widely spoken non-official immigrant language as a mother tongue is Tagalog with 115,240 speakers, followed by German with 84,465 speakers, Punjabi with 74,490 speakers, Cantonese with 62,645 speakers, and Spanish with 60,300 speakers (Statistics Canada, 2021). Furthermore, it is important to note that Alberta has a strong reputation for bilingual educational programs in Canada (Cummins, 2014; Cummins & Persad, 2014). For instance, the province has eight International Languages programs, as well as several two-way immersion programs in American Sign Language, Arabic, German, Hebrew, Mandarin, Punjabi, and Spanish (Alberta Education, 2013; Cummins, 2014). Finally, an estimated 31,000 people speak Indigenous languages in Alberta (Statistics Canada, 2023b). The most widely spoken Indigenous languages are Cree language varieties with over 19,000 speakers, followed by Blackfoot, Stoney, and Northern Athabaskan languages (Statistics Canada, 2023b). Thus, although French-English bilingualism rates remain low, diverse forms of multilingualism have long been present in Alberta and are growing rapidly throughout the province.

1.2.2 Languages in Saskatchewan

Language education and policy pertaining to official bilingualism in Saskatchewan have been shaped by significant challenges and opposition throughout the history of the province. Whereas the inauguration of Saskatchewan in 1905 ostensibly protected French educational rights, provincial legislation would not permit French language instruction in Saskatchewan until 1915 (D’Almeida, 2006). Furthermore, French language education also faced hostility from radical organizations in Saskatchewan, including the Ku Klux Klan (Denis, 2006). Indeed, the Klan had a strong presence in Saskatchewan in the 1920s-30s and opposed many tenets of the French Catholic community, including French language instruction (D’Almeida, 2006; Denis, 2006). Thus, French education encountered significant resistance throughout the history of

Saskatchewan from governments and radical organizations alike (Von Staden & Sterzuk, 2017). Such opposition was not exclusively against French language education, however; provincial governments and radical organizations opposed all non-English language education programs, including the formerly rich and vibrant Ukrainian schools in Saskatchewan (Sterzuk, 2022).

In 1968, the Official Languages Act established French and English as the official languages of Canada, and the Education Act was amended to allow designated schools to adopt French as the medium of instruction in Saskatchewan (D’Almeida, 2006). The first FI program of the province also began in 1968 in Saskatoon, SK, followed by a second program the following year in Regina, SK (Reeves, 2006). Subsequently, FI programs spread throughout the province and continue to grow in popularity (Bonjour SK, 2023). More specifically, 8.8% of school-aged children were enrolled in FI programs in Saskatchewan in the 2018-2019 school year; although this percentage is low relative to some provinces and territories, FI enrolment has been growing steadily since 2014-2015 (Canadian Parents for French, 2019). Moreover, the *Conseil des écoles fransaskoises* was created to offer French language education for the *Fransaskois* community in Saskatchewan. However, French-English bilingualism rates are remarkably low throughout Saskatchewan; specifically, only 4.7% of Saskatchewanians report a knowledge of both official languages, which is lower than any other province or territory in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2023c). In summary, Saskatchewan is arguably the most English-dominant province of Canada, characterized by high levels of English monolingualism (Sterzuk & Shin, 2021).

Beyond the binary of English and French, however, there have always been other forms of multilingualism in Saskatchewan. In terms of Indigenous languages, there are 28,340 people in Saskatchewan who speak an Indigenous language as a mother tongue, the most prevalent

being Cree language varieties with 19,965 speakers, followed by Dene with 7,855 speakers (Statistics Canada, 2023b). Moreover, there are important language revitalization initiatives in Saskatchewan that promote Indigenous language learning (Daniels et al., 2021; Sterzuk & Fayant, 2018). As it pertains to non-official immigrant languages, the five most widely spoken first languages are German with 21,320 speakers, Tagalog with 20,045 speakers, Chinese languages with 12,460 speakers, Ukrainian with 11,270 speakers, and Urdu with 6,520 speakers (Statistics Canada, 2021). Notwithstanding high levels of English monolingualism and low rates of French-English bilingualism, diverse forms of multilingualism are growing and re-emerging in Saskatchewan.

1.2.3 Languages in Manitoba

Manitoba has a rich and illustrious history with respect to official-language bilingualism. The first French speakers in Manitoba were colonists working for the Hudson's Bay Company in the 1660s, many of whom married Indigenous wives and had children who identified as a distinct people who would become known as Métis (Collins, 2017; Sawchuk, 1973; St-Onge, 2004). The Métis were vital in the struggle for French language rights in what would become Manitoba. Louis Riel formed a provisional government and successfully advocated for linguistic equality between English Protestants and French Catholics as a condition of Manitoba entering into Confederation in 1870 (Collins, 2017). However, in 1916, the Government of Manitoba made English the only language of education, and the right to French language education would not be reinstated until 1970 (Collins, 2017). Subsequently, the *Division scolaire franco-manitobaine* was created in 1994 and serves the *Francomanitobain* community throughout Manitoba. As it pertains to FI, the first immersion program in Manitoba began in 1973 in the Saint-Boniface and Winnipeg school divisions (Manitoba Education, 2023). In the 2018-2019 school year, 14.4% of

school-aged children in Manitoba were enrolled in FI programs, a markedly higher percentage than Alberta (7.0%) and Saskatchewan (8.8%) in the same year (Canadian Parents for French, 2019). Today, 8.4% of Manitobans report a knowledge of both English and French (Statistics Canada, 2021). Thus, although Manitoba has higher rates of French spoken than Alberta and Saskatchewan and considerably higher enrolment in FI programs, official-language bilingualism across the Canadian Prairies remain low relative to other provinces and territories in Canada.

Whereas French-English bilingualism has decreased in Manitoba, other forms of multilingualism have always been present and have increased in recent years. The five most common non-official immigrant languages spoken as first languages are German with 69,795 speakers, Tagalog with 40,425 speakers, Ukrainian with 18,940 speakers, Punjabi with 10,625 speakers, and Spanish with 9,480 speakers (Statistics Canada, 2021). Finally, as it pertains to Indigenous languages, Cree language varieties are the most widely spoken mother tongues with 15,520 speakers, followed by Oji-Cree with 8,865 speakers, and Ojibway languages with 7,060 speakers (Statistics Canada, 2023). Furthermore, more people in Winnipeg, MB, can speak an Indigenous language than in any other single city in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2021).

In summary, although there are distinctions and nuances between the linguistic histories and demographics across Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, the Canadian Prairies share several important linguistic similarities. First, all three provinces are characterized by English dominance and by historic opposition to French language education. Second, all three provinces have witnessed a decrease in French-English bilingualism in recent decades. Finally, all three provinces have witnessed an increase of diverse forms of multilingualism, largely as the result of increased global migration and increased efforts to revitalize Indigenous languages.

1.3 Research with Refugee-Background Students in Canada

The education of refugee-background children and youth has emerged as a significant area of research in Canada. Refugee-background students represent an important, but often overlooked and misunderstood, demographic of learners in Canada, embodying a wide range of ethnic origins, cultural backgrounds, linguistic repertoires, and lived experiences. Thus, while there is a tendency amongst educators and researchers to homogenize and stereotype the experiences of refugee-background students and families (Cho et al., 2019), it is important to recognize the significant diversity of backgrounds and lived experiences of such populations (Massing et al., 2023). Similarly, although some refugee-background students and families encounter traumatic experiences, educators and researchers sometimes uncritically reinforce a pervasive and deficit-based “trauma discourse” about such learners (Cho et al., 2019; Lunneblad, 2017). Indeed, while it is true that many refugee-background students and families face unique and difficult challenges throughout their migration journeys and while integrating into Canada, focusing excessively on the real or imagined obstacles of such learners disregards the assets and strengths of children and youth with refugee backgrounds (Kovinthan, 2016; Massing et al., 2023; Moll et al., 2015). In light of the tendency for educators and researchers to make problematic generalizations about refugee-background children and youth, I strive to adopt an asset-based perspective in this research, emphasizing the strengths and resources of such learners (Kovinthan, 2016; Massing et al., 2023). Whereas refugee-background students and families encounter notable educational experiences in all phases of their journeys – including pre-migration, transit, and resettlement (Drachman, 1992) – I focus on research examining the resettlement phase in Canada. In this brief literature review, I synthesize research pertaining to the education and integration of refugee-background children and youth in Canada with respect

to four areas of inquiry: first, literacy practices of refugee-background learners; second, language learning of refugee-background students; third, diverse challenges facing some refugee-background students; and fourth, perspectives and pedagogies of educators across Canada.

1.3.1 Literacy Practices

The migration journeys of refugee-background students and families are remarkably complex and varied, including diverse experiences in pre-migration, transit, and resettlement phases (Drachman, 1992). Likewise, the linguistic knowledge and literacy practices of such families are similarly multifaceted, shaped by several factors throughout all stages of learning, schooling, and migration. However, several researchers have found that the knowledge and literacy practices of refugee-background students are often undervalued in Canadian schools (Kovinthan, 2016; Nakutnyy & Sterzuk, 2018; Schroeter & James, 2014). In their study examining the experiences of Black, French-speaking, refugee-background students in Canada, Schroeter and James (2014) found that such learners were streamed into remedial classes at school. The students were rightly critical of this inequitable practice and shared with the researchers: “*On est là parce qu’on est noir. [We’re here because we’re Black]*” (Schroeter & James, 2014, p. 31). Moreover, Kovinthan (2016) adopted a narrative inquiry approach to reflect on her personal experiences as a refugee-background student and as a preservice teacher. The researcher described several examples of schools and teachers devaluing the knowledge and abilities of refugee-background students, including EAL programs in which such learners were asked to fold and staple literacy activities for other students because they were deemed to have insufficient linguistic knowledge. Furthermore, Nakutnyy and Sterzuk (2018) examined the home literacy practices of a refugee-background student and his mother who came to Canada from what is now the Republic of South Sudan. The participants in this study identified several

significant differences between their home literacy practices and the literacy expectations of the school and of Canadian society. Specifically, Nakutnyy and Sterzuk (2018) found that when the family moved to Canada, “their daily life practices – including literacy practices – changed from a community-mediated approach that relied heavily on oral communication, to a more individualistic and writing-based social reality” (p. 87). The student also expressed a preference for collaborative learning and group work, which he found was less common in Canada compared to schools in the Republic of South Sudan. To summarize, there is often an important disconnect between the home literacy practices of refugee-background students and families and the practices that are valued in Canadian schools. This disconnect is often uncritically understood by educators to represent insufficient linguistic knowledge and illegitimate literacy practices, which further contributes to pervasive deficit discourses pertaining to refugee-background students in Canada (Kovinthan, 2016; Nakutnyy & Sterzuk, 2018; Schroeter & James, 2014).

1.3.2 Language Learning

The language learning of refugee-background children and youth in Canada is also an important area of literature for this study. Researchers have found that language learning is of central importance for refugee-background students and families, both in terms of formal education and social integration in Canada (Bahi & Piquemal, 2013; Checkley, 2020; Guo et al., 2019; MacNevin, 2012; Massing et al., 2023; Schroeter & James, 2014; Stewart et al., 2019). In the Canadian context, most studies have focused on the learning of English for refugee-background students, including both children and adults. In a study framed by the work of Bourdieu, Ghadi et al. (2019) found that refugee-background men and women from Syria considered English language learning to be the single greatest obstacle in finding work in Canada and were often frustrated by the lack of relevance of their English language classes. Moreover,

the researchers observed that the migration journey from Syria to Canada resulted in a loss of linguistic capital for the refugee-background adults and a shift in gender roles, which was especially challenging for the men (Ghadi et al., 2019). Similarly, Kikulwe et al. (2021) found that refugee-background adults from Syria were often discouraged in their English language learning and resented becoming dependent on government assistance due to limited English proficiency. In a study drawing from interviews with refugee-background youth resettling in Alberta, Wilkinson (2010) determined that the English language abilities of such students had a notable influence on their academic achievement. Indeed, the learning of English is of paramount importance for many refugee-background students and families in Canada, both in terms of employment opportunities for adults and academic achievement for children and youth.

Additionally, researchers have found that language learning is not only important for refugee-background children and youth as it pertains to academic achievement, but also with respect to social integration in Canada (Guo et al., 2019; Kirova, 2019; Massfeller & Hamm, 2019; Massing et al., 2023). More specifically, several recent studies have found that refugee-background students from Syria consider limited English language proficiency a significant barrier for making connections and developing friendships in Canada (Guo et al., 2019; Massfeller & Hamm, 2019; Massing et al., 2023). Through focus groups with refugee-background children and parents from Syria integrating into Alberta, Guo et al. (2012) documented that many students expressed having difficulty making friends with Canadian-born students and considered the English language a formidable obstacle in their social integration. Similarly, Massfeller and Hamm (2019) found that refugee-background students from Syria sometimes felt lonely and isolated at school in New Brunswick, noting that the “students expressed their deep desire to be part of school social groups, which was difficult for them

because they lacked confidence, were shy, and struggled to speak English coherently” (p. 39). More recently, Massing et al. (2023) interviewed refugee-background students from Syria in Saskatchewan. Whereas some children expressed having Canadian-born friends at school, the students emphasized the importance of friendships with classmates from Syria in large part because of the shared language background (Massing et al., 2023). To summarize, the learning of English is critical for many refugee-background children and youth integrating into life in Canada, both for reasons of academic achievement and for social integration and belonging.

Finally, a small number of studies have explored French language education for refugee-background students in Canada. Bahi and Piquemal (2013) examined the education and integration of 18 French-speaking refugee-background youth in francophone schools in Manitoba. In terms of French language learning, one refugee-background student from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) shared that he could not attend school regularly in his transition country of Zambia and therefore lost some French language proficiency prior to arriving in Canada (Bahi & Piquemal, 2013). Furthermore, Schroeter and James (2014) drew from critical race theory (CRT) to explore the experiences of several French-speaking, African-Canadian, refugee-background students who were placed in a remedial program in a francophone school in Ontario. The students were rightly critical of their enrolment in this program and believed that this decision was rooted in anti-Black racism. Schroeter and James (2014) noted that the educators had good intentions of caring for the students, but also concluded that this study added to a growing body of research demonstrating the inequitable streaming of racialized students into non-academic programs in Canadian schools (Kanu, 2008; James, 2012).

In my estimation, the above studies are important and valuable insofar as they examine the experiences of refugee-background students in French language programs, especially in

English-dominant provinces of Canada. Nevertheless, it is important to note that both studies were conducted in Francophone programs with refugee-background students who spoke French prior to resettling in Canada, rather than with students who were learning French as an additional language upon arriving in the country. To the best of my knowledge, researchers have not yet focused on the experiences of refugee-background students in French as an additional language programs, such as FI, in Canada. This represents an important gap in the literature, which I address in the present study conducted in FI programs across the Canadian Prairies. Adopting a critical perspective, I believe that refugee-background students are likely disproportionately excluded from FI programs, insofar as such programs are perceived as elite (Kunnas, 2023) and refugee-background students are often streamed into remedial programs in Canada (Kanu, 2008).

1.3.3 Challenges Facing Refugee-Background Students

Researchers have examined the experiences of refugee-background children and youth integrating into Canada and have identified several diverse challenges facing such students. It is important to note, however, that there is no single refugee story, and all refugee-background students and families have unique journeys and experiences. Guo et al. (2019) explain, “refugee students in Canada are not a homogenous group and their strengths and needs vary depending on their age, gender, religion, ethnicity, and/or linguistic backgrounds” (p. 90). Researchers working with refugee-background populations must refrain from making assumptions and generalizations about such learners, which can reinforce deficit discourses (Shapiro, 2014). Therefore, while many refugee-background students face distinct challenges in Canada, I have strived to adopt an asset-based perspective with respect to such students in this review (Massing et al., 2023).

While the experiences and journeys of refugee-background students and families are diverse and unique, one particular challenge that has been documented by several researchers

includes the gaps and interruptions to formal schooling that several such learners experience (Bahi & Piquemal, 2013; Feuerverger, 2011; Guo et al., 2019; Kovinthan, 2016; MacNevin, 2012; Massing et al., 2023; Stewart et al., 2019; Wilkinson et al., 2017). Feuerverger (2011) examined the experiences of refugee-background students in Ontario and found that some students encountered significant gaps due to war and conflict in the home and transition countries. More recently, Stewart et al. (2019) explored the education and integration of refugee-background children and youth from Syria in Manitoba and Alberta. The researchers reported that educational gaps and interruptions were a significant challenge for many Syrian students who were unable to attend school regularly in transition countries, such as Jordan or Lebanon, because they were forced to work (Stewart et al., 2019). Massing et al. (2023) found that some refugee-background children from Syria experienced educational gaps in transition countries for a variety of reasons, including safety concerns, financial difficulties, and insufficient resources and instructional time for Syrian students in Jordan and Lebanon. Researchers have also found that the significant educational gaps and interrupted learning of some refugee-background students often results in uncertainty of the appropriate grade levels of such learners upon resettlement in Canada (Kanu, 2008; Kirova, 2019; MacNevin, 2012; Rossiter & Derwing, 2012). Indeed, several refugee-background students experience gaps in their schooling, which presents a number of challenges for their education and integration into Canadian schools.

In addition to educational gaps and interrupted learning, some refugee-background students also face mental health challenges and traumatic experiences. In a study with refugee-background students in Ontario, Yau (1995) found that such learners often encountered distinct challenges that differentiated them from other immigrants, including posttraumatic stress, fear, precarious residence status, family separation, financial difficulties, and significant culture shock

and isolation. Adopting an auto-ethnographic methodological approach, Feuerverger (2011) reflected on her own experiences as a refugee-background child and on the diverse challenges facing other refugee-background students in Canada today. The researcher found that some refugee-background youth had encountered traumatic experiences coming from war-torn countries and significant challenges integrating into Canada; however, she also noted that many refugee-background students were resilient and hopeful about their future lives in Canada. Moreover, Feuerverger (2011) reported that some refugee-background students expressed pride in their diverse linguistic repertoires, noting that “multilingualism became a source of pride for many students and increased their sense of cultural and linguistic capital” (p. 370); this finding is of particular interest for the present study, as many refugee-background families arrive in Canada with significant knowledge of multiple languages but their abilities are undervalued in schools. More recently, in a study with refugee-background children and youth from Syria, Stewart et al. (2019) found that some students had witnessed or experienced violence, been detained, or experienced family separation in their home country; subsequently, some children and youth were sometimes abused and exploited in transition countries like Lebanon and Jordan; finally, some students also experienced discrimination and isolation upon arriving in Canada. To summarize, the traumatic experiences and mental health challenges facing some refugee-background families and students in Canada are complex and multifaceted, spanning diverse phases of their migration journeys. However, it is important to note that there is a problematic tendency for researchers and educators to overemphasize the trauma and challenges of refugee-background students by perpetuating the pervasive “trauma discourse” (Lunneblad, 2017); therefore, I seek to acknowledge the diverse challenges but emphasize the strengths of refugee-background students, contributing to asset-based perspectives (Massing et al., 2023).

1.3.4 Educator Perspectives and Pedagogies

The fourth area of scholarship pertaining to the education and integration of refugee-background children and youth includes research examining the perspectives and pedagogies of educators across Canada. Although I am not aware of previous studies that have examined the perspectives of FI educators as they pertain to refugee-background students, several researchers have explored educator perspectives in other programs in Canada. Many scholars have found that teachers in Canada are often unaware of the challenges facing refugee-background children and youth and often feel unprepared to teach such students (Gagné et al., 2017; Kanu, 2008; MacNevin, 2012; Stewart, 2012; Zaidi et al., 2021). For instance, Kanu (2008) conducted focus group interviews, individual interviews, and classroom observations to examine the diverse challenges of refugee-background students from different African countries integrating into two high schools in Manitoba. The researcher found that although individual teacher participants expressed interest in supporting the education and integration of refugee-background students in their schools, there were relatively few professional development opportunities focusing on such learners. Furthermore, Kanu (2008) observed that “although the student population in the schools in this study was changing, many of the eight teachers observed for this study did not adapt their curricula, instruction, assessment, and interaction patterns to this changing population” (p. 926). Subsequently, MacNevin (2012) conducted an ethnographic, qualitative study exploring the perspectives and pedagogies of educators teaching refugee-background students on Prince Edward Island. Drawing from interviews with classroom teachers, MacNevin (2012) found that although many educators had completed professional development sessions focusing on teaching EAL students, the educators would be interested in learning opportunities centred specifically on refugee-background students. Moreover, Stewart (2012) reported that although some teachers in

Manitoba espoused inclusive views towards refugee-background students, other educators contributed to “racism, discrimination, unfair treatment, exclusionary actions, and disrespectful comments” (p. 186). Additionally, Gagné et al. (2017) adopted a self-study approach to examine the roles of teacher education programs and professional development in equipping educators to develop culturally responsive pedagogical approaches to meet the needs of refugee-background students in Manitoba and Ontario. To this end, Gagné et al. (2017) conclude that “enhancing teachers’ understandings of refugee learners’ unique situations and how these have been informed by intersecting social, historical, political and cultural elements is key to developing a responsive pedagogy” (p. 441). More recently, in a study examining the engagement of refugee-background parents in Alberta, Zaidi et al. (2021) found that the challenges facing many refugee-background families were exacerbated by “a lack of trauma-informed supports, an insufficient number of multilingual and multicultural in-school support staff, and a dearth of varied modes of home-school communication (and in different languages)” (p. 928). Zaidi et al. (2021) conclude by recommending the creation and implementation of explicit programming to support refugee-background youth, a local school board support system, and professional development opportunities and teacher training focusing on refugee-background students. In summary, researchers have documented divergent perspectives and a widespread lack of awareness amongst educators with respect to refugee-background students in Canada; furthermore, many educators have expressed the need for greater learning opportunities focusing on such students.

Whereas some research has found that teachers and principals across Canada often feel unprepared to teach refugee-background students and sometimes espouse deficit-based views towards such learners, scholars have also observed asset-based perspectives and innovative pedagogical approaches designed to empower refugee-background students (Kendrick et al.,

2022; Kovinthan, 2016; Michalovich et al., 2022). First, Kovinthan (2016) found that narrative inquiry could be used to challenge and overcome stereotypes about refugee-background students. Furthermore, Kendrick et al. (2022) conducted a case study exploring the potential for digital storytelling (DST) for refugee-background youth in a high school in British Columbia. Through interviews and classroom observation, the researchers found that DST enabled such learners to tell complex, nuanced, and multifaceted stories about their lived experiences in ways that would not have been possible in traditional literacy activities. Kendrick et al. (2022) reported that the refugee-background youth “used the project as an opportunity to exercise their agency and to some considerable extent, given they created their own pathways and strategies, to become active, autonomous knowledge producers of powerful multimodal texts that affirmed their identities” (p. 980). Michalovich et al. (2022) also adopted a case study approach to examine the learning and identity construction of refugee-background youth in British Columbia through YouTube reaction videos. The scholars noted that the play-based pedagogical activity of creating reaction videos enabled youth to “bring forward their playful personalities to the center stage of the composition, positioning themselves to their classmates and teachers as lighthearted and humorous, and in this way gain more social capital” (Michalovich et al., 2022, p. 11). Indeed, researchers have found that innovative pedagogical approaches focusing on storytelling through narrative inquiry, multimodal texts, and DST could be used to challenge deficit ideologies and promote asset-based perspectives with respect to refugee-background students in Canada.

1.4 Researcher Positionality

In the present section, I reflect on my positionality and lived experiences as a researcher with respect to FI programs and refugee-background students and families. My parents enrolled me in a FI elementary program in Saskatoon, SK, in 1994. Although they did not speak French

and had no experience with FI programs, my parents believed that my younger brother and I should become bilingual in Canada's two official languages, which they felt might be valuable for prestigious career opportunities. My dual-track school offered both FI and English programs, and there was a stark contrast in student demographics between the programs. While the FI program consisted almost exclusively of white, Canadian-born, English-speaking, children of middle-class parents like me, the English program had many racialized, newcomer, Indigenous, multilingual children of working-class parents. I felt a sense of belonging in FI programs, and I likely felt pride for studying in what I considered the more academically challenging program. Furthermore, my family is of German and Austrian origin and I took several German language courses in elementary and secondary school, which my parents encouraged as a way to connect to our heritage; however, studying German was never framed as an opportunity for academic enrichment in the same way that I viewed learning French in FI programs. Similarly, when I began to learn introductory Spanish as an adult, this was primarily for traveling purposes, whereas learning French felt much more closely tied to my identity as a Canadian.

I was a strong student and enjoyed learning French. However, when my hearing impairment became more pronounced, my teacher recommended that my parents withdraw me from FI, believing that the program might prove overwhelming. This was my first encounter with the ideology that FI might not be suitable for students with different abilities or learning difficulties. Fortunately, my parents quietly dismissed this recommendation, and I continued my schooling in FI. Subsequently, I completed a Bachelor of Arts in French at the University of Saskatchewan in 2011 and a *Baccalauréat en éducation française* at the University of Regina in 2013. Notwithstanding the experience with my hearing impairment, my positionality as a white,

middle-class, official-language bilingual student ensured that my belonging in FI programs was never challenged or questioned, as I embodied a dominant identity in Canadian FI programs.

I began my career as an educator in 2013, teaching in FI elementary programs in the same school division in Saskatoon, SK, where I had been a student. I was encouraged to see that FI programs were becoming increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse; however, I was discouraged to meet educators who espoused the view that FI programs were inappropriate for multilingual learners and that such students should focus on learning English, especially in Saskatchewan. Such experiences inspired me to pursue my Master of Arts in Second Language Education at McGill University in Montreal, QC, and conduct thesis research exploring the perspectives of educators and multilingual parents in FI programs in Saskatoon, SK. When I resumed my teaching career, I began advocating more outspokenly for the inclusion of multilingual learners in FI programs, both at my school and in the broader division. In 2020, I began teaching in the *Baccalauréat en éducation française* at the University of Regina, where I have the privilege of contributing to the education of French teachers in Saskatchewan. My greatest joy in this role is encouraging teacher candidates to explore plurilingual pedagogies in French language education programs in order to include and empower multilingual learners.

In terms of my positionality with refugee-background communities, I have had the privilege of volunteering and working with refugee-background students and families in Canada and internationally. I have worked and volunteered with two non-profit organizations serving immigrants and refugee-background families in Saskatoon, SK, in the areas of family programming, childcare, and language education programs for refugee-background students. Moreover, I taught in a pilot English as an Additional Language (EAL) program for refugee-background elementary students in Saskatoon, SK. Additionally, I have volunteered with a faith-

based, non-profit organization serving refugee-background populations and providing humanitarian assistance and relief worldwide. Through this organization, I had the opportunity to meet Syrian refugee-background students and families living in Za'atari Refugee Camp, as well as Syrian refugee-background students in several schools in Jordan and Palestinian refugee-background families in Jerusalem. More recently, I have been actively engaged with Palestinian refugee-background families and communities through activism in Regina, SK, including participating in rallies and co-organizing non-violent resistance events calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. However, despite my experience working with refugee-background families and students, my positionality as a white, middle-class, official-language bilingual, university-educated man affords me unearned privilege and prevents me from fully understanding the diverse and multifaceted experiences of refugee-background families. Thus, I believe I have insider status amongst FI educators, but outsider status with respect to refugee-background families.

My insider positionality as it pertains to FI programs provides a proximity to FI educators across the Canadian Prairies. For instance, I share a cultural and linguistic background with many FI educators, and I understand the challenges of teaching French as an additional language in minority language contexts. In contrast, despite my best intentions, my outsider positionality with respect to refugee-background communities precludes me from fully understanding the experiences of such students and families. Therefore, I believe I am knowledgeable and well-positioned to critically examine the perspectives and ideologies of FI educators, but I recognize that I am less able to understand the experiences of refugee-background students and families. In light of this insider and outsider positionality, I believe that I can advocate most effectively for greater equity and inclusion in FI programs by working with educators as peers and perhaps work more closely with refugee-background communities in future research. Through this study,

I seek not only to better understand the perspectives and ideologies of FI educators with respect to refugee-background students across the Canadian Prairies, but also to challenge discriminatory and exclusionary practices and advocate for the inclusion and support of these students. My position is not that refugee-background students should or must learn both of Canada's official languages, as I affirm the right and autonomy of families and learners to determine their own linguistic practices and priorities; rather, my position is that refugee-background families who are interested in providing bilingual or multilingual educational opportunities for their children, through FI programs or otherwise, should be included and supported in their efforts to do so. In the following section, I situate my study within the critical research paradigm and the theoretical perspective of sociolinguistics for change, discussing the intended contributions of my inquiry.

1.5 Research Paradigm

In the present section of this introduction chapter, I situate my study within the research paradigm of critical theory and the theoretical perspective of sociolinguistics for change. First, I provide an overview of critical theory, including a brief historical synthesis and a juxtaposition of critical theory with other research paradigms with respect to ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Subsequently, I discuss the theoretical framework of sociolinguistics for change and the importance of critically examining the language ideologies of FI educators pertaining to refugee-background students. Finally, I present the intended contributions of my research, including intellectual contributions to the advancement of knowledge in language education scholarship and contributions to social change for more equitable and inclusive FI programs.

1.5.1 Critical Theory

The historical origins of critical theory are often traced to the Frankfurt School and the scholarly contributions of Hegel, Marx, Engels, and Habermas in social and political domains.

Whereas the above scholars certainly influenced critical theory by theorizing social and political solutions to address socioeconomic issues, it is perhaps their commitment to fusing intellectual work with advocacy and social change that is most central to critical theory today (Crotty, 1998). In the realm of education, Paulo Freire is arguably the greatest example of a scholar who merged intellectual scholarship with meaningful advocacy for equity and social change in education. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970) wrote about creating curriculum and pedagogy both for and with marginalized populations as a means of liberation for the oppressed and oppressors alike. Moreover, Freire critiqued the traditional banking model of education and advanced the framework of dialogic education for teachers and students to teach and learn together. Through the concepts of critical conscientization and praxis, Freire (1970) radically transformed literacy and social justice education in Brazil and worldwide. Freire is widely considered an essential figure in critical theory, critical pedagogy, social justice education, and liberation theology today. For the purposes of this research, Freire's scholarship centred on the pedagogy of oppressed populations is especially pertinent, as I believe that the inclusion and support of refugee-background students in FI programs is important and valuable for marginalized students and mainstream students alike. In my estimation, all FI students, whether dominantly positioned or otherwise, would benefit from more inclusive policy and greater supports in FI programs.

In terms of a definition of critical theory, Kincheloe and McLaren (2011) note that it is difficult to define this research paradigm for the following three reasons: "(a) there are many critical theories, not just one; (b) the critical tradition is always changing and evolving; and (c) critical theory attempts to avoid too much specificity, as there is room for disagreement amongst critical theorists" (p. 287). Notwithstanding this important caveat, there are certain core tenets of critical theory that are widely accepted amongst scholars and that serve to distinguish critical

theory from other research paradigms. First, as it pertains to ontology, critical theory is unique amongst other traditions in its conception of reality and knowledge. Guba and Lincoln (1994) describe the ontological assumption of critical theory as historical realism, insofar as “reality is assumed to be apprehendable that was once plastic, but that was, over time, shaped by a congeries of social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender factors, and then crystallized (reified) into a series of structures that are now (inappropriately) taken as ‘real’” (p. 11). This ontological assumption is especially pertinent for my study examining the perspectives and ideologies of FI educators in Canada. Specifically, educators express several perspectives that are rooted in underlying ideologies that are shaped historically and socially (Roy, 2015, 2020). Such ideologies, if left unexamined, can serve to perpetuate issues of elitism, exclusion, and discrimination in FI programs (Kunnas, 2023). In this study, I seek to illuminate the unexamined ideologies of educators, which are often inappropriately taken as real, and problematize these ideologies as social, political, cultural, and linguistic structures. Furthermore, the epistemology of critical theory is inherently value-mediated; thus, critical theorists do not seek to deny or suppress their own perspectives and motivations, but rather believe that they are of central importance in the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Kincheloe and McLaren (2011) discuss critical enlightenment and critical emancipation as objectives of critical research. In my estimation, critical enlightenment and critical emancipation are both central goals of my study, as I hope to contribute to a greater understanding of the perspectives and ideologies of FI educators with respect to refugee-background students across the Canadian Prairies, as well as advocate for the inclusion of such learners throughout Canada. My orientation toward critical theory as a research paradigm is perhaps best encapsulated by Giroux’s (2018) notion of a ‘transformative intellectual’ seeking to advance knowledge and inspire social change. To the extent that I hope to

contribute to a greater understanding of FI educators' perspectives with respect to refugee-background students across the Canadian Prairies while advocating for the inclusion and support of such learners, I believe that my research orientation is aligned with the paradigm of critical theory.

