THE ACCOMMODATION OF GRADE 9 STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN THE APPLIED CORE FRENCH CLASSROOM

by

Katy Elizabeth Arnett

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

© Copyright by Katy Elizabeth Arnett (2001)
The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author’s permission.

L’auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L’auteur conserve la propriété du droit d’auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.
THE ACCOMMODATION OF GRADE 9 STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN THE APPLIED CORE FRENCH CLASSROOM

Katy Elizabeth Arnett

Master of Arts
Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

2001

Abstract

Since the introduction of the term "learning disabilities" into the educational lexicon, teachers and researchers have endeavored to determine the best ways to accommodate the needs of students with learning disabilities in the classroom. This study used classroom observations and a document analysis to determine how a Grade 9 Applied Core French teacher accommodated learning disabled students in her class. In addition, this study examined the belief systems and personal experiences that influenced this teacher's pedagogy and her perceptions about the effectiveness of her modification strategies. The study found several commonly suggested modification strategies to be a regular part of this teacher's repertoire, mostly as they relate to the implementation of assignments and tasks. Overall, the participating teacher seemed to have a positive attitude about including learning disabled students in the Core French program and believed that many of the modifications benefited the students and their burgeoning French proficiency.
Acknowledgements

It is impossible to undertake a work of this magnitude without advice, assistance, inspiration, and encouragement from numerous individuals, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them.

First and foremost, I wish to thank my supervisor, Dr. Miles Turnbull, for the unwavering support and insightful feedback he provided throughout this process. He is responsible for helping me to organize my research goals two months into my Master’s program, and without that initial impetus, I do not think it would have been possible for me to complete my thesis in the time frame that I did. I am sincerely appreciative of all of the support and encouragement he has provided in my other academic pursuits and for that, I also extend my thanks.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to the other member of my thesis committee, Dr. Nathalie Bélanger, for all of her guidance. She introduced me to new ways of thinking about special education and the impact special education has on student learning and development.

I would like to express my gratitude to the participating teacher in this study for granting me permission to come into her classroom and learn more about her teaching of students with learning disabilities. Without her, this research would have not been possible. I thank her for her accessibility, generosity, insight, inspiration, and most importantly, the time she took to help me realize this study.

Finally, I would like to thank all of my family and friends, who, even though were usually far way, provided me with encouragement, advice, and a shoulder to lean on
whenever I became frustrated or fatigued during this process. I wish to also thank two
students from my undergraduate years, Paul and Ellen, who taught me that students with
learning disabilities do belong and can succeed in the foreign/second language classroom.
If it were not for them, I do not think that I would be doing this research today.
For a truly great spirit—
Mom
# Table of Contents

Abstract / i

Acknowledgements / ii

Table of Contents / iv

List of Tables / vii

List of Figures / x

1. Introduction / 1
   - Statement of the Research Problem / 1
   - Statement of the Research Questions / 2
   - Rationale for the Study / 2
   - Outline of Subsequent Chapters / 6

2. Literature Review / 8
   - The Construct of Learning Disabilities / 8
     - Definitions and Legal Obligations / 8
     - Types of Learning Disabilities / 14
       - Learning Disorders of Language and Communication / 14
       - Reading Disabilities / 16
       - Attention Span Disabilities / 17
       - Foreign Language Learning Disabilities / 19
   - Sociological Concerns Regarding “Learning Disabilities” / 21
   - Learning Disabilities Research in Foreign/Second Language Programs / 22

3. Design and Methodology / 30
   - Participant / 31
   - Classroom Context / 32
   - Classroom Observations / 34
   - The Observation Scheme / 34
     - From COLT to MOLT to MILC / 34
       - The COLT / 35
       - The MOLT / 36
       - The MILC / 36
     - MILC: The Observation Categories / 38
       - Time / 38
       - Activities & Episodes / 38
       - Participant Organization / 38
       - Content / 39
       - Assessment / 40
       - Content Control / 41
Language Use / 41
Student Modality / 42
Materials I / 42
Pacing / 43
Environment / 44
Presentation of Materials / 45
Materials II / 46
Grading / 47
Assignments / 47
Reinforcement/Follow-Through / 48
Assessment Adaptations / 49
The Piloting Process / 50
Inter-Rater Reliability / 51

