

ENGAGEMENT OR DESPONDENCE?
ONTARIO MIDDLE-SCHOOL CORE FRENCH TEACHERS`
PERCEPTIONS OF AND EXPERIENCES WITH THE
2013 ONTARIO FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE CURRICULUM

by

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Engagement or Despondence? Ontario Middle-School Core French Teachers` Perceptions of and Experiences with the 2013 Ontario French as a Second Language Curriculum

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Abstract

The implementation of the revised French as a Second Language (FSL) curriculum, inspired by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was mandatory as of 2014 in Ontario. This study explored how four Ontario middle school French teachers understood and perceived the revised curriculum as well as how they are implemented it in Core French (CF) middle-school classrooms. Data for this exploratory comparative case study were collected through surveys, interviews and a focus group. The main findings of the study indicate that perceptions of the curriculum evolve over time and implementation is a dynamic process enhanced by support at the school and district levels. Although the four diverse teachers in this study welcomed the revised curriculum, their perceptions and implementation strategies varied. However, they all agreed on the need for professional development during the early stages of implementing a new and vastly different FSL curriculum.

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List of Acronyms

| | |
|-------|--|
| AIM | Accelerated Integrative Methodology |
| ALTE | Association of Language Testers in Europe |
| CASLT | Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers |
| CEFR | Common European Framework of Reference for Languages |
| CF | Core French |
| CLT | Communicative Language Teaching |
| CPF | Canadian Parents for French |
| DELF | Diplôme d'études en langue française |
| ESL | English as a Second Language |
| FSL | French as a Second Language |
| FI | French Immersion |
| L2 | Second language |
| LTO | Long Term Occasional Teacher |
| MLC | Modern Languages Council |
| OCT | Ontario College of Teachers |
| OMLTA | Ontario Modern Languages Teachers' Association |
| TBLT | Task-based Language Teaching |
| TL | Target Language |

Chapter 1: Context of the Study

The focus of this study is to explore teachers' perceptions of the revised curriculum entitled, *The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language: Core, Grades 4–8; Extended, Grades 4–8; Immersion, Grades 1–8, 2013* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b). For the purposes of this thesis, the curriculum is referred to as the Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum, or the 'new curriculum', or the 'revised curriculum'. Specifically, this study explores how Ontario Core-French (CF) middle-school teachers navigate and implement the curriculum objectives throughout the first year of the policy's implementation. Teachers were also asked to compare the new curriculum with the previous version, which was implemented in 1998.

Summary of the Study

Ontario has published and mandated two newly revised FSL curricula for the elementary and secondary panels. At the time of the study, the elementary curriculum was in its first year of implementation, whereas the secondary is to be officially mandated in September 2015. I maintain a social constructivist lens in this study so that I can "seek understanding of the world" (Creswell, 2013, p. 24) with 'world', implying my "participants' views of the situation" (p. 25). Data for this exploratory comparative case study were collected through an online survey, two interviews, and a focus group completed by all four participants.

Curriculum as a Concept

It is important to briefly outline the general characteristics of 'curriculum'. Although curriculum in education has existed in its modern form for over a century (Wiles & Bondi, 2011), defining the exact parameters of 'curriculum' remains difficult. As such, I am particularly guided by Johnson's (1989) breakdown of the curriculum process as it identified many roles of varying stakeholders for curriculum design and implementation. In his model, Johnson (1989) identified that curriculum planning first begins with policy makers who, in turn, create a policy document or a curriculum. The curriculum is then supported with meaningful resources from "materials writers" (p. 3), such as publishers. Curriculum

consultants then prepare materials to assist the individual teacher who realizes the curriculum in a classroom context (Johnson, 1989). The question remains whether the curricular 'manual' addresses the individual needs of all members of a classroom. A rigorous curriculum requires "intentionally aligned components - clear learning outcomes with matching assessments" (Ainsworth, 2010, p. 8). A metaphor for understanding and implementing a curriculum "is a race to be run, a series of obstacles or hurdles (subjects) to be passed" (Marsh, 2009, p. 3) for many teachers who are the curriculum users. Quite often, these individuals are bound to such curriculum. As such, Ben-Peretz (1990) emphasized the importance for teachers to be aware of the nature of curricular decisions and to get an "inside story" (p. 112) to be curriculum literate. Additionally, the author reinforced that teachers need to have curricular autonomy or flexibility in terms of how they implement a given curriculum in their daily teaching context. Some teachers are very faithful to the curriculum, while others deviate from its objectives. Some curriculum users are enthusiastic about curriculum modifications, whereas others, view curriculum revisions as obstacles. Curriculum, therefore, is a dynamic field of study and its successful implementation is dependent on a variety of factors.

French language and culture in the Canadian and Ontarian education system have faced, and continue to face, an ongoing dilemma for student appreciation and enrollment in FSL Programs. Wernicke and Bournot-Trites (2011) noted that even though in 1867 Canada identified itself with English and French as the "official languages of the legislatures and courts" (p. 111); at the present time, it is not common for Canadians to speak both of these languages in everyday life. In 1996, less than a quarter of Canadian adolescents could converse in both French and English and this rate continuously declined (Standing Committee on Official Languages, 2013) even as these teenagers became adults. Specifically the CF Program does not inspire students as much as other FSL programs (such as the Immersion Program) to continue with this subject after high school (The State of French Second Language Education Programs in Canada: Report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, 2014). In fact, adolescents tend to drop-out of this program at an alarming rate (Canadian Parents for French, n.d.) as CF students typically found French to be uninspiring as it merely followed a grammar-based program (Canadian Parents for French, 2005). During the period of 2012-2013, it outlined a precipitous drop from 118,695 enrolled

Ontario Core-French (CF) students in Grade 8 to only 11,105 in Grade 12 (Canadian Parents for French, 2012-2013a). The enrollment data demonstrate a prevalent student attrition rate, specifically the CF context.

Student decline in French programs has often been due to poor and ineffective curriculum design. It has already been identified in research that previous Canadian FSL curricula had a “lack of coherence [...] inconsistent with empirical evidence regarding effective practice” (Cummins, 2014, p. 1). In the past decade, grammatical accuracy dominated the focus of FSL curricula. Ironically, both elementary and secondary panels of the previous Ontario FSL curricula reinforced the need for students to have “fundamental communication skills in French” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999a, p. 2), and policy documents were implicitly based on the communicative competence. Canale and Swain (1980) established their own communicative model in second language (L2) teaching and learning. The theorists reinforced that competence and performance in the target language (TL) should be the overall learner goals. From personal experience as a novice FSL teacher using these curricula, my experienced colleagues reminded me that authentic, task-based opportunities were considered to be supplementary to the curricula due to time constraints. Priority was placed on the explicit grammar teaching. Without covering all the grammar structures on a daily basis, we were not considered to be effective curriculum users. As there was this discrepancy of curriculum misalignment with the communicative approach perceived by many FSL stakeholders such as CF teachers, the Ontario Ministry of Education enacted the curriculum revision process for both the elementary and secondary panels of FSL education. The Ministry initiated their curriculum review process of all Ontario curricula in 2003 to ensure that these policy documents were revised accordingly to address any issues requiring revision to enhance the curriculum instruction (The Curriculum Review Process: Instructional Video, n.d.). As such, the FSL curricula were recently revised.

Rationale and Purpose of the Study

Many FSL learners lack confidence when speaking French (Rehner, 2014). As a former FSL teacher, I can also attest to the fact that many of my FSL students lacked the confidence required to speak in the target language (TL). I also observed that fewer FSL students were

enrolled in the non-mandatory courses of high school. Frustrated with the consistent decline, I wanted to know why they were leaving French and identify strategies to increase student interest with French. Knowing that the new Ontario FSL elementary and secondary curricula would become shortly available, I was interested in determining how, and if, the structure of the new curricula would inspire more students to pursue FSL education post-Grade 9, which is the final, mandatory grade of FSL.

Since September 2014, all Ontario English-language elementary schools must implement the new Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b).

Additionally, all secondary panel schools in the province must implement their revised FSL curriculum entitled: *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 to 12: French As a Second Language – Core, Extended, and Immersion French, 2014 (revised)* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014b). The revised Ontario elementary and secondary FSL curricula however, still follow the same FSL program structure as previous curriculum versions which are titled, *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 4-8: French As a Second Language: Core French, 1998* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1998) for the elementary panel, *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 and 10: French As a Second Language – Core, Extended, and Immersion French, 1999* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999a) and *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 11 and 12: French As a Second Language – Core, Extended, and Immersion French, 1999* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999b) for the secondary panel. Given the recently developed curricula, the revised versions can be perceived as an “architectural blueprint” (Becher & Maclure, 1978, p. 137) for all future advancements in FSL education in Ontario including resource development.

For this study, I was particularly interested in capturing the initial experiences of the specific target group, notably, Ontario FSL middle-school CF teachers. Table 1 outlines the specific program requirements for the elementary panel, which is the focus of this study.

Table 1: Ontario FSL Elementary Program Requirements

| FSL Program in the Elementary Panel | FSL Instructional Time |
|--|--|
| Core French (CF) | “a minimum of 600 hours of French instruction by the end of Grade 8” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b, p. 15) |
| Extended French (EF) | “a minimum of 1260 hours of instruction in French by the end of Grade 8” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b, p. 15) |
| French Immersion (FI) | “a minimum of 50 per cent of the total instructional time at every grade level of the program and provide a minimum of 3800 hours of instruction in French by the end of Grade 8” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b, pp. 15-16). |

Middle school was chosen as it has often been considered a “time of tumultuous upheaval” (Lipsitz, 1980, xvi), and it is literally ‘in the middle’ between the initial primary school level and the young adolescent’s entry into the high school level. As such, the effectiveness of the Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b) may impact the middle- school student’s decision to either continue with, or cease pursuing French post Grade 9. I have chosen to focus on the CF program for my study as this program is notoriously forgotten and marginalized (Cooke, 2013; Lapkin, et al., 2009; Lapkin et al., 2006; Richards, 2002) even though it is the most common FSL program in Ontario (Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers [CASLT], 2006), Specifically, I am particularly interested in exploring the following research questions:

1. How do four Ontario middle-school Core French teachers understand and perceive the revised Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b)?
 - How do they describe the differences / similarities between the “old” FSL curriculum policy and the revised 2013 policy?
 - What are their perceptions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the revised curriculum?
 - What are their perceptions of the potential of the new curriculum to increase student engagement in learning FSL?
 - What are their concerns about this revised curriculum?
2. How do these teachers operationalize the new curriculum in their daily practice?

Background of the Researcher

Prior to the Ontario 2013 and 2014 FSL curricula being officially launched, as a newly-licensed FSL teacher, I was already implementing the revised concepts into my planning. I incorporated numerous cross-cultural and cross-curricular experiences; however, the objectives from the previous curricula were more grammar-based. Regardless of the challenges of creating cross-curricular and cross-cultural experiences while also maintaining a grammar focus, I was known by my colleagues and by my students as an ambitious educator, always looking forward to curriculum change.

I also was inspired to present my thoughts of FSL to a community of teachers. For example, I co-lead workshops for the Ontario Modern Language Teachers' Association (OMLTA) in Cambridge, Ontario (October, 2014), and subsequently in Niagara Falls, Ontario (March, 2015) with another FSL teacher. We presented topics concerning student attrition and teachers' perceptions of the future 2013 and 2014 FSL curricula. Particularly during our Cambridge presentation, we noticed that our audience of teachers was not able to identify and implement specific expectations from the Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b) when completing an imaginary unit as the final presentation activity. Post-presentation, the teachers expressed great interest in having us present additional workshops on how to create long-range plans that adhered to the new curriculum. Despite the progression of time, in March, during the presentation at Niagara Falls, the audience asked us to identify strategies on reducing student attrition in FSL Programs as they too, were encountering a decline of student enrollment in their own schools. As a result, the reactions of the audiences prompted me to conduct more research on these topics.

New Curricula with New Concepts

Due to its relatively recent introduction in the Ontario context, little is known about teachers' understandings, perceptions and attempts at early implementation of the revised Ontario FSL curricula. A major shift in curriculum design from the Ontario Ministry is the overarching concept of life-long language learning that is instilled in the revised FSL curricula. Life-long learning is encouraged through the new curriculum in the following ways:

- Authentic Oral Communication, Reception, Production and Interaction
- Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing: Interconnected but Distinct
- Development of Language Learning Strategies
- Interdependence of Language and Culture
- Emphasis on Critical and Creative Thinking Skills
- Goal Setting and Reflection
- Making Real-World Connections

(Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b, p. 8).

Specifically, in order for Ontario FSL students to “realize the vision” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b, p. 6) of the two revised curricula they are expected to:

- use French to communicate and interact effectively in a variety of social settings;
- learn about Canada, its two official languages, and other cultures;
- appreciate and acknowledge the interconnectedness and interdependence of the global community;
- be responsible for their own learning, as they work independently and in groups;
- use effective language learning strategies;
- become lifelong language learners for personal growth and for active participation as world citizens

(Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013.b, p. 6).

Additionally, the new FSL curricula are grounded by recently introduced concepts found in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001), which are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2. In summary, however, both the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) and the revised Ontario FSL curricula share common terminology, such as the objective for the student to be able to communicate in the target language (TL) as a “social actor” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013.b., p. 9) which can be compared with the Framework’s similar concept of the learner being a “social agent” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 14). Both the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) and the revised Ontario FSL curricula reference ‘cultural awareness’ as one of the primary goals. Taciana de Lira e Silva (2014) recently identified that an analysis of culture in the CF Ontario classroom

is underexplored. As such, it is important to conduct new research to see how current Ontario FSL CF teachers perceive and work with the abundance of new concepts embedded in the new curricula.

Thesis Overview

The study is organized into seven chapters. Chapter 2 presents the relevant literature and research in the field to guide me as I interpret the participants' lived experience. Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework for the study, which serves as my lens to interpret the data. Chapter 4, the methodology chapter, describes the approaches I took to collect, analyze and interpret the data for this study. Chapter 5 summarizes the compiled data to provide the reader with participant 'portraits' related to how they perceived and implemented the revised curriculum in daily practice. Chapter 6 is based on a cross-case analysis whereby I compare and contrast the curriculum perceptions and experiences of the four participants. I also reference the conceptual framework from Chapter 3 throughout my analysis. Chapter 7 summarizes the findings of the study, analyzes the limitations and implications of my research, and provides suggestions for future studies.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the literature that helped shape my research questions. I first outline the scope of the literature review by rationalizing why I referenced the various studies presented in this chapter. The negative experiences of Canadian FSL teachers and students are explored. Next, I introduce L2 teaching methods and the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) that inspired the development of the Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b). I then identify some of the Canadian and provincial government initiatives and the initiatives of various FSL Associations for FSL education. I present related studies that investigated teachers' perceptions and strategies when dealing with curriculum or programming change. Finally, I identify the existing gaps in the literature and demonstrate why my particular study is important to investigate.

A Systematic Approach for Literature Search

Few studies have specifically investigated the effectiveness of the Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b) as it was only in its first year of official implementation at the time of my study. As a result, my literature review is based on targeted themes that address a sub-section of my first research question which is: How do the teachers of my study describe the differences / similarities between the 'old' FSL curriculum policy and the revised 2013 policy? The literature for this question is organized into the following themes:

- Ontario Teacher Dissatisfaction with FSL
- Student Dissatisfaction with and Attrition from Previous Canadian FSL Curricula
- New Frameworks and Orientations to Teaching FSL in Ontario
- Federal and Provincial Initiatives for the Future Development of FSL

Similarly, the areas of curriculum perceptions and management strategies of my research questions are discussed within the following themes:

- Canadian FSL Teachers' Perceptions of and Experiences with Change in FSL
- Ontario FSL Teachers' Perceptions of and Experiences with Change in FSL

I have chosen to localize my reviewed research to reflect the Canadian and predominantly Ontarian context. The research in each section of this chapter is chronologically presented to show evolution in research pertaining to my research questions. For example, the research presents the early to most recent developments of FSL. I then analyze the Ontario-based studies that were published after 2011 in greater detail, as outlined in Table 4 of this chapter.

Ontario Teacher Dissatisfaction with FSL

Research has already shed light on L2 teacher dissatisfaction in the international context when instructors merely follow a transmitted curriculum or a teacher-centered method with little training for the processing and customization of material (Becker, 1986; Prabhu, 1990; Elliott, 1991; Chick, 1996; Clarke, 1994; Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2001).

I have chosen to highlight the often-pessimistic teacher perceptions of previous Canadian FSL curricula as their reactions and beliefs may have prompted the development of the Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b). In particular, this section helps me understand the background of my research question investigating teachers' comparisons of the 2013 curriculum to the previous FSL curriculum.

In the Ontario context, French as a discipline is often considered inferior to other subjects (Daiski & Richards, 2007; Lapkin & al., 2006), which creates a negative teaching environment. It is quite common that the environment has a negative impact on Ontario CF teachers' energy and morale (Daiski & Richards, 2007; Mollica et al., 2005). Cooke (2013) reinforced the importance for CF teachers to have their own classrooms. Indeed, not having one's own classroom "clearly signals [...] the status" (p. 33), or lack thereof, of FSL teachers. In fact, Ontario FSL '*à la carte*' or trolley teachers, feel like 'phantom teachers' (Mollica et. al, 2005; Dorey, 1996; Drake, 1993) as this itinerant teacher is often disrespected

in the school culture (Mollica et al., 2005). While authentic resources such as visual supports are highly beneficial in the Ontario CF context (Mollica & Nuessel, 1998), these materials are often inaccessible. The resources that are often present typically misrepresent the FSL student (Karsenti et al., 2008; Lapkin et al., 2006; Mollica & al., 2005). As such, ineffective or entirely lacking FSL resources allocated for CF may constrain teachers' abilities to successfully implement authentic experiences for the students. My own experiences also attested to the fact that CF is often inferior not only to English-based subjects, but to other FSL programs.

It has already been identified through research that the greater the level of teacher self-efficacy and teacher preparation, the greater the confidence and the ambition for language teachers to remain in their profession (Swanson, 2012, 2010a, 2010b; Swanson & Huff, 2010). These studies briefly mentioned legislation (i.e., curriculum policy) as a cause for teacher attrition; however, they did not necessarily point to poor curriculum design as the principle cause of teacher dissatisfaction. Regardless, these studies revealed how FSL and L2 teachers were already leaving the programs in previous decades as well as factors that keep language teachers in their profession.

Despite the progression of time, teacher dissatisfaction in current FSL programs still exists in particular for newly-licensed Ontario FSL CF teachers. In fact, it has been observed that the first years of teaching are often unsettling transitional times (Cooke, 2013; Müller-Fohrbrodt et al., 1978) for this type of teacher. Therefore, understanding such initial teaching experiences can contribute (Gold, 1996) to the redesign and revitalization of pre-service teacher education programs (Veenman, 1984). Cooke's (2013) study revealed that her Ontario FSL teacher participants still labeled French as an "afterthought" (p. 76) in their school environment as the priorities of the respective administration tended to be predominantly numeracy and English literacy based. More specifically, the researcher revealed that her CF and FI participants had problems networking and collaborating with Francophone communities, but that overall, her FI participant teachers "demonstrated a higher sense of efficacy than their CF colleagues" (ii). The higher sense of efficacy of FI teachers was simply due to the common, pre-existing issues in CF contexts such as classroom management difficulties that are more prevalent than in the FI context.

Many Ontario FSL CF teachers have ceased teaching French. For example, in 2006, a Canada-wide survey was distributed to approximately 1300 FSL teachers that identified that almost half of the participants considered leaving the profession (Lapkin, et al., 2006). French and Collins (2014) conducted two Canada-wide reports based on an online questionnaire distributed to elementary and secondary FSL and English as Second Language (ESL) teachers. Specifically, the questionnaire sought to identify a summary of their perceptions of their professions. The researchers found that Canadian FSL CF teachers felt overworked as they catered to a variety of learning styles. For example, students with special needs received little support from administration. The participants in French and Collins' study also complained about the lack of student motivation, the lack of appropriate resources for CF, scheduling issues, and the lack of professional development. While French and Collins (2014) did not explicitly reference the Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b), they revealed that even in most recent years, the overall teaching context of CF is still a challenge.

Student Dissatisfaction with and Attrition from Canadian FSL Programs

Students' perceptions of FSL programs are important to review and analyze, as their learning and their development are the purposes of a curriculum. Gardner (1985) emphasized that learners need to have a positive perception of the TL for continued interest throughout their lives. Research has already been conducted to begin to address the 'why' of student attrition in French-language programs in the Canadian and specifically the Ontarian context. An empirical National Core French Study (1985-1989) determined that the Canadian FSL CF curricula at the time did not help students build on oral proficiency as the programs put more emphasis on the written grammatical components of the language (Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers, n.d.; LeBlanc, 1990). In a Grade 12 FSL study conducted in Ontario, approximately one third of 100 high school students confirmed that they would drop out of French at the post-secondary level due to their lack of appreciation for the curriculum's design, their lack of interest in Francophone issues, and their lack of interest in learning another language (Gardner et al., 1987). It has been already identified that previous Canadian FSL curricula did not offer substantial opportunities for oral production and interaction activities as spontaneous communication remained a constant goal amongst

researchers (Omaggio Hadley, 2001; Savignon, 1997; Stern, 1990, 1986, 1982). Essentially, these studies revealed that the design and purpose of each respective FSL curriculum was misaligned in that they did not reflect student interests and needs as FSL learners.

In the last decade, the French Immersion Programs in Ontario and in Canada have also seen a tendency for students to drop French at the secondary level (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007; Makropoulos, 2007, 1998; Beck, 2004; Mannavaryan, 2002; Halsall, 1997). Students who left often felt that the previous FSL curricula were too advanced (Mannavaryan, 2002) and that the programs did not assist non-university-bound students or students with impairments (Makropoulos, 2010). Moreover, these programs were often taught by a “drip-feed approach” (French & Collins, 2014, p. 14) meaning that FSL instruction was typically delivered in small portions similar to Core French rather than in a true ‘immersion’ environment. French and Collins (2014) concluded that FSL instruction needs to have “longer teaching blocks and [an increased] number of hours” (p.14). As a result, even the bilingual French immersion (FI) students tended to lose their bilingualism (Lepage & Corbeil, 2013) as the curriculum structure and teacher did not prepare them for post-secondary studies and/or real-life experiences, which prompted even the advanced-level FSL students to cease pursuing French studies.

Gender differentiation may also be a factor in student attrition in Canadian FSL Programs as males often receive less encouragement to continue with French studies than females (Pauwels, 2006; Cameron, 2004; Burgess et al., 2004; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Netten et al., 1999), resulting in more male students leaving the FSL programs than females (Kissau, 2006; Allen, 2004; Netten et al., 1999). Kissau (2007) also identified that more teachers and parents encouraged female students to pursue French studies than males.

Given the significant body of research reviewed on problems with FSL programs for students, it is equally important to capture a sense of enrollment trends of FSL students in the CF Program in Ontario. The Ontario Ministry of Education compiles student enrollment data for its FSL Programs. I have chosen to highlight the most recent available enrollment year of 2012-2013. I compared the secondary enrollment data with the total elementary CF enrollment to see the shift in CF enrollment trends of both panels. Additionally, I selected the

final grade of high school in Ontario to determine if students were still enrolled in French education even after their final, mandatory year of the discipline in Grade 9. The enrollment trends based on these parameters are highlighted in Table 2.

Table 2: Ontario FSL Enrollment Trends

| Total CF Elementary Enrollment | Total CF Grade 12 Enrollment | Total FI Grade 12 Enrollment | Total Secondary Enrollment |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 640, 784 ¹ | 11, 105 ² | 4, 213 ³ | 684, 597 ⁴ |

Prior to reviewing the trends, it is important to note that there are more students enrolled in the elementary school system in Ontario simply because there are more schools in this panel than the secondary counterpart. This information reinforces the fact that even in recent years of FSL education, fewer students continue with FSL education past the final, mandatory year of Grade 9 French. Therefore, the recent statistics described reinforce the importance for my study to explore a sample set of elementary teachers' initial curriculum perceptions and management strategies to see how the revised content can increase student enrollment in French.

French and Collins (2014) suggested that students need to understand the natural complexity of learning a second language. Pursuing such understanding may remind students, parents and other stakeholders to set attainable learning goals in lieu of the unreasonable expectation for the learner to become proficient by Grade 9. As such, the definition of learner 'success' in Ontario FSL Programs not only needs to change but that this shift of perception has to be accepted by all FSL stakeholders such as the student and the parent.

¹ Ontario Ministry of Education. (2014a). *Quick Facts: Ontario Schools 2012-13*. Queen's Printer for Ontario Retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/quickfacts/2012-13/quickFacts12_13.pdf

² Canadian Parents for French. (2012-2013a). *Core French Enrolment by Province/Territory and Grade*. Retrieved from <http://cpf.ca/en/files/COED-2012-2013-Core-by-Prov-Terr-Grade.pdf>

³ Canadian Parents for French. (2012-2013b). *French Immersion Enrollment by Province/Territory and Grade*. Retrieved from <http://cpf.ca/en/files/COED-2012-2013-French-Immersion-by-Prov-Terr-Grade.pdf>

⁴ Ontario Ministry of Education. (2014a). *Quick Facts: Ontario Schools 2012-13*. Queen's Printer for Ontario Retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/quickfacts/2012-13/quickFacts12_13.pdf

New Frameworks and Orientations to Teaching FSL in Ontario

In the following sections, I discuss a number of different frameworks and orientations focused on FSL teaching that inspired the development of the Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b). The two main approaches to L2 instruction that are discussed serve as effective tools to promote authentic communication in the FSL classroom. However, Ontario FSL CF teachers following the revised elementary and secondary curriculum are not expected to perceive these as ‘methods’, but as strategies and/or frameworks to orient themselves and implement the new FSL curricula in Ontario.

The Task-based Language Teaching Approach

The new curriculum is rooted in the task-based language teaching (TBLT) approach. Netten and Germain (2012) identified that,

The ability to read and write in French was generally assumed, not taught. The focus was primarily on learning correct forms rather than on the meaning of the utterances. When project activities were used, the emphasis was on the production of an object rather than on use of the L2/FL. In most activities, authenticity of language use was not a consideration; accuracy of language was (p. 93).

For the purposes of this study, I refer to this approach as it is identified with the TBLT; however, it is also known as task-based instruction (TBI) and task-based language learning (TBLL). TBLT is derived from the communicative competence model (Canale & Swain, 1980). The TBLL is considered a revitalized approach for L2 instruction (Littlewood, 2004; Nunan, 2004) as it emphasizes the use of authentic language through meaningful tasks (Bilash, 2001). In the context of the Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b), it focuses on fluency-based learning rather than accuracy in the target language. For example, in the introduction section of the policy document, ‘engagement’ is supported with “meaningful, age-appropriate, and cognitively stimulating tasks and projects [...] motivating FSL students” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b, p. 13). An example of an authentic fluency-based task outlined in the curriculum includes “participating in a debate on a current issue” (p. 19). This curriculum proposed “various oral activities” (p. 19) that are interconnected in all language strands.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in Canada

While explicit references to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) are not found in the Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b), concepts from the CEFR or otherwise known as the Framework (Council of Europe, 2001) are implicitly rooted in the action-oriented approach where the learner seeks to obtain “a unilateral vision of communication” (Piccardo, 2010, p. 28) in the TL. Specifically, the CEFR was designed to provide,

a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively. The description also covers the cultural context in which language is set. The Framework also defines levels of proficiency which allow learners’ progress to be measured at each stage of learning and on a life-long basis”
(Council of Europe, 2001, p. 1).

It is quite evident that grammatical perfection is no longer the only important competency measuring language proficiency, but rather a single component. The Framework has two main purposes for teachers (a) “To encourage practitioners of all kinds in the language field [...] to reflect” (Council of Europe, 2001, Notes for the User, para.3) and (b) “To make it easier for practitioners to tell each other and their clientèle what they wish to help learners to achieve, and how they attempt to do so” (Council of Europe, 2001, Notes for the User, para. 4). As such, the CEFR offers a flexible point of reference for L2 curriculum design with a vision for authentic communication in the target language for language learners.

Federal and Provincial Initiatives for the Future Development of FSL

The purpose of this section is to analyze the efforts of the governments that either directly influenced the development of the new Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b) and/or the improvement of FSL Programs across Canada. Education in Canada is managed at the provincial level which can cause the “absence of specific, formal policies at the provincial/territorial level that would ensure equitable access”

(Mady & Black, 2012, p. 499). Management at the provincial level adds to the lack of “consistency in L2 programs across Canada” (French & Collins, 2014, p. 10).

Regardless of this organization, the Federal Government has shown an interest in refining FSL education. For example, the current government allocated approximately \$175 million dollars for the revitalization of these programs for the period of 2013 - 2018 (Government of Canada, 2013). Even with the accountability requirement for mandatory provincial auditing of this allocated money (Government of Canada & the Council of Ministers of Education, 2009), the House of Commons recently indicated that “there is no indication that the biennial reports are publicly available” (The State of French Second-Language Education Programs in Canada: Report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, 2014, p. 7) which leads FSL stakeholders to question how this money is effectively spent and managed.

Apart from direct funding, Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages, reinforced change in CF Programs during the Standing Committee on Official Languages. He emphasized that French-immersion should not be a “panacea” (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, 2013, para. 8) or otherwise known as the sole option to learn the language in Canada. It was also noted that all Canadian students must have access to authentic communicative opportunities (The State of French Second-Language Education Programs in Canada: Report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, 2014) and these authentic experiences will be a “federal priority in second-language learning” (Canadian Heritage, 2013, p. 11). As such, the government has established many goal-setting initiatives with respect to the improvement of FSL programs in Canada.

The province of Ontario has also helped teachers orient themselves with the new FSL curricula by producing unique, interactive, and approachable resources. For example, the resources entitled, *FSL French as a Second Language: A Guide to Reflective Practice for Core French Teachers* (Curriculum Services Canada, n.d.) and *A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools: Kindergarten to Grade 12* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013a), promote the use of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) as a reference tool for assessment. In a more recent publication, the Ontario Ministry of Education also provided FSL teachers with a guide to support students with special needs entitled: *Including*

Students with Special Education Needs in French as a Second Language Programs (2015). It provides FSL stakeholders with the benefits of learning a second language and presents strategies (i.e. case studies of successful accommodations) to help students understand the benefits of learning the language and include all children in FSL education. Through the sample of publications already offered by the Ontario Ministry of Education, FSL teachers have an initial point of reference for the curriculum implementation. Ontario school boards also need to prepare and submit reports on the progress of their FSL programs in their respective school communities up until 2022-2023 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013.a). These reports are meant to demonstrate accountability pursuant to some of the deadlines set forth by the province, which are identified in Appendix A.

Initiatives of FSL Associations for the Future Development of FSL

Quite often, curriculum implementation begins with teachers consulting resources from publishers and associations. Unfortunately, Netten and Germain (2012) identified that curriculum resources for L2 Canadian classrooms “have been produced according to this paradigm for the last twenty years [with] vocabulary lists, verb conjugations, grammar rules, exercises to practice this knowledge” (p. 88). Table 3 briefly summarizes the recent efforts made by various Canadian FSL Associations to assist teachers with FSL education with more applicable resources in line with L2 curriculum change across Canada. Their resources, while not directly referencing the Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b), still offer tools to help Ontario CF teachers with the new curriculum.