1.5.2 Sociolinguistics for Change

Sociolinguistics for change was created as a theoretical perspective by Auger et al. (2007) and refined by Dalley and Roy (2008). The educational scholars drew inspiration from the more established theoretical framework of critical sociolinguistics, especially from the seminal scholarship of Heller (1994, 2002, 2003) with French-speaking communities in Ontario. For her part, Heller (1994) built on the theories of Bourdieu (1979) and argued that, although French had historically been associated with lower socioeconomic status and power in Canada, the language was growing in symbolic power as a result of its official status and newfound appeal amongst English-speaking families in Canada. Furthermore, the notions of capital and habitus advanced by Bourdieu (1979) are also pertinent to the present study. More specifically, Canadian-born, English-speaking students are often deemed to have high cultural and linguistic capital in Canada and their interest and enrolment in FI programs is seldom questioned; conversely, refugee-background students are considered to have less capital and are therefore considered less capable of learning French in Canada (Gerbrandt, 2022). Heller (2002, 2003) adopted the theoretical perspective of critical sociolinguistics to explore diverse power dynamics and imbalances within social structures and systems. While Auger et al. (2007) found the critical sociolinguistics approach of Heller (2002, 2023) valuable, the scholars sought to develop a theoretical framework that would enable them to work closely with language educators to critically examine discourses and ideologies in schools. Furthermore, Dalley and Roy (2008) theorize educators as agents of

social change in schools and discuss the responsibility of supporting teachers and principals in their learning and advocacy. In summary, sociolinguistics for change and critical sociolinguistics both examine power relations with respect to language and society; however, sociolinguistics for change focuses more specifically on educational contexts and on the agential power of teachers and teacher educators to inspire meaningful, systemic change in schools.

Sociolinguistics for change has also been adopted as a theoretical framework in research in FI programs, also in the context of the Canadian Prairies. Sylvie Roy, one of the founding theorists of sociolinguistics for change (Auger et al., 2007; Dalley & Roy, 2008), has used this theoretical perspective in ethnographic research examining the discourses and ideologies of diverse stakeholders in FI programs in the province of Alberta. Notably, Roy (2010) found that FI students do not feel they belong to French-speaking communities of Alberta, often because they perceive their French language variety as somehow deficient or illegitimate. Roy and Galiev (2011) further examined the discourses of FI students in Alberta pertaining to language learning, bilingualism, and cultural identity, identifying diverse ideologies surrounding the imagined ‘native speaker.’ Subsequently, Roy (2012) explored the discourses and ideologies of FI teachers, principals, students, and parents with respect to language varieties in Canada and found that stakeholders tended to perceive some French language varieties as more appropriate or legitimate than other varieties. Furthermore, Roy (2015) also examined the ideologies of FI educators pertaining to multilingual learners and encountered the widespread belief that such learners must develop strong English language proficiency before learning French. In her landmark book *French Immersion Ideologies in Canada*, Roy (2020) synthesizes over 15 years of scholarship surrounding several critical issues in Canadian FI programs. I believe that the theoretical perspective of sociolinguistics for change, rooted in the research paradigm of critical

theory, serves as an effective framework for this study insofar as I explore the perspectives and unexamined ideologies of FI educators with respect to refugee-background students across the Canadian Prairies. In the subsequent section of this chapter, I present the intended contributions of my study, including the advancement of knowledge and advocacy for social change.

1.5.3 Intended Contributions of Research

In keeping with the research paradigm of critical theory and the theoretical framework of sociolinguistics for change, I seek to contribute both to the advancement of knowledge and to the advocacy of systemic change. First, the present study will contribute to a greater understanding of the perspectives and ideologies of FI educators with respect to refugee-background students in Canada. Whereas several researchers have examined the perspectives of FI educators pertaining to multilingual learners more generally (Bourgoin, 2016; Davis, 2019; Davis et al., 2019, 2021; Mady & Masson, 2018; Roy, 2015), I believe that this is the first study to focus on refugee-background students in FI programs. Refugees and asylum seekers are migrating to Canada today in greater numbers than ever before (Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada, 2023). Therefore, researchers must consider the implications of the changing student demographics for FI programs in Canada. Furthermore, the research site is significant insofar as the Canadian Prairies remain underrepresented in FI research (Arnott et al., 2019; Mady & Turnbull, 2012). Thus, the present study will address two gaps in FI scholarship: the experiences of refugee-background students and the perspectives of FI educators across the Canadian Prairies. Beyond simply addressing gaps in the FI literature, however, I believe that this research will contribute to greater awareness and understanding amongst educators of their own unexamined ideologies pertaining to refugee-background students. My hope is that inviting FI educators to reflect on their perspectives will lead to a greater awareness of the exclusion and neglect refugee-

background students might experience in FI programs, which might inspire such educators to make meaningful and systemic changes in policy and pedagogy to empower these students.

Moreover, I intend to advocate for systemic transformation in FI programs to better include, support, and empower refugee-background students and multilingual learners in Canada. Through this study, educators will become more aware of their unexamined ideologies pertaining to refugee-background students and of the ways in which their school divisions' policies, or lack thereof, often result in the exclusion and neglect of such learners. Finally, drawing from the findings of this research with respect to the perspectives of FI educators, I will advance several recommendations for educators and school divisions to create equitable and inclusive FI policies. In summary, this study will contribute both to the advancement of knowledge and to advocacy efforts for the inclusion and support of refugee-background students in FI programs in Canada.

1.6 Overview of Dissertation

In the present study, I explore the perspectives and ideologies of educators with respect to refugee-background students in FI programs across the Canadian Prairies. To conclude this introduction chapter, I provide an overview of my dissertation. In terms of the structure of my dissertation, I have written a manuscript-style thesis in partial fulfilment of the Mentored PhD in Education program at the University of Regina. In accordance with the Faculty of Education Manuscript Thesis Guidelines, a manuscript-style thesis must include an introduction chapter, a number of manuscripts agreed upon by the supervisor and committee, and a conclusion chapter. For my dissertation, I have written three original manuscripts for peer-reviewed, academic journals, all as sole author. As I submit the written dissertation, the first paper has been published, whereas the second and third papers have been accepted and are in press with their respective journals. There are some minor differences between the manuscripts included in this

dissertation and the versions that have been submitted, accepted, or published as journal articles; such differences are the result of recommendations by anonymous journal reviewers and word limits of the three respective journals. Moreover, it is important to note that there is some overlap amongst the manuscripts and other dissertation chapters in terms of the literature reviews, theoretical perspectives, methodological approach, findings, discussions, and recommendations; these areas of overlap exist because each of the manuscripts must present coherent and contextualized ideas as individual manuscripts, independently of the other chapters, while also contributing to the full dissertation. The peer-reviewed manuscripts can be referenced as follows:

Davis, S. (2023). Multilingual learners in Canadian French immersion programs: Looking back and moving forward. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 79(3), 163-180.

Davis, S. (in press). Refugee-background students in Canadian French immersion programs: Exploring the perspectives and ideologies of educators. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*.

Davis, S. (in press). French immersion programs for refugee-background students in Canada: Examining the ideologies shaping policy, inclusion, and support. *Journal of Education, Language, and Ideology*.

In the present section, *Chapter 1: Introduction*, I have provided an overview of Canadian FI programs and the pedagogical and political significance thereof. Moreover, I examined the sociolinguistic context of the Canadian Prairies, presenting the demographics of official languages, non-official immigrant languages, and Indigenous languages across Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. Furthermore, I synthesized pertinent research exploring the education and integration of refugee-background students in Canada, focusing on literacy

practices, language learning, challenges and strengths, and perspectives and pedagogies of educators. Additionally, I situated my study within the research paradigm of critical theory and the theoretical framework of sociolinguistics for change, discussing the intended contributions of my research pertaining to the twofold goals of advancing intellectual knowledge and advocating for more equitable and inclusive FI programs across the Canadian Prairies and beyond.

Subsequently, in *Chapter 2: Multilingual Learners in Canadian French Immersion Programs*, I synthesize post-millennial (2000-present) scholarship examining multilingual learners in FI programs. This literature review is the first of three manuscripts in this dissertation and focuses on the areas of language-in-education policy, educator perspectives, motivation, and language learning. Furthermore, I propose emerging areas for future research with multilingual learners, including the diverse intersections between language and race, migration, as well as the important implications for plurilingual education in FI programs across Canada.

Chapter 3: Refugee-Background Students in Canadian French Immersion Programs serves as the first results section of this dissertation. In this chapter, the second of three peer-reviewed journal manuscripts in this dissertation, I present the transformative mixed-methods approach and the qualitative and quantitative findings of this research pertaining to the perspectives and ideologies of FI educators as they pertain to refugee-background students. Specifically, I focus on survey and interview data with respect to the four findings of the perceived suitability of FI programs for refugee-background students, the language learning of these students, the challenges facing refugee-background students, and the supports and resources offered in FI programs. Drawing from these findings, I identify and discuss the unexamined ideologies of FI educators with respect to refugee-background students, identifying

and problematizing English-first ideologies, deficit-based ideologies pertaining to refugee-background students, and ideological tensions about supports in FI programs.

In the second results-driven section of this dissertation, *Chapter 4: French Immersion Programs for Refugee-Background Students in Canada*, I present further qualitative and quantitative findings of this study, focusing on perspectives and ideologies pertaining to diversity, inclusion, gatekeeping, and policy. While there is some overlap and repetition between Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 – including common themes in the literature reviews and similar descriptions of the methodological approach – this chapter presents different qualitative and quantitative data, focusing more directly on questions of inclusion and policy in FI programs. Moreover, this chapter features a more substantive discussion section pertaining to previous research with refugee-background students, both in Canada and internationally. Finally, I present five recommendations for school divisions to create equitable and inclusive FI programs across Canada. This chapter is the third and final peer-reviewed manuscript of this dissertation.

Finally, in *Chapter 5: Conclusion*, I provide a more expansive discussion section, synthesizing the contributions of this study with respect to previous scholarship and proposing areas for future research with refugee-background students and multilingual learners more broadly in FI programs across Canada. Moreover, I expand on previous recommendations for school divisions to better include and support refugee-background students in FI programs, which I believe would contribute to the creation of more equitable FI programs across Canada.

Chapter 2. Multilingual Learners in Canadian French Immersion Programs

Since the origins of the program in 1965 in Saint-Lambert, an English-dominant area of Montreal, French immersion (FI) programs throughout Canada have historically served predominantly Canadian-born, English-speaking families in their pursuit of bilingual education in the country's two official languages, French and English (Lambert & Tucker, 1972). Nevertheless, FI programs have become culturally and linguistically diverse as a result of increased global migration to Canada, and many newcomer, multilingual families desire official-language bilingual education opportunities for their children. Researchers have examined the significant motivation of such families in FI programs (Dagenais & Berron, 2001; Dagenais & Jacquet, 2000; Davis et al., 2019) and the strong language-learning outcomes of multilingual students in such programs (Bourgoin & Dicks, 2019; Dagenais & Moore, 2008; Mady, 2015). However, scholars have also noted several challenges facing multilingual families, including a lack of policy ensuring the inclusion of such families in FI (Galiev, 2013; Mady & Black, 2011; Mady & Turnbull, 2010), a lack of support for multilingual students hoping to learn both official languages in addition to home languages (Kubota & Bale, 2020), and a pervasive myth of English language proficiency being considered a prerequisite for success in FI (Davis, 2019; Mady & Masson, 2018; Roy, 2015). Indeed, although multilingual learners demonstrate high motivation and strong language-learning aptitude in both French and English, such learners and families face enduring issues of equity and inclusion in FI programs. In light of the increasingly diverse student demographics throughout Canada, educators, researchers, and policy developers alike must adapt FI programs to better support, include, and teach multilingual learners.

The purpose of the present synthesis is to review post-millennial (2000-present) research pertaining to multilingual learners and families in FI programs in Canada and to set the stage for

future inquiry in this area of scholarship. To this end, the present manuscript is divided into two main sections. First, I provide a critical synthesis of research concerning multilingual learners and families in FI programs in Canada, focusing on the following four domains proposed by two leading scholars in this area of inquiry, Mady and Turnbull (2012): (a) policy for multilingual students in FI; (b) perspectives of FI educators and administrators with respect to such learners; (c) motivations for multilingual families in FI programs; and (d) language learning outcomes of multilingual students in FI. Additionally, whereas Mady and Turnbull (2012) included a variety of French language education programs in their article, I will focus exclusively on FI in order to provide a more specific perspective on such programs. Subsequently, in the second section, I will explore new and emerging questions and opportunities for future research with multilingual learners and families in FI in two additional areas of inquiry: (a) scholarship focusing on specific populations of multilingual learners in FI programs in Canada; and (b) research exploring plurilingual education, crosslinguistic pedagogy, and the political and pedagogical implications thereof for multilingual learners in FI. In this way, I will synthesize recent scholarship pertaining to multilingual students in FI programs, while proposing future trajectories for important research with such learners and families in Canada.

2.1 Shaping Understandings of Multilingual Learners

Throughout the history of FI research, scholars have referred to students whose home languages are neither English nor French with a variety of terms, such as *minority-language students*, *English language learners*, *immigrant-background students*, and *allophones*. While these terms have been helpful for examining the experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse student populations in FI programs, they have also inspired further questions. For instance, do the above groups include Canadian-born students as well as newcomer students?

How do speakers of Indigenous languages fit into such groups? What of students who speak multiple home languages and language varieties that may or may not be recognized as countable, discrete languages? Should English-speaking and French-speaking students be considered immigrant-background learners if they are settlers in Canada? Whereas I have used the term *allophones* in previous publications (Davis, 2019; Davis et al., 2019, 2021), I recognize the shortcomings of this term for referring to diverse groups of students and families. In this manuscript, I will use *multilingual learners* to refer to all students, Canadian-born and newcomers, who speak multiple languages in Canada. In my estimation, *multilingual learners* is a valuable, if imperfect, term insofar as it encompasses the above terms and emphasizes the diverse linguistic repertoires and language-learning resources of such students, rather than framing multilingual learners through a deficit lens by the languages they may not ostensibly speak proficiently. While multilingualism is itself a difficult concept to define (Blommaert & Backus, 2013; Marshall & Moore, 2018), I use *multilingual learners* for the purposes of this manuscript insofar as the term includes Canadian-born and newcomer students who speak multiple languages and language varieties in Canada.

Furthermore, to the extent possible, I refrain from using program names that presuppose the number of languages students might speak, such as *English as a second language* (ESL) and *French as a second language* (FSL). Rather, I refer to French as an additional language, recognizing the multilingual learners with varying English language proficiency and experience, and for whom French might be a third, fourth, or fifth language.

2.2 Looking Back: Research with Multilingual Learners in FI

In the early years of FI research, very few studies examined the experiences of multilingual students (Bild & Swain, 1989; Lapkin et al., 1990; Taylor, 1992). However, the

education and inclusion of newcomer, multilingual learners became a more important area of inquiry at the turn of the century. Mady (2007a) conducted a seminal review of the early literature in this domain in both FI and core French programs. Subsequently, Mady and Turnbull (2012) identified the following four key directions for future research in this area: (a) language policy, (b) educators' perspectives, (c) motivation, and (d) learning and achievement. In the present literature review, I seek to build upon the important work of these scholars by synthesizing recent scholarship pertaining to the aforementioned four themes, focusing specifically on post-millennial research (2000-present) conducted in FI programs in Canada. I will conclude each of the four sections by reflecting on the research questions proposed by Mady and Turnbull (2012) and the extent to which these questions have been addressed in the past 10 years.

2.2.1 Multilingual Learners in FI: Language-in-Education Policy

The first area of research with multilingual learners in FI programs identified by Mady and Turnbull (2012) was the development and implementation of language education policy. Whereas official language policy is created at the federal level, provincial and territorial governments have the autonomy to create language education policy. First, in terms of federal language policy, the Government of Canada has long promoted increasing official-language bilingualism throughout Canada. For instance, in three post-millennial federal government documents - *The Next Act: New Momentum for Canada's Linguistic Duality* (Canada, 2003), *Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality 2008–2013: Acting for the Future* (Canada, 2009), and *Education, Immigration, Communities: Roadmap for Canada's Official Languages 2013–2018* (Canada, 2013) — the Government of Canada discussed the importance of language education initiatives for promoting official-language bilingualism and doubling the number of citizens who are bilingual in both English and French in Canada. However, such policy

documents make no mention of newcomer, multilingual learners as they pertain to official-language bilingualism. Mady and Turnbull (2010, p. 6) note that the extent to which multilingual learners have been overlooked in official-language policy and planning “is especially perplexing given that this issue has been explicitly highlighted by Canadian Commissioners of Official Languages.” Indeed, the Government of Canada has described initiatives for increasing French/English bilingualism throughout Canada, as well as programs for integrating immigrants and refugees into the country, but has effectively divorced the two objectives, ignoring newcomer, multilingual learners entirely with respect to official-language bilingualism (Galiev, 2013; Mady & Black, 2011).

Similarly, policy for official-language bilingual education for multilingual learners is often overlooked at the provincial and territorial level in Canada. Insofar as education is a matter of provincial and territorial jurisdiction, language education policy varies considerably across the country. In this vein, Mady and Turnbull (2010) found that it was mandatory to learn French in Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Quebec; conversely, it is mandatory to learn additional languages, but not necessarily French, in British Columbia and the Yukon; finally, it is optional to learn French in Alberta, Manitoba, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Saskatchewan. Moreover, even where learning French is ostensibly mandatory, administrators and educators often disregard such policies and exclude multilingual learners from French programs (Mady, 2007a, 2012; Mady & Turnbull, 2007). Thus, the mere existence of a policy pertaining to French as an additional language does not inherently ensure the inclusion of multilingual learners. In summary, several policies at the federal, provincial, and territorial levels promote the learning of one official language for multilingual learners, but access to bilingual education in both official languages is rarely guaranteed in Canada.

In addition to research examining official-language, bilingual education policy for multilingual learners at the federal, provincial, and territorial levels, scholars are beginning to explore the implementation of such policies within individual school boards. Sinay (2010) studied the demographics of students enrolled in FI programs in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and found an overrepresentation of white, English-speaking, Canadian-born learners. Whereas 54% of students in the TDSB speak a home language other than English, this is true of only 31% of students enrolled in FI programs in the school board (Sinay et al., 2018). Kunnas (2019) conducted a critical policy analysis of FI curricula and promotional material in the same area, concluding that “FI documents contribute to the construction of an English-speaking, White, middle-class, Torontonians/established resident as the typical FI student” (p. 85). This inquiry examining the intersections of race and language in FI policy has important implications for future research, which will be discussed subsequently in this manuscript.

Whereas post-millennial scholarship has contributed to a greater understanding of language education policy for multilingual learners in Canada, many of the policy-related research questions proposed by Mady and Turnbull (2012) remain unanswered. For instance, little is known about the factors that influence the creation of provincial and territorial language policy, or about how such policies are interpreted and implemented within Ontario with respect to multilingual learners and students with special needs in French language education programs. The researchers documented a significant disconnect between the practical experiences of teacher candidates working with multilingual learners in FI programs and the lack of education on this subject in their methodology courses. Moreover, Byrd Clark (2008) and Byrd Clark and Roy (2022) examined the efforts of teacher candidates striving to become multilingual and to adopt plurilingual pedagogical approaches – that is, pedagogy that draws from the full linguistic

repertoires of language learners (Lau & Van Viegen, 2020) – in light of the increasing student diversity in French language education, including FI programs, throughout Canada. The researchers found that although many teacher candidates were influenced by essentialist, deficit-based models of language learning, several future educators were interested in developing plurilingual pedagogical approaches and becoming multilingual themselves. More recently, Masson et al. (2022) explored anti-racist initiatives in French as an additional language teacher education programs in Ontario. They concluded that although such programs were beginning to examine racism and colonialism more explicitly, much more work was needed to strengthen pedagogical strategies and theoretical learning.

In terms of the research questions proposed by Mady and Turnbull (2012), several post-millennial studies have contributed to a greater understanding of educators' perspectives with respect to multilingual learners in FI programs throughout Canada (Bourgoin, 2016; Davis et al., 2019; Mady & Arnett, 2015; Mady & Masson, 2018; Roy, 2015). However, it would be valuable to explore the perspectives of FI educators pertaining to specific groups of multilingual learners, insofar as educators might consider FI programs to be suitable for some multilingual learners but not for others. Additionally, research exploring educators' perceptions of different French as an additional language programs might be of interest, since teachers and school administrators sometimes recommend core French or late French immersion for multilingual learners (Davis, 2019). Finally, further research is needed in teacher education contexts in order to better understand the development of ideologies among FI teacher candidates. Indeed, to the extent that several myths about the suitability of FI for diverse student populations continue to perpetuate elitism and exclusion, teacher education represents a critical opportunity to create more inclusive and equitable FI programs in the future.

2.2.2 Multilingual Learners in FI: Motivation and Investment

In addition to scholarship exploring language policy and educators' perspectives, Mady and Turnbull (2012) called for further research examining the motivation of multilingual learners and families as it pertains to French as an additional language education in Canada. In terms of earlier scholarship, Dagenais and Berron (2001) studied the language practices of three newcomer, multilingual families from different countries in Asia who had enrolled their children in FI programs in British Columbia. The researchers found that the parents were motivated to provide official-language, bilingual education opportunities for their children, recognizing the value of French and demonstrating confidence in their children's ability to learn English in Canada. Drawing from the theoretical construct of language learning as investment (Norton, 2000), Dagenais and Jacquet (2000) interviewed several families from different countries in Asia with children enrolled in FI programs, concluding that the families were interested not only in providing official-language bilingualism for their children but also in developing multilingual identities by continuing to teach and maintain home languages. Moreover, Dagenais (2003) noted that the families in question were also motivated by the hope that official-language bilingualism would offer future employment opportunities. Subsequently, Dagenais and Moore (2008) concluded that the families selected FI because of the belief that official-language bilingualism was linked to Canadian identity. Throughout the above studies, the parents were confident in their children's ability to learn multiple languages simultaneously in FI programs.

More recently, my master's thesis research found that newcomer, multilingual families in Saskatchewan were drawn to FI programs because of the official language status of French and English, espousing the view that official-language bilingualism and multiculturalism were essential elements of Canadian identity and that FI offered an opportunity for their children to

adopt such values (Davis et al., 2019). Additionally, some parents shared that they decided to enrol their children in FI programs because they valued multilingualism in all its forms (Davis et al., 2021). Finally, most parents were confident in their children's ability to learn French and English simultaneously, but some expressed concern over the lack of opportunities to learn and maintain home languages in Saskatchewan, a province with a particularly strong monolingual bias (Sterzuk & Shin, 2021). Kubota and Bale (2020) have explored this critical issue insightfully, noting that multilingual learners in Canadian FI programs "are not given equitable access to develop *plus plurilingualism* – that is, plurilingualism in official language(s) *plus* their heritage language" (p. 1). In summary, multilingual families are often motivated to enrol their children in FI programs to develop a sense of Canadian identity through official-language bilingualism, in addition to striving to support and maintain the heritage languages that comprise their children's diverse multilingual repertoires through family language planning and community programs.

Whereas some post-millennial research has investigated the motivation of multilingual learners in core French programs (Mady, 2007b, 2010), few studies have examined the motivation of such learners in FI. Makropolous (2010) explored the attitudes of secondary students in Ontario, including some newcomer, multilingual learners, regarding the FI curriculum. The researcher concluded that some newcomer learners were engaged in their learning, whereas others were disengaged after experiencing racial discrimination in FI programs. Furthermore, in the related area of identity construction and citizenship, researchers have also found that multilingual learners developed positive identities as Canadian citizens and as language learners in FI programs when their plurilingual literacy practices were valued (Dagenais, 2008; Dagenais & Moore, 2008; Prasad, 2015; Sabatier et al., 2013). The motivation,

investment, identity construction, and citizenship of multilingual learners – and the extent to which these are influenced by issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion – remain important areas for future research in FI programs.

Reflecting on the research agenda proposed by Mady and Turnbull (2012) pertaining to the motivation of multilingual learners to learn French in Canada, I would submit that most of the questions remain unanswered. Indeed, although several studies have examined the reasons that parents of multilingual learners are interested in FI programs (Dagenais, 2003, 2008; Dagenais & Berron, 2001; Dagenais & Jacquet, 2000; Dagenais & Moore, 2008; Davis et al., 2019, 2021), relatively few have explored the motivations of the students themselves. For instance, researchers have not addressed the questions of whether the motivation of multilingual learners changes over time or whether there is a novelty effect (Mady & Turnbull, 2012). Additionally, it would be interesting to study the motivations and investment of multilingual learners in late French immersion programs; indeed, insofar as such programs typically begin in Grade 6 or 7, students are likely more involved in the enrolment decision than in early FI programs. In summary, post-millennial FI research has generated a greater understanding of the motivations of multilingual parents, but further research with multilingual learners would be of interest.

2.2.3 Multilingual Learners in FI: Learning and Achievement

The fourth area of research proposed by Mady and Turnbull (2012) was the achievement of multilingual learners in French as an additional language programs in Canada. Several post-millennial studies have explored the language-learning outcomes and academic achievement of multilingual learners in FI programs. Notably, Turnbull et al. (2001) compared the English language literacy and mathematics skills of multilingual learners to those of English-speaking

students in FI programs, documenting similar abilities between both groups. Dagenais and Moore (2008) found that multilingual learners demonstrated high academic achievement in FI programs in British Columbia when their plurilingual practices were valued. Furthermore, Moore (2010) documented the literacy practices of multilingual learners from China in FI in the same province and observed that such students demonstrated sophisticated metalinguistic awareness as they acquired strong literacy skills in three writing systems simultaneously.

Subsequently, Bérubé and Marinova-Todd (2012) compared the language and literacy skills of the following three groups of FI students in British Columbia: English-speaking, monolingual learners; multilingual students who were literate in an alphabetic language; and multilingual students who were literate in a logographic language in FI programs. The researchers found that the second group of students developed strong literacy skills in French and English in FI, whereas the third group experienced difficulty in their literacy development. Thus, Bérubé and Marinova-Todd concluded that multilingual learners with literacy skills in logographic languages might require additional French and English oral language support in FI programs in order to mitigate the typological dissimilarities among their languages.

In a landmark study examining diverse measures of French language-learning outcomes of multilingual learners in FI programs, Mady (2015) compared the following three student groups in FI programs in Ontario: Canadian-born, French/English bilingual learners; Canadian-born, multilingual learners; and newcomer, multilingual learners. The results of this research demonstrated that newcomer, multilingual learners have several distinct advantages in FI programs, displaying superior French language proficiency and outperforming the other student groups in French speaking fluency. Mady (2015) noted the high motivation of newcomer, multilingual students in FI programs, as well as the significant efforts such learners made to

speak French, as predictors of their language-learning success. This study is especially important and interesting insofar as it suggests the existence of language-learning advantages not only for multilingual learners in FI but also for newcomer, multilingual learners in particular.

More recently, Bourgoin and Dicks (2019) investigated the French and English reading development of seven Canadian-born, multilingual learners in FI programs in New Brunswick. The results indicated that six of the seven multilingual learners performed as well as, or better than, English-speaking peers in FI, suggesting that multilingual learners “seem to be at no greater disadvantage as a result of learning to read in multiple languages, and it would appear, have advantages over their unilingual and bilingual peers” (Bourgoin & Dicks, 2019, p. 18). Notwithstanding the limitations of a small number of participants, the researchers noted that the multilingual learners demonstrated strong metalinguistic awareness in their literacy development by describing rich, cross-linguistic reading strategies.

In summary, several of the research questions proposed by Mady and Turnbull (2012) have been addressed in post-millennial scholarship. Research examining the language learning and academic achievement of multilingual learners in FI programs has generated positive results (Bourgoin & Dicks, 2019; Mady, 2015; Turnbull et al., 2001). However, very few studies have examined the learning of multilingual students with specific language backgrounds in FI programs (Bérubé & Marinova-Todd, 2012). Additionally, research comparing the language-learning outcomes of multilingual learners in early versus late French immersion programs would be of interest and could have important pedagogical and political implications; indeed, educators espouse divergent perspectives with respect to the suitability of such programs for multilingual learners, considering factors such as student age, linguistic repertoires, and migration history (Davis, 2019). Finally, research exploring the effects of diverse plurilingual

pedagogical approaches on the French language learning of multilingual learners is needed.

Plurilingual education has virtually exploded in post-millennial scholarship, but much remains largely unexamined in FI research. The importance of future research exploring plurilingual education for multilingual learners in FI programs will be discussed in the next section.

2.3 Moving Forward: Future Research with Multilingual Learners in FI

In the previous section, I reviewed post-millennial research conducted with multilingual learners in FI programs in Canada pertaining to the four areas of inquiry proposed by Mady and Turnbull (2012). It is important to note that these domains of scholarship are still important for future FI research; indeed, many of the insightful research questions proposed remain unexplored and could serve as inspiration for further scholarship. Nevertheless, I believe that research beyond the above areas is also pressing as we look ahead to the future of FI in Canada. In this section, I will propose two additional areas that I believe have emerged as critical issues for future research with multilingual learners in FI programs in Canada: (a) research with diverse student populations, including refugee-background learners, Indigenous learners, and racialized learners of all linguistic backgrounds; and (b) research examining plurilingual approaches to education and the political and pedagogical implications thereof for multilingual learners in FI.

2.3.1 Multilingual Learners in FI: Intersections of Race, Migration, and Language

Researchers have examined several different research questions pertaining to multilingual learners in FI programs in Canada. Whereas studies have generated important findings with respect to the learning and inclusion of multilingual learners in FI programs, the lack of precision around student populations and definitions has limited our understanding of the experiences of specific groups in Canada. Multilingual families represent a range of migration histories, educational backgrounds, linguistic repertoires, and lived experiences; therefore, categorizing

such families together often prevents researchers from understanding the nuances of each specific family, culture, and population. Exploring such intersectionalities is critically important, especially in the context of FI programs in Canada that have historically privileged white, Canadian-born, English-speaking families to the detriment of racialized, newcomer, multilingual families. For this reason, I believe that future research focusing on specific populations of multilingual learners and families will be important for the future of FI programs in Canada.