Teacher Interviews / 51
Document Analysis / 54
  Document Title / 55
  Date(s) Used / 55
  Source / 56
  Function / 56
  Pacing / 56
  Presentation of Materials / 56
    Emphasis / 56
    Other Modifications / 56
  Materials / 56
  Assignment/Testing Adaptations / 57
  Grades / 57
Inter-Rater-Reliability / 57

4. Results: Teacher Interviews / 59
  Professional Development and Support / 60
  Applied Core French Program Materials / 64
  Conceptions of Students with Learning Disabilities / 66
  Conceptions of Modification Strategies / 70
  Perceptions of the Effectiveness of the Modification Strategies / 76
  Personal Beliefs about Teaching French to Students with Learning Disabilities / 82
  Summary/ 86

5. Results: Classroom Observations and Document Analysis / 87
  Classroom Observations/ 87
    Classroom Context/ 89
      Participant Organization / 89
      Content / 90
      Assessment / 93
      Content Control / 95
      Language Use / 95
Student Modality / 96
Materials I / 100
Modifications / 102
Pacing / 103
Environment / 104
Presentation of Materials / 109
Materials II / 111
Grading / 113
Assignments and Tests / 114
Reinforcement/Follow-Through / 116
Assessment Adaptations / 118

Document Analysis / 121

Document Context / 123
Prevalence / 123
Source / 123
Function / 125
Modifications / 127
Pacing / 127
Presentation of Materials / 127
Emphasis / 128
Other Modifications / 129
Materials / 131
Assignment/Testing Adaptations / 133
Grades / 136

Summary / 136

6. Discussion / 138

Teacher Beliefs About Accommodating Students with Learning Disabilities / 138
Modifications Used to Accommodate the Needs of Students with Learning Disabilities / 141
Participant Organization / 143
Focus / 144
Assessment / 146
Content Control / 148
Language Use / 149
Student Modality / 152
Pacing / 154
Environment / 155
Presentation of Materials/ 157
Materials II / 158
Grading / 158
Assignments and Tests / 159
Reinforcement/Follow-Through / 161
Assessment Adaptations / 162

Teacher Perceptions of the Effectiveness of the Modifications / 163
Limitations of the Current Study / 166
Conclusion / 168

7. References / 170

8. Appendices / 181
   Appendix A: Modifications in the Language Classroom (MILC) Scheme / 181
   Appendix B: Letter of Informed Consent for Teacher Participant / 184
   Appendix C: Letter of Informed Consent for Principal of Teacher Participant / 186
   Appendix D: Letter of Informed Consent for Parents of Formally Identified Students / 188
   Appendix E: Questions: Pre-Observation Interview / 190
   Appendix F: Questions: Students with Learning Disabilities Interview / 191
   Appendix G: Questions: Mid-Observation Interview I / 192
   Appendix H: Questions: Mid-Observation Interview II / 193
   Appendix I: Questions: Mid-Observation Interview III / 194
   Appendix J: Questions: Mid-Observation Interview IV / 195
   Appendix K: Questions: Post-Observation Interview / 196
   Appendix L: Document Modification Analysis Scheme (DMAS) / 197
List of Tables

5.1 Participant Organization: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive and Equal Foci) / 89
5.2 Focus: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive and Equal Foci) / 91
5.3 Assessment Type: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive and Equal Foci) / 94
5.4 Assessor: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive and Equal Foci) / 95
5.5 Content Control: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive and Equal Foci) / 95
5.6 Language Use: Percentage of Observed Time / 96
5.7 Student Modality: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive and Equal Foci) / 97
5.8 Student Modality: Percentage of Observed Time (Primary Focus) / 100
5.9 Materials I--Type: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive and Equal Foci) / 100
5.10 Materials I--Source: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive and Equal Foci) / 102
5.11 Pacing: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive and Equal Foci) / 103
5.12 Environment: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive and Equal Foci) / 105
5.13 Presentation of Materials: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive and Equal Foci) / 110
5.14 Materials II: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive and Equal Foci) / 112
5.15 Grading: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive Focus) / 113
5.16 Assignments and Tests: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive and Equal Foci) / 115
5.17 Reinforcement/Follow-Through: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive and Equal Foci) / 117
5.18 Assessment Adaptations: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive and Equal Foci) / 120

