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# A Case Study of Pedagogical Practices and Learning Environment in an Ontario Francophone Child Care Centre

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Education

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A CASE STUDY OF PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES AND LEARNING  
ENVIRONMENT IN AN ONTARIO FRANCOPHONE CHILD CARE CENTRE

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Alan David Russette

Graduate Program in Education

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education

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## Abstract

This thesis explores the pedagogy and learning environment in an Ontario Francophone child care centre. This study is an exploratory descriptive case study using ethnographic tools. Relying on Cummins' (1989) Minority Empowerment Framework and Lyster's (2007) Counterbalanced Approach to Second Language Teaching as reference points, this study investigated how Franco-Ontarian culture and linguistic character are reinforced in this child care centre; how language instruction was integrated into educational activities; and what supports were in place to assist and support Anglophone and Allophone children in this environment. Over ten weeks, the researcher found that the centre promoted a culture of universal acceptance, rather than strictly a Franco-Ontarian culture; the centre's interpretation of Emergent Curriculum meshes well with Lyster's (2007) Counterbalanced Approach; and that gestures, repetition, and praise were used with all the children, regardless of language background.

## Keywords

Child care; early childhood education; counterbalanced approach; emergent curriculum; French; second language learning

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# Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Tables.....	vii
List of Appendices.....	viii
Chapter 1.....	1
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Rationale for the Study.....	2
1.2 Context.....	4
1.3 Positioning Myself as a Researcher.....	9
1.4 Research Questions.....	11
Chapter 2.....	13
2 Theoretical Framework.....	13
Chapter 3.....	17
3 Literature Review.....	17
3.1 Emergent Curriculum and the Use of Routines.....	19
3.2 Integrating Analytical and Experiential Approaches.....	21
3.3 Role of First Language in Second Language Learning.....	24
3.4 The Importance of Form in French.....	25
Chapter 4.....	27
4 Methodology.....	27
4.1 Case Study and Ethnography.....	27
4.2 Methods.....	29

4.2.1	Site .....	29
4.2.2	Participants.....	30
4.2.3	Data Sources .....	30
4.2.4	Analysis.....	31
4.2.5	Ethical Issues .....	31
4.2.6	Trustworthiness.....	32
Chapter 5.....		33
5	Findings.....	33
5.1	Physical Setting and General Schedule.....	33
5.2	The Participants .....	35
5.2.1	The éducatrices .....	36
5.2.2	The Children .....	38
5.3	Language Learning Events .....	40
5.3.1	The First Day .....	40
5.3.2	Monique .....	45
5.3.3	Tina .....	48
5.3.4	Brandon.....	49
5.3.5	Emily.....	51
5.3.6	Shawn.....	52
5.3.7	Marc .....	53
5.4	The Learning Environment.....	54
5.4.1	Songs.....	54
5.4.2	The Continuum of Authority .....	56
5.4.3	The Supermarket.....	59
5.5	Findings Seen Through the Lens of Cummins .....	60

5.5.1 Cultural/Linguistic Incorporation .....	60
5.5.2 Community Participation .....	62
5.5.3 Assessment.....	63
Chapter 6.....	65
6 Discussion .....	65
Chapter 7.....	70
7 Conclusions and Future Research .....	70
7.1 Franco-Ontarian Culture and Linguistic Character.....	70
7.2 Integration of Language Instruction into Educational Activities.....	71
7.3 Supports to Assist Anglophone and Allophone Children .....	72
7.4 Limitations of the Study.....	72
7.5 Future Research .....	73
References.....	74
Appendix 1: Home Language Comparison.....	80
Appendix 2: Letters and Consent Forms .....	81
Appendix 3: Ethics Approval Notice .....	87
Curriculum Vitae .....	88

## List of Tables

Table 1: Names of Adult Participants .....	35
Table 2: Names of Child Participants .....	36
Table 3: Comparison of Languages Spoken at Home in CSDECSO Elementary Schools 2011-2012 .....	80



## List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Home Language Comparison.....	80
Appendix 2: Letters and Consent Forms .....	81
Appendix 3: Ethics Approval Notice .....	87

## Chapter 1

### 1 Introduction

French language education continues to be an important issue on the Canadian political and cultural landscape. This is evident from the Canadian government's \$1.1 billion investment in the *Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality 2008-2013: Acting for the Future* initiative. This initiative is based on "two pillars: the participation of all Canadians in linguistic duality, and the support for official language minority communities" (Government of Canada, 2008, p.6). In the initiative's mid-term report document, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, the Honourable James Moore states, "Canada's linguistic duality permeates all fields of our society and undoubtedly represents a social, cultural, and economic asset for Canadians at home and abroad" (Government of Canada, 2012, p. 2). This initiative provides funding for a number of key areas, including facets of education, such as second language education bursaries, early childhood education and care, family literacy, and second language education programs, like French Immersion. The mid-term report indicates that Canada-wide enrollment in French Immersion sits at approximately 350, 000 students and continues to grow in popularity, increasing by 10% in the past 5 years (Government of Canada, 2012).

In Ontario, French as a second language (FSL) education takes several forms. The most common is referred to as Core French and often involves a French teacher rotating from classroom to classroom to deliver instruction in the French language as subject for approximately 40 minutes per day. In some instances, the teacher is given a dedicated classroom for French, but that varies by school. Often beginning in Grade 4, students are expected to receive a minimum of 600 hours of French instruction by the time they complete Grade 8 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1998).<sup>1</sup> Extended French

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<sup>1</sup> In the Public school system, students in non-French Immersion schools begin taking French as a subject no later than Grade 4. In the Catholic system, French-as-subject instruction typically begins in Grade 1, though some school boards begin teaching French as early as kindergarten.

serves as a middle ground between Core French and French Immersion. Approximately 25% of instructional time must be conducted in French, with students receiving a minimum of 1260 hours of French instruction by the end of Grade 8 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2001). French Immersion is, by far, the most intensive of the three instructional approaches. In Immersion programs, a minimum of 50% of class instruction must be conducted in French. By the end of Grade 8, students are expected to have completed a minimum of 3800 hours of French instruction, though many programs far exceed this minimum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2001).

In addition to the various forms of FSL program supported by the Federal government, the *Roadmap* also provides funding for official-language minority communities. A considerable amount of research exists pertaining to FSL and French Immersion programs, but few studies have focused on official-language minority communities. In Ontario, the official-language minority communities are predominantly Francophone; a child care centre serving one of these official-language minority communities in Southwestern Ontario provided the focus for this study. The goal of the study is to provide insight into the pedagogy employed and the learning environment created in a Southwestern Ontario French Language Education (FLE) child care centre, paying particular attention to the “what”s, the “how”s, and the “why”s of the learning environment. It is my hope to use this study as a starting point for a more in-depth comparative analysis of FLE and French Immersion elementary schools; however, that comparison lies outside of the scope of the current study.

## 1.1 Rationale for the Study

Over the past several years, I have taught as an Occasional (Substitute/Supply) teacher in a number of French Immersion elementary schools. My interactions with staff and students at these schools have led me to question how well the current French Immersion model is satisfying its goal of providing students “with the skills they need to communicate in a second language, and thereby to enhance their ability to perform effectively and meet with success in a rapidly changing global economy” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 4). It occurred to me that valuable insights about French

language pedagogy might be gained by conducting comparative observations in an FLE elementary school.

From a demographic standpoint, the student bodies of FLE elementary schools and French Immersion schools in Southwestern Ontario are very similar. For instance, it is not unusual to find a handful of Francophone children in French Immersion schools; however, the two programs differ in terms of who directs them. While it may not seem significant on the surface, I wondered if having Francophone direction of the FLE educational system fundamentally affects the FLE learning environment. The programs also differ in terms of the amount of instructional time in French. Princess Anne French Immersion Public School, for instance, states on its school website that it “now operates as a bilingual school with 70% of the programme delivered in French and 30% in English” (Princess Anne French Immersion P.S., n.d.). From my experience, this ratio of French to English instruction is typical of the French Immersion schools in the Thames Valley District School Board. By contrast, one would expect close to a 90% French to 10% English allotment of instructional time for FLE schools.

Because of the demographic similarity between FLE and French Immersion schools<sup>2</sup>, successful pedagogical strategies and approaches to the learning environment as a whole could conceivably be transferred from one learning context to the other<sup>3</sup>. The possibility of identifying new and useful approaches and strategies makes this study a worthwhile pursuit. Gaining a better understanding of the approach Franco-Ontarians take to the elementary school system can be beneficial to those interested in French Immersion education, Franco-Ontarian culture, and first and second language educators as a whole.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1 for a table comparing languages spoken in Conseil scolaire de district des écoles catholiques du Sud-Ouest. This demonstrates that FLE schools in this school board are second language learning environments.

<sup>3</sup> My interest in pedagogies used in FLE schools should not be misconstrued as a value judgement on the quality of either FLE or French Immersion schools. I am merely seeking out a different perspective in the hopes of improving existing pedagogical practices.

FLE child care centres are an important preliminary step before entry into the FLE school system. The FLE child care centres are run independently of the school boards, despite typically being physically attached to both Catholic and Public FLE schools. These child care centres cater to Francophones as well as Anglophone and Allophone parents who wish to enroll their children in an FLE elementary school. Because of my interest in French language teaching and learning, it is appropriate to start at the beginning of the Anglophone and Allophone children's French language learning journey. This means an examination of the teaching and learning environment found in an FLE child care centre.

## 1.2 Context

Southwestern Ontario provides an interesting backdrop for French language education, given its predominantly Anglophone population. First, however, to properly provide context for the learning environment in FLE schools in this part of the province, it is important to understand more of the history and background that led to the creation of the Francophone school boards in the province. Franco-Ontarians have spent decades fighting and lobbying for the right, not only to be educated in their own language, but also for self-governance of that education (Cartwright, 1996; Heller, 1994/2003). This decades-long struggle for control over their own education no doubt plays a role in the decisions made in each school board, including the entry criteria for non-Francophone students.

It should be noted that "Franco-Ontarian" in this context refers to the Francophone population of Ontario who trace their ancestry back to the colony of New France. It does not include those of French Canadian ancestry who no longer speak French as their mother tongue. Although Francophone immigrants to Ontario are considered Franco-Ontarian by literal definition, Quell (2002) notes that, according to the 1996 Canadian Census, immigrants make up only 6% of the Francophone population. While that percentage has likely increased over time, the overwhelming majority would still trace their ethnicity and culture back to the French colonies in North America.

French language education in Ontario has been a politically sensitive topic since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For the most part left to their own devices, Franco-Ontarians experienced the first of several attacks on their rights to French-language education in 1885 when English instruction became mandatory. The situation worsened for Franco-Ontarians by 1890 when “it was no longer permissible to use any language other than English unless the students understood no English” (Heller, 1994/2003, p. 68). This prompted Francophones to take refuge in the Catholic school system and claim their children understood no English. This was not, however, a permanent solution, as Anglophone politicians introduced Regulation 17 in 1912, which virtually abolished French-language instruction in Ontario schools after the third grade (Department of Education, 1913). The regulation was never repealed, though it fell into abeyance in 1944 when it was not renewed. Some elementary schools were permitted to use French after 1927, but its use was rather limited.

Heller (1994/2003) describes Franco-Ontarian education as existing in a state of legal limbo from 1927 to 1968. Catholic secondary schools, which offered French programming, were only publicly funded through grade 10, which forced many Francophones to finish high school in the public system in English or not finish high school at all. The Catholic Church provided instruction in some communities through *collèges classiques*, which were “private institutions covering the equivalent of the end of high school” (p. 69), principally serving the elite. It was during this period that two important community organizations, the *Association des enseignants franco-ontariens* (AEFO) and the *Association française des conseillers scolaires de l’Ontario* (AFCSO), were formed.

Cartwright (1996) notes that boards of education “were not granted permission to open French-language secondary schools until 1968” (p. 244), but this was conditional, based on there being sufficient numbers of students to warrant such schools. The range of services provided in any given area varied from school board to school board; however, a more formalized and structured approach to Francophone education in Ontario began to emerge through the 1970s and 1980s. Heller (1994/2003) posits that the Ontario Premier’s decision to make French one of the province’s official languages of

education in 1968 was essentially part of “a campaign to prove to Quebec that it was worth staying in Canada” (p. 69). Franco-Ontarians received a significant boost to their education system in the 1980s after the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was incorporated into the Canadian Constitution in 1982. According to Cartwright (1996), Section 23 of the charter not only guaranteed the rights of official language minority groups to be educated in their mother tongue, but it also “declares that minority-language education facilities must be provided out of public funds” (p. 244).

It should be noted that, during this time period, school boards were still being run by Anglophones, leading Franco-Ontarians to request “greater input by francophone ratepayers in the operation of their school system” (Cartwright, 1996, p. 245). Franco-Ontarian groups lobbied for, and eventually received, the right to elect Francophone trustees to the local school boards, though they needed the intervention of the Ontario Court of Appeal to finally do so. Amendments to the Education Act gave the new minority-language trustees “exclusive jurisdiction in matters of program, recruitment, and assignment of teachers for those children who are enrolled in the French-language classes” (Cartwright, 1996, p. 245). Although they were largely autonomous, these trustees were still members of Anglophone school boards. It was only in 1988 that Ontario finally created its first Francophone school board in the Ottawa-Carleton region. In subsequent years, additional school boards were created, including 12 boards (4 public and 8 Catholic) in 1997 (Ontario Office of Francophone Affairs, n.d.).

In London, Ontario, Francophones are clearly a linguistic minority, comprising a mere 1.47% (5, 115 people) of the city’s population, according to the 2006 Canadian Census. Of these 5, 115 Francophones, only 1, 605 acknowledged French as the primary language used in the home (Statistics Canada, 2007c). The number of children under the age of 15 (the typical age of elementary school students) listed as speaking French as their Mother Tongue in the city of London is 575 (Statistics Canada, 2007b). If one includes those who listed English and French as a first language then the total increases to 740 (Statistics Canada, 2007b). It should be noted that the numbers selected reflect those of the city itself and not the Census Metropolitan Area, which includes surrounding areas. However, using the Census Metropolitan Area would only serve to further

reinforce the fact that Francophones are an extremely small part of London's linguistic and cultural makeup.

If one uses 740 as the maximum number of potential students for FLE elementary schools and all of the eligible students attended these schools, then there would probably be sufficient numbers to fill two large schools, or perhaps three smaller ones. However, in the London area, there are currently 5 elementary schools (3 Catholic, and 2 public) that offer French as a First Language instruction (Education en langue française en Ontario, n.d.). Even if one presumes that there has been a modest increase in the French speaking population since the 2006 Census, that increase would not likely be sufficient to justify the maintenance of 5 schools. However, enrollment in these schools continues to increase. The demand for space has been so great that parents have been petitioning the Ontario Ministry of Education since 2006 to open a third public FLE elementary school in London, due to overcrowding in the two existing FLE public schools (Dubinski, 2012). If the students that attend these FLE schools are not, in fact, Francophone, then who are they? Is this typical of FLE schools across Southwestern Ontario, or does London have a particularly small Francophone community?

The Windsor Census Metropolitan Area provides an excellent point of comparison to London. Francophones make up 11, 105 (3.46%) of the Census Metropolitan Area's population, which, while higher than London, still places them in a severe minority (Statistics Canada, 2007d). The number of people who speak French in the home is also greater than in London, at 2, 950 (Statistics Canada, 2007d). If one includes those who identify as speaking both French and English in the home as part of the total, then the number rises to 3, 655 (Statistics Canada, 2007d). The number of children under the age of 15 who identify as having French as a Mother Tongue is 680, which is only marginally more than one finds in London (Statistics Canada 2007a). If one adds in those who identify as having both French and English as a Mother Tongue, the total becomes 920, which would be sufficient to fill four small schools, or perhaps three larger ones (Statistics Canada, 2007a). However, like London, there are a significantly higher number of schools than the number of Francophones should warrant. If one considers the Windsor area to consist of the city itself and the surrounding towns



of Tecumseh, LaSalle, and Amherstburg, then one finds there are 8 FLE elementary schools (7 Catholic and 1 public) serving this rather small Francophone market (Education en langue française en Ontario, n.d.). The number of schools in Windsor can be justified, to a certain extent, because of the French heritage of the general area<sup>4</sup>. London, by contrast, has a similar number of schools despite serving a Francophone community approximately half the size of Windsor's with no similar French history.