In my estimation, one population of multilingual learners and families of significant interest for future FI research would be refugee-background learners and families. Research examining the experiences of refugee-background learners and families in FI programs is especially urgent at this time. Over the past five years, Canada has accepted over 40,000 asylum seekers fleeing the ongoing humanitarian and political crisis in Syria (Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, 2019). More recently, several thousand refugee-background families evading violence and instability in Afghanistan have arrived in Canada, and many families escaping war in Ukraine are beginning to come to Canada as well (Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, 2022). Several researchers have examined the education and integration of refugee-background children and youth in Canada, focusing on English language learning, social exclusion and isolation, academic challenges, and trauma and mental health issues (Checkley, 2020; Guo et al., 2019; Kirova, 2019; MacNevin, 2012; Massfeller & Hamm, 2019; Stewart, 2017; Stewart et al., 2017; Wilkinson, 2001). However, few studies have explored the experiences of refugee-background students in French educational contexts (Bahi & Piquemal, 2013; Papazian-Zohrabian et al., 2018, 2019; Schroeter & James, 2014), and no known studies have been conducted in FI programs. Similarly, although research examining the experiences of Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) has emerged as an important area of inquiry

in English language contexts in the United States (Chang-Bacon, 2021; Salva, 2021), this scholarship has not yet been pursued in Canadian French immersion programs. To the extent that some educators believe that FI programs are unsuitable for students with limited English proficiency (Davis, 2019; Mady & Masson, 2018; Roy, 2015) or perceived learning disabilities or difficulties (Arnett et al., 2014; Genesee, 2007; Le Bouthillier & Kristmanson, 2019), it stands to reason that refugee-background learners are likely excluded from FI programs. The lived experiences, inclusion, and learning of refugee-background students in FI programs, as well as educators' perspectives of such learners and families, represent critical gaps in FI research, which I seek to address in my doctoral study across the Canadian Prairies.

Furthermore, scholars must also examine the experiences of racialized families and students in FI programs in Canada. While several researchers have found that newcomer, multilingual families and learners are sometimes excluded from FI programs on the basis of supposedly low English proficiency (Bourgoin, 2016; Davis et al., 2019; Mady & Masson, 2018; Roy, 2015), few studies have examined the access and inclusion of racialized, Canadian-born students in FI. Researchers have found that racialized students are under-represented in FI programs in Canada (Sinay, 2010; Sinay et al., 2018) and that the policy documents and promotional materials for such programs perpetuate white, Euro-centric biases in FI (Kunnas, 2019, 2023); however, the extent to which racialized students are included or excluded in FI programs is unknown. Scholars have called for applied linguists to investigate the intersections of race and language in recent years (Crump, 2014; Kubota & Lin, 2006; Rosa & Flores, 2017), but the learning and inclusion of racialized students remain unexamined in Canadian FI programs. Wernicke (2022) explored the identities of French as an additional language teachers with respect to race and language and found that educators often prioritize the official languages

of Canada to the detriment of non-official languages, effectively ignoring certain dimensions of their diverse linguistic and racial identities.

Furthermore, Masson et al. (2022) examined the development of anti-racist initiatives in French as an additional language teacher education programs, and, as previously mentioned, further scholarship in this area is needed. Moreover, the experiences of Indigenous learners in French as an additional language programs remain critically unexamined; indeed, only one study has examined the French language learning of Indigenous students in Canada (Lavoie, 2015), and no known study has explored the experiences of Indigenous learners in FI programs (Arnott et al., 2019). Crump (2014) rightly notes that, as a result of the “stigma around race, racism, and racialization (any R-word derivatives), cultural and linguistic differences often end up being used as a proxy for racial difference” (p. 216). Thus, it is possible that the under-representation of certain student populations in FI programs is the result not only of English-first ideologies and deficit discourses around newcomer, multilingual learners but also of racial discrimination. Similarly, the over-representation of white, middle-class, English-speaking students and families in FI programs is likely the result of unearned privilege and systemic advantages in education systems throughout Canada. Historically, most FI research has been conducted by dominantly positioned scholars, which is a possible explanation for the extent to which white, middle-class, English-speaking students and families have been centred in this scholarship. Therefore, I believe that further research by racialized, multilingual scholars would contribute to a greater understanding of the experiences of students who have traditionally been disadvantaged in FI programs. I would echo the call for research examining the intersections of race and language in education, which should be led first and foremost by racialized, multilingual researchers. In

summary, future research must explore the learning and inclusion of newcomer, multilingual learners from around the world, but also of racialized students in FI programs in Canada.

2.3.2 Multilingual Learners in FI: Plurilingual Education

Plurilingual education has emerged as a critically important theoretical and pedagogical movement within diverse language education contexts, both in Canada and around the world. Plurilingual pedagogical approaches are rooted in different theoretical and conceptual frameworks and seek to empower language learners to draw from their diverse linguistic repertoires as resources in their learning. The most widespread conceptualization of plurilingual pedagogy is the notion of *translanguaging*, which originated as both a theoretical construct and pedagogical approach in Wales (Williams, 1996). Subsequently, in the United States, García (2009) used translanguaging in reference to the “multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds” (p. 45). García distinguished translanguaging from code-switching insofar as the latter term implies that learners are alternating between discrete language systems whereas the former suggests that learners are freely and seamlessly drawing from integrated linguistic repertoires. Furthermore, García and Wei (2014) problematized the concept of language as a fixed and static entity, arguing for the blurring of boundaries between languages. Moreover, Flores and Rosa (2015) drew from translanguaging theory to critique constructs such as “additive bilingualism” and “academic language” as being rooted in raciolinguistic ideologies and deficit perspectives about racialized learners. More recently, García et al. (2021) adopted a translanguaging perspective in their manifesto rejecting abyssal thinking about the language education of racialized learners. Evidently, the emergence of translanguaging as a theoretical framework and as a pedagogical approach has pedagogical and political implications for language education contexts worldwide.

In the context of FI programs in Canada, the discourses around plurilingual education have mostly addressed the role of students' home languages in their learning of French. Swain and Lapkin (2013) discussed the mediating and scaffolding functions of the first language in second language learning, arguing that FI students should be allowed to use English to discuss complex ideas. Similarly, Cummins (2014) presented critiques of monolingual instructional assumptions in FI programs, challenging the historically rigid boundaries between French and English. Critically absent from such articles, however, is a sociolinguistic analysis of the inequitable status and power dynamics between French and English in Canada; specifically, increasing the presence of English, the majority language, could result in further marginalizing of the minority language, French, in FI programs. Thus, Ballinger et al. (2017) rightly advocated for context-appropriate cross-linguistic pedagogy, encouraging FI educators to reflect critically on the power imbalance between majority and minority languages in Canada. More recently, Lyster (2019) critiqued the dubious argument that recourse to English is needed to mediate complex ideas in FI, arguing that "this is the opportune moment for language to grow and for students to develop the confidence they need to support continued language growth" (p. 344). Furthermore, Lyster drew a distinction between pedagogical translanguaging and cross-linguistic pedagogy, citing the example of bilingual read-aloud projects in FI programs that foster cross-linguistic transfer and develop biliteracy skills across languages while maintaining separate spaces for French and English (Lyster et al., 2009, 2013). Moreover, Ballinger et al. (2020) advocated for cross-linguistic pedagogy (XLP) in FI programs, noting that "while translanguaging, plurilingual, and XLP may be branches of the same tree, these contextual differences have had an impact upon their specific foci, perspectives, and practices" (p. 269). I would echo the positions of Ballinger et al. (2017, 2020) and Lyster (2019) that the widespread

mixing of English and French is contextually inappropriate in FI, especially in light of the increasing diversity in such programs. Moreover, I would contend that the extent to which Swain and Lapkin (2013) and Cummins (2014) have effectively presumed English to be the home language of FI learners perpetuates the ideology that such programs are most suitable for students with strong English proficiency, which is deeply problematic for diversity, equity, and inclusion issues in FI programs.

Plurilingual pedagogical approaches have also been explored in languages beyond English and French in Canada. The *Éveil aux langues* research team has been especially active in this area, examining intercultural education, linguistic diversity, and plurilingual pedagogy in French education contexts in Canada. Maraillet and Armand (2006) explored the perspectives of multilingual elementary school students in Montreal with respect to linguistic diversity. Furthermore, Dagenais et al. (2007, 2008) examined the implementation of language awareness activities in elementary schools in Vancouver and Montreal, finding that the language awareness activities exposed learners to different languages and enabled students to co-construct knowledge about linguistic diversity through peer collaboration. Armand et al. (2008) also conducted two studies in linguistically diverse schools in Montreal, the first of which explored metaphonological abilities and early literacy skills, and the second of which examined the effects of language awareness activities and the perspectives of multilingual learners pertaining to linguistic diversity. Subsequent research by this team explored pedagogical activities on the theme of linguistic landscape (Dagenais et al., 2009), early literacy skills of multilingual students (Gosselin-Lavoie & Armand, 2015), and the representations of the linguistic repertoires of such learners (Lory & Armand, 2016). This scholarship in plurilingual pedagogy in French language programs is critically important in Canada, but it remains largely unexamined in FI programs.

Prasad has examined the effects of various plurilingual pedagogical approaches and activities in different French language programs, including Canadian FI programs, exploring the reflexive drawings of multilingual students (Prasad, 2015, 2018) and the diverse representations of plurilingualism through the creation of collages (Prasad, 2020). Future research must further explore plurilingual pedagogical approaches including languages other than English in FI programs and the effects of such approaches on the learning and inclusion of multilingual learners. I believe that plurilingual pedagogy integrating French and other minority languages in Canada, including heritage languages and Indigenous languages, could benefit multilingual learners in FI programs insofar as it would value the diverse linguistic repertoires of such students while strengthening their learning of French.

2.4 Conclusion

Throughout this manuscript, I have synthesized research pertaining to the education and inclusion of multilingual learners in FI programs in Canada. In the first section, I reviewed FI scholarship concerning multilingual learners according to the four research domains identified by Mady and Turnbull (2012). Furthermore, I presented two additional areas of scholarship that I believe will be important for future research with multilingual learners in FI programs in Canada. First, I urge researchers to examine the learning and inclusion of specific groups of multilingual learners in FI, including refugee-background learners and racialized students. Second, I implore scholars to explore plurilingual education in FI programs, and especially pedagogical approaches that value the diverse linguistic repertoires of multilingual learners. It is time that educators, researchers, and policy developers recognize the diverse language backgrounds of multilingual learners in FI, not as obstacles to overcome but as valuable resources for language learning.

French immersion programs are at a crossroads with respect to the education and inclusion of multilingual learners in Canada. Educators and researchers alike must respond to the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in classrooms across the country by advocating for the inclusion and empowerment of multilingual learners in FI programs, both by creating more inclusive policy and by promoting more equitable pedagogy. Future research must do more than dispassionately study perspectives, policies, and practices within FI programs; rather, scholars must critically challenge the equity issues, as well as the unexamined and often discriminatory ideologies, that privilege some students and families to the detriment of others in such programs. The scholarship of racialized, multilingual researchers will be especially vital in such endeavours. Looking back, we can see how much we have learned about the education and inclusion of multilingual learners in FI; moving forward, we can see how much there is to do to adapt such programs to embrace and empower the increasingly diverse learners of Canada.

Chapter 3. Refugee-Background Learners in Canadian French Immersion Programs

Historically, French immersion (FI) programs across Canada have served predominantly English-speaking, Canadian-born students in their pursuit of bilingual education in the country's two official languages, French and English (Genesee, 1984; Lambert & Tucker, 1972). Whereas FI programs have traditionally privileged white, Canadian-born, and English-speaking families to the detriment of racialized, newcomer, and multilingual families, such programs are becoming more culturally and linguistically diverse as a result of increased global migration to Canada (Statistics Canada, 2021). Researchers have examined the experiences of multilingual families and learners in FI programs, including the motivation of such families to learn French and English, the language learning outcomes of multilingual students, and the perspectives of educators regarding the inclusion of such learners (Bourgoin & Dicks, 2019; Dagenais & Berron, 2001; Dagenais & Jacquet, 2000; Dagenais & Moore, 2008; Davis et al., 2019, 2021; Knouzi & Mady, 2017; Mady, 2007, 2015). Nevertheless, researchers have not focused on the experiences of refugee-background learners in FI programs; this represents a critical gap in the scholarship insofar as the number of refugee-background learners arriving in Canada is growing rapidly and their bilingual education experiences remain largely unexamined.

In the present paper, I illustrate the findings of a mixed-methods study exploring the perspectives of FI educators with respect to refugee-background learners in eight school boards across the Canadian Prairies. First, I begin by introducing key terms and definitions for this study. Second, I offer a literature review focusing on research examining educators' perspectives pertaining to multilingual learners in FI programs across Canada. Third, I situate this study within the paradigm of critical theory and the theoretical framework of sociolinguistics for change. Fourth, I describe the research questions, methodology, and participants that shaped the

present inquiry. Fifth, I present results from this study with respect to the four themes of suitability, learning, challenges, and resources. Finally, I conclude by discussing the ideologies underlying the findings and by offering recommendations to school boards to better include and empower refugee-background students and all multilingual learners in FI programs in Canada.

3.1 Multilingual Learners and Refugee-Background Learners: Shaping Understandings

Researchers have used a variety of terms over the years to refer to students whose home languages are neither English nor French in Canada, including *minority-language students*, *immigrant-background students*, *English language learners*, and *allophones*. Whereas such terms have been useful for examining cultural and linguistic diversity in FI programs, they also have shortcomings, such as unclear definitions and deficit-based understandings. For example, do these terms include Canadian-born students and newcomer learners? What should we make of students who speak multiple home languages, including official languages, immigrant languages, heritage languages, and language varieties that may not be recognized as standard? Is there a level of English language proficiency at which a student ceases to be an English language learner? How do speakers of Indigenous languages fit within such categories? In the context of ongoing settler colonialism in Canada, who is truly immigrant-background? For the purposes of this study, I use *multilingual learners* as an overarching term to include all learners, Canadian-born and newcomers, who speak multiple languages and language varieties in Canada (Byrd Clark, 2008; Byrd Clark & Roy, 2022). To be sure, this term is also imperfect, and multilingualism is itself a notoriously difficult concept to define (Blommaert & Backus, 2013; Marshall & Moore, 2018). Nevertheless, I believe that *multilingual learners* emphasizes a strengths-based understanding of such learners by recognizing their diverse linguistic repertoires and language learning resources. While some of the above terms ‘other’ students with diverse

language backgrounds or define such learners by languages that they are deemed to speak insufficiently, *multilingual learners* challenges and rejects this deficit framing by underscoring the linguistic repertoires and language learning strengths and resources of these students.

Moreover, it is important to understand the terms *refugee* and *refugee-background students*. Drawing from the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the Office of the United Nations Human Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2001) offered the following definition of a refugee: “A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her (*sic*) country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.” The term *refugee-background student* is increasingly common in refugee studies and refers to students who have refugee experiences (Ghadi et al., 2019; Kikulwe et al., 2021). I use the term refugee-background students to acknowledge that although these learners have lived experience as refugees, such experiences do not represent their entire identities; rather, this is just one facet of their complex, dynamic identities (Massing et al., 2023).

3.2 Multilingual Learners in FI: Educators’ Perspectives

In light of the growing cultural and linguistic diversity in FI programs across Canada, researchers have examined different areas of inquiry pertaining to multilingual learners in FI. First, scholars have found that multilingual families are often highly motivated to learn both French and English in Canada. Multilingual parents often believe that official-language bilingualism will offer employment opportunities for their children (Dagenais, 2003; Davis et al., 2019). Additionally, many multilingual parents are drawn to FI programs because they perceive French-English bilingualism as an essential element of Canadian identity and because they value multilingualism in all forms (Byrd Clark, 2009; Dagenais & Berron, 2001; Dagenais & Jacquet,

2000; Davis et al., 2019, 2021). Furthermore, multilingual learners themselves are often highly motivated and engaged in FI programs, especially when their plurilingual literacy practices are valued in the classroom (Dagenais, 2008; Dagenais & Moore, 2008; Prasad, 2015; Sabatier et al., 2013). It is important to note, however, that although FI researchers have focused on the motivations of multilingual families to learn English and French in Canada, very few scholars have explored the efforts and initiatives of these families to maintain and teach non-official home languages to their children in FI programs; this gap in the literature is especially problematic because non-official languages are unsupported in FI programs (Kubota & Bale, 2020).

In terms of language learning and achievement, researchers have found that multilingual learners often develop strong language proficiency in French and English in FI programs. Turnbull et al. (2001) noted that multilingual learners in FI developed similar English language literacy abilities and mathematics skills as English-speaking students. Moreover, Moore (2010) observed strong literacy skills and metalinguistic awareness amongst multilingual learners in FI programs. Mady (2015) and Knouzi and Mady (2017) compared the French and English language learning of different student groups in FI programs and found that the newcomer, multilingual learners outperformed Canadian-born, multilingual and English-speaking students in French language proficiency. Additionally, Bourgoin and Dicks (2019) explored the French and English reading abilities of seven Canadian-born, multilingual learners and found that such students developed similar or superior skills compared to their English-speaking peers. In summary, the research demonstrates that multilingual learners – and newcomer, multilingual learners in particular – tend to develop strong French and English abilities in FI programs.

Notwithstanding the motivation of multilingual families and learners toward learning French and English in Canada and the positive research evidence with respect to the French and

English language learning of such students, many educators believe that FI programs are inappropriate for multilingual learners. In the literature review chapter of this dissertation, I have synthesized research examining diverse areas of inquiry pertaining to multilingual learners in FI programs, including language education policy, educators' perspectives, motivation, and learning. In the present literature review, I will focus specifically on previous research investigating the perspectives of educators with respect to multilingual learners in FI programs. For the purposes of this paper, the term *perspective* refers to an explicitly stated opinion or point of view; in contrast, the term *ideology* refers to an implicit, underlying, and often examined belief system in which the perspective is rooted.

3.2.1 Teachers' Perspectives

Research examining educators' perspectives concerning multilingual learners demonstrates that many teachers believe that FI programs are unsuitable for these students in Canada. In a survey of 1,305 French language educators across Canada, including FI educators, teachers indicated that their single greatest challenge was diversity in the classroom, specifically naming the growing number of multilingual learners (Lapkin et al., 2006). In a seminal study in this area, Mady (2012) found that several teachers in Ontario espoused the view that FI programs were unsuitable for multilingual learners who would be learning French and English simultaneously. Moreover, Mady (2013) found that FI teachers were less likely than core French teachers to agree that multilingual learners should be included in French language programs, concluding, "French immersion respondents were less supportive of inclusion than their core French teaching counterparts" (p. 51). Subsequently, Mady (2016) explored the perspectives of FI kindergarten teachers and observed that many kindergarten teachers believed that multilingual learners should sometimes be excluded from such programs. Similarly, Arnett and Mady (2018)

found that many early-career teachers believed that multilingual learners and students with learning difficulties should sometimes be exempted from French language programs, including FI programs. These exclusionary perspectives appear to be rooted in the pervasive ideology and the unsubstantiated myth that FI programs are more suitable for English-speaking families (Davis, 2019; Roy, 2015).

Whereas much of the research examining teachers' perspectives pertaining to the inclusion of multilingual learners in FI programs has been conducted in Ontario, researchers have also explored the perspectives of FI educators throughout other provinces of Canada. Roy (2015) explored the discourses and ideologies of FI educators in Alberta with respect to several important themes and found that some FI teachers believed that students must master their first languages before learning additional languages. In her critical analysis, Roy (2015) concluded that the perspectives of FI teachers reflected underlying ideologies pertaining to language learning and bilingualism. Moreover, Bourgoin (2016) examined the beliefs of FI teachers in New Brunswick with respect to inclusion and found that some teachers believed that FI programs were unsuitable for multilingual learners and for students with learning challenges. Specifically, Bourgoin (2016) found that educators held unsubstantiated beliefs about the ideal language learner, as well as about the suitability of FI programs for multilingual learners and for students with special needs. More recently, I explored the perspectives of FI teachers and principals in Saskatchewan as they pertain to multilingual learners and encountered the widespread myth that English language proficiency was required for success in FI programs (Davis, 2019). Furthermore, some teachers espoused the view that FI programs might be appropriate for some multilingual, newcomer learners, but would be too difficult for refugee-background learners from Syria insofar as such families were likely facing significant challenges adapting to life in

Canada (Davis et al., 2019, 2021). Thus, Davis et al. (2019) found that the perspectives of educators were shaped by several unexamined, unconscious ideologies with respect to multilingual learners and language learning. Specifically, many FI educators were influenced by English-first ideologies, espousing the view that multilingual learners should focus on English instead of French in Saskatchewan (Davis, 2019). Evidently, there remains an important and long-standing disconnect between the overwhelmingly positive findings with respect to the strong motivation and language learning of multilingual learners in FI programs and the exclusionary perspectives of some teachers.

3.2.2 Principals' Perspectives

The perspectives of school principals pertaining to multilingual learners in French language programs are especially important to understand, insofar as principals often serve as gatekeepers in such programs. Researchers have found that the perspectives and gatekeeping practices of principals in French language programs toward multilingual learners are often based on personal beliefs and experiences, rather than on research evidence (Arnett et al., 2014; Arnett & Turnbull, 2007; Mady, 2007b). It is important to note, however, that few studies exploring principals' perspectives have been conducted in FI programs. Therefore, Mady and Turnbull (2012) called for further research examining this area of inquiry in FI programs across Canada.

More recently, Mady and Masson (2018) explored the beliefs of school principals with respect to multilingual learners in FI, as well as gatekeeping practices in such programs. In terms of principals' beliefs, the researchers observed several contradictory ideologies pertaining to inclusion, bilingualism, language learning, as well as discourses surrounding the ideal language learner. Notably, Mady and Masson (2018) found that many principals believed that multilingual learners should focus on learning English before French. Moreover, Mady and Masson (2018)

found that FI principals adopted a variety of gatekeeping practices with respect to the inclusion of multilingual learners, including varying degrees of encouraging or discouraging families from enrolling their children in FI programs or refraining from making recommendations altogether. This study has contributed significantly to a greater understanding of the beliefs of FI principals and the extent to which these perspectives are sometimes rooted in personal experiences and myths about language learning, rather than in the overwhelming research demonstrating the strong motivation and the language learning aptitude of multilingual learners. Future research is needed to further explore the complex relationship between language ideologies and gatekeeping practices in FI programs. Furthermore, researchers must also adopt a critical approach to understand and problematize the disconnect between ostensibly inclusive policies at the provincial and school division levels and the haphazard and sometimes exclusionary practices of FI principals and administrators.

3.2.3 Teacher Candidates' Perspectives

Researchers have also begun to examine the perspectives of French language teacher candidates pertaining to multilingual learners (Byrd Clark, 2010, 2011, 2012). For instance, Byrd Clark (2012) conducted ethnographic research with French language teacher candidates in Ontario and found that core French and FI programs often do not reflect the diverse linguistic repertoires in Canada today. More recently, Byrd Clark and Roy (2022) explored the diverse perspectives and ideologies of French language teacher candidates in Ontario and Alberta and their efforts to implement plurilingual pedagogical approaches in recognition of the increasing diversity of French language programs across Canada. The researchers found that although “some of the student teachers’ initial perceptions reflect essentialist and mono-ideological representations of languages, cultures, and identities demonstrating a critical need for a

rethinking of French language pedagogy,” teacher candidates also challenged dominant language ideologies in French language education programs (Byrd Clark & Roy, 2022, p. 265). For instance, the teacher candidates challenged ideas about multilingualism, code-switching, and translanguaging in the French language classroom and problematized ideologies favouring certain French language varieties to the detriment of others. Teacher candidates play a critical role in dismantling these long-standing, pervasive, and often discriminatory ideologies that have served to exclude marginalized learners and language varieties in Canadian FI programs.

Additionally, Masson et al. (2022) conducted a prescient study examining the ways in which teacher candidates in two French language education programs in Ontario were being equipped to disrupt colonial, racist, and white supremacist ideologies in French language programs. Adopting an anti-biased, anti-racist (ABAR) lens, Masson et al. (2022) found that professors promoted intercultural competence to varying degrees and were beginning to examine racism more explicitly in their teaching; however, the initiatives of these professors were largely driven by individual efforts, rather than the results of systemic and deliberate change. Consequently, teacher candidates reported feeling unprepared to address issues of equity and racism in their French language classrooms. The researchers concluded by calling for more deliberate and systemic efforts to integrate critical equity and anti-colonial approaches in French language teacher education programs across Canada.

3.3 Sociolinguistics for Change

Sociolinguistics for change was first conceptualized as a theoretical framework by Auger et al. (2007) and revisited by Dalley and Roy (2008). Whereas Auger et al. (2007) drew inspiration from critical sociolinguistics (Heller, 2002, 2003), they found that this framework was not sufficiently practical and sought to develop a theoretical perspective that would be more

conducive to collaborating with teachers in order to examine and challenge language ideologies and to make practical changes in schools. In her landmark scholarship synthesizing years of research examining language ideologies in Canadian FI programs, Roy (2020) offered the following explanation of the distinction between the two overlapping, yet discrete, theoretical frameworks: “The difference between critical sociolinguistics and sociolinguistics for change is that the latter focuses on consistently monitoring discourses that transmit ideologies especially in schools.” (p. 23). In summary, while this theoretical framework shares several features with critical sociolinguistics (Heller, 2002, 2003), sociolinguistics for change is distinct insofar as it was developed specifically for exploring language education contexts, collaborating closely with educators, and critically examining and challenging dominant and unexamined discourses and ideologies (Roy, 2020).

Through the present research, I hope to not only contribute to a greater understanding of the perspectives and ideologies of FI educators across the Canadian Prairies, but also to advocate for transformative and systemic changes to better include, support, and empower refugee-background students and multilingual learners more broadly in FI programs throughout Canada. I seek to build upon the seminal research of Roy (2012, 2015, 2020) by further examining language ideologies in FI programs in Canada, focusing on the perspectives and ideologies of educators with respect to refugee-background learners and advancing political and pedagogical recommendations to adapt FI programs in light of the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity. While there are certainly real and significant challenges facing many refugee-background learners in Canada, I believe that educators, including myself, sometimes unknowingly espouse essentialist views rooted in deficit-based discourses about refugees and language learning.

Therefore, I believe that the theoretical framework of sociolinguistics for change, rooted in the research paradigm of critical inquiry, aligns auspiciously with my motivations for this study.

3.4 Methodology

In the present study, I explore the perspectives and ideologies of educators with respect to refugee-background learners in FI programs across the Canadian Prairies. My reasons for conducting this research throughout the Canadian Prairies – namely, the provinces of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta – are twofold. First, the Canadian Prairies remain underrepresented in FI research (Arnott et al., 2019). Additionally, the Canadian Prairies are a particularly English-dominant region of Canada with low levels of French-English bilingualism compared to other provinces and territories across Canada (Statistics Canada, 2023); therefore, the perspectives of FI educators in this distinct sociolinguistic context are especially interesting. For the purposes of the present paper, the following research questions have guided my inquiry:

1. What are the perspectives of educators with respect to refugee-background learners in FI programs across the Canadian Prairies?
2. What are the underlying ideologies of educators pertaining to refugee-background learners and multilingual learners in FI programs across the Canadian Prairies?

To this end, I adopted a transformative mixed-methods approach to explore the above questions within several school divisions across the Canadian Prairies (Creswell, 2014). In this section, I provide a rationale for my research approach, present an overview of the research participants, and discuss the methods employed for data collection and analysis.

3.4.1 Transformative Mixed-Methods Study

The methodology that I have adopted for the present study is a transformative mixed-methods approach (Creswell, 2014). Transformative mixed-methods approaches are especially appropriate for research conducted within theoretical frameworks related to social justice and critical perspectives, seeking to contribute to the advancement of knowledge and to systemic social change (Creswell, 2014). The present study reflects a transformative mixed-methods approach insofar as I draw from survey and interview data simultaneously in order to contribute to a greater understanding of the perspectives and ideologies of FI educators and to advocate for the inclusion and support of refugee-background learners in FI programs. In terms of data analysis, I analyzed survey and interview data concurrently, as both methods were generating data simultaneously pertaining to similar themes. In summary, the present research design represents a transformative mixed-methods study, rooted in the critical theoretical framework of sociolinguistics for change within the paradigm of critical inquiry.

3.4.2 Participants

The present study explores the perspectives and ideologies of FI educators with respect to refugee-background learners throughout the Canadian Prairies. After receiving approval from the University of Regina Research Ethics Board on March 21, 2022, I invited several school divisions across Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta to participate in this research during the 2022-2023 school year, focusing on urban school divisions that tend to serve greater populations of refugee-background students and multilingual learners more broadly than rural divisions in these provinces (Wilkinson et al., 2017). Eight urban school divisions of varying sizes participated in this study, including four in Saskatchewan, two in Manitoba, and two in Alberta. I invited FI educators within the eight school divisions to participate in the survey and interviews,

accepting all consenting participants. In total, 126 (n=126) educators completed the survey.

Although some survey participants did not specify their province, 54 (n=54) indicated that they worked in Saskatchewan, 40 (n=40) in Manitoba, and 23 (n=23) in Alberta (Table 1). In terms of interview participants, I interviewed 40 (n=40) FI educators, including 26 (n=26) from Saskatchewan, 10 (n=10) from Manitoba, and four (n=4) from Alberta (Table 2).

Table 1

Survey participants by province

Province	Number (N=)	Percentage
Saskatchewan	54	46.15%
Manitoba	40	34.19%
Alberta	23	19.66%

Table 2

Interview participants by province

Province	Number (N=)	Percentage
Saskatchewan	26	65%
Manitoba	10	25%
Alberta	4	10%

Furthermore, with respect to the positions of participants, FI educators from a variety of teaching and administrative positions were represented in this research. This diversity of positions amongst FI educators is important for several reasons, including the breadth of

experiences and perspectives from which participants could draw, as well as the ability to juxtapose diverse perspectives and ideologies between different teaching and administrative positions. Specifically, participating educators belonged to the following three categories of positions: first, FI teachers, including elementary (K-8) and secondary (9-12) teachers; second, FI principals, including principals and vice principals; and third, central office staff, including superintendents and consultants. Again, not all survey participants indicated their current positions, but among those who did, 94 (n=94) were FI teachers, 19 (n=19) were FI principals, and four (n=4) were central office staff. In summary, the majority of participating educators were FI teachers, most of whom taught in elementary schools; however, FI school principals and central office staff were represented in this study (Table 3). Finally, as it pertains to the positions of the 40 (n=40) interview participants, 26 (n=26) were FI teachers, seven (n=7) were FI principals, and seven (n=7) were central office staff (Table 4).

Table 3*Survey participants by position*

Position	Number (N=)	Percentage
Teachers	94	80.34%
Principals	19	16.24%
Central office staff	4	3.42%

Table 4*Interview participants by position*

Position	Number (N=)	Percentage
Teachers	26	65%

Principals	7	17.5%
Central office staff	7	17.5%

3.4.3 Survey Methods

In the present mixed-methods study, I examined the perspectives and ideologies of FI educators with respect to refugee-background students across the Canadian Prairies through surveys and interviews. First, as it pertains to the survey, I created an anonymous online questionnaire using Qualtrics software, which was piloted by a small number of educators who provided feedback on its design. Survey questions were asked in both French and English and participants were not required to answer every question. Furthermore, educators had the option of writing comments; thus, the survey generated both quantitative and qualitative data. The survey was distributed to consenting participants via email and was completely anonymous, as it was impossible to link specific survey responses to names or email addresses. Moreover, participants were free to withdraw consent prior to completing the questionnaire. The questionnaire began with three demographic questions asking educators to indicate their province, teaching position, and years of teaching experience in FI programs. Subsequently, the survey included 20 questions using a Likert scale of measurement to assess the degree to which participants agreed or disagreed with different statements (Creswell, 2013). I developed the survey items by reflecting on previous survey-based research in FI programs, especially as it pertains to multilingual learners (Davis, 2019; Lapkin et al., 2006; Mady & Masson, 2018). Specifically, I created and organized 20 survey items in the following categories: first, perspectives on the suitability of FI programs for refugee-background students; second, perspectives on different French language programs; third, perspectives on the language learning

of refugee-background students in FI programs; and fourth, perspectives on inclusion, policy, and supports pertaining to refugee-background students in FI programs (Appendix A). In terms of analysis, I conducted descriptive statistical analysis to determine trends in survey responses. Additionally, I compared the survey responses to the interview data to triangulate the results and find common findings in both sources of data (Creswell, 2013).

