French immersion and core French graduates in post-secondary French:

how does their past education affect their current experiences?

By

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study examines how the educational backgrounds of French immersion and core French students impact their experience and performance in a second-year, post-secondary French course at a Canadian university. An exploratory case study approach is adopted for this research. Factors such as the type of program and the type of instruction students received are considered in relation to how fluent or accurate participants perceive they are and demonstrate they are through oral and writing samples. This is a primarily qualitative study, but some statistical research was used to compare results between groups of participants and individuals. Four instruments were used to collect and triangulate data: a questionnaire, interviews, writing samples, and oral samples. Findings revealed that results for fluency were often associated with program type and factors such as having a French-speaking relative or friend, yet results for accuracy were more scattered. Participants who had experience learning French more implicitly tended to have greater fluency, whereas those who learned the language more through explicit instruction often had higher accuracy. Further, findings suggest that program type is not necessarily the main or only variable that affects the fluency and accuracy of participants. Implications from this study are also discussed for pedagogy and for the design of future studies in this area.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The two primary avenues of French-as-a-second-language education in Canada, French immersion and core French, are programs where the target language is primarily acquired through subject matter in the classroom (the former) or as a separate subject for an assigned part of the day (the latter). In each case, varying degrees of implicit and explicit learning take place, depending on factors such as the year of study, the type of program, and the individual teacher. In early French immersion classes, students generally learn implicitly in their early years of education and gradually learn French more explicitly as they progress throughout secondary school (Netten & Spain, 1989, p. 485). In late French immersion, students generally have more experience learning the language explicitly, from taking core French classes prior to immersion study (Genesee, 1981, p. 117). Unlike French immersion, core French does not have French as the medium of instruction for other subjects and the language is not taught implicitly through other subjects. In core French programs, French (as a second language) is the subject being studied and is done so in daily periods of 20-50 minutes, often more explicitly – through grammar exercises and a focus on a conscious study of the language – than French immersion programs (Genesee, 1981, p. 117).

While graduates from both programs have been studied individually and comparatively (Lapkin, Harley, & Taylor, 1993; Swain, 1996; Wesche, 1992), it appears that they have not yet been researched comparatively at the post-secondary level in relation to the type of instruction they received throughout their schooling (based on a review of the literature for this thesis). Nor have French immersion and core French

students in the same university class been studied. The question then arises: in post-secondary French classes, the tasks students are asked to perform are the same, but does student performance vary according to prior French educational backgrounds? There have been many important studies done on the type of instruction that immersion and core French students received (Lapkin, Harley, & Taylor, 1993; Swain, 1996) – with varying degrees of implicit and explicit learning – but there does not appear to have been research done on how the varied backgrounds of these graduates affect their experience and performance at the university level, even though many studies call for more research on these graduates in post-secondary institutions (Wesche, 1992, p. 208). Such research is clearly needed, as increasing numbers of students are graduating from French immersion and core French programs and many choose to continue French education in post-secondary institutions. In terms of French immersion graduates, studies show that 85% to 90% of French immersion students who have completed an elementary school immersion program and a bilingual high school program are university bound (Wesche, 1992, p. 210). However, little is known about how the previous French educational backgrounds of French immersion or core French graduates affect their university experience learning French. This gap in research is surprising, given that the merging of graduates from French immersion, core French, and former students of both creates a rich opportunity to study how French educational backgrounds can affect their current performance in post-secondary. Filling the gap is timely and important, as such research on French immersion, core French, and students of both in post-secondary could aid in understanding the various needs of these students and how their French educational backgrounds affect areas such as fluency and accuracy.

Research Objectives and Questions

This exploratory study aimed to investigate how students' previous educational backgrounds in French – specifically the type of program (French immersion, core French, or combined[1]) and the type of language instruction (implicit or explicit) they received – impacted their experience and performance in a second-year, post-secondary French course at a Canadian university. The performance of participants was looked at in terms of their fluency and accuracy in the language. This study also aimed to identify factors other than program type that could affect student experience and performance in university French, such as teacher, having a French-speaking relative or friend, or participating in an exchange to a French-speaking province or country. In order to gain insight into the impact of students' French educational backgrounds on their French performance, data were collected by means of a questionnaire, interviews with students, student oral and writing samples, and an interview with the students' post-secondary French instructor. These data sets were triangulated at the end of this thesis in order to compare the students' and instructor's perceptions of the students' performance (based on questionnaire and interview data) and fluency and accuracy indicators in the oral and writing samples.

The previous training and performance of the university students was compared not only with program type (French immersion or core French), but also by taking into account individual variation among graduates of the same program type, since it is well documented in the research that no two immersion or core French classes are the same,

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[1] The students who received both French immersion and core French education will be referred to as the "combined" group.

but vary according to different factors. This not only provided the researcher with insights into how the performance of French immersion students differed from core French students in the same university French class, but also shed light on the differences and similarities between graduates of the same program type and how their type of instruction – primarily how much explicit or implicit instruction they received – was affecting their post-secondary French experience. This research does not focus on how programs differ, but more specifically, on how the kind of explicit or implicit instruction received by French immersion and core French students impacted their performance in university French and if any other factors might influence their experience and performance.

It should also be noted that the type of French education that some students had in this study was mixed between core French and French immersion. Due to the variation within programs and educational backgrounds, it is important that this study focused primarily on the type of instruction students received in their French schooling, which often went beyond the labels of French immersion and core French. Hence, given the complexity of learning paths and circumstances, an exploratory multiple case study approach seemed appropriate as a first step in identifying factors that could affect the fluency and accuracy of French immersion, core French, and graduates of both in a post-secondary French class.

The primary questions motivating this research were the following:

- What type of language instruction – implicit or explicit – do French immersion and core French graduates receive in their French schooling?

- How do French educational backgrounds – specifically, the type of program (French immersion, core French, or combined) and the kind of language instruction (implicit or explicit) received – affect the fluency and accuracy of participants in French at university?

- What factors and circumstances other than program type (e.g. French-speaking relatives or friends, an exchange program, teacher, year of the program, etc.) might influence fluency and accuracy?

- How do former immersion and core French students in the same university French class perform differently or similarly, depending on their French educational backgrounds?

To answer these questions, more sophisticated qualitative and quantitative (e.g. regression analysis) are needed. However, this does not detract from the usefulness of this study as preliminary exploration attempting to unravel and identify factors that could influence participants' fluency and accuracy. To gain preliminary insights into these questions, this research focused on the French educational backgrounds and performance of a selected group of students in a second-year university class at an English-speaking university in Ontario. A mainly qualitative case study approach focusing on group and individual learning paths and circumstances was used in order to unravel the complexity of factors that influence the performance and experience of former immersion and core French graduates in post-secondary French. However, some descriptive statistic indicators were also used when possible, in order to make preliminary comparisons and reveal the possible impact of program type and background on fluency and accuracy.

Organization of Thesis

In order to investigate these research questions, I first situate this study with related and important literature that distinguishes between French immersion and core French programs, discusses the type of instruction that could take place in the programs, and identifies key issues related to the programs (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 presents the methodology used in this study, and includes the research design, information on participants, and procedures and analysis. Chapter 4 presents the results from the data collection that was used: a questionnaire, interviews with student participants, oral samples, writing samples, and an interview with the post-secondary French instructor. Finally, Chapter 5 triangulates the data sets, provides a summary of the main results, discusses key issues from the interviews, and presents implications for pedagogy and future research, while tying in relevant literature.

Summary

Chapter 1 presented background information on the French immersion and core French programs, the research gap that exists in the area, and the need for the gap to be filled. It also introduced the rationale for this study, the research questions, and the organization this thesis will take. Following this introduction, a literature review in Chapter 2 will present relevant research on the French immersion and core French programs, as well as the type of instruction that could take place in the classrooms.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will focus on issues concerning the type of instruction received in the French immersion and core French classrooms. Implicit and explicit learning is first discussed as a prelude to the type of learning and instruction that could take place in immersion and core French classrooms. Research on French immersion and core French is then reviewed in order to clarify the differences between programs, and the Ontario curriculum is also highlighted. Finally, instructional differences are discussed in relation to implicit and explicit learning, focus on form, and error correction.

Implicit and Explicit Learning

The idea of implicit and explicit learning as two separate means for developing a second language was called to attention by Krashen in the 1970's with his "acquisition-learning distinction" (Krashen, 1982, pp. 10-11). Krashen states that implicit and explicit learning are "two distinct and independent ways of developing competence in a second language" (1982, p. 10). His hypothesis has been critiqued in the literature due to the question of whether or not learners develop two *independent* systems.

In discussing the distinction between implicit and explicit learning as two separated modes, Berry (1994) asserts:

Although a distinction has been made between the above two modes of learning, such a characterisation could be considered to be a little extreme. It is probably more useful to think in terms of these two modes combining in different ways to give rise to a number of different styles of learning. These different learning styles differ in the extent to which actions (or decisions) are driven by conscious beliefs. Hence, performance in any complex learning situation is likely to involve a subtle combination of implicit and explicit learning processes. Similarly, the knowledge gained as a result of interacting with a complex learning task is likely to involve both implicit and explicit aspects, rather than being solely one or the other. The particular balance will depend on both the experimental instructions and the salience (however it is defined) of the crucial variables (p. 157).

The relationship between implicit and explicit learning is now thought of as a more intertwined process, instead of two separate systems. Although each style of learning exists on its own, the two are more interconnected than initially thought and depending on the task and the method of instruction, each affects learning to a certain degree (Berry, 1994, p. 157; Ellis, 2005, pp. 143-144). Instead of looking at implicit and explicit learning as two distinct labels, it would be more advantageous to look at the degree to which implicit learning prevails over explicit learning and vice versa, as well as the implications from the type of learning (Berry, 1994, p. 157).

Although implicit and explicit learning are connected and differ depending on the task and method of instruction, this is not to say that one style of learning cannot outweigh the other. In this study I will look at the degree of implicit and explicit learning participants experienced in their French education and how it affects their current performance in post-secondary French.

Measuring Implicit and Explicit Knowledge

Ellis' (2005) study looks at what factors contribute to implicit knowledge and what factors lend more to explicit knowledge. He developed a battery of tests that would provide separate measures of implicit and explicit knowledge. Bialystok (1982) also contends that different tasks will draw differentially on implicit and explicit knowledge. Although it would be impossible to construct tasks that would supply pure measures of the two types of knowledge, as Berry (1994) indicates in her research, the tests developed by Ellis (2005) measure whether participants draw *primarily* from implicit or explicit knowledge. Ellis' research is relevant for this study because of the need to separate what would be considered implicit and explicit learning in relation to the French educational backgrounds of the participants.

Among the results relevant to my study is the low correlation found between the replication of a grammar rule and the measure of implicit knowledge (Ellis, 2005, p.163). Results also suggested that time pressured tests primarily require reliance on implicit knowledge. Tests without time constraints allow participants to draw on their implicit and explicit knowledge. Tests that require learners to focus on "meaning" will elicit implicit knowledge, while tests that call for a focus on form will elicit explicit knowledge (Ellis, 2005, p.163). As was also supported by Zobl (1995), tests of implicit knowledge will elicit less variable responses than tests of explicit knowledge (p. 44). Explicit knowledge is said to consist of both analyzed knowledge and metalanguage (Ellis, 2005, p. 166).

Limitations to Ellis' study include the lack of knowledge of the participant's learning backgrounds. The way that the participants learned English – primarily

implicitly, explicitly, or a mixture of the two – was not taken into account when the tests were being analyzed.

French Immersion and Core French

Instruction in the French immersion classroom will differ according to teachers of the program, but what has been an issue in much of the literature is that there is not enough explicit teaching of language in French immersion classrooms. This results in students who are fluent, but not particularly accurate, according to Swain (1996):

> In general, the research has shown that students develop high levels of communicative fluency in the immersion language, yet their spoken and written use of the target language often contains morphological and syntactic inaccuracies, lacks precision in vocabulary use, and tends to be sociolinguistically limited to a more formal academic register (p. 531).

Swain asserts that explicit teaching is lacking in French immersion, and in order to improve the accuracy of the students, while still maintaining fluency, there needs to be more integration of language structure into the course content. Her study specifically looks at the degree to which French is taught implicitly or explicitly in the immersion classroom. Her results show conflict can arise between good content teaching and good language teaching. Often teachers would be so focused on the students learning the content in French, that they would indicate acceptance or not of what the student was saying about the content and move on without correcting the students errors or drawing attention to the structure of the language (Swain, 1996, p. 533). Swain also discusses how grammar instruction is sometimes taught in an explicit manner, but not in relation to the content being taught – it is isolated from meaningful contexts. There was no evidence that grammar was being integrated into content teaching. Additionally, there was no

proof that students were being pushed by their teachers toward a more accurate and coherent use of French (Swain, 1996, p. 536).

The assumption in French immersion is that second language skills can be acquired while subject matter is being learned. The second language is not taught as an academic subject, but is acquired implicitly (especially in the early years of schooling) through learning subject matter in the immersion classroom (Netten & Spain, 1989, p. 485). Netten & Spain observe that students who achieve well in subject matter appear to succeed well in the second language also (1989, p. 486). This correlation is an indication that because the second language is primarily learned implicitly through the subject matter, when there is achievement in the content learned, there will also be achievement in language learned. However, this is not to say that the students will be accurate in the language without some form of explicit language teaching.

With core French, French is taught as a separate subject and although starting grades and instructional hours vary widely across provinces, in most provinces (as in Ontario) there is a grade 4 start with 40 minute periods that amount to 120 instructional hours each year (Lapkin, Harley, & Taylor, 1993, pp. 1-3). Research on core French indicates that a primarily form-focused approach dominates many classrooms, yet the literature calls for less of a focus on explicit grammar teaching in class and more of an integrated and multidimensional approach where linguistic features are learned via purposeful language use and educationally relevant activities (Lapkin et al., 1993, pp. 16-18). There is also a concern among former students of core French that there is not enough oral practice of the language in class. In relation to the students' perceptions of their core French education, a 1984 study by Canadian Parents for French reported that of

the respondents who identified a lack of satisfaction in their core French education, at least 20% indicated that there was "not enough oral, conversational French/ too much formal French/grammar/reading" (Lapkin et al., 1993, p.14). Research proposes more of a balance between analytical and experiential learning in core French, but still questions what exactly is an appropriate balance and at which grade levels (Lapkin et al., 1993, p. 17).

In a recent publication by Turnbull (2006), the amount of French used by the teacher in the classroom is also discussed as a primary issue. This article pushes for more intralingual teaching and less crosslingual and/or explicit teaching. It does not suggest a complete omission of the L1, but proposes that the dominant classroom language should be the L2. It also advises useful methods of using the L1, such as presenting keywords for the lesson at the beginning of the class in both the L1 and L2 (Turnbull, 2006, pp. 618-619).

Ontario Curriculum

The French immersion and core French curricula for Ontario are available from the Ontario Ministry of Education and indicate what each group is expected to know by the end of each grade of French schooling. The document outlines expectations for students in three strands: oral communication, reading, and writing. Students are also expected to learn language structures through work done in the three strands. In the domain of language structures, specific grammar points are outlined – for example, grade 11 and 12 French immersion students are expected to know how to form and use the subjonctif passé of "er", "ir", and "re" verbs and irregular verbs (*The Ontario curriculum*, 2000, p. 44). An achievement chart is included at the end of the document, which is

expected to guide teachers in planning and assessment (*The Ontario curriculum*, 2000, p. 46).

What is not included in the document is the way teachers are expected to go about teaching the students what they are expected to know. Teachers have guidelines for what students must learn by the end of the course, but the way in which they teach students is left to them. Although there are specific language structures that are expected to be taught, they may choose to focus on teaching rules implicitly, explicitly, or integrate explicit teaching into content.

What is interesting is the document's focus on language structures being learned *through* work in the three strands, and not as a separate focus. Additionally, the document names oral communication as the skill which creates a base for reading and writing: "The development of strong oral communication skills provides the foundation for students to read and write effectively" (*The Ontario curriculum*, 2000, p. 8). However, the skill of writing is viewed as a "support" for oral language skills: "Students' writing activities, in turn, support and reinforce their oral language skills" (*The Ontario curriculum*, 2000, p. 8). The document also indicates that French must be the language in the classroom for both the immersion and core French programs (*The Ontario curriculum*, 2000, p. 5).

Instructional differences

Although in early-entry immersion instruction the language is generally taught more implicitly through subject matter, as Netten & Spain (1989) point out, instructional differences can affect the way in which students learn a second language. I will look at Netten & Spain's study in relation to the implicit-explicit focus in the classroom. Netten

& Spain observed three different classrooms where the teachers used three different approaches to language learning. The teacher in Classroom C used more drill-type activities, where students focused more on the structure of the language and were asked to produce more stereotyped language responses. The teacher in Classroom B used personal interaction with students and over one-third of the class time was spent in less structured, more implicit individual exchanges between students and teacher. Classroom A included virtually no lecture type activities and placed its emphasis on interaction between peer and group work, with the teacher giving assistance to each group. Although only the oral component of language learning was considered in the results, the students in Classroom A were much more fluent in that they were better at using French to express both academic and social matters to the teacher and to each other (Netten & Spain, 1989, p. 493).

This study is relevant to my thesis because it indicates the difference in teaching styles in immersion classrooms and also how teachers' personal philosophies of teaching affects the manner in which they teach. Although this study did not test students on tasks requiring more explicit knowledge of French, one would assume that if the teacher puts more emphasis on knowing the explicit structure of the language, as in Classroom C, students would perform well on tasks requiring explicit skills. However, as in Classroom A, when more emphasis is placed on learning the language through conversation about subject matter, and less on paying attention to the structure of the language, students would do well in fluency (as is the case in this study), but not necessarily on accuracy.

Berry (1994) reports on a study undertaken by one of her graduate students that tests language learners of Greek on implicit and explicit tasks. Before each task learners

were prepped through either implicit learning or explicit learning means. The results

showed: "Even though students in the "implicit" condition heard ten times more

examples of the target structure than students in the "explicit" condition, the "explicit"

subjects performed significantly better on both oral and written grammatical exercises"

(Berry, 1994, p. 161). Berry's study stresses the importance of explicit teaching in

language teaching in order to achieve higher accuracy results.

Focus on Form

Focus on form, which involves drawing students' attention to linguistic items –

the form of the language – has been the focus of much literature on French immersion

and core French. Specifically being brought to attention by researchers is the need for a

greater focus on form in the French immersion classroom, in order to improve the

accuracy of immersion students (Swain, 1996, p. 536). Additionally, a focus on forms

involves the syllabus of the lesson being focused entirely on the linguistic elements.

Focus on form is instruction that focuses the learner's attention on a certain form as it

arises incidentally through content (Long, 1991, p. 46). Long distinguishes a focus on

forms to be different from a focus on *form,* in that the latter teaches something other than

an exclusive focus on the structure of the language – it teaches content and overtly draws

learners' attention to linguistics items as they come up in the lesson which is focused on

meaning or communication (1991, p. 46).

Focus on form and focus on forms can also be more explicit or implicit. Even

with focus on form, the degree to which linguistic features are isolated may differ (Long,

1991, p. 43). Explicit form-focused instruction involves the learner thinking about the

specific rule being taught. The learner consciously knows that a rule is being taught. Implicit focus on forms happens when the learners' attention is focused on the form being taught, but they are not aware that there is a specific feature being targeted (Ellis, 2001, p. 1). The difference between explicit and implicit formed-focused instruction is awareness – whether students are aware of what they are learning.