An examination of the school profiles for the 2011-2012 academic year posted on school websites for the *Conseil Scolaire de District des Écoles Catholiques du Sud-Ouest* (CSDECSO) paints an interesting portrait of the Catholic FLE school system in Southwestern Ontario (See the Appendix for a comparison of the languages spoken in CSDECSO schools). All across the school board, Francophones make up a clear minority, even in their own schools. The most extreme case can be found in Leamington at École St-Michel where only 11 students in a school of 547 speak primarily French in the home (École St-Michel, n.d.). Even in a historically French area like Belle Rivière, the Francophone students only make up 40% of the École Pavillon-des-Jeunes population (École Pavillon-des-Jeunes, n.d.). This school boasts the highest percentage of Francophones in an elementary school in the entire board. École St-Philippe in Grande Pointe and École St-Paul in Pointe-aux-Roches report a mere 10% and 24% Francophone population respectively (École St-Philippe, n.d.; École St-Paul, n.d.). In general, Francophones seem to occupy approximately 20% of the spots in the CSDECSO schools, with some schools dropping to as low as 2-3% and none, with the exception of École Pavillon-des-Jeunes, exceed 25%. The remaining spots are taken up by English speaking (Anglophone) students, or students who speak a language other than English or French (Allophones).

The London Catholic FLE elementary schools, École Frère-André, École Saint-Jean-de-Brébeuf, and École Ste-Jeanne-d'Arc follow the same trend as others in the

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<sup>4</sup> The town of LaSalle, for instance, just outside of Windsor has a French name, and many of the street names are French in origin (e.g. Bouffard Rd). The city of Detroit, across the Detroit River from Windsor, comes from the French word for "strait."

school board in that francophone students are clearly a minority. At École Frère-André, for instance, Francophone students represent only 2% of the 375 student population (École Frère-André, n.d.), while at École Saint-Jean-de-Brébeuf they make up 10% of the 278 total (École Saint-Jean-de-Brébeuf, n.d.). What makes the London schools such an anomaly for CSDECSO is the high number of Allophone students. École Frère-André reports that 83% of its student body speaks a language other than French or English at home, while École Ste-Jeanne-d'Arc reports that 67% of its grade 3 class and 62% of its grade 6 class are Allophones. Such high numbers of non-Francophone students will very likely heavily influence pedagogical approaches because of students' probable lack of fluency in the language of instruction. This will be particularly evident in the primary division due to lesser exposure to the French language when compared to junior and intermediate grades. One might also expect practices to also differ greatly between École Frère-André and other schools in the board because of the atypically high number of Allophones in each class.

Please note that the demographic data provided pertain to the Catholic FLE school board because it was readily available to the public through the schools' websites. However, one would expect the Public FLE schools to follow similar trends to their Catholic counterparts. A certain degree of diversity could be expected in the London area Public FLE schools, though it would be surprising to find another one with the number of Allophones found in École Frère-André.

### 1.3 Positioning Myself as a Researcher

Growing up, I took French-as-subject through the typical 40 minute per day Core French program at my elementary school. I enjoyed French, as I considered it as part of my family heritage<sup>5</sup>, and thus I felt a certain responsibility to do well in the subject. Unfortunately for my French teachers, my appreciation for the language put me in the minority of my class. I expect that my teachers would have liked to have tried different

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<sup>5</sup> My family name, Russette, is an Anglicized version of the Quebecois surname Racette. My parents also met during a university French Immersion program in Quebec.

pedagogical strategies, but classroom behaviour necessitated the use of a Grammar-Translation approach with a considerable amount of time spent on writing out lists of vocabulary words and memorizing verb conjugations.

The Grammar-Translation method, also referred to as the Classical Method, was used earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011), though I can personally attest to its continued use during the 1980s and 1990s. As the name would suggest, this method emphasizes the explicit learning of grammar when learning a foreign language because “a fundamental purpose of learning a language is to be able to read literature written in the target language” (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 19). Proponents of this method also thought that focusing on grammar would assist in student understanding of their first language, as they would be able to recognize similar grammatical features in their own first language. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) note that there is a considerable emphasis placed on memorization of vocabulary, grammar rules and language structures. Student use of the target language tends to be restricted to fill-in-the-blank exercises, reading comprehension questions, short compositions and cloze exercises. Though this approach is not highly regarded today, it served me well as I was able to resume my French studies in university without difficulty nearly a decade after my last high school French class.

Although my knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and verb tenses was strong, I did not gain much oral fluency until I spent several months in Trois-Pistoles, Quebec at *L'école de langue française de Trois-Pistoles*, through the Department of French Studies at the University of Western Ontario. The school provides a total French language immersion environment where one has no other choice but to speak French to communicate. The entire town acts as a language learning environment. Students stay with Francophone host families, take university credit courses in the mornings, and participate in a wide array of workshops and cultural activities in the afternoons and evenings. This format provides students with a great variety of opportunities to use French in academic and social contexts. My experiences in Quebec, learning directly from Francophones in a total immersion environment, served as part of my motivation to become a French teacher.

I have not had an opportunity to teach in an FLE school, as I work for an Anglophone school board; however, the majority of my teaching assignments are in French Immersion elementary schools. I have taught classes ranging from kindergarten to grade 8 and seen a variety of approaches to language instruction. I have observed what teachers may consider “strong” and “weak” classes, both within individual schools, as well as across school boards. I have noticed that the amount of French spoken, particularly between students in French Immersion, is limited, especially during independent work times and recess breaks. These observations have led me to question the overall effectiveness of current pedagogical approaches to French Immersion. The more I thought about it, the more I began to wonder about how Franco-Ontarians approach teaching French in their schools.

## 1.4 Research Questions

When one thinks of the term “French Language Education School,” one expects that all the students and the staff of the school will be Francophones who speak French fluently. A natural extension of this expectation is that students who attend FLE schools will finish elementary school speaking, reading, and writing more fluently in French than their counterparts in French Immersion elementary schools; however, as noted, the school profiles of the Catholic FLE schools in Southwestern Ontario demonstrate that Francophones are a significant minority in their own school system. One wonders if the high number of non-Francophones in the FLE schools affects Ontario Ministry of Education learning expectations.

In order to succeed in an FLE school, students must have a working knowledge of French. For many Anglophone and Allophone students, the journey toward official bilingualism begins in an FLE child care centre. These child care centres provide the foundations for the future success of many non-Francophone children in the FLE school system. Given the significance of the role these child cares play in the FLE school system, the following questions merit exploration:

- 1) How is the Franco-Ontarian cultural and linguistic character applied and reinforced in this specific French Language Education child care centre learning environment?

- 2) Do Early Childhood Educators in French Language Education child care centres integrate educational activities and language instruction to facilitate the learning of their second language learners? If so, how do they do it?
- 3) What supports are in place to assist and facilitate success for Anglophone and Allophone students in this FLE child care centre?

## Chapter 2

### 2 Theoretical Framework

The Francophone school systems in Southwestern Ontario are an interesting example of a minority group attempting to preserve its language and culture in the midst of a dominant linguistic and cultural community. These schools represent a concerted effort on the part of the minority group to valorize its cultural identity in the face of assimilation by the dominant language group. While this is not a unique phenomenon, as one finds other examples across the globe of minority language groups actively trying to preserve their language and culture, this is a sufficiently rare case insofar as the power within the learning environment and the school board rests with the minority, rather than the dominant language group<sup>6</sup>.

While exploring roots of the academic difficulties of minority children, Cummins (1989) presented a theoretical framework of empowerment for minority students. Although the framework was originally designed to examine issues of disempowerment and alienation among minority groups within the white Anglo-centric school systems in North America, it provides a good lens through which to examine the broader aspects of the first research question. Cummins identifies four key areas of interest with respect to minority students and their interactions with educators and societal institutions: cultural/linguistic incorporation, community participation, pedagogy, and assessment. The framework has continued to evolve and be refined since it was first introduced (Cummins, 2001 & 2009), but this earlier version was chosen because it offers a sufficiently broad scope through which to examine this particular case.

Cummins (1989) states that, “the extent to which students’ language and culture are incorporated into the school program constitutes a significant predictor of academic

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<sup>6</sup> It should also be noted that since French is an official language of Canada, the Francophones have additional status and political clout not afforded to other minority language groups. Thus, a Francophone school board must be viewed differently than, for instance, a private school run by another minority language group, like Arabic or Hebrew.

success” (p. 60). In the case of FLE elementary schools, the language and culture of the Franco-Ontarian minority are part of the *raison-d’être* of the learning environment. Considering these schools were largely established after Cummins introduced this framework, this study presents an opportunity to more carefully examine Cummins’ theory under “real life” conditions. It will also be interesting to see the impact of this integration on the Anglophone majority in the school.

Community participation, which can encompass everything from school councils and parent-teacher committees to in-school volunteers, is another area of interest. Cummins (1989) indicates that community participation runs along a collaborative-exclusionary continuum; a collaborative orientation encourages “minority parents to participate in promoting their children’s academic progress both in the home and through involvement in classroom activities” (pp. 62-63), while an exclusionary orientation would keep parents out of the classrooms and the power in the hands of the teachers and school staff. In FLE schools, the teacher is often a member of the Franco-Ontarian minority community, while the parental groups are often comprised of members of the dominant Anglophone community. This begged the question about the extent to which parent volunteers, particularly Anglophone volunteers, are actively involved in daily classroom activities.

The third key area in Cummins (1989) framework is pedagogy. Cummins promotes an approach that will “aim to liberate students from dependence on instruction in the sense of encouraging them to become active generators of their own knowledge” (p. 63). He identifies two major orientations with respect to pedagogy: transmission and interaction/experiential. Transmission, as the name implies, is a passing of knowledge from the teacher to the students. The teacher is in control of the information flow, and works towards lesson objectives. The interaction/experiential approach, by contrast, shifts the power away from the teacher and places greater impetus on the students to take responsibility for their own learning. The Emergent Curriculum approach, an example of an interactive/experiential pedagogical model, will be discussed further in the Literature Review.

The final piece of Cummins' (1989) framework is assessment. In his empowerment framework, Cummins seeks to undo the exclusionary orientations that teachers often have towards minority students and communities in English as a Second Language contexts, which often lead to the labeling of minority language learners as learning disabled. Cummins suggests the use of an advocacy orientation whereby assessment is "broadened so that it goes beyond psychoeducational considerations to take account of the child's entire learning environment" (p. 66). Essentially, Cummins wants to expand assessments to examine multiple facets of the child's learning environment, including examining how the students' language and culture are integrated into the learning environment, the amount of collaboration between parents and teachers, and the extent to which a child is encouraged to use his/her first language in addition to the new language, in order to avoid the misdiagnoses of learning disabilities.

Cummins (1989) suggests that minority language speakers are often misdiagnosed as having learning disabilities by teachers from the dominant language community. The FLE school environment is a reversal of the norm in that the teachers are part of the minority community and thus less likely to misdiagnose learning disabilities in minority language students in the way that Cummins indicates. However, there may be a risk of misdiagnosing members of the majority language community because they are operating in the minority language context. For the purposes of this study, assessment will be examined in terms of formative methods and how these forms of assessment inform classroom pedagogy because summative assessment does not pertain to this age group and setting.

While Cummins provides the backdrop for examining the school as a whole, it is Lyster (2007) who provides a more focused lens through which to understand and interpret second language (L2) classroom pedagogy. Although Franco-Ontarians may disagree with this classification, the FLE schools in Southwestern Ontario are L2 learning environments with a heavy focus on learning content through the L2—in other words, akin to French Immersion schools. As such, Lyster's counterbalanced approach to teaching language through content is quite relevant. He describes the approach as a systematic attempt at language instruction that "requires learners to vary their attentional



[*sic*] focus between, on the one hand, the content to which they usually attend in classroom discourse and, on the other, target language features that are not otherwise attended to” (p. 4). This shift in attention is thought to facilitate L2 learning through “the destabilization of interlanguage forms” (p. 4). Although this study is not meant as a test of the Counterbalance Hypothesis, a familiarity with Lyster’s suggestions can aid with the identification of the presence or absence of salient pedagogical features. Additional discussion of the Counterbalanced Approach will appear in the following section.

## Chapter 3

### 3 Literature Review

Research pertaining to pedagogies employed in FLE child care centres in Canada is relatively sparse when compared to that of French as a Second Language (FSL) or French Immersion elementary and secondary school programs. However, Prasad (2012) provides a glimpse into the learning environment of a Toronto area FLE school. Because of its higher population, Toronto area schools likely have a higher percentage of Francophones than one finds in typical Southwestern Ontario schools; however, the diverse and cosmopolitan nature of the Toronto school that Prasad (2012) studied allows comparisons to London's École Frère-André.<sup>7</sup> She notes that, as of 2007, 58% of the students at the school she studied spoke a language other than French in the home. She further notes that, despite this diversity, "the administration endeavours to create a francophone space" (p. 198) within the school.

Prasad (2012) focuses on how this FLE elementary school, which she calls École Cosmopolite, tries to facilitate the integration of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners into the greater Francophone community. She acknowledges the challenges associated with such an integration, noting that it "necessitates that teachers find alter(n)ative [*sic*] ways to work within the linguistic and cultural mandate of French-language schools to include the diverse identities of CLD learners" (p. 202). Prasad examines 5 categories of alternative classroom practices, including alternative starts to the day; messages; responses to traditional activities; literacies; and experiences through the arts. These areas were selected because the teachers "consciously employ them in purposeful and inventive ways that acknowledge students' diverse cultural and linguistic resources and invite students to draw upon these skills and experiences in their learning at school" (p. 202). In addition to the cursory discussions of pedagogy mentioned above,

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<sup>7</sup> Please note that the explicit identification of École Frère-André in this section serves as an example in the Southwestern Ontario region of a school with comparable traits to one from the Greater Toronto Area. As it is not the intended site of the study, anonymity of the site location remains intact.

Prasad spends a considerable amount of time discussing the importance of students' involvement in the school's junior choir as a means of integration into the Franco-Ontarian cultural community. A student performance at a provincial conference is described as having "facilitated a sense of belonging among choir members as they practised and performed a song that traces the roots of Franco-Ontarian culture" (p. 207). She describes the teachers at this school as having a transformative pedagogical orientation in that they approached their students from an asset-oriented perspective and worked in "collaboration with families and community members to support learners' learning and sense of identification" (p. 209) with the francophone community. The learners were not viewed as multiple minorities, but as CLD plurilingual learners.

While Prasad's article presents some interesting insight into some ways that Allophone students are being integrated into the Franco-Ontarian community, there was little discussion of pedagogical approaches to content or to language instruction, leading one to question whether there is a gap in the literature in this area. Based on the research available I could find, it appears that would be the case. To bridge this gap, I turn to research on French Immersion pedagogy.

Literature pertaining to French Immersion pedagogy was valuable over the course of this study because of the high percentage of non-Francophone students found in the Southwestern Ontario area French First Language elementary schools. The practices employed in French Immersion schools will provide a good point of comparison to those observed in the Francophone child care centre. French Immersion schools differ from typical FSL programs in that "students study content material such as mathematics, history, geography, and science for at least 50 percent of the school day using French" (Swain, 2000, p. 199). Since students are simultaneously learning the French language in addition to curricular content, different pedagogical strategies are employed than one would find in an FSL classroom.

Born out of concerns that typical FSL pedagogies were inadequate to serve the English-speaking minority of Quebec, parents of the St. Lambert suburb of Montreal in the 1960s, in consultation with faculty at McGill University, "proposed to the school

board that their children receive French instruction from the first day of kindergarten and have English integrated later” (Roy, 2008, p. 398). This was the beginning of the French Immersion model. The popularity of French Immersion grew, not only in Quebec, but throughout Canada “as a result of favorable views toward bilingualism and the social, political, and economic value of knowing French” (Roy, 2008, p. 398). Using subject content as a vehicle for language learning is a strategy meant to provide students with opportunities to see French in a more realistic context than is typically offered in language-as-subject teaching.

### 3.1 Emergent Curriculum and the Use of Routines

Allen, Harley, and Swain (1989) broadly categorized L2 learning strategies as either experiential or analytical. Experiential teaching emphasizes functional usage, often using themes, and more “real talk,” focusing on fluency and meaning over accuracy and error avoidance. Analytical teaching, by contrast, places a higher priority on language structures, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Teachers try to encourage students to be more conscious of how the language works. Although most teachers will try to incorporate a mix of the two methods to some degree, French Immersion classrooms are more often described as using the experiential approach, while FSL classes tend to be more analytical because of the shorter allotted time for instruction.