3.4.4 Interview Methods

The second research method in the present study entailed semi-structured interviews. As it pertains to interview methods, I conducted 40 semi-structured, standalone, audio-recorded interviews, which lasted between 45-60 minutes. Educators were given the choice to be interviewed in English or in French, as well as whether to participate in person or via Zoom. Furthermore, participants provided consent to be interviewed and were invited to review the transcripts of their interviews. Additionally, interview participants were assigned pseudonyms, and interview data were anonymized in order to not include the names of students, colleagues, schools, or school divisions. Interview participants were free to withdraw consent at any point in the study, including before, during, or after the interview. In terms of the interview questions, I created several sample questions drawing from some of the same categories as the survey items. Specifically, interview questions were organized into the following categories: first, introductory questions about educator participants; second, questions about different French language programs that were offered in their school divisions; third, questions about student diversity in FI programs; fourth, questions about personal experiences and perspectives with respect to refugee-background students in FI programs; fifth, questions about FI policy; and sixth, questions about different supports and resources in FI programs (Appendix B). My rationale for designing interview questions that overlapped significantly with survey questions was that the interviews

would allow me to explore the survey categories in greater depth and detail (Creswell, 2013). Evidently, the questions changed throughout the course of the interview and varied amongst participants depending on the interests and experiences of the educators, as is typical for semi-structured interviews. In terms of data analysis, I transcribed all 40 interviews in full, shared interview transcripts with participants for member checking, and assigned pseudonyms to all educators. Subsequently, I used NVivo 12 software to analyze and code transcripts for common findings across both research methods through inductive analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Gibbs, 2007). Finally, for the purposes of data triangulation (Creswell, 2013), I compared interview transcripts and codes with survey responses to identify common findings across qualitative and quantitative data.

3.5 Results

Through this study, I explore the perspectives and ideologies of educators with respect to refugee-background learners in FI programs within eight school divisions across Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta. In this section, I present interview and survey data pertaining to several key findings from my analysis. As it pertains to excerpts from interviews that were conducted in French, I provide the original French interview excerpt, followed by my own English translation. For the purposes of this chapter, I focus on findings pertaining to the following four areas: 1) suitability of FI programs for refugee-background learners; 2) language learning of refugee-background students; 3) challenges facing refugee-background learners; and 4) resources and supports offered for refugee-background learners in FI programs.

3.5.1 Suitability of FI for Refugee-Background Learners

The first key theme of the present study relates to the perspectives and ideologies of educators with respect to the suitability of FI programs for refugee-background learners.

Educators across all eight school divisions expressed that FI programs were becoming increasingly diverse, discussing the growing cultural and linguistic diversity in such programs. Some educators shared that they had not yet had the experience of teaching refugee-background; however, all participants had taught newcomer learners in FI programs. In terms of suitability, one survey item measured the perceived suitability of FI for newcomer learners (Figure 1). Most educators believe that FI programs are suitable for newcomer learners, as expressed by the following teacher who shared that such students are often among the strongest in her class:

C'est une régularité dans chaque année que j'enseigne. La plupart des familles immigrantes – c'est souvent les parents qui sont les immigrants – leurs enfants sont les plus forts et ils travaillent le plus fort en salle de classe. *Dana, Teacher, Saskatchewan.*

It's a pattern I see every year that I teach. Most of the immigrant families – it's usually the parents who are immigrants – their kids are the strongest and work the hardest in the classroom. *Dana, Teacher, Saskatchewan.*

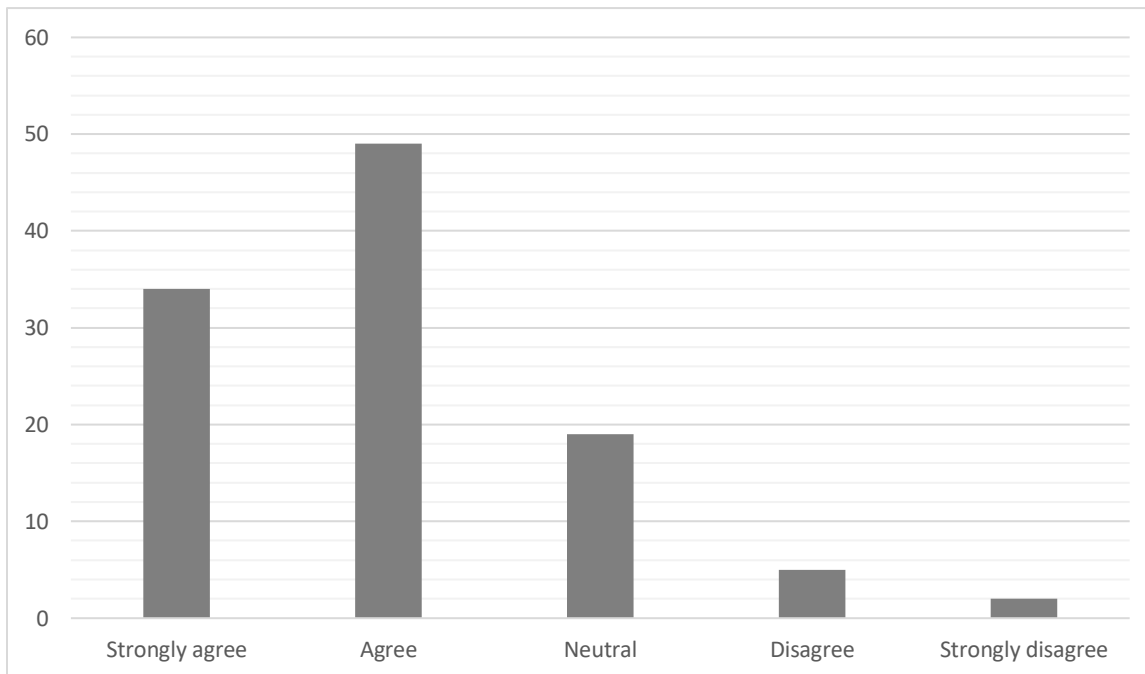
Many teachers also shared that FI programs are appropriate for newcomer learners and families because of their keen motivation to learn both French and English in Canada, as well as their language learning experience. The following interview excerpt reflects this perspective:

My kind of, my kind of whole spiel when I do speak to those families – I'm obviously a big advocate for FI, and I think most or all FI teachers are – is that if your child speaks another language already, I think that that's an obvious sign that they should go into FI. And I think FI can be suitable for everyone, too. So, if they have a good base in their first, in their native tongue, and they're already learning English, I think that FI is a great bet. *Marie, Teacher, Saskatchewan.*

In summary, most educators believe that FI programs are suitable for newcomer students because of the strong motivation and language learning experience of such learners and families.

Figure 1

I believe that French immersion is a suitable program for newcomer students.



As it pertains to refugee-background learners specifically, one survey item measured the perceived suitability of FI programs for such students (Figure 2). The responses to this question are similar to the previous survey item, except for slightly fewer participants who responded affirmatively ($n=83$) and slightly more who responded neutrally ($n=19$). Therefore, the survey data seem to suggest that most educators believe that FI programs are suitable for refugee-background students, although some may have misgivings about refugee-background learners that they may not have about newcomer students more broadly. To this end, one teacher shared that he believed that FI programs were suitable for most newcomer students, but that he would recommend English programs for refugee-background learners arriving in English-dominant Saskatchewan:

Les élèves dont on vient de parler, ils sont stables. Très souvent, les parents sont des intellectuels. Mais les réfugiés, la plupart du temps, les parents n'ont pas été à l'école, les

enfants ont subi des traumatismes. Et là, à ce niveau, je trouve que c'est un peu difficile de répondre si le programme est adapté pour eux parce que déjà, si l'élève vient et il ne parle pas le français ou l'anglais, est-ce qu'il faut tout suite apprendre le français ou l'anglais? Pour ma part, je le mettrais – c'est mon point de vue – je le mettrais en anglais d'abord pour se socialiser, pour trouver ses repères, tu vois, dans la langue dominante. Si on est en Saskatchewan, il faut commencer par l'anglais, mais cela ne les empêche pas de se convertir en immersion. Mais moi, je commencerais cela en anglais. *Owen, Teacher, Saskatchewan.*

The students we were just speaking about, they're stable. Often, the parents are intellectuals. But refugees, most of the time, the parents didn't go to school, the kids suffered trauma. And then, to that end, I find it's a bit difficult to answer whether the program is appropriate for them because already, if the child comes and doesn't speak French or English, should he learn French or English right away? For my part, I would put him – it's my point of view – I would put him in English first to socialize him, to help him get his footing, you see, in the dominant language. If we're in Saskatchewan, we must start with English, but that doesn't prevent them from changing to immersion. But me, I would start them in English. *Owen, Teacher, Saskatchewan.*

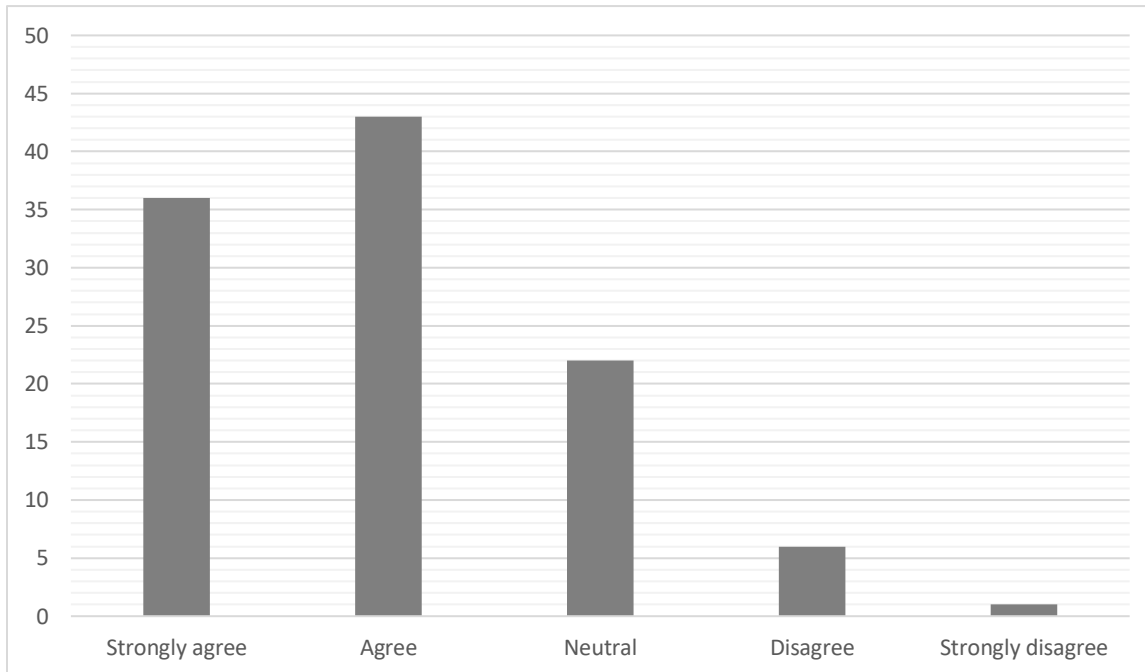
Similarly, another teacher shared the perspective of her colleague regarding the suitability of FI for a student who had recently fled Ukraine and enrolled in a FI program in Saskatchewan:

There was a colleague and their student is in Grade 1, just moved from Ukraine, post-war. So, there's a lot going on for this kid. Not a lick of English and the student's in FI. The teacher's perspective was: "This kid just went through hell. Dad didn't come with them. And now you want to put them in a classroom in Regina, Saskatchewan, to learn French when they don't know a lick of English?" And the teacher was under the impression that this student should be in an English class, and then they could at least speak the majority language in this province... What I heard was: "This student just went through trauma and now they can't learn to talk to anyone, and they're learning the wrong language for this city." *Karen, Teacher, Saskatchewan.*

To summarize, the survey and interview data indicate that most participants believe that FI programs are suitable for refugee-background learners; however, some educators expressed in interviews that FI programs were inappropriate for such learners and that refugee-background students should focus on learning English, the dominant language across the Canadian Prairies.

Figure 2

I believe that French immersion is a suitable program for refugee-background students.



3.5.2 Language Learning of Refugee-Background Students in FI

The second key finding in the data relates to the language learning of refugee-background students in FI programs. To this end, one survey item measured the extent to which educators believed that refugee-background students typically developed strong French proficiency in FI programs (Figure 3). While many educators (n=52) answered affirmatively, there were several participants (n=34) who responded neutrally, which might suggest that they had not taught such students or that they preferred not to generalize. One principal shared the French learning experiences of three refugee-background brothers from the Democratic Republic of Congo:

Mom and Dad were both from the Congo, and Mom and Dad both had some verbal, like, oral language in French, and they were really making a case that it would be easier, it would be an easier transition for the family, because at least it was a language that was known to Mom and Dad. And so, they had three boys all in a row – Grade 1, Grade 2, and Grade 3 – and we accepted all three of the boys. Now, this is a very unique situation, so not really one that you or I could use as an example and say, “Look, this really

works!” because these boys have, and still have – the youngest is with us still in Grade 6 – there are some significant learning issues with these boys. Now, that being said, all of the boys speak French, and all of the boys learned French. *Danielle, Principal, Alberta.*

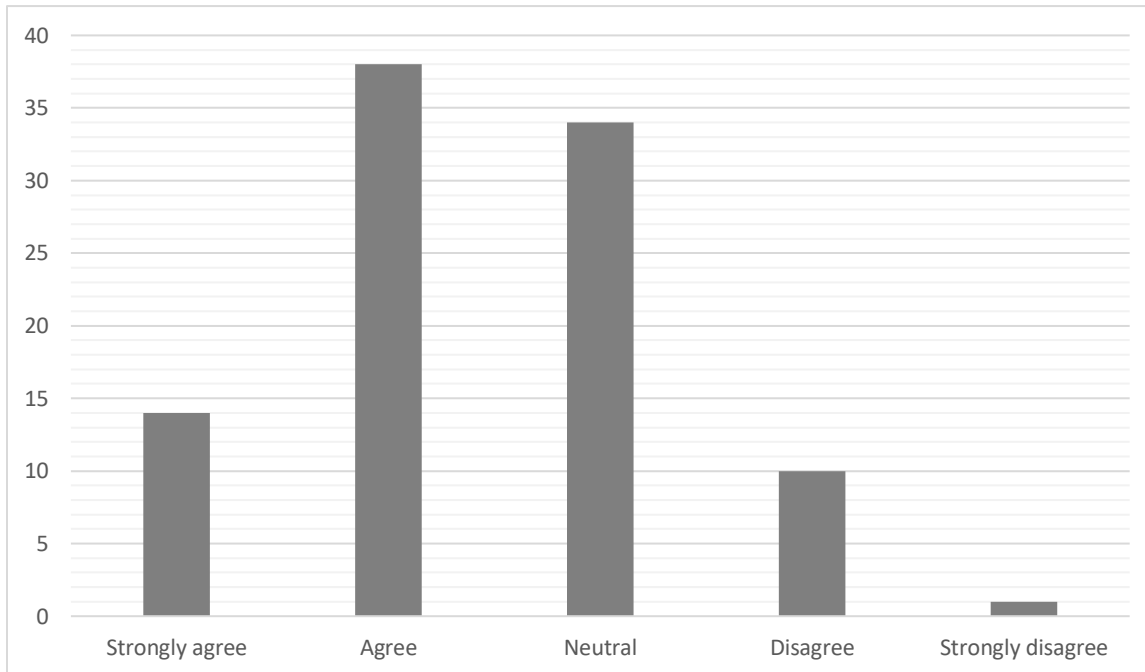
This principal emphasized that although the three students encountered significant obstacles in their education, such as difficulties transitioning and adapting to a new school system in Canada, they were successful in their French language learning. Moreover, a principal discussed the French language learning of three refugee-background siblings from Syria:

The Grade 5 girl just joined us in October... She was very interested in learning French based on her French culture and communication class, which is basic French here. And of course, a couple of weeks after getting into school and realizing that we speak French all day long except for a small portion of the day, she’s very tired of it... And then her brother, in Grade 3, I’d say that he’s had a couple of lightbulb moments in the last three to five weeks and he seems to be catching on, and I think that he certainly has the potential. He came in at a time where he’s been able to facilitate that learning with the Grade 3 curriculum a little bit easier than the Grade 5. And then the Grade 1, he’s doing well. It seems to be that, since it’s a natural entry point, he doesn’t seem to be that different from his peers in terms of knowledge of French. *Alana, Principal, Manitoba.*

Indeed, educators noted that refugee-background students have diverse language learning experiences in FI programs, even within the same families. Furthermore, the age of entry into FI programs was cited as an important issue, insofar as many educators expressed that refugee-background learners could learn French effectively in earlier grade levels, whereas students entering FI programs in later grades often experienced difficulty in their learning of French.

Figure 3

I believe that refugee-background students typically develop strong French language proficiency in FI.



In terms of the English language learning of refugee-background students in FI programs, the results for this survey item were similar to the question measuring French language learning; specifically, many participants (n=53) affirmed the English language learning of such students, but some educators (n=29) responded neutrally (Figure 4). Some educators shared that refugee-background students tended to learn both French and English effectively in FI programs, but that English was often easier for such learners because of its prevalence across the Canadian Prairies:

De ce que je voyais, ils apprenaient très, très vite l'anglais parce que c'était la langue de la récréation et dans la communauté. Et ils apprenaient assez vite le français aussi parce qu'ils étaient entourés par le français. L'anglais était peut-être plus vite, juste parce que c'était communautaire. Alexis, Teacher, Saskatchewan.

From what I've seen, they learn English very, very quickly because it's the language of recess and of the community. And they learn French quickly enough, too, because they're surrounded by French. English is maybe faster, just because it's the community language. Alexis, Teacher, Saskatchewan.

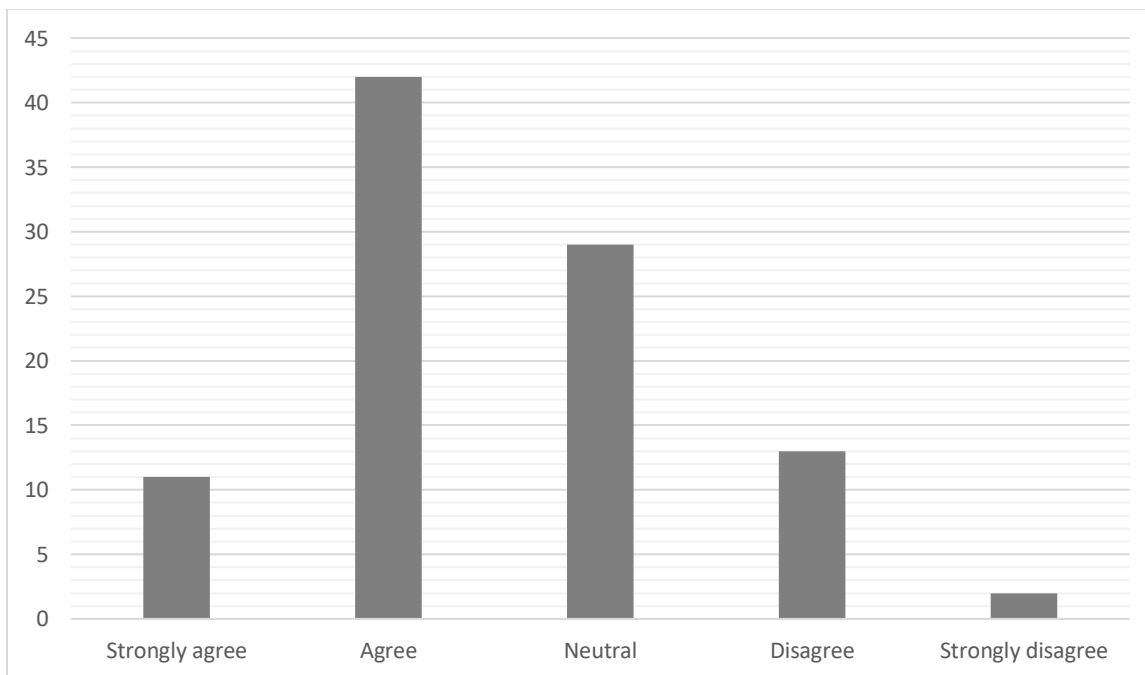
Additionally, some educators shared experiences about refugee-background learners entering FI programs with previous French language knowledge, such as the following story of a student from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) whose classmates helped him learn English:

They spoke French with him, especially at the beginning, because he just couldn't understand what they were saying at all. They would speak to him in French all the time because that was how he would understand. So, it kind of helped them out, too. And then they would, like, start teaching him little things. He would come in from recess and be like, "Madame, how was your day?" and the kids would be watching and they would clap for him because they taught him how to do that outside. They would do little things like that to help him... So, it was good for him because they spoke French, because otherwise, like, if he had gone into an English school where nobody spoke French, I think he would have really struggled. *Elizabeth, Teacher, Manitoba.*

In summary, most educators believe that refugee-background learners tend to develop strong French and English language proficiency in FI programs, although many noted that the age of entry and previous knowledge of French were important determinants of language learning.

Figure 4

I believe that refugee-background students typically develop strong English language proficiency in FI.



3.5.3 Challenges Facing Refugee-Background Learners in FI

Educators discussed several challenges facing refugee-background learners and families. For example, one teacher shared that refugee-background families often face complex challenges, such as being forced to flee their home countries and adapt to new cultures and languages:

Les parents réfugiés, ils font face à beaucoup de défis. Le réfugié, c'est quelqu'un qui ne s'attendait pas à une catastrophe mais c'est arrivé et il a laissé son pays dans un tel état. Donc, derrière lui, il y a beaucoup de bagage qui est toujours connecté avec lui. Il est allé dans un pays nouveau pour lui. D'abord, il y a l'adaptation. Il doit lui-même s'intégrer dans le milieu social. D'ailleurs, il y a aussi la langue; si ce n'est pas la langue qu'il sait parler, il doit aussi apprendre la langue. Il doit aussi réfléchir à comment avoir des moyens financiers. Si tout ça n'est pas là, ce sera difficile d'intégrer son enfant dans une école ayant une nouvelle langue. Les parents ont aussi beaucoup de stressés dans la vie, et souvent, les élèves vivent ces stressés aussi. *Ahmed, Teacher, Saskatchewan.*

Refugee parents, they face a lot of challenges. A refugee, it's someone who didn't expect a catastrophe but it happened and he left his country in that state. So, behind him, there's a lot of baggage that's still connected to him. He went to a country that's new to him. First, there's the adaptation. He has to integrate himself into the social milieu. Additionally, there's also the language; if it's not the language he knows how to speak, he must also learn the language. He also needs to reflect on how to have financial means. If all of that isn't there, it will be difficult to integrate his child into a school with a new language. Parents also have lots of stresses in life, and often, the kids live those stresses, too. *Ahmed, Teacher, Saskatchewan.*

Indeed, refugee-background students and families often encounter considerable challenges in their migration and in their integration into new countries. The following superintendent observed diverse challenges for refugee-background learners upon arriving in Canada:

I can think of a number of students who had housing needs. They were given notice that they had to move, and so they had to try to find new accommodation. One student came in with very little English, no driver's license, but he was driving, so he was in trouble with the police and we had to help him sort that out. You know, students who were ill and had no parents in town, so I wanted to make sure they had the medication they needed and that kind of thing. *Stella, Central office staff, Saskatchewan.*

In summary, refugee-background families often face diverse challenges at different stages of their journeys, beginning in their home countries and continuing into their new lives in Canada.

As it pertains to the perceived learning challenges of refugee-background learners, two survey items measured the extent to which educators believed that such students had advantages (Figure 5) and disadvantages (Figure 6) learning languages in FI programs compared to Canadian-born students. The large number of neutral responses for these items suggest that many educators are uncertain about refugee-background learners having advantages or disadvantages, although several participants disagreed with the notion that such learners had disadvantages. Several interview participants discussed the complex ways in which the challenges of refugee-background learners and families appear to shape the learning of such students in FI, such as the following account of the multifaceted challenges of a refugee-background student from the DRC:

Academically, he was not strong because he had been in a refugee camp before coming to Winnipeg, so he hadn't been in school for a while. We weren't actually sure that he was going into the right grade when he came. We weren't sure, like, where he had kind of finished off; they just went based off age. So, he didn't do, like, he wasn't strong, but he was a hard worker and he would answer questions in class all the time when he could. He got better and he improved throughout the year as well. Technology was very difficult, like, really hard for him because he had basically never used a computer before, right? And then the poor thing had to go remote. I felt so bad for him. But he managed. He did manage, even in that tough situation. *Elizabeth, Teacher, Manitoba.*

For this student, several interrelated challenges presented difficulties for learning in FI, including interrupted schooling, language barriers, and difficulties with technology, all of which were exacerbated by the shift to remote learning in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, a principal discussed the challenges of a family that had recently fled the ongoing war in Ukraine and the impact of this difficult family situation on the student's learning and enrolment in FI:

The child from the Ukraine, she is doing well in the sense that she has a lot more understanding than you would expect, joining late. She has a knowledge of English, Ukrainian, and Russian, and so French has sort of flowed in most of her understanding. However, I think with the addition of, you know, her dad is still back home and he's not allowed to leave the country and she fled here with her mom and her brother in the middle of the night. So, there's just lots going on in the sense of trauma and ongoing warfare. I would say, you know, she isn't loving it and she has chosen English for Grade 6. *Alana, Principal, Manitoba.*

Evidently, this principal believes that the student from Ukraine was learning French and English effectively in FI, but because of trauma and family separation, she has chosen to discontinue FI. To summarize, many educators perceived diverse and multifaceted challenges facing refugee-background learners and families in Canada, some of which were not strictly academic challenges but had important implications for language learning and continuity in FI programs.

Figure 5

I believe that refugee-background students have advantages learning languages in French immersion compared to Canadian-born students.

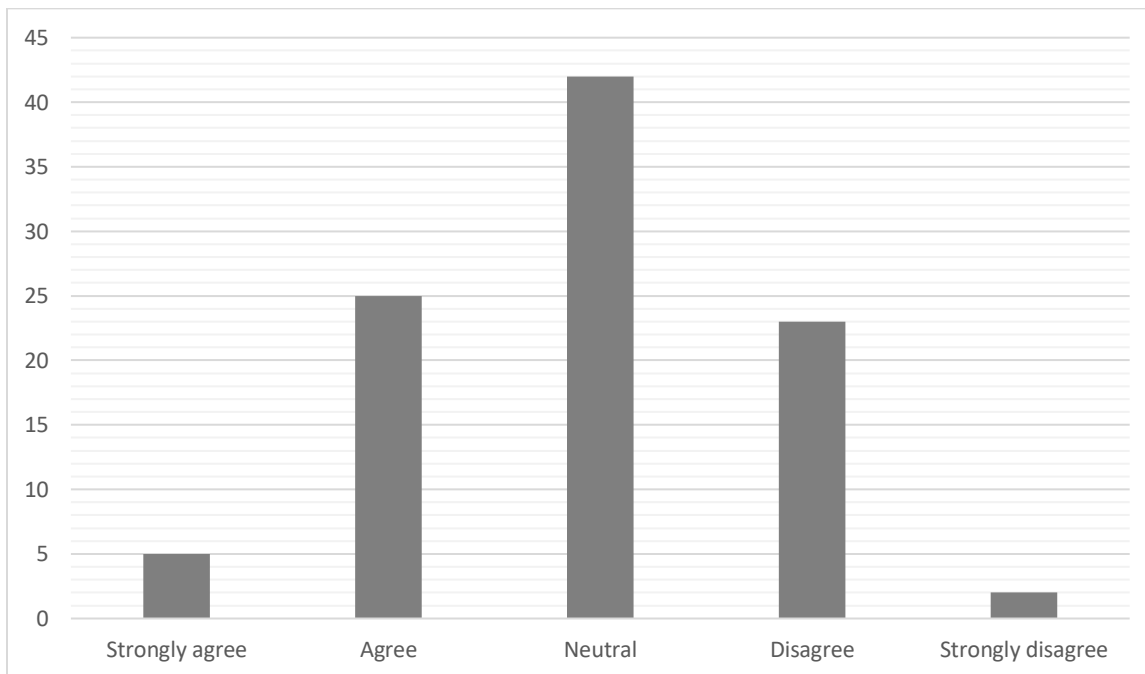
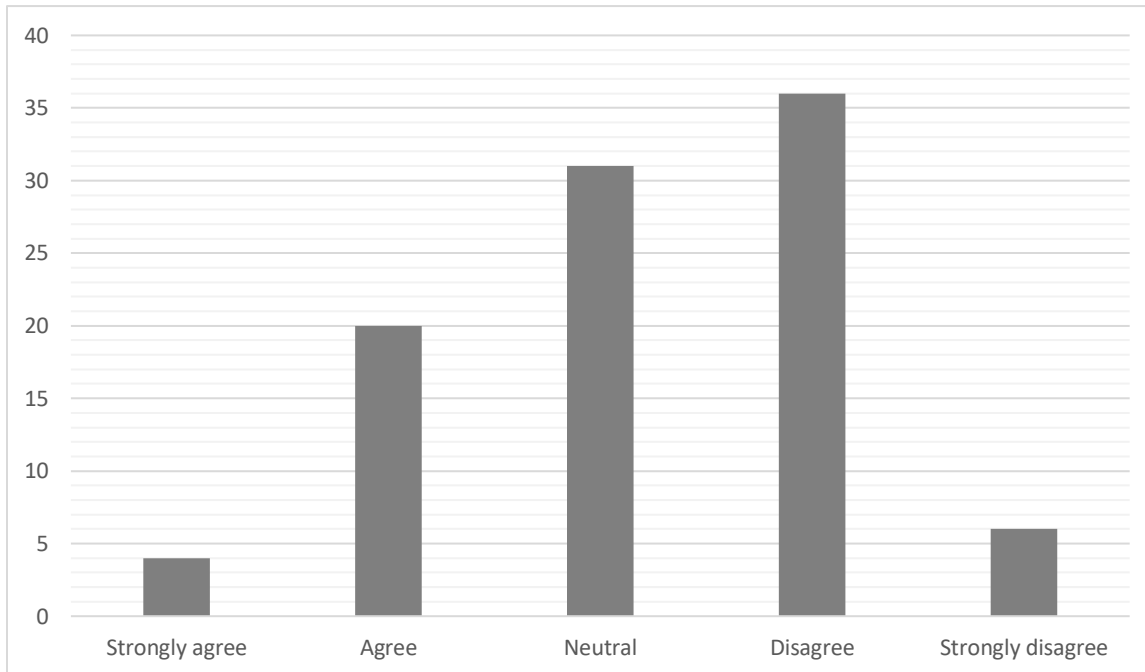


Figure 6

I believe that refugee-background students have disadvantages learning languages in French immersion compared to Canadian-born students.