Error Correction

Corrective feedback has been researched consistently in the past 10 years, particularly in relation to students in communicative classrooms who have little difficulty with fluency (specifically with oral production), but have problems with accuracy (Ammar and Spada, 2006, p. 544). Literature indicates that this is generally the case for French immersion students, and one area that needs improvement is accuracy. Low accuracy is often attributed to lack of comprehensible input and solely meaning-based instruction (Ammar and Spada, 2006, p. 544). When students' attention is focused on formal properties of the second language and they notice the linguistic items, they are better able to learn them. Error correction, and more specifically the type of error correction, is important in building accuracy in language learners, as students are made aware of their errors and can see where they went wrong.

Summary

This chapter presented some of the literature in regards to the French immersion and core French programs in Canada, as well as the type of instruction that might take

place in the classrooms. It discussed the variation in types of instruction that can take

place in the French immersion and core French classrooms, even with a set curriculum.

Varying degrees of implicit and explicit learning happen in Canadian French-as-a-

second-language classrooms, which are perceived to affect the fluency and accuracy of

students. The next chapter presents the research approach and design of this study,

including information on the participants, research instruments, and procedures taken.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter will present the primarily qualitative approach chosen for this study, as well as the statistical indicators and measures used to identify commonalities and differences based on program type, instruction type, and individual experiences and circumstances. The overall research approach and design is discussed, followed by a background on the participants and presentation of the research instruments. The type of instruction received in the post-secondary French class, based on classroom observation, is also reported. The procedures used for collecting data, i.e., a questionnaire, interviews, oral samples, and writing samples, are then presented. Indicators for assessment of fluency and accuracy of the oral and writing samples and categorization of errors for the oral and writing samples are also introduced.

Research Approach and Design

For this exploratory study, a qualitative approach was used. However, some statistical indicators and measures were used to identify trends within the group of participants in this study. This research mostly used a multiple case study approach, which looked at individuals and their French educational backgrounds as well as their current experience and performance in FRE 201[2], but it also focused on patterns that could be identified when observing program type and other factors that immerged from the data. Merriam (1998) contends that multiple case studies are essentially several cases of a single case study. An important part of this study was the variety of data sets used to

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[2] All course names and numbers are fictitious.

triangulate the research. A questionnaire, interviews, oral samples, and writing samples were used to collect data, correlate data, and arrive at a more comprehensive look at the results. The different data sets also allowed student and instructor perceptions in the interviews to be compared to their actual performance, which was highlighted in the oral and writing samples. Data from the interviews were analyzed qualitatively, whereas data from the questionnaire, oral samples, and writing samples were analyzed both qualitatively and by using descriptive statistics. The statistical analysis of the questionnaire, oral samples, and writing samples cannot be generalized to the larger population of French immersion and core French graduates, but was used to identify trends and possible factors within the specific group of participants.

As a former French immersion student, I, as the researcher and writer of this thesis, made my own French educational background known to the participants in this study, but I did not act as a participant myself. After taking French immersion since grade one and graduating high school with a bilingual certificate, I also took French classes at the university level. What sparked my interest in this particular thesis topic was the interesting difference that seemed to emerge between French immersion and core French graduates in my previous university French course. The tests in the university French course were heavily grammar based, and the core French students seemed to outperform the immersion students on the tests and receive higher grades. However, the core French students seemed to struggle with fluency in the French language, whereas the immersion students did not appear to have a problem. This interesting situation in my previous French course drew my attention to the areas of implicit and explicit learning in graduate studies, and finally, to this thesis topic. Although my French educational background was

entirely with the immersion program, I took as detached a view as possible in this study and did not favor the views of one group of participants over another.

Participants

The main participants for the study were students enrolled in one section of the second-year university course, FRE 201, at an English-speaking university in Ontario. The course focused on improving French written and oral skills using audio-visual materials and written texts. The class was three hours a week, plus two hours of workshops and/or directed studies, and counted as one full credit. Students had been placed in the class after taking the French Placement test (a self-assessment questionnaire) or FRE 100 and/or FRE 101 as a prerequisite. The class had a combination of students from French immersion and core French backgrounds, as well as those who took both. All students in the class were between the ages of 17-30, and the majority of students had recently graduated from high school. Of the participants in this study, most had completed their French schooling in Ontario (many in Ottawa, although some in Toronto and other areas), but other regions where students graduated include Newfoundland, British Columbia, and Connecticut, U.S.A.

The FRE 201 instructor was also a participant in the study and participated in a semi-structured interview.

Table 1 introduces each student interview participant and their French educational backgrounds. Of the 12 student participants, 11 were females and 1 was male. All names of participants in this study are fictitious. Student participants are separated into three

groups, depending on if they took all French immersion, all core French, or a

combination of both[3]:

Table 1. *French educational backgrounds of participants*

	Years of French education	**Current year in university**	**Province(s) of previous French schooling**	**Exchange program**	**French speaking Relative(s) or close friend(s)**
French Immersion:					
Rachel	Kindergarten – grade 12	1st year	Ottawa, ON: kindergarten-grade 3 Belleville, ON: grades 4-6 Newfoundland: grades 7 and 8 Ottawa, ON: grades 9-12		
Ashley	Grade 1-13	4th year	Toronto, ON		
Kayla	Kindergarten – grade 12	2nd year	Ottawa, ON		
Eva	Kindergarten – grade 12	1st year	Orléans, ON		French speaking parents, relatives, and neighbors
Danika	Grades 1 – 12	1st year	Oakville, ON	3-week exchange in France in grade 12	
Core French:					
Luke	Kindergarten – grade 13	2nd year	Ottawa, ON: kindergarten – grade 3 Peterborough, ON: grades 4-13		
Emily	Grades 4 – 12	2nd year	Whitby, ON		

	Years of French education	Current year in university	Province(s) of previous French schooling	Exchange program	French speaking Relative(s) or close friend(s)
Combined:					
Isabel	French immersion: kindergarten – grade 6 Core French: grades 7-13	2nd year	Vancouver, B.C.: kindergarten – grade 6 Connecticut, U.S.A.: grades 7-12		Mother is Francophone
Julia	Core French: grades 3-4 French immersion: grades 5 and 6 Core French: grades 7-12	1st year	Toronto, ON	One month in Québec with the "Explore" program	
Melissa	French immersion: kindergarten Core French: grades 1-6 French immersion: grades 9-12	2nd year	Ottawa, ON		Boyfriend is Francophone
Olivia	French immersion: Grades 7 and 8 Core French: grades 9-12	1st year	Toronto, ON	2 month exchange in France	

Instruments

Ethnographic research methods (interviews and document analysis) were used in order to gain an understanding of the French educational backgrounds of participants, their perceptions of their strengths and weaknesses in using the French language, and their fluency and accuracy.

A detailed questionnaire[4] was formulated in Likert scale format and focused on the type of French instruction students received and how they felt it was affecting their performance at the university level. The questionnaire also looked at factors that could cause the type of instruction to vary (for example, the program, the year of the program, or the individual teacher). The questionnaire was designed so that participants would be required to make an evaluative decision, and for this reason, there was no neutral choice (Dörnyei, 2003, pp. 36-37). Questions were formulated in "common language" and language that could have made the questions unclear or ambiguous was avoided. Response options were "strongly no," "somewhat no," "somewhat yes," and "strongly yes." The questionnaire played a vital part in distinguishing the variation in background of the students. They were distributed to all students and were used as a base for questions discussed in the interviews.

After the data from the questionnaire had been reviewed, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the student participants to follow up on the data from the questionnaire and also to allow for a detailed study of how specific types of French instruction affect performance at the university level (in this particular French class). The interviews were conducted in English, but the first section was completed in French, with

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[4] See Appendix D: Questionnaire

the participants' consent[5]. The instructor of the FRE 201 also participated in a semi-structured interview, which concentrated on questions concerning the fluency and accuracy of the French immersion and core French students in his FRE 201 class[6].

Oral samples and writing samples were also collected and analyzed for indicators of fluency and accuracy. The oral and writing samples were used to triangulate the study and gain a better understanding of the participants' actual performance in the French language, in addition to their perceptions from the questionnaire and interviews of how fluent or accurate they consider themselves to be.

Gaining Access

After receiving ethics approval for the study, this project was firstly presented to the chairs of the French department of the university in which the research was taking place. A letter was distributed to the chairs[7] to provide them with an overview of the proposed research and ask for their permission and support in conducting this project in one section of FRE 201. After meeting with chairs, an instructor of FRE 201 was contacted and asked to participate in this study. A letter was distributed to the FRE 201 instructor[8] which described the study and outlined the nature of participation involved. Once the FRE 201 instructor consented to participating in this study, the dates and times for classroom observation were arranged.

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[5] See Appendix E: Interview Guide for Student Participants
[6] See Appendix F: Interview Guide for FRE 201 Instructor
[7] Appendix A: Letter to the Chairs of the French Department
[8] Appendix B: Letter to the FRE 201 Instructor

Classroom Context

Classroom observation was used to better understand the FRE 201 classroom, the participants, and the teaching approach (implicit or explicit) used in the class. The purpose of these classroom observations was also to establish a rapport with prospective participants and to situate students' learning experiences with the context of their French university class. Field notes were collected over five consecutive three-hour classes, in which the researcher acted as an observer in the class. This type of observation was essential in understanding the structure of the French course, the instructional focus, and the participants' behavior in the class. Before sitting in on classes, the researcher presented the project orally to the class with the instructor's consent and outlined how students could further participate in the study.

The structure of the FRE 201 class and the teaching approach were very much tied to the structure of the textbook, *Intrigue: Langue, culture et mystère dans le monde francophone,* that was used in the course (Blood & Mobarek, 2007). There was an assumption in the course that students knew explicit grammar rules and tenses already, and there were limited amounts of explicit grammar teaching and greater attempts at integrating rules into content and oral French practice. Class would involve beginning a new chapter in the textbook or carrying on from the chapter that was started last class. Each chapter would include an explicit grammar lesson and readings that integrated the rules into the content and discussion questions that encouraged students to use the particular rules. Along with a grammar lesson, readings centered around cultural issues, and discussion questions, the chapters included key vocabulary words relating to the topic and literature in the chapter, opportunities for written responses, and audio activities

as well. The amount of time spent teaching the explicit grammar lesson was very minimal – often five minutes, and sometimes fifteen minutes – before starting a new section or chapter, since again, it was assumed that students knew these rules already.

The focus of the FRE 201 class was on integrating grammar into content and conversation, yet there was still explicit grammar correction within the integrated activities that often arose from questions initiated by the students. For example, students would ask questions about the position a pronoun or preposition would take in a phrase. Table 3 separates activities observed in the classroom into more explicit-based activities that drew students' attention to rules, structure, and conscious study of the language. Table 2 displays more implicit-based activities where the rules are integrated into content or French oral practice and where students may not be consciously aware they are learning the rules. It should be noted that even within implicit-based activities, examples of the grammar rules in the text were often drawn attention to, so students were not learning implicitly without some attention paid to structure.

Table 2. *Class activities that focused more on implicit learning*

Implicit
Reading literature in which grammar rules are hidden within the content
Reading comprehension questions (written and oral)
Opinion questions (oral)
Reading a French novel
Discussion concerning knowledge of content rather than language
Listening to a tape recording of dialogue between one or two French-speakers for meaning

Table 3. *Class activities that focused more on explicit learning*

Explicit
Grammar lessons
Writing grammar mistakes on the board and demonstrating how they can be corrected
Translating from French to English and vice-versa to demonstrate the syntactical difference between the two phrases
Drawing attention to anglicisms in the text, as well as in spoken and written dialogue
Drawing attention to the difference between two or more verb tenses
Pulling out grammatical examples from the French tape recording and writing them on the board
Pronunciation work

Although Tables 2 and 3 are separated into two tables of explicit and implicit tasks as defined by Ellis (2005, p. 151), the separation does not mean that the activities in the two columns are not related to each other (Berry, 1994, p. 157). The strong interface position claims that explicit knowledge can be derived from implicit knowledge and that explicit knowledge can be converted into implicit knowledge through practice (Ellis, 2005, p. 144). The explicit rules in the classroom were always playing on the implicit content. There was a constant connection between the implicit and explicit activities, because the teacher focused on drawing attention to explicit structures within the implicit work and practicing making explicit rules into more implicit conversation and dialogue.

In class, all instruction was in French, with the exception of a few words or sentences that were translated to allow for the study of syntax; however, in the textbook, short sections that explained explicit grammar instruction were written in English. The rest of the textbook, including content with an explicit focus on meaning and an implicit focus on language, was written in French.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was first piloted on five former French immersion and core French students who were not in the FRE 201 class. Piloting the questionnaire was extremely useful in identifying ambiguous or unclear language. Suggestions from those who participated in the piloted questionnaire were taken into account before the final copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the FRE 201 class.

On the last day of the classroom observation, the researcher again briefly described the study, explained the procedures for filling out the questionnaire, and

distributed a letter to all the students[9] outlining the research and inviting students to participate (by questionnaire only, questionnaire and interview, or questionnaire, interview, and collection of a writing sample). After students had finished reading the letter, the questionnaire was administered to those who wanted to participate. An informed consent form was on the front page of the questionnaire, which allowed students to indicate if they were willing to further participate in the research by allowing the researcher to contact him/her for an interview and/or the collection of a writing sample.

After completed questionnaires were collected, the data were examined qualitatively using open coding and the constant comparison method to identify key issues and reoccurring themes. The data from the questionnaire were also coded in a database using Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) software and analyzed using descriptive statistics in order to identify trends between the groups of French immersion, core French, and graduates of both programs.

Interviews

Once the data from the completed questionnaire had been collected and reviewed, the researcher contacted those who indicated they would be willing to participate in an interview and/or the collection of a writing sample. In total, 17 out of the 19 students who were present on that day consented to participating in either an interview, the collection of a writing sample, or both. All 19 students consented to filling out the questionnaire. Of the 17 students who indicated they would like to be contacted for an interview and/or collection of a writing sample, 5 said yes to an interview only, 4 said yes to the collection

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[9] Appendix C: Letter to Students of FRE 201

of a writing sample only, and 8 said yes to both an interview and writing sample. The researcher contacted the 13 students who were willing to participate in an interview by email and phone, and from the 13 students, 11 students set up interview times and carried out the interviews. The four students who indicated they were only willing to submit a writing sample were not contacted, because the researcher only analyzed the writing samples of those who participated in interviews (8 participants). In relation to the French educational backgrounds of the 11 students who agreed to be interviewed, 5 were former French immersion students, 2 were former core French students, and 4 took both French immersion and core French.

The interviews were semi-structured and each took approximately 30 minutes in length. Questions were divided into three sections[10]:

Section 1 [Conducted in French]: Background information

Section 2: Experience in French Immersion, core French, or a combination of both

Section 3: Experience in university French (FRE 201)

The interviewees were firstly thanked for their participation and given a brief outline of the overall context of the research. After the three interview sections were introduced to the participants, interviewees were asked if they felt comfortable responding to questions in the first section in French. All interview participants consented to responding in French, which allowed for the collection of oral samples in the target language.

The questions in the first section all related to the participant's background in French. Students were asked to talk for a few minutes about how they learned French and what type of program(s) they took. They were invited to discuss whether they had a

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[10] See Appendix E: Interview Guide for Students of FRE 201

positive or negative experience in French and if they found the language learning process easy or difficult. They were also welcomed to talk about a specific example or teacher that they liked or disliked. The questions were first introduced to the students in English (very generally, in describing the section) and second in French, immediately prior to their response to the questions. The main purpose of these questions was to, firstly, make clear what type of background in French each participant had, and secondly, to give the participants a topic to talk about that would be fairly easy for them to discuss in French and which would produce rich oral samples. Since most of the information on their French educational backgrounds was already available to me through their completed questionnaires, I felt that I would not be missing out on valuable information if they were not able to express themselves well in French.

The second section concentrated on the type of French instruction students received in their years in French. The questions in this section inquired about the balance between grammar instruction and meaning/conversation in their classes growing up, what type of grammar instruction they received, how easy or difficult it was to transfer explicit grammar instruction to conversation and writing, and if they are most concerned with fluency or accuracy (or neither or both) when they speak and write.

In addition to focusing on the French instruction they received in their French schooling, students were also asked at the beginning of Section 2 if they participated in any French exchange programs or if they have any Francophone relatives or close friends.

The questions in Section 3 focused on students' experiences in post-secondary French and, specifically, FRE 201. Participants were asked to explain the focus of

instruction in the class, the amount of explicit grammar instruction in comparison to the teaching of content and conversation, and how their previous education in French was different from or similar to FRE 201 and in what way(s).

At the end of each interview, if the student indicated that he/she would be willing to submit a writing sample, the student was then asked if he/she would consent to having the information released from their written exam question. Each of the 8 writing sample participants consented and signed a "release of information" form[11].

Finally, the FRE 201 instructor also participated in a semi-structured interview, which lasted approximately 50 minutes in length.

Once all the interview data were collected, the interviews with the students and instructor of FRE 201 were transcribed for a closer analysis. After all interviews were transcribed, I began the process of open coding. I separated sections of each interview transcription into themes that were reoccurring throughout groups of participants and individuals. The constant comparison method was then used to compare how themes differed depending on program type or individual. Lastly, I used selective coding to ensure that all data related to each theme was included.

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[11] See Appendix G: Release of Information Forms

Oral Samples

French oral samples were collected from the student interview participants at the beginning of the interviews. Interviewees were asked if they felt comfortable responding to questions in the first section of the interview in French. All 11 interview participants consented to responding in French, which allowed for the collection of oral samples in the target language. Students were asked to talk for a few minutes about how they learned French and what type of program(s) they took. They were invited to discuss whether they had a positive or negative experience in French and if they found the language learning process easy or difficult. From the recorded French oral samples, the first minute of each sample was transcribed and analyzed for fluency and accuracy indicators.

After the oral samples were transcribed, they were analyzed for fluency and accuracy by the researcher, as well as a first-language speaker of French. Indicators, such as number of words produced in a fixed amount of time (tokens) and richness of vocabulary, were considered good measures of oral fluency in literature such as *Assessing Speaking* and were used to assess fluency in this study (Luoma, 2004, pp. 70-72). The vocabulary profiler, *Web Vocabulary Profilers* (2006), was used to break down the text into word frequencies. The types referred to all of the tokens of the same word, and the K1 words pertained to the 1000 most frequent words in French. The type-token ratio and percent of K1 words were especially useful in determining surface fluency among participants. Number of errors, error-word ratio, and type of errors are considered good indicators of accuracy and were used to assess accuracy in the oral samples (Luoma, 2004, pp. 70-72). Qualitative error analysis was also completed on the oral samples, with attention paid to repeated errors made by individuals and groups. The

qualitative analysis also took into account that grammar in speech is different than grammar in writing (Luoma, 2004, p. 12). The fluency and accuracy indicators used to evaluate the oral samples are fairly similar to the indicators used to evaluate the writing samples to allow for comparisons between the written and oral modes, but the indicators were adapted to respect the properties of speaking. Additionally, the mean and standard deviation of each group of participants were also calculated in most cases, to identify variation within groups and between groups. Table 4 and 5 demonstrate the indicators that were used to measure fluency and accuracy for the one-minute French oral samples.

Table 4. *Indicators used to assess fluency in one-minute French oral samples*

Fluency
Number of words produced (tokens) in a fixed amount of time: 1 minute
Number of types
Type-token ratio
Percent of K1 words

Table 5. *Indicators used to assess accuracy in one-minute French oral samples*

Accuracy
Number of errors in first minute of sample
Type of errors
Total number of errors per total number of words

To analyze accuracy, errors were categorized "A," "B," "C," or "D." Table 6

displays the categorization for the errors, which was adapted from Weigle's taxonomy of

language knowledge (2002, p. 30).