The child care centre in which I observed used an experiential pedagogical approach that they identified as Emergent Curriculum. This approach to pedagogy strives to create learning opportunities for children that are rooted in their interests. According to Jones (2012), Emergent Curriculum is “open-ended and self-directed. It depends on teacher initiative and intrinsic motivation, and it lends itself to a play-based environment” (p. 67). Through this approach, children become the architects of their learning. However, the children’s interests are not the only source of Emergent Curriculum.

Jones (2012) indicates that the teacher’s interests, the physical and social environment, and developmental tasks can all be sources of Emergent Curriculum. It is the responsibility of the teacher to seize the opportunities presented to facilitate children’s

learning. Jones states, “To develop curriculum in depth, adults must notice children’s questions and invent ways to extend them, document what happens, and invent more questions. The process is naturally individualized” (p.67). This individualization of the child’s learning experiences will aid in developing his/her strengths and passions and provide the child with more meaningful knowledge than would be available through a more standardized and prescribed approach.

Hyun and Marshall (2003) underline the importance of trust and teacher-child rapport in the success of Emergent Curriculum, stating that it “depends upon learners' and teachers' open and expressive willingness to convey their interests and under-construction ideas in the process of adventurous learning” (p. 47). A lack of communication between teacher and child could stunt the learning process. Building upon the importance of communication in Emergent Curriculum, Hyun and Marshall (2003) argue that “children who are more socially proactive and free from cultural and language barriers will have a greater opportunity to take advantage of, engage in and ultimately steer emergent-oriented curriculum experiences” (p. 47). Children who are shy or who have difficulty with the language could find themselves and their interests overlooked if the teacher is not proactive in building trust relationships. Whether this held true in the study, including details concerning this child care centre’s interpretation of Emergent Curriculum, can be found in Chapter 5.

One way to assist L2 learners is through the use of gestures and a reliance on routines. Weber and Tardif suggest that language learning “is facilitated by the teacher’s paralinguistic (gestures, body movement, intonation and expression) and by concrete materials, pictures, symbols, and rituals” (as cited in Taylor, 1992, p. 739). Rituals, in this context, refer to ongoing routines. Weber and Tardif (as cited in Taylor, 1992) indicate that routines provide context for new linguistic elements, which assists students with no prior knowledge of French. The FLE child care centre where I observed made significant use of routines and gestures, particularly with new arrivals to the centre. The use of routines and gestures will be discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6.

## 3.2 Integrating Analytical and Experiential Approaches

Day and Shapson (2001) attempted to integrate formal/analytical and functional/experiential approaches in French Immersion to address student deficiencies with respect to the students' oral and written grammar, particularly as it pertained to the Conditional tense. They chose the Conditional tense because it had been identified as a problem area for French Immersion students in prior research studies. The materials were designed to give students opportunities "to use this form in natural, communicative situations; by reinforcing their learning with systematic, focused games or exercises; and by encouraging their metalinguistic awareness" (p. 49). They were also designed to be integrated for use with content from other subjects, like science or social studies.

The study was conducted in metropolitan Vancouver, BC, involving 12 classes of Grade 7 early immersion students from 4 school districts over a 5-7 week period. The classes were chosen based on similarity of socioeconomic background, student ability, and teacher experience. The experimental cohort consisted of 6 classes, while the remaining classes acted as the control group. Both groups were given pre-tests, post-tests, and follow-up tests to determine the effects of the intervention.

The intervention material encouraged students to use the Conditional in hypothetical situations and polite requests. The overall project asked students to plan a space colony. The unit tasks tied into each of the major language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). The researchers used cooperative-learning approaches (group work) to encourage students to interact in natural situations; linguistic games and exercises at the beginning of each period; and group and self-evaluations to aid student awareness in their language use. A language monitor system was also instituted, wherein one student per group tracked the use of the Conditional, the use of English, and motivated students to speak in French in its correct forms.

The unit tasks consisted of the planning of an imaginary space colony; an oral presentation outlining and justifying the students' design choices; the creation of a model of the colony; a written report describing the different parts of the colony and their importance; and finally, a newspaper article describing life for the space pioneers.

Information about the organization and facilitation of the unit was provided to the teachers.

The researchers found that all the Experimental and Control classes improved between the pre-test and post-test periods; however, the Experimental classes made the most consistent improvement across all the classes. One of the Control classes, however, had a high number of gifted students, and a teacher whose instructional methods resembled those used in the Experimental classes, which skewed the Control group's overall results, making it appear that more progress was made than actually was.

The researchers found that, in terms of written usage, the Experimental group “made significantly higher gains in their ability to use [the Conditional] than did classes that had not experienced this approach” (Day & Shapson, 2001, p. 74). The classes did not demonstrate statistically significant gains in oral usage; however, individual analysis indicates that some gains were made in this area, as well. The researchers feel that improvement of students’ “oral and written grammatical skills can be achieved through curricular intervention that integrates formal, analytic with functional, communicative approaches to language teaching” (p. 76).

Clearly this type of intervention does not apply to a Francophone child care setting because of the complexity of the tasks designed for the project and the student independence required. Preschool children are typically just learning their alphabet, not how to read and write. However, there are elements of the intervention worth noting that are relevant to my study. For instance, there was no formal grammar instruction in this child care centre, but like in the Day and Shapson (2001) intervention, new language structures and vocabulary were reinforced through games and activities. The ECEs acted as the language monitors, noting the children's use of English and motivating them to speak in French. The songs and repetition used by the ECEs over the course of the day could be viewed as quasi-exercises to reinforce the desired language learning outcomes. The presence of these elements in the FLE child care, as noted in Chapter 5 of this thesis, make the Day and Shapson (2001) findings relevant to this study.

The previous study demonstrated how an approach that integrates analytical and experiential components could work during language classes; however, a significant portion of the teaching day in French Immersion involves content-based areas of study. Lyster has done considerable work in addressing how to incorporate form-based instruction into French Immersion content classes. For instance, Lyster (2008) notes that, while French Immersion students may “attain high levels of comprehension abilities and functional levels of communicative ability in production” (p. 3), they often fall short in areas like the proper use of idiomatic expressions, lexical variety, and sociolinguistic appropriateness. Lyster posits that these areas can be addressed “through instruction that is counterbalanced in a way that more systematically integrates language and content” (p. 4). There is a tendency for Immersion teachers “to avoid language issues during subject-matter instruction” (p. 9) rather than actively integrating and addressing language structure into lessons. Any language structures taught during subject-matter instruction tend to be dealt with incidentally, which Lyster describes as insufficient.

While FLE early childhood educators (ECEs) do not teach “content” in the way elementary school teachers do with respect to specific subjects (e.g., History, Mathematics, or Geography), they nonetheless impart “content” appropriate to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) guidelines. This “content” falls under five domains of a child’s development: social; emotional; communication, language and literacy; cognition; and physical, as described in the ECEC framework, *Early Learning for Every Child Today* (Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, 2007). If these FLE early childhood educators integrate French teaching and content instruction, then one could argue that this is evidence the application of Lyster’s Counterbalanced Approach in an Early Years context.

Lyster (2008) suggests that teaching language incidentally does not lend itself to a systematic approach and that the time spent is inadequate to give students a proper understanding of the new language structure. He argues that “the cognitive dispositions of predominantly English-speaking learners of French interact with classroom input in ways that restrict the incidental assimilation of specific target features and grammatical subsystems” (p. 10). Lyster believes that the combination of content-based instruction



and incidental reference to language structures, “falls short of facilitating entry into three important grammatical subsections in French: the verbal system, pronominal reference, and gender attribution” (p. 10). In other words, identifying new grammatical structures as they arise during the course of content-based instruction does not allow the students sufficient exposure to, or experience using, these new structures for them to become a part of the students’ language repertoire.

Lyster (2008) advocates a counterbalanced instructional approach that, “integrates content-based and form-focused instructional options by interweaving balanced opportunities for input, production, and negotiation” (p. 26). Form-focused instruction refers to language teaching that pays explicit attention to features of the target language. Successful integration of content and language form requires a commitment on the part of the teacher to make the content comprehensible, while at the same time making language features salient. He advises that teachers need to give students a range of opportunities to use the target language in an academic context, but also during practice activities designed “to promote the proceduralization [*sic*] of target language forms that tend otherwise to be avoided, misused, or unnoticed” (p. 26). He sees this approach as a superior alternative to either decontextualizing language instruction through traditional grammar instruction, or approaching language structures incidentally during content instruction.

### 3.3 Role of First Language in Second Language Learning

An important vein of research when discussing L2 teaching and learning is the role of the students’ first language. One need only take a stroll through a French Immersion school yard during recess and one will hear English being spoken by students. As much as Francophones may wish to create a French-only environment in their schools, the reality is that in Southwestern Ontario, English is ever-present in the daily lives of the students and should be taken into account when designing pedagogical programming.

Swain and Lapkin (2000) have examined task-based learning approaches to L2 learning and the role played by the students’ mother tongue (L1) during these tasks. They noted that the L1 is most useful during cognitively demanding tasks in the target

language (L2). In classrooms where the L1 is restricted or prohibited, then L2 tasks may become considerably more difficult for the learners and the final products may not reflect the students' true abilities. It was also noted that the L2 may become essentially a subordinate language, used exclusively for academic purposes, while the L1 serves as a common social language. This was because "immersion students had little to no access to L2 'kid-speak' in the school context" (p. 253). Access to the right 'kid-speak' is seen as vital to an adolescent's self-image. Swain and Lapkin (2000) advise that "judicious use of the L1 can indeed support L2 learning and use. To insist that no use be made of the L1 in carrying out tasks that are both linguistically and cognitively complex is to deny the use of an important cognitive tool" (p. 268-269). When trying to teach a minority language, like French, in a dominant language environment, one should try to use whatever tools are available to most efficiently facilitate L2 language learning.

During my field work for this study, I observed a range of L1 usage in the child care. The children spoke almost entirely in English to one another, and intermittently in French to the ECEs. The ECEs, by contrast, spoke primarily in the children's L2, though they would occasionally speak the children's L1 if absolutely necessary, but only if the child was greatly upset. This will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

### 3.4 The Importance of Form in French

Research into FSL and French Immersion studies has a heavy focus on how to instill a proper grammatical foundation in French language learners, particularly when it comes to problematic verb tenses like the Conditional. To those who do not speak French, it may seem odd that so much time and attention is spent on very specific aspects of spoken and written language, especially since English as a Second Language (ESL) education (or at least Canadian adult ESL education) has moved away from a grammar-based instructional model toward a more task-oriented and functional approach (Pawlikowska-Smith, 2000); however, the French have a very different perspective when it comes to their language.

The French place a great deal of importance on the use of proper grammar and vocabulary when speaking and writing French, as evidenced by the existence of

*l'Académie française*, a French institution dedicated to the preservation and proper usage of the French language (Académie française, n.d.) and its Quebecois counterpart, *l'Office québécois de la langue française* (Office québécois, n.d.). Current French Immersion research relies heavily on the work of Anglophone researchers as they attempt to design interventions to bridge the language gaps experienced by immersion students. Since the FLE schools and child cares in Southwestern Ontario are predominantly L2 learning environments, French Immersion-related research is relevant to my study. I used the literature to guide my observations and interview questions, in the hopes of finding a Francophone solution to a problem facing Anglophone and Allophone French Immersion students.

## Chapter 4

### 4 Methodology

In the first section, I describe the similarities and differences between Case Study and Ethnography and why my study is more Case Study than Ethnography. In Section 4.2, I discuss the Methods in more detail. Sub-sections include: Site, Participants, Data Sources, Analysis, Ethical Issues, and Trustworthiness.

#### 4.1 Case Study and Ethnography

The research proposed will take the form of an exploratory descriptive case study using ethnographic tools. Because of the unexpected make-up of the Francophone schools in Southwestern Ontario, a case study approach is the best course of action to gain a more thorough understanding of the learning environment and the pedagogy. One would have expected to have a higher percentage of native French speakers in a French First Language school, but as Table 3 in the Appendix 1 clearly demonstrates, Francophones are a significant minority, even in their own schools. The FLE child care centres provide one entry point for non-Francophone children into the FLE school system. The number of non-Francophones in the FLE system would suggest that programs such as those found in FLE child care centres must be highly successful in building a solid foundation in French for those children. How the Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) build a strong foundation for non-Francophone children, including what supports are in place to support the children's successful acquisition of the French language was of particular interest in this study. This sort of information could not be as easily gleaned from surveys or from interviews.

Case study and ethnography represent two complementary forms of qualitative research. The more that I discussed and explored my topic, the more evident it became that I should conduct my study using a fusion of these two approaches. Much like a photograph captures people and places at a particular moment in time, so, too, does a case study capture a particular group of people in a specific context over a particular period of time. Case studies fall under what Seliger and Shohamy (1989/2011) categorize as

descriptive research, which “involves a collection of techniques used to specify, delineate, or describe naturally occurring phenomena without experimental manipulation” (p. 124). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) explain that case studies provide, “a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories or principles” (p. 289). Researchers who use this format are concerned with observing what occurs in the real world, rather than isolating variables and conducting experiments in a language laboratory.

Data sources for case studies generally fall under the following six categories: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation, and physical artifacts. Yin (2009) remarks that, “the various sources are highly complementary, and a good case study will therefore want to use as many as possible” (p. 101). It is important to distinguish between direct observations and participant-observation. Though the two are related, Yin (2009) notes that participant-observation is “a special mode of observation in which you are not merely a passive observer” (p. 111), but an active participant (hence the name ‘participant-observation’) in the context being observed. The degree to which I conducted direct observations versus participant-observation was negotiated between me and the ECEs, as I interacted with the students in the child care centre. How I participated in the child care is clarified in the events I describe in Chapter 5.

Ethnographies, like case studies, also involve observing a group or community over a period of time. Yin (2009) states that ethnographies “usually require long periods of time in the “field” and emphasize detailed observational evidence” (p. 15). Case studies, by contrast, do not necessarily need to take a long time. Brice Heath and Street (2008) indicate that time frames for ethnographies vary from the classic year-long study in the field to shorter, more intense periods of observation, depending on the context being observed (p. 62-63).

Blommaert and Jie (2010) describe ethnography as an inductive science in that “it works from empirical evidence towards theory, not the other way around” (p. 12). That

is not to say one does not approach ethnography without a theoretical framework. Blommaert and Jie (2010) indicate that exploring theoretical frameworks comes with the preparation for ethnographic fieldwork, and data is analysed according to the frameworks chosen during the preparatory stages (p. 13). The data sources for ethnographies overlap with those of case studies, with a considerable emphasis placed on data collected in the field (e.g. direct observation, participant-observation, interviews and physical artefacts) (Blommaert & Jie, 2010; Brice Heath & Street, 2008). Given my focus on pedagogy and the learning environment, as a whole, I placed a similar emphasis in my study. A description of the data collected, particularly data collected under direct observation and as a participant observer, can be found in Chapter 5.

Because this study took place over the course of 10 weeks, I had spent an insufficient amount of time in the field for this study to qualify as an ethnography; rather, it was an exploratory, descriptive case study using ethnographic tools. The case study involved almost 3 months, using on-site observations conducted several days per week, and my conducting semi-structured interviews with three members of the child care staff and one parent. A document analysis was undertaken, including such sources as school and child care websites. Artefacts were also collected and photographed when possible. Examples of the artefacts collected included weekly plans, daily itineraries, and flyers pertaining to parent-child workshops.

## 4.2 Methods

### 4.2.1 Site

On-site observations and interviews took place in one of the Francophone child care centres in Southwestern Ontario. The site was selected by members of the child care centre's administration, who issued a memo to their staff requesting volunteers who would be willing to participate in the study. A centre was suggested partly based on the willingness of staff to volunteer for the study, and fortunate timing in that a new group of children was joining an existing preschool group. The child care ran using a continual intake of new children, though the cap for each group was eight children. The child care's director believed that the integration of this new group into the existing preschool

group would provide some interesting observations for my study. I agreed and proceeded with the study.