Table 3: A Summary of the Initiatives of Canadian FSL Associations

| Associations | Sample Initiatives |
|--|---|
| Curriculum Services Canada (CSC) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSC contains a plethora of resources such as the French as a Second Language: <i>FSL Connecting, engaging, learning together</i> section for Canadian FSL teachers about developing proficiency among students, the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), the TBLL, and other subject areas to indirectly implement in any Canadian FSL curriculum (n.d., http://www.curriculum.org/fsl/home). |
| Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CASLT is instrumental in introducing the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) in the Canadian context. • Rehorick (2004) inspired CASLT to adopt and coordinate a similar language portfolio project on a Canadian level. CASLT then launched and housed CEFR-related resources such as the <i>Canadian Language Portfolio for Teachers</i> (Turnbull, 2011b). • In 2009, CASLT developed the <i>Competencies Profile of an Effective FSL Teacher</i> which was embedded in a CASLT resource series document (Salvatori & Mac Farlane, 2009). |

More locally in the Ontario context, I have chosen to focus on the specific efforts of the Ontario Modern Language Teachers' Association (OMLTA). It has produced initial, practical resources for the Ontario FSL teacher to implement in daily practice. These resources include the Elementary FSL Curriculum Project (January 28, 2015), information pages entitled *Fact Sheets* (OMLTA, 2014) for the new curriculum, and their upload of the resources from the Modern Languages Council (MLC) such as *Supporting the Revised 2013-2014 French as Second Language Curricula: A Practical Guide for Teachers in Ontario* (Modern Languages Council & OMLTA, n.d.), among others. While the *Programming and Delivery Module* (Modern Languages Council, n.d.) identifies basic unit planning guidelines, it does not go into ample detail to support teachers on learning how to break down the revised curriculum objectives into manageable components. As such, the resources presented by OMLTA and MLC initiate the delivery of the new curricula implementation; however, more effort is needed to educate the new curriculum users of the FSL programs.

Despite the initiatives of Canadian FSL associations, more marketing of their resources would be beneficial so that their recommendations are consistently implemented.

Additionally, the resources need to include more detail to specifically target Ontario FSL CF Elementary teachers with curriculum management strategies (i.e. lesson plans, unit plans, task-based activities, etc.) that adhere to the revised curriculum as their specific teaching context is different than the FI classroom.

Canadian FSL Teachers' Perceptions of and Experiences with Change

In the early 2000s, the Accelerative Integrated Methodology (AIM) was largely discussed in research as it focused on key strategies such as gesture-based learning, a targeted vocabulary focus, and a content-infused teaching focus. Additionally, activities are often cooperative in nature (AIM Language Learning, 2010) including all students in a given task such as participating in a play. Due to its characteristics, AIM has been used by “2,500 schools across Canada” (Mady, 2008, p. 13) in the CF curriculum as it proved successful for the attainment of oral proficiency (Mady et. al, 2007; Arnott, 2005; Carr, 2001; Maxwell, 2001). The success of AIM, however, was dependent on the teacher’s effective implementation of this program (Arnott, 2005). Drama embedded into the FSL curriculum has also proved successful (Dicks & LeBlanc, 2005). As such, in order to improve oral language development for learners, teachers need to adapt their practices with different content or teaching styles.

More recently, Canadian FSL teachers are beginning to implement components of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) into their practice. Change, while often necessary for curriculum development, is an ongoing, time-consuming process. During a facilitator’s report about the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) in the Canadian context, it was identified that if teachers actually see “value added to make the paradigm shift” (Turnbull, 2011a, p. 15), then implementing concepts of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) in their programming would be more frequent. Turnbull (2011a) also noted that newly licensed Canadian FSL teachers were at an advantage with respect to changing their teaching practices to embed this Framework into the curriculum, as there was a higher likelihood that they were exposed to CEFR concepts in their pre-service teacher education program. These teachers were already

successfully integrating the CEFR-inspired learning portfolio for assessment of FSL. Some FSL stakeholders however, were concerned about the highly popular, CEFR-based *Diplôme d'études en langue française* (DELFL) (CLEP, n.d.) test used across Canada as it may reinforce teachers only 'teaching to the test'; therefore, FSL curricula expectations needed to be revised to better align with a "competency-based" (p. 17) program. Vandergrift (2015) describes the DELFL as,

the official French-language diploma awarded by France's Ministry of National Education. The diploma, based on the DELFL test, is recognized in 165 countries around the world; that makes it valuable for certifying French-language proficiency on an international level (p. 53).

Riba and Mavel (2008) added that the DELFL (CLEP, n.d.) is supervised by trained evaluators and correctors. Despite the negative perceptions of the DELFL (CLEP, n.d.), Vandergrift noted that it has received "attention in Canada for its potential as a national French second language (FSL) proficiency test" (p. 52). Specifically, Vandergrift (2015) outlined that, "The DELFL test, like the CEFR, is grounded in a communicative approach to language learning" (p. 54), which "can compel teachers to reorient their pedagogy" (p. 55). Finally, the stakeholders agreed that successful implementation of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) varied dependent on the jurisdiction. Wernicke and Bournot-Trites (2011) analyzed a new draft CEFR-inspired curriculum from British Columbia and acknowledged that the revisions supported the diverse, cultural group of BC students. Arnott (2013) summarized 14 empirical studies, predominantly mixed-method in design related to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) in Canada, and she concluded that ongoing research needs to assess "how teachers are making sense of the CEFR related to their existing beliefs and practices" (p. 3) and to observe and report on the students' perceptions.

Ontario FSL Teachers' Perceptions of and Experiences with Change

The Ontario-based studies summarized in Table 4 are the focus of this section. These were selected as they were relevant to my study with a similar teacher participant profiles that mirrored my own study. Additionally, they all contributed to the CF context, which is the program of focus in this research.

Table 4: A Summary of Relevant Research

| Researcher(s) | Background of the Studies | Data Collection | Focus of the Studies |
|--|--|--|--|
| de Lira e Silva (2014) | -1 Ontario classroom (English community) -15 Grade 4 FSL CF students -2 week duration (2012) | -Master’s thesis, Action-research, qualitative-based action-research study -Intercultural communicative competence model -Conducted in the researcher’s classroom based on a cultural unit of five 50 minute lessons (e.g., email exchanges with a francophone classroom, etc.) -Questionnaire, observation checklist, semi-structured interviews of the children | -Grade 4 students’ perceptions interacting with Grade 4 francophone students |
| Cooke (2013) | -3 Ontario school boards -28 elementary, predominantly newly-licensed CF FSL teachers | -Master’s thesis, mixed-methods study -Social learning and social cognitive frameworks -Questionnaire and semi-structured interviews | -self-efficacy beliefs of newly-licensed elementary FSL teachers |
| Piccardo (2013a) | -Toronto area -4 FSL secondary teacher participants -Approx. 2 year duration | -Qualitative exploratory study -Transformative paradigm -Focus groups (2010), CEFR training modules (2012), focus groups (2012) | -teachers’ perceptions of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) in the Ontarian context |
| Mison & Jang (2011) | -Urban Ontario Elementary and Secondary FSL Programs -12 teacher participants | -Qualitative study -3 Focus groups (2010) comprising of 1 public school, 1 Catholic school and 1 independent school focus group | -teachers’ perceptions of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) in the Ontarian context with a focus on assessing using concepts from the Framework (Council of Europe, 2001) |
| Faez, Majhanovich, Taylor, Smith, & Crowley (2011a) Faez, Taylor, Majhanovich, & Brown (2011b.) | -Ontario Elementary and Secondary FSL Programs -9 Ontario school boards -Over 50 CF teacher participants -Over 900 students -3 month duration of CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) implementation | -Predominantly qualitative, but also quantitative, mixed-methods study -Pre-study questionnaire, CEFR-activity kits provided to teacher-participants (Can Do assessment descriptors), Focus Group Sessions and Interviews (11 teachers from the focus group) | -teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the CEFR in the Ontarian context as they reacted to CEFR-inspired resources provided to them during the study |

FSL Teachers' Perceptions of and Experiences with Change Summary

All of the aforementioned studies reinforced the importance of greater exposure (i.e., time) for the successful implementation of changes in teaching practice. Furthermore, it was identified from all of the studies that as FSL teachers implemented the change in their practice they came to appreciate it. 'Change' was often the shift from teacher-centered instruction to a more student-centered, exploratory, culture-based instruction. A major factor in the positive perception was through professional development and the provision of ample resources. For example, in three of the studies, the CEFR was introduced to teachers. FSL teachers in Piccardo's study (2013a) were more likely to use the CEFR-based assessment tools as they felt that these tools would inspire students to continue with French in high school simply as the assessment criteria focuses on what they can do, rather than what they cannot do. In fact, the assessment rubrics inspired by the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) helped "teachers push the students so that they keep moving forward to doing a level higher" (Piccardo, 2013a, p. 401).

The studies in Table 4 also reinforced that other FSL stakeholders positively reacted to change (i.e., the CEFR) through ample exposure of the new concept or material. Specifically in de Lira e Silva's (2014) action research conducted in her own classroom, she observed that her students "read e-mails, looked at photographs that were authentic [...] responded to those readings developing an interaction that was meaningful [...] as they interacted to the other students" (p. 78). As a result, by the end of the study, she noticed that her FSL students "fostered authentic communication between the groups, [increased their] confidence in communicating in French, [analyzed] their culture and the other group's culture, as well as demonstrated acceptance of the other group" (p. 73). As the teacher participants implemented the assessment criteria from the 'Can Do' descriptors⁵ found in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), parents of the students found the assessment levels more reflective of student progression in the L2. Specifically, parents found the 'Can Do' descriptions to be more

⁵ The *Can Do* descriptors were developed by "the ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe) [to validate] a large set of descriptors, which can also be related to the Common Reference Levels" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 22). "The aim of the 'Can Do' project is to develop and validate a set of performance-related scales, describing what learners can actually do in the foreign language" (ALTE, 2002, p. 3).

positive in terms of describing what their children could do rather than what they could not accomplish which helped to pin-point the actual FSL level of their child (Piccardo, 2013a).

The studies, however, also provided considerations for future development of FSL education. Enacting teacher change integrating the CEFR-inspired activities was considered to be an elaborative process in all of the aforementioned studies. Additionally, the way in which an FSL teacher implemented change differentiated from study to study. De Lira e Silva (2014) admitted that she had “doubts about how long and how often the cultural exchange should happen in the classroom [as] students need to be exposed to the other culture, in authentic communication, and for a long period of time” (p. 93). Cooke’s study (2013) also acknowledged that FSL teacher education programs need to provide greater preparation for change in FSL instruction— notably the infusion of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) in daily instruction. As her teacher participants were newly licensed, they struggled with not only French as a language but their pedagogical expertise. As a result, Cooke reinforced that “teachers wishing to teach FSL need more opportunities for practice teaching in an FSL setting, as experience in the classroom was one of the most importance factors connected to the increased sense of efficacy” (pp. 96-97).

Cooke (2013) also identified the role of administration for teacher support, specifically with the “distribution of resources, assignment of classrooms” (p. 97). Piccardo’s (2013a) participants identified that “unpacking” (p. 403) the CEFR was challenging, as the individual FSL teacher is often “alone” (p. 403) in making the necessary pedagogical decisions. The individualized and isolated nature through which teachers implement a given curriculum was also noted as problematic by Mison and Jang (2011), as their participants perceived assessment grids differently in their respective classrooms. One of the focus groups of their study felt that the standardized provincial assessment grids were “too unclear and subjective” (p. 105). Mison and Jang (2011) also observed that the use of English was varied between participants. Faez et al. (2011a) identified that their teacher participants wanted “concrete examples to show them how to incorporate CEFR-informed instruction in their classrooms to attain the learning objectives identified by the curriculum” (p. 15).

Further research is required to build on the studies in Table 4. For example, it is important to also illuminate the role of technology in the FSL classroom to determine its importance for CEFR-inspired activities. Additionally, few of the selected studies in Table 4 explored different types of students such as learners with special needs and non-native English speaking students. Their experiences as learners need to be explored to see if and how changes in the FSL classroom support their particular needs. There may have also been some levels of participant bias from several of the aforementioned studies in Table 4 that need to be clarified in future research. For example, while the Can Do descriptors (ALTE, 2002) found in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) were deemed to be positive for the teachers in the aforementioned studies, it is important to note that Faez et al. (2011a; 2011b) gave their teacher-participants ample training to use these statements. Additionally, Piccardo's study (2013a) launched training modules for their teacher participants to use the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) in the Canadian context. Further research would help confirm if the bias would still be present, or, if the experiences with the CEFR tools were common throughout Ontario. Apart from de Lira e Silva's study (2014), more in-class research would be beneficial to explore how new concepts embedded in an FSL classroom are perceived by the students. For the reasons mentioned, additional research is required to capture more experiences with the revised Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b).

Summary of the Chapter

The research presented in this chapter reported on the status of the previous FSL Canadian and Ontarian realities faced by teachers and students. Trends in FSL education, as well as curriculum management strategies were also identified in this chapter for consideration for the new Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b). A new curriculum automatically dictates changes to the teacher's daily practice. Unfortunately, as Babadogan and Olkun (2006) note, "there is little attention given to the teacher training in the whole process of reform" (p. 5). Despite the efforts already made by the governments and FSL Associations, many issues in FSL education are still present.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

In this chapter, I first acknowledge the gap between the curriculum design and the way the curriculum is enacted. I then present concepts from researchers who explain the processes for teacher change. The novice and experienced teachers' typical curriculum perceptions and management strategies are outlined. I introduce the Nested Pedagogical Orientations (Cummins et al., 2007) that identifies and characterizes the teacher's perceptions of curriculum and the ways through which the teacher or curriculum user implements the curriculum in daily practice. I also embed references from other theories and theorists into the Nested Pedagogical Orientations (Cummins et al., 2007) along with my own interpretation of the orientations reflecting the Ontario middle school, CF context.

The Dynamic Nature of Curriculum Enactment

Kerr (1968) presented curriculum as being an “infinitely complex nature” and containing “many interdependent facets”, which may result in the curriculum vision becoming a “blurred reality” for the teacher in the implementation stage (p. 20). While a curriculum designer (in this case the Ontario Ministry of Education) intends to have a curriculum enacted in a specific way by the teacher (in this case the Ontario CF middle-school teacher), the teacher may neither perceive nor implement the curriculum as intended by the curriculum designer. Lappia (2011; 2009) and others (Van den Akker, 2003; Goodlad, 1994, and Goodlad and Su, 1992) elaborated on this dilemma confirming the disparity between the envisioned and enacted curriculum. Specifically, Lappia (2011) identified that various components of curriculum design may not be perceived in similar ways by the designer and the implementer. A summary of the components are identified as follows:

- The aims and the objectives of the curriculum
- The curriculum content
- The learning activities of the curriculum
- The teacher role for using the curriculum
- The materials and resources outlined in the curriculum
- The organization of grouping

- The time factor of curriculum content
- The location of the given curriculum
- The assessment components of the curriculum

The entities listed above may not be equal in weight or importance in the classroom of every teacher. In the case of my study, there is often a disparity with respect to the teacher prompts found in the Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (2013b) and their actual use in the CF middle-school classroom. This disparity can be explained by the fact that the advanced level of French language contained within these prompts may not be actually understood by a CF student; therefore, teachers' use of prompts may differ from the prompts suggested in Ministry documents. For example, a CF middle-school teacher reviewing the elaborated teacher prompts may simply disregard them, or alter them, or perhaps misuse the prompts in accordance with the realities of their specific classroom. As such, the uniqueness of the CF middle-school classroom may result in diverse understandings and implementation of the revised curriculum content by different curriculum users teaching the same program.

Whenever a new program, curriculum, or framework is enacted, teacher change and/or acceptance of change is necessary for its successful implementation (Earl, 2003; Molinaro & Drake, 1998; Bruner, 1977); however this can be a complex process. Fullan (2001) categorized teacher change according to the following stages: (a) the initiation stage whereby the teacher merely explores the concept or the potential of change with training and observation, (b) the actual implementation stage where the teacher begins to implement some aspects of change, and (c) the institutionalization stage where the change has been fully implemented. Similarly, Rogers' (2003) elaborated stages of teacher change including: (a) persuasion, where the teacher is considering the idea of change to (b) decision, where the teacher either goes with or draws back from implementation to (c) implementation of change, and then (d) confirmation, where the change is deemed acceptable by the teacher. Van den Branden (2009) also developed categories for L2 teacher change by citing other contributors (Borg, 2006; Ellis, 2003; Rogers, 2003; Markee, 1997). Van de Branden added that teacher change is successful if it is not too complex, yet still feasible, suitable and innovative. Additionally, "superficial" change may not be taken seriously (Van den Branden, 2009, p.

663). Change that is mandated by an overarching governing body is often not well received. As such, the concept of change is interpreted differently from teacher to teacher.

The way in which a curriculum is perceived and implemented is also dependent on the teacher's own beliefs. Borg (2004) defined and addressed the influence of the "apprenticeship of observation" which includes the "teacher's own experience of what works in the classroom, in addition to life and other non-teaching work experience" (p. 275). Every teacher's own learning and teaching experiences shape the way in which this individual perceives and implements a given curriculum (Almarza, 1996; Thornbury, 1996; Richards, 1998; Farrell, 2006). They also tend to revert back to their preferred learning style and to the teaching style they are most familiar with (Richards & Pennington, 1998) and may reject revitalized L2 teaching techniques or policies (Numrich, 1996). As such, beliefs about how a curriculum should be implemented are unique to each individual curriculum user.

It is important for L2 teachers to be ongoing reflective practitioners for curriculum implementation. Cruickshank and Applegate (1981) defined teacher reflection as "the teacher's thinking about what happens in classroom lessons, and thinking about alternative means of achieving goals and aims" (p. 554). Nation and Macalister (2010) offered important considerations while reflecting on the L2 curriculum design. Specifically, while monitoring and assessing, teachers are consistently reflecting on their planning to see how their intended goals for the course are actually perceived and accomplished by the students.

Novice versus Experienced Teachers' Perceptions of Curriculum

Curriculum planning is often a problem-solving process (Calderhead, 1984). As my study had equal representation of newly-licensed (5 years or under) and seasoned practitioners (5 years+), it allows for important comparisons. Ariew (1982) noted that experienced teachers "readily adjust to different teaching materials and can adapt them to the students' needs" (p. 18) as their planning process is more driven from recall of their previously successful classroom experiences that had established "routines" (Tsui, 2003, p. 26). Additionally, experienced teachers are more flexible in terms of how they operationalize their curriculum as these teachers tend to be "more responsive to contextual cues" (Tsui, 2003, p. 29) and can better determine patterns to resolve classroom problems (Peterson & Comeaux, 1987).

Novice teachers, on the other hand, tend to “engage in short-term planning” (Tsui, 2003, p. 26) more than their expert colleagues simply due to their lack of a “sophisticated knowledge base” (p. 28). Essentially, the newly-licensed teacher is engaging in the practice of teaching in survival mode as they do not feel as prepared to teach (Huberman, 1993a). Additionally, Huberman (1993a) and later Tsui (2003) outlined the ‘growth’ of the teacher by characterizing stages of professional development found in Table 5.

Table 5: Stages of Teachers' Professional Development

| Stage | Defining Characteristics |
|---|--|
| Discovery phase | Teachers merely feel happy to have their own official classroom. |
| Stabilization phase | Teachers at this point are flexible with the unpredictable nature of teaching. Their focus shifts from previously teacher-centered focus to keeping in mind of the students’ needs. |
| Experimentation and Diversification phase | Personal experiments are conducted to face future challenges using different methods and materials. Teachers are highly enthusiastic. |
| Reassessment phase | Teachers tend to doubt their performance due to change or difficult working environments. |
| Serenity phase | Teachers accept that they cannot change the world, and they accept who they are as educators. Resistant to change. |
| Disengagement phase | Teachers withdraw and interact less with the content and their students. |

Adapted from Huberman (1993a) & Tsui (2003)

It is important to note however, that teachers go ‘in and out’ at different points of their professional growth and these stages are not necessarily sequential. As the Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b) is in its first year of implementation, it is difficult to immediately determine who is an ‘expert’ or ‘novice’ teacher in terms of this new curriculum. In fact, Tsui (2003) affirms that defining a teacher expert is “problematic” (p. 4); therefore, this is why becoming an expert teacher is an

ongoing process (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993). Huberman (1993b) identified that teachers who are ongoing learners and who are not afraid of challenges are often more satisfied with the profession.

Nested Pedagogical Orientations

The lenses through which teachers interpret and implement curriculum objectives vary from teacher to teacher. In fact, “educators not only make pedagogical choices but they also make identity choices with respect to where they position themselves in relation to the power structure of the society” (Cummins et al., 2007, p. 42). Cummins et al., (2007) identified three pedagogical orientations that identify how a teacher perceives and enacts pedagogy promoting a critical awareness of how pedagogy is implemented. Figure 1 illustrates these three orientations.

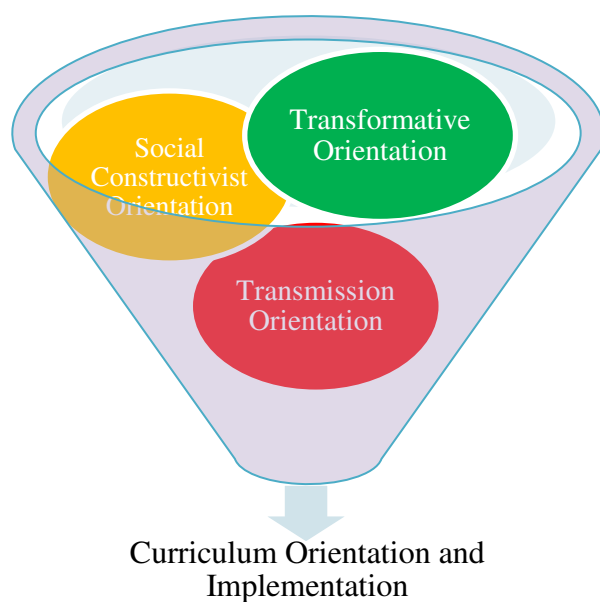


Figure 1: Nested Pedagogical Orientations - Adapted from Cummins et al. (2007, p. 45).

This heuristic model of curriculum orientation helps me navigate through my participants’ curriculum perceptions and experiences to identify ‘where they were’ with respect to the Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b) at the time of my study. I looked to these orientations not to ‘label’ my participants but more to use the orientations model as a tool to better understand their curriculum experiences. In the original

model, the orientations are “nested within each other” (Cummins et al., 2007, p. 44) in the form of a cone structure which was envisioned by Kazoullis (Skourtou et al., 2006). The key concepts of this framework include topics of character building, student and teacher input into programming as well as identifying and exposing concepts of social inequalities hidden in curriculum and in society (Wink, 2011). The framework helps explain why at times, curriculum content and implementation may not ‘stick’ to students or really apply to their realities (Wink, 2011) such as economic hardship faced by students. This framework of orientations may be useful in reminding teachers of the importance to connect curriculum content to students’ lives. The model acknowledges that teachers may embrace more than one orientation to teaching depending on several factors such as their classroom environment, the teaching resources they have access to, and the specific needs of the learners. As a result, the Nested Pedagogical Orientations (Cummins et al., 2007) should not be perceived as points of progression with a ‘weaker’ orientation, but rather as dynamic model with movement between orientations.

In this section, I provide explanations from researchers as well as my own perceptions of the three orientations linking them with my research topic of perceptions of curriculum and curriculum implementation. Additionally, I have merged a variety of perspectives with respect to curriculum management, understanding of curriculum and teacher preparedness into my elaboration of the Nested Pedagogical Orientations (Cummins et al., 2007). For the purposes of my explanation, the ‘teacher’ is defined as the Ontario CF middle-school educator and the ‘curriculum’ is the Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b).

‘Transmission’ is also referred to as the “traditional pedagogical orientation” (Cummins et al., 2007, p. 38); however, for the purposes of this thesis, I have chosen to refer only to ‘transmission’. The transmission orientation encompasses “the narrowest focus” (Cummins et al., 2007, p. 44) to pedagogy. According to the authors of this framework, teachers reflecting this orientation tend to have the goal “to transmit information and skills articulated in the curriculum directly to students” (p. 44). In my own interpretation of this orientation, the teacher is often enacting the curriculum with an abundance of drill-based grammar activities to focus on grammatical accuracy. Netten and Germain (2012) identify the need for

a balance of, “implicit competence [...] to communicate orally [and] explicit knowledge [...] to communicate accurately using the written forms of the language” (p. 90). Using Netten and Germain’s terminology it is possible to suggest that the teacher with a transmission orientation to teaching perceives competence mainly as explicit knowledge. I have outlined this stage in red to represent that merely having this orientation towards implementing the new curriculum can be a hindrance to the implementation of the new curriculum which supports the use of authentic documents and open-ended activities. In my view, a teacher with a transmission orientation to curriculum can still successfully implement a given curriculum; however, this teacher tends to adhere to the program material and the curriculum objectives mainly in a linear fashion. While this may not be an issue in other teaching contexts around the world, given that the Ontario Elementary FSL Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b) includes student-centered curriculum objectives, I believe that a teacher with this orientation may perceive the new curriculum as challenging to implement. As a result, one might imagine such a teacher using the curriculum resources from the previous curricula to assist them with the implementation of the new curriculum. A transmission-oriented teacher might also find the reflective process time-consuming and uncomfortable (Bailey, 2012). The lack of resources or a designated FSL classroom may contribute to a transmission orientation.

In the social constructivist orientation, there is a greater sense of exploration (Wink, 2011). A teacher with a constructivist orientation conceives the curriculum in a broader manner “to include the development among students of higher-order thinking abilities based on teachers and students co-constructing knowledge and understanding” (Cummins et al., 2007, p. 44). This orientation is located in between the two other orientations to symbolize its location at the ‘cross-roads’ of the transmission and transformative orientations. I depicted this orientation in yellow to represent the transition from the transmission to the transformative orientation. It would be possible to imagine this constructivist teacher experimenting with various curriculum resources to implement the new curriculum expectations while continuing to draw on activities from a textbook that he/she may have used in the past. This teacher would likely integrate familiar teaching practices with new teaching strategies with an understanding that a shift is necessary to be able to implement the new curriculum. A constructivist teacher might also want to become a member of a community of reflective

practitioners to discuss the implementation of the new curriculum in their CF middle-school teaching context. However, a teacher with this constructivist orientation may not necessarily support students to think critically about social inequities (Cummins & Davison, 2007).

The transformative pedagogical orientation has a “broadened focus [...] emphasizing the relevance not only of transmitting the curriculum and constructing knowledge but also of enabling students to gain insight into how knowledge intersects with power [...] to promote critical literacy among students” (Cummins et al., 2007, p. 45). ‘Critical literacy’ is included in this orientation as it is “relevant in an era of global propaganda” (Cummins et al., 2007, p. 46) and “for participation within a democratic society” (p. 39). Critical literacy is defined as “the ability to read between the lines rather than just skim over the surface structure of texts” (p. 39). Additionally, Cummins (2001) noted that language is taught in an adaptive manner corresponding to student interests and needs as well as the needs and desires of society as a whole.

I have illustrated the transformative orientation in green to represent what I believe to be the ideal curriculum orientation. The teacher with this orientation is open to and is actively pursuing differentiation and inclusion. You might imagine this teacher regularly conducting a needs analysis and consistently reflecting on his or her teaching. The transformative teacher might spiral the curriculum expectations to ensure consistent review of content which is deemed to be a component of an effective L2 language curriculum design (Nation & Macalister, 2010). Additionally, this teacher would likely draw on his or her pedagogical content knowledge (Richards, 2012) by selecting appropriate materials and activities and differentiating these materials and their presentation for each student. The appropriate materials would be more critical in line with the orientation. For example, the teacher might present reading material from different francophone communities from developing countries to illustrate different perspectives and explore actions to address global inequities. This teacher is open to change and seeks opportunities for further professional development through rich exchanges with colleagues. A teacher with a transformative orientation is likely considering student reactions, the timing of his or her activities and other factors (Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Bateson, 1972). Additionally, teacher reflection may be in the ‘spur of the moment’ (Zeichner & Liston, 1996) and is welcomed by this teacher. The transformative

teacher has a positive attitude to modifying his/her planning, as he or she expects challenges during the implementation phase of a new curriculum. By collaborating and identifying gaps in the lessons, the teacher is making ongoing adjustments to the planning process (Zeichner & Liston, 1996) so that he or she is more likely to be successful in operationalizing the curriculum objectives.

Finally, I add on concepts from the Integrated Model of Language Teacher Conceptual Change (Kubanyiova, 2012) to this orientation as this model specifically focuses on “teacher’s conscious and goal-directed mobilisation” (p. 57) for change. Additionally, the same framework speaks to a “Reality Check Appraisal” (p. 62), which identifies that change is more likely to be enacted provided that the teacher finds “their internal and external resources sufficient” (p. 62).

I acknowledge that my own interpretation and extension of the Nested Pedagogical Orientations (Cummins et al., 2007) may not reflect the opinions of my readers or of my participants. Wink (2011) reminds us that each orientation has particular benefits in specific teaching contexts that should not be forgotten when thinking about what is the most ‘effective’ orientation in various contexts. Additionally, Wink clarified that it may not be beneficial for teachers to maintain a transmission orientation as it may be restrictive in that students may not have sufficient opportunities to engage in inquiry as compared with the other two orientations. I add onto this point, in that I perceive it also being ineffective for CF teachers to only have a social constructivist or a sole, transformative orientation simply because I still see a place for explicit grammar instruction where teachers have students target their learning to the ‘base’ of the language. I also believe that it is possible for a teacher to approach their practice from the various orientations to curriculum as discussed above. For example, a teacher who encounters difficulty in teaching an aspect of francophone culture they are not familiar with, might teach this through transmission; however, the same teacher might teach an aspect of the language or culture with which they are very familiar in a more constructivist or transformative manner by soliciting student input in the creation of activities as well as a focus on critical awareness in curriculum implementation. Additionally, it is important to note that Ontario CF middle-school teachers using the new Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum may not necessarily begin with the transmission orientation to

teaching; but rather, they may already have the transformative orientation to implementing the new curriculum. As a result, from the direct references to the Nested Pedagogical Orientations (Cummins et al., 2007) to my own particular perceptions of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), and references to other concepts from research, the approaches through which teachers operationalize the given curriculum is a complex and varied process.

Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, I presented various theoretical insights from several scholars with respect to characteristics of curriculum management and teacher change. This chapter was based on a heuristic model of curriculum orientations building theoretical perspectives from other researchers and my own beliefs related to curriculum perceptions and implementation. I suggest that the ideal curriculum user implementing the new curriculum maintains a predominantly transformative orientation for diversified activities that are not only student-centered but that promote critical awareness to the world around the FSL CF student. I also acknowledged that the pathway to arrive at this stage is a dynamic one in that the curriculum user is often faced with many hindrances in the environment that can impact the teacher's curriculum orientation.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This study explored Ontario CF middle-school teachers' perceptions and experiences with the 1998 and the 2013 Ontario Elementary FSL curricula. In this chapter, I outline the rationale for my study and its structural design. Then, I elaborate on the preparatory measures that were made (i.e., ethical and confidentiality considerations, etc.). I also describe how I recruited my teacher participants. The chapter then presents participant descriptions or otherwise known as 'portraits' to provide the reader with relevant background on each individual participant. Next, I outline the features of my data collection tools and the analysis of such tools in preparation for my discussion chapter.