Table 6. *Categories used to analyze errors in French oral samples*

Category	Type of error
A	Pronunciation
B	I. Grammatical correctness: • Tense • Gender • Pronouns • Prepositions • Articles II. Syntax/structural correctness: • Correctness in the order in which the words and sentences are produced
C	Vocabulary: Appropriateness of chosen words – includes pronominal verbs.
D	Stylistic appropriateness/Awareness of differences across languages

Writing Samples

Student writing samples were collected from the interview participants who indicated on the questionnaire that they were willing to submit a French writing sample. The writing samples that were used were from the written question on the FRE 201 final exam for the first semester of the course. Students were asked to sign a "release of information" form to allow the researcher to use the written information from their exam for analysis. The first 100 words of the writing samples were analyzed for fluency and the first 5 sentences were analyzed for accuracy. The first 100 words were rounded off to the end of the sentence, which meant that some participants had a few words less or a few words extra.

The writing samples were analyzed for fluency and accuracy by the researcher, as well as a first-language speaker of French. Each student had 3 hours to complete the exam, which consisted entirely of the written question that the writing sample was taken from. Although the students were under a time limit, the writing sample is not entirely considered a timed sample, as students did not need the full 3 hours to complete the written question. Additionally, students were allowed to use a dictionary and a French language reference book that provides verb conjugations during the exam.

Indicators, such as number of words produced in a fixed amount of time (tokens) and richness of vocabulary, were considered good measures of written fluency in literature such as *Assessing Writing,* although fixed time could not be used because the amount of time students took to finish their writing samples was unknown. However, indicators of vocabulary richness, which look at lexical sophistication and can be

considered indicators of deep fluency, were used to assess fluency in the writing samples (Weigle, 2002, p. 16). Shorter sentences and a lower average of words per sentence are considered to suggest less syntactical sophistication (Krashen, 1982, p. 65). The vocabulary profiler, *Web Vocabulary Profilers* (2006), was used to break down the text into word frequencies. The types referred to all of the tokens of the same word, and the K1 words pertained to the 1000 most frequent words in French. Number of errors and type of errors are considered good indicators of accuracy and were used to assess accuracy in the writing samples (Weigle, 2002, p. 30). A qualitative observation was also performed by the researcher, which concentrated on error analysis of the samples. Tables 7 and 8 demonstrate the indicators that were used to measure fluency and accuracy for the French writing samples.

Like the French oral samples, to analyze accuracy, errors were categorized "A,"

"B," "C," or "D." Table 9 demonstrates the categorization for the errors was again

adapted from Weigle's taxonomy of language knowledge (2002, pp. 30). The taxonomy

was created to be as close as possible to the taxonomy used for the oral samples;

however, taking into account that writing and speaking are different skills, an extra

category of "spelling and punctuation" was added for the analysis of writing samples and

"pronunciation" was omitted.

Table 9. *Categories used to analyze errors in French writing samples*

Category	Type of error
A	Spelling and punctuation
B	I. Grammatical correctness: ■ Tense ■ Gender ■ Pronouns ■ Prepositions ■ Articles II. Syntax/structural correctness: ■ Correctness in the order in which the words and sentences are produced
C	Vocabulary: Appropriateness of chosen words – includes pronominal verbs.
D	Stylistic appropriateness/Awareness of differences across languages

Summary

This chapter detailed the overall research approach and design of this study, including the participants, research instruments, and the procedures used for gaining access. The type of instruction received in FRE 201 was also discussed, based on classroom observation. The chapter further presented indicators of fluency and accuracy and categorization of errors for the oral and writing samples. Chapter 4 will present the results of the questionnaire, interviews with student participants, oral samples, writing samples, and interview with the FRE 201 instructor.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter reports on the results gathered by the instruments of a questionnaire, interviews with student participants, oral samples, writing samples, and an interview with the FRE 201 instructor. It identifies trends between the groups (French immersion, core French, or combined), the type of instruction received, and individual experiences and circumstances. The questionnaire is analyzed qualitatively, but also statistically. The student interviews report on the type of instruction participants received, issues that immerged in their previous French education, and their recent experience in post-secondary French. Oral and writing samples assess the fluency and accuracy of groups and individuals. Lastly, the interview with the FRE 201 instructor highlights his perspective on French immersion and core French graduates in his classes and data sets are triangulated.

Questionnaire

All 19 students present in FRE 201 class on the day the questionnaire was administered participated in the questionnaire. Of the 19 students who participated in the questionnaire, 11 were former French immersion students, 3 were former core French students, and 5 took a combination of French immersion and core French. 2 participants were male and 17 were female.

The questionnaire was designed primarily for qualitative analysis. The purpose was to find out more about the French educational backgrounds of students in the class and how they felt their French backgrounds affected their performance in FRE 201. The

results of the questionnaire also acted as a base for the design of the interview questions. Through the questionnaire it was discovered that French immersion students perceived that they received fairly balanced instruction between content/meaning in French and grammar/rules. The core French students reported that they had more explicit grammar teaching rather than content and meaning instruction.

Statistical data was also used to identify trends common to all the participants, between groups (French immersion, core French, and combined), and within groups. One questionnaire was left out when the data was entered into the SPSS program. The misplaced questionnaire belonged to a participant who took a combination of French immersion and core French and was not willing to participate in an interview or submit a writing sample.

Results from the statistical data indicated inconsistencies within the group of former immersion students. These inconsistencies included a larger spread of answers concerning perspectives on their accuracy in the French language. The core French group and the combined group did not have as many inconsistencies as did the immersion group.

In relation to student perceptions of their fluency, the type of program students took influenced the perceptions of how fluent they consider themselves to be. The French immersion group all checked either "somewhat yes" (3) or "strongly yes" (4) to the question "Overall, has your experience in French education made you fairly fluent in French?" The core French group ranged from "strongly no" (1) to "somewhat yes (3)." The combined group all responded with "somewhat yes (3)." Figure 1 shows the differences between groups in relation to how fluent participants considered themselves

to be. The length of the box indicates the variability between samples, while the line across the box shows the median. The difference between the 25th and 75th percentiles are represented in the box. The minimum, lower quartile, median, upper quartile, and maximum are presented in the box. The whiskers of the box and the position of the line show if the sample is symmetric or skewed. The tails indicate the minimum and maximum of the sample, and if one tail is longer than the other, there is lack of symmetry. No tails indicate a more symmetrical sample. Figure 1 shows all French immersion students responded 3-4, while the core French students were spread between 1-3, and all students who took a combination of both immersion and core French responded 3. It should be noted that the "both" group in all box plots refers to the "combined" group in this thesis.

Figure 1. *Overall, has your experience in French education made you fairly fluent in French?*
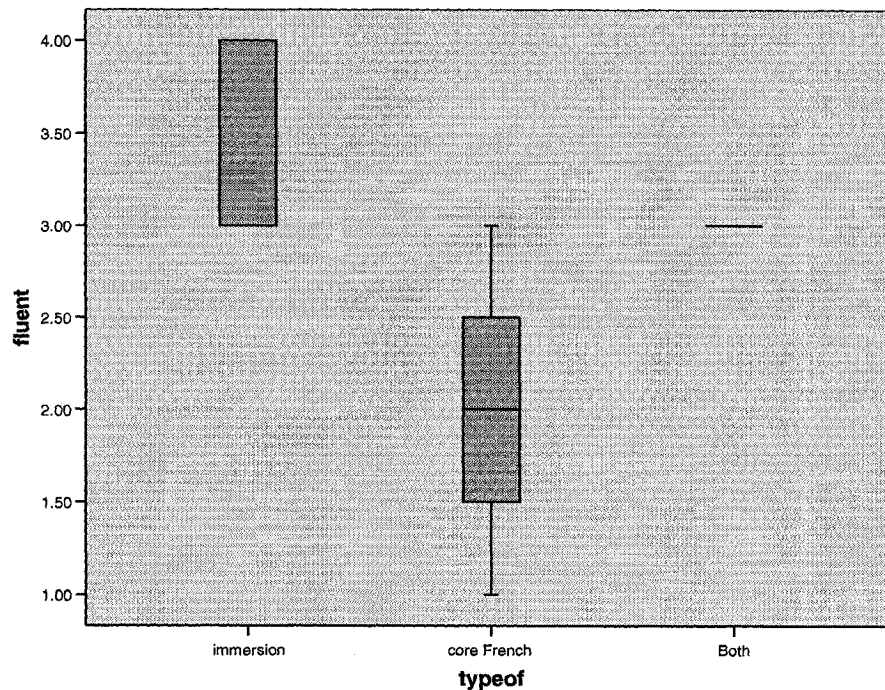
Interestingly, the highest answer in the core French group was the same as the lowest answer in the immersion group. The combined group sat in between the core and immersion group and the answers of all participants in the group were equal to the highest answer in core French and the lowest answer in French immersion. This suggests that overall the French immersion students believed that their experiences in French education have made them fairly fluent in French, unlike the core French students.

In relation to student perceptions of their French grammar ability, distinctions are not as clear as for fluency. Figure 2 shows that immersion students ranged from "somewhat no" (2) to "strongly yes" (4), demonstrating inconsistency. Two core French students felt their experience in French made them good at grammar, while one core

French student did not. The combined group spanned the range of the core French and

immersion groups, and had a mean of 3 (somewhat yes).

Figure 2. *Overall has your experience in French education made you good at grammar?*
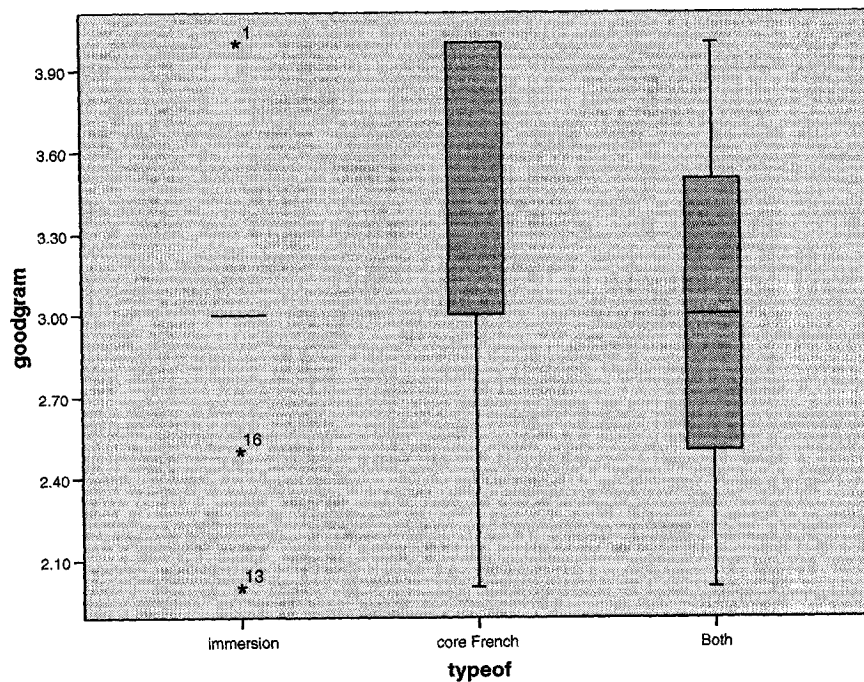
The box plot suggests the type of program that participants took influenced fluency more

than accuracy, or at least participants perceived it to be this way.

Directional Measures Eta was also used to show the strength of association

between the two variables of program type (categorical) and the question "Overall, has

your experience in French education made you fairly fluent in French?" (ordinal). In

Table 10, Eta shows a strong association between the program type and how respondents

answered the fluency question: 79.3% of the variance in the responses to the question on

fluency are accounted for by program type (immersion or core French) (Hatch &

Lazaraton, 1991, p. 300).

Table 10. *Strength of association between program type and the question "Overall has your experience in French education made you fairly fluent in French?"*

			Value
Nominal by Interval	Eta	typeof	.793
		fluent	.712

Fluency separated the immersion group from the group of core French and those who took a combination of immersion and core French in this study, as the immersion students considered themselves more fluent than the core or combined groups. However, in terms of grammar ability, there was not a clear distinction between groups. One or two groups did not clearly outdo the others in terms of their perceptions of grammatical accuracy, although two out of three core French students in the study rated their grammatical accuracy high.

When the participants were asked if French grammar was currently difficult for them, more students in the immersion group responded more strongly yes than the core French and combined groups, whose medians were both "somewhat no," as shown in Figure 3. Even so, there was not a large difference between groups.

Figure 3. *Is French grammar difficult for you now?*
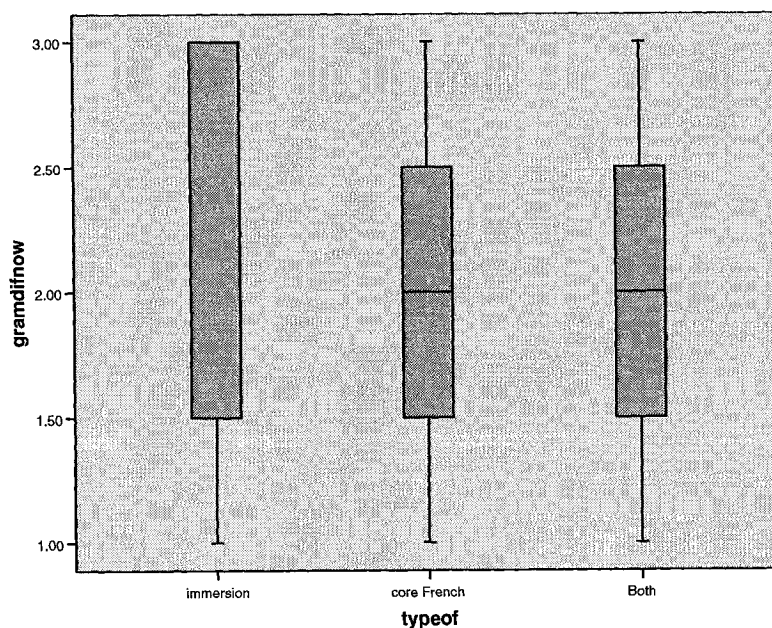
Kendall's tau was also used to show if there were correlations in the data with the

answers from the French immersion and core French groups. The Kendall tau showed a

significant correlation between how fluent participants thought their education made

them overall and how difficult they find listening and speaking in French now (in FRE

201). Additionally, there was a significant correlation between how accurate students felt

their education has made them overall and how difficult they find explicit grammar now.

Eta was used to show the strength of association between program type and

factors that influenced the type of instruction that students received (the variables). The

major factor that influenced the type of instruction students received was the specific

program or school, with the value being 0.785. Another factor that influenced the type of

instruction for immersion students was the teacher, but only for this group. Six

immersion students reported "strongly yes" for teacher as a factor that the emphasis of

instruction (focus on grammar or conversation) depended on.

As displayed in Figure 4, French immersion students and those who took a

combination of immersion and core French also reported a greater ability to respond

intuitively (by the "feel" of the language) when interacting orally in French, instead of

thinking of grammar rules. Although the French immersion group was again scattered in

their answers, the medians in the French immersion group and combined group were

"somewhat yes." In contrast, the core French group said that they responded less by the

feel of the language when interacting orally in French (and more by grammar rules they

learned):

Figure 4. *When interacting orally in French (listening and speaking) do you respond intuitively (by "the feel" of the language), instead of thinking of grammar rules?*
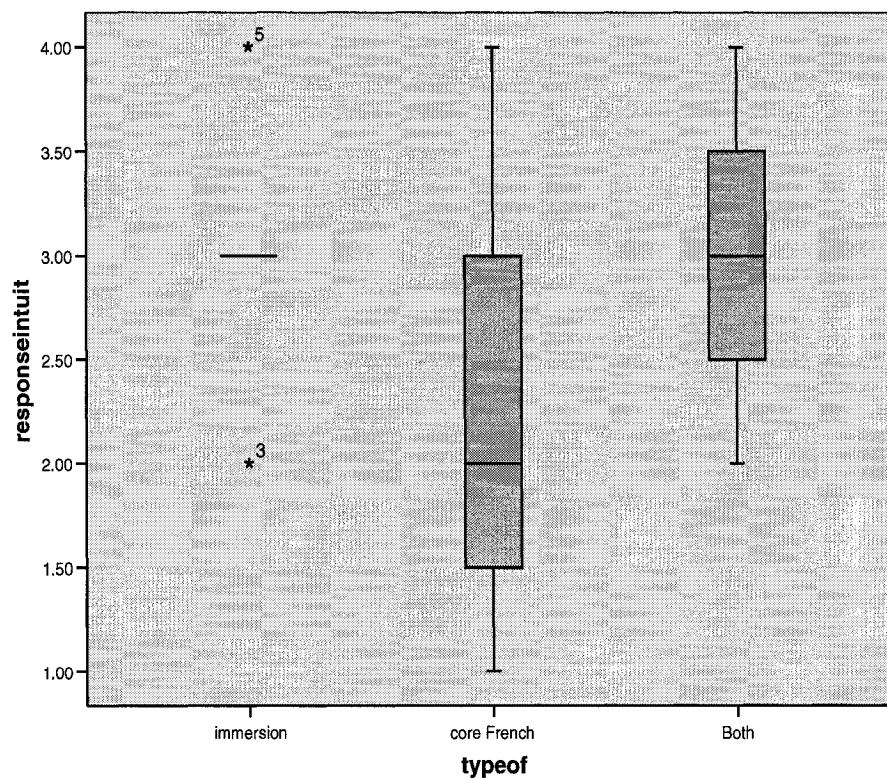
Interviews with Student Participants

The semi-structured interviews that were conducted with the eleven students of FRE 201 were undoubtedly the most fruitful type of data collection in terms of the depth with which the participants discussed their experiences concerning their previous French education. Additionally, there were many common threads that were evident throughout all of the interviews, and there were also common themes within groups of participants. These groups included those who took French immersion, core French, or a combination of both, and within the three groups, those who had an exchange experience and those who had a French speaking relative(s) or close friend(s). Through the interviews, participants were able to explain their French educational backgrounds more clearly and personally than in the questionnaire. They often used examples and stories to recount their experiences and express points they were trying to make.

Major themes that were evident in all interviews:

- Division between explicit grammar teaching and speaking
- Difficulty in transferring grammar rules to speech
- Importance of the integration of explicit grammar rules with meaning, content, and conversation
- Differences between previous French educational background and university French class

Themes that were evident within groups:

- Perceived differences in fluency and accuracy between groups
- Impact of having French relatives or study programs
- Difficulty in generalizing French immersion

Type of Instruction Received and Teaching Approach

Distinguishing the type of instruction that individual participants received in their

French schooling, and specifically if the instruction was more implicitly or explicitly

based or a mixture of the two, provided a base for analyzing how the French education

backgrounds of the participants affected their performance and experience in post-

secondary French. Implicit instruction involves little explicit grammar instruction and a

strong focus on content, while more explicit instruction focuses on a conscious study of

the language and linguistic items. Table 11 summarizes the amount of implicit and

explicit instruction that each group of participants received, based on the interview data.

Table 11. *Amount of implicit and explicit instruction received*

Type of program:	Implicit/explicit instruction
French immersion ■ Rachel ■ Ashley ■ Kayla ■ Eva ■ Danika	■ Results varied depending on factors such as teacher, school, and year of the program, but most participants said that they received fairly balanced instruction between implicit content teaching and more explicit grammar instruction ■ They received very explicit grammar instruction in high school, but they also had content courses where they received no grammar instruction – there was always content and a focus on meaning in addition to grammar ■ There was often no attempt to connect explicit grammar rules to content and practice with speaking French
Core French ■ Luke ■ Emily	■ Both students felt that they received very explicit instruction, and primarily grammar instruction, throughout all their years of core French ■ Little attention was focused on an implicit study of the language or speaking French ■ An exception was with Luke in his grade seven year
Combined ■ Isabel ■ Julia ■ Melissa ■ Olivia	■ Students felt they received more implicit instruction in French immersion, but very explicit instruction in core French

In relation to the three groups of participants – those who took French immersion, core French, or a combination of both – the French immersion students were the group with the most inconsistency within the group: not in terms of the amount of explicit grammar instruction and content instruction they received, but more so in relation to the attempt to integrate explicit grammar, content, and conversation made by their teachers. Additionally, there were also inconsistencies with the type of instruction French immersion students received throughout their individual French schooling. The type of instruction varied according to factors such as the year of the program, the school, the province, and the teacher. Most students named the year and the teacher as the greatest factors for the varied type of instruction.