Based on the demographics of the *Conseil scolaire de district des écoles catholiques du Sud-Ouest* (CSDECSO) schools, I expected there to be a high number of non-Francophone children in the child care centre. I anticipated a considerable amount of the pedagogical programming would be aimed at welcoming the new children into the Francophone community and establishing a foundation for future learning in French. My assumptions proved correct in that, of the group of 16 preschool children, only 2 could be considered Francophone. I observed the preschoolers from the point of their arrival each day until the afternoon nap time. This period included the morning snack, free play times, lunch time, and outdoor activities.

#### 4.2.2 Participants

The participants included five Early Childhood Educators (ECEs), one parent, and twelve preschool-aged children in a FLE child care centre in Southwestern Ontario.<sup>8</sup> There were as many as eighteen children in the preschool program; however, only twelve returned signed consent forms to participate. A more detailed description about the key participants can be found in Chapter 5 in Section 5.2.

#### 4.2.3 Data Sources

The data sources for this case study consisted of the following:

- Detailed, coded field notes taken during pre-arranged classroom observations.
- Semi-structured, open-ended interviews with the three of the five participating ECEs, and one parent were conducted. These interviews underwent extensive aural analysis. Interactions with students were informal, and naturally-occurring.
- Document analysis of lesson and unit plans, Ministry of Education curriculum documents, and photographs.

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<sup>8</sup> See Tables 1 and 2 on pages 35 and 36 for additional details and descriptions of the participants.

- Artefacts, including a daily itinerary and a flyer promoting a weekend parent-child workshop.

#### 4.2.4 Analysis

I began my data analysis largely inductively in the early stages of the case study. While Cummins' (1989) Minority Empowerment framework and Lyster's (2007) Counterbalanced Instructional framework provided a guideline of what to look for and how to organize the data, no framework can predict what patterns, trends, or themes will emerge over the course of the study. As Patton (2002) notes, "[q]ualitative analysis is typically inductive in the early stages, especially when developing a codebook for content analysis" (p. 453). The more data I collected, the better able I was to assess, analyze, and adjust my focus based on what transpired. For instance, during my first several visits to the child care, I spent my time observing the daily routines and getting a better sense of the ECEs and the children. From there, I began to narrow my focus, observing specific children and one ECE, paying particular attention to language-related events.

Interviews were conducted at the end of the study, and examined aurally in an effort to better understand the participants, their educational philosophies, and their perspectives on the progress being made by the children. I listened to these interviews repeatedly, using the participants' inflections and intonations to guide me when selecting the portions of the interviews to transcribe. I coded field notes in a manner that identified potential pedagogical trends in the child care where I observed.

#### 4.2.5 Ethical Issues

Although this case study involved observing and interacting with children, ethical concerns were minimal. As no interventions were planned, I did not intentionally affect the learning environment. While it is impossible to be truly invisible during the course of a study, I did my best to blend into the scenery as much as possible. In order to gain access to the site, I agreed to play the role of an observer. I was never alone with the children at any point, nor did I lead any group activities. The ECEs conducted the daily routines as they would have had I not been present, and the children accepted me as a part



of their learning community. Additional details of my interactions with the children can be found in Chapter 5.

#### 4.2.6 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was established through triangulation of data obtained through participant observation, the semi-guided open-ended interviews with ECEs and one parent, and document analysis, which included elementary school profiles, 2006 Canadian Census data, and Ministry curriculum documents.

Additionally, trustworthiness was established through acknowledging my biases. My key bias is my passion for French language education, particularly as it concerns the oral and written proficiency of French I have observed in the London area French Immersion schools. This led me to examine the different ways the French Immersion learning environment could be improved for the benefit of the students. My first stop on this journey was an examination of the Francophone child care environment.

## Chapter 5

### 5 Findings

This chapter will be divided into several sections and subsections. Section 5.1 describes the physical setting where the study took place. Section 5.2 introduces the participants. Subsection 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 introduce the participants in more detail. Section 5.3 and its subsections recount specific language learning events. Section 5.4 describes different aspects of the learning environment, while Section 5.5 groups additional findings and observations from the perspective of Cummins' (1989) Minority Empowerment Framework.

#### 5.1 Physical Setting and General Schedule

The child care centre where I observed is attached to a French Language Education (FLE) elementary school. It consists of a small office, two larger activity rooms, and an adjoining washroom for the children. There is also a combination laundry-storage room, and a small kitchen, complete with a refrigerator, microwave, and stove. Small cubbies line one wall of the hallway outside of the activity rooms, each bearing the name of one of the children registered at the child care centre. On the opposite wall were a series of photographs taken during activities from earlier in the year. Each was mounted on construction paper and included a brief explanation of the activity and the learning outcomes the children experienced. A calendar outlining the major activities for the month was posted just outside the door to each activity room. Below that was a daily summary/attendance sheet, written in French, which noted which children were present, whether they ate at lunch and snack times, and described the activities and explorations the children undertook that day.

The activity rooms were set up to provide the children with a wide variety of learning opportunities and experiences. In the preschool room, I noticed a water centre, a costume centre, a kitchen set-up, and a small workshop. On the far side of the room, there was a small arts and crafts table, a television, and a library of age-appropriate books. A carpeted area beside the television provided some open play space for children

using building blocks or assembling railroad tracks. The central feature of the room was two U-shaped guided reading tables (one red and one blue table) used for the children's meals and transition activities. Plastic bins containing a wide array of learning materials (building blocks, toy animals, railroad tracks, etc.) were stored on large wooden carts which were used to separate one activity area from another. Every piece of furniture in the room was mobile enough to allow for a number of different set-ups, allowing the *éducatrices*<sup>9</sup> the flexibility to re-arrange the room as necessary, according to the needs of the day.

Along one side of the room were counter space, a sink, and a series of storage cupboards. The cupboards were labelled in French according to their contents. For example, the one that contained toys used during transition times was labelled *jouets de transition*. On one of the cupboard doors, the *éducatrices* posted outlines for the week's activities. These outlines were more similar to a teacher's daybook plans than to specific lesson plans, and served as a quick reference and visual prompt for the staff as they went about their day.

Opposite the main entry door to the preschool activity room was an exit with access to an outdoor play area. The toddlers and preschoolers each had their own fenced off area complete with a sandbox area and climbing equipment. Additionally, there was sufficient space for the children to ride tricycles and other push and pedal riding toys, as well as run around without crashing into one another. The climbing equipment had a ladder, and a slanted climbing wall that led to a central platform and three slides. Beneath the platform was a tube through which the children could crawl. Outdoor activities typically took place in this play area, though the *éducatrices* had the option to take the children on walks to local parks and playgrounds.

The children arrive between 7:30 AM and 9:00 AM, though a few stragglers may be dropped off by 10:00 AM. The children (toddlers and preschoolers) play in the

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<sup>9</sup> An *éducatrice* is the title given to French Early Childhood Educators. Please note that footnotes in this section will be primarily used to provide English translations of French expressions if they are not already translated in context.

toddler room until 8:45 AM, at which point they take a washroom break and wash their hands before the morning snack. The snack takes approximately a half hour, after which the children wash their hands again, and are free to play once more. Weather permitting, the children prepare to go outside at 10:00 AM, which can be a bit time consuming, depending upon how independent each child is and how much cold weather gear is involved. If all goes well, then the group is enjoying fresh air by 10:30 AM. Outdoor activities differ depending on the weather, but range from free play in a fenced off area to taking a walk around the block to one of several local parks. By 11:30 AM, the children are back inside, getting changed out of their winter clothing, and preparing for lunch. The lunch and general clean-up takes approximately 30 to 45 minutes, at which point the children go for an afternoon nap. I had arranged with the centre's administrative team to observe from the arrival time until the children went to sleep.

## 5.2 The Participants

In this section I will introduce the significant participants in this study. I have divided the participants into two groups: *éducatrices* and children. To preserve anonymity, the names have been changed, and identifying features (e.g., such as ethnic background and specific country of origin) have been excluded from my descriptions. The following table lists the adult participants, their roles in the child care, and their dominant language.

**Table 1: Names of Adult Participants**

Name	Role	Dominant Language (French, English, Other)	Origin (Canadian/Non- Canadian)
Josie	<i>Éducatrice</i> /Supervisor	Other	Non-Canadian
Monique	<i>Éducatrice</i> (Blue Table)	French	Non-Canadian
Karine	<i>Éducatrice</i> (Red Table)	French	Non-Canadian
Stephanie	Substitute <i>Éducatrice</i>	English	Canadian

Marie	<i>Éducatrice/Stagiaire</i> <sup>10</sup>	French	Canadian
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The next table lists memorable child participants, their table group, their dominant language, and their age at the time of the study. I consider these children memorable because of my interactions with them and their participation in specific events detailed in this study. I use the term Table Group to differentiate between those children who began just before the beginning of the study (Red) and those who have been at the centre for several months prior to the study (Blue). This corresponds also to the colour of the table at which the child ate his/her meals. Although there were more child participants than are indicated on the table, only those who are discussed in the language events are listed.

**Table 2: Names of Child Participants**

Name	Table Group	Dominant Language	Age
Tina	Blue	English	4
Brandon	Blue	English	4
Emily	Blue	English	4
Shawn	Red	English	3
Marc	Blue	English	4

### 5.2.1 The *éducatrices*

Over the course of the study, I met a number of different *éducatrices*. The child care assigns staff based on the number of children expected each day, as there is a specific ratio of certified adult staff to children. In the toddler room, there was one *éducatrice* for every five children, while the preschool room maintained a ratio of one *éducatrice* for

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<sup>10</sup> A *stagiaire* is an intern who is completing a practicum placement (*stage*) toward the completion of his/her program of study.

every eight children. On a typical day, there were three *éducatrices* working in this centre; however, they also welcomed a high school co-op student on a daily basis, and a *stagiaire* from Quebec during the last month of the study.

Josie was the child care supervisor and primary *éducatrice* for the toddler room. She was a warm and welcoming woman in her mid to late 40s from a non-Canadian background who spoke French with a noticeable accent, clearly influenced by her Allophone country of origin. Josie had learned French in Montreal after she and her family had arrived in Canada. In her home country, she worked in education, teaching language and law courses at the secondary school level in her L1. She began working at the child care centre several years ago, after relocating to Ontario and doing Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) courses through a local college.

Monique and Karine were responsible for the preschool room. Like Josie, both Monique and Karine came from non-Canadian backgrounds; however, they came from Francophone countries. Monique could understand and speak English and French, while Karine was primarily Francophone with a very limited English vocabulary. The two of them had also completed ECEC certification courses through one of the local colleges after arriving in Canada. Because of their responsibilities in the preschool room, I primarily observed Monique and Karine and their interactions with the children.

Josie injured her back several weeks after the study began, and only returned during the final week of my observations. When it became apparent that Josie's injury would keep her off of work for an extended period of time, a shuffling of staff was necessary to ensure that qualified *éducatrices* were covering the toddler and preschool rooms. This led to Stephanie joining the group for the latter half of the study.

Stephanie was a Canadian-born, French speaking Anglophone in her early 20s who did substitute assignments for the French child care centres in the area. She was educated in the Anglophone school system prior to working for the child care centre. Stephanie became responsible for the red table group that Karine supervised. Karine, meanwhile, was moved to the toddler room. Monique stayed with the blue table group in the preschool room, but took over supervisory duties for the centre in Josie's absence.

The last of the *éducatrices* to participate in the study was a *stagiaire* named Marie. Marie was a Canadian-born Francophone in her early 20s from Quebec who came to the centre to complete the final practicum placement for her ECEC program. She chose a placement in Ontario because she had hoped to improve her English over the course of her practicum. Her opportunities to speak English were rather limited because she was staying with an *éducatrice* from another centre, and the two spoke to each other primarily in French. Her limited English fluency made for some interesting exchanges with the children during the study.

### 5.2.2 The Children

In addition to the *éducatrices*, I met 21 children (3 toddlers and 18 preschoolers); however, only 15 of the 21 children participated in the study. Of those 15, I found that certain children stood out more than others in terms of their language usage. Many of the members of the red table group barely spoke at all in my presence in either English or French. In this subsection, I will introduce some of the more memorable children involved in the study.

Tina was the first child I encountered at the child care. Tina had been attending the child care on a part time basis for a couple of years, and had been accepted to begin kindergarten in an FLE school in September. She was part of Monique's blue table group, and was one of the first children to warm up to me. Tina's father spoke three languages: English, Italian, and French, while her mother was a non-Canadian Anglophone whose French experience was limited to what she had taken in secondary school. It was her father with whom Tina primarily spoke French at home.<sup>11</sup>

Brandon was a very physical and rambunctious child, often running around with the other boys. Like the majority of children in the child care, he came from a non-Francophone family; however, he had been accepted to attend kindergarten in a Francophone elementary school in the fall. He was part of Monique's blue table group,

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<sup>11</sup> This information came from an interview conducted with Tina's mother.

and like the others, he had been with her since the previous September. Though he didn't speak French in complete sentences, he was often willing to offer answers whenever Monique asked questions to the group during lunch and snack times. His favorite song to sing with the group was *Les étoiles dans le ciel*.<sup>12</sup>

Emily was one of the more talkative children in the preschool room. A member of Monique's blue table group, Emily's French fluency was one of the more difficult to gauge among the children because she spoke almost exclusively in English. She primarily played with the other girls, and seemed to be the one in charge of the different games. Emily would also step in to protect her friends if another child was behaving inappropriately (e.g., pushing, hitting, or taking away toys). Like her friends in the blue table group, she was accepted to an FLE school for kindergarten in September.

Shawn started at the child care in early March, two weeks before I came to the centre. He came from an Anglophone family, and was part of Karine's red table group. Shawn's interests were fairly well-defined when compared to the other children, as he was primarily interested in cars and trains. When the others would play at any of the other centres, Shawn would be busy assembling toy railroad tracks or pushing toy cars and trucks around the carpet. He was so fixated on the trains and cars that he would become quite agitated if another child tried to use what he would consider to be "his toys."

Marc was a part of Monique's blue table group, and one of the few children in the child care whose first name was spelled the French way. Despite his parents' (or at least his mother's) ability to speak French and their willingness to give him a French name, English was the dominant language in his home. His short stature led me to believe that he should be part of Karine's red table group, as they were collectively younger than Monique's blue table group, but like the others in his group, Marc was preparing to start kindergarten in a Francophone elementary school in September. He seemed to grow

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<sup>12</sup> Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star



attached to me during the study, often seeking me out during the outdoor play times to play catch with him.

## 5.3 Language Learning Events

In this section, I describe many of the language learning events I observed during this study. I have broken this section down into a number of subsections. Section 5.3.1 describes my first day at the child care centre. The subsections that follow recount specific language learning events. Each of these subsections is titled after the central participant in the events described.

### 5.3.1 The First Day

On my first day at the child care centre, I was greeted by Josie, the centre's supervisor and *éducatrice* for the toddler room of the centre. After having me fill out some last minute obligatory paperwork, she began showing me around the toddler room and explaining how things generally ran on an average day.

Josie asked me if I was familiar with the “Emergent Curriculum” or, as she referred to it, *le nouveau programme*.<sup>13</sup> Having never spent any time in a child care prior to that moment, I asked her to describe her interpretation of this *nouveau programme*. She explained that, in the *nouveau programme*, teaching and learning opportunities are driven by the child's interests and explorations. She did not dictate what she expected the children to do. Instead, her job was to observe each child, and look for opportunities to incorporate teaching and learning moments into these activities. For example, if a child was playing with Lego building blocks, then she could use that as an opportunity to teach the child the names of different colours, or to practice counting in French. The small number of toddlers registered (three in total) at this child care centre made it easy to spend one-on-one time with each child, but I wondered how the *nouveau programme* worked with larger groups.

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<sup>13</sup> *Le nouveau programme* translates as “the new program.” The old program is identified as “*l'ancien programme*.”

Josie led me to the preschool activity room where I met the two *éducatrices* responsible for the preschoolers, Monique and Karine. Like Josie, both of the *éducatrices* came from non-Canadian backgrounds; however, they were both born and raised in Francophone countries. Each was responsible for her own group of preschoolers: Monique took care of the older group (3 and 4 year olds), while Karine cared for the newer arrivals (2 and 3 year olds). Karine's group had just joined the main preschool group two weeks before I began my observations, so they were still becoming accustomed to the daily routines.