3.5.4 Resources for Refugee-Background Learners in FI

The fourth important theme pertains to the perspectives of educators with respect to the supports and resources offered to refugee-background learners and families in FI programs. One survey item assessed the degree to which participants believed that their school divisions offered sufficient supports for refugee-background students in FI programs (Figure 7) and another measured the extent to which educators believed that their school divisions needed to offer more resources for such learners (Figure 8). The responses demonstrate that several educators (n=55) believed that there were insufficient resources offered for such learners in FI programs and many participants (n=78) felt that their school divisions must offer more support. Several educators shared that greater supports for refugee-background learners were needed in FI programs,

including English as an Additional Language (EAL) instruction, Resource support, and mental health support, as per the following excerpt:

I think that there definitely needs to be more one-on-one support for these students. I think that we need to increase EAL positions, Resource support for these kids, getting counsellors, therapists in the school to better adjust these kids, more interpreters within the school to communicate with the families, smaller class sizes for these students in particular. If we want them to succeed in any language, but in French immersion as well, there needs to be just more support. *Marie, Teacher, Saskatchewan.*

Furthermore, several educators expressed that resources were more widely available in English programs than in FI. For instance, a superintendent said that in dual-track schools offering FI and English programs, EAL and Resource support were offered predominantly in English programs:

Malheureusement, ce que je vois, c'est que l'immersion est un peu défavorisée... Je dirais que dans les écoles à double voix, on favorise les enfants qui sont en anglais quand ça vient aux appuis pour l'anglais comme langue additionnelle, et même pour les besoins spéciaux. *Samantha, Central office staff, Alberta.*

Unfortunately, what I see, it's that immersion is a bit neglected... I would say that in dual-track schools, we favour the kids who are in English when it comes to supports for English as an additional language, and even for special needs. *Samantha, Central office staff, Alberta.*

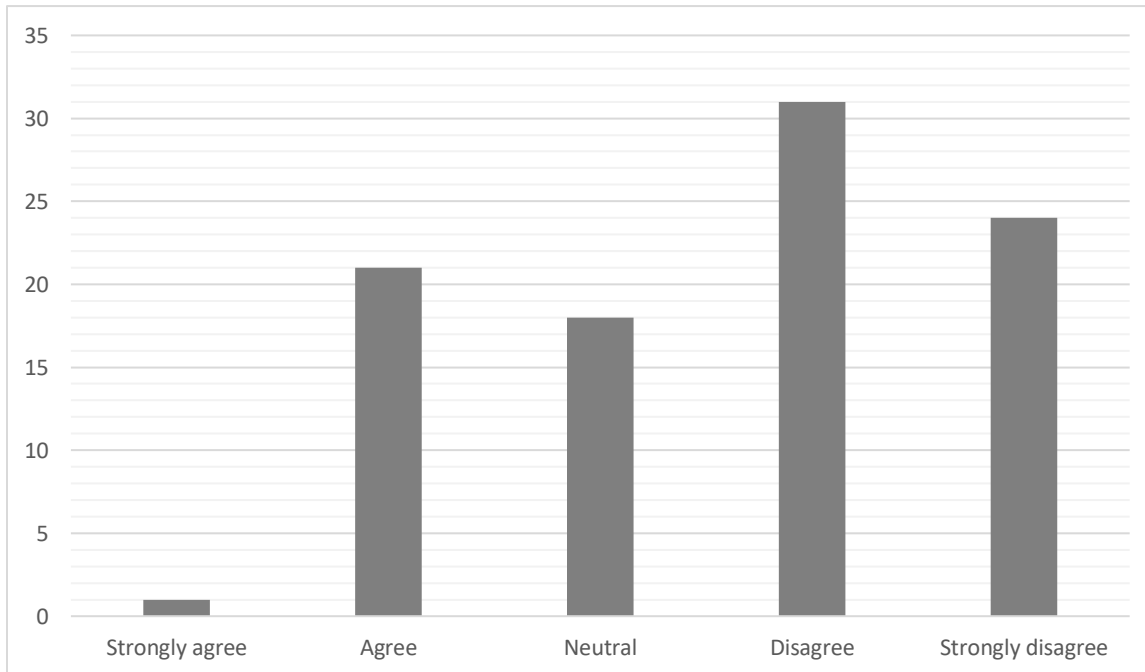
Similarly, a principal in a different school division said that when her school became a single-track FI school, several resources were removed because of an assumption that FI students did not require such supports; therefore, she needed to advocate to continue to offer resources in FI:

We actually had to advocate quite strongly since we have become a single-track school for supports to still be in place. It's also very interesting because it's not... I wouldn't say it's universally... Not accepted, accepted isn't the right word... There's a lot of people who would feel otherwise about these families, like: "Why would they be choosing FI?" So, I think that's interesting. We have had to advocate. *Danielle, Principal, Alberta.*

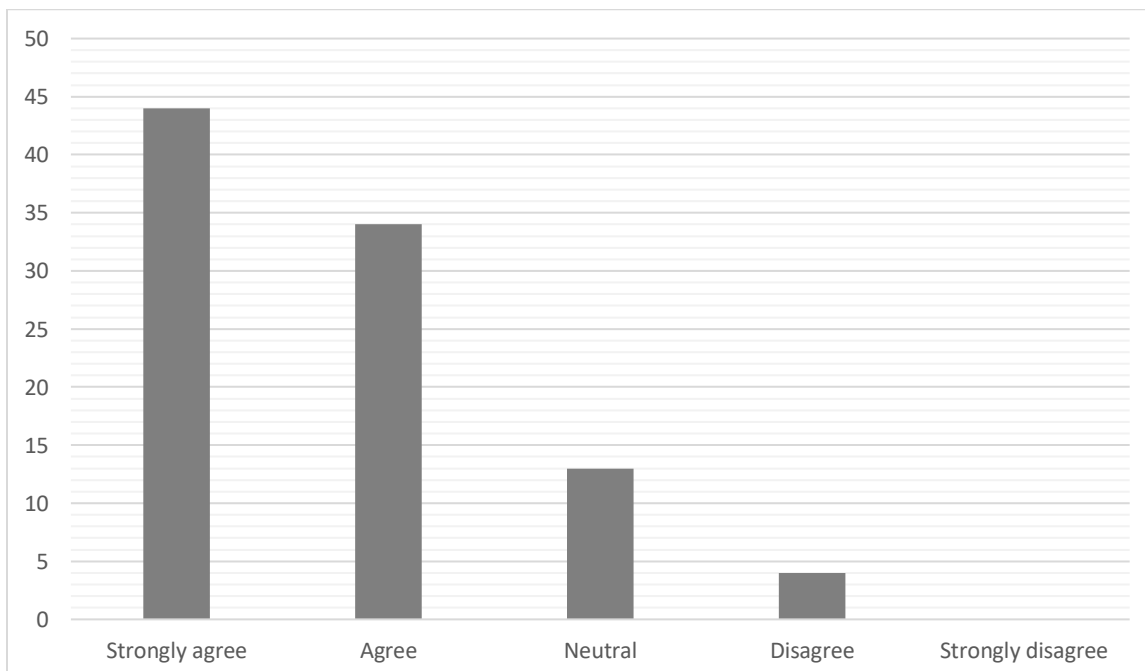
In summary, some participants shared that their school divisions were beginning to offer more resources for refugee-background learners in FI programs; nevertheless, most educators expressed that EAL instruction and resource support were still offered more widely in English.

Figure 7

I believe that my school division offers sufficient supports and resources for refugee-background students in French immersion programs.

**Figure 8**

I believe that my school division must offer greater supports and resources for refugee-background students in French immersion programs.



In addition to the pervasive perspective that school divisions must offer more supports and resources in FI programs, several educators also discussed the need for professional development and educational opportunities focused specifically on refugee-background students. Correspondingly, one superintendent discussed the growing need for more professional development (PD) opportunities for both FI and EAL educators pertaining to refugee-background learners:

Well, in my ideal world, if we had lots of refugees and other newcomers coming into French immersion programs, it would be nice to do a specific PD with those EAL teachers so that they, you know... Not many of our EAL teachers speak another language or study French or any other language. So, I think it would be really good to do some PD with them so that they can better support newcomers and EAL students coming into those programs. *Stella, Central office staff, Saskatchewan.*

Likewise, another superintendent shared that her school division allowed students, including refugee-background learners and newcomer students, to enter FI programs at all grade levels, and she believed that greater supports and professional development opportunities were needed:

I would love to see supports for anyone entering French immersion at a non-traditional entry point. I would love to see that. I would love to see some specific training for Resource teachers to be trained in this area. I would love to see administrators being given in-service for this. *Stephanie, Central office staff, Manitoba.*

Evidently, the survey and interview data indicate that most educators believe that refugee-background students are underserved in FI programs in their school divisions, emphasizing the critical need for supports, resources, and educational opportunities focusing on such learners.

3.6 Discussion

Throughout this manuscript, I explored the perspectives of educators with respect to refugee-background learners in FI programs in eight school divisions across the Canadian Prairies. In the previous section, I presented the survey and interview results of this research pertaining to four overarching themes, including the perceived suitability of FI programs for

refugee-background students, the language learning of such students, the challenges facing refugee-background learners, and the supports in FI programs. Here, I discuss the findings of this study as they relate to previous research, examining three distinct, yet interrelated, underlying ideologies of FI educators. First, I explore English-first ideologies amongst FI educators; second, I unpack the deficit ideologies surrounding refugee-background learners in FI programs; and third, I examine the ideological tensions between educators' desire for inclusive FI programs and school divisions' unwillingness to support refugee-background learners in such programs.

3.6.1 English-First Ideologies in FI

The present study contributed to a greater understanding of the perspectives and ideologies of FI educators regarding refugee-background students across the Canadian Prairies. Most educators espoused the view that FI programs were suitable for refugee-background students and that such learners typically develop strong French and English language abilities in FI programs. Although no known study has focused specifically on the language learning outcomes of refugee-background students in FI, research examining the French and English language learning of multilingual learners in such programs has consistently found that such students tend to develop strong abilities in both languages (Dagenais, 2003, 2008; Mady, 2015, 2017; Moore, 2010). Furthermore, in a study conducted in the United States, Warriner (2016) identified and examined a similar set of English-first ideologies pertaining to refugee-background students. More specifically, the researcher found that educators recommended that refugee-background students learn English for neoliberal reasons, especially to compete in the English-dominant workforce of the United States (Warriner, 2016). Likewise, de Heer et al. (2016) identified a similar premium placed on the learning of English for refugee-background students in Australia. Interestingly, some educator participants in the present study conceived of

the language learning experience and metalinguistic awareness of refugee-background students as an advantage in FI, whereas some considered limited English language proficiency a disadvantage in FI; such findings corroborate previous research examining the perspectives of educators with respect to multilingual learners (Bourgoin, 2016; Davis et al., 2019, 2021; Mady & Masson, 2018). Paradoxically, the diverse linguistic repertoires and experiences of refugee-background learners seem to be perceived as both advantageous and disadvantageous for language learning in FI programs. In my estimation, this paradox speaks to the critical need for school divisions to provide professional learning opportunities for FI educators that are centred on refugee-background students and multilingual learners, which would be an important first step in challenging the enduring myth of English language proficiency being a prerequisite for success in FI programs across Canada (Davis, 2019).

I believe that the perspectives of some FI educator participants reflect underlying English-first ideologies, which are complex and take many different forms in this research. For instance, some educators believed that it was in the best interest of refugee-background students to learn English upon arrival to Canada, especially in the English-dominant sociolinguistic context of the Canadian Prairies (Statistics Canada, 2023). Such educators seem to associate English language proficiency with successful integration into Canada and therefore might question the suitability of FI programs for students deemed to have limited English language proficiency. While researchers have found that FI educators often recommend English programs for multilingual learners in several regions of Canada (Bourgoin, 2016; Mady, 2016; Mady & Masson, 2018), I believe that English-first ideologies are especially prevalent across the Canadian Prairies, given the dominance of English in these provinces (Davis, 2019; Roy, 2015; Sterzuk & Shin, 2021). In this vein, the ideology of refugee-background students in FI programs

learning ‘the wrong language’ for the given community suggests that some educators perceive Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta as essentially English-speaking provinces. This problematic framing of the Canadian Prairies as English-speaking provinces is not only historically inaccurate, given the diverse forms of multilingualism that have always existed in these provinces, but also disregards the growing number of speakers of Indigenous languages and non-official immigrant languages across Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta (Statistics Canada, 2023). Further research is needed to better understand how FI educators perceive the value of minoritized languages – including French, Indigenous languages, and diverse heritage languages – in the unique sociolinguistic context of the Canadian Prairies and beyond.

3.6.2 Deficit Ideologies about Refugee-Background Learners

Several educators expressed concern for the challenges facing refugee-background learners in FI programs across the Canadian Prairies. Notably, educators discussed challenges such as experiencing and witnessing violent conflict, trauma and mental health issues, poverty and malnourishment, interruptions to formal schooling while living in a refugee camp, family separation, language barriers, and social isolation in Canada. Researchers have documented such challenges amongst some refugee-background learners in Canada (Bahi & Piquemal, 2013; Guo et al., 2019; MacNevin, 2012; Massfeller & Hamm, 2019; Stewart et al., 2019; Wilkinson, 2001), as well as in the United States (Dryden-Peterson, 2011, 2022; McBrien et al., 2017). However, it is important to note that although some refugee-background learners and families encounter these challenges, such experiences do not describe all refugee-background families. Furthermore, there is a problematic tendency for educators and researchers to overemphasize the real or imagined challenges of refugee-background families through a ‘trauma discourse’ and disregard the numerous strengths of such learners (Cho et al., 2019; Lunneblad, 2017; Massing et al., 2023;

Shapiro, 2014). For instance, refugee-background students and families often arrive in Canada with diverse linguistic knowledge and repertoires, important home literacy practices, as well as strong resilience and high motivation to begin a new life (Feuerverger, 2011; Kovinthan, 2016; Nakutnyy & Sterzuk, 2018; Zaidi et al., 2021). In the context of Australia, Due et al. (2016) found that refugee-background students were able to resettle and integrate into their new schools effectively when their teachers and school environments recognized and valued their prior knowledge and learning experiences. Furthermore, Salva (2021) explored the experiences of Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE) in the United States, including refugee-background students, and found that such learners displayed resilience and perseverance when supported by educators and community members. Moreover, Dryden-Peterson (2022) explores the numerous ways in which refugee-background students are not only adapting to their new lives in Canada and in the United States, but are leading and thriving in their schools and communities when empowered to do so. Thus, while several of the challenges discussed by the educators in this study might indeed be accurate for certain refugee-background families, there is a danger in essentializing the complex, diverse, and unique experiences of these learners. For this reason, I echo the recommendation of Massing et al. (2023) for educators and researchers to strive to adopt an asset-based perspective when working with refugee-background students by emphasizing the strengths and learning resources of these learners, both in Canada and beyond.

Researchers have found that teachers and principals often unwittingly perpetuate deficit ideologies pertaining to refugee-background learners (Lunneblad, 2017; Shapiro, 2014; Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017). I believe that this is true for FI educators as well. Whereas several participants expressed that they had taught refugee-background students in FI programs, many had not or were unsure; therefore, such educators might have based their perspectives on

assumptions and hearsay, rather than on personal experience or research findings, which has been found in other contexts in Canada (Cho et al., 2019). For instance, educators might assume that refugee-background learners have lived through traumatic experiences or interrupted schooling, which may or may not be the case, and then believe that learning two additional languages would be too burdensome for such students. Moreover, deficit ideologies about refugee-background learners are often interrelated with English-first ideologies. Specifically, some educators believe that refugee-background learners experience significant challenges that would prevent them from learning two additional languages successfully and therefore believe that English programs are in the best interest of such students insofar English is seen as the most important language across the Canadian Prairies. Nevertheless, even in cases where FI educators were aware of specific challenges in the lives of refugee-background learners in their classrooms – traumatic experiences, interrupted schooling, family separation, poverty – the underlying ideology that such experiences preclude a student from learning languages successfully is entirely unsubstantiated by research. Indeed, researchers have not identified a single language background, learning disability, or socioeconomic factor that can reliably predict failure to learn languages in FI programs (Genesee, 2007; Wise, 2011). Respectfully, I urge FI educators to reflect critically on their assumptions as they pertain to language learning and refugee-background students. I echo the call of many participants for greater education and professional development opportunities focusing on refugee-background students and multilingual learners more broadly in FI programs.

3.6.3 Ideologies about Supports and Resources in FI

The third set of perspectives I have examined in the present study pertain to the supports and resources offered in FI programs across the Canadian Prairies. The survey and interview data

demonstrate resoundingly that the majority of participating FI educators in eight different school divisions believe that there are insufficient resources for refugee-background learners in FI programs and that their school divisions must provide greater supports for such students. More specifically, educators throughout the eight school divisions shared that there was more Resource support, EAL instruction, and counselling services offered in regular English programs than in FI programs. Thus, although most educators affirmed that FI programs were suitable for refugee-background learners, many expressed apprehensions about FI for such students because of the lack of supports and resources offered compared to regular English programs. This finding corroborates previous research examining the perspectives of educators with respect to multilingual learners in FI programs (Bourgoin, 2016; Davis et al., 2019; Mady & Masson, 2018). Nevertheless, I believe that some FI educators feel more apprehensive about including refugee-background students than other groups of multilingual learners because of the challenges facing many refugee-background learners and the deficit discourses surrounding such students.

In my estimation, the extent to which most educators indicated that FI programs were suitable for refugee-background students while expressing that greater resources were required to support such learners reflects a critical ideological tension between theoretical suitability and practical issues. Whereas most educators believe that FI programs are essentially appropriate for refugee-background learners, they believe that the implementation of supports and resources is lacking in immersion programs and therefore have reservations about including such students. This ideological tension pertaining to support and inclusion is often perpetuated cyclically in school divisions. Namely, educators and administrators often discourage refugee-background students and multilingual learners from enrolling in FI programs because of insufficient resources, and then educators and administrators do not provide sufficient supports and resources

in FI programs because such learners are underrepresented; indeed, this is also true for FI students with learning disabilities (Wise, 2011). Echoing the call of the educators, I urge school divisions to break the cycle of neglect and exclusion by providing greater resources in FI programs, including Resource support and EAL instruction. If educators truly believe that refugee-background students and multilingual learners can learn effectively in FI programs with proper supports, it is high time for school divisions to provide the necessary resources to ensure the success of such learners.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I shared the findings of a transformative mixed-methods study exploring the perspectives and ideologies of educators with respect to refugee-background learners in FI programs in eight school divisions across the Canadian Prairies. For the purposes of this chapter, I focused on the following four themes: the suitability of FI programs for refugee-background students, the language learning of such students, the challenges facing refugee-background learners, and the resources offered in FI programs. Drawing from the theoretical framework of sociolinguistics for change, I reflected on the underlying and interrelated ideologies of FI educators, including English-first ideologies, deficit ideologies about refugee-background students, and ideological tensions between beliefs about inclusion and misgivings about supports in FI programs. Certain limitations notwithstanding – including the difficulty of collecting demographic information for FI educators and students, the difficulty in exploring nuanced perspectives about specific refugee-background populations, and the difficulty in analyzing how supports and resources are allocated in different school divisions, to name but a few – I believe that this study contributes to a greater understanding of the perspectives and ideologies of FI

educators in the underexamined sociolinguistic context of the Canadian Prairies, as well as about an important and growing population of students, refugee-background learners in Canada.

In keeping with the theoretical perspective of sociolinguistics for change and the research paradigm of critical inquiry, I seek not only to contribute to greater academic knowledge, but also to inspire meaningful, systemic change for social justice. To this end, I have advanced several recommendations for school divisions to better include and support refugee-background students in FI programs, such as providing greater resources for such learners, offering professional development opportunities for FI educators, and reflecting critically on unexamined ideologies that perpetuate elitism and exclusion in FI programs. Truly, I believe that all educators and all school divisions have the power to create more inclusive and equitable FI programs, not only for refugee-background students and for multilingual learners, but for all students who have historically been excluded from FI programs throughout Canada.

Chapter 4. French Immersion Programs for Refugee-Background Students in Canada

French immersion (FI) programs have traditionally served predominantly Canadian-born, English-speaking students in their efforts to learn Canada's two official languages, French and English. However, student demographics are changing rapidly because of increased migration to Canada, and many newcomer, multilingual families are interested in FI for their children (Dagenais & Moore, 2008; Davis et al., 2019). Researchers have found that newcomer, multilingual families are often highly motivated to learn both French and English in Canada and that multilingual learners tend to develop strong abilities in both languages in FI programs (Bourgoin & Dicks, 2019; Dagenais & Berron, 2001; Dagenais & Jacquet, 2000; Dagenais & Moore, 2008; Davis et al., 2019, 2021; Knouzi & Mady, 2017; Mady, 2007, 2015).

Notwithstanding the positive findings pertaining to motivation and language learning, some FI educators believe that FI programs are inappropriate for multilingual learners and encourage such families to enroll their children in English programs because they erroneously believe that learning two languages simultaneously will be overly burdensome (Davis, 2019; Mady & Masson, 2018; Roy, 2015). Furthermore, school divisions often lack policies to ensure the inclusion of multilingual learners in FI programs; consequently, such students are often excluded from immersion across Canada. Therefore, as a result of the exclusionary perspectives of some educators and in the absence of official policy ensuring the inclusion of multilingual learners in FI programs, the cognitive, social, and political benefits of learning French and English in immersion programs are disproportionately bestowed upon white, English-speaking, Canadian-born students to the detriment of racialized, multilingual, newcomer students across Canada.

In this study, I examine the perspectives and ideologies of FI educators with respect to refugee-background learners in eight school divisions across three provinces that constitute the

Canadian Prairies; Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta. For the purposes of this paper, I focus on the perspectives of educators pertaining to issues of inclusion and policy in FI programs.

First, by way of introduction, I present important terms and definitions for this research. Second, I synthesize previous research regarding policy and the inclusion of multilingual learners in FI programs. Third, I contextualize this paper within the theoretical framework of sociolinguistics for change. Fourth, I discuss the research questions, methodological approach, school divisions, and participants in this study. Fifth, I present the findings of this research as they pertain to the themes of diversity, inclusion, gatekeeping, and policy. Sixth, I discuss the contributions of this study and the implications thereof for future inquiry. Finally, I advance recommendations for school divisions to implement more equitable and inclusive practices and policies for refugee-background students and multilingual learners more broadly in FI programs across Canada.

4.1 Multilingual Learners and Refugee-Background Students: Illuminating Key Terms

Throughout the history of FI research in Canada, several terms have been employed to represent students whose home languages are neither English nor French, such as *minority-language students*, *English language learners*, and *allophones*. Whereas such terms have been valuable for examining the experiences of students with diverse linguistic backgrounds, the above categories have also been problematic because they often lack clear definitions and reflect deficit discourses. In the present study, I use *multilingual learners* to represent all students, Canadian-born and newcomer alike, who speak multiple languages and language varieties in Canada (Bale et al., 2023; Byrd Clark, 2008; Byrd Clark & Roy, 2022). Evidently, it is worth noting that multilingualism is itself a difficult concept to define (Blommaert & Backus, 2013; Marshall & Moore, 2018). In my estimation, multilingual learners is a valuable, albeit imperfect,

term because it rejects deficit discourses by emphasizing the language learning experiences, abilities, assets, and resources of learners with diverse linguistic repertoires (Byrd Clark, 2008).

In terms of the definitions for *refugee*, the United Nations Human Rights Commissioner for Refugees defines refugees as follows: “A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her (*sic*) country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular group” (UNHCR, 2001). Therefore, refugees represent a specific class of immigrants who are forced to migrate to new countries under urgent circumstances and are seldom able to select their destination countries. Recent examples of widespread migrations of refugee-background families arriving in Canada include asylum seekers fleeing from Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Ukraine (Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, 2020, 2022). Moreover, *refugee-background learner* is increasingly widely used in refugee research to refer to students who have refugee experiences, recognizing that such experiences represent only part of the complex and multifaceted identities of the learners (Ghadi et al., 2019; Massing et al., 2023).

Finally, for the purposes of this paper, the term *perspective* represents an explicitly stated point of view or opinion of a FI educator. In contrast, *ideology* signifies an implicit, underlying, and often unexamined system of beliefs in which the perspective is rooted (Roy, 2015, 2020).

4.2 Multilingual Learners in FI: Policy and Inclusion

Researchers have explored different areas of study with respect to multilingual learners in FI programs in Canada (Davis et al., 2019; Mady, 2007; Mady & Turnbull, 2012). For instance, multilingual families are often highly motivated to provide French-English bilingual education opportunities for their children, both because they believe that official-language bilingualism will offer employment opportunities in the future and because many multilingual families perceive

French-English bilingualism as a key element of Canadian identity (Dagenais, 2003; Dagenais & Berron, 2001; Dagenais & Jacquet, 2000; Davis et al., 2019, 2021). Moreover, multilingual learners are often highly motivated to learn both French and English in FI programs (Dagenais, 2008; Dagenais & Moore, 2008; Moore, 2010; Prasad, 2015; Sabatier et al., 2013). Additionally, multilingual learners tend to learn both French and English effectively in FI programs, developing strong reading abilities and literacy skills (Bourgoin & Dicks, 2019; Moore, 2010). Furthermore, newcomer, multilingual learners have been found to outperform Canadian-born, multilingual learners and Canadian-born, English-speaking students in a variety of measures of French language learning proficiency in FI programs (Knouzi & Mady, 2017; Mady, 2015). It is therefore deeply problematic that multilingual learners are often excluded from FI programs because of the perspectives and ideologies of educators and the lack of equitable and inclusive policy. In this literature review, I synthesize research pertaining to French language education policy and the inclusion of multilingual learners in FI programs to demonstrate the extent to which such students and families are often excluded from FI programs across Canada.

4.2.1 French Language-in-Education Policy

The area of language education is shaped by a complex intersection of policy in Canada; namely, official language policy is created at the federal level, whereas educational policy is determined at the provincial and territorial level (Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008). First, as it pertains to federal language policy, the Government of Canada promotes bilingualism in the country's two official languages, French and English. To this end, several documents created by the Government of Canada discuss diverse initiatives to increase official-language bilingualism and the goal of doubling the number of citizens who are bilingual in French and English across Canada (Government of Canada, 2003, 2008, 2013). Notwithstanding this ambitious goal, such

policy documents do not include planning for official-language bilingualism for multilingual learners; consequently, such learners are often encouraged to learn one, but not both, of Canada's official languages (Mady & Turnbull, 2010). In summary, the federal government has developed initiatives for French-English bilingualism, but has effectively ignored multilingual learners in official-language policy and planning in Canada (Galiev, 2013; Mady & Turnbull, 2010).

As it pertains to provincial and territorial policy for official-language bilingual education, such policies vary significantly across Canada. Specifically, it is obligatory to learn French in the provinces of Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Quebec; alternatively, it is mandatory to learn an additional language, but not necessarily French, in British Columbia and the Yukon; finally, it is optional to learn French in Alberta, Manitoba, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Saskatchewan (Mady & Turnbull, 2010). Thus, students do not necessarily have the right to learn French as an additional language across Canada (Mady & Black, 2011). Furthermore, even in provinces where learning French is ostensibly mandatory, multilingual learners are frequently exempted from French language programs (Arnett & Mady, 2018; Mady, 2007, 2012; Mady & Turnbull, 2007, 2010). Therefore, the existence of a policy pertaining to French language education does not inherently guarantee the inclusion of multilingual learners. For instance, in the Toronto District School Board, white, English-speaking, and Canadian-born students are overrepresented in FI programs (Sinay, 2010; Sinay et al., 2018). In the same context, Kunas (2019, p. 85) found that FI policy, curricular documents, and promotional materials “contribute to the construction of an English-speaking, White, middle-class, Torontonians/established resident as the typical FI student.” Thus, although some provinces might have policies to ensure the provision of official-language bilingual education, the haphazard and often discriminatory implementation of such policies at the school board level often results in the exclusion of

newcomer, racialized, and multilingual learners from FI programs. While some educators might believe that they are acting in the best interests of multilingual learners by exempting them from FI programs, erroneously believing that learning two additional languages simultaneously is overly burdensome for such students and an obstacle to remove from their learning, this deficit ideology results in the exclusion of such learners from bilingual learning opportunities.

4.2.2 Inclusion of Multilingual Learners in FI

In the absence of policies ensuring the inclusion of multilingual learners in FI programs across Canada, the perspectives of educators play a critical role in whether such students are included. Mady and Masson (2018) examined the perspectives of FI principals in Ontario and observed contradictory ideologies with respect to the inclusion and language learning of multilingual students in FI programs. Additionally, principals cited a variety of gatekeeping practices with multilingual learners in FI programs, often basing such practices on personal experience and hearsay, rather than policy or research. Thus, the perspectives and gatekeeping practices of FI principals can vary considerably, even within the same school boards, and serve to reify the status quo of FI programs being promoted for English-speaking, Canadian-born students to the detriment of multilingual, newcomer learners (Kunnas, 2019, 2023).

Researchers have also explored the perspectives of FI teachers with respect to the inclusion of multilingual learners. Lapkin et al. (2006) found that many French language educators considered the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in classrooms across Canada to be their greatest teaching challenge. Evidently, the notion of student diversity being a challenge is rooted in a deficit ideology, framing the education and inclusion of multilingual learners as an obstacle instead of an opportunity. Moreover, Mady (2013) investigated the perspectives of educators in different French language programs in Ontario and concluded that

FI teachers were generally less inclusive of multilingual learners than were core French teachers, suggesting the existence of bias amongst some FI educators towards certain students. Bourgoin (2016) found that some teachers in New Brunswick espoused the view that FI would be overly challenging for multilingual learners, arguing that such learners should focus solely on learning English, rather than learning both official languages. Similarly, Mady (2016) reported that some FI kindergarten teachers in Ontario believed that multilingual learners should sometimes be excluded from FI programs because they believe that learning English and French simultaneously will be overly difficult for such students. Subsequently, Arnett and Mady (2018) found that some novice teachers in Ontario felt that FI programs were inappropriate for multilingual learners. More recently, in the context of my master's thesis research, I explored the perspectives of FI educators in Saskatchewan and found that although most teachers and principals were inclusive of multilingual learners, some believed that such students should focus on learning English before studying in FI programs in the context of this English-dominant province (Davis, 2019). Moreover, some educators expressed that FI programs were unsuitable for refugee-background students who had recently migrated from Syria because of the diverse challenges, real or perceived, that they believed such learners were facing in Canada (Davis et al., 2019, 2021). In summary, FI educators across Canada espouse divergent views pertaining to the inclusion of multilingual learners in FI programs, sometimes reinforcing the myth that such programs are more appropriate for English-speaking students.

4.3 Sociolinguistics for Change

The present study is situated in the theoretical framework of sociolinguistics for change, rooted in the research paradigm of critical theory. Drawing inspiration from the perspective of critical sociolinguistics (Heller, 2002, 2003), Auger et al. (2007) first developed sociolinguistics

for change as a critical framework that would merge theory and practice in educational contexts. More specifically, Auger et al. (2007) perceived critical sociolinguistics as valuable in some contexts, yet lacking in practicality for working with educators to effect change in schools. Sociolinguistics for change seeks to facilitate collaboration between researchers and educators to critically investigate and challenge unexamined ideologies in order to promote social change in language education contexts (Dalley & Roy, 2008). In keeping with the tradition of critical theory as a research paradigm, sociolinguistics for change represents a valuable theoretical framework for contributing to the advancement of knowledge and to meaningful social change.

Sociolinguistics for change has also proven to be a valuable theoretical perspective for examining language ideologies in FI programs. For instance, Roy and Galiev (2011) investigated the discourses of FI students and educators in Alberta pertaining to language learning and bilingualism. Moreover, Roy (2010, 2012) adopted a sociolinguistics for change perspective to examine the discourses of FI students with respect to their language learning, uncovering a widespread ideology amongst FI learners that their linguistic varieties are less legitimate than those of imagined ‘native speakers.’ Subsequently, Roy (2015) examined the discourses and ideologies of FI educators, students, and parents regarding language learning, bilingualism, and multilingualism. Roy (2015) found that some FI teachers believed that immersion programs would be overly difficult for multilingual learners and that such students should focus on learning English. In the present study, I seek to build upon the groundbreaking work of Roy (2010, 2012, 2015, 2020) by adopting the theoretical framework of sociolinguistics for change to explore the perspectives and ideologies of educators with respect to refugee-background learners in FI programs across the Canadian Prairies and to advocate for systemic change in such programs across Canada. In my estimation, sociolinguistics for change is an especially valuable

theoretical framework for this research because it merges the two objectives of examining the perspectives and ideologies of FI educators and of advocating for more inclusive and equitable FI programs in the future. Through this research, I strive to contribute not only to a greater understanding of the perspectives and ideologies of FI educators across the Canadian Prairies, but also to work alongside educators to advocate for systemic change to include and support refugee-background students and multilingual learners in FI programs throughout Canada.