Rationale for a Qualitative Explorative Case Study

My study is a qualitative exploratory case study. "Qualitative research has come to be a legitimate part of educational research today" (Cheah & Chiu, 1997, p. 58) as qualitative researchers "seek to understand how structures affect the world [...] of informants" (p. 60). Creswell defines case study as an approach that is used when a researcher "explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system [...] or multiple bounded systems [...] over time" (2013, p. 97) having "multiple sources of information" (p. 97). Additionally, Cheah and Chiu (1997) identify that qualitative research has "a larger amount of descriptive data through direct interaction with the informants" (p. 59). As the curriculum was in its first year of implementation at the time of this study, I conducted an in-depth and multifaceted investigation with four teacher participants using a variety of data collection tools. Fewer participants meant that I received much more data regarding their unique curriculum perceptions and experiences to provide greater insight to my two research questions.

I broke down the data collection into manageable timeframes as I realized that my teacher participants were already preoccupied with learning about this new curriculum and quickly implementing it in their respective classrooms. As such, data collection strategies such as multiple in-class observations of teacher participants would not be appropriate because of their full-time teaching positions in conjunction with a new curriculum. As such, my study was small in scale so that I was able to explore and report on teachers' initial reactions and

curriculum experiences through the collection of multiple sources of data to generate rich and fulsome responses to my questions. The small sample size allowed me to collect in-depth data from each participant, while still producing a manageable amount of data for analysis. My study is in alignment with Little's recommendation that CEFR-based studies need to be small and exploratory in nature to respond to the "CEFR's key challenge" (2011, p. 392) to determine to a greater extent how participants realize emerging concepts from this Framework (Council of Europe, 2001).

Case studies have proven to be beneficial for an in-depth presentation of participants' experiences when data are collected through various avenues (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, case studies are extremely beneficial to help researchers clarify "'how' and 'why' questions" (Yin, 2014, p. 2). As the Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b) implicitly references the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), this small-scale study allowed for more data collection opportunities per participant to identify the influence of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001). The data collected for this study are interpreted with a constructivist lens to qualitative research. Cheah and Chiu (1997) suggest that

The constructivism paradigm thus sees knowledge as a joint construction created during interaction between investigator and respondents, and the main purpose of inquiry within this paradigm is to understand and reconstruct the social realities held by both investigator and respondents while simultaneously moving towards new interpretations (p. 63).

Case studies have also been known to incur challenges for the researcher. Primarily, case studies need to be contained into "boundaries" (Creswell, 2013, p. 102), yet they "may not have clean beginning and ending points" (p. 102). Additionally, case studies are typically small-scale in design; therefore, researchers may perceive the collected data as minimalistic, not representative of a community at large or that carry issues of generalizability of the data (Dörnyei, 2010).

Regardless of the disadvantages of case studies, this was an exploratory study. 'Exploratory' in that I did not intend to prove a hypothesis but merely to present initial realities as well as recommendations from my teacher participants implementing a new curriculum. In so doing,

I was able to identify several key findings that contribute to the knowledge related to curriculum implementation and teacher perceptions while also exploring the new curriculum in depth.

Research Context

As the revised Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b) was in its first year of implementation at the time of this study, I chose to exclusively focus on the teachers' perceptions and experiences as I felt that it was important to research teachers as they have the primary responsibility to implement the revised curriculum objectives. Previously, the 1998 curriculum tended to be perceived by teachers as more grammar dominant; whereas, the newer version emphasizes oral fluency in its expectations. The curriculum re-structuring may seem daunting for some Ontario CF middle-school teachers, impossible to attain, or, it may be an uplifting and exhilarating policy document to implement in daily practice. As a result, my exploratory study investigated such realities of the Ontario CF middle-school teacher.

Ethical Considerations

To maintain ethical compliance in research, I employed a variety of initiatives to safeguard my participants. Prior to the launch of my study, I prepared my ethics review for the Research and Ethics Board of my university, receiving approval in mid-December 2014. The confidentiality of my participants was equally considered and maintained throughout the study. I did not reveal their names to my supervisors or to any other individuals and pseudonyms were chosen by my participants to maintain participant anonymity. Through informal conversations with my participants, I also encouraged them to share their beliefs and experiences with the new curriculum to inform the larger community of FSL stakeholders.

However, I acknowledged that there was no pressure imposed on my participants to become the bearer of all knowledge of the revised curriculum. Participants were additionally remunerated with a \$25 gift card. Lunch was also provided to the participants upon completion of the focus group. For the reasons mentioned above, in all of my interactions

with participants I sought to create a safe and meaningful sharing atmosphere throughout the data collection activities.

Participant Selection Criteria

A randomized sampling recruitment strategy was used in the hope of locating four Ontario CF middle-school (Grades 6-8) teachers qualified to teach FSL in Ontario. I adopted this recruitment strategy as I was considering the reality that many teachers may not have felt immediately comfortable in their first official year of curriculum implementation to share not only their immediate reactions, but also their initial curriculum management strategies. The province has 72 publically-funded school boards (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2015) with approximately one million students enrolled in the elementary panel during the period of 2013-2014 (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2015) As such, at the onset of recruitment, I welcomed any FSL elementary-level teacher who ideally lived in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) ⁶ to localize my research and ensure that I would also be able to easily meet my participants based on my own place of residence in the GTA. Two of my participants taught at the Peel District School Board, another in the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, and the fourth worked for the Toronto District School Board.

Participant Recruitment

I implemented a variety of recruitment strategies. Initially, I marketed my study with an online flyer (Appendix D). I also prepared a message (Appendix C) emailed to a group of friends and former colleagues that I thought would be ideal participants. I managed to obtain two volunteer participants from Appendix C. As I had difficulty recruiting two more participants, I capitalized on a presentation that I co-led at the OMLTA Teacher Conference held in Cambridge, Ontario where I distributed my flyer (Appendix D) to potential participants. Unfortunately, only members of the audience contacted me after the presentation to decline my request. My thesis supervisor then connected me with another OISE student who became my 'agent' as she distributed my recruitment material to her

⁶ The GTA is comprised of Durham, Halton, Peel, Toronto and York (Retrieved from http://toronto.about.com/od/communitieslivingspace/a/gta_cities.htm).

network of middle-school CF colleagues with an introductory email (Appendix B) introducing myself as well as my study. As a result, I managed to obtain one more participant. My final participant was recruited through a friend, who also acted as my agent. All of my participants confirmed their interest by mid to end of January 2015 and they then completed my letter of informed consent (Appendix E).

While it was not a requirement that participants in my study be permanently teachers, ironically, all four individuals were permanent staff in their respective school boards. No private school teachers were recruited; however, I would have been open to including such participants in my study to determine how and if the privately-funded learning environment supports or hinders FSL CF teachers with this new curriculum. All four participants were non-native speakers of French. Two distinct groups of teacher-participants surfaced: two teachers were novice teachers (<5 years of experience) and two were experienced educators (>10 years of experience). Three out of four participants taught in the Peel area while the remaining teacher taught in Scarborough Ontario. Additional participant background details are found in Table 6.

Table 6: Participant Background

| Participant | D'Artagnan | Helena | Madeleine | Isabel |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 51-60 | 20-30 | 20-30 | 41-50 |
| Education Background | Bachelor of Arts Bachelor of Education Master of Arts | Bachelor of Arts Bachelor of Education | Bachelor of Arts Bachelor of Education | Bachelor of Arts Bachelor of Education |
| Location(s) of FSL Teacher Education Program(s) | Combination of Ontario and other Canadian provinces | Combination of Ontario and other Canadian provinces | Combination of Ontario and other Canadian provinces | Combination of Ontario and other Canadian provinces |
| FSL Teaching Context(s) | Ontario public schools Switzerland France | Ontario Catholic schools | Ontario public schools | Ontario public schools An Ontario private school |
| # of CF Teaching Years in Ontario | 33 years on and off | 3 years | 2 years | 18.4 years in the school board context 2.6 in the private school context |
| Additional FSL Programs Taught | Multiple programs/levels | N/A | Multiple programs/levels | N/A |

| Participant | D'Artagnan | Helena | Madeleine | Isabel |
|--|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Location(s) of Teaching Context(s) | Multiple Ontario school boards | Only one Ontario school board | Multiple Ontario school boards | Multiple Ontario school boards |
| FSL CF Programs Taught at the Time of the Study | Grade 6 | Grades 5-8 | Grades 4, 7-8 | Grades 4-8 |

Participant Portraits

D'Artagnan

D'Artagnan obtained his teaching degree in the early 1980s. He was qualified to teach French, German and Co-operative Education. D'Artagnan taught in both high school and in the elementary contexts teaching Spanish, French, German and Co-operative Education. D'Artagnan was the Head of the Cooperative Education Department until his retirement. He also contributed to the development of course material for an international languages program as well as for a FSL textbook. D'Artagnan collaborated with a variety of school boards in Ontario on various curriculum projects. At the time of this study, he taught three classes of Grade 6 International Baccalaureate Program (IB) and four classes of Grade 6 CF. This International Program follows specific curricula in several disciplines that integrate critical literacy, political and environmental education (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2005-2015).

Helena

Helena recently graduated and was qualified to teach French as well as Business Studies. Most recently she obtained her junior panel and religious education qualifications. Helena was part of her board committee of the DELF (CLEP, n.d.) as an examination corrector. She has only taught CF in the Catholic system. At the time of this study, she was teaching Grades 5-8 CF and concurrently teaching beginner-level Italian to adult learners for her board's night-school program.

Madeleine

Upon graduation, Madeleine was qualified to teach English and FSL at the intermediate and secondary level. She later obtained her primary and junior panel qualifications. She

transitioned from occasional teaching positions in southwestern Ontario to a permanent position in the GTA. At the time of the study, Madeleine was predominantly teaching Core-French classes: Grade 7/8, two sections of Grade 8, two sections of Grade 7 and one section of Grade 4. Additionally, Madeleine also helped the French Immersion teacher by filling in as French Immersion health teacher in Grade 1 to allow her to have “prep time”.

Isabel

Isabel obtained her Ontario teaching license in the early 1990s. Her qualifications are the following: Primary/Junior, FSL Part 1 and Religious Education Part 1. As an experienced teacher, Isabel has been teaching CF for over 20 years in Ontario. Additionally, she taught FI at the middle school level, primary science, primary physical education/health, junior and senior kindergarten programs, and special education programs. She predominately taught in one school board in the GTA; however, Isabel also spent about two years teaching in a GTA private school. At the time of my study, Isabel was teaching Grades 4-8 at an elementary public school in the GTA. Throughout her teaching career, Isabel often had her own classroom. Outside of the classroom Isabel pursued a number of FSL professional activities and contributed to this community in the form of co-writing for Pearson Education (Pearson Canada Inc., 2000-2015), and attending various FSL workshops for the Elementary Teachers of Toronto (ETT) (Elementary Teachers of Toronto, 2015). She also hosted workshops for the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). In mid-January, she returned to teaching following a short-term leave.

Data Collection

Preliminary Questionnaire

The purpose of the preliminary online questionnaire was to (1) to prepare the participants for the first one-on-one interview (to have enriched responses to the questions) and (2) to prepare myself, as the researcher to identify if I needed to customize the first interview with additional clarification questions. The online questionnaire was generated with Google Form (Google, n.d.). All four of the participants completed this portion of the data collection in January 2015.

The questionnaire contained 40 questions as found in Appendix F. I generated 40 questions as I felt that the amount took into consideration my participants' time while also ensuring that I still had sufficient data from this source. My questionnaire was broken down into three categories: (1) participant background, (2) curriculum perceptions, and (3) curriculum preparation strategies. All three sections of this questionnaire were rooted in pre-existing research in the field. For example, I was inspired by Salvatori and MacFarlane's (2009) report that used questionnaires to identify Canadian FSL teachers' perceptions of their competencies. Additionally, I modeled my questionnaire content on Faez et al.'s (2011a; 2011b) studies regarding Ontario FSL teachers' perceptions of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001).

The first category of my questionnaire contained background questions to identify their age range, their number of teaching years, and other descriptive factors. The second category asked participants to identify their initial curriculum perceptions and readiness with the new curriculum. The topics of these statements found in this category included the amount of training, the amount of resources and their beliefs of the curriculum's vision and purpose. I structured the questionnaire following the Likert response-system of strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The Likert-scale questions with scales of 1-5 are readily used in different research contexts even outside the L2 scope as a valid data collection tool (Hartley, 2013). Jamieson (2004) writes that the Likert scale is commonly useful and implemented for measuring attitude. The third section of this questionnaire also followed the Likert scale format and asked participants to briefly think about their initial curriculum management strategies. From the characteristics presented, my preliminary online questionnaire was extremely useful to 'set the stage' of my study.

Semi-structured Interviews

As Leko identified, qualitative methods such as interviews help researchers understand "rich and detailed accounts" (2014, p. 276). Galletta (2013) noted that semi-structured interviews have "remarkable potential" (p. 1) to not only fill in the research gaps but leave room for participants to contribute to the unthought-of topics. Each participant took part in two interviews, one in late January/early February 2015 and another in March 2015. Each interview was approximately one hour in length. I interviewed the participants at two

intervals so that I could see the evolution of their curriculum perceptions and strategies. Wilson (2014) supported the use of semi-structured interviews in research as the researcher can have flexibility in terms of the questions. Given the nature of semi-structured interviews, Wilson noted that the research can maintain a list of prescribed questions, yet still have the flexibility to pose unforeseen questions ‘on the spot’ with the participant for clarification purposes. In my case, I used all of my prepared questions; however, I also added additional clarification questions to both sets of interviews whenever I was unclear about my participants’ comments. Many of my questions from both sets of interviews were also inspired by the work of Moonen et al. (2013) as they have previously investigated the effectiveness of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) in European curricula. For the reasons noted above, I rationalized my choice to implement semi-structured interviews.

First Interview

At this point in the scholastic year, my teacher participants had had approximately four months to implement this new curriculum. January was an ideal time for the first interview after the winter break as I assumed that my participants would return in January 2015 feeling revived and ready to share their curriculum perceptions and strategies. Specifically, the January interview questions (Appendix H) sought to identify their initial curriculum preconceptions, reactions and strategies. A total of 16 questions were asked to all four participants regarding the following topics:

- a) comparing and contrasting the previous 1998 and the 2013 FSL curricula;
- b) addressing the current accessibility of the revised objectives in the middle-school CF context; and
- c) identifying initial participant approaches to implementing the curriculum objectives.

In order to prepare my participants for meaningful discussions, prior to the interview I emailed the teachers a copy of the interview questions. In fact, it was D’Artagnan who prompted me to send the questions in advance as he wanted to have sufficient preparation. I also encouraged my participants to bring direct references and specific activities to the interviews.

Second Interview

Similar procedures were maintained from the first interview for the second interview, which took place in March 2015 so that participants had at least two additional months of exposure to the new curriculum. Appendix I outlines the topics of interview questions, which included the following areas of investigation:

- a) accessibility of CEFR in this revised curriculum;
- b) specific lesson plans, activity ideas, or links to teaching strategies;
- c) student transition to high school with this new curriculum;
- d) teacher and student evolution from the first interview to the second interview; and
- e) initiatives from other FSL stakeholders (e.g., principals, curriculum consultants, etc.).

Focus Group

Focus groups are “carefully planned discussion(s) designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment” (Krueger, 1988, p. 22). I conducted a focus group (Appendix J) as a final data collection opportunity to gather new knowledge and/or to solidify previously addressed concepts and beliefs of the four teacher participants. The participants also networked with each other and built a repertoire of curriculum management strategies for use in their daily practice.

The focus group took place at the University of Toronto Mississauga Campus, April 25, 2015, in a pre-booked study room—a location that was mutually agreed upon by all participants. Beverages and light snacks were provided as well as all focus group materials. I did not send the participants the focus group questions in advance as I was concerned about the possibility for participant bias, but I sent them an agenda for the day. However, I forgot to ask them to bring lesson plans and other material to the focus group as concrete examples of how they implemented the new curriculum. We did not officially commence until 40 minutes after the intended start time, as not all participants were present at 11 am. It was a very warm day; therefore, the study room was uncomfortably hot. As such, this prompted me to offer a break mid-way through the session.

For the first 30 minutes, the participants introduced themselves to build a safe sharing environment, as they never had met each other prior to this point. Then they reacted to various prompting citations from the curriculum that I had personally selected prior to the session. These citations included topics such as intercultural awareness, student attrition and the curriculum planning process.

The remaining portion of the focus group was spent on a collaborative activity. As a group, the teacher participants were asked to illustrate their thoughts on the following prompt: The New FSL Curriculum: Our Experiences (Appendix J). While I intended the exercise to be in form of a collective mind map, the participants chose to divide the large paper into four distinct portions: each teacher tackling their own respective ‘corner’. Every participant quietly concentrated on completing their portion. The individualized approach adopted by my participants was another surprise for me as the researcher as I had predicted I would observe them collaborating together to complete this task. Each member illustrated their perceptions differently with different shapes, captions and colors. I decided to veer off my plan for this focus group by asking them to present their work informally to the other participants to clarify concepts.

Data Analysis

I chose to analyze my data in multiple forms for an enriched analysis. First, I identified common answers as well as discrepancies in the online questionnaire. This provided me with quantifiable data to obtain an initial portrait of each participant. The answers to the online questionnaire were then organized in a tabular format, separating the 40 questions to highlight the participant background, their initial curriculum readiness, and their initial management strategies for my two research questions as summarized in Appendix G. Upon completion of each interview and of the final focus group, I immediately transcribed the recorded sessions on my computer. Subsequently, I highlighted interesting and repeated comments from my participants. Prior to printing my transcriptions, I emailed my participants whenever I did not understand a comment or when I required greater detail to their answers. My interview and focus group data was then organized into distinct, color-coded themes to identify the “recurring regularities” (Guba, 1978, p. 53). I organized the

themes into two categories to address my research questions: curriculum readiness and curriculum management strategies. Srivastava (2009) supports the notion for researchers to develop meaning from the collected data and the importance for researchers to not only review but also interpret the data on a frequent basis. As such, I reviewed all of the data collected and I clustered participants into ‘partners’ that essentially had similar curriculum perceptions and management strategies.

Summary of the Chapter

Given the small scale of my study, I chose to conduct a qualitative-based study to illuminate the experiences shared by my participants in relation to the new curriculum. This chapter also presented an overview of how I prepared and conducted my study. Information was provided on the background and experiences of each individual. Finally, I outlined the features of my data collection tools and the analysis of such tools in preparation for my discussion chapter.

Chapter 5: Participant Portraits

In this chapter, I summarize the key findings of my participants' belief system related to the new curriculum as well as their curriculum management strategies. The findings outlined in this chapter respond to my research questions:

1. How do four Ontario middle-school Core French teachers understand and perceive the revised Ontario Elementary FSL Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b)?
 - How do they describe the differences / similarities between the “old” FSL curriculum policy and the revised 2013 policy?
 - What are their perceptions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the revised curriculum?
 - What are their perceptions of the potential of the new curriculum to increase student engagement in learning FSL?
 - What are their concerns about this revised curriculum?
2. How do these teachers operationalize the new curriculum in their daily practice?

The data presented in this chapter is descriptive in nature and derived from all of the data collection tools: the online questionnaire (Appendix G), the two interviews (Appendices H & I), the focus group discussion as well as the focus group final activity (Appendix J). All data forms present a detailed ‘snapshot’ of each participant, and the specific strategies and resources that they used to implement the new curriculum in its first year of official implementation.

D’Artagnan

His Positive Perceptions of the Revised Curriculum

D’Artagnan presented numerous examples of his high regard for the new curriculum. From his previous experience in curriculum design, D’Artagnan affirmed that the new curriculum was in line with society’s current needs and desires. As such, he was not only happy but “excited and grateful” and thought that the curriculum revisions were “brilliant”, “inviting

and expansive” for a “global awareness”. In fact, he often referred to it as “exciting” as “it supports more inspired learning and more inspired teaching [...] especially with differentiated classes”.

D’Artagnan also found the implicit grammar instruction in the new curriculum as “reasonable” as, and better than the explicit and numerous grammar requirements from the 1998 version. He also felt that the revised curriculum supported all students as “the weakest kid in the class can love French class with this approach”, as it empowers all learners. The new curriculum was also highly regarded as flexible in design for more programming choices for D’Artagnan. He also characterized the revised curriculum as “a support document as well as a goal” in that it is not something as constrictive but open and accessible for the CF middle-school context.

With respect to his thoughts about the curriculum’s effectiveness for student engagement and continuation with French studies, he believed that “in five more years, we’ll have [...] a better level of French speaker coming out, I think, I hope” as he felt that the curriculum is written as a “broad net to catch your students”. Given the infusion of inquiry-based learning prevalent in all Ontario curricula, D’Artagnan believed that “French can be a high point in their day”.

He felt that the curriculum objectives changed the way in which assessment is conducted and analyzed and that the changes were in line with his preferences. In a particular experience, D’Artagnan gave a student a “C+ for reading but had an A for listening, speaking, and writing” which was neither initially well received nor understood by the parent. However, he reminded the parent and the student that with the new curriculum, a mark no longer reflected one assessment such as grammar test; rather, it encompassed many formative classroom observations for assessment. He explained that, “I try to avoid that kind of confrontation just by keeping the atmosphere light and successful and encouraging and fun.”

His Perceptions and Experiences of Curriculum Implementation

D’Artagnan already started ‘on the right foot’ with his curriculum preparation. Despite his numerous teaching years, D’Artagnan confirmed that he was not the ‘traditional teacher’ as

he was “always interested in new ideas and always visually, very keen”. For example, he was already implementing the new curriculum in spring 2013, before its official implementation in September 2013. He admitted that he was already a progressive teacher “interested in [...] the whole picture”. D’Artagnan led frequent “communicative and action-based” programs even while teaching previous FSL curricula. D’Artagnan added that he was “more [...] on the AIM-side of things [as] it’s fun”. He had already prepared for the curriculum by having thematic units “since 30 years ago” which proved to be successful in his experience.

D’Artagnan was also well-versed in theoretical concepts about L2 learning such as the belief that, “language learning occurs in a vortex instead of a linear continuum [therefore] why should we expect [...] a Grade 6 student [...] to know a word when they’ve only heard it once?” As such, he already brought to the study his evident willingness to work with the new curriculum.

The Requirement of an ‘Expert’ Teacher for the Revised Curriculum

D’Artagnan felt that a “progressive teacher” was required to successfully implement the new curriculum. During the focus group final activity, D’Artagnan summarized his curriculum perceptions and experiences as Moses as identified in Figure 2.

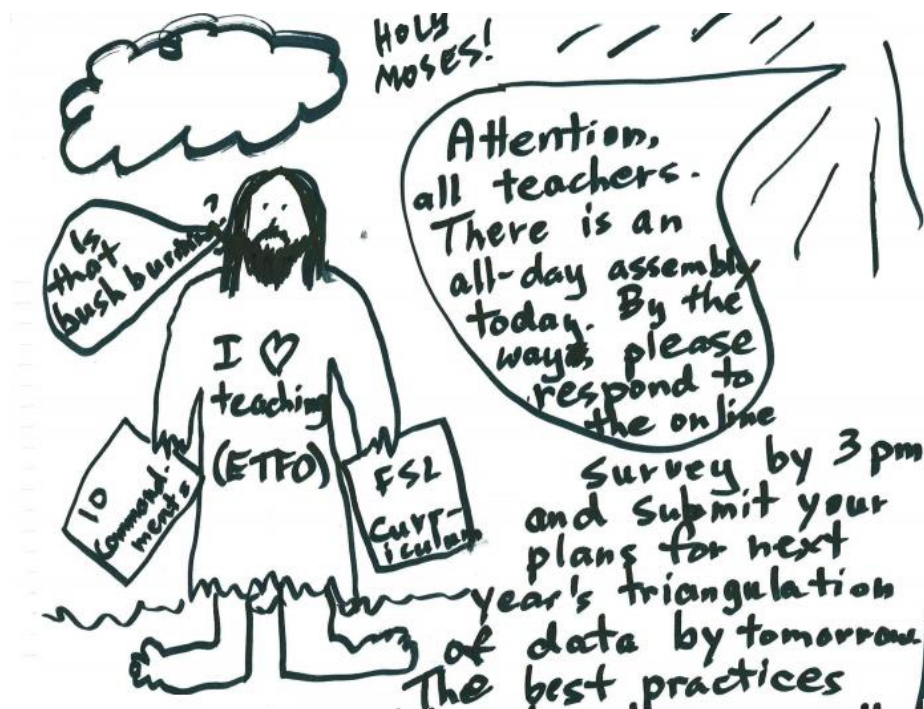


Figure 2: D'Artagnan as 'Moses'

D'Artagnan illustrated himself as Moses just to be “cheeky”. Moses had, “all the policies [...] in his right hand [...] the board policy, the Ministry policy” representing an authoritative figure. In his left hand, Moses held onto the new curriculum as he was “trying to juggle the two”. When D'Artagnan shared his drawing during the focus group, Isabel added that “Moses exiled his people out of Egypt [...] when he led the people to Israel”. Helena also added that “his pharaoh treated him poorly”; therefore, D'Artagnan confirmed that Moses “paid his dues”.

God, according to D'Artagnan was “anyone who starts telling us what we have to do” who also spoke in an authoritative, commanding manner. D'Artagnan inserted a typical message from his school in his representation. He felt that the school's message created anxiety as, “There's so much to juggle [...] I take a lot home” and that French was challenging to implement due to the “many interruptions” which made planning difficult.

He affirmed that, “if you're happy using the old curriculum in this age, you're stuck. You need the new curriculum in this age and especially again with differentiation”. D'Artagnan referenced the importance for people who “are passionate about languages [...] because they

need to know enough to structure activities and make up their own material” and that they have to be “open to learning”. As such, he stated that the “real old-fashioned textbook teacher will find this very challenging”.

He also added on the importance for FSL teacher proficiency so that “at least they can communicate [...] in French and encourage students to use French as much as possible”. He confirmed that his French “is good enough to spontaneously respond” to his students; however, he noted that “it’s really hard to find French teachers” and that proficiency is shared and developed by both the student and the FSL teacher. He assumed that younger teachers would have more cultural opportunities than seasoned practitioners but that “you can’t expect it”. He appreciated his former teacher-candidates that he mentored as they brought him, “really good [...] activities and strategies from the Ministry”. He cautioned however, the “complacent” teachers that may use the curriculum as “a source of power for the teacher” to control and threaten students.

He also noted that the intercultural understanding strand required “special support” and appropriate “grade-level resources”. In terms of his own professional growth, D’Artagnan returned to FSL teaching after “more than 15 years” feeling out of touch with the intercultural understanding component of the new curriculum; therefore, his planning style had to evolve. He also needed to teach his students how to re-learn French class routines such as playing games with the new curriculum; whereas before “They were used to drill [...] and copying notes into their notebooks”.

D’Artagnan also said that the sequential learning process from one year to the next is “gone” as the new curriculum has “no more standard language knowledge”. This participant also perceived the teacher prompts as too advanced for the CF level but appropriate for a more advanced and rigorous program, notably the IB (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2005-2015). D’Artagnan outlined the negative realities of school culture that can impact teachers’ perceptions of curriculum feasibility. He discussed a plethora of factors that FSL teachers need to juggle and consider in their FSL curriculum planning:

having seven classes to prepare for and to assess and to give meaningful feedback to [...] manage in terms of differentiation, to inspire and to engage, to monitor and organize, while integrating with the whole school culture as well with its

attendant interruptions [...] its preoccupations [...] keeping tabs on the progress of all the individuals [...] the wide array of scheduling challenges like whole-class, whole-school assemblies, sports events, family trips for a month abroad, and logistical issues like your ESL students and your ICOM students and the IEPs [...] there's bullying [...] disabilities, kids with family crises [...] kids who are abusive of technology [...] broken equipment [...] lack of funding [...] homeroom dynamics [...]

His negative perceptions shifted to more of a directional approach. First and foremost, D'Artagnan reinforced that the revised curriculum is "the spirit" because from his previous curriculum writing experience, he noted that "you can never exactly nail the objective or the content, or the approach or the strategy that you want to encourage teachers to use". He also emphasized the importance for teachers in particular "to be careful to not take it too literally [...] if the prompts are too advanced, don't use the prompts! But they're there in case you need". As such, he was very cautious and sensitive to avoid over-criticizing the curriculum acknowledging that "a lot of pain-staking conversation and editing went in".

His Supportive Board Culture

Prior to even working with the new curriculum, D'Artagnan capitalized from his previous connections working for his board. His board-level FSL Consultant helped him implement the new curriculum. As a result, his colleagues at school "couldn't believe this new guy on an LTO would know the direction of the new curriculum". He was also able to partake in a workshop that was typically "over-subscribed"; therefore, he felt fortunate to have been selected. D'Artagnan identified his advantage of being a seasoned practitioner rather than a novice teacher in that he felt that the newer teacher is often "intimidated to phone the board officials because they think that they're going to expose their ignorance". D'Artagnan also benefitted from ample technology offered to him by the board. For example, the board allowed for the "BYOD, Bring Your Own Device" so that students are encouraged to bring technology in the classroom (i.e., cellular devices that can pick up Internet from Wi-Fi). Rules to view French-language films had also "loosened up a lot" for him as well as photocopying restrictions as he stated the following: "It used to be that you could only use 10% of a document and it's looser in some ways now". For the reasons described, he already worked for a supportive school board.

His Supportive School Culture

D'Artagnan had a strong school working environment that helped him prepare for and implement the new curriculum. For example, he taught in his own portable and felt that this was advantageous as he indicated “Any French teacher probably functions better with their own classroom [...] how you set up for group activities when you’re going to seven different rooms?” His principal granted him permission to have a noisy FSL classroom for effective communication and fun in French, which he identified, was not commonly permitted in other schools. D'Artagnan noted that his school had abundant technology in that he had access to a, “large screen”, a “document camera”, an “LCD Projector”, a “teacher laptop”, and “ten Chrome books” that were readily used in his classroom. In fact, D'Artagnan described how, “every classroom had [...] 30 net books”. The combination of these factors created a situation in which, “the possibilities really opened up” for an enhanced enactment of the revised curriculum. Table 7 outlines a sample list of resources that he often referred to at the time of the study to implement various curriculum objectives. Given the number of resources presented, he confirmed that the Internet for him was “a treasure cove”.