Since I was only an observer in the centre, I was never formally introduced to the children when I came in; however, my presence was noticed, particularly by the boys. Although I did not realize it at the time, Monique later told me that the boys were considerably more active than they normally were, likely in an effort to get my attention. I tried to be as inconspicuous as possible, though that proved difficult considering I was the largest person in the room, by far.

I had arrived during the morning snack time and found the children seated at the red and blue tables. There were no assigned seating arrangements, though the colour of the table each child sat at corresponded to when he/she began at the child care. Monique's group, who had been at the centre since September, were seated around the blue table, while Karine's group, who began in March, ate at the red table. I did a quick head count and noticed that Monique's group had 8 children, while Karine's had 6 children. This led me to ask if there were any specific adult to child ratios in place. Monique explained that the ratio was generally 1 adult to 8 children maximum in the preschool room, while the toddlers had a 1 adult to 5 children ratio.

Since Monique's group had been at the centre for a longer period of time, she seemed to be more interactive with them during snack time. She would ask the children questions about colours and numbers, while Karine would focus on short, polite requests connected to the snack. For example, Monique would ask who in her group was wearing the colour pink. Children would respond with one word answers, naming the correct

child more often than not. Meanwhile, Karine would reinforce expressions like, “*Encore du lait?*”<sup>14</sup> and “*Oui, s’il vous plaît.*”<sup>15</sup>

Looking at the children, it was clear that they came from a number of different ethnic backgrounds similar to what one would expect to find in a typical Canadian multicultural classroom setting. A number of the children were visible minorities and/or from mixed backgrounds; however, the children shared a common language: English. According to the *éducatrices*, the majority of the children in the child care were Anglophone. One or two of them might speak French at home occasionally with their parents, but the dominant form of communication in the home was English. Conversations and interactions between the children took place entirely in English with the exception of when there were disagreements or arguments. At that point, the children would use the expression, “*Non, merci!*” to indicate that someone’s actions were not welcome. For instance, if one child took a toy from another, the victim would squeal, “*Non, merci!*” and begin crying. This would lead to one of the *éducatrices* intervening and reinforcing the concept of sharing and turn-taking.

Once the morning snack was finished, the children washed their hands and went off to play with whatever toys interested them. As Karine cleaned up the red and blue tables, Monique began circulating around the room, talking to the children. Monique often asked, “*Qu’est-ce que tu fais?*”<sup>16</sup> and then re-stated the child’s answer in French, as the answer was often in English. Monique used these conversations as a way to initiate teaching opportunities. For example, Monique approached a small group of children playing with letter blocks. After asking her preliminary questions and re-stating the children’s answers, she asked them to identify different letters on the blocks for her. Next she asked what colours the letters were. With each correct response, she praised the

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<sup>14</sup> “Encore du lait?” means “More milk?” in this context. I found the use of “encore” to be a bit odd, as it is typically used to mean “still,” “even,” or “again,” rather than “more,” but since both Monique and Karine come from Francophone countries, this usage must be acceptable.

<sup>15</sup> Oui, s’il vous plaît: Yes, please.

<sup>16</sup> What are you doing?

child, using his/her name and saying, “Bravo!” Incorrect responses were addressed immediately by introducing the correct answer and prompting the child to repeat it a couple of times. The repetition seemed to reinforce the correction and offered an opportunity to reinforce proper pronunciation. Monique’s approach demonstrates Lyster’s Counterbalanced Approach in that she integrated language features (e.g., vocabulary) into the children’s play activity (see Section 3.2 pp. 23-24 ).

Monique transitioned into an introduction of *prépositions de lieu*,<sup>17</sup> using the blocks and a plastic bin to demonstrate *devant*, *derrière*, *dans*, and *à côté de*.<sup>18</sup> She demonstrated it several times using different blocks to show that the vocabulary was not specific to any particular block, but could be used for many things. When it was time to clean up, I got my first opportunity to see how the *éducatrices* signalled and directed the children. Monique stood up and, in a loud voice, called out, “*Statue! Statue les amis!*” She put her hands on her head and looked around to see if the children had stopped their activities. Once she had their attention, she began singing the clean-up song (sung to the tune of London Bridge): *C’est le temps de tout ranger, ramasser, nettoyer; C’est le temps de tout ranger; A la [name of the child care]; Rangez vite et rangez bien, ramassez, nettoyez; Rangez vite et rangez bien; Tous les beaux jouets.*<sup>19</sup>

Any time the children were expected to stop and begin cleaning up, one of the *éducatrices*, typically Monique, would begin singing the song. This was the signal to the children that play time was over and that they were moving on to something else once the room was tidy. The *éducatrices* would usually do more of the clean-up than the children would, but the children still contributed. Following the clean-up, the children would be directed to use the washroom and then line up at the door.

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<sup>17</sup> Prepositions of place.

<sup>18</sup> in front of, behind, in, and beside.

<sup>19</sup> It’s time to tidy up, pick up, and clean everything; It’s time to tidy up everything; at the child care; Tidy up quickly, tidy up well, pick up and clean; All the beautiful toys.

Specific songs were used to signal most of the major transitions, such as cleaning up the room, lining up at the door, and eating meals. Occasionally, a song may be used to direct the children to the washrooms, but for the most part, they were simply told to come “*fais pipi aux toilettes.*”<sup>20</sup> If told to go wait at the door, the children would go, and perhaps act silly as they waited for the *éducatrices* to arrive; however, once they heard the song to line up, they knew it was time to go. The line-up song’s lyrics are as follows : *A la queue leu leu; je me place, je me place; A la queue leu leu; je me place doucement.*<sup>21</sup> Unlike some of the other songs, I did not recognize the tune used in this song.

On this first day, I paid particular attention to the language used by the *éducatrices* with the children. I noted several examples of the *futur proche*, *l'imparfait*, *le présent*, *le passé composé*, and *l'impératif*.<sup>22</sup> The meal times were the closest example of what one might expect to see in a classroom setting. There were no anchor charts or white boards in the child care; however, the children were seated around a guided reading table, answering questions as they ate. For example, Monique asked the blue table group, “*Qu’est-ce que tu vois dans la soupe?*”<sup>23</sup> as she scooped a small carrot onto her spoon. With little prompting from Monique, one of the children answered that it was a carrot. Monique re-stated the answer in French and emphasized, “*On dit des carottes.*”<sup>24</sup> The child repeated “*des carottes*” and Monique carried on, scooping different vegetables on to her spoon. This is another example of integrating an activity with a focus on language form (See Section 3.2, p. 24). Karine’s group, by contrast, being new to the child care, continued to work on short, polite requests for more milk, more soup, and more bread.

Once lunch was over, the children were asked to go use the washroom, wash their hands, and then return to their table groups. After quickly cleaning off the tables,

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<sup>20</sup> To go to the washroom.

<sup>21</sup> In single file; I stand, I stand; In single file; I stand quietly.

<sup>22</sup> The near future, the imperfect, the present, the past tense, and the imperative tenses

<sup>23</sup> What do you see in the soup?

<sup>24</sup> We say, “Carrots.”

Monique placed a variety of French language books on the tables for the children. Soft music played in the background as the children began leafing through the books, looking at the pictures. Monique began to circulate around the tables, asking children about what they were reading and about specific pictures. She asked them to identify colours, count animals, and identify different objects in the pictures (Monique is making vocabulary comprehensible and salient as Lyster suggests in Section 3.2, p. 24) during the activity while Karine set up cots for the afternoon nap time. Once all the cots were ready, Monique sang a different version of the clean-up song, this time to the tune of the “Farmer in the Dell”: *Ramasse les livres, ramasse les livres. Oh ouais oh ouais oh ouais, ramasse les livres.*<sup>25</sup> Monique often used variations of this song to give instructions like, for example, asking the children to take their hands off the table when she’s cleaning it with disinfectant: *On cache nos mains, on cache nos mains. Oh ouais oh ouais oh ouais, on cache nos mains.*<sup>26</sup>

Although I spent time observing both *éducatrices*, I found myself gravitating more toward Monique’s group because of their language level. Karine’s group was younger and almost completely new to French, so her options were more limited with respect to language learning opportunities. Time did not permit me to track the incremental improvements Karine’s group made, so I chose to focus more attention on Monique’s group and the different language concepts that she tried to instill. Because the group had a greater exposure to French than Karine’s, I believed I would have more opportunities to observe these new concepts in action.

### 5.3.2 Monique

Monique often told me that the children and their interests drive the curriculum at the child care, but after observing the way different *éducatrices* interacted with the children, it became clear that she played an important role in the way that was really the children’s learning. She never missed an opportunity to interact with them and to encourage them to speak in

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<sup>25</sup> Pick up the books, pick up the books. Oh yeah oh yeah oh yeah, pick up the books.

<sup>26</sup> We hide our hands, we hide our hands. Oh yeah oh yeah oh yeah, we hide our hands.

French. For example, the children were often taken for walks around the block with the *éducatrices*. Monique saw these walks as an opportunity to talk with the children about what they saw. If the group passed someone walking his/her dogs, a fairly common occurrence in this neighbourhood, Monique would ask the children how many animals they saw, what kind it was, and what colour it was. She asked questions about the trees, the leaves, and the birds. Even if a child answered her in English, she acknowledged the response, praised correct responses, and then restated the child's response in French (This is an example of a "recasting," and integrating a focus on language learning into a physical activity, as Lyster suggests in Section 3.2, p.24). If a child gave an incorrect response, she did not dwell on it. She quickly corrected the child and reinforced the correct response and vocabulary in French. At the end of the walk, she often asked the children where they went and what they saw.

Monique was an extrovert whose personality that lent itself to storytelling. Several times per week, she read aloud from one of the *Paul et Suzanne* children's book series. Each page offered her a new opportunity to engage the children, to teach new vocabulary, and to reinforce prior learning. For example, while reading *Paul et Suzanne - La ferme* (Tougan, 2011),<sup>27</sup> she often paused to ask the children what they saw in the pictures. She asked them how many animals they saw in a particular picture. Next she asked them to identify types of animals they saw and their colour. She asked them to count the animals with her as a group. In one case, she used the pictures to illustrate the difference between *grand* and *petit*. In another, she reviewed the *prépositions de lieu*.<sup>28</sup> Monique actively tried to make connections between what the children have learned that day and what she points out in the pictures.

Monique did not necessarily need a book to engage the children. She was just as apt to improvise her own version of popular children stories as she was to read aloud. On one occasion, she had the children sitting down around her as she recounted the story of

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<sup>27</sup> Paul and Suzanne - the Farm

<sup>28</sup> Prepositions of place (e.g., in, under, in front of, beside, behind)

the *Three Little Pigs*. Her dramatic retelling, complete with sound effects and hand gestures, kept the children entertained; however, she was not content to just entertain. She managed to ask the group questions about story details, and found ways to reinforce the concepts of *dur* and *doux*.<sup>29</sup> This is another example of Lyster's Counterbalanced Approach (see Chapter 3, p. 26) in that Monique encouraged language production through her interactions with her audience and also drew their attention to comparative adjectives.

Monique put a lot of thought into the activities and games she used with the children and was mindful of how they influenced and promoted learning. For instance, on one rainy day, Marie was playing a game of Musical Chairs with members of the blue table group. After two rounds of the game, Monique asked Marie to tell her what the children were learning from doing this activity. Marie paused for a moment, and Monique suggested that it was a body movement activity that allowed the children to express themselves as they danced around the chairs. Marie thought for a moment and then agreed. As an observer to this episode, it seemed to me that Monique was reminding Marie that every activity should have a learning opportunity tied to it, and that she should keep that in mind whenever she did something with the children.

Reflective practice was built into the work the *éducatrices* do on a daily basis, as they were required to make observations and summarize activities. Monique seemed to embrace this. During the morning snack one day, she began talking to her group about seeds. Taking a seed from one of the apple cores, Monique asked the children what she had in her hand. The answers varied, which prompted Monique to inform them, "*C'est une graine.*"<sup>30</sup> From there, she elaborated in French, "And do you know what we do with seeds? We plant them in the soil." She continued to explain that the seeds would one day grow to be trees that produce new apples. Next, she sliced a kiwi in half and showed the group the little black specks in the middle of the fruit. She asked them what they thought

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<sup>29</sup> Hard and soft.

<sup>30</sup> It's a seed.



it was. She told them that these specks were also seeds, and that they could also be planted in the ground. She explained that all fruits have seeds, and that even though they may look different, they still grow up into plants and produce fruit (This is an example of teaching from a transmission orientation, as described by Cummins in Chapter 2, p. 14). Reflecting upon the children's response to her talk about seeds led Monique to suggest an activity to Stephanie.

A few days later, Stephanie built upon the seed discussion, guiding the children through the planting of bean plants in small Styrofoam cups (This is an example of an experiential orientation, as described by Cummins in Chapter 2, p. 14). Monique later told me that, to her, it would make no sense to just bring in seeds and soil and expect the children to start planting. She felt it was important to gauge the children's interest first before starting such an activity.

### 5.3.3 Tina

During my observations, I had noticed the kinds of questions Monique usually asked her table group. She seemed to focus on numbers, colours, and general vocabulary. She had also begun to introduce *grand, moyen, et petit*<sup>31</sup> to the group. One day, Tina was playing around the sofa near where I was sitting to observe. In her hands she had small plastic horses of varying size. I took this opportunity to ask her some slightly different questions than those I had heard Monique ask.

Pointing to one of the horses, I asked, "*Qu'est-ce que c'est?*"<sup>32</sup> She answered, "*Cheval.*"<sup>33</sup> I asked, "*C'est quelle couleur?*"<sup>34</sup> "*Jaune,*"<sup>35</sup> she answered. The horse was actually more of a tan/beige colour, but describing it as yellow was close enough,

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<sup>31</sup> Big, medium, and small

<sup>32</sup> What is it?

<sup>33</sup> Horse

<sup>34</sup> What colour is it?

<sup>35</sup> Yellow

considering her language level and vocabulary. Now that she was comfortable answering my questions, I decided to see if she could recognize the superlative. I asked her, “*Quel est le plus grand?*”<sup>36</sup> She showed me the biggest of the horses. I followed that by asking, “*Quel est le plus petit?*”<sup>37</sup> She showed me the smallest horse.

I chose the superlative specifically because I had not heard Monique use that construction with the children at that point. Monique had also been focusing on colours and numbers more than comparisons, so I would not have to worry about a recency effect with Tina’s answer. However, it is possible that Tina was keying on the words *grand* and *petit* rather than recognizing the superlative construction. Even so, I considered it a positive sign of Tina’s French language development.

Once the weather started getting warmer, the children were given more of an opportunity to play outside. The change in seasons also provided the backdrop for one of the more interesting conversations I heard during the study. On the first really warm day we had this year, the children were getting dressed to play outside. Monique told them, “*Mettez pas les bottes de pluie. Il fait beau dehors.*”<sup>38</sup> She repeated it several times to make sure that all of the children heard and understood her. At this point, Tina started to get upset. Tears started to well up in her eyes as she sat in her cubby. Monique went over to her and gently asked why she was so upset. Tina responded that, “*Je n’ai pas les bottes de soleil.*”<sup>39</sup> Monique smiled and reassured her that it wasn’t a problem and that she could wear her rain boots if that was all she had with her.

### 5.3.4 Brandon

As a researcher, my goal was to remain as inconspicuous as possible so that I could observe the learning environment in its most natural state. However, since I was in the

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<sup>36</sup> Which one is the biggest?

<sup>37</sup> Which one is the smallest?

<sup>38</sup> Don’t put on your rain boots. The weather is beautiful outside.

<sup>39</sup> I don’t have any sun boots.

activity room with the children, interactions would take place naturally as a result of me sitting there taking notes. I first realized that I was becoming accepted by the group one day when the children were getting changed out of their snow suits to come back inside the preschool room. I was standing out of the way near the door, observing what was going on.

When I am standing in place, I typically shift my weight from one foot to the other, essentially swaying slightly back and forth from side to side. As I stood there, I looked down to my left. There stood Brandon, facing the same direction I was, hands in his pockets, swaying slightly from side to side. Monique looked up from helping a child out of her snow suit, looked at the two of us standing side by side, and started smiling. “*Il t’imite, toi!*”<sup>40</sup> she said with a laugh. Brandon had observed my unconsciously-modeled behaviour and had indeed begun to mimic me. Despite my best efforts, I was clearly impacting the learning environment through my presence. However, my presence should not be construed negatively. The children had become accustomed to me being there and often approached me as they would one of the *éducatrices* if they needed help with something, like zipping up their winter coats.