The two participants who took core French throughout their schooling had very similar accounts of the type of instruction they received. As well, they reported that the type of instruction remained consistent throughout their years in core French and did not change dramatically at any year or level, with the exception of a unique situation in grade seven with Luke.

The participants who took a combination of French immersion and core French at some point in their schooling reported variation concerning the type of instruction between the two programs, but not as much within the French immersion or core French programs themselves.

French Immersion

The group of five participants who took entirely French immersion in their schooling, Danika, Rachel, Eva, Kayla, and Ashley, reported a fairly even distribution

between explicit grammar teaching and content teaching from grade five or six to the end of high school. As the students got higher up in the grades, mostly in high school, classes were separate between "French language class" and other content classes in French, like history, art, geography, etc. Within the French language class, the immersion students reported strong explicit grammar lessons.

In terms of explicit grammar instruction, the French immersion students overwhelmingly named verb tables as a huge part of their French grammar education. From grade six on, they said there was a large focus on tenses, and more specifically memorizing the verb tables for each tense. They were tested on such exercises as fill in the blanks (with correct verbs in the correct tense) and correcting sentences. The former French immersion students also remembered studying verb placement in a sentence, sentence structure, and the placement of prepositions.

In terms of the content teaching and the teaching of meaning, the former French immersion students remembered reading French literature, practicing drama, doing oral presentations, and participating in class and small group discussions.

Most French immersion students reported a greater focus on oral French skills at the beginning of their French education, where they would learn French through such content such as songs. Through these early years (up until grade five or six), they noted a strong focus on building vocabulary. Ashley, in particular, commented that throughout junior high and high school, the concentration on conjugating verbs and learning different tenses really intensified. Classes included less speaking and more grammar and rules.

The area where the former French immersion students varied – both within the group and within their individual experiences – was in the attempt made by the teacher to

integrate explicit grammar teaching into content. Danika said that in the early years, there was a stronger attempt to integrate grammar into content than in the later years. She remembered having units on such subjects as dinosaurs, and the grammar unit would be focused on the subject and integrating the grammar rules into the unit topic. She might have been asked to write a story about dinosaurs in the passé composé. However, in the later years of French immersion (late middle and high school, for example) there was less of an attempt to integrate the grammar into the content. Except for the one teacher she named (which she had in grade nine and twelve), she primarily memorized verbs without practicing integrating the verbs into content. She said that they would do grammar sheets and keep the content separate.

Ashley remembered a lot of explicit grammar teaching in her years in French immersion, but not a great opportunity to apply the knowledge being learned in the grammar rules, or at least not much of an attempt from her teachers to use the grammar rules: "I remember getting tests, where you just had a verb, and you'd have to fill out the entire thing and memorize it. You know when it's used, but you don't actually get to use it so much, I found."

Core French

The two participants who took core French throughout their schooling reported a very similar type of instruction received throughout their schooling, and the type of instruction was also very consistent throughout all their years in core French. However, the early years in core French differed from the middle to late years somewhat in the

teaching approach. They reported that this was due more to the year of the program, rather than the specific teacher.

Unlike the immersion students who reported a balance between explicit grammar teaching and content teaching, the core French students said that explicit grammar teaching accounted for practically their entire core French experience, especially in the middle to late years. Both Luke and Emily said that their classes in core French consisted of at least three-quarters explicit grammar teaching. Luke commented:

> High school French was mostly a grammar class. There was a bit of comprehension, a bit of reading, but it was mostly just like, this is the next tense, we'll work on this tense for a week and a half, you'll figure out all the kinks, you have to memorize the irregulars, and then it's just a grammar class.

Luke further described his class routine as starting with the present tense, learning the verb endings, and identifying texts that had the present in it. He explained,

> Basically every single year from grade 9 on was like, starting at the present from the start of the year and then going further and going to another tense by the end of grade 9. In grade 10 it was like, start at the present again, it is review, then we go a step further to the conditional or something like that. By the time we reached grade 12, we went all the way through subjunctive and a bunch of other tenses. But it always started at present at the start of the year again.

The repetition of verb tenses was also brought up by Emily, who vividly remembered being constantly given a piece of paper with a verb on it, and being asked to conjugate the verb with all the tenses they learned up until then.

Emily further commented on the lack of speaking in the classes in relation to the large concentration on verb tenses. She said that often students did not want to speak French, and the teacher would not try to make them: "Maybe it was the curriculum we had that was really heavy on grammar, and teachers were kind of lax when we really

didn't want to speak it." She went on to say that she never had any Francophone teachers in core French, and some teachers could barely speak French at all. She said that by grade twelve they were learning passé simple and complicated grammar, but they would speak to the teacher in English.

The disconnection between learning French grammar and applying the rules to conversation in French was brought up by both former core French students. Interestingly, Luke had a very different experience in grade seven that contradicted the type of instruction he received in the other years of core French. His grade seven teacher was a Francophone who spoke very limited English. As a result, Luke said the class was much more talkative in French. He explained that when the teacher could speak English, the students would ask for the answer in English so that they could figure it out, however, with this particular teacher, he was forced to speak French in order to communicate with him. He said, "We, as a class, made more of an effort to understand the French and understand him, because we knew there was no other option. Had there been an option, it would have been different." He went on to explain that he felt like he had to learn French in order to understand his teacher. Before Luke's experience in grade seven with his Francophone teacher, all the core French teachers he had spoke to him in English. In grade seven, he felt that he had an immersion experience in core French. He said that he learned more about speaking that year than in any other year. However, he learned very minimal grammar, because the teacher was not able to explain grammar rules in English, so he concentrated on the oral component of the language.

Although both Luke and Emily commented on the large amount of explicit grammar teaching in class, they both acknowledge that often teachers tried to include

French content in class as well. Examples of what the students worked on in class besides explicit grammar teaching were skits, oral presentations, French literature, and in particular, units centered on a certain theme. However, both core French students said that this type of content made up only a small portion of their classes (around 20%), and that most of the time spent in class was focused on explicit grammar teaching. Emily thought this was because the students were not particularly skilled in speaking and learning content in French, and teachers gave up when students started showing resistance.

Combined

The students who took a combination of core French and French immersion, said that their core French classes were primarily grammar classes, but that their immersion classes were much more well-rounded. In their immersion classes, they felt that they had their most beneficial learning experiences of the French language. However, they felt that the core French classes provided them with a good base in French grammar.

Division Between Explicit Grammar and Speaking

A common, and somewhat shocking, thread that spanned across all three groups – French immersion, core French, and those who took a combination of both – was the inability to apply explicit grammar rules that were taught in class to the skill of speaking in French. Practically all interview participants held grammar rules and the speaking of French at two opposite ends of a spectrum, with little or no connection made between the two. Although many of the students acknowledged that there should be a connection

between grammar rules and the oral component of the French language, most felt that because there were limited connections made throughout their French schooling, they were not (and still are not) able to unite the two[12]. Olivia, who took both French immersion and core French, pointed out: "There's the grammar side and doing all the work and stuff and learning all the rules and how they go and all the accords, and then there's actually speaking." Like Olivia described, the majority of the eleven interview participants considered grammar and speaking to be two separate components of their knowledge of French.

The students in core French manifested a very low transfer of grammar rules to speaking. The immersion students also reported a low transfer to speaking; however, they had much more of an opportunity to practice speaking French in class, and they felt that their fluency did not suffer as much as their accuracy. All of the French immersion students attested that their accuracy in speech came from being orally corrected while they were speaking French. They did not feel that they internalized the explicit grammar rules or integrated them as they were speaking French. For some, the most significant learning opportunities in this regard came from their experiences outside of school, when they had the opportunity to practice speaking French with Francophones. Anna, who took both French immersion and core French, commented:

> It's different knowing the grammar when you're writing, and it's different
> using it when you're speaking. When you're speaking, you don't get as
> much time to think about it, so unless you're used to speaking and you talk
> a lot with people in French, it's like a lag delay time to think about what
> you want to say. And think, 'Oh should I use this tense or this tense?' But
> when I was there (Québec) and hearing other people speak, then I became
> more comfortable myself and I heard how they used it.

---

[12] In terms of grammar rules and the skill of writing, however, students reported a high correlation and ability to transfer rules.

Luke, a former core French student, talked about the separation he placed between grammar rules and oral communication in French. After the researcher was made aware of the separation he was making, the following conversation was had:

> Researcher: For you, what is more important: that you can speak French well, or that you know grammar?
>
> Luke: That I can speak French well. Which is why I'm frustrated with it.
>
> Researcher: And do you see a relationship between the two at all?
>
> Luke: How do you mean?
>
> Researcher: I guess I'm wondering do you still separate the two...or do you try to integrate them?
>
> Luke: I try to now that I realized that [I need to], but whenever I sit down to do a grammar exercise, I don't treat it as French, I treat it as a grammar exercise. And I'm trying to be like, ok, read this and understand this because you need to speak like this, but it's very hard. I find it's very hard.

Luke seemed to believe that he still separates what he learned through explicit grammar lessons from his oral production of the French language because they were always separated in his core French classes: "...in the core French classes...the grammar part of French and the actual French speaking part were two different things. It was so very separated. It was two different realms almost. It was odd now that I look back on it."

This divide between explicit grammar rules and oral communication of French that spanned across all three groups was mostly tied to the separation of explicit grammar and speaking in class, as reported by the participants. According to the French immersion students, the separation between grammar rules and speaking was less tied to the French program (immersion or core), and more dependent on the teacher they had. Although the core French students (in the core French and combined groups) felt that the division was upheld throughout the majority of their core French education, regardless of their

teachers. The core French students felt they did not have much of an opportunity to practice speaking French in class at all, let alone practice the grammar rules they learned. Additionally, much of the instruction given in class was done in English, which did not allow for grammar rules to be practiced while speaking since there was a lack of speaking in French already.

With the strong divide between grammar rules and speaking in French spanning all groups of participants, the question of how well were students and teachers able to integrate the grammar lessons into conversation, and also writing, persists.

Rachel felt that her French immersion teachers did not try to integrate grammar into conversation enough. She talked about the relationship between content teaching, such as learning French through literature and drama, to grammar:

> We never really related our books or our drama to the grammar that we did. So say class was an hour and a half long. We would do some grammar and then flip over to our book, and for our book we had poetry units and our book units, so it was like the French equivalent of English class, where we learned about metaphors and alliteration and we had to find those in our book, but they never really asked us to find certain grammar examples in the books we were reading or in the plays we were presenting.

Ashley, who was also in French immersion, said that some teachers would make some attempt at integration and ask students to use a particular tense and verb in a sentence, but she felt this was different than speaking and having a conversation with someone. Her comments are linked to Krashen's (1982) argument which hypothesizes that natural communicative input could supply $i + 1$ if certain conditions were met (p. 71). She said that conditions such as the amount of time provided during a writing task compared to the spontaneous nature of speaking in French (that she was used to) caused writing and speaking to be dissimilar skills for her: "You have time to think of the

sentence [when the teacher gives you the tense and verb]. It's coming out of a different part of your brain when you use it."

Transferability

Most interview participants in all three groups discussed the difficulty in transferring explicit grammar rules to oral communication in French. For the majority of participants, transferring grammar rules to writing was not a problem, but with oral communication in French, they strongly maintained that there was little transfer or that the transfer did not happen at all. Many students, such as Luke, considered grammar and oral communication to be strongly separate components of their knowledge of the French language:

> Researcher: In terms of grammar lessons, besides grade 7, how easy or difficult was it to transfer what you learned in the rules to conversation?
>
> Luke: Very hard. Matter of fact, I still don't transfer it. Even in second-year university. I have lots of problems. Taking the subjunctive, I don't use it ever when I speak in French. There are only certain tenses that I know very well that I take. The transferal, ya, that transferal has really not happened very well. Still the grammar exercises on the page and my verbal skills in French are two totally different things. Like, here and here [indicating two separate places with hands], and it's hard to take elements from each and put them together.
>
> Researcher: Any idea about why you think that might be?
>
> Luke: I think because the instruction was never in French for the grammar exercises, or was not in complete French. Also, maybe because doing French exercises and speaking French in core French were always two different things, and she (the teacher – always female teachers) would never put them together. Very, very odd.

They would say, 'Now it's time to do French grammar exercises,' then be like, a half hour later, 'Stop. Now it's time to speak French.' The divide was so odd, you know what I mean? It's like French grammar: ok, turn that button off -- turn the speaking button on. And then you would forget what you did in your exercises. At least I did. There was no connection between I'm supposed to take this and put it in my language now.

Researcher: So there wasn't any attempt to integrate the two?

Luke: They would say, when you're speaking, keep in mind the tense now, but it was very hard for the kids to translate what they had just written into what they were speaking.

Researcher: What about writing? How easy or difficult was it for you to transfer the grammar rules to writing?

Luke: Easy. Easy to transfer them to writing, because I was already writing the grammar itself, and so when I was writing a sentence I would be very conscious this sentence is now in this tense. I found it much easier to write – I still don't write very well in French – but it's easier to think about the rules and what the tenses are, because when I was studying grammar it was all on the page.

It was Luke's experience in core French that grammar rules and speaking were always separate, with a much stronger emphasis on explicit grammar rules. Again, he discussed the lack of speaking and use of French in class in relation to the difficulty in transferring rules to speech. He perceived that his inability to transfer rules to speech was derived from lack of experience in doing so. Rules and speaking were always separated in his core French classes, with little attempt at integration.

Rachel, a former French immersion student, also had difficulty in transferring grammar rules to speech. When asked how well she was able to transfer what she learned in French grammar rules to conversation in French, and if specifically in relation to verb tables, if the rules simply stay on the grammar sheet or if she is able to use them in conversation, she replied:

> It kind of just stays there. I've done so many tables like that, but then I forget them. You're just writing it down, and you're getting the class work done, and then you go home and you forget and you're not going to go back to that table and apply it very easily to the next time you need it. So, I think when you do grammar stuff like that it becomes class work. You know, where you study everything and you remember it for the exam and then you forget it? I think it was kind of like that.

With this French immersion student it was not so much the lack of speaking in class or the lack of French language spoken in class, but it was more the weak focus on integration and practice in transferring the explicit rules to oral communication.

Ashley also discussed her difficulty in applying rules to conversation from her French immersion education:

> Cause you learn it, you know it, you can conjugate a verb, any verb you give me I can conjugate it pretty well I think, but when it comes to actually pulling it out when you have to speak to somebody, it's a lot more difficult.

Implicit to Explicit

Interestingly, Olivia, a former student of both immersion and core French, also mentioned that the opposite is true. She felt that some of her knowledge of the French language that she communicated orally, she could not produce grammatically correct in writing:

> You can speak it, but then you don't actually know how to spell it. Or how it goes. For example, is it é or ais? Even when I was in France, I learned a lot of that, like how to say it. But then I'd go back and think, luckily I had my training with rules and stuff, so I could think about it and put it back, but you don't think about making the agreement when you're speaking.

Additionally, if she did not have experience with French grammar rules, she thought it would be even more difficult for her to produce an accurate transfer from speech to a conscious study of the language.

Kayla, a former French immersion student, furthered the point that Olivia touched on concerning the transfer of implicit knowledge of the French language to an explicit study. She explained in the interview that her knowledge of explicit grammar came from the French she knew and used in oral communication. When she was asked to write a grammar test, do a piece of writing, or consciously study the French language, she thought of "how it's supposed to sound" or how she would use the word or verb in conversation. As opposed to the other participants, she did not feel that her grammar knowledge came from the grammar sheets and explicit teaching she received – she did not make the connection – she felt that it came from her intuitive knowledge of the structures from conversation in French. Further, she commented that is was quite difficult for her to pull out the rules she knew implicitly, to an explicit study.

Through the interviews, it surfaced that unless participants had a teacher who paid special attention to integrating explicit grammar into conversation and writing, the integration did not happen very well. This is especially true with the integration of explicit grammar into conversation, or more specifically, the lack of integration. Shockingly, practically every interview participant held explicit grammar and accuracy in conversation at two opposite extremes, regardless of their prior French educational backgrounds.

Accuracy/Fluency

Table 12 summarizes, by program type, how fluent or accurate in French

participants considered themselves to be, as reported in the interviews.

Table 12. *Trends in the interview data in relation to students' perceptions of their fluency and accuracy*

Type of program:	Fluency	Accuracy
French immersion ▪ Rachel ▪ Ashley ▪ Kayla ▪ Eva ▪ Danika	▪ All were more comfortable with tasks that focused more on fluency than accuracy ▪ All felt that their fluency was greater than their accuracy	▪ All named accuracy as their greatest obstacle in French oral communication ▪ Most felt that their accuracy was poor ▪ All would rather be corrected orally to improve their accuracy than by learning grammar rules
Core French ▪ Luke ▪ Emily	▪ All were very uncomfortable speaking French ▪ All felt their fluency was very poor ▪ Luke felt that his fluency has improved since beginning university French, but prior to university, he had very low fluency	▪ All felt that they were more accurate than fluent ▪ All would rather learn grammar rules to improve their accuracy, than be corrected orally
Combined ▪ Isabel ▪ Julia ▪ Melissa ▪ Olivia	▪ Fluency depended upon the time they spent in immersion or core French: the more time spent in immersion, the more comfortable participants were with their fluency	▪ The more time spent in core French, the more comfortable participants were with their accuracy (with the exception of Isabel on written tasks)
Additional practice:		
French-speaking relatives or friends ▪ Eva ▪ Isabel ▪ Melissa	▪ All felt that they were fluent in French and attributed much of their fluency to their out of school experiences and somewhat to their French immersion experiences	▪ Isabel felt that her accuracy in speech came from oral correction by her Francophone mother, although she felt her accuracy in writing was very poor ▪ Eva and Melissa did not feel that they had significant problems with accuracy

Between the groups of French immersion and core French, there was a great divide in how accurate or fluent the participants considered themselves to be with certain skills, specifically speaking in French. Former French immersion students all felt that they were stronger with fluency than accuracy in speaking French.

All former French immersion students named accuracy as their greatest obstacle in oral French communication. Overall, the former French immersion group felt fluent in French and comfortable speaking the language, but in relation to accuracy, they felt that their grammar was poor. For most of the French immersion students, their difficulty in accuracy resulted in embarrassment, particularly when students were speaking with a Francophone speaker. All French immersion participants, except for Eva, a student with French-speaking parents, said that they were worried about their grammar when they spoke in French, especially when they were speaking in front of a group of people, such as during an oral presentation. Eva said that she was not worried about her accuracy, but she still felt that her fluency was greater than her accuracy. Rachel said that she found oral presentations easier than writing in French, because grammar errors are less noticeable in speaking than writing. When asked if she would feel more comfortable doing an oral presentation in French or completing a piece of writing, Rachel responded:

> If it's an oral presentation that I have time to prepare for, probably the oral presentation, because I find when you're speaking it's harder to say 'Look, she spelled that wrong, she conjugated that wrong. I need time to prepare, because if it's improvised at all, I get kind of flustered and worried about my grammar.

With Rachel it was not the fluency that she was concerned with – it was her accuracy in spoken French. However, she felt that her accuracy was affecting her fluency somewhat, as she felt she must take the time to think about her grammar. She knew what

she wanted to say in French, yet she sometimes felt slowed down while thinking of grammar rules in her speech.