4.4 Research Methodology

The present study examines the perspectives and ideologies of educators across several themes pertaining to refugee-background students in FI programs across the Canadian Prairies. In the present paper, I focus on the perspectives and ideologies of educators regarding diversity, inclusion, gatekeeping, and policy in FI programs in order to illuminate and problematize the extent to which refugee-background students are excluded from FI programs. In light of this focus, the following two research questions are pertinent for the present manuscript:

1. What are educators' perspectives and ideologies regarding the inclusion and gatekeeping of refugee-background students in FI programs across the Canadian Prairies?
2. What are educators' perspectives and ideologies with respect to policies pertaining to the inclusion of refugee-background students in FI programs across the Canadian Prairies?

4.4.1 Transformative Mixed-Methods Study

My research design for the present study is a transformative, convergent mixed-methods study (Creswell, 2014). Rooted in the paradigm of critical inquiry, transformative mixed-methods approaches generate qualitative and quantitative data with the goals of advancing intellectual knowledge and advocating for social change (Creswell, 2014). In terms of the present study, I draw from survey and interview data concurrently to contribute not only to a greater

intellectual understanding of the perspectives and ideologies of FI educators, but also to advocate for meaningful, systemic changes to better include and support refugee-background students and all multilingual learners in FI programs. As it pertains to data analysis, I interpreted survey and interview data simultaneously, triangulating qualitative and quantitative data to identify common trends across both research methods. To summarize, the research approach for the present study represents a transformative mixed-methods design, situated in the critical theoretical framework of sociolinguistics for change and within the paradigm of critical research. In the following section, I provide an overview of the FI educator participants, as well as discuss specific survey and interview methods and data analysis of this transformative mixed-methods study.

4.4.2 Participants

After receiving approval from the University of Regina Research Ethics Board on March 21, 2022, I invited FI educators from several school divisions in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta to participate in this research. Educators from eight school divisions across the three provinces participated in this study, including four divisions in Saskatchewan, two in Manitoba, and two in Alberta. In terms of eligibility to participate, I invited all FI elementary and secondary teachers, all FI principals and vice principals, and all central office staff members to complete the survey and to participate in interviews. Furthermore, all interested and consenting participants were accepted for both research methods after providing written consent via email. As it pertains to further ethical considerations, participants were free to answer or not answer all survey and interview questions. Moreover, the survey was anonymous and it was impossible to link specific responses to names or email addresses. Additionally, survey participants were free to withdraw consent before or during the survey. The survey was completed by 126 educators. Although not all survey respondents selected their home provinces, 54 participants indicated that

they worked in Saskatchewan, 40 in Manitoba, and 23 in Alberta (Table 1). Furthermore, as it pertains to teaching positions, survey participants who indicated their positions included 94 FI elementary and secondary teachers, 19 FI principals and vice principals, and four central office staff members (Table 2). In terms of interview participants, I interviewed 40 FI educators, including 26 from Saskatchewan, 10 from Manitoba, and four from Alberta (Table 3). As it pertains to the teaching positions of interview participants, 26 were FI elementary and secondary teachers, seven were FI principals and vice principals, and seven were central office staff (Table 4). Interview participants were assigned pseudonyms, and any students, colleagues, schools, and school divisions mentioned during interviews were assigned pseudonyms as well. Interview participants were free to withdraw participation before, during, and after interviews. Moreover, I shared the completed interview transcripts with participants for the purposes of member checking. In summary, the majority of survey and interview participants were FI teachers, but principals and central office staff were also represented in both research methods of this study.

Table 5

Survey participants by province

Province	Number (N=)	Percentage
Saskatchewan	54	46.15%
Manitoba	40	34.19%
Alberta	23	19.66%

Table 6

Survey participants by position

Position	Number (N=)	Percentage
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Teachers	94	80.34%
Principals	19	16.24%
Central office staff	4	3.42%

Table 7*Interview participants by province*

Province	Number (N=)	Percentage
Saskatchewan	26	65%
Manitoba	10	25%
Alberta	4	10%

Table 8*Interview participants by position*

Position	Number (N=)	Percentage
Teachers	26	65%
Principals	7	17.5%
Central office staff	7	17.5%

4.4.3 Research Methods

First, in terms of survey methods, I created a bilingual, online survey using Qualtrics software. The survey included three demographic questions and 20 items using a Likert scale of measurement, assessing the degree to which participants agreed or disagreed with different statements. I created and organized the survey questions in the following categories: first, perspectives on the suitability of FI programs for refugee-background students; second,

perspectives on different French language programs; third, perspectives on the language learning of refugee-background students; and fourth, perspectives on inclusion, policy, and supports with respect to refugee-background students in French immersion programs (Appendix A). All questions were provided in both French and English, and participants were invited to add optional comments in either or both languages. The development of survey items was informed by my reading of previous survey-based research with FI educators pertaining to multilingual learners (Davis, 2019; Lapkin et al., 2006; Mady & Masson, 2018). Additionally, the survey was first piloted with a small number of educators in June 2022 who provided feedback on survey design and on the phrasing of certain items. As it pertains to data analysis, I performed descriptive statistical analysis to determine means and trends in survey responses in order to triangulate the quantitative survey data with the qualitative interview findings.

Moreover, I also conducted 40 semi-structured interviews with FI educators in the same eight school divisions. Educators chose whether to be interviewed in French or in English, as well as whether to be interviewed in person or via Zoom. The interviews were audio-recorded and lasted approximately 60 minutes. I created several sample interview questions, drawing from many of the same categories as the survey items. For instance, categories included introductory questions about the educator participants, questions about French language programs offered in their school divisions, questions about student diversity in FI programs, questions about personal experiences and perspectives with refugee-background students in FI programs, questions about FI policy in their school divisions, and questions about resources offered in FI programs (Appendix B). My reason for developing interview questions that aligned and overlapped with survey items was that the interviews would allow me to explore similar perspectives as the surveys, but in greater depth and nuance (Creswell, 2013). As per the nature of semi-structured

interviews, the questions changed throughout the interviews and varied amongst participants, depending on the specific experiences and interests of the educators. However, the above categories of questions were discussed consistently, to varying degrees, with every interview participant. Subsequently, I transcribed all 40 interviews in full, shared transcripts with participants for review and for member checking, assigned pseudonyms, and used Nvivo 12 software to code transcripts to identify common findings in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Gibbs, 2007). Finally, I triangulated the data by juxtaposing survey responses with interview transcripts to identify trends across quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell, 2014). In this way, the quantitative survey data provide a broad overview of the perspectives of a large number of educators, whereas the qualitative interview data enable a more nuanced exploration of the same findings in greater depth.

4.5 Findings

In the present transformative mixed-methods study, I examine the perspectives and ideologies of educators as they pertain to refugee-background students in FI programs across the Canadian Prairies. Through inductive analysis of interview transcripts, descriptive statistical analysis of survey responses, and data triangulation of both methods, I identified several common trends relating to FI policy and the inclusion of refugee-background learners. In this section, I draw from quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data to present the results of this study with respect to four common findings across both research methods: 1) diversity in FI programs; 2) perspectives about the inclusion of refugee-background students in FI programs; 3) gatekeeping practices in FI; and 4) perspectives on policy for refugee-background learners in FI programs. In cases of excerpts of educator interviews that were conducted in French, I provide the original French interview transcription, followed by my own English translation.

4.5.1 Diversity in FI

The first key finding of the present study represents the perspectives of educators with respect to student diversity in FI programs. All interview participants (n=40) across the eight school divisions espoused the view that FI programs were becoming increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse, discussing the growing number of racialized, multilingual, newcomer learners. Although some educators stated that they had not personally taught refugee-background learners, all participants expressed having taught newcomer students in FI programs. One teacher shared that at least half of her students were newcomer learners and that such students tended to learn multiple languages effectively in FI programs, as per the following:

Je dirais qu'au moins la moitié ou plus que cela était des nouveaux-arrivants dans la classe et parlaient plusieurs langues, en effet, et je pense que le programme d'immersion était fantastique pour eux parce qu'ils savaient déjà d'autres langues et ils pouvaient parler une langue à la maison, une autre langue avec leurs amis, et puis à l'école, c'était le français, et c'était juste génial de voir comment leurs cerveaux fonctionnaient et ils pouvaient changer de langues facilement. *Mallory, Teacher, Saskatchewan.*

I would say that at least half or more than that were newcomers in the class and spoke many languages, actually, and I think that the immersion program was fantastic for them because they already knew other languages and they could speak one language at home, another language with friends, and then at school, it was French, and it was just awesome to see how their brains worked and they could change languages easily. *Mallory, Teacher, Saskatchewan.*

Moreover, one survey item measured the extent to which educators perceived FI programs as suitable for newcomer learners; this question yielded mostly affirmative (n=83) responses (Figure 9). Additionally, another survey item assessed about the perceived suitability of FI for refugee-background learners; this item generated similar results, albeit slightly fewer positive responses (n=79) and more neutral responses (n=22) than for the previous survey item (Figure 10). Furthermore, some educators expressed that FI programs were not only becoming more culturally and linguistically diverse, but also more diverse in terms of special needs and abilities. One principal shared the following about changing student demographics in FI programs:

The face of French immersion has changed significantly, and that's a good thing. More culturally rich and diverse in ethnicity, culture, and religion... And also, the needs... If they are special needs, if they are students who have autism, students who have cerebral palsy, these are all important things that every child should have the opportunity to learn in the language that they choose to learn in. We may not have seen as much diversity maybe a decade ago, whereas now, we absolutely see this, and this is a wonderful thing for the French immersion schools in our city. *Linda, Principal, Manitoba.*

In summary, all interview participants (n=40) expressed that FI programs were becoming increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse as a result of the growing number of newcomer learners; moreover, some participants also noted the growing diversity of special needs and learning abilities, suggesting that this form of student diversity is also increasing in FI programs.

Figure 9

I believe that French immersion is a suitable program for newcomer students.

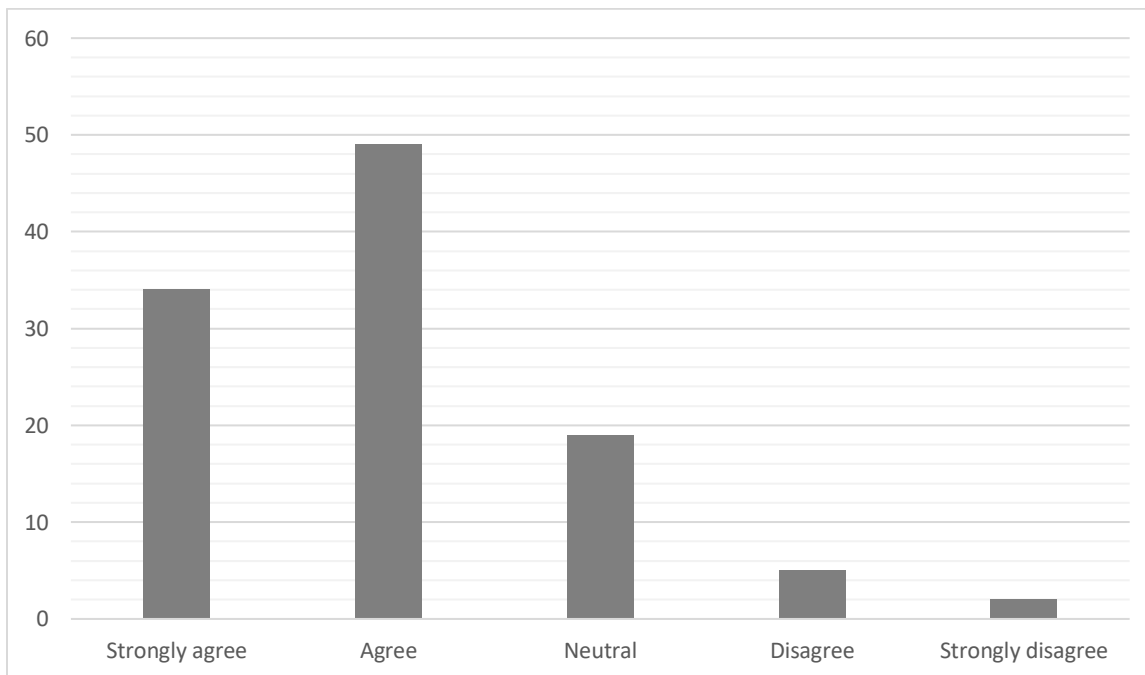
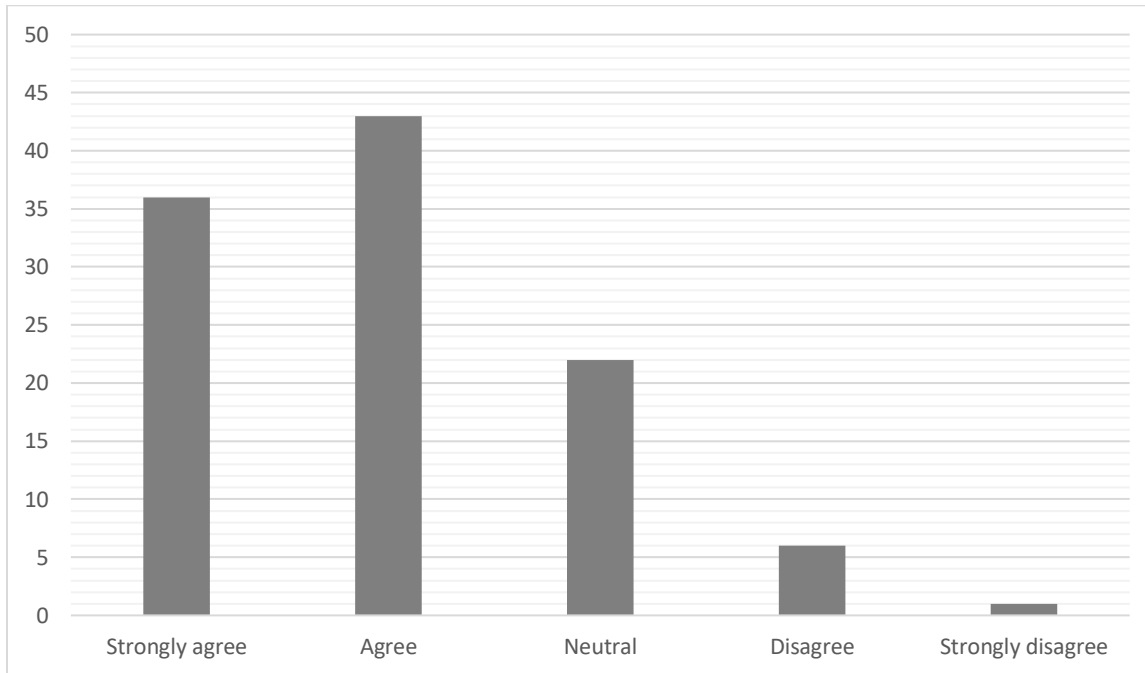


Figure 10

I believe that French immersion is a suitable program for refugee-background students.



Whereas all interview participants (n=40) shared that FI programs were becoming increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse, several participants also expressed more nuanced perspectives about student diversity in such programs. Notably, some educators stated that although the student demographics in FI programs were becoming more diverse, immersion programs remained less diverse than regular English programs in the same communities:

In my experience – I worked in dual-track schools in both circumstances – and it has seemed like the diversity of French programming is much less than that of the diversity of the English stream, even when we're operating in the same neighbourhood and the same building... I think that there's some work to be done ensuring access for all students in French immersion. *Miranda, Central office staff, Saskatchewan.*

Indeed, some interview participants noted a consistent contrast between the diversity of students in FI programs and in English programs, even within the same schools. Moreover, the following teacher shared his perspective regarding diversity in FI programs, sharing that there were very few racialized students in his class and that he was the only Black teacher in the school:

Il n'y a pas assez de diversité. C'est mon point de vue personnel. Je regarde, par exemple, à ma classe. Dans ma classe, il y a juste une ou deux personnes qui sont autres que des personnes blanches, tu vois? Il y a une seule personne noire et il y a seule personne d'origine un peu asiatique. Alors, tu peux dire que la diversité, pas vraiment, même au niveau de l'effectif des enseignants ici. Je suis le seul enseignant noir à l'école. Alors, il y a un peu de diversité, mais pas vraiment. *Abrar, Teacher, Saskatchewan.*

There isn't enough diversity. That's my personal point of view. I look, for example, at my class. In my class, there are only one or two people who are not white, you see? There's only one Black person and only one person of Asian origin. So, you could say that, diversity, not really, even in terms of teacher demographics here. I'm the only Black teacher at the school. So, there's a bit of diversity, but not really. *Abrar, Teacher, Saskatchewan.*

Evidently, some interview participants expressed that although FI might be becoming increasingly diverse, such programs did not reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of their communities, neither in terms of student populations, nor with respect to teacher demographics.

4.5.2 Inclusion in FI

The present study also examined the beliefs of educators surrounding the inclusion of refugee-background learners in FI programs. Several survey items juxtaposed different French programs to measure whether educators believed that refugee-background learners should be included in some programs but not others. First, one survey question asked whether educators believed that FI was more suitable than core French for refugee-background learners; this item generated mixed responses, with several educators agreeing (n=40), many responding neutrally (n=41), and several disagreeing (n=2) with the statement (Figure 11). However, when the two programs were inverted in a different question, many participants disagreed (n=50) with the notion that core French was more suitable than FI (Figure 12). Subsequent items measured whether educators believed that Early French immersion (EFI) was more suitable than Late French Immersion (LFI) for refugee-background students, and most educators (n=61) affirmed that EFI was indeed more appropriate (Figure 13). When the two programs were inverted in the following question, very few (n=8) survey participants indicated that LFI programs were more

appropriate for refugee-background students than EFI programs (Figure 14). In summary, survey participants indicated that refugee-background students should be included in all programs, but that EFI was especially suitable for such learners compared to LFI and core French programs.

Figure 11

I believe that French immersion is a more suitable program than core French for refugee-background students.

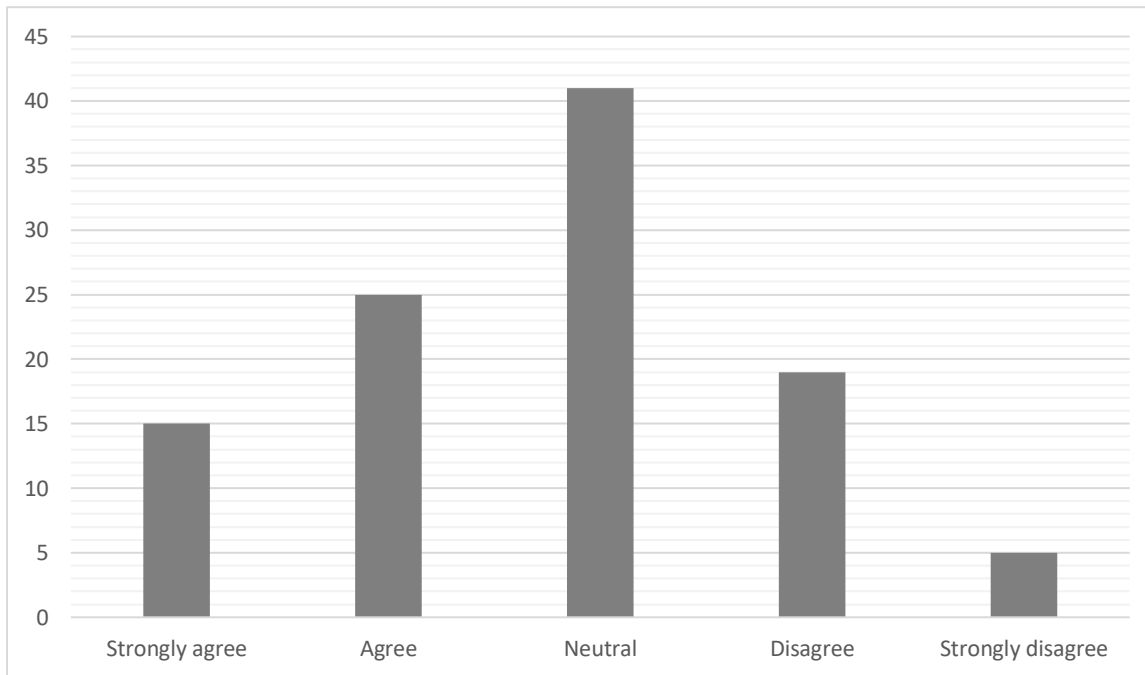
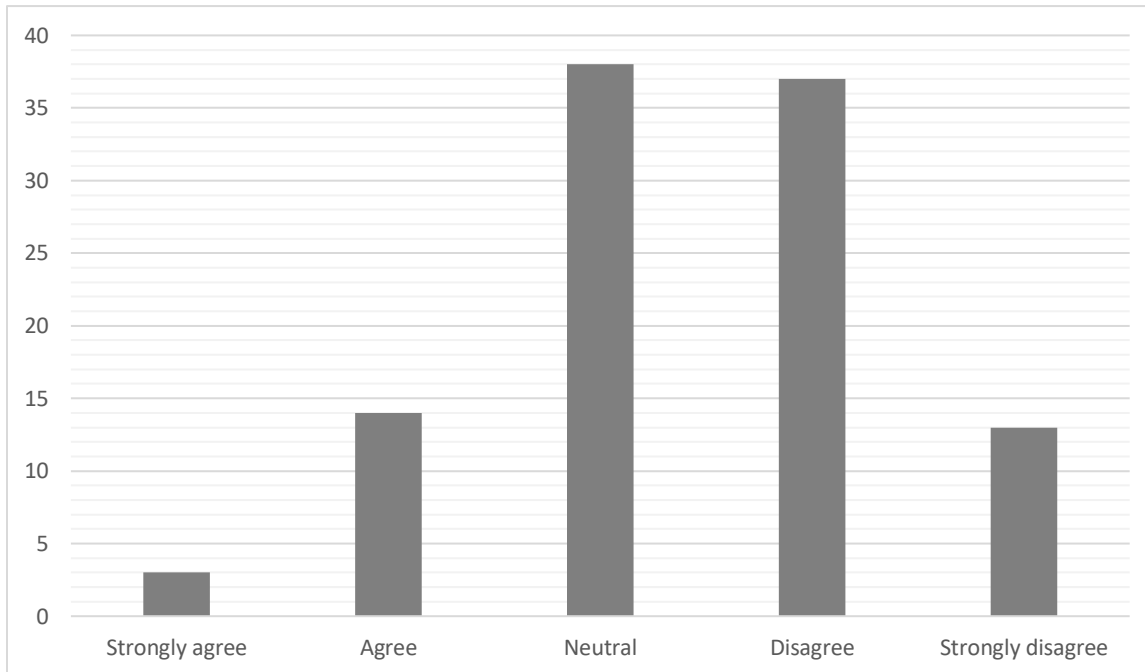


Figure 12

I believe that core French is a more suitable program than French immersion for refugee-background students.

**Figure 13**

I believe that Early French Immersion (EFI) is a more suitable program than Late French Immersion (LFI) for refugee-background students.

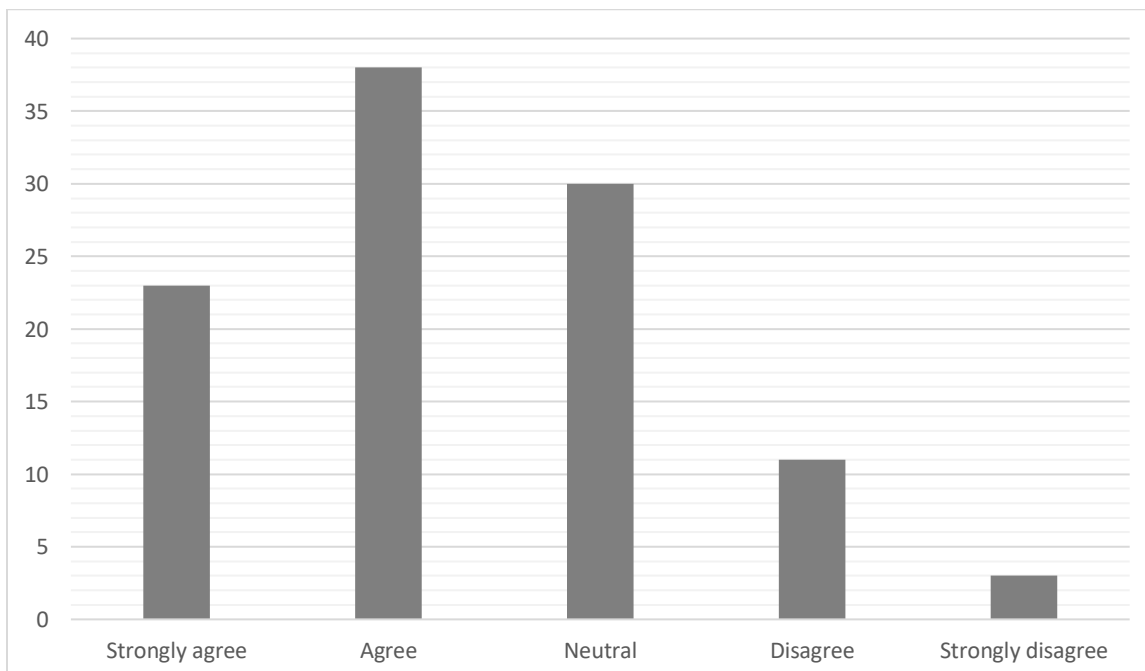
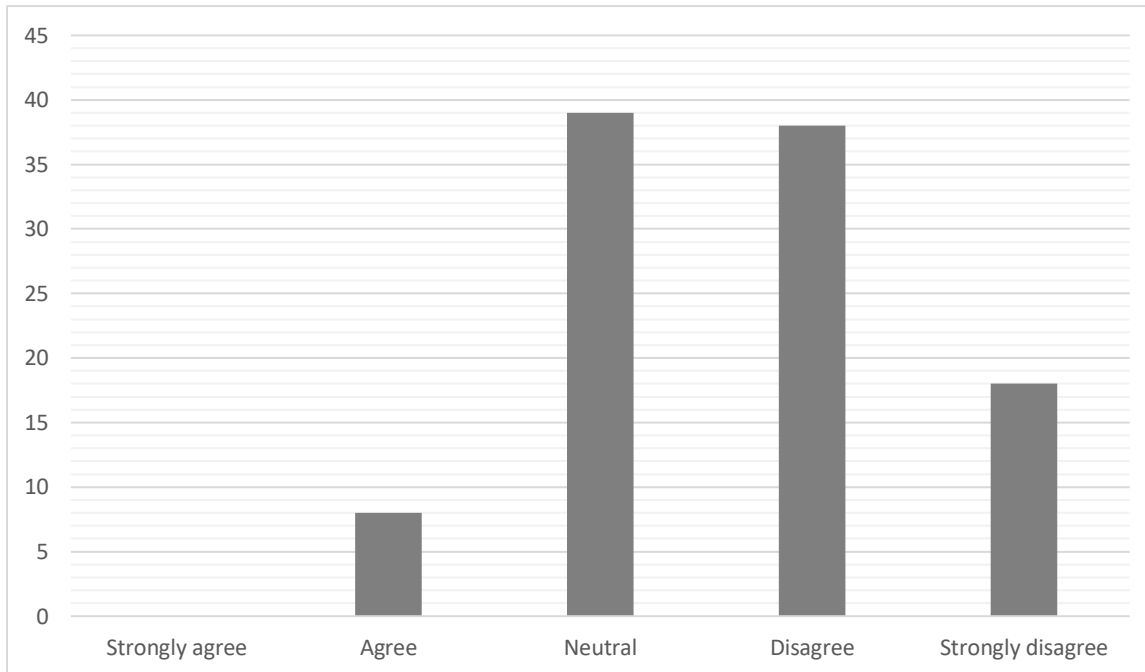


Figure 14

I believe that Late French Immersion (LFI) is a more suitable program than Early French Immersion (EFI) for refugee-background students.



The belief that refugee-background students should be included in FI programs was also reflected in interviews with educators. To this end, one school principal shared her perspective that all students should be included in FI programs, including refugee-background learners:

I think French immersion should welcome all of our refugee students, especially those coming from refugee backgrounds, even if they're not French backgrounds... I don't think we should close our doors to anybody! *Tammy, Principal, Alberta.*

Similarly, a consultant expressed his belief in including and supporting all newcomer students in FI programs, reflecting on his personal experience as a child of immigrants:

Well, I really believe in including everybody, and I'm a son of immigrants myself. So, I do believe in including everybody and just providing what they need to be successful. *Marco, Central office staff, Manitoba.*

To summarize, all interview participants (n=40) shared that they believed that newcomer students, including refugee-background learners, should be included in FI programs in Canada.

Although all interview participants (n=40) that refugee-background students should be included in FI programs, many participants shared examples of colleagues who disagree with this belief. For instance, the following educator recounted conversations with teachers who believed that refugee-background learners with low English proficiency be excluded from FI programs:

J'ai entendu quelques enseignants et enseignantes qui se plaignaient de cela aujourd'hui : « Cet enfant vient d'arriver. Comment est-ce que je vais faire? C'est trop difficile. L'enfant devrait tout d'abord maîtriser l'anglais... Est-ce que cet enfant devrait être en immersion? On devrait le laisser en anglais. » *Omar, Teacher, Saskatchewan.*

I heard some teachers complaining about this today: "This student just arrived. How am I going to do this? It's too difficult. The student should master English first... Should this student be in immersion? We should put hm in English." *Omar, Teacher, Saskatchewan.*

Likewise, a teacher who had studied in FI programs as a newcomer learner herself shared that she often hears exclusionary views about refugee-background students in staff meetings:

I hear that in staff meetings all the time and I get really mad. I feel like I was given that opportunity by someone who had a really good heart, you know? I feel like... I get frustrated when teachers just try to say this can't be done. No, it can be done... Why can't we assist them with French? Why are we so special that we get to pick who can come and who can't? *Ofelia, Teacher, Saskatchewan.*

Finally, a superintendent expressed in her interview that she often encounters educators who believe that refugee-background students should sometimes be excluded from FI programs:

It drives me bananas! We're a public school system. How on earth would we presume that we have any right to decide who comes here, right? That's my Achilles heel, right? Those assumptions that we make, right? A lot of it comes from our own biases, and I don't want to get into that, but it comes from our own prejudices and biases that we carry about trauma and different groups, you know? *Stephanie, Central office staff, Manitoba.*

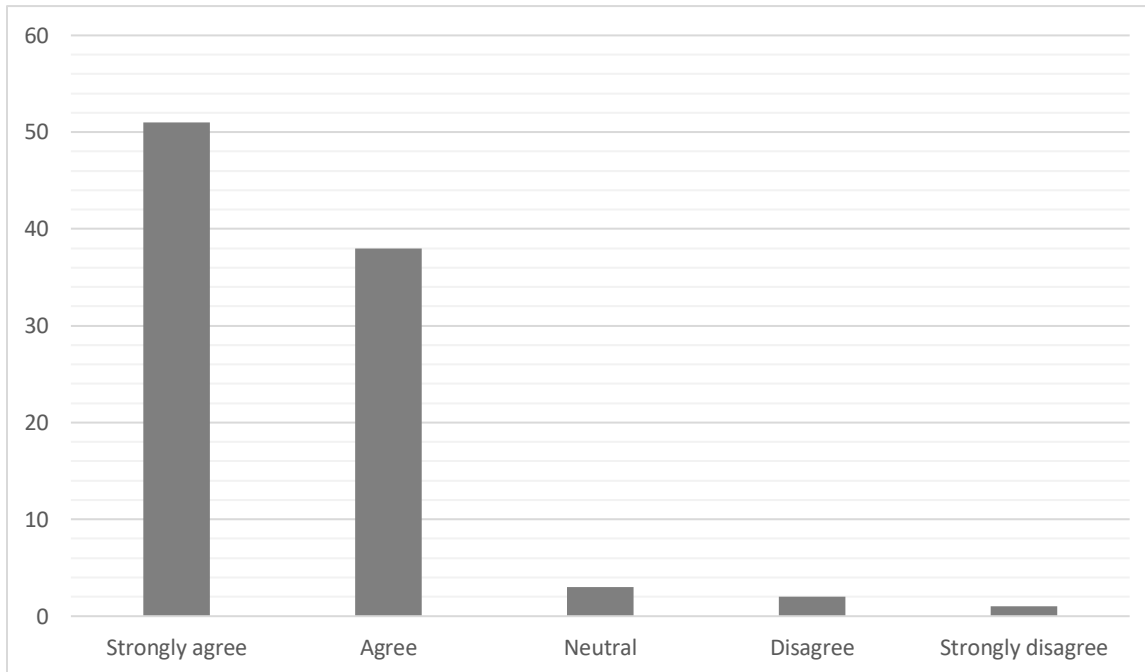
In summary, all educators who were interviewed indicated that refugee-background students should be included in FI programs; however, many teachers, principals, and central office staff members across all eight school divisions emphasized that this was a critical point of contention.