One day, Brandon noticed a green plastic knife that belonged to the kitchen/house play set. He began running around the room and pretending to slash or stab at different children. Monique took Brandon by the hand and led him back to the kitchen table of the play set and demonstrated that the knife was for cutting fruits and vegetables, not for play fighting with the other children. She used this opportunity to ask Brandon the names of the plastic fruits and vegetables, as well as the colour of the plastic knife. In each case, he answered her questions correctly. This is an example of Monique redirecting inappropriate behaviour, and then integrating language learning (e.g., reinforcing vocabulary) while teaching content (e.g., the proper way to use of a particular toy).

Six weeks into the study, Brandon’s parents made the decision to have him stay home to be watched by his grandparents. Monique told me that, although she understood

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<sup>40</sup> He’s imitating you!

the decision from a financial standpoint, she was worried about how much Brandon's French would regress as a result of his absence from the child care. She felt that he had made good progress during his time in her group, but she felt that his transition back into a French environment would be more difficult for him than would be necessary had he stayed at the centre.

### 5.3.5 Emily

Emily's comprehension and word recognition seemed to be as sharp as the other children in the blue table group. If the *éducatrices* asked her to get something on the other side of the room, she was able to do so without hesitation. For instance, they may tell her to, "*Mets un tablier avant de faire la peinture,*"<sup>41</sup> and she would put down her paint brush, cross the room, put on an apron, and then return to her painting. They could also give her instructions with multiple steps like putting away a toy across the room, getting a Kleenex box, and then returning to the *éducatrice*. However, she was the only child to whom Monique would occasionally whisper in English.

I asked Monique about Emily's comprehension and she told me that she felt Emily's unwillingness to speak in French was having a detrimental effect on her language development. She said that, for the most part, Emily seemed to understand, but as newer situations arise, the child seemed blocked. Monique recounted an exchange between Emily and Marie outside during one of the play times. Emily wanted to play a game with Marie, but Marie did not know the rules. Marie asked Emily to explain them to her, but she did not understand what Marie was asking. Marie's English is very weak, so she also couldn't understand what Emily was trying to say to her. Finally, Monique stepped in and asked Emily, in English, to explain the rules to her, so she could explain them to Marie. Emily proceeded to explain the rules in English to Monique, who then translated them for Marie. Emily was expected to start kindergarten in a Francophone elementary school in September, and Monique was concerned about how she would adjust to that environment if she continued to avoid speaking in French.

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<sup>41</sup> Put on an apron before painting.

### 5.3.6 Shawn

Shawn's days at the child care would begin in much the same way each day. He would be dropped off by his parents at close to 10 AM. As soon as he realized that his parents were leaving, Shawn would begin to shriek and cry. This would go on for approximately half an hour before he finally settled in for the day.

Shawn was one of the first children to approach me on my first day at the centre. During the first free play time, he came over to the red table where I was sitting to take some initial notes, and he began to talk to me. I had a difficult time understanding what he was saying since he spoke so quietly, but I soon discovered he was sharing his interest in cars with me. Though he spoke to me in English, I responded to him in French. This exchange was typical of the rapport we developed over the course of the study.

Shawn was a curious child, despite his focus on cars and trains. On one occasion, he came over to me with his toy cars in hand. He was looking at a farm play set that was sitting on one of the mobile shelf units beside me. He began pointing at different structures on the farm set and asking me, "What's that?" I answered, "*C'est une ferme.*"<sup>42</sup> Next he pointed at an arched gate and asked, "What's that?" Not really knowing what it was called, I went with the closest thing I could think of, "*C'est la porte.*"<sup>43</sup> Finally, he pointed at one of the toy grain silos, again asking, "What's that?" Like the arched gate, I didn't remember the word for silo, so I called it *une tour*.<sup>44</sup>

Shawn and I had similar exchanges during my time observing in the child care. He asked me about different toy animals, and even his cars, trucks, and trains. However, he rarely repeated the names back to me after I told him what they were. He would simply move on to asking about a different toy or object. This is an example of Shawn taking ownership and responsibility for his own learning by seeking out the names of

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<sup>42</sup> It's a farm.

<sup>43</sup> It's the door.

<sup>44</sup> A tower

different objects (See Chapter 2, p. 14). It is unclear, however, how much he is learning because he rarely repeated the words back to me.

### 5.3.7 Marc

During Marie's first week, she assumed several of Monique's duties during the meal times. She sat at the blue table with the older group of children and served the food. Like Karine, her English was very poor, so she often urged the group to speak in French. During one of the meals, she asked Marc if he would like more milk; however, she used an expression that he did not understand. When she asked, "*Veux-tu d'autre lait?*"<sup>45</sup>—a phrase I found unusual since *d'autre* typically means "other,"—he looked at her with a confused expression, and said that he didn't understand what she said. She repeated herself again, and so did he.

At that point, I interjected that the *éducatrices* usually use the expression *encore du lait* when asking if the children wanted more milk. She gave me an odd look, shrugged her shoulders, and then asked Marc, "*Veux-tu encore du lait?*"<sup>46</sup> Now understanding the question, Marc answered with an excited, "*Oui!*"

Later in Marie's practicum, I observed another interaction between her and Marc. The two of them were building towers out of Lego blocks and comparing the sizes. Marc told her, "*C'est plus grand que toi.*"<sup>47</sup> Marie chuckled and responded, "*C'est plus grand que moi? Oh, je pense pas.*"<sup>48</sup> That was when I realized he was talking to her in French. He had often talked to me, but each time he did so he spoke to me in English—even though I had always responded to him in French. So why had he started speaking more French with Marie? This will be addressed further in Chapter 6.

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<sup>45</sup> The meaning she was trying to convey was, "Do you want more milk?"

<sup>46</sup> Do you want more milk?

<sup>47</sup> It's bigger than you are.

<sup>48</sup> It's bigger than me? I don't think so.

## 5.4 The Learning Environment

In the following section, I discuss several different songs used by the *éducatrices* to reinforce important vocabulary and behaviours. Next I discuss the unspoken hierarchy of authority recognized by the children, and finally, I recount my observations of the supermarket play set. These topics provide insight into pedagogical approaches used in the child care, as well as providing a more thorough understanding of the learning environment as a whole.

### 5.4.1 Songs

I have already introduced a few songs in previous sections; however, it is important to note the significant role they played in the daily routine of the centre. They marked the transitions for the children, acted as instructions, and helped to regulate the children's behaviours. At snack or lunch time, they sang the *Bon appétit* song to signal that it was time to begin eating: *Bon appétit les grands amis; bon appétit les grands amis; ça sera bon, hé! Ça sera bon, hé! Bon appétit les grands amis! Bon appétit les amis!*<sup>49</sup> While the children were not prohibited from starting before the song had been sung, they typically waited to eat until the song was finished. This was the only song that was consistently sung every day without fail.

In addition to marking transitions, songs were used to engage the children's attention, and to reinforce teaching points. If children were being too noisy while waiting at the door to go outside, then Monique or Stephanie would start singing some of the children's favourite songs. One that seemed universally popular with the children was the *Petit escargot*<sup>50</sup> song: *Petit escargot; portait sur son dos; sa maisonnette. Aussitôt qu'il pleut; il est tout heureux. Il sort sa tête. CUCKOO!*<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Enjoy your meal good friends; enjoy your meal good friends; That'll be good, hey! That'll be good, hey! Enjoy your meal good friends! Enjoy your meal, friends!

<sup>50</sup> Little snail

<sup>51</sup> Little snail; wore on his back; his house. As soon as it rains; he is really happy. He pops out his head. Cuckoo!

Once the song begins, the children know that they need to put down their heads, covering them up with their hands, and pretend that they are the little snail hiding under his shell. At the very end of the song, the children pop back up and all say, “Cuckoo!” One of the children usually happily calls out, “*Encore! Encore!*” and they would sing the song again. By the third time through, the children are all calm and in good spirits.

A number of songs are used to reinforce colours with the children. The most popular of these is the *Papillon*<sup>52</sup> song. The *éducatrice* chooses one of the children in the group and uses his/her name in the song. At the end, the *éducatrice* asks the child what colour his/her shirt is. The *éducatrice* has the option of asking the child about different articles of clothing, depending on what they’re trying to reinforce. The song will be sung several times to give multiple children an opportunity to answer. The general song lyrics are : *Avez-vous vu un papillon? Un papillon, un papillon? Avez-vous vu un papillon; sur la tête de [child’s name]? C’est quoi la couleur de ton chandail?*<sup>53</sup>

Monique used another song to reinforce colours with the children, and to encourage them to dance around and have fun. One day, a number of the children were dressing up in some of the costumes. Monique had noticed that Brandon had put on a multi-coloured grass skirt. She asked him, “*Veux-tu danser avec Monique?*”<sup>54</sup> He took her hands and they began to dance while she sang, “*Brandon portait bleu, bleu, bleu. Brandon portait bleu; toute la journée. Danse, danse, danse Brandon! Danse, danse, danse Brandon! Danse, danse, danse Brandon; toute la journée!*”<sup>55</sup> Once she finished the song, she asked the children who wanted to dance next. She had Brandon take off the grass skirt and then she chose another child. She asked him/her what colour they were wearing, and then she went through the song again. This time, all the children were

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<sup>52</sup> Butterfly

<sup>53</sup> Have you seen a butterfly? A butterfly, a butterfly? Have you seen a butterfly; on [child’s name]’s head? What colour is your shirt?

<sup>54</sup> Do you want to dance with Monique?

<sup>55</sup> Brandon was wearing blue, blue, blue. Brandon was wearing blue; all day long. Dance, dance, dance Brandon! Dance, dance, dance, Brandon! Dance, dance, dance, Brandon; all day long!



dancing around with her. She repeated this process until every child who wanted to dance with her had had an opportunity to do so.

In addition to colours, the *éducatrices* sang songs to reinforce the letters of the alphabet, counting from one to five (or higher, depending on the child), the parts of the body, the members of the family, and different animals, like birds, fish, dogs, and cats. The songs were often sung multiple times, allowing the children to practice the vocabulary over and over again in an active and fun manner. Gestures often accompanied the songs' lyrics, providing the children who did not yet know the words an opportunity to participate, as well (See Section 3.1, p. 20).

#### 5.4.2 The Continuum of Authority

The children seemed to recognize an unspoken continuum of authority within the child care centre. Just because an adult gave them an instruction did not necessarily mean that the children would listen. This became apparent when different substitute *éducatrices* came in to cover the preschool room due to various staff appointments and illnesses. The greater the familiarity one had with the children, the greater the likelihood that they would choose to listen to instructions.

On one occasion, there were two substitutes covering the preschoolers, which is hardly an ideal situation for the staff. I knew this would be a challenging day for them when I entered the preschool room and 5-6 of the children ran up to me and hugged my legs. This was the first time that they had done anything like that with me, so I knew something was different. When I looked around and saw the substitutes, I understood why the children had such a reaction to me: I was the only familiar face in the room that day.

My role as strictly an observer changed for that day, and I became a participant-observer. If I saw a child misbehaving or doing something dangerous, I would proactively call the child by name, give him/her a disapproving look, a corrective instruction, and then advise the *éducatrices* of what just took place. For example, if I saw one child hit another, I would use the same terminology Monique and Karine would use,

saying, “*Non, merci. On ne frappe pas les amis ici.*”<sup>56</sup> After the morning snack, one of the substitutes asked me if I would join her and her group outside because I knew the routines and the children’s names better than she did. While they did not always listen to me, the children seemed to accept me as more of an authority figure than they did that particular substitute.

This was also the day that I began to appreciate how skilled Monique and Karine are at their work and how seamlessly they integrated learning opportunities into the children’s activities. The substitutes, particularly the one I was assisting, were more accustomed to the old program and its prescribed group activities and organizational model. For example, the substitute tried to have the children sit at the red table to paint pictures. She demonstrated what she would like them to do, and encouraged the children to follow her example. This differed significantly from the way that Monique and Karine conducted activities, and the children reacted poorly to this change. Children would often get up from the table and go off to pursue their own interests, rather than complete the activity provided.

Monique, who was acting as the supervisor that day, as well as covering the toddler room for Josie, occasionally came into the preschool room to see how things were going. Even during these brief periods, she still found time to reinforce vocabulary and work on counting with several of the children. For example, she sought out children playing at one of the tactile sensory exploration centres and scooped beans into a container, asking them to count along with her until the container was filled. When children threw some of the beans on to the floor, she asked them to count with her as they picked them up and put them back. Monique demonstrated a facility for seizing teaching opportunities that the substitutes lacked.

As mentioned earlier in this section, the centre used songs to signal transitions to different activities. They have a song to start cleaning up, a song to go off to the washroom, a song to line up at the door, and a song just before meals, among others.

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<sup>56</sup> No, thank you. We don’t hit our friends here.

Originally, I thought that the songs were the key to smooth transitions; however, I noticed that who initiated the song was often more important than the song itself. For example, if one of the substitutes initiated the clean-up song, the children didn't tend to react, but if Monique started singing, most of the children would start cleaning up. Monique still did most of the clean-up herself, but the children were more apt to pitch in if she was the one who used the song.

I saw the unspoken hierarchy at play once again when Marie arrived from Quebec. This was her final practicum assignment before finishing her program in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). By this point in my observations, the children and the *éducatrices* were quite comfortable with my presence. They knew that, if I saw one of the children doing something inappropriate or dangerous, I would say something to the child. For example, if a child began climbing on to one of the bookshelves, I would say the child's name and tell him/her to "*Descends.*"<sup>57</sup> Monique would also notice non-verbal cues from me, which would allow her to intercept and correct inappropriate behaviour.

On this particular day, one of the children was playing with a lacing toy, and had wrapped the shoelaces from the toy around her neck in a dangerous way. Marie noticed this and asked the child to come to her so she could un-wrap the laces. However, each time Marie moved toward the child, the child would scoot backwards, smile mischievously and giggle. Marie would move forward, and the child would scoot backwards out of reach. When I saw this, I called the child by name and gave her a look that let her know the game was over. She looked at me sideways with a grin on her face, but I didn't change my expression. This time when Marie moved forward, the child didn't move and she was able to untangle the laces from around the child's neck.

In another example, one of the children was running around the room with scissors in his hand. Marie noticed this, called the child's name, and told him to give her the scissors. Rather than doing so, the child hid the scissors behind his back. I got up

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<sup>57</sup> Get down.

from my chair, said the child's name and extended my hand. Without hesitation, the child handed me the scissors and went off to play. Both of these episodes took place approximately a month after Marie had begun her practicum assignment, and although the children were already accustomed to her being there on a daily basis, I seemed to be perceived as having more authority than she did. The children's responses to me may have been due to their greater familiarity with me as I had been around them longer at this point.

### 5.4.3 The Supermarket

The supermarket activity centre has become an important fixture in the preschool room. Early on in this study, Monique spent several days cutting boxes in half, painting them brown to look more like wooden crates, and gathering the items to be sold during the activity. On each of the boxes, a photograph of a particular fruit or vegetable was posted. Plastic fruit and vegetables were used to fill the produce boxes, and while there was not necessarily enough to fill each box with the exact fruit or vegetable depicted in the photographs, care was taken to separate the food appropriately. For example, tomatoes would not be placed with the broccoli. In the days leading up to the launch of the activity, Monique asked parents to bring in empty cereal boxes, plastic bottles, egg cartons, and other similar containers in order to stock the shelves of the supermarket. The final product resembled what one may expect to see at a small downtown storefront market.

A table with a toy cash register was set up to the side of the supermarket display near the kitchen/house play set. Beside the cereal boxes were small shopping baskets. Play money was placed in the baskets for the children to use during their trip to the market. Monique played the role of cashier as each of the children took turns filling their shopping baskets and coming to the checkout.

At the checkout, the children were asked to put their groceries on the counter and Monique would ask them to identify what they bought. Monique would pick up a piece of plastic fruit or a vegetable and ask the child what it was called. She repeated the name in French and prompted the child to repeat it back to her. Next she would ask what

colour the item was. Again she would repeat the name in French and prompt the child to do the same. Finally, she would ask the child to count the number of items he/she was purchasing. In some cases, she would have the child count how many vegetables were bought. In others, she would ask the child to count all the items that shared a particular colour (eg. Green). The questions she asked seemed to be geared toward the child's current fluency with the language. Those who had been in the centre the longest were asked more detailed questions than those who had started at the beginning of March.