Table 7: A Sample of D'Artagnan's Resources

| Description | Description |
|--|---|
| Programs that detect voices and type the message electronically for the speaker Text to Speech (various sources) | Games www.fslactivities.ca (Renaud, n.d.) www.crickweb.co.uk (Crickweb, 2003-2015) www.quia.com (IXL Learning, 2015) www.uptoten.com (UpToTen, 1999-2015) |
| Authentic listening exercises Radio Canada Jeunesse (Radio-Canada.ca, 2015) www.french.yabla.com (Yabla, 2015). | Interactive Vocabulary Lists with Diagram Prompts for Pronunciation www.languageguide.org (Blackmon, n.d.) |
| Search Engine for FSL Themes www.pourapprendre.ca (2Learn.ca, 1997-2015) | Listening activities for Immersion or Advanced FSL Students www.didierbravo.com (Didier, n.d.) |
| Homework review www.fslhomeworktoolbox.ca (Rainbow District School Board, 2011) | French Cartoon Videos www.multilingualbooks.com (Multilingual Books, n.d.) |

D'Artagnan belonged to a Professional Learning Community (PLC) that ignited his reflective process about how to implement the new curriculum in line with the other programming in the English-language classrooms of his school. He also worked directly with three other FSL teachers in his school to “anticipate the new changes” in the form of “subject-meetings”. His administration was “wonderful” because they gave their FSL teachers “one grade level [to be able to] focus on delivering a quality program”. One of his colleagues, a Grade 5 FSL teacher welcomed him into her classroom to observe her teaching style with the AIM Program (AIM Language Learning, 2010) so that he could “understand the background” of the previous grade level. She also provided D'Artagnan with more cultural knowledge of French as he “wasn't a French teacher for a long time”. All three of his FSL colleagues were going to attend a new workshop post-study about “making your way about the new curriculum”. His principal also gave him release time for a department meeting with his three FSL colleagues “to look at the new curriculum.” In short, D'Artagnan concluded “French teachers in our school are the luckiest [...] we're not in a fearful environment”. Essentially, in order to successfully teach the CF program, D'Artagnan suggested “you need the perfect venue for a cross-curricular activity”. For the reasons described, D'Artagnan already came with a supportive ‘arm’ notably, his individual school context.

His Overall Curriculum Planning Process

D'Artagnan acknowledged his advantage in having exposure to the IB Program (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2005-2015) as he felt that it offered unique programming topics such as political science. He implemented an IB template⁷ to help him plan with the new curriculum in his CF classroom. He felt that “it represents a lot of the international aspects now that are in the Core French expectations”. The IB template was also noted as an essential teacher reflection tool because it “has textboxes where you fill in what you perceive as you teach the unit [...] when you re-teach it, you can look back at your notes”. In fact, it became his first source for curriculum planning for the “checklists”. He then outlined his typical planning structure in the following description:

⁷ D'Artagnan provided me with the resource; however, as this resource was intended only for IB teachers, I have not attached it in the Appendices.

I always make sure there's a dialogue, there's a research element, there's always group work, there's always a film with a reading attached to it. [...] There has to be geography because they're supposed to be learning about francophone countries. [...] And then I always give a three skilled unit test- listening, reading and writing.

He managed his classroom by preparing for success in lieu of reacting to a classroom management issues. His students understood his expectations for the classroom as “they know how to move the desks [...] sometimes I'll say to them, ok, *changez, mettez-vous en groupes*⁸, they know what to do”. His philosophy was to “give kids freedom” not creating “an atmosphere of fear”. He clarified that “if anyone needs to be a non-bully, it's the teacher”. The overall planning tool of the IB Template as well as his classroom structuring style already initialized a supportive base to implement the new curriculum.

Cross-curricular, Theme-based Focus

D'Artagnan focused his curriculum planning on cross-curricular, thematic units such as schooling in francophone countries, learning about the endangered species and space exploration. He also had ample international experiences. For example, he taught abroad in Europe for a summer course that inspired him to “capitalize on the authenticity of an immersion experience for Core kids” as the “global situation” was ever present and important to D'Artagnan. Most recently, his nephew, a military attaché working for the United Nations, conducted a Skype (Skype, 2015) session with his students. A summary of the activity is as follows:

There were 90 kids in the session [...] they had their questions [...] it was very exciting. And [...] then with the emails back and forth afterwards [...] they thanked him and sent him a present by mail. So those authentic interpersonal contexts add meaning and it's not just a list of vocabulary.

D'Artagnan volunteered his time for American Field Service Intercultural Programs (AFS Intercultural Programs, Inc., 2011) a cultural exchange program. As a result, the association gave him “links to community cultures [...] DVD sets [...] that are put out for themes in FSL”. He was also looking forward to liaising with his contacts in Switzerland to help him find a classroom to exchange pen-pal letters.

⁸ Ok, go into groups!

Focus on Differentiation

D'Artagnan often spoke about learners with special needs and differentiation. D'Artagnan noted a particular example with a student in the ICOM Program⁹ who encountered difficulty functioning in English and in French. D'Artagnan provided the child with scissors to simply cut the verb endings of the present tense “to prepare kits for a game”. By doing this kinesthetic exercise, D'Artagnan hoped that the student would identify “a pronoun [...] a stem [...] an ending because he had to pile them into three piles” and then progress to another verb tense. His activity was “perfect” according to the special education teacher; however, D'Artagnan had to consistently “think about this boy, and always have [...] a strategy that he can do”. D'Artagnan also differentiated his instruction for literacy. He explained that “the weakest kids will have the easiest reader with the most pictures [...] the immersion students [...] will have [...] an immersion text [...] so they get a high challenge but I'll make the assessment easy so they get a high challenge with a high success assessment”. For French language films, D'Artagnan had English subtitles “for the weaker kids”. In summary, D'Artagnan repeated that he did not make any child “feel stupid” when learning French.

Focus on Play-based Learning

D'Artagnan identified several tools and activities that he implemented to adhere to the new curriculum. He had a plastic bin containing “relevant and useful hard copy materials” that he referred to when he could create his own resources. He incorporated “lots of games” into his curriculum planning such as “Speed Dating”, cultural teaching “*sur le champs*”¹⁰, reading menus and brochures from Quebec and using Duolingo (Duolingo, n.d), an online language-learning program, to name a few. D'Artagnan emphasized that amusement is of central importance in his classroom so that “they'll bring it up again the next day”.

⁹ *Intermediate Communication Program*. As explained by D'Artagnan, the students in this program tend to have reading and writing difficulties. In this program they follow a scripted program from Sick Kids Hospital called EMPOWER where they learn five-word attack strategies. The students are removed from regular programming up to 50% of the time, missing 1 out of 3 French classes in D'Artagnan's school context.

¹⁰ Immediately, randomly in context

Assessment Practices

The writing strand continued to be important to D'Artagnan with the new curriculum as he took "20% off for spelling mistakes or grammar to encourage the communicative aspect".

D'Artagnan also offered pre-tests to his students and rationalized his technique as follows:

I give them a pre-test so that they know what will be on the unit test [...] so that they would know what mark they would get [...] It's really useful when you have seven classes to do a pre-test because you discover [...] there's a gap that I didn't realize [...] this group needs more work on, for example, IR verbs before the real test [...] I'll tell the kids, if you do better on the pre-test than on the real test, then I'll give you the marks on your pre-test and it makes them study for the pre-test [...] it's building in more success. And then, when they do the real test, their marks are really good and I give them one of those mini-chocolate bars if their marks go up from the pre-test to the real test. And they find that motivating.

Lack of Curriculum Training and Resources

While D'Artagnan was overtly positive about the curriculum, he still had some concerns. D'Artagnan confirmed that he and his colleagues were at the initial "awareness" stage for curriculum implementation as he identified his struggle with 'catching-up' with technology, metacognition and the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001). This was due to the amount of reflection time required to identify "how to implement things and how to make them part of your practice". Additionally, he often referenced his desire to connect with other FSL colleagues, but that this was difficult as he struggled "to find a school to Skype¹¹ with and pen pal with".

He confirmed that "student ownership and classroom management are ongoing challenges" but that these were not "necessarily tied to the new curriculum" but more as typical dilemmas while teaching FSL.

While teaching reading, D'Artagnan identified his dilemma in managing all learners' readiness. For example, his students who came from the French Immersion context now, in his CF class were not often interviewed orally after every independent reading activity simply due to the challenge of having "190 French students" as his responsibility. As such,

¹¹ Skype is commonly a free online program that offers instantaneous communication online in video and/or audio format (Skype, 2015).

these students completed a written assignment instead which made differentiation difficult for D'Artagnan. He identified that his marking workload was immense as he stated "I have homework every night"; however, he was happy to edit student work as he clarified "I always thought that process writing was the way to go".

D'Artagnan also brought up the need for enhanced support at the provincial level. He questioned the province by wondering "I don't know if the Ministry has dreams of helping teachers implement the new curriculum". He was also aware that the Ministry of Education placed emphasis on math and could see how that affected his school. He explained that it was very difficult for French teachers to infuse math into Core French.

Technology for Professional Development

While D'Artagnan was immediately introduced to a plethora of technological tools to implement the new curriculum, he identified his feelings of insecurity as he said that he was "not adapting quickly [...] assessing using cameras, assessing by having students hand things in online" because he preferred "printed work" as this format was perceived as showing that the students understood "if they print it". He admitted that this was due to his feelings of being "a dinosaur" in that "it's going to take some time" for the technology learning curve to adjust. However, he realized that it was okay to not know everything about technology as his students became his technology informants. He stated:

Remember last time when I said that I wished there was a way for the kids to tape themselves and send it to me? And you told me to just tell them to find their own way. So, it worked! They all submitted their little book reports orally, online and I assessed them and it's great!

To overcome his challenges, he was interested in learning about the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), the AIM method (AIM Language Learning, 2010) and having official IB (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2005-2015) training to have "authentic resources at the grade level" and "more and more action-based strategies". D'Artagnan was also interested in finding more student reflection tools such as the Google Forms (Google, n.d.).

A Summary of D'Artagnan's Curriculum Perceptions and Experiences

D'Artagnan was optimistic about the new curriculum's potential and he felt confident about teaching within the framework of the new program because he was already familiar with many of the teaching strategies. From the first interview conducted, it was clear that he was confident in his abilities, appreciative of his school and board culture, and looked forward to the academic year with enthusiasm about the new curriculum. He was always looking for additional learning opportunities such as workshops on technology so that he could implement authentic activities. He believed that the success of the revised curriculum is dependent upon the 'type' of FSL CF teacher and on the support of administration.

Madeleine

Positive Perceptions of the Revised Curriculum

Madeleine preferred implementing the new curriculum over the 1998 edition as it had “no connection [...] to a bigger picture or to a bigger unit”. Madeleine also felt that teachers following the 1998 curriculum often “had boxes and boxes of worksheets like *Grammaire sous la main*¹²” and that she was teaching her students “aliens or creating an imaginary animal” as an example curriculum topic. Madeleine felt that these activities were ineffective in capturing student the interest of students for French. As a result, she appreciated the new curriculum's structure allowing for flexibility, “more motivation”, “decoding skills applicable in real-life situations” with a stronger emphasis on the “process” for learning French. She also felt that the new curriculum was more relatable to the interests of her students. With the new curriculum, she was able to customize her planning with “a potential for anything outside of the classroom”. She noted that the curriculum supports student autonomy and student accountability. She stated:

The new curriculum has a focus on process [...] before it was hard to hold them accountable. [...] now, I can hold them accountable and say, well, I want to see what strategies you used [...] before you hand in your final project [...]

¹² These grammar-based resources help Ontario FSL teachers align themselves with any FSL curriculum (LearningSpirit, n.d.)

preventing things like Google Translate¹³ from being used [...] I can take it back to them and say, well, I don't care just about your good copy, I care that you're going through the different stages.

According to Madeleine, if it is “implemented [...] applied” properly and if it has “the love of language learning” then this revised curriculum can also encourage the middle-school student to pursue at bare minimum, another L2 in high school. Madeleine emphasized the need for FSL CF teachers to help middle-school students to “gain an appreciation for how to learn a language [which] in turn gives them an appreciation for different cultures [...] of being able to travel [...] to conduct business in different languages”. She summarized her positive perception of the new curriculum during the final activity of the focus group as illustrated in Figure 3.

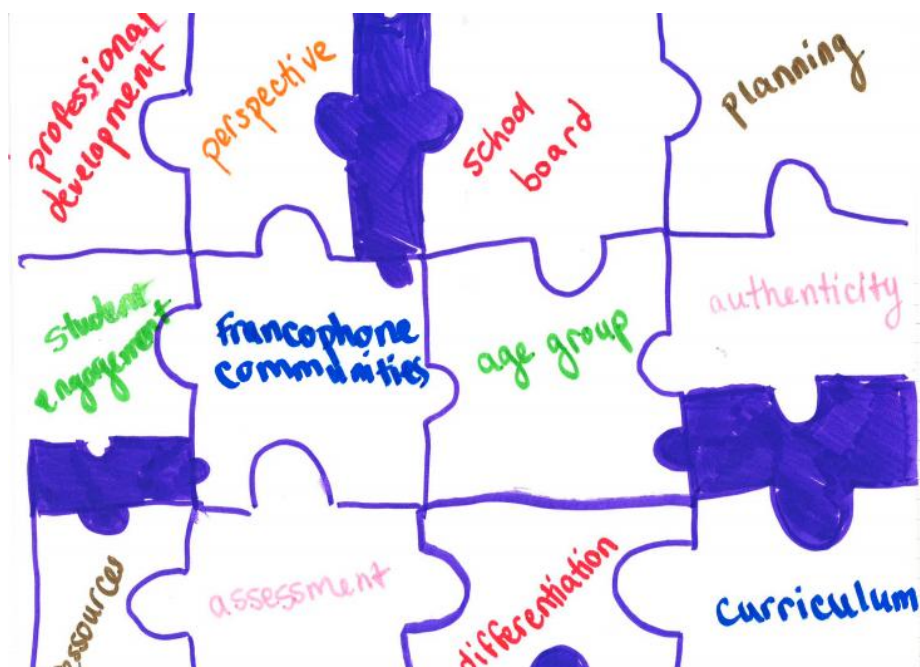


Figure 3: Madeleine as a Curriculum Puzzle Builder

Madeleine’s pieces of the puzzle included (1) professional development, “both the good and the bad side of it [as] we’re not getting enough but we’ve had a little bit, most of us”, (2) the school board, “what it’s mandating [...] recommending [...] providing”, and (3) the curriculum planning. The missing pieces of the puzzle symbolized her continual pursuit of

¹³ This free online program on Google allows users to instantaneously translate from one language to another (Google, n.d.).

trying to fill in the gaps for learning as a novice teacher. In fact, she stated “Every time I learn something new, it builds in some of the missing pieces but I don’t necessarily know what are the missing pieces”. Eventually, she believed that the curriculum user discovers “where the piece goes”. Madeleine clarified that she did not color in her puzzle pieces to represent a specific meaning. She acquired several of these topics “one at a time” which was not necessarily “a bad thing” but that, “eventually it does form a picture”. This comment represented her overall sense of a peaceful yet ambitious self with this new curriculum as she was cognizant that she did not know everything but that she was on the right path.

Her Perceptions and Experiences of Curriculum Implementation

Madeleine had a variety of curriculum preparation tools as a new teacher implementing the new curriculum. For example, Madeleine found her pre-service teacher education program effective in the presentation of CEFR concepts that are implicitly embedded in the new curriculum. She also used her knowledge acquired from university to ‘test out’ the task-based learning activities with her Grade 6 /7 students the year prior of this study. In fact, she revealed that she was able to determine “what they were capable of, what they were still struggling with, and then apply that to this year”. Madeleine also developed her own French-language proficiency by going to the “Alliance Française¹⁴”. For the reasons described, Madeleine had sufficient preparation with this new curriculum structure more than her school peers as she confirmed “I don’t think that my colleagues really started using it until this year”.

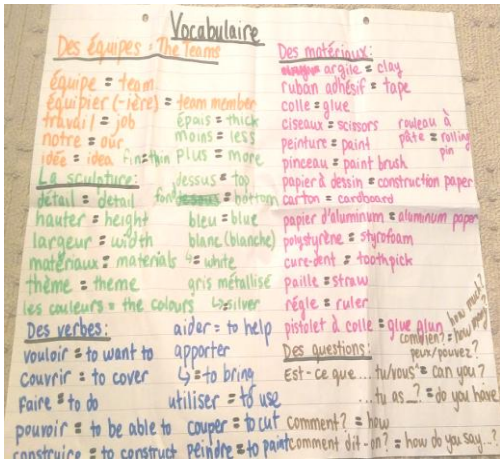

Curriculum Planning Process

Madeleine presented her ‘life-saver’ resource kit in the first interview. This resource kit became her daily tool as an *à la carte* teacher as it contained essential classroom materials such as Band-Aids and games. She used many technology-based resources to implement the new curriculum. She maintained an open “personality” as a professional who was always willing to share and receive new resources. One of her first steps working through the document was by consulting the “overall expectations”. She had “sticky notes for each

¹⁴ A private FSL learning centre recognized internationally (Alliance Française, n.d.).

learning strand” to eventually be able to make “success criteria out of the specific expectations”. Madeleine combined learning strands in one lesson or activity because “there’s no way you can do it separately”. Some of her curriculum management strategies included the *Boomerang Program*¹⁵, *DJ DELF*¹⁶, and *Échos Pro*¹⁷. Madeleine benefitted from consulting various teacher blogs, notably, *The Ontario core French Teachers Community* (Facebook, 2015). She also consulted *Pinterest*.¹⁸

A lot of her activities were authentically theme-based such as the directions and food units, integrating Canadian-based experiences for students to immerse themselves in francophone culture. Madeleine introduced a collaborative school experience whereby French Week was launched. FSL classes throughout the school all contributed to this special celebration of francophone culture. French-language vocabulary was taught in a natural manner through accomplishing a task such as the sculpture project for the *Carnaval*¹⁹ Festival, as a team-building experience. Student autonomy was also instilled throughout all of her activities that she presented as she had her students complete a specific task. Figure 4 outlines a sample of the aforementioned activities.

| | |
|--|--|
|  <p>Vocabulaire</p> <p>Des équipes / The teams</p> <p>Équipe = team équipier (-ière) = team member travail = job notre = our idée = idea La sculpture: détail = detail hauteur = height largeur = width matériaux = materials thème = theme les couleurs = the colours Des verbes: vouloir = to want to couvrir = to cover faire = to do pouvoir = to be able to construire = to construct</p> <p>épais = thick moins = less Plus = more dessus = top dessous = bottom bleu = blue blanc (blanche) = white gris métallisé = silver aider = to help apporter = to bring ↳ = to bring utiliser = to use couper = to cut peindre = to paint</p> <p>Des matériaux: argile = clay ruban adhésif = tape colle = glue ciseaux = scissors peinture = paint pinceau = paint brush papier à dessin = construction paper carton = cardboard papier d'aluminium = aluminum paper polystyrène = styrofoam cure-dent = toothpick paille = straw règle = ruler pistolet à colle = glue gun Des questions: Est-ce que... tu/vous = can you? ...tu/as...? = do you have? comment? = how comment dit-on? = how do you say?</p> |  <p>“Ice” Camera Sculpture for the Carnaval de Québec</p> |
|--|--|

¹⁵ A literacy-based FSL teaching resource (DIFELICE ET AL., 2015 LES EDITIONS CEC).

¹⁶ An FSL resource that correlates with the revised curriculum supporting authentic communication (Official Site of Étienne & DJ DELF, 2015).

¹⁷ A literacy-based resource (Pearson Canada Inc., 2015).

¹⁸ A project-based, inspirational website where individuals post their own projects to others (Pinterest, 2015).

¹⁹ This is a Carnival that takes place in Quebec typically in February (Québec Winter Carnival, 2015).

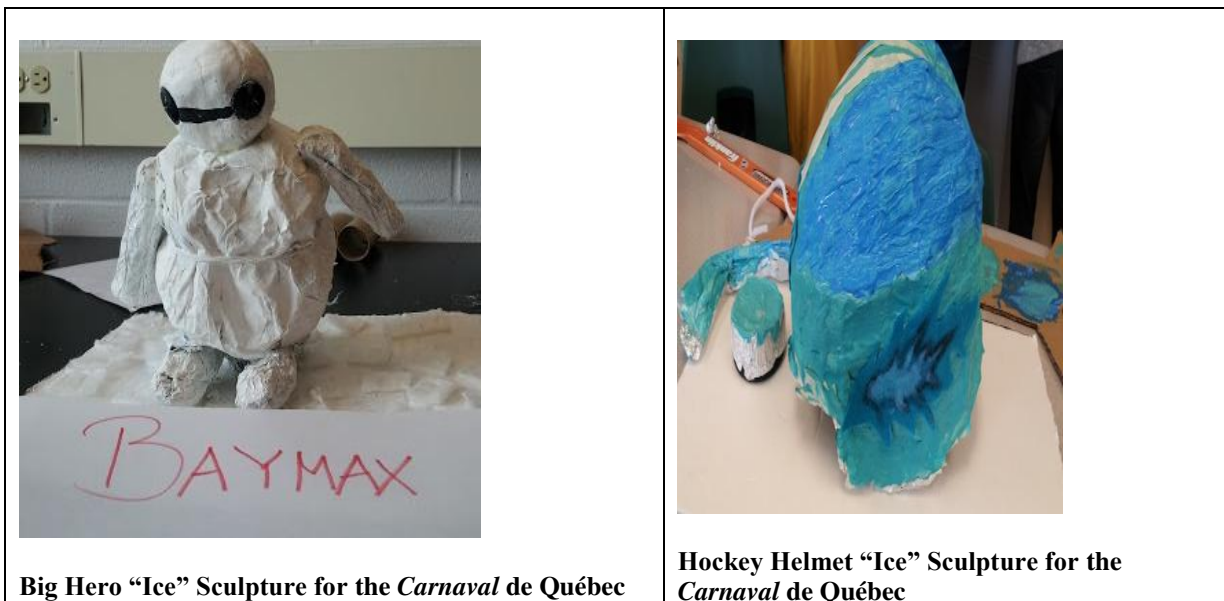


Figure 4: A Summary of the *Carnaval* Activities

Many of her activities were inspired from teacher-led research produced by the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001). However, as a novice teacher, Madeleine sought help from experienced FSL professionals, notably the board’s instructional coach. This coach helped teachers in her board develop planning and coaching strategies including classroom observations, lesson plan writing and editing. Madeleine specifically asked her instructional coach to help craft Madeleine’s long-range plans in line with the new curriculum as summarized in Figure 5 which is an example of her Grade 7 CF long-range planning.

| Term 2 Curriculum Links | January | February | March | April | May | June |
|--|---|--|-------|-------|-----|------|
| <p>Listening A2. Listening to Interact; A2.2, A2.3 A3. Intercultural Understanding; A3.1, A3.2</p> <p>Speaking B2. Speaking to Interact; B2.2, B2.3 B3. Intercultural Understanding; B3.1, B3.2</p> <p>Reading C1. Reading Comprehension; C1.2 C2. Purpose, Form, and Style; C2.2, C2.3 C3. Intercultural Understanding; C3.1, C3.2</p> <p>Writing D1. Purpose, Audience, and Form; D1.2, D1.3 D2. The Writing Process; D2.3 D3. Intercultural Understanding; D3.1, D3.2</p> | <p>Big Idea: French in the Community/Canada</p> <p>Unit Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Carnival <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Learning Goal: I am learning to give and follow simple instructions. o Final Task: Students will choose a game/activity to run in French during our celebration of Carnival. > Folktales/Legends <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Learning Goal: I am learning to read and explain my understanding of texts. o Final Task: N/A. | <p>Big Idea: Francophone Culture & Travel (World)</p> <p>Unit Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Food / Restaurants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Learning Goal: I am learning to express likes and dislikes about food. I am learning to make simple purchases. o Final Task: Students will come up with their own restaurant concepts and present to a panel of judges for 'Canada's Next Great Restaurant' television show. > Travel & Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Learning Goal: I am learning how to organize information about a travel destination (e.g., itinerary, brochure, etc.). I can make simple statements or ask simple questions about French Culture. o Final Task: Students will create a promotional material of their choice (e.g., commercial, PowerPoint presentation, etc.) for a French speaking country to try increase their tourism. | | | | |

Figure 5: A Sample of Madeleine’s Long-range Planning

Madeleine realized that planning for the new curriculum was “very much a top-down kind of model” and that she was beginning to “see the bigger picture and [...] do it more successfully”. The resources that she referenced throughout the study were age-appropriate and focused on building student success. Madeleine explained: “I pick a prompt and I re-use it throughout the year so they get used to seeing it or hearing it”. Anchor charts and timers provided Madeleine with “a good sense of structure” for her students. When explaining a task to her students, Madeleine often confirmed the message in multiple ways - written, oral, visual, and, dramatic. Madeleine said she does “whatever I need to get my point across”. The variety of resources presented prompted the students to take control of their learning, held them accountable, and provided them with “some sort of inquiry”.

Madeleine also tried her best to incorporate a math and literacy skills focus in her planning to be in line with the board’s priorities of math and English. For example, she combined math and literacy skills in a French-language scavenger hunt in the following description:

They wrote the directions [...] we invited some of the younger classes to come and join us and they did the scavenger hunt and ran it with the younger kids [...] they’re speaking, they’re interacting, they’re listening [...] They also had to write

the clues and post them around the school [...] they did it in French. [...] some had more leadership than others [...] depending on their interest level [...] it was really successful and really amazing to see everybody working together for that common goal [...] They picked up new vocabulary [...]

A depiction of Madeleine's infusion of math-based FSL activities is illustrated in Figure 6.


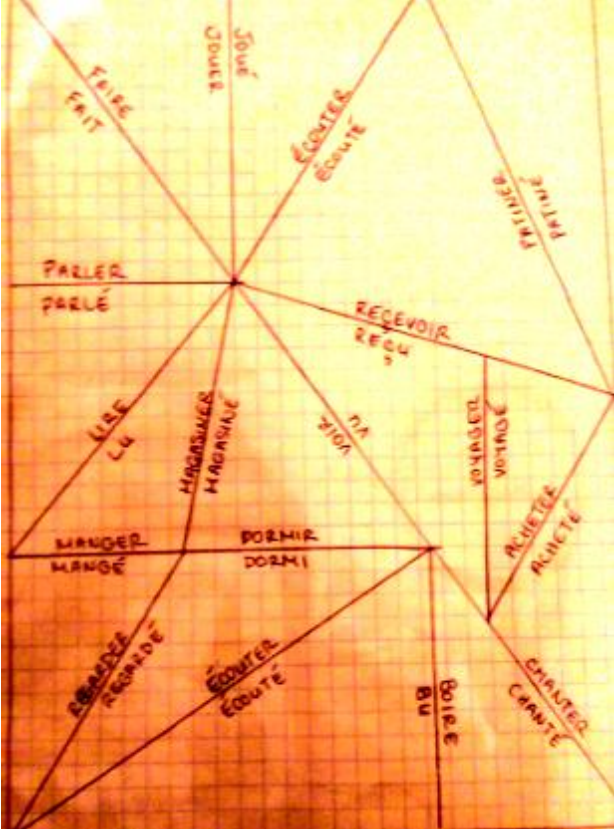
| QR Codes (QRStuff, 2014) for the Scavenger Hunt | Math-based <i>Passé Composé</i> Verb Activity |
|---|---|
|  |  |

Figure 6: A Sample of Madeleine's Math-infused FSL Activities

She also had her students learn how to budget while pretending that they lived in Trois-Rivières, Québec factoring in transportation, lodging, and other real-life moving realities.

Madeleine also promoted French in the classroom simply by scaffolding her activities in meaningful ways that supported the readiness and the abilities of her learners. For example, her students were often asked to write in bullet-point form in French in lieu of long paragraphs, which had previously prompted her students to use Google Translate (Google, n.d.) to write in French. Madeleine clarified the dangers of Google Translate (Google, n.d.)

so that they refrained from using it as a main resource. She summarized that teaching with this new curriculum is “being intuitive into how you can relate French culture to their culture or different things that are of interest to them”.

Expectations were openly discussed with her students. Madeleine also understood and explained that her planning strategies (i.e., her evaluation activities) would have to change on a yearly basis with this new curriculum as the needs of her learners will change. However, Madeleine remained consistent with her marking criteria. For example, she structured her unit planning always in line with the overarching goal for her students to obtain a Level 3, standard, Ministry expectation. She clarified that “It’s not an easy A [...] *Growing Success*²⁰ helps set that standard”, but “it is difficult for parents to understand”. As her students were high achievers, Madeleine took the additional time to explain how assessment evolved and what it looked like with this new curriculum to her students. She clarified that an A+, or “Above and beyond is not putting sparkles on your board”. As such, her assessment style changed and was explained to her students for their success.

Prior to the launch of the new curriculum, Madeleine did not focus much on classroom management; however, with the 2013 version, she could no longer “ignore this person in the corner who’s using their device or the person that’s talking to their friend” as she could not lead authentic exercises if her students were not all focused.

Benefits of an “À la carte” Teacher

Madeleine confirmed that she was an *à la carte* teacher, however, this did not prove to be disadvantageous “to put together”. She admitted that being a trolley teacher required “advanced planning but that’s ok [...] you just have to be able to adapt very quickly”. She had an excellent relationship with the English-language homeroom teachers and her two FSL colleagues. These relationships helped her with being a trolley teacher as she did not feel threatened to seek help or leave her resources in their classrooms. She realized the importance of such collaborative relationships that “can make or break you”. Madeleine additionally identified that all of her colleagues were ‘on a level playing field’ as she

²⁰ Ontario Ministry of Education. (2010). *Growing success: Assessment, evaluation, and reporting in Ontario schools (1st ed.)*. Toronto, ON: Queen’s Printer for Ontario.

confirmed “being at a new school [...] we’re all very ambitious and excited to be starting together”.

Flaws of Resources

Madeleine suggested that many of the resources she consulted had flaws with their design and/or appropriateness for the CF middle-school classroom. She described her reactions to DJ DELF (Official Site of Étienne & DJ DELF, 2015) a commonly utilized program purchased by many Ontario CF teachers. She stated: “it wasn’t quite what I was expecting but I think it’s a good place to start”. Échos Pro (Pearson Canada Inc., 2015a) proved to be difficult to use for her as it was challenging to fully understand the content. Madeleine appreciated and embedded technology into her curriculum planning. However, she acknowledged that technology was inconsistent and of a disadvantage if “is not working that day [...] or if the Internet’s slow, then, you’re out of luck [...] there’s that kind of fear there in using that”. Despite the numerous resources available to Madeleine, there were still issues.

Lack of Transferability

Despite her overall positive perceptions about the curriculum, Madeleine was concerned about the transferability of grammar from one grade to the other. Madeleine feared that the lack of explicit grammar checklists that were originally found in the 1998 edition would make it difficult for teachers to know what to teach, and when to teach the content. She was equally concerned about the curriculum’s preparation for student transition into high school. Madeleine felt that the 1998 curriculum “gave you some sort of progression and you could look to see what kind of structure they were supposed to be using in the previous grade, [...] whereas now, it’s very, very open”. She was not certain if the new curriculum would encourage students to continue with French as it is “open-ended” and “different people will approach this new curriculum in different ways”. She also noted that the teacher prompts were not representative of the CF level if they are to be implemented ‘as is’ as they require “a lot of scaffolding to get there”. The scaffolding, according to Madeleine requires sufficient teacher planning to:

know your document really well [...] it really comes down to having a really well-planned year and understanding the timings of it, so that the grammar [...] flows into your lessons naturally.