5.19 Percentage Breakdown of Document Source / 124

5.20 Percentage Breakdown of Document Function / 125

5.21 Percentage Breakdown of Document Emphasis / 129

5.22 Percentage Breakdown of Presentation of Materials Document Modifications / 130

5.23 Percentage Breakdown of Materials Document Modifications / 132

5.24 Percentage Breakdown of Assignment/Testing Document Modifications / 135
List of Figures

4.1 Selected Comments on Professional Development and Support / 61

4.2 Selected Thoughts on the Applied Core French Program Materials / 65

4.3 Selected Comments on Claire’s Conceptions of Students with Learning Disabilities / 68

4.4 Selected Comments on Claire’s Conceptions of Modification Strategies / 71

4.5 Selected Comments on Claire’s Perceptions of the Effectiveness of the Modification Strategies / 79

4.6 Selected Comments about Claire’s Personal Beliefs about Teaching French to Students with Learning Disabilities / 83
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Statement of the Research Problem

In 1963, arguably the most significant development in the field of learning disabilities was made. At a speech to the Fund for Perceptually Handicapped Children on April 6 of that year, Samuel Kirk became the first to publicly coin the term, "learning disability" to describe those students, who, for some reason, could not properly communicate through any one of the four communicative modes, despite evidence that the student possessed the necessary cognitive abilities (Sabatino, Miller, & Schmidt, 1981; Gearhart & Gearhart, 1989). Even though researchers had been analyzing cerebral abilities, disabilities, and learning capacities since the nineteenth century, this speech marked the advent of public awareness and debate in the field of learning disabilities (Opp, 1994). While the "advent" of this new field has not been without its controversies, the most obvious being whether or not learning disabilities are as wide-spread and significant a problem as currently believed, the fact remains that learning disabilities are a cause for educational concern. Since their formal "identification," educators in the United States and Canada have been grappling with how to differentiate the types of learning disabilities that manifest in the classroom, but more importantly, the best way to teach these students.

For the most part, the United States and Canada have both approached the accommodation of the needs of students with learning disabilities in a very similar manner. In both countries, laws and policies have been enacted to protect the rights of these students, efforts have been made to identify and understand the characteristics and
prevalence of the various types of learning disabilities, and attempts have been initiated to define the exact nature and implications of the term, “learning disabilities.” Students with learning disabilities in both countries are entitled to a multitude of accommodations, including modified curricula/expectations, additional time on tasks and assignments, and access to special equipment (i.e. computers). However, there has been one essential difference in the approach of the United States and Canada that necessitates further exploration—the teaching of second and/or foreign languages to students with learning disabilities.¹ While the inclusion movement in the United States has resulted in an increase of students with learning disabilities being enrolled in foreign language classes over the past decade, second language teachers in Canada have been including these students since the 1970s because of the policies regarding the mandatory study of a second language in Canada (Spinelli, 1996). It is my belief that these Canadian educators can therefore provide some much needed insight to their American colleagues with regards to the types of modification strategies that are used to meet the needs of their students with learning disabilities, the teachers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of these strategies, and the teachers’ beliefs about teaching a foreign language (in this case, French) to students with academic difficulties, considering there are some who believe that foreign/second language study should only be reserved for the academic “elite”.