At first, the supermarket was more popular with the girls in the centre; however, the boys gradually became more interested in using it, as well. Once it was introduced, it became a daily staple of the children's activities. In keeping with the principles of the Emergent Curriculum, there was no formal time set aside to use the supermarket, but the materials were always on display. The children had an open invitation to go shopping whenever they had free playtime. If Monique noticed that children had begun shopping, then she would assume her position at the cash register.

## 5.5 Findings Seen Through the Lens of Cummins

In this section, I have grouped findings that can be more closely associated with Cummins' (1989) Minority Empowerment Framework. Each subsection corresponds to one of the main pillars of the framework: Cultural/Linguistic Incorporation, Community Participation, and Assessment. Since pedagogy has been a central part of the findings to this point, I have not assigned it a subsection here. Additional discussion concerning pedagogy used in the child care will be found in Chapter 6.

### 5.5.1 Cultural/Linguistic Incorporation

The French language child care centres exist to provide Francophone Ontarians with the option to have their children cared for in their own first language. However, the number of Francophone children enrolled at this centre mirrored the percentage of Francophones currently enrolled in Catholic Francophone elementary schools across Southwestern Ontario. Of the 16 children in the preschool room, only 2 could be reasonably

categorized as Francophone since their parents came from Francophone countries. The remaining children came from Anglophone or Allophone households.<sup>58</sup>

Identifying these two as Francophone was somewhat problematic because they communicated so fluently in English with the other children. It might be more accurate to describe these two as “bilinguals,” though their English was noticeably more fluent than their French. The two bilingual children tended to respond most often to the *éducatrices* general questions, and were often called upon to follow multi-stepped instructions, leading me to believe that their receptive language in French is quite developed. That being said, whenever they did answer questions, their responses were typically as brief and simple as those of their Anglophone peers, which calls into question the level of development of their productive language in French.

The Franco-Ontarian cultural perspective was noticeably absent from the day to day activities of the learning environment, which is understandable considering the multicultural make-up of the staff and children. Recognizing *la semaine de la francophonie*<sup>59</sup> on the monthly calendar gave the impression that the week may be celebrated; however no activities specifically connected to Francophone culture were conducted during that week. Interestingly, traditional French songs were also absent from the daily routine of the centre. Considering the importance of songs to the daily routine, it is surprising that songs like *Alouette* or *Frère Jacques* were not heard occasionally.

Linguistically, the *éducatrices* were the primary source of French language in the child care. While it would be accurate to say that the language of business and

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<sup>58</sup> I rarely met the parents as I tended to arrive after the majority of children had been dropped off. With the exception of one child, all of the children spoke English quite well for their age, making it difficult to gauge which could be considered Anglophone versus Allophone. I could only go by what the *éducatrices* had told me about their backgrounds.

<sup>59</sup> *La semaine de la francophonie* celebrates Francophone culture around the world (Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, 2013). *Francophonie* refers to France, Belgium, Switzerland, the former colonies of France that have maintained French as an official language, and also countries where French is not an “official” language, but is widely used.

communication for the centre was French, the fact that, in this author's observation, the children spoke to one another entirely in English makes it difficult to say that French was the dominant language. Communication letters to parents were always written in French and English, with French being given prominence at the top of the page. English translations were provided at the bottom of the page for those parents who did not read French.

The *éducatrices* never discouraged the children from speaking English; however, they constantly encouraged the children to speak French. This approach demonstrated a value and respect for both languages, without giving the children a sense that one was superior to the other. The *éducatrices*' use of praise and encouragement likely positively affected the children's motivation to learn French.

### 5.5.2 Community Participation

Community involvement and participation in the child care are important parts of the centre's learning environment. Participation takes many forms including: welcoming of local high school co-op students to volunteer in the centre; conducting workshops for parents and children; and inviting of members of the public service (e.g., the local police) to make presentations. The centre also welcomes local yoga instructors to come in and work with the children several times per month.<sup>60</sup>

For Mother's Day, the child care organized a party for the mothers and their children. Early in the day, the children worked on greeting cards<sup>61</sup> and baked cupcakes to celebrate. Activities were planned for parents and children that provided an opportunity for the parents to socialize with the *éducatrices*, other parents, and their children. The centre tried to organize something on a monthly basis for parents and children, in an effort to foster a sense of community. The Mother's Day party was well-attended, and all involved seemed to enjoy themselves. Mothers, for the most part,

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<sup>60</sup> It is important to note that the language spoken during all of these activities was French.

<sup>61</sup> There was no writing on the greeting cards. They just consisted on the children's artwork.

focused their attention on their own children, but I noticed several of the parents interacting with one another, as well.

In addition to events organized within the centre itself, parent-child workshops are organized between different Francophone child care centres. For example, a pizza making workshop was held on a Saturday for interested parents and children. The workshops are typically several hours in length, and conducted entirely in French. These workshops provide an opportunity for the families to connect with the larger child care community. Events such as these demonstrate to both children and parents that the Francophone community is larger than the pool of friends and acquaintances they see on a daily basis.

Although the children are too young to appreciate the significance of the child care's interaction with the Francophone community, parents may appreciate the opportunity to meet other like-minded people who believe that French language education is important to the future career success of their children. Inviting the local police to come in and do presentations in French provides the children with French speaking role models outside of the child care setting and their immediate families. Fostering positive relationships within the Francophone community can only benefit the children's overall development.

### 5.5.3 Assessment

Assessment in the child care setting is far more subtle than what one finds in a formal schooling environment. Since this is a child care setting, the children do not participate in any summative assessments (i.e., tests) conducted by the child care workers/teachers themselves. Instead, the children's time in child care can be viewed as an extended formative assessment. Observations are recorded by the *éducatrices* on a daily basis, and activities are planned according to the needs and interests of the children.

Language level is a key motivating factor for the *éducatrices* as each of the Anglophone and Allophone children are required to take a proficiency test in order to enter the Francophone school system; however, language level is not the only aspect of



the child's development being evaluated. In addition to language development, the *éducatrices* are expected to plan for and to assess the children's social, cognitive, and physical development. The weekly teaching outline mentioned in Section 5.1 is laid out in such a way as to ensure that each area of development has been planned for.

In his Minority Empowerment Framework, Cummins is concerned about the misdiagnosis of language learners as Learning Disabled (See Chapter 2, p. 15). This is not an issue in the child care setting because they do not make such diagnoses. However, if a child demonstrates consistent anti-social or violent behaviour towards the *éducatrices* or the other children, then the *éducatrices* have the option of requesting an outside evaluation by a child behaviour specialist. As this is the only formal type of assessment or evaluation performed in conjunction with this child care, I felt it was important to mention.

The assessment cannot proceed without the permission of the child's parents, which poses a challenge if the parent chooses not to acknowledge that his/her child may have behavioural issues. If the child demonstrates that they are a consistent danger to themselves or the other children (e.g., biting other children several times), then he/she may be removed from the centre.

## Chapter 6

### 6 Discussion

In the following section, I discuss the Emergent Curriculum pedagogical approach (see Section 3.1) employed at this child care centre and its connection to the theoretical frameworks applied to this study, particularly Lyster's (2007) Counterbalanced Approach to second language teaching. Next I discuss the importance of routines to the learning environment before moving on to an analysis of specific language events from my findings.

The pedagogy employed at the child care centre is deeply rooted in the Emergent Curriculum concept. In many ways, the children direct the learning through their own interests. It is the responsibility of the *éducatrices* to seize the opportunities for learning presented by the children. To the casual observer, the Emergent Curriculum approach may seem disorganized and chaotic; however, if done properly it engages the children and makes the learning relevant to their own experiences.

Finding the correct balance between *éducatrice* and children is a delicate matter. The ratio of *éducatrices* to children in the preschool room is a quite favorable 1 adult to 8 children, which allows the *éducatrices* the flexibility to properly supervise, and also to circulate and spend time with the children one-on-one or in small groups. During the study, the ratio of adults to children in the preschool room changed to closer to 1 adult to 6 children because of the presence of the *stagiaire*, Marie. Having an additional adult presence increased the children's opportunity to interact with someone in French, which seems beneficial to their language development. Increasing the number of children per adult would likely have negative outcomes for the children involved, as they would have less opportunity to interact directly with an *éducatrice*.

The teaching that takes place in the centre is very informal and natural. As mentioned in Section 5.3.1, there are no anchor charts or white boards in the child care. The closest thing to formal classroom-style instruction occurs during the meal times when the children are gathered together at the red and blue tables, reminiscent of what

one might see during a Guided Reading session in an elementary school (See pp. 47-48). However, the teaching during these times is still very informal. The children are already engaged in eating, so the mini-lessons likely seem like casual meal-time conversations. Since the mini-lessons were almost always connected to language learning and vocabulary building, this integration of teaching into the meal times can be seen as another example of Lyster's (2007) Counterbalanced Approach, albeit unintentional as the *éducatrices* were likely unfamiliar with this particular approach.

Positive reinforcement and encouragement are key components to the pedagogical style employed by the *éducatrices* in the centre. Correct responses are met with words like, "Bravo," while incorrect responses are met with follow-up questions to try to prompt the correct answers. At no point do the *éducatrices* tell the children that they are wrong or incorrect. There is no shame, embarrassment, or judgement connected with wrong answers. They simply support the child and give him/her the opportunity to give correct answers. The children are made to feel safe as they learn to communicate. This reinforcement encourages and empowers children to take "risks" in their L2, which positively reflects Cummins perspective on pedagogy (See Chapter 2, p. 14).

The Emergent Curriculum used in this child care complements Lyster's (2007) Counterbalanced Approach at an age appropriate level. The children were actively engaged in play activities that acted as entry points for the *éducatrices* to provide content and language instruction. The *éducatrices* integrated language learning into the play activities, shifting the children's attention from what they are doing and on to French vocabulary, thus "counterbalancing" the activity. While Lyster had initially intended his framework to be used with older children in academic content-based classes, the findings in this study demonstrate its applications with younger children. The supermarket activity (See section 5.4.3), in particular, is an excellent example of Lyster's Counterbalanced Approach in action as every interaction with Monique during this activity could be seen as evidence of Lyster's approach in that she integrates vocabulary building and reinforcement into the roleplaying activity.

I found the supermarket activity appealing because it is grounded in everyday experiences the children likely have had with their parents. It offered an authentic and realistic opportunity to learn vocabulary in a meaningful way and, since Monique was already a part of the activity as the cashier, the children did not find her questions to be intrusive on their fun. It also offered many entry points to reinforce the language. In addition to teaching the colours, counting, and the names of food items, Monique had the option to integrate size comparisons (big or small), and sorting items according to colour or type. The number of possibilities will continue to grow as more items are added.

Similar to Weber and Tardif's (1990, as cited in Taylor, 1992) work in the French Immersion kindergarten setting, routines seemed to be an important part of the learning environment for this case, too. The consistency of these routines created a sense of stability for the children. This stability was important to the effectiveness of the overall environment for learning French. These routines were particularly important for Karine's red table group since they had just started at the child care shortly before my study began. The songs and gestures would have been the only way the children could reasonably understand what was going on. For example, once Monique began singing the clean-up song, they knew it was time to put the toys away and then go to the washroom. If she just called out instructions, they likely would have continued playing. The routines and gestures augmented the children's understanding beyond their current language levels.

If the routine was significantly altered, as was the case when two substitute *éducatrices* worked the one day in the preschool room, then the learning environment was compromised. That day became more about regulating behaviour than about educating the children. The children in the child care seemed to respond well to structure, as long as it was not oppressive.

As mentioned in Section 5.4.2, the children reacted poorly to having their activities dictated for them. They may have enjoyed the activity had they been invited to participate, rather than instructed to do so. This was a good example of what Cummins (See Chapter 2, p. 14) described as a transmission orientation versus an interactive/experiential orientation. The substitute was used to teaching from the

transmission perspective, while the children had grown accustomed to an interactive learning experience. For these children, Monique's fusion of an experiential teaching model with Lyster's Counterbalanced Approach seemed to offer more learning opportunities, particularly since the children were already used to it.

Two events warrant further discussion. The first involved Tina (See section 5.3.3) and her *bottes de soleil*. I found this episode to be quite interesting. Tina's comments demonstrated a clear and logical understanding of the vocabulary she was using. While the use of "*bottes de soleil*" sounds as odd to a Francophone as the use of "sun boots" does to an Anglophone, the thought process is perfectly logical. We have snow boots for when it snows, and rain boots for when it rains, so it is reasonable to think we would have sun boots for when it is sunny. She took the expression, broke it down into its noun and prepositional phrase components, and substituted a complement that would make sense given the circumstances. She demonstrated a complexity to her productive language that was not as evident in the other children at that point. Her development is a positive reflection of the child care centre workers' efforts to teach the children French.

The next event I will discuss pertains to Marc (See section 5.3.7) and his interactions with Marie. In the initial exchange, Marc did not understand what Marie was asking him when she offered him more milk. This exchange showed me that Marc was still at an earlier stage of oral comprehension. He understood that *encore du lait* meant more milk. Instead, she asked him, "*Veux-tu d'autre lait?*" He was not recognizing or distinguishing the word *lait* in Marie's question. This could have been due to her Quebecois accent, which differed from the accents of Monique and Karine, but I am more apt to think Marc was chunking together vocabulary and expressions to decode meaning. He had become accustomed to certain expressions and routines being used in certain situations. Once the familiar expression was used, he responded without hesitation, which indicates he understood what she had asked him.

The second exchange, when they were building the Lego towers together, may have built upon the *lait* event. Marie did not understand Marc when he spoke to her in

English, so if Marc wanted to communicate with her, then he would have to try something else. He knew she spoke French, so he chose to speak to her in the language they had in common to ensure he would be understood. The circumstances forced him to adapt. This stood in sharp contrast to how he spoke with me. He knew I understood English, even though I had always spoken to him in French, so he had no incentive to change the way he communicated with me.

Although I did not set out to assess the effectiveness of this FLE child care in teaching French to the children cared for there, inevitably I am left with some impressions. Do the children who attend this centre learn to speak French? Yes, to a certain extent. Do they speak French as well as they speak English? No, they do not. Each of the children I observed was far more comfortable speaking in English than in French. However, the *éducatrices* built a strong enough foundation for the children that they all passed the tests for entry into FLE kindergarten. The fact that these children all passed the entry test speaks positively to the work put in by the child care staff.

## Chapter 7

### 7 Conclusions and Future Research

This thesis set out to examine how Franco-Ontarian cultural and linguistic character is applied and reinforced in this specific Francophone child care setting; if and how early childhood educators integrate educational activities with language instruction to facilitate the learning of L2 learners; and what supports are in place to assist and facilitate the success of Anglophone and Allophone children in this centre. These points of interest were examined through the lens of Cummins' (1989) Minority Empowerment Framework and Lyster's (2007) Counterbalanced Approach to second language teaching and learning.

The study took the form of an explorative, descriptive case study using ethnographic tools. Over the course of the 10 week study, I was introduced to this centre's interpretation of Emergent Curriculum, and observed how it related to the Counterbalanced Approach advocated by Lyster (2007). The Emergent Curriculum is an experiential pedagogical model which allows the child to use his/her interests to facilitate learning (Jones, 2012). The child care workers found ways to integrate language learning into the children's play activities, thus "counterbalancing" the child's learning experience. In this section, I will sum up my findings concerning each of the research questions, address limitations of the study, and finally suggest possibilities for future research.

#### 7.1 Franco-Ontarian Culture and Linguistic Character

The culture of the child care was not distinctly Franco-Ontarian in the traditional sense. The *éducatrices* who worked there did not fit the historical definition of what a Franco-Ontarian is thought to be (i.e., French Canadian ancestry dating to New France). The primary care givers, while mostly Francophone, reflect the new and changing identity of the Franco-Ontarian community. As more Francophone immigrants arrive in Ontario, the definition of what it means to be Franco-Ontarian changes. This ethnically diverse idea

of the Franco-Ontarian accurately fits this child care as each *éducatrice* at this centre came from a non-Canadian ethnic background and foreign country of origin.