Danika, on the other hand, knew that her grammar was poor, but did not let her lack of accuracy when speaking French fluster her. When asked if she was more concerned with fluency or accuracy in her oral French communication, she responded "accuracy," although went on to say, "But I am never really worried about that (accuracy), because I know I can communicate my thoughts and what I am trying to say even if I have bad grammar because I know the words in French. I usually have pretty good flow."

Ashley was the only French immersion student who expressed strongly her dissatisfaction with her oral fluency in French, but also her ability to listen. Ashley was a fourth-year university student and felt that her French has weakened from the four years she has been out of high school. After explaining during the interview about a point in her job where she had to tell a French speaker to slow down, she said,

> It shouldn't be like that. Sometimes I'm thinking, you know, I've been in
> French since kindergarten, shouldn't I know a little bit more? It's kind of
> let me down in a way. I mean, I'm better than a lot of my friends who took
> grade 9 French and that's it, but you figure you'd be completely bilingual,
> especially when you have that certificate that says you are.

Ashley's frustration with her ability in French was echoed in Hunter's (2005) findings where the French immersion students she interviewed felt that their bilingual certificate did not represent their true ability (p. 32). After graduation, students in Hunter's study felt that oral expression and writing ability had deteriorated the most (2005, p. 29). Ashley felt that it was a combination of her being out of a French class for four years and also the lack of conversation in her French immersion classes, coupled with lack of

extracurricular activities in French that contributed to her diminished fluency in French. Although she was currently struggling with fluency, as all the former French immersion students indicated, she still felt that accuracy was her biggest problem in spoken French.

When asked why they felt that their accuracy was poor, especially after they had worked so diligently at French grammar, the former French immersion students felt it was because they were not able to connect what they learned in explicit grammar lessons to conversation. What is also interesting is that all five former immersion students responded that they would rather improve on their spoken accuracy by being corrected orally by another speaker of the language, rather than by learning grammar rules on the board or on a sheet. The two former core French students, however, both strongly felt the opposite. They asserted that they would much rather learn grammar exercises first and practice inserting the rules into their speech, instead of being orally corrected in French. For the core French students, they felt that they would have more success learning the rules first.

To further the contrast between the immersion and core groups, all former French immersion students said that they would rather complete an oral presentation than do a piece of writing in class, as they felt that in writing, their grammar errors were more obvious than in speaking. In speaking, they felt that they could use their fluency to overpower their difficulty with grammar. The two core French students felt that their writing was much stronger than their speaking and that they would rather complete a piece of writing than do an oral presentation.

The two former core French participants expressed great difficulty with fluency in oral communication in French. This was especially true for Emily. When asked how comfortable she felt communicating orally in French, she said she felt "Very uncomfortable. If I can sit down with a dictionary and write something, then I'm fine with that, but without being able to look it up, I get all flustered." I then asked if she was more concerned with accuracy or fluency in her French speech, and she responded: "Definitely that I can't express myself. I think, usually, I have a hard time even getting a simple point across. That shouldn't be, but. I think grammar wise I have enough bases, so I can speak fine (grammar wise)." Emily said that she has trouble finding the correct French words in her speech. She has trouble choosing vocabulary and using the correct verb tense, she said.

The other former core French student, Luke, said that he became much more comfortable speaking French because of his experience in university French, but before university, he was definitely concerned with fluency and conveying his thoughts in French. He felt much more aware of his fluency in university French and he attempted to work on it because he did not want to speak the way he wrote in French. He wanted to be less rigid and more fluid in his French speaking.

In terms of the students who took both French immersion and core French, their ability to be comfortable with fluency or accuracy depended on how long they took each program and factors such as having a French-speaking relative or completing a French study program.

Melissa, who took core French from grades 1-6 before switching to French immersion from grades 9-12, was comfortable speaking in French, but was concerned

with accuracy. She felt that she had good fluency however, which she attributed to her years in French immersion and the practice she received with her Francophone boyfriend.

Julia, on the other hand, spent more of her French education in core French. She took core French for grades 3 and 4, switched to French immersion for grades 5 and 6, and went back to core French for grades 7 to 12. She also had the opportunity to live in Québec for a month with the "Explore" program. In terms of writing in French, Julia felt that she was fairly fluent and accurate. With speaking, she did not feel very comfortable. Julia said, "There are some people in the class that speak very well, but then I know they have trouble with the grammar and the writing part of it. But I'm kind of the other way around." She went on to explain that she was most concerned with fluency in her French speech. Vocabulary was a concern for her, along with maintaining a steady flow of speech and not stopping every five seconds, trying to think of a word. Although Julia had practice speaking French through the "Explore" program, she felt that she still needed practice and an opportunity to connect the French rules she learned very explicitly in core French to her French oral skills.

Isabel took French immersion before moving to the United States in grade 7 (where she took core French), however, her mother was Francophone and French was the sole language of communication between them. Isabel felt that she was very fluent in French, since it was her first language and she spoke French to her mother everyday. She believed that she still had problems with accuracy, but she thought it was more in her writing than her speaking in French. Her mother would correct her spoken French orally, but with writing, she only relied on the explicit grammar teaching she received throughout her schooling. She does not apply the grammar teaching to her oral

communication in French, though. She credited her accuracy in her spoken French mostly to her mother's oral correction, which worked well for her, and somewhat to her French schooling.

Eva, a former French immersion student also had the experience of speaking French outside of school. Like Isabel, she said that she knew how to use grammar rules in her written French work, but she did not think of rules when she spoke French. She said the only rule she thought of when she spoke French was the rule of politeness. She was the only former French immersion participant who was not overly concerned with accuracy in her French speech. She felt that her fluency was better than her accuracy in spoken French, but at the same time, she did not feel like her accuracy was poor either.

Post-Secondary French: Why Students Chose To Continue French Education

The majority of participants interviewed decided to take university French because a French language credit was required for their major. Many interview participants were in the journalism program, specifically. Many students also commented that with Canada being a bilingual country, they thought it was a good idea to keep up their French. Interestingly, most French immersion students wanted to improve on areas such as writing (and in particular, sharpen their accuracy in their writing) by taking the course, but core French students and those from the combined group who took most of their French education in core French wanted to improve on their French speaking skills. The different answers in relation to writing/speaking from the French immersion, core French, and combined groups highlight the different perceived learning needs.

Additionally, most participants also said that they took the course because they felt they would be successful in the course and achieve high grades. Many said that French was something that they knew well and had experience with, and they felt that it would be an easy grade for them.

Assumption That Grammar Was Already Known

In the interviews, most of the participants commented on the "assumption" in the FRE 201 class that students already knew the grammar rules. They said that the teacher did not spend a lot of time explicitly teaching grammar rules or going over verb tables, but spent a small amount of time at the beginning, then proceeded to integrate the rules into the content. In integrating the rules into the content, students also had the opportunity to practice integrating the rules into their speaking of French. This happened through small discussion groups in class, which often happened numerous times each class. The topic of the discussion groups and the grammar rules and verb tenses that students were expected to use in the discussions, all came from the textbook, which strongly focused on integrating grammar into content. Danika talked about the assumption in FRE 201 that students already know grammar rules, in her interview: "There's a lot on grammar too, but it goes by pretty fast under the assumption that you've already learned it. Damien doesn't have a lot of time to re-teach it."

Ashley's comment also corresponded with the "assumption" that students repeatedly discussed in their interviews:

> I think he understands that a lot of us know what's going on in the
> textbook already, there's times where we just kind of fly right through,
> because it's so obvious. It seems like the teacher knows that a lot of
> students know it (grammar) already.

Ashley enjoyed the lesser focus on explicit grammar teaching and stronger focus on

integration, as she felt it was a way to build on what she already knew. Emily, however,

made the point that if a student in the class did not already have a strong base in

grammar, they probably would find the class very difficult, since there was an

assumption that students already knew French grammar rules. She said, "For people who

don't have a base in grammar, there's probably not enough grammar teaching."

Fortunately for the interview participants, all commented that they indeed had enough

grammar teaching in their French schooling, and often very explicit grammar teaching

without integration. The FRE 201 class provided them with the opportunity to integrate

what they knew explicitly into conversation and content.

Teaching Approach in FRE 201: Integrated Grammar and Content

Without exception, every interview participant said that FRE 201 class was

different than what they were used to. The main difference that practically every

interview participant named was the integration between grammar, conversation, and

content – in particular, grammar and speaking in French.

With the divide between grammar and speaking that spanned across all

interviews, it was obvious that the participants were used to keeping explicit grammar

teaching separate from conversation in French and found it very difficult to integrate

grammar rules into conversation. However, in the second-year university class, there was

less of a focus on explicit grammar teaching and more of a focus on integrating the rules

(which students said was assumed that they already knew) into conversation in French. Olivia was surprised, but very pleased at the integration of grammar into speaking. When asked in what way she found FRE 201 different from her previous French education, she responded, "The fact that we have both *work* at the same time (my italics)." In asking her to clarify what type of "work" she meant, she said, "That we have, (laughs) I'm separating them again, the grammar and the verbal. We have it at the same time: the grammar and the speaking. He speaks French the entire time and he mixes the two."

Like Olivia, Melissa was also stricken by the integration: "This is the first time I've seen it actually integrated into the two of them. Because we learn the grammar, but then we practice it right away. So, it's definitely well integrated."

Luke explained that the class time that was spent on the mechanics of learning a verb tense such as the conditional was about five minutes. Students then had the chance to ask questions and the rest of the class time was spent doing oral, written, and reading exercises that involved the conditional.

The participants who had backgrounds in French immersion commented that the content used in FRE 201 was very similar to what they were used to in the French immersion program – for example, French novels and units on French culture, politics, etc. What was different was that the integration between grammar, content, and conversation never happened before for most participants. Many participants, such as Kayla, explained that the grammar was "hidden" within the content: "I think we do a lot more conversation than we do grammar. The grammar sometimes is hidden in there, I think, so we don't really notice it." Kayla was explaining a more implicit focus on learning French grammar. Rachel said that practicing French grammar orally was new for

her and that the teacher of FRE 201 concentrated on hearing everyone speak and making sure that everyone practiced speaking, which she really enjoyed.

Like the participants who took some or all French immersion, those who had backgrounds in core French also remarked on the integration between grammar, content, and conversation. In addition to integration, the former core French students also discussed the focus on listening and speaking in the FRE 201 course, which they had never experienced before. Luke said, "I would say that is completely reversed from my core French experience. It is 80% talking or comprehension based reading and 20% grammar maybe. I like it a lot more."

Many interview participants were shocked, but pleased at the lesser focus on explicit grammar instruction and stronger focus on oral communication. When asked to explain the balance between explicit grammar instruction and content teaching in FRE 201 class, Danika responded:

> I wouldn't say there is too much explicit grammar teaching right now, at all. We touch on grammar, but we don't go deep into it unless we do an activity, but it's not really that much. I would say there is a lot more communication and a lot more speaking in university French class. Which is something I like since it's not something I did so much in high school. It was more individual type work, unless we had group projects. But there's a lot more collaborative communication in the university classroom.

Danika's comment concerning there being more speaking practice in FRE 201 than what she was used to is also somewhat surprising, since she was a former French immersion student.

In sum, all participants enjoyed the focus on listening and speaking in class, and many commented that it gave them the opportunity to integrate rules they knew already into oral practice in French.

In Comparison With Other Post-Secondary French Courses (e.g. FRE 101)

Two interview participants, Luke and Emily (both former core French students),

had also taken FRE 101 at the same university. Both students were placed in a FRE 101

class after taking a French placement test – a self-evaluative test. The first-year French

course was the first French language course they took in university. They commented that

the instructional focus in their FRE 101 classes was very different than FRE 201.

Luke felt that the FRE 101 course was much more grammar based than FRE 201,

which included the assumption that French grammar rules and verb tenses were already

known and incorporated a more integrated approach. The FRE 101 course was more

similar to his core French education in its testing methods, as well. Luke said there were a

lot more grammar exercises and that the tests were focused on grammar rules and verb

tenses – typical of his high school core French experience. FRE 101 was also the first

time that Luke had a French teacher who spoke only French in class, besides his grade 7

experience. He said that the use of the French language was similar to FRE 201, but

dissimilar to his education in core French. He found it difficult at first, but made the

effort to adapt by looking for keywords in the instructors' speech and trying to

understand the surrounding words through the keywords.

Emily also found FRE 101 different than FRE 201. She felt that the instructor was

the main factor for the difference. Emily had an Anglophone instructor for FRE 101 and

she did not feel that she was challenged enough in listening comprehension. In FRE 201,

however, she struggled with listening comprehension at the beginning. The FRE 201

teacher was Francophone and did not slow down for the class, so the students had to

adapt. With her core French background, she said this was a challenge, but she really enjoyed and appreciated the practice.

Additionally, Emily felt that FRE 101 contained much more explicit grammar instruction than FRE 201 (as Luke commented, as well). She said that she found FRE 101 to be an easier course for her because she did not have to speak French as much or really push herself in listening comprehension. She commented that she did not have to "think" as much in the FRE 101 class. Because of her previous core French experience, the grammar was very automatic for her and she excelled in the grammar tests. FRE 201 was much more challenging in terms of listening and speaking.

Participants' Perceptions of How Their Backgrounds Affect Their Post-Secondary Experience

When asked in the interviews how participants felt their French educational backgrounds affect their performance in the second-year post-secondary French class, many different answers were given, but the divide between the knowledge of grammar rules (which they associated with being able to write accurately in French) and speaking in French remained.

The former French immersion group all felt they brought an ability to communicate in French to the FRE 201 course. They felt that they gained their marks in discussion groups and by using their verbal French skills. Many immersion graduates, such as Rachel, commented that they did not feel they would be able to keep up with the listening and speaking in class, had they not had their immersion background:

> From day one, we were doing easy grammar, but he was still speaking
> full-fledged French, no pre-tense of speaking English words here and there
> to explain it. And I think if I had not done immersion, I would not have

understood him. We're expected to answer in French right away, so I think it would have been a lot scarier if I hadn't had that French background.

The two participants who took all core French and those who took mostly core French found listening and speaking more difficult (except for Isabel, whose mother was Francophone), because of the way they learned French. However, they felt that they performed well on grammar exercises and gained marks by doing grammar tests and French writing. Luke felt that core French has made him understand all the tenses and the ability to realize he was wrong when he made a mistake. He said that he only needed a way to practice speaking more and integrate the material and explicit rules he learned in core French. Julia's response was similar to Luke's. She was comfortable with writing, and she felt it was because of her background in mostly core French. She believed her past experience had given her an excellent base in French grammar and writing. Now, she felt she simply needed to apply her explicit knowledge of the language:

> In French now, I'm learning more to use that grammar in speaking and it's, I guess, taking some time. My past experience has helped me be comfortable with one part of the language (explicit grammar and writing), and now I can just focus on oral more and use what I have learned to integrate it into the oral part.

Those who took both French immersion and core French felt that their experiences in French immersion have influenced their ability at listening and speaking in FRE 201 and that the core French classes helped them with knowing the technical side of the language, such as grammar rules and tenses.

Those who had French-speaking relatives or friends and those who did a French exchange program said that these experiences contributed to what skills they bring to FRE 201. According to the participants, having French-speaking relatives or friends has had the greatest impact. Isabel and Eva, who both have French-speaking relatives felt that

speaking French outside of school combined with their immersion experiences have helped them develop the language and bring excellent oral communication skills to the FRE 201 classroom. Melissa, who had a Francophone boyfriend, explained that having someone to practice French with outside of school had helped her immensely: "I think it's my out of school experience that has more of an impact on my French. Because even a year ago, I couldn't think enough in French to be able to formulate a sentence without thinking five minutes on it beforehand."

Oral Samples

Tables 13 and 14 show the fluency and accuracy results for the one-minute
French oral samples. The indicators that were used to measure fluency and accuracy for
the oral samples are explained in the "Methodology" section of this thesis.

Table 13. *Fluency results for French oral samples*

Participant	Total number of types	Total number of words (tokens)	Type-token ratio	Percent of K1 words (1 to 1000)
French immersion:				
Rachel	56	100	0.51	60.00%
Ashley	52	88	0.50	66.02%
Kayla	72	128	0.51	65.96%
Eva	66	102	0.59	70.27%
Danika	75	168	0.41	78.26%
Core French:				
Luke	69	139	0.47	75.34%
Emily	40	55	0.63	73.02%
Combined:				
Isabel	97	155	0.55	72.32%
Julia	58	106	0.51	66.37%
Melissa	68	127	0.50	75.18%
Olivia	60	109	0.51	70.94%

Mean of total number of words (tokens) for French immersion group: 117.20
Standard deviation: 28.55

Mean of total number of words (tokens) for core French group: 97
Standard deviation: 42

Mean of total number of words (tokens) for combined group: 124.25
Standard deviation: 19.49

Table 14. *Accuracy results for French oral samples*

Participant	Type of errors	Total number of errors	Error-word ratio
French immersion:			
Rachel	A: 1 B: 7	8	0.08
Ashley	B: 8 C: 1	9	0.10
Kayla	A: 2 B: 9 C: 3 D: 1	15	0.12
Eva	A: 2 B: 3 C: 1 D: 1	7	0.07
Danika	B: 19 C: 2 D: 5	26	0.15
Core French:			
Luke	A: 2 B: 12 C: 3	17	0.12
Emily	B: 4	4	0.07
Combined:			
Isabel	A: 2 B: 6 C: 2	10	0.06
Julia	B: 6	6	0.06
Melissa	B: 5 C: 1	6	0.05
Olivia	A: 2 B: 6 C: 4	12	0.11

Mean of total number of errors for French immersion group: 13
Standard deviation: 7.07

Mean of total number of errors for core French group: 10.5
Standard deviation: 6.5

Mean of total number of errors for combined group: 8.5
Standard deviation: 2.60

In comparing the different groups of participants, the combined group, on average, tended to be more accurate than the immersion group in their oral samples. In terms of fluency, there was not much difference across groups. The individual exception was the former core French student, Emily, who had difficulty in articulating what she wanted to say in French and had a low word count. Isabel and Eva, students who had French-speaking relatives and friends, had a higher number of words and more diverse vocabulary than most participants. The results are not statistically significant, although it is interesting to look at individual results and factors that might have contributed to such results.

The former French immersion student, Danika, produced noteworthy results from her French oral sample. She had the highest number of words of any participants, yet she had the lowest type-token ratio and the highest percent of K1 words. Her results indicated that she was able to produce a lot of words in a fixed amount of time, but many of these words were repeated and were more common French words overall. She was able to produce fluent French speech, but the depth of her vocabulary in the oral sample was not exceptionally deep or diverse. However, it should be noted that she still had more types than the other participants, suggesting that her comparatively lower type-token ratio was mostly due to her high number of tokens (fluency), rather than her limited vocabulary

(number of types). In terms of accuracy in her oral sample, Danika had the highest number of errors of any participant. Her errors were mostly morphological "B" errors relating to gender and preposition. She also had five errors in her one-minute sample that related to "D": differences across languages. Most of these errors were related to the repeated use of "comme" in her French speech, which was used as a connector. The results of Danika's oral sample supported what she explained in her interview in relation to her oral fluency in French, which is reported in the Fluency/Accuracy section of this thesis. She said that she was never worried about accuracy because she knew that she could communicate her thoughts in French. She did not let her poor accuracy get in the way of her fluency. She said that even though she had bad grammar, she still had good flow.

In contrast to Danika is Emily, a former core French student who had the lowest number of words for the French oral sample. Emily had a very difficult time expressing herself when she was answering the question for the oral sample. Emily did not have many errors, in fact she had the least amount of errors of any participant, but she only produced 55 words. The length of her oral sample was equal to half to one-quarter of what the other participants produced. Her type-token ratio was the highest, but with shorter texts a higher type-token ratio is expected since words are more likely to appear only once. Fewer words result in more diverse vocabulary per total number or words.