¹ For students here in Canada, the study of French is considered to be the study of a second language, whereas in the United States, the study of French is considered to be the study of a foreign language. Despite this fundamental difference, there are enough similarities between the programs to justify using both terms. “Second language” will be used in reference to the Canadian context, while “foreign language” will be used in reference to the American context.
Statement of the Research Questions

In an effort to gain some of this insight, this study endeavored to examine one Ontario Grade 9 Core French teacher's belief systems and accommodation strategies. Ultimately, it is my goal that insights gained from this study will enable foreign language educators in the U.S. to make more informed pedagogical decisions regarding their students with learning disabilities. Therefore, this research project endeavored to respond to the following questions:

1. What does a Grade 9 Core French teacher believe about accommodating the needs of students with learning disabilities in his/her classroom?
2. What types of curricular and pedagogical modifications are used to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities in a Grade 9 Core French classroom?
3. How effective does the teacher perceive these modifications to be?

Rationale for the Study

I became interested in the teaching of foreign/second languages to students with learning disabilities in college when I tutored students enrolled in the mandatory introductory French courses. During my freshman year, I tutored Paul, who had severe dyslexia. Up until this point in my life, I had never known anyone who had a learning disability; not only did I have no idea about the nature of dyslexia and its influence on daily life, I had no idea about how I should go about trying to help Paul. Most of the time, it was a frustrating experience for both of us, as I grappled to simplify a language that has always been easy for me to learn and use while he struggled to keep up in the

\[\text{\textsuperscript{2}} \text{All names are pseudonyms.}\]
class without having any idea as to what was going on. We somehow managed to find a middle ground and he ended up passing the class, but I realized that I needed to learn more about helping students like Paul.

The opportunity to learn more about teaching French to students with learning disabilities came two years later, during my junior year of college. During the first week of classes, Ellen, a freshman enrolled in an introductory French course, contacted me. She told me that she had a learning disability and knew that it would pose a problem in her study of French. The course professor had referred her to me because of my (limited) experience working with students with learning disabilities and hoped that I could find a way to help her. At first, I went about tutoring Ellen like I had other students—providing additional practice activities, holding short conversations in French, and so forth—because I still was not sure of how I needed to teach a student with learning disabilities French. However, I soon found that the tutoring sessions had evolved into “re-teaching” sessions, as I spent each meeting re-explaining everything that the professor had gone over in the previous class. Initially, I attributed the “re-teaching” to the fact that Ellen had no prior knowledge of French, making it difficult for her to entirely understand the all-French lectures, but when I asked Ellen what she thought to be the source of the troubles, she said that it was her learning disability more than anything else. In elementary school, Ellen had first been identified as having difficulty processing information aurally, and when she graduated from high school, her auditory processing skills were at a third grade level. The oral proficiency emphasis of the French program was beyond her processing capabilities. Again, I found myself in a tutoring situation in which both the student and myself were frustrated beyond belief.
In an effort to alleviate some of this frustration, I did some research, located some suggestions for teaching strategies that had been found to be effective for teaching students with learning disabilities in French classes across Canada, and totally revamped how I was tutoring Ellen. Her progress in French increased so much that the French department entrusted me with being Ellen's primary French instructor during the second semester. By the end of the mandatory second semester of study, Ellen had earned a "B" for the course, could understand and contribute to simple conversations in French, and I had the beginnings of a manual of strategies to help students like her in the future.

When I began teaching French at the secondary level in Maryland, I was faced with more students like Ellen and David. The study of a foreign language in a Maryland high school is usually reserved for those students wishing to pursue higher education, a practice that undoubtedly contributes to the perception in the U.S. that foreign language study is for "elite" students and has perhaps impeded the integration of students with special needs into these classrooms. The first three years in the program usually fulfill this requirement; therefore most of the students enrolled in my introductory classes were in Grades 9 and 10. However, there are some school systems in Ellenland that allow students to begin studying a foreign language once they reach middle school and consequently, students can fulfill this requirement prior to entering high school. In my experience in the school system where I taught, only those students with strong academic skills are permitted to begin studying a foreign language in Grade 8; the remaining

---

3 The school in which I taught was on a modified semester format, which made it possible for some students to complete two French courses in one academic year.
students interested in learning a foreign language must wait until Grade 9 to commence their studies.