4.5.3 Gatekeeping in FI

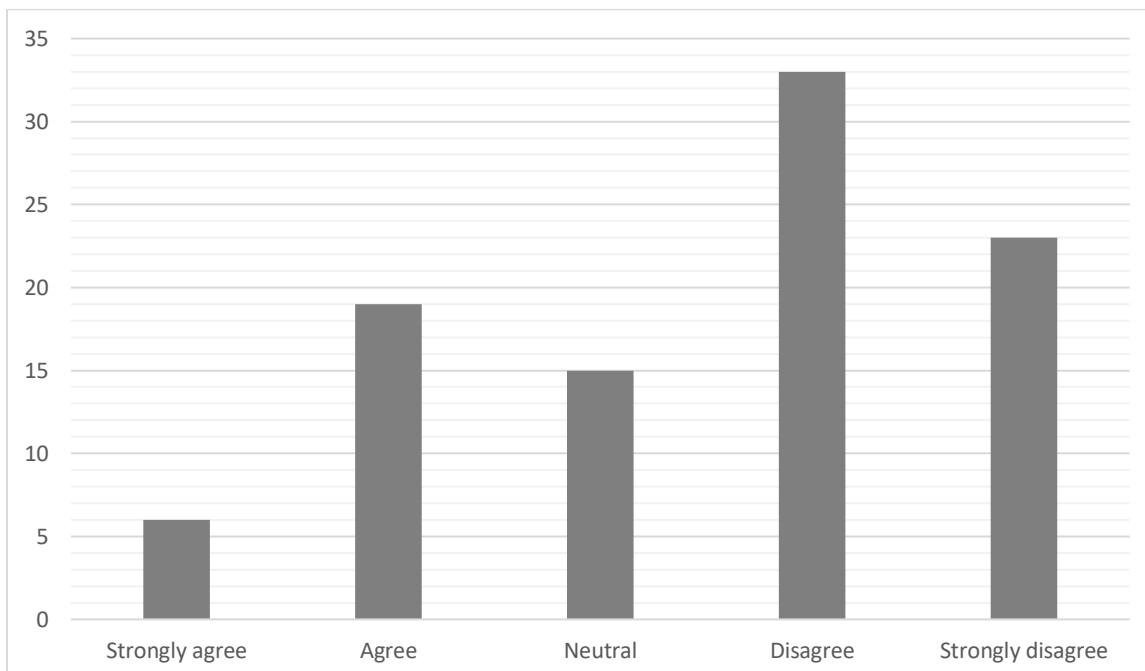
The third common finding across both survey and interview data pertains to the gatekeeping practices of FI educators. While the notions of inclusion and gatekeeping are closely interrelated, the former represents the beliefs of educators with respect to the inclusion of refugee-background students and the latter pertains to the practices of educators that serve to include or exclude such learners from FI programs. To this end, one survey question asked whether educators believed that the parents of refugee-background students should be able to choose the program of study for their children, which many participants (n=89) affirmed (Figure 15). Conversely, another item measured whether educators believed that teachers and principals should be able to decide to include or exclude refugee-background learners from FI programs, and some participants (n=25) agreed with this statement (Figure 16). Evidently, although most educators indicated that FI enrolment decisions should be made by parents, some believe that teachers and principals should sometimes serve as gatekeepers for refugee-background families.

Figure 15

I believe that the parents of refugee-background students should be able to choose the program of study for their children.

**Figure 16**

I believe that teachers and school administrators should be able to decide whether to include or exclude refugee-background students from French immersion programs.



In interviews, many participants shared that the decision to enrol children in FI programs must be made by parents and that educators were not allowed to discourage or exclude such families. The following teachers expressed this perspective pertaining to FI enrolment decisions:

Parents are totally free to have that choice. I was always told as a new teacher that we're not allowed to steer people one way or the other. *Marie, Teacher, Saskatchewan.*

I have been told if a parent says they want to, we have to do it. I know people have, like, admin and things have tried to convince parents out of it for older grades. Like, maybe above Grade 3, they'll say it's not a good idea. But I have been told by admin that if a parent says, "We want our child in French immersion" and they cannot be swayed, then their child stays in French immersion. *Alex, Teacher, Saskatchewan.*

Indeed, several educators espoused the view that they were not allowed to influence enrolment decisions in FI programs. Nevertheless, some participants shared examples of educators attempting to counsel refugee-background students out of FI programs, as per the following:

I was just in a meeting a few weeks ago for a student that they're trying to counsel out of Grade 7 and he's been in our system since Grade 3. So, this is his fourth year in Canada. His first language is Swahili and his second language is French, so his spoken French is actually pretty good. He's got, like, a cognitive delay across the board. He's been assessed so we know there are a bunch of other things happening here. And when they were counselling him out of the program, I just thought, "That would be the worst thing for this kid." ...But it's like this automatic go-to, right? Like, if you're not seeing success in this, then just leave. *Elizabeth, Central office staff, Alberta.*

In summary, many educators indicated through both surveys and interviews that they do not serve as gatekeepers in FI programs, some suggesting that they would not be allowed to do so; however, some interview participants noted that refugee-background learners are sometimes counselled out of FI, especially when additional challenges and special needs are present.

Furthermore, several educators shared that the gatekeepers excluding refugee-background students from FI programs were not necessarily FI educators, but rather administrators in different roles. Notably, some central office staff members explained that the administrative staff working in newcomer centres sometimes served as gatekeepers in FI programs. For instance, one

superintendent shared that the consultant working in the newcomer centre seldom presents FI programs as an option for refugee-background learners and families in the school division:

I did have a conversation with [the consultant] and I asked him, “Does French immersion ever come up?” and he said, “Not really!” That’s partially because he is maybe not aware or maybe has that bias that maybe French immersion is not for refugee students, or maybe it just never occurred to him. *Stella, Central office staff, Saskatchewan.*

In this case, the superintendent suspected that the consultant might not present FI programs as a viable option for refugee-background families simply because the possibility had not occurred to him. However, a second superintendent expressed that the consultants in her school division’s welcome centre were actively discouraging refugee-background families from considering FI programs, citing the recent example of several hundred asylum seekers arriving from Ukraine:

J’ai des directeurs qui m’appellent et qui disent : « Cette famille est intéressée en immersion, » mais le centre d’accueil suggère qu’ils apprennent l’anglais en premier... Je dirais que ce que je vois, depuis mes propres observations, c’est que les réfugiés sont découragés d’entrer dans nos écoles d’immersion. Alors, je peux dire qu’on a reçu 672 Ukrainiens depuis le mois de mars dernier dans nos écoles. Et je peux te dire que, bien que nous avons reçu beaucoup de réfugiés, il n’y a pas un Ukrainien qui s’est rendu dans une école d’immersion. Je dirais que les enfants réfugiés... C’est cette mentalité de « *They’ve got enough on their plate.* » On ne veut pas ajouter le français à cela. *Samantha, Central office staff, Alberta.*

I’ve got principals who call me and say, “This family is interested in immersion,” but the welcome centre suggests that they learn English first... I would say that what I see, from my own observations, is that refugees are discouraged from entering into our immersion schools. So, I can say that we’ve received 672 Ukrainians since last March in our schools. And I can tell you that, although we’ve received lots of refugees, there is not one Ukrainian who has ended up in an immersion school. I would say that refugee students... It’s that mentality of “They’ve got enough on their plate.” They don’t want to add French to that. *Samantha, Central office staff, Alberta.*

Evidently, some superintendents believe that the administrative staff working in newcomer welcome centres act as gatekeepers in FI programs, both by not providing information about such programs to refugee-background families and by actively discouraging their enrolment.

4.5.4 Policy in FI

The present study generated findings about the perspectives of educators with respect to policy in FI programs. One survey item asked whether educators believed that their school divisions had equitable policies concerning the inclusion of refugee-background students in FI programs (Figure 17). Although several survey participants (n=64) responded affirmatively to this question, most interview participants were unable to identify specific policies pertaining to inclusion in FI programs, as illustrated by the following interview excerpt:

No, there is no policy. There's nothing written. Really, the only way that a kid will end up in French immersion is because they live in the area... The option is never given to them from, like, the settlement agency or anything like that; they just get registered automatically at their neighbourhood school. *Elizabeth, Central office staff, Alberta.*

Moreover, many educators expressed that although there was no official policy in their school divisions ensuring access to FI, they believed that there was a standard practice of inclusion:

Je crois qu'il n'y a pas de politique spécifique. Tout le monde a le droit d'entrer. Je pense qu'il n'y a pas nécessairement de politique; c'est ouvert à tout le monde. *Mallory, Teacher, Saskatchewan.*

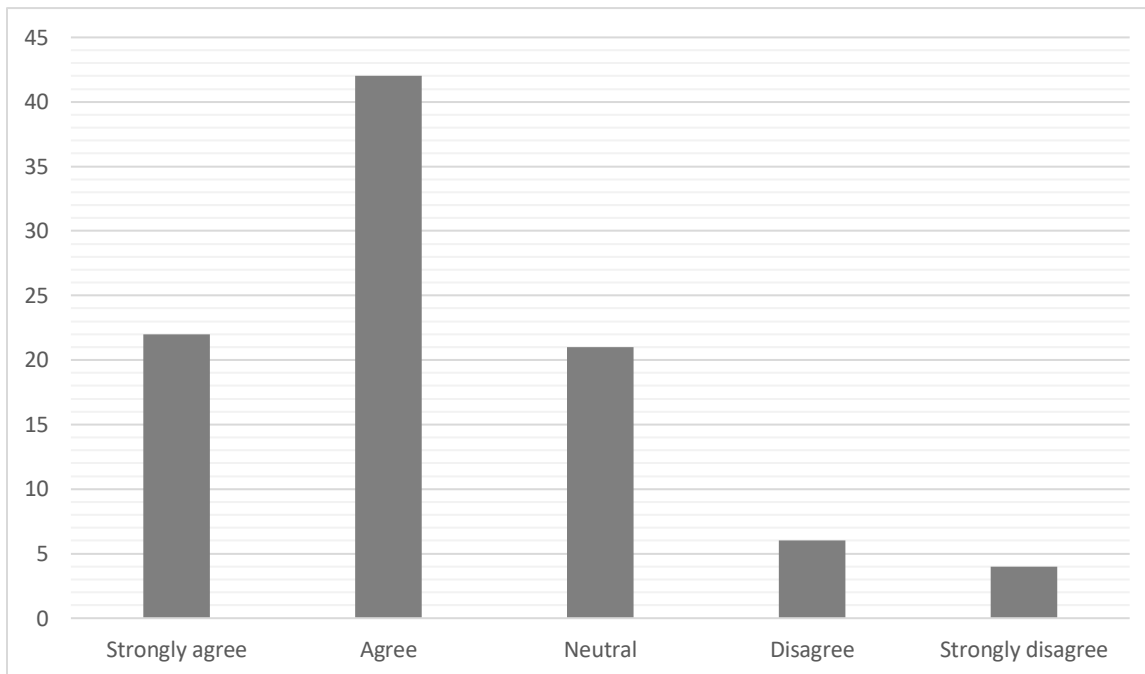
I don't believe there is a specific policy. Everyone has the right to enter. I think there isn't necessarily a policy; it's open to everyone. *Mallory, Teacher, Saskatchewan.*

You know, I always thought that it was a division policy, and I'm just figuring out now that I don't think it is! I think it's probably more of a standard practice. *Marie, Teacher, Saskatchewan.*

In summary, although many survey participants (n=64) indicated that their school divisions had equitable policies concerning the inclusion of refugee-background learners in FI programs, very few were unable to cite specific policies and instead described unofficial practices of inclusion.

Figure 17

I believe that my school division has an equitable policy regarding the inclusion of refugee-background students in French immersion programs.



Whereas most participants in the present study were unable to name official policies regarding the inclusion of refugee-background students or newcomer learners in FI programs, educators in one school division in Manitoba did discuss such a policy. Specifically, several teachers, principals, and central office staff in this school division described a policy of accepting all interested students into FI programs, irrespective of grade level, through a special integration program called French as an Additional Language (FAL). The following interview excerpt with a superintendent highlights the rationale for this inclusive FI policy in the school division:

We're definitely the exception in the province. We go about it from a human rights and language rights perspective. Often, families arrive here and come to Canada and understand that French and English are our official languages, whether they come as refugees or not. And we look at it as a right for this family to pick what they want for their child. We have appropriate programming that will meet the needs of the child. It's not to say there aren't challenges, but we come about it from a perspective that every family has the right to do what's best for their child, and we firmly believe that it's a

dialogue and relationship between the school and the family to best support those kids.
Stephanie, Central office staff, Manitoba.

Furthermore, a principal shared that although the FAL program is not specifically for refugee-background students or newcomer learners, the program has served several newcomer students over the years and contributed to the growing diversity in FI programs in the school division:

I would say that it has certainly positively impacted us. It has diversified us quite a bit at my school. And to be honest, as I'm reflecting on who I had as FAL students previously, I had a student from Palestine when I was a teacher, as well as one from the Congo. So, those being my other previous experiences, they were both refugee families. And so, yeah, I would say that it does diversify our school. *Alana, Principal, Manitoba.*

Notwithstanding such positive reflections on diversity and inclusion, some teachers discussed the challenges of accepting students into FI programs at all grade levels, as per the following:

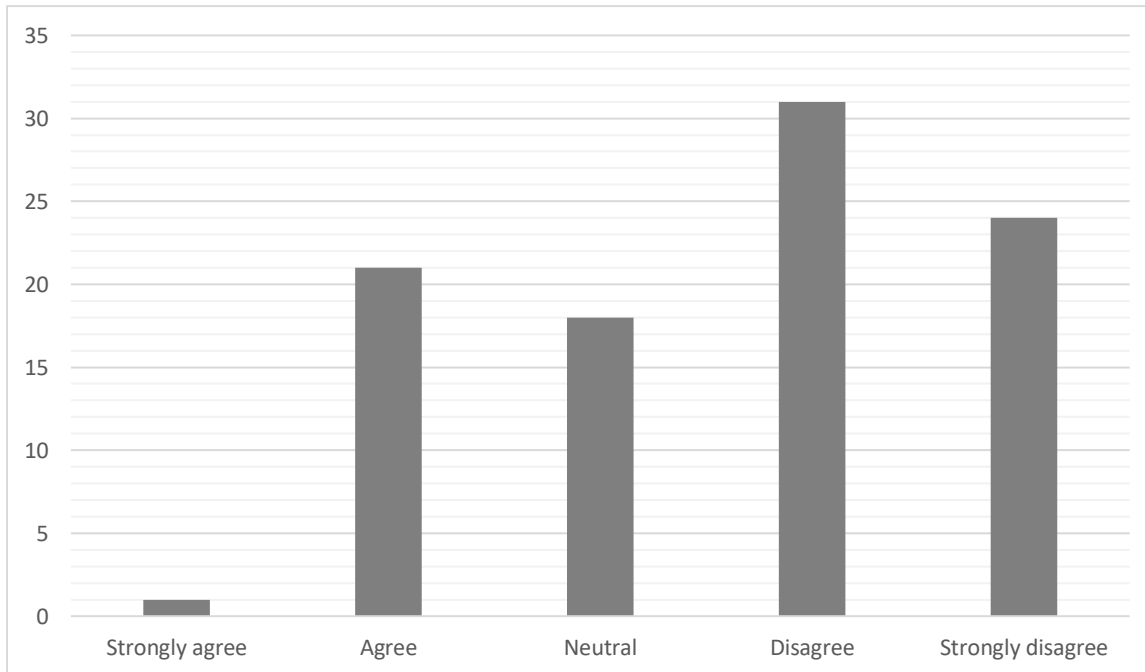
J'ai l'impression que tu le vois comme une vraiment bonne chose qu'on peut rentrer dans le programme n'importe quand. Je pense aussi que c'est une bonne chose; cependant, on n'a pas de soutien pour ces élèves... Il n'y a aucun soutien supplémentaire dans la division. Alors, je pense que c'est une très belle chose qu'on peut rentrer n'importe quand, mais je pense qu'on a besoin de quelque chose pour soutenir ces élèves. *Miranda, Teacher, Manitoba.*

I get the impression that you see this as a really good thing that one can enter the program whenever. I think it's a good thing, too; however, we don't have support for these students... There is no additional support in the division. So, I think it's a very nice thing that one can enter whenever, but I think we need something to support these students. *Miranda, Teacher, Manitoba.*

Indeed, the belief that refugee-background students were offered insufficient supports in FI programs was expressed resoundingly by educators throughout all eight school divisions; indeed, few survey participants (n=22) indicated that their school divisions were providing sufficient resources for refugee-background students, whereas many (n=55) disagreed (Figure 18). To summarize, educators from one school division in Manitoba discussed the FAL program as an equitable approach to include learners in FI at all grade levels; however, there is a tension between the existence of an inclusive policy and the lack of additional supports in FI programs.

Figure 18

I believe that my school division offers sufficient supports and resources for refugee-background students in French immersion programs.



4.6 Discussion

In the present study, I examined the perspectives of FI educators with respect to refugee-background students in eight school divisions across the Canadian Prairies. For the purposes of this paper, I focused on findings pertaining to the themes of diversity in FI programs, beliefs about the inclusion of refugee-background learners in FI programs, gatekeeping practices, and policy in FI programs. First, educators espoused the view that FI programs were becoming increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse. This perception has been documented in previous research (Lapkin et al., 2006). However, several educators expressed that FI programs were still less diverse than regular English programs. This finding corroborates research conducted in the Toronto District School Board, which found that white, English-speaking, Canadian-born students were overrepresented in FI programs relative to the broader student

population (Sinay, 2010; Sinay et al., 2018). It was not possible in this study to gather information about student demographics in FI programs; thus, future research must examine student diversity in FI programs across different regions of Canada to determine the extent to which such demographics have evolved over time. More importantly, if it is true that FI programs across Canada include disproportionately high numbers of white, English-speaking, Canadian born students relative to other programs, future research must explore whether this discrepancy in cultural and linguistic diversity is due to lack of interest amongst some populations, discrimination and exclusion in FI programs, or a combination of these issues.

Furthermore, some educators discussed the cultural and linguistic diversity of FI teachers, noting an overrepresentation of white, French-English bilingual, Canadian-born educators. Whereas the cultural and linguistic diversity and the migration history of participants was beyond the scope of this study, I found anecdotally that the FI educators who shared that they were racialized, multilingual, and immigrant-background themselves tended to espouse inclusive views toward refugee-background students and multilingual learners in FI programs. Thus, it seems to follow that racialized, multilingual, and newcomer teachers might be especially inclusive of refugee-background students and multilingual learners in FI programs because they might have similar cultural, linguistic, and newcomer backgrounds and experiences; this trend has been identified in mainstream English programs in Canada (Cho, 2016). However, refugee-background educators are not necessarily more inclusive or supportive of refugee-background students simply because of similar lived experiences (Feuerverger, 2011). Internationally, Schmidt and Schneider (2016) synthesized the myriad complexities of diversifying educators in Canada, the United States, Germany, Ireland, Scotland, and England and concluded that the employment of more immigrant-background and refugee-background teachers did not inherently

lead to greater inclusion of refugee-background students. In the Canadian FI context, it would be valuable for future research to explore the diversity of FI educators and the extent to which the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of teachers shape perspectives on diversity and inclusion.

Additionally, most educators affirmed that refugee-background students and newcomer learners should be included in FI programs. This finding corroborates previous research demonstrating that most educators believe that newcomer and multilingual learners should be included in FI programs, whereas a minority believes that they should be excluded (Bourgoin, 2016; Davis, 2019; Mady, 2016). Moreover, many educators discussed colleagues who opposed the inclusion of refugee-background students in FI programs, which suggests a self-selection bias for participating in this study. In my estimation, this represents an important limitation of this study, insofar as educators who opposed including refugee-background students in FI programs likely refrained from participating. I believe that most educators support the inclusion of refugee-background students in FI programs, although some are more apprehensive about including refugee-background students than other multilingual learners. Educators also expressed a preference for FI programs instead of core French programs for refugee-background students, as well as a preference for EFI over LFI. I suspect that most FI educators perceive EFI as the most effective French program for all students, regardless of language and migration background, and would likely recommend EFI for all learners. It is important to note that none of the eight school divisions offered LFI programs at the time of the study; thus, future research might compare the perceived suitability of EFI and LFI in divisions offering both programs.

Furthermore, participants described a variety of gatekeeping practices of FI educators, noting that principals often influenced the enrolment decisions of refugee-background families. The results of this study appear to reflect the findings of Mady and Masson (2018) with respect

to the diverse gatekeeping practices of FI principals. Namely, in the absence of official FI policy at the school division level, principals have a considerable amount of power and autonomy to determine the inclusion and exclusion of refugee-background students and multilingual learners. Studies have shown that racialized students are often streamed into non-academic, remedial programs in Canada (James, 2014; Kanu, 2008); thus, it stands to reason that this streaming might extend to the exclusion of refugee-background students from FI programs, insofar as many refugee-background students are racialized and FI is often perceived as an elite program (Kunnas, 2019, 2023). Moreover, the present study also found that administrators working in newcomer centres sometimes serve as gatekeepers in FI programs, both by not presenting FI as a viable option for refugee-background students and by actively discouraging such families from enrolling their children in FI programs. Further research is needed to explore the role of such centres in promoting FI programs for refugee-background students and multilingual learners.

Finally, the present study found that most educators believed that their school divisions had policies to ensure the inclusion of refugee-background students in FI programs but were largely unable to identify such policies. Moreover, with the exception of educators in a single school division in Manitoba, teachers were often unsure of the existence of official FI policies for refugee-background students or multilingual learners and instead described unofficial practices of inclusion. In my assessment, many educators likely overestimate the existence and implementation of inclusive policy and underestimate the frequency with which refugee-background students and multilingual learners are excluded from such programs. I believe that the single school division in Manitoba should be commended for its groundbreaking approach for accepting learners into FI programs at all grade levels and serves as an example of an inclusive policy, both for newcomer students and for Canadian-born learners. Nevertheless,

teachers in this school division are also right to express concern over the lack of supports and resources provided for students who enter FI programs at all grade levels. Evidently, the lack of supports for refugee-background students in schools is not limited to FI programs, but has been identified in many programs across Canada (Gagné et al., 2017; Zaidi et al., 2021). For a truly equitable policy for refugee-background students in FI programs, inclusion and support must go hand in hand. In the following subsection, I provide recommendations for school divisions to better include and support refugee-background students and multilingual learners in FI programs.

4.7 Recommendations for School Divisions

The results of the present study demonstrate that most educators believe that refugee-background students should be included in FI programs across the Canadian Prairies. However, many educators were unsure of the existence of official policy ensuring the inclusion of such learners in FI programs. Furthermore, nearly all participating educators across all eight school divisions expressed apprehension about the lack of supports and resources offered for refugee-background students and multilingual learners in FI programs. Drawing from the findings of this study, I advance five recommendations for school divisions seeking to better include and support refugee-background students and multilingual learners more broadly in FI programs. In my estimation, the following recommendations would contribute to more equitable and inclusive policies and practices in FI programs, which would not only benefit refugee-background students and multilingual learners, but many students who have historically been excluded from such programs. Finally, it is important to note that even white, English-speaking, Canadian-born students who already benefit from unquestioned inclusion in FI programs would benefit from greater cultural and linguistic diversity, equity, and inclusion in such programs across Canada.

4.7.1 Create Inclusive Policy in FI

First and foremost, I recommend that all school divisions across Canada create and implement official, written, public-facing policies to ensure the inclusion of refugee-background students and all multilingual learners in FI programs. More specifically, I would encourage school divisions to advertise publicly and explicitly that newcomer students and multilingual learners are welcome in FI programs, irrespective of country of origin and language background. I believe that one school division in Manitoba offers a promising example of equitable and inclusive policy by allowing for flexible entry points into FI programs. Further examples might include creating policies to ensure that educators and administrators working in newcomer centres and resettlement workers present FI programs as a viable option for refugee-background families and newcomer learners. Moreover, I would encourage school divisions to welcome multilingual families explicitly via websites, promotional materials, and information sessions for FI programs. Refugee-background families and multilingual families might already be allowed to enrol in FI programs, but creating official, written, public-facing policy would make this inclusion more consistent, equitable, and transparent across the school division.

4.7.2 Create Multilingual FI Promotional Materials

My second recommendation for school divisions seeking to better include and support refugee-background students and multilingual learners in FI programs is to create multilingual promotional materials for such programs. Promotional materials for FI programs have been found to reinforce the image of the FI student as white, Canadian-born, and English-speaking (Kunnas, 2019, 2023). While the analysis of promotional materials was beyond the scope of the present study, I have found that many school divisions offer information about regular English programs in multiple languages but only offer information about FI programs in English. I

believe that this practice implicitly reinforces the widespread myth of FI programs being most suitable for English-speaking families. Therefore, I would encourage school divisions to translate FI materials into some of the more common home languages of multilingual families in their communities. Finally, school divisions might consider providing interpretation services at FI information sessions to ensure that multilingual families understand the information presented.

4.7.3 Provide Greater Supports in FI

My third recommendation for school divisions is to provide greater supports and resources for refugee-background students and multilingual learners in FI programs. Many educators discussed the lack of supports offered for such learners in FI programs compared to those available in regular English programs, such as Resource support, English as an Additional Language (EAL) instruction, and counseling services. The disparity between the supports offered in FI programs and those offered in English programs perpetuates issues of elitism and exclusion, insofar as students requiring such supports often withdraw from FI programs. Therefore, I recommend that school divisions provide supports and resources in FI programs that are equivalent to those offered in regular English programs, which would not only benefit refugee-background students and multilingual learners, but all students in FI programs.

4.7.4 Plan for Multiple Entry Points into FI

In terms of my fourth recommendation, I would encourage school divisions to plan for multiple entry points into FI programs. For instance, it would be valuable for school divisions to offer both Early French immersion (EFI) and Late French immersion (LFI) programs to better include refugee-background students and multilingual learners. Whereas most educators indicated that they believe EFI to be more suitable than LFI for refugee-background students, LFI programs are important for newcomer students who migrate to Canada at an age considered

too old to enrol in EFI. In my estimation, offering both EFI and LFI programs would allow school divisions to include refugee-background students and newcomer learners in FI, in addition to Canadian-born students, at multiple grade levels and entry points.

4.7.5 Provide Professional Learning Opportunities in FI

My final recommendation for school divisions is to provide opportunities for learning and professional development focusing on refugee-background students and multilingual learners in FI programs. The findings of this research suggest that most educators wish to include and support refugee-background students and multilingual learners in FI programs, but that many are unfamiliar with the research pertaining to the language learning of such students (Bourgoin & Dicks, 2019; Knouzi & Mady, 2017; Mady, 2015). Therefore, I call for school divisions to develop professional learning opportunities pertaining to the inclusion of newcomer students in FI and the pedagogical practices that might empower multilingual learners in such programs. For instance, educators and researchers are beginning to examine the possibilities of cross-linguistic pedagogical (XLP) approaches (Ballinger et al., 2020; Lyster et al., 2009, 2013) and plurilingual approaches (Cormier, 2020; Prasad, 2015, 2018, 2020) in FI programs in Canada. Therefore, educators would likely benefit from professional learning opportunities exploring the implications of XLP and plurilingual pedagogical approaches for refugee-background students and multilingual learners in FI programs, both as leaders and as participants. Moreover, school divisions might consider offering professional development for educators and administrators working in newcomer student centres in order to dispel myths surrounding multilingual learners in FI programs. Providing professional learning opportunities for educators in FI programs, as well as for those working with newcomer students and multilingual learners, would lead to more inclusive perspectives, policies, and pedagogical approaches in FI programs across Canada.

4.8 Conclusion

The present transformative mixed-methods study explored the perspectives of educators with respect to refugee-background students in FI programs in eight school divisions across the Canadian Prairies. In this paper, I examined the perspectives and ideologies of FI educators pertaining to the key findings of diversity, inclusion, gatekeeping, and policy. Through the triangulation of survey and interview data, I found that most educators believed that refugee-background students should be included in FI programs, but that many participants were wary of the lack of supports and resources that such learners receive in FI. Adopting the theoretical framework of sociolinguistics for change, I advocate for school divisions to implement five key recommendations, creating inclusive and official FI policy, developing multilingual promotional materials for FI programs, providing greater supports and resources in FI programs, offering both EFI and LFI and planning for flexible entry into FI programs, and offering professional development sessions and learning opportunities focusing on refugee-background students.

I believe that this study contributes to a greater understanding of the perspectives of FI educators with respect to refugee-background students, an important and often overlooked student population in Canada, across the underexamined region of the Canadian Prairies. However, the implications of this research extend beyond refugee-background students and beyond the provinces of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta. Indeed, the critical disconnect between the ideologies around inclusion and the misgivings about the supports in FI programs is deeply problematic for all students who have historically been excluded and unsupported in such programs, including newcomer students, multilingual learners, racialized students, and students with special needs. Inclusion and support are inextricably bound to one another, and educators

and school divisions seeking to more equitably serve students who have been excluded from FI programs must create inclusive policy and provide greater supports for such learners.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

In the present study, I explored the perspectives and ideologies of educators with respect to refugee-background students in FI programs in eight school divisions across the Canadian Prairies. I believe that this research contributes to a greater understanding of the perspectives of FI educators pertaining to refugee-background students, a population of multilingual learners who have historically been overlooked in FI research and who are growing in number across Canada (Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, 2023). Adopting the theoretical framework of sociolinguistics for change, I examined several ideologies of FI educators, including deficit discourses surrounding refugee-background students and critical tensions between inclusion and support. While I focused on the perspectives of FI educators with respect to refugee-background students across the Canadian Prairies, I believe that the findings of this study have important implications for educators and researchers throughout Canada.