The second of the two core French students, Luke, had very different results from Emily. Luke produced the third-highest amount of words per one-minute sample among all participants. In his interview, Luke said that his oral fluency in French was very poor until he started university French (FRE 101 and FRE 201). Although his type-token ratio

was low and his percentage of K1 words was among the highest of all participants

(75.34%) – which suggested that his vocabulary was not particularly diverse – the

amount of words he produced surpassed all French immersion graduates, with the

exception of Danika, and those who took a combination of both immersion and core

French, with the exception of Isabel, whose mother was Francophone. Luke also had

many errors in French speech, with the majority of errors related to gender and

preposition, but some related to syntax as well.

Isabel, a student of the combined group whose mother was Francophone, and Eva,

a former French immersion student who had French-speaking parents and friends, had the

higher type-token ratios. Although Eva had an average to high number of types compared

to other participants, Isabel had the highest number of types. Her results suggested that

she had more diverse vocabulary than many of the other participants. However, it should

be noted that at the end of Isabel's oral sample, she began code-switching and inserting

phrases in English, which could have accounted for the high number of types. Both Eva

and Isabel did not have many errors in their speech, but Isabel had more errors than Eva

yet she also produced more words than the latter.

Writing Samples

Eight of the eleven interview participants were willing to submit a writing sample for analysis in this study. The students who participated from the French immersion group were Rachel, Ashley, and Danika. From the core French group, Luke participated. From the group of students who took both French immersion and core French, all four students participated: Isabel, Julia, Melissa, and Olivia. The indicators that were used to measure fluency and accuracy for the writing samples are delineated in the "Methodology" section of this thesis.

Tables 15 and 16 show the fluency and accuracy results for the French writing samples, while Table 17 indicates the final grades students received on the full written question.

Table 15. *Fluency results for French writing samples*

Participant	Total number of sentences in 100 words	Average number of words per sentence	Total number of types	Type-token ratio	Percent of K1 words (1 to 1000)
French immersion:					
Rachel	9	11.6	77	0.68	71.05%
Ashley	8	12.9	75	0.69	76.15%
Danika	10	10.1	75	0.70	71.96%
Core French:					
Luke	6	17.5	70	0.62	74.34%
Combined:					
Isabel	4	26	61	0.52	77.78%
Julia	6	17.2	76	0.70	64.22%
Melissa	7	16.6	85	0.66	69.77%
Olivia	7	14.4	80	0.74	67.59%

Mean of total number of sentences in 100 words for French immersion group: 9
Standard deviation: 0.82

Mean of total number of sentences in 100 words for combined group: 6
Standard deviation: 1.32

Mean of average number of words per sentence for the French immersion group: 11.5
Standard deviation: 1.14

Mean of average number of words per sentence for the combined group: 18.6
Standard deviation: 4.43

Table 16. *Accuracy results for French writing samples*

Participant	Type of errors	Total number of errors per first 5 sentences	Average errors per sentence
French immersion:			
Rachel	A: 1 B: 7 C: 2	10	2
Ashley	B: 5 C: 4	9	1.8
Danika	A: 1 B: 3 C: 1	5	1
Core French:			
Luke	A: 2 B: 5 C: 3	10	2
Combined:			
Isabel	A: 4 B: 7 C: 3	14	2.8
Julia	B: 1 D: 1	2	0.4
Melissa	A: 2 B: 1 C: 1	4	0.8
Olivia	B: 2 C: 1	3	0.6

Mean of total number of errors per first 5 sentences for French immersion group: 8
Standard deviation: 2.16

Mean of total number of errors per first 5 sentences for combined group: 5.75
Standard deviation: 4.82

Table 17. *Final grades on full written question*[13]

Participant	Final grade for written question : CONTENT[14]	Final grade for written question : LANGUAGE	Total final grade:
French immersion			
Rachel	95	83	86
Ashley	85	73	78
Danika	85	90	88
Mean	*88.33*	*82*	*84*
SD	*4.71*	*6.97*	*4.32*
Core French			
Luke	92.5	63	75
Combined			
Isabel	85	60	70
Julia	95	95	95
Melissa	95	90	92
Olivia	85	80	82
Mean	*90*	*81.25*	*84.75*
SD	*5.00*	*13.40*	*9.78*

Interestingly, the immersion group had the highest number of sentences in their 100 word samples and the lowest average of words per sentence. The three immersion students also had the top three highest number of sentences and the lowest average of words per sentence overall. These results could indicate that the immersion students in this study created less syntactically sophisticated and simpler sentences than those in the core French and combined groups. As well, the immersion group had a higher percent of K1 words than the combined group (with the exception of Isabel), indicating that they use

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[13] As graded by the FRE 201 instructor. A separate grade was given for content and language, followed by a total grade which was an average of the two. The written question comprised the entire exam, and the mark students received on the written question was their final mark for the exam.

[14] Final grades for content, language, and total sections are calculated out of 100.

more common French words in their writing. In relation to accuracy, the immersion group had more errors in their writing than the combined group (with the exception of Isabel). The immersion group also had a higher number of morphological and syntactical errors than the combined group. The participants in the combined group, Isabel excepted, all had very minimal errors in their French writing – the least of all participants. Their type-token ratios were high, indicating diverse vocabulary, and they also had a lower percent of K1 words than other participants, demonstrating that they used less common words than other students in the study.

In comparison to her oral sample, Danika had far fewer errors in her writing than her speaking in French. She had one of the higher type-token ratios, the highest number of sentences in 100 words, and the lowest average of words per sentence of any of the participants. Her results suggested that her writing was fairly accurate and her vocabulary was diverse, yet she possibly lacked syntactical sophistication. Further, she received a 90% for "language" on her final exam, which was the highest among the immersion students who submitted writing samples.

Julia, a former student of both immersion and core French, but primarily core French, had stellar results for accuracy in her writing. She only had two minor errors in her writing sample. Her final exam mark was an impressive 95%, with a breakdown of 95% for both "content" and "language." Julia surpassed all participants in accuracy.

Isabel, whose mother was Francophone, had the highest number of errors in her writing and the lowest mark for "language" on her exam. Although her oral fluency and accuracy were high, her accuracy in her writing was low. Her writing sample demonstrated that she wrote the same way as she spoke – her writing was more phonetic

than grammatical. Her numerous errors included spelling and proper verb tenses. Her writing would sound correct if it was read aloud, yet she had many morphosyntactical errors: for example, she would write "à rencontrer" instead of "a rencontré." In relation to fluency in her writing, she had the lowest number of sentences in 100 words (4) and her type-token ratio was the lowest of any participant. Her results suggested that she wrote in long sentences, without paying attention to accuracy, and that her vocabulary in her writing was not as diverse as that of the other participants in the data sample.

Luke was the only core French student who agreed to submit a writing sample. Again, like his oral sample, Luke's results indicated problems with accuracy, and especially with gender, articles, and idiomatic phrases in French. His type-token ratio was average, at 0.62.

Instructor Interview

The interview with the FRE 201 instructor was very useful in highlighting differences, from his perspective, between students who took primarily French immersion or core French. The literature on French immersion and core French graduates complemented many of the differences that the instructor highlighted, such as fluency and accuracy differences. It should be noted that the instructor's comments are entirely his perceptions that he formed from teaching a post-secondary class that was mixed between immersion and core French graduates. In labeling students "French immersion" or "core French" graduates, students who took both programs fall into either category depending on whether they took primarily immersion or core French, unless otherwise stated by the instructor. The instructor could not comment specifically on the individual participants in this study since all student participants were assured anonymity.

Damien, the FRE 201 instructor, was a Francophone who learned English through television primarily, but also had some English classes in school where they concentrated mostly on writing. His PhD was in comparative literature, and although he taught literature once before, his first French language teaching experience was in September 2006, with the first semester of FRE 201. He was teaching two FRE 201 courses and a literature class at the time of the interview.

In his experience teaching FRE 201, he noticed dramatic differences between students who had a background in French immersion and those who had taken core French primarily. As the interviews with the student participants also revealed, Damien

noticed that former French immersion students had the ability to be fluent in the

language, but they were not necessarily accurate:

> I think the most remarkable difference between the two groups is the
> greater ability for the immersion students to speak naturally. They never
> hesitate. They make errors, but it doesn't stop them or prevent them from
> talking. But the immersion students, although they speak more naturally,
> I'm going to say they have problems with writing. Their writing always
> mimicks their oral discourse. For example, if they say "J'ai pas travailler
> beacoup" they will write it so. They will rarely write, "Je n'ai pas travaillé
> beaucoup." They write just like they speak. And sometimes they use
> complicated structures, for example, [Damien spells out the sentence]
> "Tous que j'ai fait dans se cours..." but they don't know that this means,
> "Tout ce que j'ai fait." They use it right (orally), but they don't know how
> to write it.

According to the FRE 201 instructor, the former immersion students in his class produced

fluent speech, and in their writing, they were more so applying what they knew from their

oral discourse than what they learned through grammar lessons. They had trouble pulling

out what they knew implicitly, to reflect an accurate account of the language. Damien did

not feel that it was a problem with knowing grammar and structure: it was a problem of

applying what they knew explicitly. He said that the immersion graduates already knew

about the future and conditional tenses, but they could not always make the distinction

between, for example, "je serai" and "je serais." They were hearing both ways the same

orally, and on paper they were not thinking about making the distinction.

He said the former core French students, on the other hand, had problems with

oral communication in French. Damien remarked that they were often unsure and

hesitated in their speech. He said they always thought about grammar and structure, but

the former French immersion students simply talked without paying attention to grammar

and structure – or at least the thought of accuracy did not seem to get in the way of

fluency for the immersion students like it did for the core French students. In activities

such as oral presentations, Damien commented:

> The French immersion students don't fear anything in front of a classroom
> (during an oral presentation). They just arrive there with no notes, nothing,
> and speak for 5 minutes. That's not a problem. But the others (core
> French) still fear to go in front of the class, have no real sense of
> improvisation, they need to be prepared, so they rely very much on
> writing, so if they have notes, they will read off of them. It's less exciting.

The fluency of the majority of French immersion students in his class was

excellent, yet the core French students had difficulty producing fluent speech.

In terms of writing, the French instructor found that the core French students

wrote more accurately than immersion students. He said they did not necessarily write

"naturally" or intuitively, but they paid attention to structure and proper grammar.

Damien believed it was their French educational backgrounds that made core French

students more aware of the rules. He said that they did not necessarily write more in

length than immersion students, but they had a better knowledge of grammar and

spelling, which made their writing more readable from his point of view. An implication

for better accuracy in the writing of core French graduates as opposed to immersion

graduates was higher marks for some core French students, since much of what students

were graded on was accuracy in their written assignments.

He also noticed that French immersion students tended to be more creative in

their French writing:

> They [immersion students] tend to go out of bounds, to invent funny
> stories and everything. But apart from the grammar and the spelling, some
> of these texts are more interesting than the other ones [core French].
> Written assignment are generally more seriously done by the French core
> students.

The French immersion students in Damien's classes were not afraid to veer from what they knew with certainty was correct. They took chances in their writing more so than the core French students who stayed with the grammatically accurate basics.

Interestingly, Damien said that neither immersion nor core French graduates had trouble with explicit grammar exercises, such as fill-in-the-blanks, but as soon as they had to use what they learned, there were problems. However, each group had different types of problems. The French immersion graduates had difficulty integrating what they learned explicitly into their oral and written use of French. The core French graduates did not have difficulty producing accurate writing from what they learned in the explicit grammar exercises, but they did not possess the same fluency or intuitive knowledge that the immersion students did. Additionally, their experience with French rules and structure (but not speaking), got in the way of their fluency, because they were constantly hesitating and stopping to think of how to produce a phrase or what would be the most accurate way to do so.

Damien recognized the need for both immersion and core French graduates to integrate their knowledge of grammar and structure into their speech and writing, from his perspective. He said that the textbook for the FRE 201 course stresses integration, and he was following the approach in class:

> It's an integrated approach and I try to integrate it in the class, although I do it unconsciously. So, what I am trying to do, and I think that's the purpose of the textbook, is to force them to use what they learn in speech. So that's why we're doing grammar orally. And that's why I ask them to answer or invent any situation, just to integrate in speech what they already know on paper.

The instructor gave credit to the textbook for creating an integrated approach, but this was also the main method in which he learned German and Italian, and he agreed that a conscious study of a language should be integrated with content and practice speaking the language.

Triangulating Data Sets

The various kinds of data that were collected in this study – a questionnaire, interviews, oral samples, and writing samples – allowed the results of this research to be triangulated across data sets. In terms of fluency, there was a clear difference in how fluent the participants in the immersion group perceived themselves to be in comparison to the students in the core French and combined groups. Results from the questionnaire and interviews showed that the former immersion students consider themselves to be fluent in French, but the core French students were not at all confident in their fluency abilities. Results from students in the combined group differed depending on factors such as the length of time they took French immersion or core French, if they had French-speaking relatives or friends, and if they did a student exchange in a French-speaking province or country. Julia, who had less experience in immersion, was not at all confident with her fluency in French. Melissa, who had a French-speaking boyfriend, was fairly confident in her fluency, and Isabel, whose mother was Francophone, was very confident with her fluency in French. Olivia, who took French immersion in grades 7 and 8 and core French from grades 9-12, felt that she gained confidence in her fluency during and after her exchange to France. In sum, the immersion students considered themselves

much more fluent than the other groups considered themselves to be, but factors such as having French speaking relatives and doing exchange programs also contributed to individual perspectives of personal fluency.

The results of the oral and writing samples did not show a statistically significant difference between groups in relation to fluency, but there were differences between individuals that are worth noting. A clear difference in fluency emerged from three participants in particular, who had the opportunity to practice speaking French outside of the classroom. These participants, Isabel, Eva, and Melissa, had French-speaking relatives or friends. Participants who had immersion experience in French study programs did not have significantly higher results than other participants in fluency in regards to the oral or writing samples, but they did report significant differences in fluency from their personal perspective in the interviews. From their study programs in a French-speaking province/country, they felt that their fluency had improved a great deal. They specifically felt that their vocabulary increased from what it used to be, and all reported an invaluable experience in learning words and phrases that they were not taught in school, but were acquired through being immersed in a French-speaking environment. Many participants, such as Ashley, wished they could have had the opportunity to participate in immersion experiences such as these. Ashley felt that immersion in a French-speaking province or country would have been highly beneficial for her and other students, particularly in relation to being exposed to vocabulary, phrases, and a way of speaking that is difficult or impossible to acquire in the classroom with anglophone peers.

The French writing samples showed that the immersion group had a higher percent of K1 words than the combined group, suggesting that the immersion students

may be using more common words in their writing. These results are somewhat surprising, given that immersion students learned subject matter through the medium of French, which would presumably involve learning diverse vocabulary associated with the subject matter.

The oral samples also showed that Danika, a former French immersion student, had the highest number of tokens in her sample, yet she also had the lowest type-token ratio and the highest percent of K1 words. Her results suggested that she may be fluent in French, but she might also be repeating the same words. In comparison with Danika's FRE 201 instructor's perspective that French immersion students were more fluent than those in core French, Danika may be more fluent, but her oral sample hints at surface fluency (Cummins & Swain, 1983, p. 34). Additionally, Danika repeatedly used "comme" in her oral sample. Sankoff et al. (1997) reports that L1 and L2 speakers of French may use "comme" differently. Anglophones often use "comme" as a connector (much the same as "like" in English). The use of "comme" as a connector is also on the rise in Montreal, a bilingual city, where anglophone expressions are often incorporated into the French dialect (Sankoff et al., 1997, p. 205).

Unlike the questionnaire and interviews, which indicated a clear difference in fluency for the immersion group and individuals with a French-speaking relative or friend, the program type was not the main variable compared to individual differences in fluency results of the oral and writing samples. However, student perceptions of themselves in the interviews were often reflected in the grades they received on their exams. There was a wide variation in the oral sample results for fluency for the two core French students, and individual differences such as personality and previous experience

learning a language seemed to contribute to the wide division. Luke seemed much more outgoing and talkative than Emily, and he felt that his experience in FRE 101 improved his fluency a great deal. Additionally, he was fluent in German and felt that he picked up French (orally) more easily since he already has experience learning German this way. Although his core French background focused primarily on learning explicit rules and not on meaning and conversation, he felt that oral practice in French improves his fluency and provides the opportunity to integrate the rules he knows into conversation. Emily seemed to have a much more timid and self-conscious personality than Luke. She was constantly questioning what she was saying in French and took a long time to produce the words she was looking for. Emily could be considered a Monitor Over-user, as she said that she is always concentrating on her conscious knowledge of the French language (Krashen, 1982, p. 19). As a result, she spoke hesitantly and was so concerned with correctness that she could not speak fluently. She also never participated in class discussions, where Luke was always an active participant. Lapkin et al. (1993) reports that with few exceptions, French immersion students outperform core French students. Although Lapkin et al. does not name which specific tasks immersion students usually outperform core French students on, in focusing on her research, Emily would be considered a more typical core French student in terms of lack of fluency but accurate nonetheless, yet Luke would be atypical with fluent speech and consistent grammatical errors.

In terms of accuracy, results were not clear-cut. In the interviews, all French immersion students named accuracy as a greater concern than fluency, while core French students were the opposite. Students in the combined group who had more experience

with French immersion or had a French-speaking relative, also claimed that accuracy was a greater challenge than fluency, whereas students who had more experience with core French named fluency as a more significant obstacle than accuracy. The questionnaire indicated that French immersion students were much more scattered than the other two groups on their perceptions of how accurate they were. These results were also reflected in the oral and writing samples, with some students in the group being more accurate than others. Although the results varied for the immersion students, as a group, they had the highest average of errors in their oral samples. In the core French group, Luke was an outlier in terms of his accuracy and fluency. Luke's results were much more close to the immersion group than Emily's results.

Julia and Melissa were the most accurate in their oral samples, and along with Olivia, were the top three participants for accuracy in their writing samples as well. Julia took core French from grades 3-4 and 7-12, but took immersion in grades 5 and 6. She commented that the majority of her schooling in French was concentrated on form-focused activities, particularly in core French. Melissa took core French from grades 1-6 and immersion from grades 9-12. She felt that she had a base in the structure of the language before going into the immersion classroom in grade 9. In her interview she commented that she likes rules, and that she enjoys consciously studying French grammar in order to improve her accuracy.

Overall, the more accurate participants were those who spent more time in core French – Julia, in particular. The FRE 201 instructor described Julia as a prodigy for her accuracy in the language. Often those who had more of an opportunity to learn French through meaning, content, or listening to someone else speak it – particularly students in

the immersion group and Isabel, whose mother was Francophone – had lower accuracy. Isabel was an outlier in the combined group, as her fluency and accuracy results were closer to those in the immersion group. Isabel was extremely comfortable speaking French, but her accuracy in her writing sample was very poor – the lowest of all participants, in fact. The style of Isabel's writing also mirrored her oral discourse in French. The FRE 201 instructor commented in his interview that he noticed the immersion students tended to write the way that they spoke French. He said that they did not have poor fluency in their writing, but they did not pay attention to structure and write words and phrases without paying attention to grammatical items such as correct verb tenses or spelling. With the participants in this study, those who "wrote the most like they speak French" were those who were the most fluent speakers of the language. These students were immersion students and Isabel, who took both immersion and core French, but her mother was Francophone. Isabel's results were similar to the immersion group, which was likely because she had her own immersion experience at home with her French-speaking mother. Although she was in core French from grades 7-13, she still had a difficult time focusing on accuracy. Isabel could be considered a Monitor under-user, who relies more on the "feel" for correctness rather than their conscious knowledge of the language (Krashen, 1982, p. 19). Kayla, a former immersion student, also perceived herself to concentrate less on a conscious knowledge of the French language and more on an intuitive sense for correctness. Although she did not submit a writing sample, she had a high number of errors in her oral sample – the third highest of all participants.