While Madeleine outlined some concerns with the curriculum's feasibility, she saw it as generating learning goals. For example, as a new teacher, Madeleine often referenced her need to simply understand planning processes, regardless of any new curriculum. She was hopeful for the future stating "The more I use the different strands and things, the better I feel like I'm getting at it [...] the more I read through it I feel like I have a better understanding of it". As such, Madeleine's perception of the new curriculum was positive overall.

Concerns with Her Board Culture

Madeleine realized that she was fortunate to have taught in another school board that was more prepared to train their FSL teachers than was her experience with her current board at the time of this study. Her former school board distributed more FSL resources in line with her specific CF needs. According to Madeleine, this inconsistency at the board-level for support can create anxiety for first-time curriculum implementers as she stated:

I remember going to a workshop at the end of the year [...] During the question/answer period, [...] the general feeling was one of upset [...] I remember somebody asking, so what are we supposed to teach next year? [...] you could really tell the teachers that had been using the old curriculum for years, really felt confused about what the new curriculum was asking, about how to implement the new curriculum [...] it's hard to see your colleagues struggling like that, and then, not getting the support that we need just yet.

Madeleine contacted her new school board in hopes to obtain resources; however, she explained that, "they had nothing". As such, she purchased her own resources based on those that had been recommended by her previous school board. Even in January 2015, Madeleine still did not have "a clear vision as to what the board's recommending" and she shared that her first opportunity to engage in a professional development day for training with the new curriculum occurred in January. As such, her board at the time of the study was behind other boards in terms of providing professional development for FSL teachers.

Need for More Support

Madeleine did experience some challenges with curriculum management. Her main challenge was that, as a novice teacher, she did not feel confident scaffolding or breaking down the curriculum objectives in meaningful ways. To resolve this issue, Madeleine used many electronic teaching resources such as Spanish teacher blogs that had "really amazing

communicative activities” that she was not able to find on related blogs based on a French context. She also obtained planning assistance with the Ontario Core French Teachers Community (Facebook, 2015) and maintained her relationship with the board’s instructional coach who helped Madeleine construct lesson and unit plans. She then opted to organize the curriculum objectives to specific time points throughout the year. She stated:

If you look at A 1.1 to A 1.3, those are usually the easier ones to kind of implement whereas when you start to get to the point 4, point 5 and point 6, those are things that, you know, we’ll touch on a little bit at the beginning of the year but I’m expecting that by the end of the year that’s when they are able to do those deeper-ended expectations.

While Madeleine already infused her FSL activities with other disciplines such as mathematics, she felt that the math had “limits on what you can do in a beginner-level language course”. The listening strand was also an area of concern for her to “implement formally on a regular basis” because her middle-school students were “easily distracted”. Grammar was also a point of difficulty for Madeleine. Specifically, she encountered difficulty in knowing “what order” to teach grammar so that “it’s in context”. She felt that “you almost have to start from scratch every year anyways with Core”.

Madeleine had a high regard for the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) in the Ontario context as it provided her with assessment guidance. She said “it can tell you what you should be able to do at a beginner’s level [...] intermediate level [...] advanced level [...] so that I’m not setting unrealistic expectations for them”. She was specifically interested in reviewing the *European Language Portfolio*²¹ “where they can reflect [...] show their best work, or work they feel needs to be improved on”. Despite this, she felt that more support was required to use the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) in a meaningful content.

Madeleine encouraged additional sharing opportunities with her school board colleagues as well as the larger FSL community so that “our ideas are communicated to the people that are higher up”. Specifically, she reinforced the importance of having “the time to talk about it amongst each other”, for a consensus to have “PD on this. This is a question that all of us have. This is a common concern [...] and we want to get more direction about”.

²¹ The portfolio is an application to help learners analyze themselves as they are following the CEFR (European Language Portfolio, n.d.).

The Requirement of an 'Expert' Teacher for the Revised Curriculum

Madeleine acknowledged that the traditionally-minded teacher may perceive the curriculum as a 'scary' document because this teacher is "fixated on teaching everything in a certain order, or the topic". Madeleine also noted that the new curriculum makes the teaching of grammar "like a guessing game" for the novice teacher. Madeleine admitted that teachers "have to be intuitive and listen to them and listen to what they're telling me so that I can give them the right tool". She felt fortunate, that given her novice experience, she could still "explore and experiment" with her curriculum planning style.

Madeleine defined French-language proficiency as an ever changing and dynamic. She felt that it varied from teacher's college to the actual FSL classroom as a licensed teacher. She defined proficiency as,

knowing the culture [...] knowing the language that you're teaching and knowing how to apply those different scenarios to situations that students actually want to learn about [...] being intuitive into how you can relate French culture to their culture or different things that are of interest to them to different French aspects.

With her definition in mind, Madeleine confirmed that FSL teachers require "a strong knowledge of the francophone culture", however, she was not intimidated informing her students that she too, was an ongoing learner. She often said to her students "let's look it up together".

Madeleine encountered difficulty in changing her students' perceptions about French as a discipline. In particular, she identified her challenge in convincing her students that formal grammar tests did not represent the actual 'test of life'. She questioned "How often are you going to be able to communicate with someone orally to be able to get your point across? Or, read a sign to be able to get to where you are going?" In order to maintain students' accurate perceptions of 'success' she needed to "have engaging topics for them so they don't realize oh, how come we're not doing a test, to just sort of forget about that whole formal testing process". She welcomed receiving additional support with respect to preparing such inspiring resources to her students to help them shift their attitudes towards the subject.

A Summary of Madeleine’s Curriculum Perceptions and Experiences

Madeleine maintained her optimism related to the curriculum’s effectiveness for student engagement and fluency development. Madeleine realized that she came with pre-existing, pre-service training of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) and other concepts that helped her prepare for the new curriculum. Madeleine acknowledged her supportive school environment as well as her influential instructional coach who helped her understand and implement the curriculum objectives. Her activities were in line with student interests and her ongoing collaboration with her colleagues was beneficial. She did, however, identify that a specific ‘type’ of teacher was required to implement the new curriculum—notably a flexible, open-minded individual with a positive regard for the new program. Madeleine looked forward to furthering her knowledge of the new curriculum with formal, professional development opportunities from her board as well as improving her overall curriculum planning process as a novice teacher.

Helena

Her Perceptions and Experiences of Curriculum Implementation

She prepared for the new curriculum by reading it during the summer prior to teaching. Helena also signed up for the couple of workshops offered by her board, became a *correcteur*, or corrector, for DELF (CLEP, n.d.), and consulted many CEFR-based resources. As a *correcteur*, she was introduced to a different way of assessing proficiency. For example, Helena identified that the early French Immersion Program that she observed while a *correcteur* was “a big learning experience”. She felt that the earlier the oral exposure was a useful first step and “then they [students] can build on their writing”. In her pre-service education, she was trained to correct “every bit of detail [but] now, we’re looking at whether they are generally getting what they are receiving”. Helena referred to a German-based CEFR resource as a program inspiration as it “solidified both the new curriculum and the old curriculum [as] by the end of this, they should know present, be able to throw in adjectives and certain grammar points”. She felt that the new curriculum was “a bit of a divide” with the strong focus on oral language development while ignoring written proficiency.

The AIM Program (AIM Language Learning, 2010) became her ‘saving grace’ to implement the new curriculum as the program was applicable “for anything” and that it made students “better speakers” because it gave “almost every level of student, some sort of competence”. Before, her students “knew how to conjugate but they never knew how to apply the word”. With greater exposure to AIM (AIM Language Learning, 2010), her Grade 7 students informed Helena that they missed “that array of vocabulary that they had in order to communicate” from their AIM Program (AIM Language Learning, 2010) the year prior. As such, Helena decided to keep using AIM (AIM Language Learning, 2010) in her intermediate classes.

Another ‘saving grace’ for Helena was her Italian teaching experience and exposure to Italian, teaching adult learners Italian part-time in the evening while working as a full-time FSL teacher, Helena developed a strong intercultural knowledge of the language as she also lived in Italy. She knew “how people pick up the phone, [...] how people walk, [...] how they dress”. Without having travelled to Italy, Helena admitted that she would not have had the same confidence to teach the cultural components of Italian. Her experience teaching Italian prompted her to implement a travel unit in her own CF classroom in the elementary context. Based on her successful cultural experiences, she felt that FSL teacher candidates should study abroad to develop intercultural competence in French, the way she developed this competence in Italian by living in Italy.

Positive Regard for the Revised Curriculum as a ‘Concept’

Helena acknowledged that the new curriculum is on the right path for change as she indicated “I do like their ideas [...] because it is going towards a more practical use [...] they should be able to [...] go to a restaurant, fill out [...] a passport application”. However, she felt that grammar was lacking in this new curriculum. She wished for an amalgamation of the 1998 and the 2013 FSL curricula for “a beautiful moment in French teaching history”.

During the second interview, Helena demonstrated a passive acceptance of the new changes. ‘Passive’ in that while she was ‘calm,’ about the new curriculum, Helena still had doubts about its feasibility for higher-level FSL education. She stated:

You have to be positive because you know it's out of your hands. You have to give the Ministry respect [...] I'm trying to see the goodness in it. And I'm truly hoping that the educators and the administrators and the Ministry that worked on this had a goal in mind [for students] to become better speakers because they weren't before. So I'm trying [but] I don't know how to balance [...] they need the grammar [...] with the forty minutes it's a dog and pony show. You can't do it! You can't! If I had at least an hour a day I think we'd have beautiful language-speaking kids in the core. This is where the immersion has an upper hand because they get the oral and they get the written. In core, [...] it's really hard.

Improved Board-level Curriculum Training

During the second interview, Helena identified that her feelings about curriculum preparation somewhat improved due to the increased training at the board level. For example, she attended an action-oriented workshop that helped build “theory into practice” as the teacher presenters “were very knowledgeable”. Helena was exposed to lesson ideas, even “techniques that you use in the English classroom [...] and they brought it into French” with actual student exemplars. As such, Helena promoted the importance of ongoing professional development as a key factor in enhancing teachers’ perceptions and curriculum management strategies.

Overall Curriculum Management Strategies

She often re-used older materials connected to the 1998 curriculum such as the *On y va* resource (Pearson Canada Inc., 2015b). Helena promoted the use of French on a consistent basis with her *ligne magique* or the magic line in English as a boundary system:

I put a [...] sparkly door curtain and when they walk into [the classroom] they know that's *la ligne magique* and that's when you have to start speaking French [...] it's that [...] psychological enthusiasm that once they pass the sparkly line, they think they're entering a new world. And I find it really works.

AIM (AIM Language Learning, 2010) also helped her build French-language proficiency; however, she extended the AIM-based vocabulary, exposing her students to more elaborate sentence structures such as, “*Est-ce que tu y vas en soucoupe volante ou dans une auto?*”²² She felt that it was her “duty” to introduce her students to the “spontaneous words”.

²² Are you going in the flying saucer or by car?

Her marking style “has been more lenient” with the new curriculum to be in line with her school environment. She felt that, “getting them to school is already a struggle”.

Cross-curricular, Theme-based Focus

Her example activities included, (1) introducing students to a famous French chef “cooking from the sea”, (2) simulated shopping in the classroom, (3) reading authentic materials (i.e., menus collected from Quebec, France, etc.), (4) reading current news (i.e., the Ebola outbreak in French) and (5) faith-based conversations. Despite not having her own classroom, Helena tried her best to bring as many francophone cultural representations as possible to immerse her CF students. Helena also took on the role of the cultural researcher. To implement the reading for the intercultural understanding objective of the revised curriculum, Helena exposed her students to francophone cuisine as described in the following example:

It was about a chef that was a very famous chef in France that was cooking from the sea. [...] it but was very basic language, we just finished the cooking unit in Grade 8 [it] gave [...] a cultural perspective of seafood in France. As well, tying it into the unit with our textbook and it was still at [...] Grade 8 level [...] so it was understandable.

Not only did her students immerse themselves in the francophone shopping experience but they also reinforced math concepts, which was her board focus for the year.

I was the cashier and students were purchasing different products from me. They had [...] currency in their hands [...] and they had to know how to give change and how to check if the change was correct. And when purchasing, they had to ask if it was at a certain weight, [they had to ask] for a bag or for a receipt. So making it something that is very practical and something they would do in real life.

Being in a Catholic school, Helena implemented both the FSL and the Religion curricula in daily practice by having students “look at a saint every day [...] We always talk about what they did, where they are from [...] we do a *prof du jour* ²³[...] which gets one student to speak for 10-15 minutes daily taking the role of me”. This daily task provided “a little bit of research on their part, [...] Catholicity, history, cultural awareness and they also bring the

²³ Teacher of the day

virtues home”. Helena appreciated working in a Catholic school as it was “quite of a bit of an aid” for cultural and religious education helping students communicate their thoughts in French.

Lack of Linguistic Accuracy

The new curriculum was a big change for Helena as compared to the 1998 version as she had always believed that writing was the first priority for curriculum planning. She felt that with the new curriculum “they’re answering it correctly, but they’re not spelling it correctly. So that’s my big issue right now that I feel needs the most tackling”. Helena revealed that her school board ‘threw out grammar’ as she indicated that “based on our workshops we were told pretty much worksheets and grammar is out the window which is a 380, sorry 360 from what we were at”. Everything she had planned prior to the new curriculum “went down the drain”. She felt that an equal balance of oral and written proficiency was required in the following example:

I understand they need to be social agents [...] but in order to stimulate conversation you still need a grammar base. They still need to form a sentence to speak. So I’m still trying to balance them both [...] because, if you’re lost in an airport and you don’t know how to talk in the present tense, I don’t know how to do it any other way.

As a former FSL student, then as a teacher candidate, finally, as a licensed teacher at the time of this study, Helena explained that it was difficult for her to abandon her marking style which impacted her experience with the new curriculum. She said: “We were taught to look at one little error and make a mini-lesson. But when you see 25 mini-errors, I don’t know which error to start from”. Even though she was a novice teacher, Helena felt that the lack of grammatical accuracy would impact her students’ long-term career-oriented goals in French. From Helena’s viewpoint, the revised curriculum was “disadvantaging [for] those students who will continue past Grade 9 that are going towards university [...] I understand that it accommodates practical people but that will stop after Grade 12”. She added “If they’re going to work for a company in the future where they need to write documents, they are writing phonetically”. Helena felt that high school FSL programs needed to be re-structured to include an applied level for “people [who] just want to know it for oral communication” and an academic level which “still needs to remain academic in its word”.

Lack of Time for Oral-language Development

Due to the structure of the CF classroom, Helena explained that there was not enough time to teach an abundant oral-based curriculum. She felt that,

By the time they take off their jackets and sit down [...] You're down to 30 minutes [...] the whole think, pair, share, you don't get enough time. Either you conference one day, speak one day and it just becomes so divided [...] I may be just in the middle of really stimulating them, really getting something going, it's time to go.

Core French Marginalization: A Challenging Barrier for Curriculum Implementation

Helena expressed dissatisfaction with the current practices of her board in that her FSL Curriculum Consultant was overworked due to “a financial issue”. Within the school context, Helena also reinforced that French is on the ‘back burner’ of her principal’s priorities as English-language curricula dominated the principal’s focus leaving the CF Program as an after-thought or “0.05 percent of the school population”, even if this was unintentional.

No longer having her own classroom was problematic for Helena. Despite having wonderful colleagues to work with she said, “the authentic environment has gone away [as] you feel bad touching their things”. When she had her own classroom, Helena had “pictures of different francophone countries, [...] visual aids [...] auditory and technological advances [and a] prayer table”. However, she felt that these resources were not as effective and difficult to carry as an *à la carte* teacher. In her previous classroom, she felt that her students had a higher regard for the language simply as she was allocated a classroom. Without having her own classroom, Helena felt marginalized:

If we're a bilingual country and we're treated as OCT teachers ²⁴we should have our own room because we are just as equal as our colleagues and I think if we want French to be important [...] we need to make it visible.

By not having her own classroom, Helena also found technology to be difficult to implement in daily practice. As such, she had to purchase her own kinesthetic resources for more cultural experiences. She stated the following:

²⁴ Ontario Certified Teachers from the Regulatory Body (Ontario College of Teachers, 2015).

I can't use it cause my laptop doesn't have access to [...] Wi Fi [...] we don't have it in our school and [...] it's really affecting my ability to make authentic tasks [which have] to be taken from the computer [...]

Additional Expertise Required with the New Curriculum

Helena felt that the 1998 version and its resources developed by publishers scaffolded the cultural expectations in a clearer manner as compared to the 2013 curriculum and its resources. She stated the following:

If you weren't at least culturally proficient [...] the textbook gave you enough activities, little cultural tips that you could kind of go with [...] Now, it's so play-based that unless you do your own research [...] it's a yin and yang cause before we had more resources but it wasn't stated so much explicit in the curriculum. Here, it's stated in the curriculum but there's no background.

As such, she felt that a specific type of teacher with an enhanced level of francophone cultural knowledge would be a better implementer of the 2013 curriculum.

With respect to teacher French-language proficiency, Helena admitted that FSL teachers needed to be prepared with an almost expert level of proficiency to respond to the dynamic needs and requests of students following an authentically-based curriculum. For example, Helena revealed her ongoing task of having a strong vocabulary base:

You can't just teach the *Trois Petits Cochons*.²⁵ What if a student asks, oh, Mademoiselle, how do you say town home (which is what a student asked me)? [...] no matter what level you teach, if you're an educator, you need a very high level of French if you want to produce a high, intensive, rich program [...] it's scary when you know you just have FSL Part 1²⁶.

Helena admitted that she still had “gaps” for her own Native-like proficiency. She felt that her cultural proficiency of French needed improvement to effectively introduce “those little nuances” that typically come from “a native French speaking person”. Helena also revealed that the majority of FSL teachers in Ontario are of “non-French backgrounds” and they do

²⁵ The Three Little Pigs folktale (Coin des petits, n.d.).

²⁶ This is the first level of the French as a Second Language (FSL) additional qualification that teachers are required to have to teach FSL in publically-funded schools in Ontario.

not have a strong cultural foundation of French. Without sufficient cultural training for CF teachers, Helena warned the danger of having students merely “go and explore the Internet” as “there’s not many reliable resources [...] of the real culture. So still you need to model and you know, scaffold for them to get somewhere”.

Finally, she also thought that the new curriculum lacked stimulating activities in its objectives. For example, she stated the following:

Everything is the same from Grade 4 to 8. [...] in the old curriculum [...] you had a certain concept that had to be learned by the end of that year. The new document -they need to write an email [...] I don’t know to what extension that email increases in intensity.

Thus, teachers needed to be thoughtful in generating activities that were both interesting and could provide measurable targets for the students and teacher to monitor progress.

Need for Support and Disparity Among School Boards

Helena felt that FSL CF teacher support varied from board to board, specifically the funding, technological and cultural opportunities. She wished that she had worked in a different school board to develop a better sense of how to manage the new curriculum as did her peers. Helena summarized her beliefs and her experiences with the new curriculum in the activity during the focus group as illustrated in Figure 7.

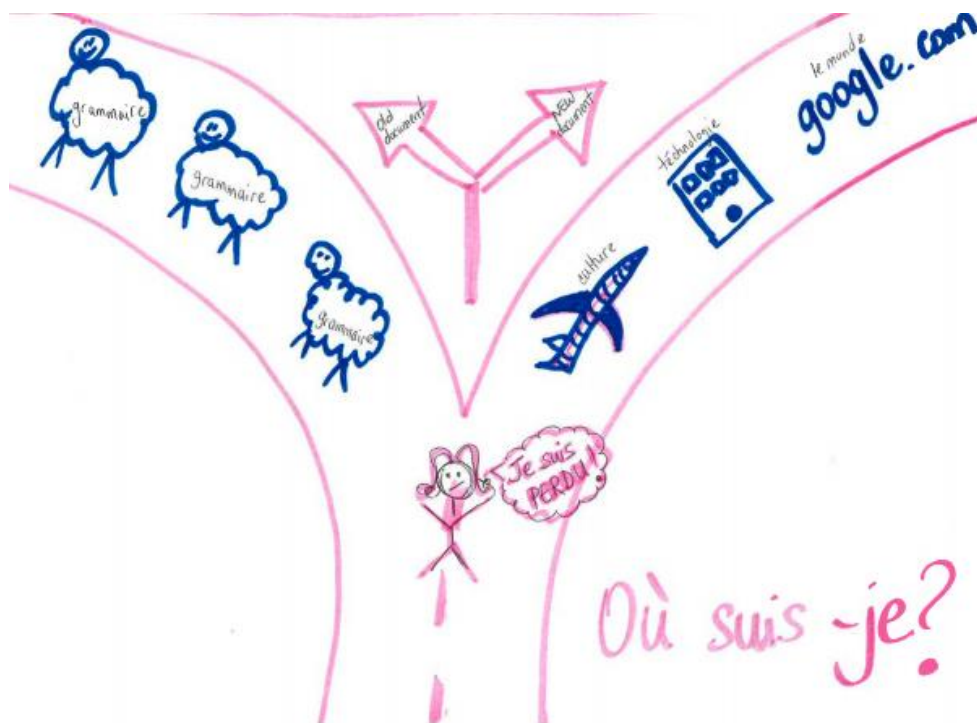


Figure 7: Helena at the Crossroads with the New Curriculum

She divided her paper into two distinct sections. The left side represented the 1998 curriculum while the right side represented the 2013 edition. She illustrated herself in the middle of her drawing with a question in French of *Où suis-je?*²⁷ Change for her, was “a hard process”. She perceived the new curriculum as being technologically focused as “Google pretty much owns everything”. The left side contained sheep that represented teachers to “follow the leader [...] the blind leading the blind”. Grammar was not included on this right side as according to Helena, “It is simply not in the document and they told us we don’t want to see it that’s why I got rid of it”. However, during the focus group, Madeleine disagreed by saying “It’s still there but [...] you don’t know where to put it in [...] the scaffolding is missing”. Isabel also reinforced that learning English was not explicitly taught with grammar concepts such as “I went, he went, she went, we went”, rather it was done “*par hazard*”.²⁸ Helena was willing to reduce her focus on grammatical accuracy provided that she obtained “the right map” and help that acknowledged that “we’re going in the right

²⁷ Where am I?

²⁸ By chance

direction”. However, she still maintained her concern about the lack of a grammar focus of the new curriculum which would not adequately prepare students for higher-level French as “universities aren’t going that way [...] with this inquiry”.

Helena supported the need for further training as she stated “give me [...] some workshops, give me some guiding [...] it was thrown at us [...] I just don’t know if I’m going the right way”. Since the revised curriculum is at a “novel state,” Helena wanted “to reflect with someone” because she felt alone as a curriculum user. Helena suggested co-planning with other colleagues of different “age, experience, knowledge, academia” which was the “best way to reflect”. She also felt that workshops would provide FSL teachers with a global sense of commonality with new curriculum. Co-creating lessons and talking about ideas “would be gold because then everyone knows where to go from. Workshops would also provide her FSL community with a space to vent “addressing concerns” such as “reporting assessment because everyone’s on a different page”.

She looked forward to receiving more money so she could stop having to purchase her own resources as well as to take her students on field trips for authentic experiences. She said “I think throwing them into an airport, even taking them, tell them to try to go and book a ticket in the Air France section [...] would solidify everything we’re learning”.

A Summary of Helena’s Curriculum Perceptions and Experiences

The majority of the experiences Helena shared, revealed her evident concern and dissatisfaction with the revised curriculum as it made her “feel lost”. As such, her “comfort level [...] is very low” as she was “sinking in the bottom of the ocean”. Not only did she have reservations about this new curriculum, she also identified problems for its successful implementation due to the lack of funding to purchase authentic FSL resources and the lack of a specific room allocation for FSL.

Despite these hindrances, she was still able to implement unique, culture-based activities. At the time of the second interview, Helena appeared to be more versed with the new

curriculum, understanding its intent and trying her best to incorporate grammar concepts. She strongly reinforced the importance for board-level, mandatory, FSL teacher training so that the curriculum users can understand and accurately perceive the revised curriculum as it was “a guinea pig process”.

Isabel

Positive Curriculum Perception

Overall, Isabel had a positive perception of the new curriculum and described it as “a great idea [...] more relevant [...] more natural [...] as it is not prescribed”. The 1998 curriculum was “too general and too easy, just not a challenge for the students” in Isabel’s experience. She felt that the new curriculum is “trying to make better French students” so that they can “order a hamburger” in the target language. She felt that the Ontario Ministry of Education created the new curriculum to address the fact that previously FSL students following the 1998 curriculum did not attain the “standards”. Therefore, the province “wanted to find a way to fix that”. Isabel also thought that the Ministry had the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) in mind to have their “expectations more in line with what Europe was doing”. She thought that the CEFR-infused concepts of the revised curriculum were beneficial in that the students “focus on useful outcomes [of the] communicative approach”. Isabel also thought that the new curriculum helped learners be autonomous as “they’re more involved in [...] the acquisition of the language. And that’s a good thing because that makes them more responsible for their outcomes, so it is harder”.

An Ambitious Learner

Isabel had made substantial efforts to try to understand and prepare for the new curriculum. She felt satisfied with her French proficiency level of “B1 and B2 in terms of CEFR” which is of an intermediate level (Council of Europe, 2001). Isabel reassured her students that “it’s ok to make mistakes and I am nervous speaking to first-language French-language speakers all the time”. In fact, she admitted that “sometimes my accent is beautiful and sometimes it sucks”.

She was already familiar with the curriculum content three years prior to this study as she got herself “invited to a study [of] a group of people who were assessing what worked and what didn’t work with the draft”. Isabel also consulted various Internet-based resources; however, they were not “age-appropriate”. Additionally, she joined a French Committee offered by her Union to be able to liaise with other FSL teachers in her board. However, Isabel did not know any of her FSL colleagues in her family of schools. From the colleagues that she did manage to network with, Isabel found that she was the “only one putting stuff” onto an online sharing forum. Regardless, Isabel was looking forward to growing with the new curriculum as she stated “I worked really hard to get out and front of it and embrace it and start to integrate it into my own planning”.

Curriculum Management Strategies

Isabel emphasized the importance for young learners to have as much early exposure to French as possible so that they remain engaged as the oral proficiency was considered to be “their biggest struggle”. Isabel felt that with greater exposure and time for curriculum implementation, it “becomes easier [...] they feel way more success [...] they can go to Montreal with their parents and say, no, that means East Dad!” As a result, Isabel reinforced and embedded, “practice, practice, practice” with the curriculum objectives so that every student could succeed. Isabel often implemented reading strategies focusing on what the students can do, rather than what they cannot do. Figure 8 outlines a sample strategy which translated in English mean: (1) I can find familiar words, (2) I underline them, (3) I look at the drawings, and (4) I make links with the drawings and with the words in the story.

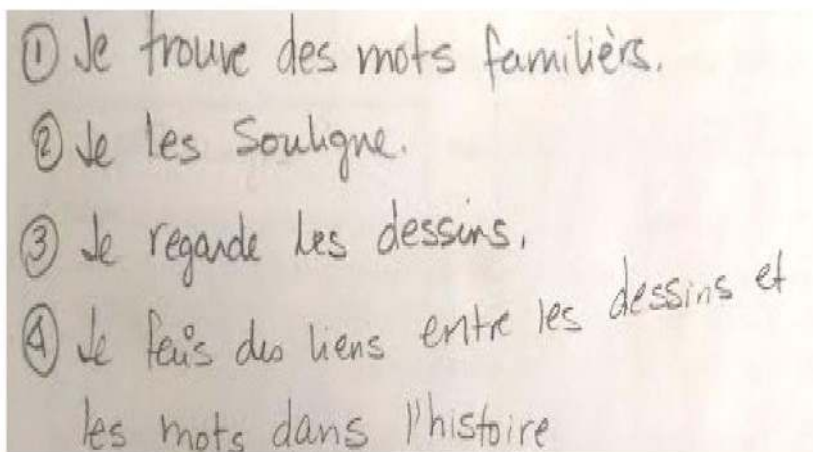


Figure 8: A Sample of Isabel's Reading Strategies

Figure 9 outlines an example of visuals connected to a reading passage entitled *L'inspecteur Lafouine: La couronne des Ducs de la Bodinière* (Les petites histoires, 2013-2014), that helped her students understand the story.

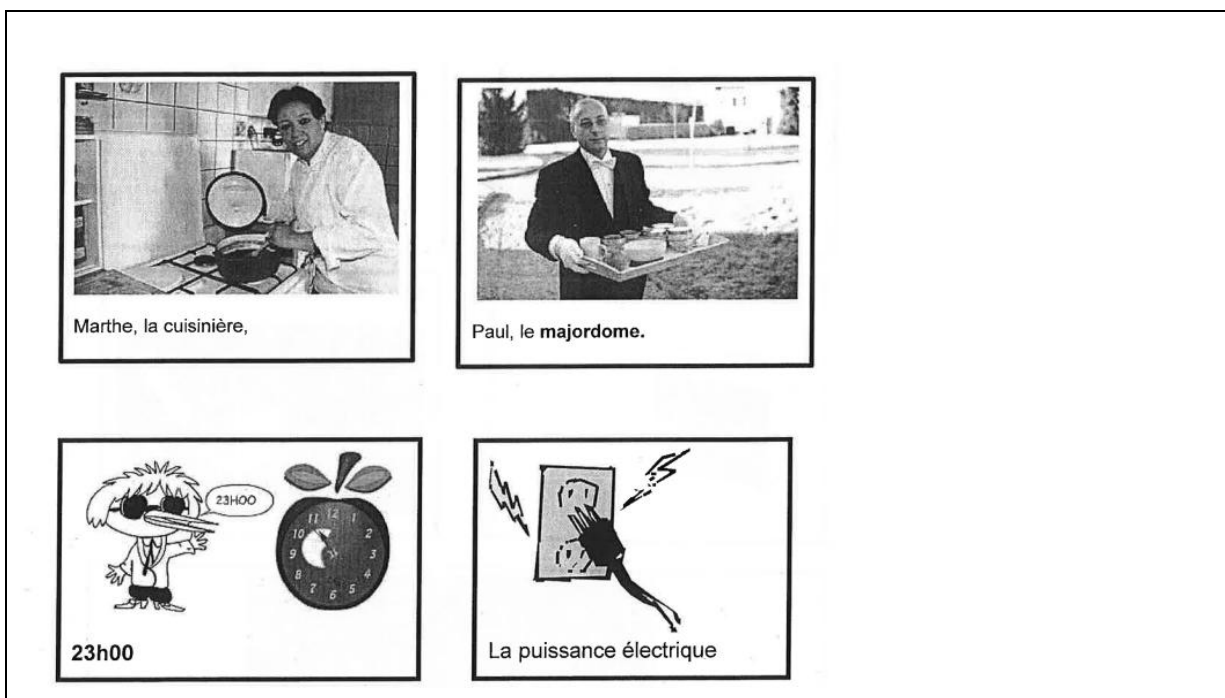


Figure 9: A Sample of Isabel's Reading Resources

Isabel also simplified online videos through You Tube (You Tube, LLC, 2015) when implementing the listening strand. She used curriculum resources *On y va* (Pearson Canada Inc., 2015b) and *C'est parti* (Collinson, et al., 2015, Les Editions CEC) from the 1998

curriculum whenever she was in her “panic go state” as they were structured, “familiar” and they “[fit] the bill for the most part”.