Cultural activities like the celebration of Mother's Day, while not distinctly Franco-Ontarian, represent a commitment by the *éducatrices* to honour and respect North American traditions. The lack of overt displays of Franco-Ontarian culture in favour of a universal culture of acceptance, regardless of ethnic or cultural background, favourably reflects the multicultural and diverse make-up of the centre.

The linguistic character of the child care is a mix of French and English. The staff exclusively speaks French during the work day, while the children communicate with each other primarily in English. All activities led by the staff are conducted in French, as are any workshops or presentations done by members of the community. The French used is pretty standard, though some Quebecois expressions are used occasionally by the *éducatrices*. This is a reflection of time spent in Quebec by the staff during practicum placements or, in one case, a by-product of living in Montreal for a number of years.

## 7.2 Integration of Language Instruction into Educational Activities

The *éducatrices* in the centre use each and every activity as an opportunity for language instruction. Through use of the Emergent Curriculum and the children's interests, the staff introduces and reinforces vocabulary and grammatical concepts, like comparatives. This integration of language into activities comes across so naturally that the children may not even realize that language is being taught to them. Language instruction, though very informal, is central to the daily routine of the centre.

The *éducatrices* commonly start by asking the children what they're doing. From there, they begin to ask more specific questions about the toys being used (e.g., the names of specific toys, their colours, etc.). Even an activity as simple as climbing a ladder on the outdoor equipment provides an opportunity to practice counting with each step. This introduction of vocabulary and language features into everyday play activities and games demonstrates an age appropriate application of Lyster's (2007) Counterbalanced



Approach to second language instruction. The language features being taught are relevant to the children and rooted in their everyday experiences.

### 7.3 Supports to Assist Anglophone and Allophone Children

Specific supports for Anglophone and Allophone children were difficult to distinguish because all but two of the children in the centre could fit that description. Language instruction, particularly for the new arrivals, is accompanied by gestures, demonstrations and repetition as Weber and Tardif (as cited in Taylor, 1992) would suggest. If giving directions to a child, his/her name is used, followed by a one or two word instruction. If the child does not understand, then the instruction is repeated and a demonstration is incorporated.

The tone of voice used is typically quite warm and welcoming. Whenever a child properly interprets an instruction, then he/she is praised for the effort. The child is similarly praised if he/she properly uses a new expression. Vocabulary is built up incrementally with little pressure or urgency placed on the child. The *éducatrices* recognize that children progress at their own pace and that patience is often required when teaching preschoolers to learn a new language.

### 7.4 Limitations of the Study

The most significant limitation of this study was time in the field. The ten weeks spent in the child care, while informative, were not sufficient to properly track the language development of the child participants, particularly the new arrivals. As a result, I focused on the senior group who already had some knowledge of French. A longer time in the field may have provided me with more opportunities to gauge and assess the newer children's development in French.

Having access to only one child care centre was also a limitation. It would have been interesting to compare and contrast the pedagogies employed by *éducatrices* in different centres. A comparison may have allowed me to observe different interpretations of the Emergent Curriculum and to assess the effectiveness of different teaching strategies.

## 7.5 Future Research

This ten week case study provides a small glimpse into the language learning environment fostered at the child care centre; however, there is a great deal more that could be learned from a longer term study in this environment. Due to time constraints, I was unable to track the incremental language gains made by Karine's red table group. It would be fascinating to observe new Anglophone or Allophone children from their first entry into the Francophone child care environment. An Allophone child, who spoke neither French nor English, started at the centre approximately two weeks before this study concluded. Tracking his progress over the course of 6 months to a year would produce some very interesting insights into his language learning journey.

Revisiting the same centre in a year's time would also be interesting, as it would allow me to note the progress made by the members of Karine's group. None of the children in this group spoke French upon arrival, and at the time this study concluded, their French was largely limited to short responses and interjections. A few of the children may still have been in the receptive language stage, as I never witnessed them communicating in English or French.

Continuing in a similar longitudinal vein, it would be interesting to follow Monique's departing group as they make the transition from the child care centre to the more formal learning environment of kindergarten of a French Language Education elementary school. Emily, in particular, would be fascinating to track, given her aversion to speaking French in the child care. Similarly, Brandon would be entering a Francophone kindergarten after having been away from any sort of French input for 5 months. Observing the kinds of support and incentives the elementary school provided for each of them would be very useful for language learning researchers, and French immersion teachers.

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## Appendix 1: Home Language Comparison

**Table 3: Comparison of Languages Spoken at Home in CSDECSO Elementary Schools 2011-2012**

OLMC	School	School Population	Students Who Speak Mainly French at Home (Percentage)	Students Who Speak Mainly English at Home (Percentage)	Students who Speak Mainly Another Language at Home (Percentage)
Amherstburg	St-Jean-Baptiste	356	10 (3%)	343 (96%)	3 (1%)
Belle Rivière	Pavillon-des-Jeunes	406	162 (40%)	244 (60%)	0 (0%)
Chatham	Ste-Catherine	196	21 (11%)	171 (87%)	4 (2%)
	Ste-Marie <sup>62</sup>	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable
Grande Pointe	St-Philippe	160	16 (10%)	144 (90%)	0 (0%)
LaSalle	Mgr-Augustin-Caron	562	56 (10%)	478 (85%)	28 (5%)
Leamington	St-Michel	547	11 (2%)	328 (60%)	208 (38%)
London	Frère-André	375	8 (2%)	56 (15%)	311 (83%)
	St-Jean-de-Brébeuf	278	28 (10%)	209 (75%)	41 (15%)
	Ste-Jeanne-d'Arc <sup>63</sup>	212	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade – 10% 6 <sup>th</sup> grade – 25%	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade – 24% 6 <sup>th</sup> grade – 12%	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade – 67% 6 <sup>th</sup> grade – 62%
McGregor	Ste-Ursule	210	53 (25%)	157 (75%)	0 (0%)
Pointe-aux-Roches	St-Paul	143	35 (24%)	108 (76%)	0 (0%)
St. Joachim	St-Ambroise	115	29 (25%)	86 (75%)	0 (0%)
Sarnia	St-Thomas-d'Aquin	305	21 (7%)	284 (93%)	0 (0%)
Tecumseh	St-Antoine <sup>64</sup>	330	60 (18%)	249 (76%)	21 (6%)
	Ste-Marguerite-d'Youville	397	12 (3%)	377 (95%)	8 (2%)
Tilbury	St-Francis	150	10 (7%)	138 (92%)	2 (1%)
Windsor	Georges-P. Vanier	313	47 (15%)	235 (75%)	31 (10%)
	Mgr-Jean-Noel <sup>65</sup>	430	127	321	90
	St-Edmond <sup>66</sup>	216	46 (21%)	68 (32%)	102 (47%)
Woodstock	St-Marguerite-Bourgeoys	295	45 (15%)	232 (79%)	18 (6%)

<sup>62</sup> The school website did not provide a breakdown of the school population, unlike the others listed.

<sup>63</sup> The school profile provided a breakdown by percentage of only the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes.

<sup>64</sup> The number of students was changed from 305 to 330 to reflect the breakdown listed in the report.

<sup>65</sup> The report indicates that 108 students speak 2 or more languages at home, making percentages difficult to calculate.

<sup>66</sup> The number of students was corrected from 218 to 216 to reflect the breakdown listed in the report.

## Appendix 2: Letters and Consent Forms

### Information Letters and Consent Forms - Consent Form (Interview) **A Case Study of Pedagogy and Learning Environment in an Ontario Francophone School**

#### LETTER OF INFORMATION – Teacher/Administrator/Support Staff

My name is Alan Russette and I am a Masters student in the Faculty of Education at Western University. I am conducting research into the learning environment of Francophone elementary schools in Ontario, and would like to invite you to participate in the study.

The aim of my research is to examine multiple aspects of the learning environment, including how the Franco-Ontarian linguistic and cultural identity is promoted and reinforced in the school, community involvement, pedagogies employed, and assessment. The study includes a classroom observation component, and a one-on-one interview component.

If you agree to participate in the interview component of the study, the interview will take 30-45 minutes. It can be conducted in a classroom or another location of your choosing. The interview will be audio-recorded with your permission and later transcribed. Once the transcriptions are complete, you will be contacted and provided with an opportunity to check them for accuracy. You may make amendments or corrections to the transcriptions, if you wish.

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor any information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. Only the researcher will have access to the tapes, field notes, and transcripts. You will be given a pseudonym to protect confidentiality in the thesis and any other forms of publication. All collected data will be destroyed after the research is completed.

There are no risks to participating in this study. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from this study at any time with no effect on you personally or professionally.

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Manager, Office of Research Ethics, at Western University at XXX-XXX-XXXX or [XXXX@XXX.ca](mailto:XXXX@XXX.ca). If you have any questions about this study, please contact Alan Russette at [XXXXXXXX@XXX.ca](mailto:XXXXXXXX@XXX.ca) or my supervisor Dr. Shelley Taylor at XXX-XXX-XXXX x XXXXX or [XXXXX@XX.ca](mailto:XXXXX@XX.ca).

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

**A Case Study of Pedagogy and Learning Environment in an Ontario Francophone  
School**

By Alan Russette  
Faculty of Education  
Western University

**CONSENT FORM**

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me, and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Name (please print):

Signature:

Date:

Consent Form (Classroom Observations)

**A Case Study of Pedagogy and Learning Environment in an Ontario Francophone School**

LETTER OF INFORMATION – Teacher

My name is Alan Russette and I am a Masters student in the Faculty of Education at Western University. I am conducting research into the learning environment of Francophone elementary schools in Ontario, and would like to invite you to participate in the study.

The aim of my research is to examine multiple aspects of the learning environment, including how the Franco-Ontarian linguistic and cultural identity is promoted and reinforced in the school, community involvement, pedagogies employed, and assessment. The study includes a classroom observation component, and a one-on-one interview component.

If you agree to participate in the classroom observation component of the study, I will be visiting your classroom 2-3 times per week over the course of several months. A formal visiting arrangement can be negotiated to suit your schedule and preferences. Portions of your lessons may be audio or video recorded with your permission and later transcribed. Field notes will also be taken during the observations.

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor any information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. Only the researcher will have access to the tapes, field notes, and transcripts. You will be given a pseudonym to protect confidentiality in the thesis and any other forms of publication. All collected data will be destroyed after the research is completed.

There are no risks to participating in this study. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from this study at any time with no effect on you personally or professionally.

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Manager, Office of Research Ethics, at Western University at XXX-XXX-XXXX or [XXXXXXX@XXX.ca](mailto:XXXXXXX@XXX.ca). If you have any questions about this study, please contact Alan Russette at [XXXXXXXXX@XXX.ca](mailto:XXXXXXXXX@XXX.ca) or my supervisor Dr. Shelley Taylor at XXX-XXX-XXXX x XXXXX or [XXXXXXX@XXX.ca](mailto:XXXXXXX@XXX.ca).

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

**A Case Study of Pedagogy and Learning Environment in an Ontario Francophone  
School**

By Alan Russette  
Faculty of Education  
Western University

**CONSENT FORM**

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me, and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Name (please print):

Signature:

Date:

Parent/Guardian Consent Form (Classroom Observations)

**A Case Study of Pedagogy and Learning Environment in an Ontario Francophone School**

LETTER OF INFORMATION – Parents of Students

My name is Alan Russette and I am a Masters student in the Faculty of Education at Western University. I am conducting research into the learning environment of Francophone elementary schools in Ontario, and would like to invite your child to participate in the study.

The aim of my research is to examine multiple aspects of the learning environment, including how the Franco-Ontarian linguistic and cultural identity is promoted and reinforced in the school, community involvement, pedagogies employed, and assessment. The study includes a classroom observation component.

I will be visiting your child's classroom 2-3 times per week over the course of several months. Although the focus of the classroom observations will be on the teacher and how he/she conducts the classroom learning environment, children will be observed to document and assess their reactions to the teacher's lessons and to the learning environment. Portions of the teacher's lessons may also be audio or video recorded. Interaction with the children will be incidental, for the most part, and only those students who agree to participate in the study will be observed. No notes will be taken on students who are not participating.

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your child's name nor any information which could identify him/her will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. Only the researcher will have access to the tapes, field notes, and transcripts. Your child will be given a pseudonym to protect confidentiality in the thesis and any other forms of publication. All collected data will be destroyed after the research is completed.

There are no risks to participating in this study. Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw your child from this study at any time with no effect on you or them.

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Manager, Office of Research Ethics, at Western University at XXX-XXX-XXXX or [XXXXXXXX@XXX.ca](mailto:XXXXXXXX@XXX.ca). If you have any questions about this study, please contact Alan Russette at [XXXXXXXXXX@XXX.ca](mailto:XXXXXXXXXX@XXX.ca) or my supervisor Dr. Shelley Taylor at XXX-XXX-XXXX x XXXXX or [XXXXXXXX@XXX.ca](mailto:XXXXXXXX@XXX.ca).

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

**A Case Study of Pedagogy and Learning Environment in an Ontario Francophone School**

By Alan Russette  
Faculty of Education  
Western University

CONSENT FORM (for students under the age of 18)

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me, and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Name of the student (please print):

Name of the parent or guardian (please print):

Signature of the Parent or Guardian:

Date:

## Appendix 3: Ethics Approval Notice

### Western Education

WESTERN UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS - ETHICS APPROVAL NOTICE

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Review Number: 1210-5  
 Principal Investigator: Shelley Taylor  
 Student Name: Alan Russette  
 Title: *A Case Study of Pedagogy and Learning Environment in an Ontario Francophone School*  
 Expiry Date: September 30, 2013  
 Type: M.Ed. Thesis  
 Ethics Approval Date: November 20, 2012  
 Revision #:  
 Documents Reviewed &  
 Approved: Western Protocol, Letters of Information & Consent

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This is to notify you that the Faculty of Education Sub-Research Ethics Board (REB), which operates under the authority of the Western University Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects, according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the date noted above. The approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the REB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.

During the course of the research, no deviations from, or changes to, the study or information/consent documents may be initiated without prior written approval from the REB, except for minor administrative aspects. Participants must receive a copy of the signed information/consent documentation. Investigators must promptly report to the Chair of the Faculty Sub-REB any adverse or unexpected experiences or events that are both serious and unexpected, and any new information which may adversely affect the safety of the subjects or the conduct of the study. In the event that any changes require a change in the information/consent documentation and/or recruitment advertisement, newly revised documents must be submitted to the Sub REB for approval.

[REDACTED]  
 /s/ Dr. Alan Edmunds (Chair)

*2012-2013 Faculty of Education Sub-Research Ethics Board*

Dr. Alan Edmunds	Faculty of Education (Chair)
Dr. John Barnett	Faculty of Education
Dr. Farahnaz Faez	Faculty of Education
Dr. Wayne Martino	Faculty of Education
Dr. George Gadanidis	Faculty of Education
Dr. Elizabeth Nowicki	Faculty of Education
Dr. Julie Byrd Clark	Faculty of Education
Dr. Kari Veblen	Faculty of Music
Dr. Jason Brown	Faculty of Education
Dr. Susan Rodger	Faculty of Education
	Faculty of Education, Associate Dean, Research ( <i>ex officio</i> )
Dr. Shelley Taylor	Faculty of Education, Western Non-Medical Research Ethics Board ( <i>ex officio</i> )
Dr. Ruth Wright	Faculty of Music, Western Non-Medical Research Ethics Board ( <i>ex officio</i> )
Dr. Kevin Watson	Faculty of Music, Western Non-Medical Research Ethics Board ( <i>ex officio</i> )

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The Faculty of Education    Research Officer  
 1137 Western Rd.    Faculty of Education Building  
 London, ON N6G 1G7

[REDACTED] ext. [REDACTED] FAX [REDACTED]

Copy: Office of Research Ethics



## Curriculum Vitae

**Name:** Alan Russette

**Post-secondary Education and Degrees:** The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada  
1993-2005 B.A.

The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada  
2008-2009 B.Ed

The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada  
2011-2013 M.Ed

**Honours and Awards:** Dean's Honor List (Faculty of Arts and Humanities – UWO)  
2004-2005

Joan Pedersen Memorial Graduate Award  
2012-2013

**Related Work Experience** Occasional Teacher  
Thames Valley District School Board  
London, Ontario, Canada  
2010-present

ESL Instructor  
Collège Boréal  
London, Ontario, Canada  
2011-2012