In this concluding chapter, I synthesize the findings and contributions of the present study and discuss the implications of this research for school divisions and for future inquiry. To begin, I summarize the findings and discuss the contributions of this study with respect to the following four themes: first, perspectives on diversity and suitability of FI programs; second, discourses pertaining to the learning and challenges of refugee-background students in FI programs; third, perspectives surrounding inclusion and gatekeeping in FI programs; and fourth, findings related to resources and policy in FI programs. Subsequently, I advocate for educators and school divisions to implement four key recommendations to create more equitable and inclusive FI programs for all learners, expanding on ideas discussed in previous chapters. Finally, I conclude the present dissertation by proposing new directions for future research with diverse populations of refugee-background students and multilingual learners in FI programs across Canada.

5.1 Discussion of Research Findings and Contributions

In the first section of this concluding chapter, I synthesize key findings of the present study and discuss the contributions of this research to broader FI scholarship in Canada. In *Chapter 3: Refugee-Background Learners in Canadian French Immersion Programs*, I focused on the perspectives and ideologies of FI educators pertaining to the perceived suitability of FI programs for refugee-background students, the learning of such students, the challenges facing refugee-background students, and the resources offered in FI programs. Subsequently, in *Chapter 4: French Immersion Programs for Refugee-background Students in Canada*, I examined findings pertaining to diversity in FI programs, beliefs about the inclusion of refugee-background students in FI, gatekeeping practices, and FI policy. In this more expansive discussion and conclusion chapter, I integrate the eight findings to focus on the following four overarching conclusions of this study: first, perspectives on diversity and suitability of FI programs; second, discourses regarding the learning and challenges of refugee-background students in FI; third, perspectives on inclusion and gatekeeping; and fourth, resources and policy in FI programs.

5.1.1 Refugee-Background Students in FI: Diversity and Suitability

The majority of educators expressed in interviews that FI programs were becoming increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse as a result of the growing presence of multilingual learners in such programs. This widespread perspective amongst FI educators corroborates previous research (Lapkin et al., 2006). Furthermore, many educators affirmed in surveys and interviews that FI programs were appropriate for newcomer learners, whereas a small number of educators disagreed. This trend appears consistent with other survey-based research with FI educators (Davis, 2019; Davis et al., 2019; Mady & Masson, 2018). However, educators were slightly less confident in the suitability of FI programs for refugee-background

students than for newcomer learners, which suggests that some educators are more apprehensive about the suitability of FI for refugee-background students than for newcomer learners generally. Moreover, most educators indicated through surveys and interviews that while all French programs were suitable for refugee-background students, EFI programs were more appropriate than LFI or core French programs. The most common reason given for this preference was that EFI programs would allow such students to start learning French intensively from an early age.

Although all interview participants espoused the view that FI was more culturally and linguistically diverse than in years past, several noted that such programs remained less diverse than regular English programs. Specifically, many teachers, principals, and central office staff members across all three provinces shared that refugee-background students, newcomer learners, and Indigenous students were more commonly enrolled in English programs than in FI programs. This finding was also documented in a study conducted in the TDSB, which demonstrated that FI students were disproportionately white, English-speaking, and Canadian-born compared to the broader student population in Toronto (Sinay, 2010; Sinay et al., 2018). Finally, some teachers discussed the overrepresentation of white, French-English bilingual, Canadian-born educators in FI programs as an example of the lack of cultural and linguistic diversity in such programs. Whereas the diversity of FI educators was beyond the scope of this research, I found that nearly all of the racialized, multilingual, and immigrant or refugee-background educator participants in this study affirmed the suitability of FI programs for refugee-background students. Therefore, I theorize that racialized, multilingual, and immigrant or refugee-background teachers are likely especially inclusive and refugee-background students and multilingual learners in FI programs because they might share similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds and experiences. In their important study examining the ideologies of educators and teacher candidates in Ontario with

respect to multilingual learners, Bale et al. (2023) found that the ideologies of teacher candidates tended to adhere to a hierarchy of languages in Canada, even when the educators were themselves multilingual. Thus, the diversification of FI educators would not inherently and instantaneously lead to more inclusion and support for refugee-background students; however, greater diversity amongst FI educators might contribute to changing the enduring myths surrounding refugee-background students and multilingual learners in FI programs. I therefore call for future research exploring the extent to which FI teachers' cultural and linguistic backgrounds shape their perspectives and practices with respect to the inclusion of refugee-background students and multilingual learners in FI programs. In summary, educators across the Canadian Prairies expressed that FI programs were becoming increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse; nevertheless, several educators espoused the view that FI programs were less diverse than regular English programs in terms of both student and teacher demographics.

5.1.2 Refugee-Background Students in FI: Learning and Challenges

The present study contributes to a greater understanding of FI educators' perspectives with respect to the learning of refugee-background students and the challenges they encounter. In terms of the language learning of refugee-background students, most educators expressed through surveys and interviews such students were capable of learning both French and English effectively in FI programs. Nevertheless, some educators shared that refugee-background students who are facing significant challenges might find FI programs overly burdensome. The challenges described by FI educators in this study – traumatic experiences, violent conflicts, mental health issues, poverty, malnourishment, interrupted schooling, family separation, language barriers, and social isolation – have been documented previously amongst refugee-background learners in Canada (Bahi & Piquemal, 2013; Guo et al., 2019; MacNevin, 2012;

Massfeller & Hamm, 2019; Massing et al., 2023; Schroeter & James, 2015; Stewart et al., 2019; Wilkinson, 2001), as well as in the United States (Dryden-Peterson, 2011, 2022; McBrien et al., 2017; Salva, 2021). While many refugee-background students encounter some of the above challenges, researchers have found that educators sometimes essentialize the experiences of such learners and families in a trauma discourse (Cho et al., 2019; Lunneblad, 2017). Furthermore, there is a problematic tendency for educators and researchers alike to emphasize the challenges and difficulties of refugee-background students and families and overlook their numerous strengths (Lunneblad, 2017; Massing et al., 2023). Therefore, educators and researchers alike must remember that all refugee-background families have unique lived experiences and diverse journeys to Canada, bringing with them a wealth of experiences and learning resources.

The implication seems to be that some refugee-background students might be capable of learning French and English in FI programs if they do not face overwhelming challenges in life, whereas those encountering significant difficulties will likely find learning in FI to be an insurmountable obstacle. Thus, some educators framed FI programs as an excellent opportunity for students without difficulties, but an unnecessary burden for learners facing challenges. This finding corroborates research about elitism in FI programs, including the pervasive idea that such programs are best suited for students without special learning needs (Kunnas, 2023; Wise, 2011). I theorize that some educators perceive refugee-background students as the confluence of several real or imagined challenges, including diverse linguistic repertoires and special learning needs. Educators might believe that some multilingual learners and some students with special needs can learn effectively in FI programs, but that refugee-background students who are perceived to have both diverse linguistic backgrounds and special needs will likely find FI overwhelming.

In my estimation, the ideology of French as an unnecessary burden for refugee-background students is reflected in one superintendent's account of colleagues discussing why FI programs might be inappropriate for students arriving from Ukraine: "They've got enough on their plate." This perspective is rooted in deficit ideologies about refugee-background students, many of which have been examined by other researchers working in other educational contexts, both in Canada and beyond (Cho et al., 2019; Schroeter & James, 2014; Shapiro, 2014; Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017). In this study, the deficit ideologies of some educators were intertwined with English-first ideologies. For instance, educators who believed that refugee-background students might be unable to learn two languages simultaneously tended to espouse the view that such learners should focus on English, the majority language of the Canadian Prairies. In the context of the United States, Warriner (2016) identified similar English-first ideologies that shaped the educational policies and pedagogical practices surrounding refugee-background students. The ideology that refugee-background students face such great challenges that they will be unable to learn French and English in FI programs is completely unsubstantiated by research. Throughout the history of FI research, scholars have not identified a single factor – such as socioeconomic background, linguistic repertoire, or learning disability – that can consistently predict academic difficulty or failure in FI programs (Genesee, 2007; Wise, 2011). Furthermore, this ideology also ignores the fact that refugee-background students and families often come from countries where multilingualism is the everyday reality (UNHCR, 2022). In summary, while most educators believe that refugee-background students can learn French and English effectively in FI programs, some erroneously believe that the challenges facing such learners sometimes make language learning in FI programs untenable. The ideology that refugee-background students will find FI programs insurmountably difficult serves to exclude and

discriminate against these learners and has no basis in language learning research. Educators and researchers alike must identify and dismantle this pervasive ideology.

5.1.3 Refugee-Background Students in FI: Inclusion and Gatekeeping

Inclusion and gatekeeping were central and interrelated areas of findings in this study. Most educators expressed that refugee-background students should be included in FI programs, whereas a small number of participants indicated that such learners should be excluded in certain cases. This finding is consistent with previous research examining the perspectives of educators pertaining to multilingual learners in FI programs (Bourgoin, 2016; Davis et al., 2019, 2021; Mady, 2016; Mady & Masson, 2018). For some educators, the age and grade level of the students were important considerations, as some participants stated that no students should be admitted to FI programs after Grade 1. It is also interesting that several educators shared that their colleagues opposed the inclusion of refugee-background students in FI programs, which I believe is indicative of a self-selection bias for participating in this study. As discussed previously, this represents a limitation of this study, insofar as educators who were opposed to including refugee-background students in FI programs likely chose not to participate in the first place. Additionally, some educators might not have truly believed that refugee-background students should be included in FI but felt pressure to express this perspective, as suggested by the number of participants who stated that they had been told that they were not allowed to exclude any students from the program. Thus, it is difficult to know how many educators genuinely believe that refugee-background students should be included in FI programs versus how many teachers express this inclusive view out of a sense of obligation or an interpretation of FI policy.

In terms of gatekeeping in FI programs, many teachers espoused the view that they were not allowed to influence enrolment decisions but that principals often served as gatekeepers. This

supports the findings of Mady and Masson (2018) as they pertain to the diverse gatekeeping roles that FI principals often play, especially in the absence of official policy in school divisions. The vast majority of educators affirmed that the parents of refugee-background students should be able to select the program of study for their children; however, some educators also believe that teachers and principals should have the authority to include or exclude such learners from FI programs. Furthermore, several educators shared that the primary gatekeepers in FI programs were not necessarily FI teachers or principals, but rather administrators and central office staff who did not work closely with FI programs. Indeed, educators in several school divisions across Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta shared that the staff working in newcomer centres often excluded refugee-background students from FI programs, both by not presenting information about FI to refugee-background families and by actively discouraging parents from enrolling their children in such programs. To be sure, I believe that newcomer centre staff who dissuade refugee-background and newcomer families from enrolling their children in FI programs almost certainly believe that they are acting in the best interests of such learners. I found that the newcomer centre staff in many school divisions often worked closely with EAL educators, but not with FI educators or with teachers in other language programs. Therefore, newcomer centre staff are likely understandably focused on the English language learning of newcomer, multilingual students and may not know that such learners tend to develop strong French and English language proficiency in FI programs (Bourgoin & Dicks, 2019; Dagenais, 2008; Knouzi & Mady, 2017; Mady, 2015; Moore, 2010). I believe that there is a significant disconnect in many school divisions between the inclusive perspectives of many FI educators towards refugee-background students and the exclusionary practices of many newcomer centre staff members.

5.1.4 Refugee-Background Students in FI: Policy and Supports

The present study also generated findings pertaining to policy and supports in FI programs. Most educators could not identify a formal, official FI policy for including refugee-background students or for newcomer, multilingual learners more broadly. Rather, educators referred to an unofficial, de facto policy in their school divisions of including all interested students in FI programs, as demonstrated by the number of teachers, principals, and central office staff who discussed standard practices of welcoming everyone. Interestingly, most educators indicated in survey responses that their school divisions had equitable policy for including refugee-background students in FI programs, but could not identify such a policy in interviews. In my estimation, this appears to suggest that many educators believe that their school divisions do have official policies, or that they believe that the de facto policy is sufficiently equitable. Additionally, educators might feel that the de facto policy is theoretically inclusive, but that their school divisions do not sufficiently promote FI programs for refugee-background students and multilingual learners. Educators likely overestimate the existence of inclusive FI policy and underestimate the frequency with which refugee-background students are excluded from such programs. Indeed, the lack of inclusive policy and frequent exclusion of multilingual learners from FI programs have been documented extensively across Canada (Bourgoin, 2016; Davis, 2019; Mady & Masson, 2018; Roy, 2015). In contrast, some educators were critical about the lack of official policy in their school divisions and believed that such policies should be created.

Whereas the educators in seven out of eight school divisions were unable to identify official policies for including refugee-background students or newcomer, multilingual learners in FI programs, educators in one school division in Manitoba did discuss a policy. To be clear, the policy of accepting students into FI programs at all grade levels is not exclusively for refugee-

background students or multilingual learners; however, educators shared that this approach serves many newcomer learners and families, especially those who arrive in Canada after the traditional entry points of Kindergarten or Grade 1. In my estimation, educators in this school division should be commended for creating and implementing such an inclusive policy for FI programs, even though the provincial government provides no additional support. While it is true that educators in this division expressed concern over the lack of additional support provided for these learners, I believe that this school division is one of few divisions across the Canadian Prairies that has created an inclusive policy, imperfect though it may be. Indeed, this school division should be recognized for striving to uphold the French language rights of all learners.

Finally, this research also contributed to a greater understanding of the perspectives and ideologies of educators with respect to the supports and resources in FI programs. To this end, nearly all educators in all eight school divisions across Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba expressed resoundingly that the supports offered for refugee-background students in FI programs were insufficient. For instance, educators across all eight school divisions shared that regular English programs still offered more Resource support, EAL instruction, educational assistants, and counselling services than FI programs. In this vein, some educators explained that although refugee-background students might initially be included in FI programs, such families often withdraw their children from FI programs because of the dearth of supports and resources. The trend of parents withdrawing children from FI programs because of insufficient resources is consistent with research on student attrition (Bourgoin, 2014; Nazzicone, 2017). Evidently, school divisions face complex challenges in providing sufficient resources in FI programs; however, for as long as greater supports are offered in English programs than in FI programs, the cycle of elitism and exclusion will continue to repeat itself. It is not enough for school divisions

to declare FI programs inclusive through official policy alone; policy and support are inextricably bound together, and must work hand in hand to create truly equitable FI programs.

In summary, the present study contributes to a greater understanding of the perspectives and ideologies of FI educators with respect to refugee-background students in eight school divisions across the Canadian Prairies. Many of the themes and findings of this research are interrelated and provide an overview of FI programs in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta. While I focused on the perspectives of FI educators pertaining to refugee-background students, I hope that this research might offer insights into broader issues of equity and inclusion in FI programs and advocate for the inclusion and support of all multilingual learners across Canada.

5.2 Recommendations for School Divisions

In the present study, I found that most educators believe that FI programs are appropriate for refugee-background students and that they should be included in such programs across the Canadian Prairies. Nevertheless, educators were largely unable to identify official policies ensuring the inclusion of refugee-background students in FI programs, and nearly all educators expressed concern over the lack of supports offered to such learners in FI programs. In *Chapter 4: French Immersion Programs for Refugee-background Students in Canada*, I advanced five specific recommendations for school divisions to implement to create more equitable and inclusive FI programs. In this conclusion chapter, I revisit and expand upon the five recommendations for greater clarity and emphasis. In my estimation, the following five recommendations would not only benefit refugee-background students, but many newcomer students and multilingual learners who have historically been excluded from FI programs.

5.2.1 Create Inclusive Policy in FI

My first recommendation for school divisions across Canada is to create official, written public-facing policies to ensure the inclusion of refugee-background students and multilingual learners in FI programs. Such policies might vary from one school division to another, but they must be written, followed, and implemented by educators at all levels in the school division. Inclusive FI policies must ensure that the educators and administrative staff in newcomer centres and in schools offer information about FI programs to families and present FI as a viable option for refugee-background students and multilingual learners. It is also important for such policies to be public-facing. Refugee-background and newcomer families might technically be allowed to enrol their children in FI programs, but they may not be aware of this right because this option is not advertised widely and explicitly in school division documents. Furthermore, inclusive FI policies must include planning for resources to support learners in FI programs in the event that they encounter challenges, lest they withdraw from FI due to lack of support. In my estimation, creating an inclusive policy for FI programs serves not only refugee-background students and multilingual learners, but all students who might otherwise be excluded from such programs.

5.2.2 Create Multilingual FI Promotional Materials

My second recommendation for school divisions seeking to better include and support refugee-background students and multilingual learners in FI programs is to create multilingual promotional materials for such programs. Promotional materials for FI programs have been found to reinforce the image of the FI student as white, Canadian-born, and English-speaking (Kunnas, 2019, 2023). While the analysis of promotional materials was beyond the scope of the present study, I have found anecdotally that many school divisions offer information about regular English programs in multiple languages but only offer information about FI programs in

English. I believe that the practice of only providing information about FI programs in English implicitly reinforces the widespread myth that FI programs are most suitable for English-speaking families and tacitly directs multilingual families away from such programs. Therefore, I would encourage school divisions to translate FI materials into some of the more common home languages of multilingual families in their communities, which many school divisions have already done for mainstream programs and for EAL programs. Finally, school divisions might consider providing interpretation and translation services at FI information sessions to ensure that multilingual families understand the information presented.

5.2.3 Provide Greater Supports in FI

For my third recommendation, I advocate for school divisions to provide greater supports and resources for refugee-background students FI programs. To be sure, refugee-background students would benefit from greater supports and resources in all educational programs across Canada (Gagné et al., 2017; Zaidi et al., 2021). However, I argue that the dearth of supports for refugee-background students in FI programs is particularly dire, as several educators across Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta expressed that more resources were available in mainstream English programs than in FI programs. More specifically, educators shared that many instructional and human supports – such as Resource support, EAL instruction, educational assistants, and counselling services – were more widely available in English programs than in FI programs, which perpetuates elitism and exclusion in FI programs (Wise, 2011). For this reason, I recommend that school divisions provide supports in FI programs that are equivalent to the resources offered in English programs, which I believe would mitigate attrition and exclusion from FI programs. In my estimation, providing greater supports would not only benefit refugee-background students and multilingual learners, but all students in FI programs.

5.2.4 Offer Diverse FI Programs and Allow for Flexible Entry

I encourage school divisions to offer diverse FI programs and allow for flexible entry, including both EFI and LFI programs. While most educators in the present study indicated that EFI programs were the most suitable for refugee-background students, I believe that LFI programs are valuable for newcomer students who migrate to Canada in older grade levels and therefore would not have had the opportunity to study in EFI programs. In my estimation, offering both EFI and LFI would allow refugee-background students and multilingual families to enrol their children in EFI programs in early grade levels, while accommodating newcomer families who arrive in Canada with children in older grade levels in LFI programs. School divisions might also consider following example of the single school division in Manitoba by creating an FAL program to accept students into FI programs at all grade levels. Offering LFI programs and allowing for flexible entry points into FI programs would serve newcomer students and Canadian-born learners alike; however, this recommendation is especially important for families who arrive with children in grade levels deemed too old to begin learning in EFI programs, as this would be the only option for such learners to study in immersion.

5.2.5 Provide Professional Learning Opportunities in FI

The findings of the present study demonstrate that most educators wish to include and support refugee-background students and multilingual learners in FI programs. However, my research suggests that many FI educators are unfamiliar with the research focusing on such students. Therefore, my fifth recommendation for school divisions is to provide professional learning opportunities focusing on refugee-background students and multilingual learners in FI programs. Professional development sessions might address such topics as language diversity, classroom language policy, and plurilingual pedagogies. Furthermore, my research suggests that

there is often a lack of collaboration and communication between FI educators and teachers and administrators working in newcomer student centres. Therefore, I would recommend that school divisions offer professional learning opportunities for FI educators and for staff members who work closely with newcomer learners so that all educators and administrators might collaborate to better include and support refugee-background students and multilingual learners in FI programs. I believe that offering professional learning opportunities for FI educators and for those working closely with refugee-background and multilingual learners will result in more inclusive and equitable perspectives, policies, and pedagogies in FI programs.

5.3 Future Research with Refugee-Background Students and Families in FI

In *Chapter 2: Multilingual Learners in Canadian French Immersion Programs*, I synthesized post-millennial research with multilingual learners in FI programs and proposed new areas of research in such programs: first, intersections of race, migration, and language; and second, plurilingual education. In light of the growing number of multilingual learners in Canada, I believe that both areas of inquiry will be important for the future of FI programs. Moreover, the present study illuminates the need for further research with refugee-background students in FI programs in Canada. In this conclusion chapter, I propose areas of future inquiry with refugee-background students and families in Canadian FI programs.

In terms of research further examining perspectives and ideologies, scholars might explore the perspectives of FI educators in different provinces and territories of Canada. Furthermore, researchers might focus on the perspectives of FI educators as they pertain to specific groups of refugee-background students. For instance, do educators believe that FI programs are more appropriate for refugee-background students from certain countries or regions than from others? To what extent do factors such as country of origin, age, language, and race

shape the perspectives of FI educators with respect to refugee-background students? Moreover, I suspect that FI educators who are multilingual, racialized, and immigrant and refugee-background themselves are likely especially inclusive of refugee-background students because they might share similar backgrounds and experiences. Indeed, this trend has been identified by studies in educational programs in Canada and beyond (Cho, 2016; Schmidt & Schneider, 2016). Researchers could examine the diversification of FI educators and the extent to which their identities influence perspectives towards refugee-background students in FI programs. Finally, I recommended that school divisions provide professional learning opportunities for FI educators focusing on refugee-background students. Therefore, scholars might explore the creation of professional development in this area and its impact on the perspectives of educators.

Furthermore, scholars must also examine the language learning of refugee-background students in FI programs. Researchers have found that multilingual learners tend to develop strong French and English language proficiency in FI programs (Bourgoin & Dicks, 2019; Dagenais & Moore, 2008; Knouzi & Mady, 2017; Mady, 2015; Turnbull et al., 2001). Moreover, newcomer, multilingual students often outperform Canadian-born, multilingual learners in FI, suggesting an “immigrant advantage” (Knouzi & Mady, 2017; Mady, 2015). Therefore, scholars must examine the language learning successes and difficulties of refugee-background students in FI programs in light of the distinct challenges that such learners sometimes face. To be clear, I believe that refugee-background students must have the right to learn in FI programs in Canada, irrespective of language learning outcomes and academic achievement; however, some school divisions will be more compelled to include such students if their learning outcomes can be demonstrated.

In addition to research examining the French and English language learning of refugee-background students in FI programs, researchers must explore plurilingual pedagogical

approaches in such programs. Plurilingual pedagogical approaches, including pedagogical translanguaging, are widespread worldwide and represent an important area of scholarship in a variety of language education contexts for educators and researchers alike (García, 2009; García & Wei, 2014; García et al., 2021; Lau & Van Viegen, 2020; Williams, 1996). Scholars have created and implemented several plurilingual pedagogical approaches in French language programs in Canada (Armand et al. 2008; Dagenais et al., 2007, 2008; Lory & Armand, 2015); however, research examining plurilingual pedagogical approaches in FI programs has only begun to emerge as an important area of scholarship in recent years (Cormier, 2020; Prasad, 2015, 2018, 2020; Zaidi et al., 2022). Scholars have explored the numerous language learning benefits of cross-linguistic pedagogical (XLP) approaches in FI programs, such as bilingual read-aloud projects that facilitate cross-linguistic transfer and metalinguistic awareness (Ballinger et al., 2020; Lyster et al., 2009, 2013). Further research is needed to explore plurilingual pedagogical approaches beyond the binary of French and English in FI programs and the implications thereof for refugee-background students and all multilingual learners. Plurilingual pedagogical approaches drawing from the diverse linguistic repertoires of multilingual learners, including Indigenous languages and non-official immigrant languages, might serve such learners by valuing their rich cultural and linguistic knowledge while enhancing and strengthening their French language learning.

Finally, further research is critically needed with respect to the inclusion of refugee-background students in FI programs. Researchers have found that multilingual learners are often excluded from FI on the basis of ostensibly low English proficiency (Bourgoin, 2016; Davis et al., 2019; Mady & Masson, 2018; Roy, 2015). In light of the findings of the present study, I suspect that refugee-background students are likely excluded from FI programs more frequently

than other multilingual learners, insofar as educators might be influenced both by English-first ideologies and by deficit discourses pertaining to refugee-background students. Scholars must examine the creation and implementation of policy ensuring the inclusion and support of refugee-background students in FI programs, both within individual school divisions and at the provincial and territorial level. In summary, I believe that the present study contributed to a greater understanding of the experiences of refugee-background students and families in FI programs, but there is much more to explore with respect to such learners in FI across Canada.

5.4 Conclusion

In the present study, I explored the perspectives and ideologies of educators with respect to refugee-background students in FI programs in eight school divisions across the Canadian Prairies. First, in *Chapter 1: Introduction*, I provided a historical, pedagogical, and political overview of FI programs and discussed the sociolinguistic context of the Canadian Prairies. Furthermore, I summarized research pertaining to the education and integration of refugee-background students in Canada, situated my study within the research paradigm of critical research and the theoretical framework of sociolinguistics for change, and reflected on my positionality and experiences with FI programs and refugee-background students and families.

In *Chapter 2: Multilingual Learners in Canadian French Immersion Programs*, the first of three papers comprising this manuscript-style dissertation, I synthesized post-millennial scholarship examining the inclusion and learning of multilingual learners in Canadian FI programs. More specifically, I focused on the four domains of language-in-education policy, educator perspectives, motivation of multilingual learners and families to learn both French and English in Canada, and language learning of multilingual learners. Moreover, I proposed two

emerging areas for future inquiry with multilingual learners, including the diverse intersections of language, race, and migration, as well as plurilingual education in FI programs across Canada.

Subsequently, in *Chapter 3: Refugee-Background Learners in Canadian French Immersion Programs*, the second of three peer-reviewed journal manuscripts in this dissertation, I presented the qualitative and quantitative findings of this research examining the perspectives and ideologies of educators regarding refugee-background students in FI programs. Drawing from both survey and interview data, this chapter focuses on the perspectives and ideologies of educators pertaining to the suitability of FI for refugee-background students, the learning of such students, the challenges facing refugee-background students, and the supports and resources offered in FI programs. My analysis uncovered several unexamined ideologies of FI educators, including English-first ideologies, deficit ideologies about refugee-background students, and ideological tensions pertaining to inclusion and support.

Chapter 4: French Immersion Programs for Refugee-Background Students in Canada, the second data-driven results chapter and the third peer-reviewed manuscript in this dissertation, examined further survey and interview data from this research according to four additional findings. Whereas there is some overlap between Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 as it pertains to the literature reviews and the descriptions of the methodological approach, this chapter presented distinct survey and interview data focusing more directly on issues of inclusion and policy in FI programs. Specifically, I explored the perspectives and ideologies of educators with respect to diversity in FI programs, beliefs about the inclusion of refugee-background students, gatekeeping practices, and FI policy. Additionally, I discussed the findings of this research and advanced five recommendations for school divisions seeking to create equitable and inclusive FI programs for refugee-background students and for multilingual learners more broadly.

Finally, in *Chapter 5: Conclusion*, I discussed the findings of this study by exploring the eight interconnected findings from a new perspective. Moreover, in keeping with the nature of critical research, I discussed the contributions of my study to the advancement of knowledge and advocated for systemic change in school divisions across Canada. In this vein, I expanded upon my five recommendations for school divisions to adapt FI programs for refugee-background students and multilingual learners, which I believe would result in greater inclusion and support of all students who have historically been excluded from FI programs. To conclude, I proposed new areas of inquiry with refugee-background students in FI programs.

French immersion programs are at an important crossroads in Canada. Historically, such programs have predominantly served Canadian-born, English-speaking families in their pursuit of official-language bilingualism. However, student demographics are becoming more culturally and linguistically diverse, due in large part to increased global migration to Canada. Educators, researchers, and policy developers alike must explore the critical question of how to create more equitable and inclusive FI programs for refugee-background students, for multilingual learners, and for all students who have historically been excluded and underrepresented in such programs. My hope is that the present study will not only contribute to a greater understanding of the experiences of refugee-background students in FI programs and lead to systemic change to better include and support these learners in such programs across the Canadian Prairies, but will serve to inspire transformative research in language education throughout Canada and beyond.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Questions

Demographic Questions

1. Which of the following options best describes the context of your school division?
2. Which of the following options best describes your current position?
3. How many years have you taught in French immersion programs?

Suitability of French Immersion

4. I believe that French immersion is a suitable program for all students.
5. I believe that French immersion is a suitable program for newcomer students.
6. I believe that French immersion is a suitable program for students with limited English language proficiency.
7. I believe that French immersion is a suitable program for refugee-background students.
8. Would you like to add any comments about the suitability of French immersion?

Perspectives on Programs

9. I believe that Early French Immersion (EFI) is a more suitable program than Late French Immersion (LFI) for refugee-background students.
10. I believe that Late French Immersion (LFI) is a more suitable program than Early French Immersion (EFI) for refugee-background students.
11. I believe that French immersion is a more suitable program than core French for refugee-background students.
12. I believe that core French is a more suitable program than French immersion for refugee-background students.
13. Would you like to add any comments about different French language programs?

Language Learning

14. I believe that refugee-background students typically develop strong French language proficiency in French immersion.
15. I believe that refugee-background students typically develop strong English language proficiency in French immersion.
16. I believe that refugee-background students should learn English before enrolling in French immersion programs.
17. I believe that refugee-background students have advantages learning languages in French immersion compared to Canadian-born students.
18. I believe that refugee-background students have disadvantages learning languages in French immersion compared to Canadian-born students.
19. Would you like to add any comments about the language learning of refugee-background students in French immersion programs?

Support and Inclusion

20. I believe that the parents of refugee-background students should be able to choose the program of study for their children.
21. I believe that teachers and school administrators should be able to decide whether to include or exclude refugee-background students from French immersion programs.
22. I believe that my school division has an equitable policy regarding the inclusion of refugee-background students in French immersion programs.
23. I believe that my school division offers sufficient supports and resources for refugee-background students in French immersion programs.

24. I believe that my school division must offer greater supports and resources for refugee-background students in French immersion programs.

25. Would you like to add any comments regarding supports, resources, policy, and inclusion in French immersion programs?

Appendix B: Sample Interview Questions

Introduction Questions

1. What is your position in this school division?
2. How long have you worked in French immersion programs?
3. Could you tell me about your career and teaching experience?

French Immersion Questions

4. Could you tell me about the language programs offered in your school division?
5. Could you tell me about the French immersion programs offered in your school division?
6. Could you tell me about the French immersion program offered at your school?

Student Diversity Questions

7. Could you tell me about the student demographics in the French immersion program?
8. Would you consider the French immersion program culturally and linguistically diverse?
9. Could you tell me about your experiences working with newcomer students?

Refugee-Background Student Questions

10. Could you tell me about some of the refugee-background students at your school?
11. Could you tell me about the languages that the refugee-background students speak?
12. Could you tell me about your experiences working with refugee-background students?
13. Could you tell me about the integration process for refugee-background students?
14. Could you tell me about the language learning of refugee-background students?
15. What do you think are some of the challenges facing refugee-background students?
16. Do you think that refugee-background students and families are interested in French immersion programs in your school division? Why or why not?

17. Do you think that refugee-background students can learn and succeed in French immersion programs in your school division? Why or why not?
18. Do you think that French immersion can be a suitable program for refugee-background students? Why or why not?
19. Do you think that refugee-background students should be included in French immersion programs? Why or why not?

Policy Questions

20. Could you tell me about your school division's policy or standard practice for enrolment in French immersion programs?
21. How are decisions made in your school or school division around enrolment in French immersion?
22. How would you advise refugee-background families who ask you about the suitability of French immersion programs for their children?

Resource Questions

23. Could you tell me about the resources that are offered to refugee-background students?
24. Could you tell me about the resources that are offered to students in French immersion?
25. Could you tell me about other supports and resources that you think might be beneficial for refugee-background students and families in French immersion programs?