Isabel referred to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) to “make sure that they are reaching their goals”, specifically, with the concept of “I can” and knowing what “they’re looking toward”. Additionally, she often taught intercultural understanding “in a way that maybe will help them in the future”. For example, knowing that she had Guianese students in her classroom, Isabel infused Guianese culture into curriculum planning. She also noted that she was “really good at the writing process part” of the new curriculum as it was “very similar to teaching writing in English”.

Isabel had a strong rapport with her administrative staff at the school; therefore, she often implemented the curriculum objectives with activities that combined multiple FSL classes into one period as identified in the following example:

We’ll practice and practice being in a restaurant [...] so the Grade 6s [...] visit the Grade 8s to practice in a different setting. [...] The 8s were the owners of the restaurant. The 6s were coming in to have dinner so that they had to interact with each other without the script. So practice, practice, practice with the produced piece and then try to explain it into a real-life piece.

Lack of Teacher Reflection Time

She was trying her best to not bring her work home; however, despite being an experienced teacher, Isabel still came “home at six thirty”. Isabel identified that formal reflection was a determinant factor for being “a better teacher”, yet this form of reflection was impossible for her with her “250 kids” to see every day.

Isabel felt that the 1998 version of the curriculum was simpler to teach as the teacher using the previous curriculum was perceived as a “gardener [...] you just plant these seeds, you put water on them and you watch them”, which signals a more passive instruction approach. The older curriculum was easier to implement for Isabel due to “more rote-learning and more based on the vocabulary and phonics and pronunciation and surface things” as compared to the new curriculum where Isabel said “There’s nothing!” During the focus group, Isabel summarized her experiences and perceptions of the new curriculum in the form of a spiral design as illustrated in Figure 10.

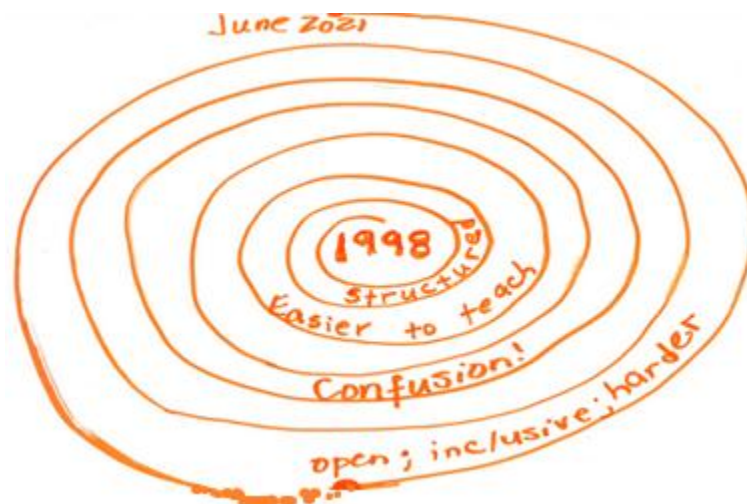


Figure 10: Isabel's 'Wonky' Curriculum Understanding

Isabel perceived the new curriculum with a blurred or “wonky” vision as she drew a swirly timeline to represent her professional growth. The centre of her spiral represented the 1998 curriculum as that policy document was “structured and way easier to teach and the expectations are targeted and very clear”, which suited her learning style. Then, the “confusion started with the new curriculum”. The words “open”, “inclusive”, and “harder”, represented her perceptions of the 2013 version. The spiral shape represented her “fuzzy” brain. However, Isabel was hopeful as the stress and the anxiety with the new curriculum would eventually “come full circle” as she said “life is always circular”.

Lack of Curriculum-appropriate Resources

Isabel felt that the new curriculum was structured with “first-language expectations” in mind in lieu of the FSL CF learner. As such, resources were lacking to help Isabel implement the enhanced expectations. Metacognition was a difficult curriculum component to teach for Isabel. Even though she had a French background from the West Indies, Isabel did not know “all the stories, all the history, all the current music [...] what’s on the charts in Paris”. As such, Isabel was “floundering, looking everywhere, collecting bits and pieces from the Internet”. She also acknowledged her difficulty teaching the listening strand. To mediate this, Isabel had simplified movies on You Tube (You Tube, LLC, 2015) to share with her students, but that she mentioned that “it’s really, really hard to find interesting, authentic pieces at level”. Isabel also referred to, *1 jour, 1 actu* (Milan Presse, 2015), a daily news

website that has age-appropriate reading materials for FSL students, yet such authentic resources were often “hard to read and it’s slang”. Teaching everything in the francophone world was perceived as “unfathomable” to Isabel and thus, required adequate resources to fully explore francophone culture with her students.

Technology was difficult for Isabel to use on a daily basis due to her school environment. Her school required Wi-Fi, faster computers and SMART Boards (SMART Technologies, 2015). In the interim, Isabel was using an old computer, her personal i-Pad, and student cell phones, which phones were “against school policy”. At the time of the first interview, the computer lab only had 12 computers that worked. She realized that other school boards in her area did offer more technological resources for FSL teachers; therefore, she questioned the disparity amongst school boards. At the time of the second interview, Isabel received one-time funding to purchase FSL resources; however, she realized that this was a rarity as she said “It was over a thousand dollars so I was very appreciative”. Isabel then obtained a stronger strength of Wi-Fi connection, and she located i-Pads for her classes. Isabel confirmed that the school received “30 re-furbished desktops” but that still, only “21 of them work”. Isabel did not attend quadrant meetings offered by her board for personal reasons. She received an invitation for a workshop in late spring of this year which was “more than the usual zero”. However, for Isabel the workshops offered were repetitive in nature. Isabel also expressed her feelings of isolation as the sole French teacher in her school. She extended her feelings of loneliness in the following example:

In our family of schools, there has to be 16 schools, that means a minimum of 16 French teachers. Why isn’t there something from our family of schools who are in the same neighborhood? We can easily get to each other’s school at the end of the day!

Lack of Curriculum Training

She admitted that the teacher implementing the new curriculum needed to have sufficient background preparation otherwise “you’re dead meat!” Even as an experienced teacher, she felt that she still required training as the new curriculum no longer permitted teachers to “rely on a manufactured or pre-existing program”. Isabel also encountered difficulty working with the intercultural and metacognition components of the new curriculum. In a notable example, she outlined her concerns:

The Grade 4 expectation it says: “Use information from oral French texts to find French-speaking communities of Ontario” [...] I’m concerned about how to quantify that [...] there’s pressure to mark everything strictly and perfectly and make sure that there’s no mistakes.

Isabel also required assistance with the listening to communicate and the listening for intercultural understanding strands of the revised curriculum as she felt unsure if she was really “getting it” as they do not even “register”. As such, planning for Isabel with this new curriculum was “a lot harder [and] more work”. Isabel sent an outcry to the board by saying “Fire me or train me!” as she felt “completely alone teaching French” consistently “re-inventing the wheel”. She elaborated on this by saying,

I’m done [...] it’s my frame of mind. Maybe it’s because there’s nothing new because this hadn’t helped me [...] the current consultant is spread way thin. There’s no way that I can call on her individually.

Additionally, she had doubts about the feasibility of assessing student autonomy with this new curriculum. “How many points do you have? What are you doing? [...] I don’t believe that it’s very productive for them to be too autonomous [...] they cheat!” Isabel maintained that it was easier to teach student autonomy in English-language subjects as “you can explain it to them in English [...] They can’t be autonomous in French because they can’t read it [...] understand it- not a lot of it. They can’t report back on it”. Isabel also outlined her new responsibility to “be more inclusive in the planning process” with this new curriculum. She stated the following:

Before, I could plan the whole unit and I could see it from beginning to end. Now, it’s more collaborative right? [...] What are some options that you see for a *tâche finale*²⁹? [...] I don’t start with the *tâche finale* anymore.

She affirmed that assessment is no longer “a single event [...] it’s more of a process. So along the way, what have you developed? How have you come to this understanding?” As such, Isabel concluded that assessment in this new curriculum is more difficult than the 1998

²⁹ Final task

version which would require additional training. She was still looking for ‘human’ support to move forward with this new curriculum. She recommended that her board film and broadcast a successful CF teacher using the new curriculum for training purposes to be given to other CF teachers. Isabel was also interested in learning about additional classroom management strategies in line with the new curriculum.

A Summary of Isabel’s Curriculum Perceptions and Experiences

Despite her evident CF teaching experience and her initial positive outlook on the new curriculum, Isabel required “human training [...] not online, not on a Webinar” so that she would not spend meaningless time “searching the entire web universe for an activity”. It was the board’s responsibility from Isabel’s standpoint, to recommend FSL material. Isabel recycled resources from the previous curriculum that aligned with the newer version. She also tried her best to engage students by combining classrooms to complete collaborative, task-based activities. She was concerned and felt disadvantaged because of the lack of progression in her school in terms of technology as a medium for cultural exchange. In the second interview Isabel identified some improvement in terms of available resources and funding in her school. Remaining concerns included the desire to receive additional training and to liaise with FSL colleagues in a face-to-face format as she still felt alone.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter focused on my participants’ perceptions of and experiences with the new curriculum identifying their growth and/or change over the period of the study. The participants’ perceptions of the new curriculum did not change significantly from January 2015 to April 2015. The data presented demonstrate that all participants, regardless of their attitudes or perceptions, tried their best to teach using unique, authentic-based activities. They all wanted additional teacher support at the level of their school and district.

Chapter 6: Cross-case Analysis

Chapter 6 summarizes the data from Chapter 5 into over-arching themes that provide insight to my two research questions and their related sub-questions:

1. How do four Ontario middle-school Core French teachers understand and perceive the revised Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b)?
 - How do they describe the differences / similarities between the “old” FSL curriculum policy and the revised 2013 policy?
 - What are their perceptions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the revised curriculum?
 - What are their perceptions of the potential of the new curriculum to increase student engagement in learning FSL?
 - What are their concerns about this revised curriculum?

2. How do these teachers operationalize the new curriculum in their daily practice?

I have identified core themes that surfaced and were repeated in the data collected. The themes are presented in order of repetition from ‘major’ to ‘smaller’ themes. The recurring themes are also built on the themes discussed in Chapter 2 of this study and offer new insights into research in FSL education. The results in this chapter are also supported with the Nested Pedagogical Orientations (Cummins et al., 2007) from Chapter 3 to help explain the similarities and the differences of my participants with respect to their reactions and experiences with the new curriculum. Finally, I compare my four participants’ experiences with the new curriculum in the form of a cross-case analysis by creating pairs of participants who shared similar curriculum perceptions and experiences.

Research Question #1: Participant Perceptions of the Revised Curriculum

In this section, I interpret the data to address my first research question focusing on my participants' comparisons of the 1998 edition with the 2013 curriculum. Five important themes corresponded to my first research question: (1) the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) as a guiding Framework for the new curriculum, (2) the vagueness of the new curriculum, (3) the marginalization of FSL, (4) the proficiency level of the FSL teacher, and (5) the overall, hopeful future for student interest in FSL.

The CEFR as a Guiding Framework for the New Curriculum

All four participants appreciated many of the components of the Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b) as they felt that its vision directly linked with concepts of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) - an empirical, international guiding framework for consideration in L2 curriculum design and implementation. Specifically, the CEFR has the following focus for second-language learning:

to deal with the business of everyday life [...] to exchange information and ideas [...] and to communicate their thoughts and feelings to them [...] to achieve a wider and deeper understanding of the way of life and forms of thought of other peoples and of their cultural heritage (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 3).

Similarly with the Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum “Students will communicate and interact with growing confidence in French [...] while developing the knowledge, skills, and perspectives they need to participate fully as citizens in Canada and in the world” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b, p. 6). The four teacher participants connected the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) and the Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b) with the focus on oral-language proficiency in French as students accomplish authentic tasks. For example, even Helena, a strong believer in the importance of grammatical accuracy, appreciated the Ontario Ministry of Education’s pursuit for oral-language development of FSL students. She identified that her students began to improve their oral-language skills as they completed authentic, task-based activities. However, she still wanted to merge the 1998 curriculum with the 2013 edition to obtain pedagogical

“harmony” afforded by combining grammar-based activities with authentic, oral-based opportunities for her students. The remaining participants of my study were extremely positive and enthusiastic regarding the possibilities springing from the new curriculum and of its CEFR-based structure. The overall positive perceptions of my participants compare favorably with several Ontario-based studies presented in Chapter 2 of this thesis. For example, the Ontario FSL elementary and secondary panel teacher participants in Faez et al.’s study (2011b) were also “generally positive about implementing instruction that incorporated a CEFR-based, language use approach in FSL classrooms” (p. 117). Additionally, Piccardo’s Ontario-based study (2013a) suggested that the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) not only be used as an evaluative tool, notably with the *Can Do* descriptors (ALTE, 2002), but also as a curriculum accompaniment.

Another main component of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) is the notion of promoting what a learner can do rather than what they cannot do in the target language, which was appreciated by all four participants in my study. The Common Reference Levels of the CEFR for assessment of proficiency “describe what learners can do in different contexts” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 21). In the revised Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b), the teacher prompts also focus on the growth of the learner. For example, one of the prompts from the new curriculum recommends that teachers ask students to identify what they do to express themselves clearly while speaking French (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b). As a result, my participants described a plethora of activities they implemented that not only engaged student interest but that were also age and FSL-level appropriate. In particular, Isabel and Madeleine emphasized their appreciation for *Can Do* (ALTE, 2002) descriptors from the CEFR which are used for “reception, interaction and production” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 25) to demonstrate what the learner can do while speaking in the target language.

The *Can Do* statements (ALTE, 2002) were also noted as beneficial by the participants in Piccardo’s (2013a) study as a tool for development for the student with his/her oral proficiency in the school and other contexts. Other Ontario CF teachers using the descriptors referenced from the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) found that “with appropriate guidance and instruction, students could actually assess their own abilities in French” (Faez et al.,

2011a, p. 11). The findings presented with regards to the influence of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) argue that FSL teachers tend not only to create authentic activities for their students, but also strive to consistently motivate their students with a more positive outlook on L2 performance. As such, components of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) inspired my participants as the ‘driving force’ for the Ontario Elementary FSL Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b). As concepts of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) were identified as evident in the new curriculum, this connects with the need for L2 teachers to understand the philosophy of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) that researchers such as Little (2006) identify. The many references to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) from both my participants as well as within Ontario-based research suggest that it is immensely important for FSL educators to understand the concepts of the Framework (Council of Europe, 2001) as guiding principles for curriculum enactment.

Vagueness of the New Curriculum

Despite the highly positive appreciation for the influence of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) in the revised curriculum, my participants did identify some aspects of the curriculum as vague. Helena was worried that the revised curriculum had too much “freedom” in its content (i.e., the lack of specific curriculum objectives). Consequently, it was difficult for her to identify “what they need to know by the end of a certain grade”. Madeleine did not feel as prepared as a novice teacher with this new curriculum as she was still “experimenting” with curriculum planning. Therefore, she had to “back track” or frequently review concepts as she was unclear about “the natural progression of the needed grammar points”. Isabel also added that the revised curriculum did not support her learning style to teach grammar in a less structured manner than with the 1998 curriculum expectations. D’Artagnan also admitted that the new curriculum was “a challenge” as it was difficult to determine the readiness of each student from previous FSL grades. However, he already identified strategies to get around this. He stated: “It’s great that the expectations are open for us because we can bring them together as a learning community and go from there”. Their experiences suggest that the new curriculum, while revolutionary in terms of its potential to support oral language development, still remains a challenge to implement.

In other studies, FSL teachers identified similar issues with the transferability of a CEFR-based curriculum. One participant in Piccardo's study (2013a) appreciated the separation of distinct curriculum strands, but revealed that "the unpacking is the messy part. That's where you're alone by yourself with these decisions" (p. 403). Additionally, a Grade 4 Extended French teacher-participant in Piccardo's study (2013a) realized the benefit of teaching French at the first level in this program as "we know they are starting at zero (0)" (p. 399). As my participants were teaching in the CF context, they did not meet with their students as frequently as an Extended French or FI teacher. As such, their reduced instructional time in CF may have impacted and influenced my participants' fears about curriculum transferability from grade to grade. I also considered the advantage of the teacher participants who taught the same students for several years in the same school as compared with other participants who had just begun teaching at a particular school. For example, Isabel was the only FSL teacher in her school, and therefore was fortunate to have taught all of the students. She explained that she was better able to know where each student came from in terms of their FSL development as compared with teachers like Madeleine who taught in a school with several other FSL CF teachers.

Metacognition is an important component of curriculum content. Jukes and McCain (2001) offer insight into its importance for the "analytical processing skills needed" (p. 87) to not only memorize the content but interpret and problem solve effectively. Many of the teacher prompts in the revised curriculum promote student autonomy and student metacognition. From the onset of data collection, the participants had difficulty understanding and implementing the teacher prompts of the new curriculum 'as is' as they felt that they were too advanced for the CF, middle-school context. Midway through the data collection, D'Artagnan and Madeleine perceived the teacher prompts for metacognition as a guide more than a word-by-word conception. In fact, they strongly suggested that FSL teachers be flexible in interpreting them to adhere to the specific needs of the classroom. Their perception of the use of the teacher prompts links with the work of Lappia (2011) on the envisioned and enacted curriculum. The Ontario Ministry of Education may have intended the teacher prompts to be used 'as is', but they were not implemented in this manner by D'Artagnan and Madeleine. Some literature suggests that Ontario FSL teachers exposed to training opportunities for the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) were better prepared to teach

metacognition and foster student autonomy (Faez et al., 2011a). Several of the other studies presented in Chapter 2 did not specifically focus on metacognition or the teacher prompts of the new curriculum; therefore, the perceptions and experiences with metacognition as described by my participants contributes to the research of the complexity of teaching metacognition. Had participants had more time and training with the new curriculum perhaps they would not have experienced such difficulties. The overall perceptions of the curriculum's vagueness, however, may be due to the fact that they were still relatively new curriculum users given that the revised curriculum only came out for official implementation September 2013. Regardless, planning and preparing for the new curriculum suggests that it is a dynamic process as identified by my middle-school CF teachers.

Marginalization of FSL

Not only was the new curriculum document analyzed and critiqued by my participants but they also reflected upon their contextual realities as CF teachers. All of my participants experienced marginalization as CF teachers. The discussion centred around the large number of CF teachers who do not have their own classroom and must teach *à la carte*. D'Artagnan knew that by being in his own classroom, he had substantial benefits and better experiences with the new curriculum than his peers who traveled from room to room. Helena originally had her own FSL classroom in previous teaching experiences, but at the time of this study, she was a teacher *à la carte*. Helena thus felt that the magic and the importance of French were almost gone. Her experience echoes the perceptions of Darryl, a CF elementary teacher in Southwestern Ontario in Cooke's (2013) study. He also felt that CF is an "afterthought in our system" (p. 76). He also believed that having a CF classroom changed students' perceptions of the program as he stated the following: "When it's my classroom [...] they cross that magic line, and they're mine" (Cooke, 2013, p. 77). What was surprising was Madeleine's positive outlook regarding the fact that she did not have her own CF classroom. She did admit, however, that a strong, supportive team of colleagues was required for her to walk into any given classroom without fear of being marginalized. She also added to the study that a CF *à la carte* teacher needs to spend substantial time to prepare and to effectively implement the new curriculum. As a result, the findings highlight the challenges of *à la carte* CF teachers and the need for additional support at the school and district levels.

Another point of FSL marginalization that surfaced was the school boards' focus on English and Math. Specifically, all of my participants acknowledged that their school boards failed to prioritize FSL education in various ways. Madeleine presented several authentic activities that tied in mathematics; however, she struggled with implementing math on a daily basis. In Cooke's (2013) study, Darryl, an FSL teacher also mentioned "English literacy and numeracy" as *the* priorities (p. 76). In addition, the participants in my student said they purchased their own curriculum resources because none were available to support the new curriculum. This connects with other FSL studies such as French and Collins (2014) who surveyed FSL teachers in Canada about the lack of appropriate and authentic curriculum resources. Additionally, not many workshops were available to help the teacher participants navigate through and implement the new curriculum. The workshops that were offered were generally not mandatory as noted by Helena. Isabel felt that the workshops that were offered in her district were repetitive in nature. Madeleine had to re-use resources from her previous job in another school district as the board she worked for at the time of the study did not provide as much PD as her previous employer.

Within the school context, my participants identified the importance for a supportive administration to help them understand and implement the new curriculum. Notably, all of my teacher-participants had supportive principals who helped them in varying ways. Some principals helped the teacher with obtaining funding for technological resources, others provided the teacher with French language materials and/or principals gave the teacher their own CF-designated classroom. The characteristics of their principals are congruent with Darryl's experiences, an Ontario CF teacher in Cooke's (2013) study. In particular, Darryl had a principal who "spoke French" (p. 76), therefore his administration had "a different perspective" (p. 76). The support provided by the four principals is not reflective of the situation across the province as not all principals are as supportive towards French, specifically CF. In fact, Isabel affirmed this observation that supportive principals are a rarity.

The disadvantage of being the only FSL teacher in a school was also a topic of discussion among my participants. Helena and Isabel felt extremely isolated as neither had an FSL colleague to liaise with on a consistent basis as compared with Madeleine and D'Artagnan

who could easily converse and observe other FSL colleagues in their school. The experiences of my participants are in line with Cooke's (2013) teacher-participants who felt "isolated, unimportant, and unsupported by administrators, parents, colleagues and students" (p. 90) as the sole FSL teacher in a school. Subsequently, Cooke identified that the teachers who had a higher sense of self-efficacy had the most teacher training with "a qualified mentor, collaboration with experienced colleagues and the support of administrators" (p. 90). The experiences described by my participants reveal that both the board-level and school-level communities greatly impact the preparation and implementation of the revised curriculum.

A Proficient FSL Teacher Required

The concept of proficiency was defined and explained by my participants. They defined L2 teacher 'proficiency' as dynamic and evolving. From the onset of the study, all of my participants felt confident with their French-language proficiency to implement the new curriculum, even as non-native speakers of French. Specifically, they identified themselves with an intermediate level of French. This feeling of confidence of the non-native speaker of French was also identified in Cooke's (2013) study. In fact, her francophone teacher-participants were not concerned about their language skills as they could easily converse in the language and teach French-language grammar to their students. 'Proficiency' also was described by my participants as teachers who had previous cultural experiences with French or another language. This was the case with Helena and Italian, as she felt confident to identify and teach the social norms of the target language such as how to answer the phone, and how to shake hands and other cultural practices not necessarily included in a textbook. 'Proficiency' was also understood as keeping oneself up to date with the relevant authentic materials required for the revised curriculum. In fact, all of my participants were already active teacher-researchers looking for appropriate and authentic resources that would help them to be in compliance with the new curriculum. My participants distinguish themselves from the CF teacher-participants of Cooke's (2013) study who "scored themselves particularly low in [...] keeping up-to-date with current approaches to second language learning and planning lessons" (p. 58) even with the francophone teachers of Cooke's (2013) study who benefitted from having French as their mother tongue but did not have enough FSL resources to match the French at the appropriate level of their FSL students. In addition,

'proficiency' was understood as pedagogical expertise such as knowing how to plan a lesson as identified by Madeleine who was a novice teacher in my study. In a study focusing on the experiences of FSL novice teachers in Ontario, Cooke (2013) identified that novice teachers had "the lowest sense of efficacy [for] general teaching methodology and L2 pedagogy" (p. 92).

'Proficiency' takes time to develop. Comparing the first interviews with the final focus group, I observed growth in my participants with respect to their proficiency and comfort understanding and using the new curriculum in daily practice. Specifically, there was growth in how they became proficient in developed resources, finding technology, and managing curriculum objectives as examples. Cooke (2013) also identified that her participants increased their overall sense of self-efficacy from their initial teaching pathway in teacher's college to the completion of her study. Specifically, her participants connected their feelings of self-confidence with "collecting a variety of mastery experiences" (p. 83). Thus, the definitions generated by my participants highlight the dynamic nature of FSL teacher proficiency. Additionally it pointed to the responsibility for FSL teachers to have 'more in their toolkit' as not only FSL teachers, but also as pedagogical and cultural 'experts' of the target language.

A Hopeful Future for Student Interest in French

Apart from the aforementioned challenges perceived by my participants with respect to FSL and the new curriculum, they also thought about the future of French and student enrollment in the discipline after Grade 9 (the final, mandatory year to study FSL in Ontario). Helena felt that the new curriculum content disadvantaged academically-driven students who needed grammatical accuracy to pursue FSL in higher-level education and/or French for an employment opportunity. Madeleine, saw more possibility for students to appreciate the concept of plurilingualism of speaking multiple languages rather than specifically continuing with French. Isabel linked student interest with French with early exposure to the language in primary school, as she believed that students learning French at a younger level would develop a greater interest in the language. D'Artagnan thought that French might gain in popularity among secondary school students because the new curriculum suggests that FSL teachers need to be inclusive and differentiate instruction to suit the needs of all learners.

Literature suggests that CEFR-based instruction engages FSL CF students, preventing student attrition (Faez et al., 2011a). Piccardo's participants also were hopeful that the revised FSL curricula in Ontario would help students understand the importance for continuing with French at higher levels (2013a). D'Artagnan structured his activities with the example of the Intermediate Communication Program (ICOM) student to ensure that every child enjoyed French. A Grade 7 CF teacher in Faez et al.'s study (2011a) also observed similar experiences of student appreciation of French specifically with the incorporation of the *Can Do* descriptors (ALTE, 2002) that "gave her students a sense of accomplishment when they realized they were able to complete certain tasks in French and therefore their level of confidence increased" (2011a, p. 9). My study identified similar experiences with other research (de Lira e Silva, 2014; Piccardo, 2013a; Faez et al., 2011a. & 2011b.) in that my teacher participants identified greater student interest with purposeful, authentic and relevant activities. The findings of my study add to the topic of student attrition as my participants offered more predictions about students' pursuit of FSL education past Grade 9 than with the studies described in Chapter 2.

Research Question #2: Participant Curriculum Management Strategies

In this section, I interpret the data related to my second research question which focuses on my participants' curriculum management strategies as well as the challenges they faced. Important themes emerged to provide insight to my second research question including: (1) curriculum organization techniques, (2) the focus on intercultural curriculum strand, (3) technology as a necessity, (4) changing assessment practices, and (5) the need for additional curriculum support.

Curriculum Organization Techniques

All participants of my study combined curriculum objectives into a single activity or lesson plan and this proved to be successful for them, specifically to create unique, enriched activities for their students. The experiences of my participants mirrored de Lira e Silva's study (2014) as she conducted action-based research in her own classroom as her students interacted with a francophone to address two general competencies in the CEFR "*savoir être* and *savoirs*" (Council of Europe, 2001, ii). She also incorporated the intercultural

competence strand (which is broken into many objectives) of the revised curriculum into this cultural exchange opportunity. This may explain why it is important to combine strands/objectives into cultural activities, as they require many skill sets such as listening to comprehend, interacting with peers and other characteristics.

My participants, regardless of their teaching experience, employed some form of structure when planning and implementing the new curriculum. D'Artagnan benefitted from his IB templates; whereas, Madeleine, a novice teacher, sought help from her instructional coach to help her craft long-range plans. Helena benefitted from various board-level FSL presenters who modeled curriculum planning techniques. Isabel based her planning on the importance of recycling curriculum content for students to effectively practice the objectives. Despite being an experienced FSL teacher, Isabel revealed that curriculum planning was not her strength. Based on the common preference for structure, the experiences of my participants may confirm that regardless of the age or experience of the instructor, the FSL teacher needs a base to begin with and ample curriculum planning support, especially when dealing with a new curriculum.

Apart from the evident need for planning structure, as identified by my participants, they also acknowledged the importance of being flexible curriculum users. For example, Helena felt that she needed to be flexible with her curriculum implementation to adhere to the interests of her students. She hosted an imaginary wedding between two of her students while teaching the verb *aimer*, (to like or to love), as the class wanted the two students “married *en français!*”³⁰ In another example, D'Artagnan juggled teaching about space exploration in French while developing an individual reading unit for a student with a fear of the solar system. As a result, my participants had varying levels of confidence to explore with their students and create activities ‘on the spot’. The importance for flexibility with the planning process was also mirrored in de Lira e Silva’s study (2014) who referenced Avots (1991). Avots “emphasizes the necessity of guidelines to organize the interaction” (de Lira e Silva, 2014, p. 22), which includes “flexibility” (de Lira e Silva, 2014, p. 22) as a fifth component.

³⁰ In French

Voices from other FSL CF teachers and researchers also emphasize the importance for flexibility in the CEFR (Faez et al., 2011a).

Two of the participants of my study appreciated and tried to implement components of the AIM Method (AIM Language Learning, 2010) as an effective tool for oral proficiency development for curriculum implementation. Helena used it even after it was no longer mandatory for her intermediate-level CF classes simply because she found that it made her students better speakers of French; however, she did not find the program beneficial in terms of including authentic activities. D'Artagnan also sought to "incorporate some" in his planning. In fact, in other research using AIM (AIM Language Learning, 2010), "more students responded positively than responded negatively" (Mady et al., 2009, p. 710). Isabel identified her interest in the program; however, realized that obtaining such resource was difficult due to the culture in her school. The references of AIM (AIM Language Learning, 2010) made by my participants could mean that they were looking for a program in line with the new curriculum that had a focus on oral language proficiency development but that still maintained a sense of structural design, specifically knowing where to begin and where to end in terms of the curriculum planning for the year.

Additionally, I observed an evolution from all my participants in terms of how they implemented the revised curriculum in daily practice. Comparing their experiences and perceptions from the first interview up until the focus group, I noticed that their activities were more elaborate and that they developed what could be defined as a curriculum routine. As time progressed, it appeared that all my participants became more confident curriculum users despite the challenges presented. For example, they knew where to go to or who to look to and what they needed to implement the new curriculum. This correlates with findings from other studies such as Faez et al. (2011a) confirming that the more teachers adopted change in their practice (i.e., the CEFR-based activities), the more comfortable they became with a "change in their attitudes" (p. 117).

Focus on the Intercultural Understanding Strand

The intercultural understanding strand was the most referenced curriculum strand in all of my participants' shared experiences with the new curriculum, which suggests its strong

importance for curriculum success. Isabel had more of a sociolinguistic emphasis on this strand when she introduced her students to “the difference between *langue officielle*³¹, and *langue administrative*³² and *langue maternelle*³³”. Helena and Isabel felt that this strand could still be implemented in conjunction with the previous 1998 curriculum resources. Helena enriched her classroom with frequent, hands on activities such as the restaurant and the wedding simulations, as well as having students fill out customs declaration cards. D’Artagnan presented more activities involving student ownership to address this strand. Madeleine focused her integration of this strand in more local, Canadian contexts with her example of moving to Quebec. From the examples outlined in this study, my participants admitted that they often created these unique and enriched activities from scratch. Their experiences suggest that their role as curriculum implementers was complex and included the frequent creation of activities in line with the revised curriculum objectives.