In comparing data that highlighted participants' French educational backgrounds, variation in between groups and within groups could be accounted for by the type of

instruction that participants received. It makes sense that the French immersion group is scattered in results for fluency and accuracy, as their program type was very diverse in the type of instruction they received, which many students commented depended on their teacher. The immersion students received a mixture of implicit and explicit instruction and a combination of meaning, content, and speaking practice coupled with explicit grammar lessons. When in high school especially, they reported more implicit instruction in classes that involved subject matter taught in French and more explicit instruction for French language class. The core French program seemed much more homogeneous in the type of instruction that was given – primarily and explicit focus on the linguistic features of the language. Those who took both would have experienced a mixture between a more diverse program and a more homogeneous program.

Summary

This chapter reported the results from the questionnaire, interviews with student participants, oral samples, writing sample, and interview with the FRE 201 instructor. Qualitative results and descriptive statistics results were reported. Trends were identified among the groups of French immersion, core French, and students of mixed French educational backgrounds, as well as individuals within groups. Factors that affected the results other than program type were also introduced and data sets were triangulated. The next chapter summarizes main results, identifies keys issues from the interviews with participants, discusses findings with reference to the relevant literature, and proposes direction for future teaching and research.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This final chapter summarizes main results, identifies keys issues from the interviews with participants, and raises implications for future pedagogy and research. Trends between groups and individuals are discussed and factors that may affect the fluency and accuracy of participants are brought forth. Results are discussed with links to the literature, and fluency and accuracy results are compared to student and instructor perspectives.

FRE 201, a second-year French course at an English-speaking university in Ontario, was an extremely interesting class to work with. The students in the class came from varied backgrounds in French, yet they were all together in the one learning environment, learning the same information. The effect that their French backgrounds had on them as French-as-a-second-language learners was significant and crucial to their performance in post-secondary French. With increasing numbers of French immersion, core French, and students of who took a combination of both entering university and taking university French courses, it is interesting to observe differences and similarities between the groups, but also comparisons among individuals.

Summary of Main Results

In regards to the research questions outlined in the introduction of this thesis, a number of results developed that are worth summarizing. Firstly, the French educational backgrounds of participants indeed affected their current experiences and performance in post-secondary French in relation to fluency and accuracy. This was especially evident in the questionnaire and interviews that suggested that program type indeed influenced how fluent or accurate participants considered themselves to be. French immersion students perceived themselves to be more fluent than accurate, core French students felt they were more accurate than fluent, and students who took both varied depending on whether they had more experience in an immersion or core French setting.

Additionally, the type of instruction students received was key to how fluent or accurate they perceived themselves to be, and also in many cases how fluent or accurate they were on the oral and writing samples. Those who received a more explicit focus on grammar were generally more accurate. Those who received a more implicit focus on meaning, content, and conversation, were generally more fluent. Those who received a mixture of both explicit and implicit instruction often produced varied results. Often program types had a stronger focus on explicit learning (core French) or a mixture of both (French immersion), but the type of instruction received cannot necessarily be generalized to program type, as it varied depending on numerous factors, including the teacher and the year of the program. However, a focus on explicit learning in the core French classroom was consistent among participants, yet an implicit/explicit focus in the immersion classroom varied greatly among participants.

The results of the oral and writing samples did not show a statistically significant difference between groups, but among the main results is the possibility of surface fluency in the immersion group. The oral and writing samples identified greater differences between individuals than program type. Factors other than program type that could have affected participants' fluency and accuracy were highlighted from the results of the interviews, oral samples, and writing samples. These factors included having a French-speaking relative or friend, participating in an exchange to a French-speaking province or country, and having a teacher who integrated grammar with meaning, content, and speaking.

Lastly, an emerging theme that spanned across all groups of participants was the need for the integration of grammar with meaning, content, and oral practice in French. Fortunately, for this group of participants, they are finally receiving instruction in the form of an integrated approach in their post-secondary FRE 201 course.

The findings from this study can be useful in better identifying the needs of students in university French and distinguishing factors that might affect student performance, such type of instruction, type of program, exposure to French-speaking relatives or friends, teachers, or exchange experiences. These needs might be taken into account for the instruction and administration of university French courses, and aid instructors and administrators to create a French learning environment that better understands and addresses the needs of the students. The next sections of this chapter will discuss key issues that arose from the interviews and implications for pedagogy and future research.

Situating Findings Within the Literature

Need For Integration

Regardless of program type, practically every interview participant commented on

a need for the integration of explicit grammar rules into content and conversation. In

immersion classrooms, Swain observed that grammar was taught, but it was often taught

isolated from contexts (Swain, 1996, p. 536). Specifically with French immersion, Swain

(1996) reports:

> Our observations in immersion classrooms suggest that there is a lot of
> content teaching that occurs where little or no attention is paid to students'
> target language use; and there is a lot of language teaching that is done in
> the absence of context laden with meaning (p. 530).

The immersion participants discussed this same problem of integration in their

interviews. With the exception of a few teachers who make a conscious effort to integrate

grammar rules into meaning and conversation, they did not feel they had the chance to

incorporate grammar into other areas of the French language. They felt that because the

grammar instruction they received was mostly isolated from context, they were not able

to connect the rules they learned to areas such as conversation in French. Calvé (1994)

contends that usually learners remember the form the most in explicit grammar activities

and rarely how the form can be used in communication (p. 639). Most of the former

French immersion students had no problem with explicit grammar exercises, like fill-in-

the-blanks, but they had problems with accuracy in oral discourse and often writing.

With core French students, the problem of integration persisted, according to the

participants who spent some or all of their French education in core French. However,

unlike the immersion students, they did not have a focus on content teaching. Their

experience was mostly with form-focused instruction, with little opportunity to practice speaking French let alone attempt to connect the grammar lessons to meaning or conversation in French. Overall, the French immersion students had a stronger focus on meaning and content than the core French group or combined group. They were exposed to more content in French and had more of an opportunity to practice speaking French than the other groups.

The combined group received a combination of more implicit instruction and an opportunity for listening and speaking in French immersion, and more explicit grammar instruction in core French. It is interesting that the combined group seemed both accurate and fluent for the oral and writing sample results.

Lack of Speaking

Many immersion students reported a lack of oral and conversational French, as well as both core French students who felt very dissatisfied with the missed opportunity to practice speaking French. Lapkin et al. (1993) talks about a 1984 study by Canadian Parents for French, in which respondents indicated that they did not have enough oral practice with French and too much formal French grammar (p. 492). These results were echoed by the core French students in particular, who strongly felt they did not have enough oral communication practice in the language, as much of their classes were explicit form-focused grammar lessons with little or no chance at integration or speaking.

All students who took core French (in the core French and combined group) reported a lack of the French language as the language of instruction in the classroom. Many students felt that they were not pushed to speak French in class and teachers would often explain rules in English. Krashen (1982) contends that teaching grammar as a subject-matter only results in acquisition of the target language when the target language is used as a medium of instruction (p. 120). Turnbull (2006, p. 612) calls for French as a medium of instruction in core French classes, in order to maximize language learning time. He also suggests practical strategies for keeping French as the medium of instruction. Additionally, the Ontario curriculum for core French in Canada asserts that French must be the medium of instruction for both immersion and core French classes (*The Ontario curriculum*, 2000, p. 5). The participants who took core French in this study were dissatisfied with the lack of French in their classes – from both teachers and students – and said they would have appreciated more practice in the language.

Error Correction

As mentioned in the "Results" section, all immersion students in this study and Isabel responded that they would rather be corrected orally than learn a grammar rule in order to improve their accuracy. The core French students, on the other hand, each said that they would rather learn a grammar rule than be corrected orally. The type of program, in this case, had a strong influence on what method of correction participants felt would be most advantageous for them. The preference for oral correction by the immersion students and those with a primarily immersion background may result from their past experience with error correction and their greater comfort level in speaking French rather than focusing on grammar and writing. The immersion group had greater opportunity to speak and listen to French in class, but the core French students had mostly form-focused instruction. It makes sense that since the immersion group was more comfortable with speaking, they were better able to internalize the corrected form of an error when they were corrected orally. With the focus on explicit grammar rules in the core French classroom, students would naturally be more inclined to internalize rules as a way to improve on accuracy rather than oral correction. Isabel also said that she would rather be corrected orally, which may be due to her positive experience in oral error correction from her Francophone mother.

It should not be assumed that these students are representative of the entire core French or immersion programs. With immersion especially, results from other studies have been known to vary depending on the individual (Netten & Spain, 1989, p. 285).

This study is similar in that results varied depending on factors such the type of instruction students' received in their French education and individual personalities.

Reading

An area that was not concentrated on in this study, but would be interesting and useful to look at in future research, is the skill of reading. Reading was not focused on this study because fluency and accuracy in oral and written production were the main factors being looked at, and speaking and writing were skills used to provide data in those areas. However, many participants in all groups indicated during the interviews that they find reading authentic French texts to be the most difficult skill to master. Many also named reading as one of the most rewarding skills to do well in.

Transferability

A clear trend in all the interviews that spanned across all groups of participants was the difficulty in transferring explicit grammar rules taught in class to the speaking of French. Krashen's (1982) Monitor hypothesis distinguishes between acquisition and learning: the former being the system that is tied to fluency and initiates utterances of second language learners and the latter functioning as an editor that makes changes to the acquired system when necessary (p. 16). He further suggests that conscious rules can only be used by second language learners when the conditions of time, focus on form, and knowing the rule are met. Student participant in all groups discussed how it was easier for them to transfer grammar rules to writing because the process of writing gave

them time to think about which rule to use. Further, the focus on form condition is one that many of the immersion participants talked about in their interviews. Krashen says that a learner must also be thinking about correctness in order for the rules to be used, and that sometimes learners are more involved in what they are saying, instead of how they are saying it (1982, p. 16). The immersion students often alluded to this condition, as they said that especially in French oral discourse, they did not think about the rules they learned. This was mostly because they did not have experience integrating rules into conversation. Throughout their schooling they felt that grammar rules and conversation were totally separate from each other. Knowing the rule is a condition that only Kayla mentioned in her interview. Other participants seemed to know the rules very well, but Kayla said that she had difficulty learning the rules, because she already knew how the French language sounded and she knew the rules more intuitively. When she was taught French grammar rules more formally and in an explicit format, she had trouble paying attention to the structure of the language that she already knew implicitly and intuitively. She felt that she was not utilizing the rules that she was taught through grammar lessons.

Limitations and Implications

Limitations to this study include factors such as small sample size and the lack of good indicators of written fluency to triangulate self-reports with actual performance. Students in the FRE 201 class were also generally high achievers from secondary school, as many reported that they were taking the course because they knew they would receive a high grade. Due to the high success of the student participants in high school French, this study does not specifically look at low achievers of the French immersion and core

French programs. Also, due to the small population, I will not be able to generalize to the larger realm of immersion and core French students for this exploratory study; however, this exploratory study has implications for both teaching and research and can pave the way for the design of future studies on French immersion and core French.

In terms of teaching, a number of questions can be examined concerning teaching French at both the post-secondary level and secondary to middle school levels. Firstly, with the mixture of French immersion and core French students in the same university classes, some post-secondary French programs question whether separating students into different classes would be advantageous in addressing the different needs of each group. Often immersion students will be placed in a class after taking a placement test, whereas core French students will register in the class after taking the prerequisite courses required.

When the FRE 201 instructor was asked if each group was getting their needs met in the class, and if there was a need to separate immersion students from core students in order to work on their distinct needs, he said that from an administrative point of view, it would be difficult to separate them, but ideally, it would be a good idea. He thought that immersion students should work on their accuracy, but core French students need to work on their fluency. However, this study indicates that given the variation and complexity of student backgrounds in the class, it would be difficult and nearly impossible to separate students into the labels of "French immersion" or "core French." Further, even within the programs of French immersion and core French, there was great diversity and incredible variation in the type of instruction students received and fluency and accuracy results. This study found many factors other than program type that contributed to how fluent or

accurate participants considered themselves to be and how fluent or accurate the indicators in the oral and writing samples suggested they were.

For research purposes, this exploratory study unravels the complexity of factors associated with program type when researching French immersion and core French. Given the variation in program and performance, the question persists of if we can ever generalize to these programs. There was great difficulty in identifying "pure" French immersion or core French students, as the backgrounds of participants were extremely diverse. In addition to different type of instruction within programs, and particularly the immersion program, this study identified other factors that future research should be aware of when conducting research in the area of French immersion and core French. Factors such as a having a French-speaking relative or friend, participating in an exchange program in a French-speaking province or school, and the amount of implicit or explicit instruction received which often depended on the type of program, the teacher, and the year of the program, all contributed to the participants' results in this study. Researchers should be made aware of the importance of factors such as these when doing research in French immersion and core French, and most importantly, to make allowance for different variables. This research highlights that program is not the only variable when looking at French immersion and core French graduates.

The results from this study are also relevant for the teaching of French immersion and core French at the secondary to middle school levels in relation to the trends that immerged in the difficulty of transferring explicit grammar rules to meaning and conversation. Practically all participants, regardless of program type, expressed a need for a more integrated approach in the classroom. Participants talked about the separation that

existed between explicit grammar rules and meaning and conversation, and unless they had a teacher who focused specifically on integrating grammar, meaning, and conversation, they were not able to make a connection. The need for integration that persisted in the student interviews is echoed in Swain (1996) who identifies lack of integration as a problem that needs to be addressed in the immersion classroom (p. 533). Although *The Ontario curriculum* (2000) identifies grammar points that students are expected to know by the end of their year in the program, it does not advise how the linguistic structures should be taught or if they should be integrated with content and practiced in conversation. The results from this study could be useful for French instructors in post-secondary and teachers in secondary and middle schools, in that findings suggest a need and a call from students of the French immersion and core French programs for the integration of grammar, content, and conversation.

In terms of recommendations for the design of future studies, a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data may be most appropriate when researching French immersion and core French, yet a qualitative base is essential for an in depth study of participants. This study used a questionnaire, interviews, oral samples, and writing samples in order to triangulate data and gain a more well-rounded view of the experience and performance of French immersion and core French participants. The variety of data collection was essential in understanding the outcomes of the research and the complexity of factors that affected the fluency and accuracy of the participants. The interviews were especially important in understanding the type of instruction that participants received and identifying trends and factors that influenced their accuracy and fluency. The in depth, qualitative data that came out of the interviews were invaluable to the findings of

this research, and I would highly recommend a primarily qualitative approach for research in this area. From my experience with this study, I also recommend that future research use a variety of different types of data collection. Having only one or a few instruments in a study involving French immersion and core French research would be a serious disadvantage, as it is with a variety of different types of data collection that gaps are able to be filled and questions that were possibly misinterpreted or misunderstood are able to be clarified and expanded upon. In this study, the interviews revealed that some students misinterpreted a few questionnaire questions – for example, the transfer of intuitive knowledge of French to an explicit study of grammar – and the interviews provided the opportunity to clarify the questions and have the participants respond once they fully understood what the question was asking. The interviews also allowed for follow up on questions from the questionnaire that could be elaborated upon.

Although this was a primarily qualitative study in the form of a multiple case study approach, descriptive statistics were also useful in looking at trends and result for this particular group of participants. Due to the small sample size, descriptive statistics results could not be generalized, but they did provide a detailed look at variation between the three groups of participants as well as individuals. For future research on French immersion and core French, multiple regression analysis would be a useful statistical tool that could be used with a larger sample size and would take into account various factors that could contribute to results other than only program type (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, p. 222). Dependent variables taken into account could be fluency and accuracy, while a number of independent variables could be analyzed, specifically factors that may influence fluency and accuracy. In addition to program type, this study suggests factors

that should be taken into consideration include having a French-speaking relative or

friend, completing a French exchange program, and learning French through primarily

explicit instruction, implicit instruction, or a combination of both.

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APPENDIX A: LETTER TO THE CHAIRS OF THE FRENCH DEPARTMENT

October 24, 2006

Dear Mr. X and Ms. X,

I am a graduate student in the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies at Carleton University, and I am conducting a research project entitled *French immersion and core French graduates in post-secondary French: how does their past education affect their current experiences?* for my thesis. I want to ask you both, as Chair and Assistant Chair of the French department, for your permission to conduct the project in one section of FRE 201.

Brief Description of the Project: This study aims to investigate how students' previous educational backgrounds in French impact their present performance in a post-secondary French course. FRE 201 would be an ideal course to conduct this research because it is mixed with former French immersion and core French students. I specifically want to look at the type of instruction -- implicit (little or no attention placed on grammar and a conscious look at the structures of the language) or explicit (strong attention placed on grammar and a conscious study of the language) – that the students received.

In order to gain insight into the impact of students' French educational backgrounds on their French performance, I would like to collect data in the form of a questionnaire, interviews, and the analysis of student writing samples.

Nature of Participation and Time Involved: Your participation in the research would consist of :

- Allowing me to identify the instructors who teach FRE 201 this year and to ask them if they are willing to participate in the research

Benefits and Risks for Participation: Providing consent and support to this research will allow me to carry on with my study, which has the potential to contribute insights into French immersion and core French research. The results of this study have the potential to be useful for those who implement and modify French immersion and core French programs, teachers of French at both the primary and secondary school level, and instructors of university French courses. In a broader context, this research has the possibility of exposing a greater understanding of how various degrees of implicit and explicit learning facilitate how students engage in varying tasks. I will offer to share with you a copy of at least one research report I plan to write on this project, which you should find informative. There is no major anticipated risk for your participation in this research.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: If you provide permission for this study, please be assured that every step will be taken in order to insure anonymity and confidentiality for the students and instructors. Pseudonyms will be used to replace names. Data will only be made available to myself and my supervisor.

Ethics Clearance and Concerns: This project was reviewed and received clearance by the Carleton University Research Ethics Committee. Should you have any concerns or questions regarding your involvement in the study, please feel free to direct them to the ethics committee chair, Professor X, who can be reached at the following address:

X X X X X

Thank you for considering this request. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Maureen O'Connor
M.A. candidate – School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies
Tel: X
E-mail: X

APPENDIX B: LETTER TO FRE 201 INSTRUCTOR

December 6, 2006

Dear instructor of FRE 201,

I am a graduate student in the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies at Carleton University, and I am conducting a research project entitled *French immersion and core French graduates in post-secondary French: how does their past education affect their current experiences?* for my thesis. I want to ask you, as an instructor of FRE 201, for your permission to conduct the project in your class.

Brief Description of the Project: The two primary avenues of French-as-a-second-language education in Canada, French immersion and core French, are programs where the target language is primarily acquired through subject matter in the classroom (the former) or as a separate subject for an assigned part of the day (the latter). This study aims to investigate how students' previous educational backgrounds in French impact their present performance in a post-secondary French course. FRE 201 would be an ideal course to conduct this research because it is mixed with former French immersion and core French students. I specifically want to look at the type of instruction -- implicit (little or no attention placed on grammar and a conscious look at the structures of the language) or explicit (strong attention placed on grammar and a conscious study of the language) – that the students received.

In order to gain insight into the impact of students' French educational backgrounds on their French performance, I would like to collect data in the form of a questionnaire, interviews, and the analysis of student writing samples.

Nature of Participation and Time Involved: Your participation in the research would consist of :

1. Allowing me to be present and observe 5 consecutive FRE 201 classes.
2. Allowing me to present my project orally to your class (15 minutes).
3. Allowing me to administer a questionnaire at the end of a regularly scheduled class (15-20 minutes).
4. Allowing me to collect student writing samples with your comments on them.
5. An interview with you about the French performance of your students (approximately 30-50 minutes)
6. Collection of student grades.