My participants’ curriculum management strategies with respect to the intercultural strand support findings from other studies. For example, de Lira e Silva (2014) also explored this new curriculum expectation in greater detail and emphasized its dynamic nature and the new-found responsibilities of FSL teachers:

Educators are expected to convey both language and culture in context and help students make connections to different French-speaking communities and understand aspects of their culture while preparing for authentic interactions with members of other cultures (p. 5).

In addition, Cooke emphasized that “Effective teachers should also demonstrate the ability to promote the value of learning French and the linguistic duality within Canada” (2013, pp. 62-63). De Lira e Silva (2014) also identified that FSL teachers should infuse their programming with “prolonged authentic cross-cultural interactions” (p. 87). In my opinion, this demonstrates that the new strand in the curriculum is a dynamic one that requires the curriculum user to be not only a user of the curriculum but an interpreter and a developer -- roles that are perhaps new to my participants. Despite the added workload potentially faced from this new strand in the curriculum, the activities shared by my participants suggest that

³¹ Official language

³² Administrative language

³³ Maternal language

when teachers are passionate about their program and ambitious and open to learn, they can create enriched pedagogical opportunities in line with the revised curriculum. Additionally, the cultural activities do not necessarily need to elaborate in design or large-scale. De Lira e Silva (2014) also recommended that simple “e-mail writing promotes understanding and acceptance of another culture without leaving the classroom” (p. 88).

Unfortunately, despite their efforts to introduce their students to the intercultural strand, my participants questioned its feasibility in a CF middle-school classroom for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, they experienced the dilemma of additional planning time required to implement intercultural activities adhering to the new curriculum strand. For example, my participants tried their best to extend their classroom parameters globally either by connecting with international contacts (i.e., D’Artagnan), or by bringing the francophone experiences into the school with artifacts (i.e., Helena & Isabel), and/or extended school-wide francophone activities (i.e., Madeleine). However, they often brought home additional work to prepare for such experiences. Helena described planning with the intercultural strand of the new curriculum as “hard”. Additionally, Isabel and D’Artagnan spent a lot of their evenings preparing for the new curriculum. Isabel spent much time trying to find the most authentic and relevant curriculum resources for her students. Their experiences compare with the Ontario elementary and secondary CF teacher participants of Faez et al.’s (2011a.) study as they too experienced “a time crunch and did not have sufficient time in the classroom to implement the CEFR-based activities and cover the demanding curriculum” (p. 11). At the time of the 2011 study, they incorporated intercultural activities based on previous FSL curricula. Subsequently, three years later, my participants still encountered time as a hindrance to implement engaging, authentic-based, intercultural activities with a formal expectation now entrenched in the separate intercultural strand.

The participants also felt that incorporating this specific strand required not only additional planning time, but also additional human and material support. For example, Madeleine spoke of the benefit of working in a supportive school environment that allowed her to extend francophone activities at a school-wide level. Helena and Isabel felt that the technological support they received was sufficient to implement this new strand. However, they remained resourceful and tried to bring in as many intercultural activities as possible

with Helena purchasing European resources, and Isabel conducting extensive research on free or cost-efficient technological tools to use in her classroom. The challenges experienced by my participants are quite different from the experiences of the teacher participants in Piccardo's study (2013a) as they received formal training with the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001). Piccardo's participants benefitted from the training and felt that the training materials were beneficial even for the CF classroom; however, they too, worried that the training would be worthless unless they had the support of their principal to teach FSL in new ways.

The location of their classroom also impacted my participants' implementation of the intercultural strand. For example, Isabel felt that it was difficult to teach francophone cultures in Ontario, which is a predominantly English-speaking province. Similarly, de Lira e Silva (2014) also identified that some of her elementary Grade 4 CF students in southeastern Ontario encountered difficulty in establishing an intimate bond with francophone students from another school in the province during an intercultural exchange opportunity. Specifically, she identified that, "Some Anglophone students had difficulty understanding the meaning of being French" (p. 82) due to the "location" (p. 82) of the study which was conducted in Ontario. Isabel admitted that teaching and understanding intercultural awareness is so immense that she needed to conceptualize it "in one unit" as that was how she understood the teaching of culture. This is similar to the findings in Faez et al.'s study (2011b) as the researchers identified that "Teachers need to be exposed to concrete, step-by-step ways of implementing task-based approaches in their classroom" (p. 117) so that the complexities of teaching this strand are simplified. The challenges that my participants experience with the intercultural strand illustrate the complexity of teaching this new strand on a daily basis, specifically with varying levels of administrative support.

D'Artagnan put a more positive spin on the dilemma of the intercultural strand in that he felt that it prompted the awareness of other languages in the French context. He built on the strengths of students who came from different language backgrounds. He explained "There's your chance to say, well, isn't that interesting? Your first language can impact French". He also reassured the other participants during the focus group that the intercultural strand is

naturally “in all four strands [...] a lot of activities are at least three strands right?” His positive outlook suggests that while the strand can be perceived challenging for a CF classroom, teachers naturally implement it with other curriculum strands for one single activity.

Technology as a Necessity

All participants of my study felt that technology became a required tool to implement the revised curriculum. In fact, it was particularly perceived as essential for the implementation of the intercultural strand. Madeleine realized that a lot of her authentic activities were successful simply due to her plethora of technological resources. D’Artagnan was more concerned with his age and lack of experience with technology as he jokingly labeled himself as a “dinosaur [...] still learning how to use colored chalk”. He also felt that technology is consistently changing as he stated the “apps are coming faster than we can teach!” Madeleine and D’Artagnan also used technology for differentiated instruction to support learners with special needs. Isabel and Helena used other resources such as You Tube (You Tube, LLC, 2015) to broadcast francophone cultural experiences to their CF students. Madeleine and Helena, the two novice teachers of my study, introduced many technological resources to the two experienced practitioners during the focus group. For example, they discussed the characteristics and the benefits of implementing QR codes or otherwise known as bar codes readable on a “mobile phone [...] that can store website URL's, plain text, phone numbers, email addresses and pretty much any other alphanumeric data” (QRStuff, 2014) and their applicability to FSL classroom activities.

My participants’ experiences with technology for FSL instruction compare favourably with other studies. For example, Piccardo (2013b) conducted a study that analyzed the perceptions of and technological strategies of Ontario FSL secondary teachers. Most of the participants in her study were also already willing to use technology in their classroom. Piccardo (2013b) identified that these teachers embedded technology primarily for images, student-led presentations, listening and grammar online activities. Her participants also viewed

technology not as supplementary or complimentary to an already-existing program but as a requirement. Regardless of the level of technological support, all of my participants deemed technology to be an essential component for their successful implementation of the new curriculum.

My participants came from different school contexts, some having an abundance of technology (D'Artagnan and Madeleine), others (Helena and Isabel), waiting for 'the good news' to receive technological resources. Financial support in fact, has already been identified as a necessary factor for successful curriculum implementation (Wiles & Bondi, 2011). Additionally, technology requires training. In a two-year collaborative research project conducted in Early French Immersion classrooms in Alberta, Pellerin (2013) was interested in capturing L2 teachers' perceptions and strategies to integrate the use of iPods, laptops and computers in their primary-level classrooms. Both the teacher participants and the researcher identified that while the educators initially suffered a period of anxiety using the resources, as time progressed, the teachers benefitted from professional development and ongoing colleague collaboration that resulted in their growing confidence with technology. Increasing confidence with technology was also experienced by all of my participants. Despite the challenges of technology faced by my participants including the lack of funding, the lack of experience, or the prevalent technical failures of their equipment, my participants maintained their ambition to resolve these problems. It would seem that technology is an essential ingredient to implement the intercultural strand of the revised curriculum.

Changing Assessment Practices

Assessment within the framework of the new curriculum was an ongoing learning goal for all of my teacher participants. It was not surprising that my participants reacted to the removal of explicit grammar lists from previous Ontario FSL curricula. Most of my participants felt this change as refreshing whereas Helena felt it to be a severe hindrance for the development of accuracy in the French language. However, Helena was willing to shift her thinking and teaching practice to be in line with the new curriculum structure, implicitly embedding grammar into its expectations and teacher prompts. As such, my participants' assessment

practices evolved from more traditional assessment to the assessment of the process of learning the language. A notable reference made by several of my participants was their tendency to use the *Can Do* descriptors (ALTE, 2002) of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) as an assessment tool.

The practice of using the *Can Do* descriptors mirrors the studies conducted by Hulstijn et al. (2012) and Little (2011) who affirmed that the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) is often used by teachers for the assessment piece in their curriculum planning. In fact, in previous research (Faez et al., 2011a.), Ontario elementary and secondary teachers also appreciated the *Can Do* descriptors (ALTE, 2002) as they helped students set their own learning goals, which made them more responsible for their learning. My participants also overcame some of the vagueness of assessment by communicating to their students what constituted success. Moonen et al. (2013) also identified through their research that their teacher participants “explained CEFR to their pupils” (p. 237) that helped promote the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) and improved student understanding of assessment.

In this regard, Madeleine stressed the importance of assessing as often as possible with the emphasis on student ownership of the assessment. She planned her programming based on the student attainment of Level 3, otherwise known as the Ontario Ministry of Education standard; however, she thought that her assessment criteria would need to be consistent with other FSL teachers for accountability and transferability reasons. D’Artagnan added that he assessed “more on communication” so listening was “really easy”. Reading, however, was harder for him to assess. He also spoke about his belief in the benefits of having pre-tests and actual test assessments to provide his students with additional learning opportunities. Madeleine assessed grammar in a more natural manner empowering her students to ‘be the teachers’ in the following example:

With my grade 4s [...] I taught them a concept the day before and so I came in the next day and said, ok, we’re going to pretend that I’m the student and I want you to explain to me what I taught you the day before. And so, I was being silly and so I was doing errors on purpose to see if they could correct it. They had so much fun trying to correct me.

Despite their shift in practice with respect to assessment, my participants encountered various degrees of difficulty in assessing within the framework of the new curriculum. A main

challenge identified was the lack of transferability of assessment results from one grade to the next. With the new curriculum, my participants admitted that it took them additional time to re-teach content from previous grades so that all students started the year off on the ‘same page’. Twelve FSL secondary teachers in the GTA also noted that there should be transparency in assessment but that this had “a long way to go” (Piccardo, 2013a, p. 403). Elementary and secondary teachers in urban Ontario also felt that the standardized provincial achievement charts were disconnected from CEFR-inspired concepts (Mison & Jang, 2011). My participants also confirmed their frustration with the lack of progression of the achievement charts of the 2013 revised curriculum as they are ‘behind’ related to the elaborate *Can Do* descriptors (ALTE, 2002) referenced in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001). Piccardo’s participants noted that the change in assessment practices had “a long way to go” (2013a, p. 403). In fact, the experiences of my participants confirm that curriculum alignment for assessment is still an ongoing process for the revised curriculum. As Turnbull (2011a) confirmed “Alignment with and infusion into the curriculum is underway, but not yet complete, in many jurisdictions” (p. 7).

The assessment practices proposed in the new curriculum and/or with the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) can support students to develop a more holistic way to think about learning French; however, the process of implementing new assessment practices is dynamic. Additionally, when achievement charts remain unchanged from the previous FSL curricula in Ontario, this can become a hindrance for the implementation of the revised curriculum.

Need for Additional Curriculum Support

The vagueness of the curriculum as identified by my participants could explain another dilemma related to finding appropriate resources. All four participants of my study reinforced the need for ongoing curriculum support for the successful implementation of the new curriculum. Three out of four participants at the time of the online questionnaire did not have access to FSL resources to orient themselves with the new curriculum. During the focus group, Isabel expressed her ongoing concern about being the sole FSL teacher in her school isolated from her FSL colleagues in neighbouring schools. Helena taught in a poor community and described using the new curriculum in her particular context as “a dog and pony show!” because she did not have the same support as did her colleagues working in

affluent communities. Helena would go “back to the old stuff” if resources were not given to her for the new curriculum. D’Artagnan specifically requested funding for CEFR-training. Helena appreciated the focus group opportunity to reflect on the new curriculum as well as exchange ideas that she might be able to implement in her own context.

My participants’ experiences are similar to the dilemmas presented in Cooke’s study (2013) whereby her teacher participants identified their own difficulty “in obtaining appropriate resources needed to deliver an effective FSL program” (p. 71) with “so many resources out there” (p. 71). Specifically, Darryl, a CF, elementary teacher participant felt that the FSL resources offered at his school were more appropriate for “first language learners” (p. 71), or francophone students. As a result, Moonen et al., (2013) and Piccardo (2013a) also reinforced that educational stakeholders must work together to achieve the successful implementation of the new curriculum.

Being a novice or an experienced teacher did not seem to impact my participants’ positive or negative perceptions of the curriculum. Due to the curriculum concerns presented in this chapter, more training and time for reflection were requested by the four participants. Change in practice, can take time. For example, Van den Branden (2006) noted that the “incorporation of task-based principles into daily classroom practice appeared to be a slow process [which] lends further empirical support to the complex relationship between teacher cognition and teacher actions” (p. 233). All of my participants felt that they needed training to help mediate several of their curriculum concerns. They also suggested that their school boards should provide regular formal and mandatory curriculum-focussed workshops. This suggestion is supported in other studies and reports such as Turnbull (2011a) who believed that “commonality in implementation of CEFR-based activities would be greatly enhanced and facilitated if there were a regular opportunity or venue for pan-Canadian sharing and consultation” (p. 16). I interpret the need for additional curriculum support as essential for Ontario FSL teachers to go beyond theory towards the implementation of new teaching practices.

Participant Orientation to the New Curriculum

In this section, I build on the themes presented in this chapter that identify common perceptions and experiences of my teacher participants with respect to the new curriculum to now highlight some of their differences as curriculum users. I observed patterns of common curriculum beliefs and management strategies by pairing my participants. I explain the process through which I paired my participants. I base my pairing of participants on the work of Cummins et al. (2007) to help me identify how I see the pairing as well as the implications the pairing have for this research. Prior to the description of the paired participants in this section, it is important to acknowledge that I paired my participants based on the information that they chose to share with me during the study. Perhaps, they omitted essential curriculum perceptions and experiences that would have impacted my pairing structure had I had known of them. Additionally, this pairing should not be perceived as ‘classifying’ my participants into a constrained ‘box’ or orientation. Rather, the pairing was considered merely to help me pursue a deeper conceptualization of the findings. Finally, I also realize that the orientations of my participants in this section may not fit with how my participants perceive their own practice or the classification they would like to assign to their own practice, but perhaps due to their teaching environment (i.e., their board and school culture, access/lack of access to appropriate resources and funding, etc.) or some other factors, their orientation was impacted. These orientations are not to be understood as evaluative in terms of the teacher’s performance as a first-time curriculum user.

Helena and Isabel: A Social Constructivist - Transformative Curriculum Orientation

I believe that these two participants reflected more of a ‘blend’ of the second and third curriculum orientations of the Nested Pedagogical Orientations (Cummins et al., 2007). A summary of their similarities and their differences is identified in Figure 11.

I summarize their experiences as ‘in the middle’ in terms of their professional comfort zone in the implementation of the new curriculum. Helena was still leaning to Stage 2 (social constructivist) as she reinforced her preference for this somewhat linear accuracy in the TL. This preference correlated with her previous experiences as a university student as well as a teacher candidate where she excelled in and loved grammar. Despite her passion for this

component of the language, she identified her dilemma to ‘let go’ of her grammar ties when using the new curriculum. Accuracy, in short, was of equal importance to her as cultural awareness.

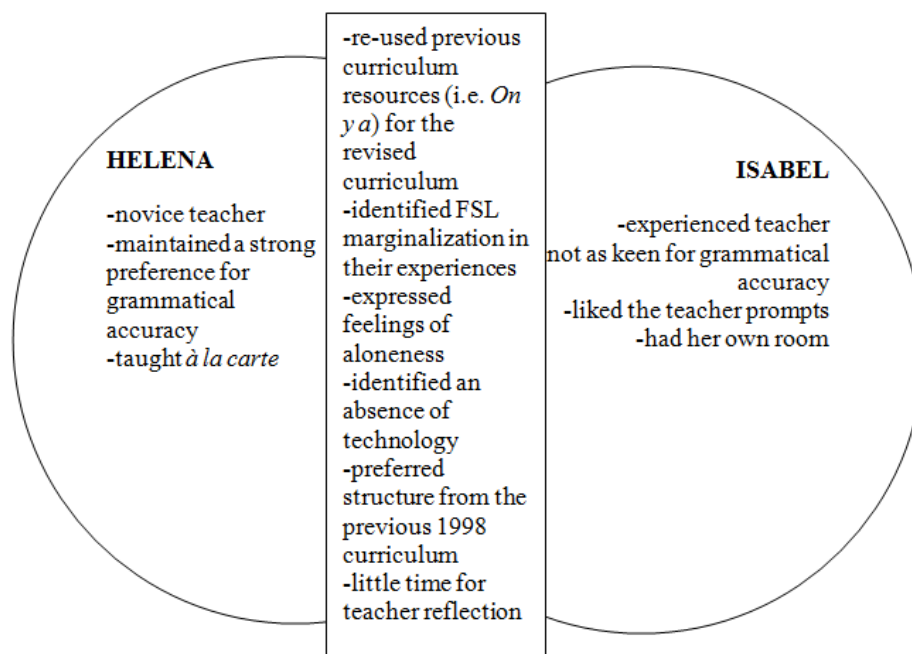


Figure 11: Comparisons of Helena and Isabel

Isabel notably confirmed her willingness to solicit student input for the final task, which was a new technique for her. She still identified her preference to use resources based on the 1998 curriculum because those were available. She also identified her preference for structure and her dilemma that curriculum planning was always a challenge and an extra burden to teaching. As an experienced teacher, however, Isabel felt confident in her presence in the school. The students loved her and due to her experience, she could always revert back to the previous resources if need be.

Curriculum change was considered as important for both Helena and Isabel; however, based on the experiences, it appeared that they did not and/or could not maintain an ongoing transformative orientation because of their respective school environments that tended to be constraining in nature. Helena and Isabel could easily transition into the next stage of curriculum implementation as they already identified a plethora of resources and unique activities. Additionally, both Helena and Isabel remained ambitious researchers in that they

often found their own unique FSL materials from either abroad (i.e. Helena’s German-based CEFR resource to Isabel’s Guianese references in classroom discussions). As such, they acknowledged that a shift in practice was necessary to implement many aspects of the new curriculum such as teaching grammar implicitly in the context of authentic activities. Additional support at the school and district levels would help them transition into the transformative orientation.

Madeleine and D’Artagnan: Transformative Curriculum Users

Madeleine and D’Artagnan’s curriculum experiences (Figure 9) are more congruent with the third orientation of the Nested Pedagogical Orientations (Cummins et al., 2007).

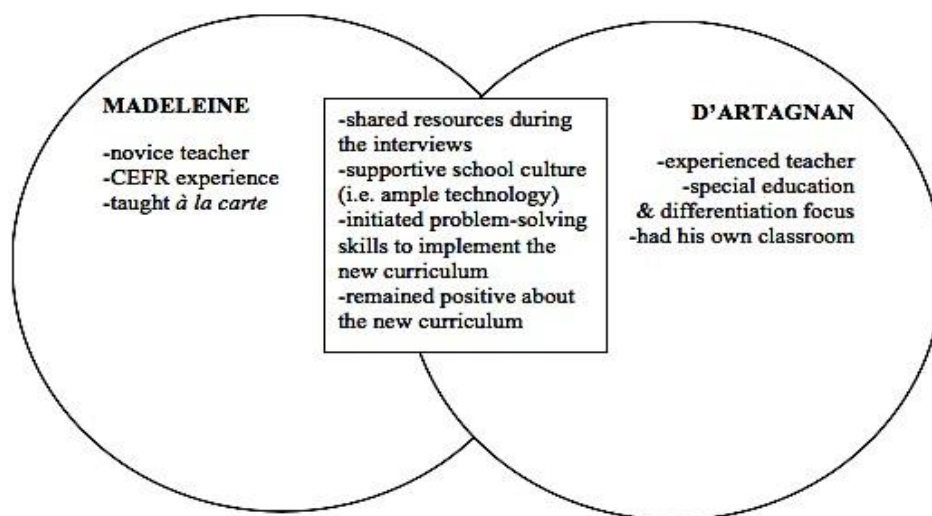


Figure 12: Comparisons of Madeleine and D’Artagnan

Transformative educators are typically more student-centered, and both participants provided more references for student input for their curriculum planning. D’Artagnan had the benefit of IB (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2005-2015) training (i.e., he referred to using IB curriculum planning templates) that helped him to connect FSL content with international and cross-curricular contexts to promote “critical literacy among students” (Cummins et al., 2007, p. 45). For example, debates on topics such as political science were common in his CF classrooms that could extend to critical topics (i.e. social inequality) and were well received by his students. Madeleine, although not trained in IB, embedded math-

based concepts in many of her French activities supporting cross-curricular experiences. In addition, Madeleine followed one of the characteristics of a post-method teacher when she recycled curriculum objectives (Nation & Macalister, 2010) on a consistent basis in particular, whenever she realized that her students did not arrive at the objective. The curriculum user with this transformative orientation uses his/her pedagogical content knowledge (Richards, 2012) by selecting appropriate materials attainable and differentiated for each student. D'Artagnan, as an example, frequently referenced differentiated instruction techniques as he thought about his students in the ICOM Program.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter summarized the data to help explain the similarities as well as the differences among the teachers' perceptions of the new FSL curriculum as well as their strategies for curriculum implementation. The four teachers had various degrees of enthusiasm towards the new curriculum as compared with the 1998 version. Their emotions ranged from highly enthusiastic to somewhat hopeful for student success with French.

They all conducted their own initial, teacher-led research to better understand and prepare for the new curriculum. All four participants combined multiple strands of the curriculum into one particular activity. Grammar was still taught, but in different ways. All four teachers were able to integrate cultural experiences in their teaching, whether it be virtual or by combining classes due to their supportive school cultures. While designing their programs, my participants often sought student input. The student learning experience was infused with games to encourage the spoken French in the CF classroom. Students shared responsibility with the teachers, as they had to conduct various forms of student-lead activities or research to accomplish a particular goal. All participants requested additional training and professional development. They refined their teaching strategies by the time of the focus group; however, they still requested additional support to help them manage the new curriculum. While differences were identified through the pairing of my participants, similarities were also present among the themes that surfaced through the data collection. While the study was small in nature, the findings presented and analyzed offer initial insights on how Ontario CF middle-school teachers implemented the curriculum during 2013-2014.

Chapter 7: Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the findings of my study “succinctly what has been attempted, what has been learned, and what new questions have been raised” (Wolcott, 2009, p. 115). For this study, I conducted research to attempt to provide insight to my research questions:

1. How do four Ontario middle-school Core French teachers understand and perceive the revised Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b)?
 - How do they describe the differences / similarities between the “old” FSL curriculum policy and the revised 2013 policy?
 - What are their perceptions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the revised curriculum?
 - What are their perceptions of the potential of the new curriculum to increase student engagement in learning FSL?
 - What are their concerns about this revised curriculum?
2. How do these teachers operationalize the new curriculum in their daily practice?

I then present the limitations of my study and the need for further research is also discussed in this chapter. Finally, I conclude by outlining the implications of this study and describe what made my study informative and relevant.

Overall Positive Perceptions of the New Curriculum

One of the main findings was that all of my participants appreciated and understood the Ontario Ministry of Education’s rationale for an oral-fluency based focus in the new curriculum. All four participants generally held favorable views of the revised curriculum with its implicit components inspired by the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), notably, the infusion of oral-based, authentic opportunities in the target language. The teacher participants, regardless of their readiness for infusing the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) in the curriculum, presented numerous examples of how their students were exposed to oral-

based activities as “social agents” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 9) incorporating the components of the CEFR’s communicative competencies. They all tried to incorporate speaking to communicate, speaking to interact, and speaking for intercultural understanding of the overall expectations of the Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b). The vision of the new curriculum focuses on developing confidence in communication, knowledge of Canada and the international landscape for active participation as learners (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b).

My participants perceived the curriculum as open enough for unique projects, which they felt was a significant improvement from the 1998 curriculum objectives. Theme-based, culturally-infused activities were incorporated into the classroom by my participants in ways that kept their students enthusiastic about French. Participants also acknowledged that one cultural activity often lead to the integration of several learning strands of the new curriculum. The curriculum content focused more on student autonomy, which proved to be another benefit of the new curriculum. While Isabel acknowledged that it was impossible to know everything about the language and of the cultures of French, many of the participants’ activities asked the students to conduct their own research which alleviated the burden of ‘knowing it all’. As such, the overall content of the Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b), with its implicit references to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) were well-received by my participants as the curriculum provided the ‘space’ to design their planning pursuant to their particular teaching realities as Ontario CF middle-school teachers.

Characteristics of Successful Curriculum Implementation

From the initial online questionnaire conducted in January 2015, to the final focus group held in April 2015, much evolution was evidenced by all four participants as they ‘grew’ with the new FSL Curriculum. This growth and evolution is summarized in Figures 13 and 14. The two figures essentially summarize the findings to support my two research questions on teacher perceptions of and teacher implementation strategies of the revised curriculum.

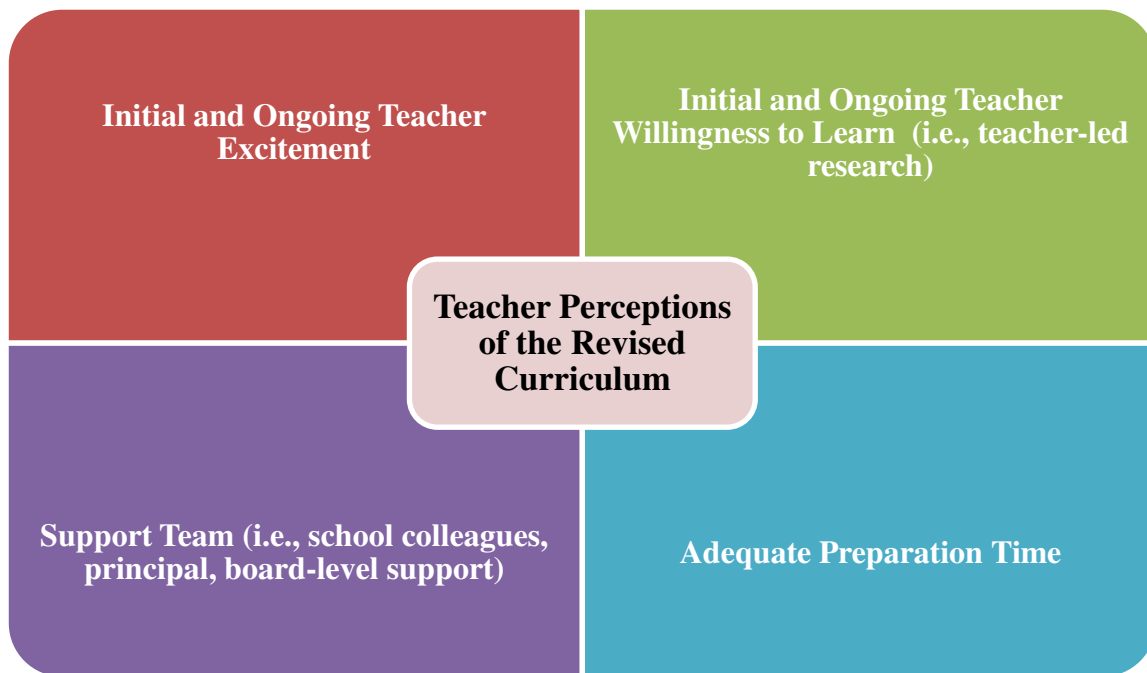


Figure 13: A Summary of Teacher Participant Curriculum Perceptions

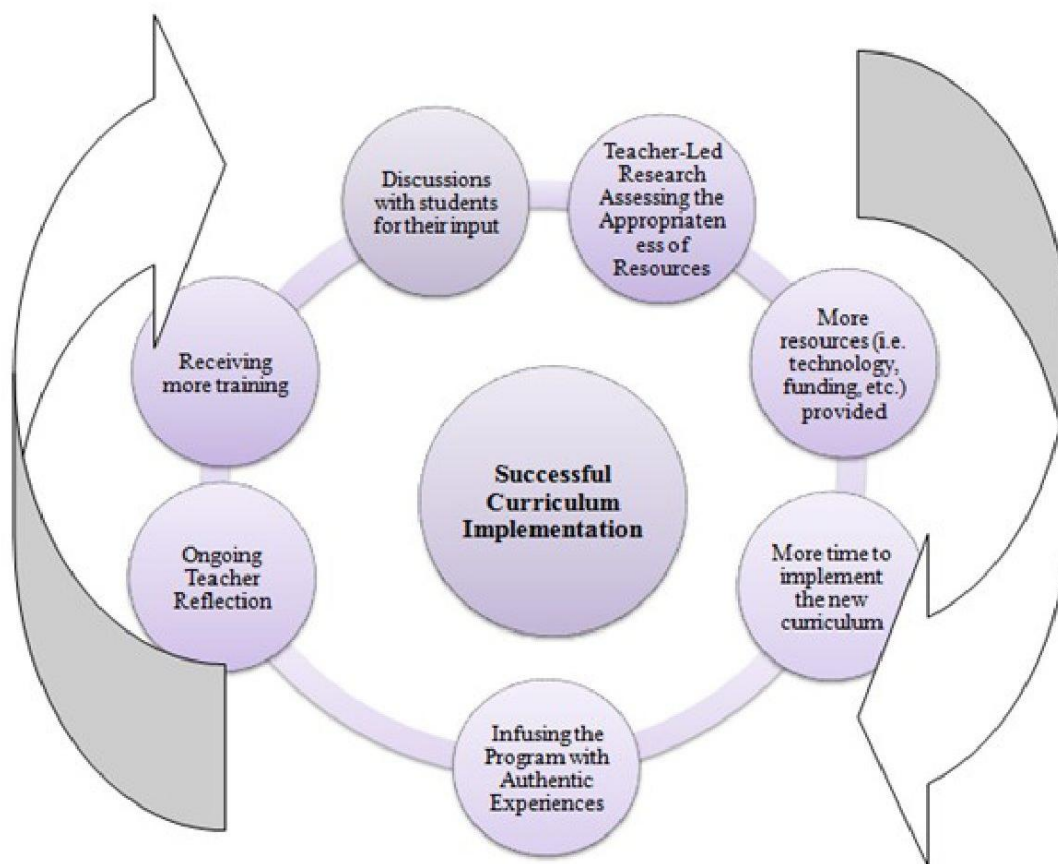


Figure 14: A Summary of Teacher Participant Curriculum Growth

Figure 13 outlines that all of my participants came to the study with the willingness to learn about the new curriculum as well as hope that it would lead to improved enrolment in FSL after Grade 9. The positive predisposition of the participants may not necessarily reflect the attitudes and realities of many CF middle-school teachers in Ontario. However, my participants' overall positive perceptions show that when teachers are willing to learn and share their knowledge, they are already on the road to successful curriculum implementation.