Please be assured that I would act only as an observer for the collection of field notes within the classroom. The purpose of taking field notes for this study is to gain an understanding of the FRE 201 classroom, the participants, and the structure of the class. Please be aware that the purpose is not to evaluate your instruction as a teacher, but to better understand how the class works, so that I might take notes on how the students' behavior, learning, and performance in class correlates with their backgrounds. This type

of research will be essential to understanding how the participants behave in class and the structure of the FRE 201 class. The questionnaire will contain questions relating to the backgrounds of your students and their current experience in FRE 201.

Also, the interviews with students will provide the opportunity to expand on questions from the questionnaire, but these will be administered outside of class. The interview with you, as their FRE 201 instructor will allow me to find out your perspective on the fluency and accuracy of French immersion and core French students in FRE 201. The writing samples will allow me the opportunity to gain further understanding into how the students' French backgrounds correlate with their current work in French. The information provided in the questionnaire, interviews, and writing samples would allow me to better understand the various backgrounds of the class, if there are students with mixed backgrounds, and how their previous French experience affects their current university study of the language.

Collection and Use of Data: The information collected will be stored at my home and in password-protected computers. Access to the data (including interview transcripts and field notes) will be limited to my supervisor (X X, (XXX) XXX-XXXX ext. XXXX) and myself. However, research findings along with selected data samples (for example, excerpts from interview transcripts) will be reported in the form of a Master's thesis, at my thesis defense, and possibly as an oral presentation at an educational conference and as a publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

Benefits and Risks for Participation: Providing consent and support to this research through access to your FRE 201 class and an interview with you will allow me collect data relevant to my study, which has the potential to contribute insights into French immersion and core French research. The results of this study have the potential to be useful for those who implement and modify French immersion and core French programs, teachers of French at both the primary and secondary school level, and instructors of university French courses. In a broader context, this research has the possibility of exposing a greater understanding of how various degrees of implicit and explicit learning facilitate how students engage in varying tasks. I will offer to share with you a copy of at least one research report I plan to write on this project, which you should find informative. There is no major anticipated risk for your participation in this research.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: If you participate in this study, please be assured that every step will be taken in order to insure anonymity and confidentiality for you and your students. Neither your name or their names will be revealed -- pseudonyms will be used for replacements.

Ethics Clearance and Concerns: This project was reviewed and received clearance by the Carleton University Research Ethics Committee. Should you have any concerns or questions regarding your involvement in the study, please feel free to direct them to the ethics committee chair, Professor X, who can be reached at the following address:

X X X X X

Thank you for considering this request. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Maureen O'Connor
M.A. candidate – School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies
Tel: X
E-mail: X

APPENDIX C: LETTER TO THE STUDENTS OF FRE 201

January 23, 2007

Dear students of FRE 201,

I am a graduate student in the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies at Carleton University, and I am conducting a research project entitled *French immersion and core French graduates in post-secondary French: how does their past education affect their current experiences?* for my thesis. As students in FRE 201, you may be able to provide useful information on how your educational background in French (prior to university) may impact your current French language learning at X University.

Brief Description of the Project: There are two primary French-as-a-second-language programs in Canada: French immersion and core French. In French immersion, the French language is primarily acquired through subject matter in the classroom. In core French, the French language is taught as a separate subject for an assigned part of the day. In this study, I specifically want to look at the type of instruction -- implicit (little or no attention placed on grammar and a conscious look at the structures of the language) or explicit (strong attention placed on grammar and a conscious study of the language) – that you, as a student in the class, received.

This study aims to investigate how students' previous educational backgrounds in French impact their present performance in a post-secondary French course. FRE 201 seems to be an ideal course to carry out this project because of the mixed educational backgrounds in the class. In order to gain insight into your past and present French language experiences, I would like to collect data in the form of a questionnaire, interviews, and the analysis of student writing samples.

Nature of Participation and Time Involved: Your participation in the research would consist of one of the following options:

7. Completion of a questionnaire.
8. Completion of a questionnaire and an interview (approximately 30 minutes).
9. Completion of a questionnaire, interview, and submission of a short writing sample.

The questionnaire will contain questions relating to your educational background in French and your current experience in FRE 201. Once the questionnaires have been analyzed, I will choose approximately 4 students from a primarily French immersion background and 4 students from a primarily core French background for interviews. Interview participants will be chosen based on specific data from the questionnaire, that I find especially relevant to this study. Only those who expressed interest in participating in the study will be considered. The interviews will provide the opportunity to expand on questions from the questionnaire. They will be audio-taped if possible. The writing samples will allow me the opportunity to gain further understanding into how your

French background correlates with your current work in French. If the interviewees expressed interest, their writing samples (1 each) will also be collected.

Collection and Use of Data: The information collected will be stored at my home and in password-protected computers. Access to the data (including interview transcripts and field notes) will be limited to my supervisor (X X, (XXX) XXX-XXXX ext. XXXX) and myself. However, research findings along with selected data samples (for example, excerpts from interview transcripts) will be reported in the form of a Master's thesis, at my thesis defense, and possibly as an oral presentation at an educational conference and as a publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

Benefits and Risks for Participation: By participating in this project, you will contribute insights into French immersion and core French research. The results of this study have the potential to be useful for those who implement and modify French immersion and core French programs, teachers of French at both the primary and secondary school level, and instructors of university French courses. In a broader context, this research has the possibility of creating a greater understanding of how various degrees of implicit and explicit learning facilitate how students engage in varying tasks. I will offer to share with you a copy of at least one research report I plan to write on this project, which you should find informative. There is no major anticipated risk for your participation in this research. Your participation in the study is voluntary, and you may withdraw your agreement to participate at any time during the study and have data withdrawn. The only foreseeable risk is that your identity might be inferred from your French educational background. However, your name and will be protected through a pseudonym and identifiable characteristics will be obscured.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: If you participate in this study, please be assured that every step will be taken in order to insure anonymity and confidentiality. A pseudonym will be used in replace of your name. Your participation in this research will not affect your course grades in any way. No data will be revealed to anyone except myself and my supervisor.

Ethics Clearance and Concerns: This project was reviewed and received clearance by the Carleton University Research Ethics Committee. Should you have any concerns or questions regarding your involvement in the study, please feel free to direct them to the ethics committee chair, Professor X, who can be reached at the following address:

X X X X X

Please complete the consent form on the questionnaire and indicate if you would like to participate by completing a (1) questionnaire, (2) questionnaire and interview, or (3) questionnaire, interview, and submission a writing sample. Thank you for your considered participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Maureen O'Connor
M.A. candidate – School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies
Tel: X
E-mail: X

APPENDIX D: QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE: STUDENTS OF FRE 201

French immersion and core French graduates in post-secondary French: how does their past education affect their current experiences?

Thank you for your participation in this study which aims to investigate how students' previous educational backgrounds in French impacts their present performance in a second-year, post-secondary French course (FRE 201). I want to specifically look at educational backgrounds in terms of the type of program (French immersion, core French, a combination of both, or another program) and the type of language instruction that students received. This is not a test so there are no "right" or "wrong" answers and you don't even have to write your name on it. I am interested in your individual educational background in French and your current experience learning French in FRE 201. Please give your answers sincerely, as only this will guarantee the success of the study. Thank you again for your help.

Filling out this questionnaire indicates that you have read the letter of January 23, 2007 and agree to participate in the research *French immersion and core French graduates in post-secondary French: how does their past education affect their current experiences?,* as described in the letter. As outlined in the letter, your name and the information you write down in the questionnaire will not be shared with your professor or other students. Only myself and my supervisor will have access to the information in the questionnaires.

You can further participate in this research by participating in an interview and sharing a short writing sample with me. If you are willing to participate in an interview and/or share a short writing sample, please include your name and contact information below.

Can I contact you for an interview?   Yes ❏   No ❏

Would you be willing to share a sample of your writing?   Yes ❏   No ❏

Name:_____

Signature:_____

Date:_____

Contact information (to send you a summary of the results, to contact you for an interview and/or submission of a short writing sample) :

E-mail: _____

Phone number: _____

SECTION 1: Background information

Please check (✔) the answers that apply to you and fill out the blank section if it applies.

1. Are you male ❏ or female ❏?

2. Are you between the ages of 17-30? Yes ❏   No ❏

3. Have you taken French immersion ❏, core French ❏, both ❏,

and/or another type of French training ❏: _____ ?

4. In what year(s) did you take (and are currently taking) university French? *(Please check (✔) the boxes that apply)*:

1st year university	2nd year university	3rd year university	4th year university	5th year university

5. Please indicate which of the following grades you took French immersion, core French, both, or other. *(Please check (✔) only the boxes that apply)* :

	K	Gr 1	Gr 2	Gr 3	Gr 4	Gr 5	Gr 6	Gr 7	Gr 8	Gr 9	Gr 10	Gr 11	Gr 12	Gr 13
French immersion:														
• Total instruction in French (80-100%)														
• Partial instruction in French (50-80%)														
• Less than 50% of instruction in French														
Core French														
Other – please specify (e.g. International Baccalaureate Program, French study abroad program, etc.) :														

6. In which province(s) did you attend primary, middle, and high school?

SECTION 2: Your experience in French immersion, core French, or another French training program

1. Did you receive a lot of grammar instruction in the following grades? *Please check (✔) the boxes that apply:*

	Strongly No	Somewhat No	Somewhat Yes	Strongly Yes
Kindergarten				
Gr. 1				
Gr. 2				
Gr. 3				
Gr. 4				
Gr. 5				
Gr. 6				
Gr. 7				
Gr. 8				
Gr. 9				
Gr. 10				
Gr. 11				
Gr. 12				
Gr. 13				

2. Was there a big emphasis on conversation and/or the content being taught in French in the following grades? *Please check (✔) the boxes that apply:*

	Strongly No	Somewhat No	Somewhat Yes	Strongly Yes
Kindergarten				
Gr. 1				
Gr. 2				
Gr. 3				
Gr. 4				
Gr. 5				
Gr. 6				
Gr. 7				
Gr. 8				
Gr. 9				
Gr. 10				
Gr. 11				
Gr. 12				
Gr. 13				

3. *Please check (✔) the boxes that apply:*

Question	Strongly No	Somewhat No	Somewhat Yes	Strongly Yes
1. Overall, was there a large emphasis on grammar instruction and rules in your years in French education?				
2. Overall, was there a large emphasis on conversation, interaction, and the content being taught in French in your years in French education?				
3. Was the emphasis (on grammar, conversation, or both) consistent throughout your French education? a) If yes, skip to question #4. b) If no, was it dependent on the following factors? :				
i. The year/grade of your education				
ii. Your teacher				
iii. The specific program or school				
iv. Other: _____				
4. a) Did you have more grammar instruction near the end of your schooling in French? (If no, skip to question #5.)				
b) If yes, was it difficult for you to transfer your unconscious knowledge of French (little attention paid to grammar and structure) to a conscious study of the language (a focus on grammar and structure)?				
5. a) Did you have more conversational French instruction near the end of your schooling in French? (If no, skip to question #6.)				
b) If yes, was it difficult for you to transfer your knowledge of French grammar rules to fluent conversation?				

Question	Strongly No	Somewhat No	Somewhat Yes	Strongly Yes
6. Did you find French grammar difficult?				
7. Did you find listening and speaking (interacting orally in French) difficult?				
8. Overall, has your experience in French education made you fairly fluent in French? (e.g. Can you carry on a conversation well?)				
9. Overall, has your experience in French education made you good at grammar?				
10. Do you think you are better at interacting in French (listening and speaking) than grammar?				

SECTION 3: Your experience in university French (FRE 201)

Please check (✔) the boxes that apply:

Question	Strongly No	Somewhat No	Somewhat Yes	Strongly Yes
1. Is French grammar difficult for you now?				
2. Do you find listening and speaking (interacting in French) difficult?				
3. Is there a large emphasis on grammar instruction and rules in your FRE 201 class?				
4. Is there a large emphasis on conversation, interaction, and the content being taught in French in your FRE 201 class?				
5. Is it easier for you to interact orally in French (listening and speaking) than to write a test or an essay in French?				
6. When interacting orally in French (listening and speaking) do you respond intuitively (by "the feel" of the language), instead of thinking of grammar rules?				
7. When writing in French, do you respond intuitively (by "the feel" of the language), instead of thinking of grammar rules?				
8. When completing a grammar test, do you respond intuitively (by "the feel" of the language), instead of thinking of grammar rules?				

To clarify or add on to any of your answers, please include any other comments here:

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME!

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDENTS OF FRE 201

Interview Guide for the Students of FRE 201

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an interview on how a students' previous training in French affects their experience in post-secondary French. The overall context of my research is that the type of training students received in French immersion or core French classes affects how they perform in university French. I am particularly interested in the kind of instruction students received: primarily implicit (little or no attention placed on grammar and the structure of the language) or explicit (strong attention placed on grammar and a conscious study of the language), and how it relates to post-secondary French study. Therefore I am conducting a study to find out more about the relationship between students' French educational backgrounds and their university French experience, and the answers you may provide today will help me better understand this relationship from your perspective as a student in FRE 101. If you don't mind, I would like to first ask general questions about your French background, then more specific questions about the type of instruction you received in your schooling. I will also ask you a mix of general and specific questions on how your previous French education is affecting your experience in FRE 101. There are three sections to this interview. If you are ready, I will now begin with section 1 on background information.

SECTION 1: Background Information [FRENCH]

This interview will be in English, but I do have one question I would like you to answer in French, if you don't mind. Would this be alright with you? This question is on your background information. I am wondering if you could tell me a little about how you learned French? For example, what courses did you take? Was it a positive or negative experience? Was it easy or difficult? Was there a particular teacher you really liked or disliked? [Question was also asked in French]

SECTION 2: Your experience in French Immersion, core French, or both

1) Do you have any relatives or close friends who are francophone?

2) Have you tried to learn any other languages besides French? Can you tell me about how you learned it (them)?

3) Do you like learning a language through "rules"? Or would you rather learn it just by listening to people around you speak it and by practicing it verbally?

4) Can you tell me a little about what your classes were like in your French schooling?

   ▪ What did your teachers focus on the most? What kinds of activities do you remember doing?

   ▪ Grammar vs. subject matter

5) I'm trying to get an idea of the balance between grammar lessons you received and learning French through non-grammar lessons, like through material in a book, or conversation with each other. Were there more grammar lessons than teaching through a specific subject and participating in conversation?

6) What do you mean by grammar – what type? Verbs? Nouns?

   ■ Do you remember what grade you started learning French grammar? How did you learn French grammar?

7) Was grammar taught very explicitly, like "OK let's start the grammar lesson now" or was it more integrated into the material?

   ■ What did you like better? Why do you think that? When you say "grammar teaching" do you mean explicit or more integrated?

   ■ Were your teachers able to integrate grammar rules into the material?

8) What percentage of the class would have involved grammar teaching? Can you tell me about the types of activities you did?

9) Were you tested on grammar a lot? How did you do on the tests?

10) How useful were the grammar lessons in terms of using what you learned in conversation? When you were given grammar lessons, were you encouraged to integrate them into your speaking, or did they basically just stay on the page in terms of verb tables and such?

11) Did factors such as your grade level, your teacher, or the specific program or school you were in affect the type of French instruction you received?

12) Overall, has your experience in French made you fairly fluent in French?

13) Overall, has your experience in French made you good at grammar?

14) For you, what is more important: that you can speak French well, or that you know grammar? How do the two relate for you?

15) Is there anything you felt was lacking in your previous French education?

16) How do you feel that your French education is helping you now?

SECTION 3: Your experience in university French (FRE 201)

1) Why did you decide to continue studying French in university? What do you want to achieve ideally, by taking university French?

2) Is university French different or similar than your previous experience with French (instructional focus, goals, experience in the class)? How is it similar? How is it different?

3) What is more difficult for you: French grammar or listening and speaking? Why do you think this?

4) How comfortable do you feel communicating in French? What are you most concerned about: accuracy or fluency?

*Is there a specific grammar error you feel you make a lot?

5) How comfortable do you feel taking a grammar test?

6) Is writing in French difficult for you? Why?

7) Is there a large emphasis on the grammar instruction in class (for example, grammar instruction)?

How do you feel about this?

8) Is there a large emphasis on conversation and teaching content in your FRE 201 class? How do you feel about this?

How does this affect your performance in the class?

9) How comfortable do you feel with the course assignments and tests?

10) What kinds of assignments and tests are the easiest for you?

11) What kinds of assignments and tests are the most difficult?

12) Do you feel that your past educational background in French has an impact on how you are performing in FRE 201? If yes, in what way?

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FRE 201 INSTRUCTOR

Interview Guide for the Instructor of FRE 201

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an interview on how a students' previous training in French affects their experience in post-secondary French. The overall context of my research is that the type of training students received in French immersion or core French classes affects how they perform in university French. I am particularly interested in the kind of instruction students received: primarily implicit (little or no attention place on grammar and the structure of the language) or explicit (strong attention placed on grammar and a conscious study of the language), and how it relates to post-secondary French study. Therefore I am conducting a study to find out more about the relationship between students' French educational backgrounds and their university French experience, and the answers you may provide today will help me better understand this relationship from your perspective as an instructor of FRE 201. If you don't mind, I would like to first ask general questions about your French background and experience as a FRE 201 instructor, then more specific questions about your perspective on 1) French immersion and core French students in FRE 201 and on 2) your teaching approach. If you are ready, I will now begin with section 1 on background information.

When I say FI and CF, I basically mean those who took primarily FI or CF, but there are students who took a combination of both, so, if you want to refer to those who took both, I will just get you to call them both.

SECTION 1: Background Information

1) French was your first language? How did you learn English?

2) Can you tell me about your background in teaching French? (At the university level and any other French teaching experiences you might have had.)

SECTION 2: Your experience with French immersion and core French graduates

1) Have you noticed any differences between the French immersion and core French students in your class, in terms of performance and various skills one group might be stronger in?

2) In your experience teaching FRE 201 and any other courses, how does the performance of French immersion and core French graduates differ on the following?:

    a) Fluency

    b) Accuracy (on grammar, structure, etc.)

    *Are the two compatible in FI and/or CF?

3) Are the best speakers of the language generally the ones who get the highest marks?

4) Does one group of students (French immersion or core French graduates) usually outperform the other on certain types activities? For example, oral presentations or grammar tests?

5) Has it been your experience that the French educational backgrounds of the students strongly influence their performance in the class?

6) Can you pick out the FI students from the CF students?

SECTION 3: Your Teaching Approach

1) Does your FRE 201 focus primarily on a conscious study of the French language (grammar, structure, vocabulary, etc.), a study of the language through subject matter and focus on the oral, or a mix between the two?

    *How does your background affect this approach?

2) Why did you come to adopt this approach? Did it change from the first semester?

3) Do you want to develop their fluency or accuracy?

4) For you, what do you feel they get out of explicit grammar teaching, compared to a more integrated approach? (How do they respond to grammar teaching?)

5) Which area are students primarily graded on? What assignments?

6) Overall, which group of students (French immersion or core French) usually achieves the highest marks in the course?

7) From your perspective, how easy or difficult is it for students with a knowledge of grammar and structure to use their French language skills in 1) oral interaction 2) writing?

8) Are you conscious of the various French educational backgrounds in the class, and how do you organize the class so that each group will learn what they need?

*How do you focus on both groups? Should there be separate classes for each?

9) Have you noticed anything about the progress of FI and CF students? Does one group progress faster than the other?

10) Do factors such as having a francophone relative or doing an immersion study experience influence their performance in any way?

APPENDIX G: RELEASE OF INFORMATION FORM

Release of information form

I, _____, release the information in my written
exam (Fall semester, 2006) for FRE 201 to Maureen O'Connor, to use for the purpose of
her thesis research project, entitled *French immersion and core French graduates in post-
secondary French: how does their past education affect their current experiences?*

Date: _____

Signature: _____