Figure 14 brings together the 'ingredients' for successful curriculum implementations that were discussed by my participants. I have summarized and ordered their recommendations clockwise, starting from discussions with students and teacher-led research. I have placed the two circles side by side in this manner as I noticed that my participants not only took on an enhanced role of a curriculum implementer through ongoing teacher-led research, but that they often solicited student input to create the best classroom activities in line with student interests.

When implementing the authentic experiences in line with the new curriculum, patterns were revealed with respect to the 'type' or focus of the authentic experience. For example, Helena found predominantly cultural resources to resolve problems in real-life settings. Madeleine also touched upon social skills and chose cultural activities simply to intrigue her students and introduce them to new aspects of the multiple cultures of the francophone world. Helena preferred building on older material and incorporating references from the media (i.e., the Ebola crisis in francophone regions) to create opportunities to use French while becoming socially aware of international issues. Isabel took note of her specific audience of FSL students to incorporate their own cultures into her curriculum planning. D'Artagnan embedded culture with personal resources such as his Swiss nephew for a real-time cultural exchange via Skype (Skype, 2015). Based on their teaching experiences with authenticity, their choices were dynamic and customizable to their specific teaching context. The authentic activities presented by my participants either implicitly or explicitly linked concepts of the sociocultural knowledge of the CEFR including: (1) everyday living, (2) living conditions, (3) interpersonal relations, (4) values, beliefs, and attitudes, (5) body language, (6) social

conventions, (7) ritual behavior (Council of Europe, 2001, pp. 102-103). A majority of the intercultural activities required technology in some way or form, whether it being You Tube (You Tube, LLC, 2015), an application such as DuoLingo (Duolingo, n.d.), or a Skype (Skype, 2015) conversation with a francophone.

The abundance of authentic activities and resources identified by my participants prompted me to think about the notion that ‘success’ with the new curriculum often corresponded to the participants who had a plethora of resources for daily use. ‘Resources’ were characterized in different ways such as people (i.e. close bonds with other CF teachers), funding and technology to name a few. ‘Success’ also meant that participants knew how not only to find and access authentic resources but to know how to link them in accordance to the ability level of the CF middle-school student.

The teaching of grammar had to change with this new curriculum; however, it was not forgotten. My participants understood and/or accepted that in order to implement authentic activities and resources in their CF classroom, grammar needed to still be taught to build a sense of structure but it was no longer taught in a constant, explicit fashion. It still remained an area of concern for some of my participants who felt that it should have an equal importance alongside the importance for fluency-building activities.

When dealing with curriculum change, the participants reflected on their teaching and planning practices. D’Artagnan was afforded reflection opportunities when he used the IB templates as part of the curriculum planning process. Time, however, was an important consideration for successful curriculum implementation and learning was considered to be a dynamic process by my participants. Throughout the data collection, they reinforced the need for ongoing professional development to enhance their curriculum implementation strategies. Specifically, they provided insight into the discrepancies of school boards in Ontario in terms of how they support their CF teachers with this new curriculum. As such, not only did they suggest additional training time be offered by their respective school boards, but that the training be uniform across all school districts in Ontario so that every CF middle-school teacher has the same formal, training.

Limitations of the Study

There were a variety of specific parameters of my small-scale study that impacted the data presented and in retrospect additional measures could have been taken to truly enhance my research. While the four participants provided rich detail about their perceptions of the curriculum and their teaching strategies, I focused on the Core-French middle-school context, missing research opportunities to identify the experiences of teachers in other FSL Programs in Ontario. I exclusively focused on one region in Ontario. As such, three teacher participants worked in the West-end of the GTA and only one, taught in Scarborough, Ontario. In addition, I did not collect data about the schools where they taught. It would have been helpful to have this information to better understand the contextual constraints faced by participants. The time to reflect and evolve as a participant was also limited as the data were only gathered within a four- month period. As none of the participants were native speakers of French, I was not able to determine if this factor might have affected perceptions of the new curriculum and implementation strategies.

While I was conducting research, I also identified limitations of my study. For example, my data collection strategies did not include classroom observation as a form of data triangulation that would have allowed me to see the teachers ‘in action’; therefore, I relied only on their accounts and the teaching resources they chose to share. As I gave my participants access to the interview questions in advance, they may have prepared the type of responses that they thought I might want to hear. Regardless of the limitations described, my study provides initial insights into the way CF teachers perceive and try to implement the new Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b).

Suggestions for Further Research

As my study was small-scale in design, there are a variety of topics and new questions that could be investigated to build on my research. Future studies could focus on the various FSL programs in Ontario (the Core, Extended and the Immersion) to determine if the experiences addressed in this study correlate with experiences in other programs as FSL teachers attempt to implement the new curriculum. Teachers from other regions of Ontario should be included

in future research studies as each region offers different resources, opportunities, and houses different communities. The perspectives of teachers in Ontario private schools also need to be considered to see how the new curriculum is implemented in this context.

With an increased number of newly accredited FSL teacher graduates in Ontario, no recently published study has addressed the teacher candidate's interpretation of the Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b). An exploratory or narrative study could provide an in-depth description of how these individuals work with the new curriculum as teacher learners preparing lessons and teaching the new curriculum in their practicum placements.

Many Canadian FSL teachers complain about the loss of instructional time as they travel from room to room because they do not have their own classroom (Lapkin, et al., 2006; Mollica et al., 2005). Surprising results of my study demonstrated that not being in an allocated CF classroom did not necessarily impact the teacher's perceptions or implementations of the new curriculum; however, the teacher participants who had their own classrooms understood their advantage over *à la carte* teachers. It would be beneficial to conduct in-class observations of other CF teachers implementing the new curriculum with or without their own classroom to identify if my findings support or contradict such experiences.

Technology and its integration is a dynamic process. As such, since my participants reiterated its necessity for the teaching of intercultural education, future studies could analyze how teachers use technology to implement the new curriculum and reference the technological tools, applications, websites, etc., in line with the new curriculum.

Given the push for inclusive practices in Ontario FSL Programs, more insight is required to identify how students with special needs are being accommodated and to determine if they continue pursuing French studies in subsequent grades. Finally because student attrition from FSL after Grade 9 is such an issue, it is also important that there be more research on the relationship between high school students' and teachers' perceptions of the Ontario FSL Secondary Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014b) and attrition rates.

Implications of the Study

Despite the limitations of my study, the findings offer insight into the perception and experiences of Ontario, Core-French, middle-school teachers as they implement the new curriculum. The experiences of the teacher participants confirm and extend research studies of FSL education in Ontario and in Canada. My study provided insight into the lives of four Ontario FSL CF middle-school teachers as they worked with the new FSL curriculum. The findings include authentic and practical teaching strategies that other Ontario CF middle-school teachers may want to try as they attempt to implement the new curriculum.

While the study specifically focused on teachers in Ontario, my findings provide some insight into L2 curriculum implementation strategies beyond Ontario. In addition, my participants referenced either implicitly or explicitly, teaching strategies that were in line with the TBI and the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), thus extending this study to a larger audience of teachers working with the CEFR outside Ontario.

My study also served as an initial point of teacher reflection on the new curriculum. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) identified that “Change in education is easy to propose, hard to implement and extraordinarily difficult to sustain” (p. 1). Through my study, I discovered that age did not make a difference with respect to how participants perceived and implemented the new curriculum. The level of curriculum support (i.e., funding, resources, professional development sessions, etc.), however, seemed to be the most important factor in successful implementation of the new curriculum. The teachers’ reactions and curriculum management strategies can provide some initial insights for curriculum consultants, school administration and other educational stakeholders such as the Ontario Ministry of Education.

I conclude this study with an important consideration made by Mison and Jang (2011) regarding directions moving forward with curriculum implementation and teacher support:

Teachers’ voice, including their current practices and needs should be considered in order to encourage teachers’ support of and participation in any movement the country might make towards adapting the framework for Canadian educational and linguistic demands (p. 106).

As a novice researcher, I learned that my study contributes to research that calls for educational stakeholders to carefully examine new programs or curriculum to determine how well they meet the needs of teachers and learners.

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Appendices

Appendix A: A Summary of the Ontario Ministry’s FSL Curriculum Milestones

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 2013-2014 | -Baseline data established -3 year plan created and submitted |
| 2014-2017 | -Plan is implemented and monitored -Progress report is submitted to the Ministry by 2016-2017 |
| 2017-2018 | -Data is analyzed and compared with the original baseline data -2 nd 3-year plan is created and submitted for 2017-2018 to 2019-2020 |
| 2017-2020 | -Plan is implemented and monitored -Progress report is submitted to the Ministry by 2019-2020 |
| 2020-2021 | -Data is analyzed and compared with the original baseline data -3 rd 3-year plan is created and submitted for 2020-2021 to 2022-2023 |
| 2020-2023 | -Plan is implemented and monitored -Progress report is submitted to the Ministry by 2022-2023 |
| Annually | -FSL stakeholders shall reflect and engage in focused dialogues with the Ontario Ministry of Education |

As drawn from *A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools: Kindergarten to Grade 12* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013a, p. 2)

Appendix B: Recruitment Email for the Volunteer Recruiter

Dear colleagues,

I am sending you this message on behalf of my colleague Rochelle Gour, an MA student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE).

For her thesis research Rochelle is looking for 4 middle-school Core-French FSL teachers to share their initial reactions and experiences with the revised 2013 Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum.

You are under no obligation to respond but feel free to pass along this message and attachments to other colleagues who might be interested in taking part in Rochelle's study. The attachments include a flyer and an information letter.

If you are interested in taking part in the study, you can find contact information that will allow you to get in touch with Rochelle.

Sincerely,

LLE student

Appendix C: Recruitment Email to Former Colleagues and/or Friends

Dear former colleagues,

I am writing in the hope that you might consider participating in my thesis study which will take place in January 2015. I have attached a flyer in this email for your reference. I am looking for 4 middle-school Core-French FSL teachers to share their initial reactions and experiences with the revised 2013 Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum.

You are under no obligation to respond but feel free to pass along this message and attachments to other colleagues who might be interested in taking part in my study. The attachments include a flyer and an information letter.

If you are interested in taking part in the study, you can respond directly to this email.

Sincerely,

Rochelle

Appendix D: Recruitment Flyer

CONSIDER TAKING PART IN A STUDY ON THE NEW FSL CURRICULUM

IF you are a middle school core French teacher

IF you want to share your perspectives on the new FSL curriculum

IF you want to discuss your experiences implementing the new FSL curriculum

THEN consider taking part in my MA thesis research study entitled:

Ontario Middle School Core French Teachers' Perceptions of and Experiences with the 2013 Ontario French as a Second Language Curriculum

WHAT'S INVOLVED AND WHEN?

- January 2015: A brief online questionnaire which takes about 10-15 minutes to complete
- End of January 2015: A 45-minute interview – online via Skype or face-to-face in a location convenient for you
- End of March 2015: A 45-minute interview – online via Skype or face-to-face in a location convenient for you
- April 2015: A 60 to 90 minute focus group in a location convenient to the group

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

- You will have the opportunity to discuss and reflect on the new program with the researcher and three other FSL teachers from different parts of the GTA
- You will receive a \$25 gift card upon completion of the study

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED

You can email me at rochelle.gour@XXX

Text or telephone me at 416 XXX-XXXX

Appendix E: Letter of Informed Consent

Dear Teacher,

I, Rochelle Gour, am a part-time MA student enrolled in the Language and Literacies Education Program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto. My study will explore four middle-school (Grades 6, 7, or 8) Ontario Core-French teachers' and perceptions of the new curriculum and how they implement the objectives in daily practice.

Your involvement in my study includes:

- (a) A preliminary online questionnaire (10-15 minute duration)
- (b) Two individual interviews (either face-to-face or online maximum 1 hour)

Interview 1 January 2015

Interview 2 March 2015

- (c) Focus group (4 teacher-participants, face-to-face maximum of 60 to 90 minutes) April 2015

As you are implementing the revised FSL curriculum, your initial experiences and perceptions of this policy are valuable in helping the FSL community to understand more about how this new FSL curriculum. This research opportunity will also be a sharing opportunity whereby during the focus group, you will meet three other participants where you can share, learn and network as a team of middle-school FSL teachers.

Privacy and Risks

Your privacy will be protected as I will not reveal your name in my thesis. Upon completion and submission of my thesis, your responses will be removed from my computer. Please be advised however, that the data will be shared to my supervisory committee but pseudonyms will be assigned to remove any traces of your identity. As you complete the online questionnaire, your email address will be used to complete this survey. During the interviews, your voice will be recorded either with an online program or with a portable recording device. The focus group will be conducted face-to-face, and you will meet and have the opportunity to discuss your perceptions and experiences with the revised FSL curriculum with three other Ontario FSL middle-school teachers. I will ask that you agree to keep the content of the focus group conversation confidential.

All electronic data collected will be encrypted with data encryption software and stored in a secure location in a locked file on my laptop, with a password known only to me; this includes audio recordings of interviews and focus groups, survey results, and course documents. Hard copies of course documents, artefacts and written records (including consent forms) will be kept in a locked file in my home office to which only I have access.

Upon convocation (November 2015), I will delete all participant files (i.e. transcriptions). The files will be deleted by permanently moving them in my 'trash' folder in my computer and in my external hard drive and/or USB key.

Publication of Results

My thesis will be accessible to FSL communities in Ontario (i.e. students, FSL Associations, school boards, etc.) as it will be available online in university's library. I will provide you with the information about the location of the thesis. I also intend to publish and deliver presentations based on the research.

Remuneration

In terms of remuneration, during the focus group, light snacks and beverages will be provided. Additionally, I will provide you with a \$25 gift card upon completion of the entire study.

Withdrawal from the Study


Your participation is voluntary. At any point, you may withdraw from the study without incurring negative consequences. If you decide to withdraw the data collected to that point would be kept and analyzed for the study. When wishing to withdraw, kindly email me at the address presented in this letter below.

If you have any further questions prior to accepting this permission request, kindly contact me via email at rochelle.gour@XXX. My thesis supervisor is Dr. Antoinette Gagné. She may be contacted at antoinette.gagne@XXX.

If you have any particular questions about your rights as a participant, you can contact the Office of Research Ethics at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or at 416-946-3273. You are encouraged to keep a copy of this information letter for your own reference.

I thank you in advance for your review and consideration to partake in this study!

Sincerely,

 , MA Candidate

Kindly complete the next section and send it to me via email no later than **DATE** at rochelle.gour@XXX

Research consent

I have read and understood the conditions under which I will participate in this study and give my consent to be a participant in the online survey and two individual interviews.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Research consent for the focus group

I have read and understood the conditions under which I will participate in this one-time end-of-study focus group, and I give my consent to participate. I acknowledge and agree to maintain the confidentiality of the identity of the focus group participants. I also agree to keep the conversation from within the focus group confidential, once the focus group discussion has finished.

_____ I will participate in an optional one-time focus group meeting at the conclusion of the study. I understand that I will be given an opportunity to re-visit my decision before the focus group occurs.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix F: Preliminary Questionnaire

Research Topic:

Ontario Middle-School Core French Teachers' Perceptions of and Experiences with the Revised 2013 Ontario French as a Second Language Curriculum

Message from the Researcher

Thank you for volunteering your time to complete this online survey. It will help me better understand your initial reactions and experiences with the revised 2013 Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum as Middle-school Core-French teachers.

This survey shall take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Kindly ensure that you review and complete all questions. Your identity will be kept confidential throughout the research process.

I look forward to our future one-on-one interview where we can discuss your responses and other experiences with the new curriculum.

Participant Background

1. Identify your age range.
 - a- 20-30
 - b- 31-40
 - c- 41-50
 - d- 51-60
 - e- 61-70

2. Select all of the types of FSL teacher-education that you pursued or that you are currently pursuing.
 - a- Within my Bachelor of Arts Program
 - b- Within my Bachelor of Arts and my Bachelor of Education Program
 - c- Within my Masters Program
 - d- Other (Please specify)

3. Where did you receive your FSL instruction?
 - a- In Ontario only
 - b- In another Canadian province or territory
 - c- A combination of Ontario and other Canadian province(s)
 - d- Other (please specify)

4. Identify your level of certification as a licensed FSL teacher.
 - a- Bachelor of Education
 - b- Masters of Education
 - c- Masters of Arts
 - d- Ph.D.

- e- Other (please specify)
5. Select all of the types of school where you have worked or are currently working in as a licensed French teacher.
- Public school
 - Catholic school
 - Other religious denomination
 - Private school
 - Other (please specify)
6. Select the best statement that represents your French proficiency level at present time.
- a- I am still learning the language (beginner)
 - b- I have a good grasp of the language (intermediate)
 - c- I have a native-speaker proficiency of the language (advanced)
 - d- I am a native-speaker
 - e- Additional comments (if necessary)
7. For how long have you been teaching Core French in Ontario?
8. Indicate all other French programs that you have taught (or are also currently teaching regardless of the location).
- a- Only Core French
 - b- Extended
 - c- Immersion
 - d- Francophone school
 - e- Combination of multiple programs/levels
9. If applicable, check off all of your other FSL teaching contexts.
- a- Other province(s) in Canada
 - b- International contexts
 - c- Only one school board/institution in Ontario
 - d- Multiple school boards/institutions in Ontario
10. Identify and select all of the FSL Core program(s) that you are teaching this year.
- a- Grade 4
 - b- Grade 5
 - c- Grade 6
 - d- Grade 7
 - e- Grade 8
 - f- Other:

Curriculum Readiness

For each of the statements that follow, select the statement that best describes your situation or opinion.

1- strongly disagree

- 2- *disagree*
- 3- *neutral*
- 4- *agree*
- 5- *strongly agree*
- 6- *I don't know*

11. I have sufficient access to resources to implement the new curriculum.
12. I have sufficient training to implement the new curriculum.
13. I believe that the revised curriculum follows more of an oral-based program rather than a grammar-based program.
14. I believe that there is a strong connection between the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the revised 2013 Ontario FSL curriculum.
15. I have read and I am familiar with the particular sections of the FSL curriculum that pertain to the grades I am teaching (i.e. Grade 6 Core French).
16. I have read other sections of the revised curriculum such as the introductory section and the expanded glossary (not only the sections pertaining to the grades and levels of French I am teaching this year).
17. I am familiar with the **vision** of this revised curriculum (found on page 6) that is applicable for both the elementary and secondary panels of FSL instruction.
18. I am familiar with the specific **goals** of this revised curriculum (found on page 6) that are applicable for both the elementary and secondary panels of FSL instruction.
19. I have reviewed additional documents from the **Ontario Ministry of Education and/or FSL Associations** such as (i.e. *A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools: Kindergarten to Grade 12*, *French as a Second Language: FSL A Guide to Reflective Practice for Core French Teachers*, etc.) that provide strategies to implement the revised curriculum.
20. The revised curriculum objectives are clearly formulated and I find that they are helpful in my planning.
21. I have had to change my teaching style to implement the revised curriculum.
22. Overall, I am finding it easy to implement the new FSL curriculum in my current Core French teaching context.
23. Overall, I prefer the revised 2013 elementary FSL curriculum to the earlier version.

Curriculum Management Strategies

24. I break down the curriculum objectives into chunks for the purposes of lesson planning.
25. I review the teacher prompts embedded in the revised curriculum and I apply them in my instructional planning.
26. I use resources (i.e. a textbook) that automatically correlate to the objectives of the curriculum.
27. I implement all components of the listening strand (listening comprehension, listening to interact, and intercultural understanding) in my daily planning.
28. I implement all components of the speaking strand (speaking to communicate, speaking to interact, and intercultural understanding) in my daily planning.
29. I implement all components of the reading strand (reading comprehension, purpose/form/style, and intercultural understanding) in my daily planning.
30. I implement all components of the writing strand (purpose/audience/form, the writing process, and intercultural understanding) in my daily planning.
31. My preference is to teach each of the language skills one at a time, i.e. I have a “listening day” and then a “writing day”.
32. My preference is to teach by integrating two or more language skills into my lessons and activities, i.e. one activity may include both writing and listening objectives.
33. I create lesson and/or unit plans from scratch.
34. I create assessment activities from scratch.
35. My classroom activities tend to be action-oriented.
36. I collaborate with my colleagues to develop and/or exchange various activities and/or lesson plans.
37. I discuss aspects of the new curriculum with my colleagues.
38. Within the framework of this new curriculum, I am able to differentiate instruction to support all types of learners in my classroom.
39. I attend or have attended professional development opportunities (i.e. workshops, conferences, podcasts, etc.) that help/helped me to implement the new curriculum.

40. I am aware of and I consult websites (i.e. EduGAINS, OMLTA, etc.) that help me understand and implement the new curriculum.

I thank you for taking the time to complete this online survey!

Appendix G: Questionnaire Results

| Curriculum Management Strategies | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| <i>Participants</i> | <i>Q. 21</i> | <i>Q. 24</i> | <i>Q. 25</i> | <i>Q. 26</i> | <i>Q. 27</i> | <i>Q. 28</i> | <i>Q. 29</i> | <i>Q. 30</i> |
| | <i>Changed Teaching Style</i> | <i>Broke down curriculum objectives into chunks</i> | <i>Reviewed & applied teacher prompts</i> | <i>Used resources that correlated with the new curriculum</i> | <i>Implement all listening strand components</i> | <i>Implement all speaking strand components</i> | <i>Implement all reading components</i> | <i>Implement all writing components</i> |
| D'Artagnan | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Neutral | Neutral | Neutral | Neutral |
| Helena | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Strongly agree | Neutral | Neutral | Neutral | Neutral |
| Madeleine | Neutral | Agree | Neutral | Neutral | Neutral | Neutral | Neutral | Neutral |
| Isabel | Agree | Agree | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Disagree | Disagree | Disagree |

| Curriculum Management Strategies | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|--|--|--|-----------------------------------|---|---|--|
| <i>Participants</i> | <i>Q. 31</i> | <i>Q. 32</i> | <i>Q. 33</i> | <i>Q. 34</i> | <i>Q. 35</i> | <i>Q. 36</i> | <i>Q.37</i> | <i>Q.38</i> |
| | <i>Preference to teach language skills in isolation</i> | <i>Preference to teach 2 + language skills by chunking</i> | <i>Create lesson/unit plans from scratch</i> | <i>Create assessments from scratch</i> | <i>Action-oriented activities</i> | <i>Collaborate with others exchanging resources</i> | <i>Discuss the curriculum with colleagues</i> | <i>Differentiate instruction with the new curriculum</i> |
| D'Artagnan | Disagree | Agree | Agree | Agree | Agree | Agree | Agree | Neutral |
| Helena | Disagree | Agree | Agree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree | Agree |
| Madeline | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Agree | Agree |
| Isabel | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree | Strongly agree | Agree | Agree | Agree | Neutral |

Appendix H: Interview #1 – January 2015

Introduction

I am here with (participant pseudonym) _____ on (date) _____ at (time) _____. (Participant pseudonym) has graciously volunteered his/her time to partake in my research study entitled: Ontario Middle-School Core French Teachers' Perceptions of and Experiences with the 2013 Ontario French as a Second Language Curriculum.

(Participant pseudonym) has already completed an online questionnaire addressing background information, and initial experiences and perceptions of topics including teacher change, teacher adaptation strategies, and opinions of the CEFR and Ontario FSL curricula.

The purpose of today is to deepen the responses from the questionnaire in an informal setting. As you are aware, this interview is currently being recorded for transcription purposes. As promised, the transcriptions and the audio recordings will be eventually deleted from my filing system upon graduation and publication of this thesis. As a reminder, your responses are anonymous. In the event that you reveal your identity, I will black out specific sentences to protect your confidentiality.

I gave you a copy of the intended semi-structured interview questions for your review prior to our meet. You could refer to them if you wish as you speak, or you can choose not to refer to them. In your responses, please feel free to draw upon specific lessons, strategies, and experiences to help enrich the response. If you want to refer to the curriculum, feel free to do so. I may ask additional probing or clarification questions as dependent on your responses. Any questions with respect to the structure of the interview before we begin?

Interview Topics/Questions

Duration: 40 minutes to 60 minutes

New versus Old Curriculum

1. How did you initially feel when you found out that the government was in midst of creating a revised elementary FSL curriculum? Did your planning style need to change to reflect this new curriculum or did your teaching and planning style remain the same?
2. What do you think was the intent for this revised curriculum?
3. Kindly describe some of the similarities and differences (i.e. content, layout of the document, teacher prompts, etc.) of the previous 1998 version with the 2013 version of the Ontario elementary FSL curriculum.

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>4. Do you have any concerns about the revised FSL curriculum? If not, why is this the case?</p> <p>5. The grammar requirements in the revised 2013 Ontario FSL Elementary Curriculum are now embedded in various curriculum objectives and are no longer separate on a page of each FSL level. As the curriculum user, what is your reaction to this formatting change from the previous 1998 to the current 2013 curriculum? How do the subconscious grammar requirements help or hinder your planning as you follow this new curriculum?</p> |
| <p>Operationalization of the Curriculum</p> | <p>6. How long have you used the new curriculum in your planning? How did you go about accessing the revised curriculum when you discovered that it would be launched?</p> <p>7. How do you implement the various strands of the revised curriculum? Do you tend to implement them separately (in isolation), or do you prefer to group one activity with multiple objectives?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The <i>listening strand</i> (listening comprehension, listening to interact, and intercultural understanding) • The <i>speaking strand</i> (speaking to communicate, speaking to interact, and intercultural understanding) • The <i>reading strand</i> (reading comprehension, purpose/form/style, and intercultural understanding) • The <i>writing strand</i> (purpose/audience/form, the writing process, and intercultural understanding) <p>8. Is there one strand that is more difficult to implement on a frequent basis in the Core-French middle-school context than another? How so?</p> <p>9. Describe the resources that you have consulted (i.e. people, online, hard copies, etc.) to help you navigate and implement the revised curriculum objectives?</p> <p>10. Describe the resources that you have used or are currently using (i.e. people, online, hard copies, etc.) to help you navigate and implement the revised curriculum objectives? Are there any recycled resources that you have used or are using that adhered to the previous 1998 curriculum?</p> <p>11. Describe your understanding of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Are there any aspects of the CEFR that you consider in your planning?</p> |

| | |
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| Accessibility of the Curriculum | <p>12. Describe your comfort level with this new curriculum. When and how do you reference the curriculum objectives for your lesson planning?</p> <p>13. If I come to your office or planning space, where is the curriculum document placed?</p> <p>14. If I come to your Core-French classroom, how would you describe the layout? Where are your French resources, technology, seating arrangement etc.? Did your classroom layout have to change with the new curriculum or did it remain the same?</p> <p>15. What additional resources are required (people, online, hard copies, etc.) to help you effectively cover all curriculum expectations in your Core-French middle-school classroom?</p> <p>16. Describe the relevance and the feasibility of the revised curriculum objectives for the Core-French middle-school student in Ontario.</p> |
|--|--|

Appendix I: Interview #2 - March 2015

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Perception of Curriculum</p> | <p>1. How has your perception of the new curriculum changed since our last interview? If it has not changed, why do you think this is the case?</p> <p>2. What level of French proficiency do you think is required for middle-school teachers within the framework of the new FSL curriculum? Can you explain? In your opinion, was the same level required for middle-school teachers using the “old” Ontario FSL curriculum?</p> <p>3. How much knowledge of Francophone culture is required for middle-school teachers within the framework of the new FSL curriculum? Can you provide examples of the type and amount of cultural knowledge you think is required?</p> |
| <p>CEFR</p> | <p>4. If applicable, describe which aspects of the CEFR that you consider in your planning.</p> |
| <p>Curriculum Implementation Strategies</p> | <p>5. Describe your multiple roles as an FSL teacher working with the new FSL curriculum? For example, model, facilitator, motivator etc... Have the roles you play now changed from when you taught with the “old” FSL curriculum? Can you explain?</p> <p>6. Describe your planning process and specifically how you try to integrate the various curriculum objectives into your plans? You may want to speak to your students’ needs as well as the goals / objectives and content of the new FSL curriculum. Has any aspect of your planning process changed since our last interview?</p> <p>7. How does the reflective process as a practitioner look like in your practice?</p> <p>8. How do you maintain or work towards a French-speaking classroom with your students?</p> <p>9. How do you embed critical thinking skills, student autonomy, and other such skills into your FSL Core classroom?</p> <p>10. How do you assess your Core-French middle-school students with this new curriculum? Has your technique changed since following the 1998 curriculum and/or since the first half of this academic year?</p> |
| <p>Example Lessons, Activities, Resources</p> | <p>11. Describe a particular unit, lesson, activity or resource that reflects how you addressed various curriculum objectives. How did your students respond to this particular unit, lesson, activity or resource?</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| Assistance from other stakeholders | <p>12. Since our 1st interview, what type of support has your community (i.e. principal, colleagues, curriculum consultant, etc.) provided to you as you implement the revised curriculum? Workshops? Online resources? Etc...?</p> <p>13. What additional support would you find useful as you implement the revised curriculum until June 2015 and in the coming year?</p> |
| Transition to High School | <p>14. Describe the initial observations that you see or hear from your students as you implement the revised objectives in your daily planning. How do you react to these observations?</p> <p>15. Do you think that the revised curriculum will make a difference to student attitudes toward studying French in the long run and in particular in terms of their decision to continue studying French after Grade 9?</p> |

Appendix J: Focus Group Results

| | |
|--|--|
| Introduction of the Focus Group | <p>-Thank participants for their attendance -Review the research questions of my thesis -Roundtable introductions of all participants (their teaching subject, grade, etc.) -Explain to participants that there are no wrong answers -Remind them of the recording and the need for confidentiality -Present the two activities today- the discussion and the graffiti/mind map activity -Invite them to ask any clarification questions about this session</p> |
| Student Perceptions of the Revised Curriculum | <p>Prompt for discussion: “Students will develop skills in assessing and understanding information about various French-speaking communities and cultures, and will apply that knowledge for the purposes of interaction” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 10).</p> <p>How have your students responded to this objective?</p> |
| Example Lessons, Activities, Resources | <p>Prompt for discussion: “Throughout the FSL curriculum, expectations that deal with the development of intercultural understanding are included in each of the four interconnected strands” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013, c. p. 10).</p> <p>Can you describe a particular unit, lesson, activity or resource that reflects how you addressed these curriculum objectives?</p> <p>Prompt for discussion: “Curriculum planning is an interactive process” (Tsui, 2014, p. 178) whereby teachers draw upon a repertoire of resources that are selected and try to reflect the objectives of the said curriculum. Can you illustrate what does your repertoire of resources look like to help you implement the revised curriculum?</p> |
| Next Steps | <p>What are your goals for next year as you use the new curriculum in its 2nd year of implementation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For yourself as a FSL teacher? • For your students? |
| Support | <p>What additional support would you find useful as you implement the revised curriculum?</p> |

Mind Map Activity

Instructions:

Think about the revised curriculum. Think about your first year of implementation of this new policy document. Consider your initial perceptions, your current perceptions about this document, your planning strategies, your ideal curriculum resources, etc.

Scribble, doodle, write, any thoughts pertaining to this topic “The New FSL Curriculum: Our Experiences”