The majority of students with learning disabilities enrolled in my classes were interested in pursuing higher education, but there were some who enrolled in the course because they wanted to profit from the more “mainstream” curriculum or because they had an empty slot in their schedule and the guidance counselors thought it would be beneficial for them to learn French. Even though the resources I had developed while working with Ellen and Paul were helpful, they were by no means adequate for the demands of a secondary school French program. My introductory classes (French I and II) would have students from Grades 9 through 12 enrolled in one class, and the average class size was about 28 students. The modifications that I had developed prior to teaching in a high school were designed for a one-on-one teaching situation, and with such large classes, many of the accommodations clearly were not feasible to implement with so many other students around. I became convinced that I could not become an effective teacher for these students without learning more about what can be done to help them learn French. In the past, research and practices that had been most helpful to me in guiding the development of activities and strategies to help students with learning disabilities in the French classroom had originated in Canada, so it became a logical choice for me to further examine this issue in my thesis.

Outline of Subsequent Chapters

The next chapter will present a review of the relevant literature regarding the teaching of students with learning disabilities in the foreign/second language classroom. The subsequent chapter will outline the methodology used to implement the study,
including a discussion of the observation scheme (Modifications in the Language Classroom [MILC]) specifically designed for this research. The results of the study will be presented over the course of two chapters; Chapter 4 presents the findings from the teacher interviews, and Chapter 5 presents the results of the classroom observations and document analysis. The thesis will conclude with a discussion of the implications of the results, limitations of the current study, and possible directions for future research.
CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

While the corpus of research devoted to students with learning disabilities in the foreign/second language classroom has been steadily growing over the past twenty years, there has yet to be any sort of examination of precisely how teachers are accommodating the needs of these students; most of the research has been devoted to identifying which students will experience more difficulties in the foreign/second language classroom and to justifying the inclusion of these students in foreign/second language classes at the university level in the U.S. However, in order to appreciate the research questions, the methodology, and the implications of this study, it is imperative to consider other issues related to learning disabilities as well. This literature review will include 1) a discussion of the construct of learning disabilities in the U.S. and Canada; and 2) an examination of the literature regarding students with special needs in the foreign/second language classroom.

The Construct of Learning Disabilities

Definitions and Legal Obligations

In 1975, President Gerald Ford signed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142), thus marking the advent of federally mandated support and resources for children with handicaps and disabilities. Although the legislation did not take effect until 1977, this law addressed the different approaches of each state to accommodating people with handicaps, and allowed for federal financial assistance in implementing the necessary remedial programs. During that same year, the USOE published the Federal Register, which provided parents and educators with
guidelines to identify those students with learning disabilities under PL 94-142. The
definition provided by the *Federal Register* was very similar to the definition first
proposed by the National Advisory Committee on Handicapped Children (NACHC) a
few years earlier and remains the only definition of learning disabilities with legal status
in the United States:

“Specific learning disability” means a disorder in one or more of the basic
psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken
or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect inability to listen, think,
speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes
such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction,
dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include children who
have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor
handicaps, of mental retardation, or emotional disturbance, or of environmental,
cultural, or economic disadvantage (USOE, 1977, p.650).

In addition to providing a definition of learning disabilities, PL 94-142 also
provided teachers with criteria that must be considered when first evaluating a student for
learning disabilities. These criteria include: the student’s ability to read and/or do
mathematical calculations compared to other students of the same age, the discrepancy
between the student’s projected aptitude and actual achievement, and the exclusion of
mental retardation, visual or hearing impairments, motor difficulties, emotional problems,
or environmental factors as direct causes of the learning disabilities (i.e. the
acknowledgement that learning disabilities are the result of some sort of
neuropsychological disorder) (Kirk, Gallagher, & Anastasiow, 1997). Using these guidelines, educators were able to begin pinpointing specific characteristics in students with learning disabilities for the first time since the term “learning disabilities” was used to describe the challenges these students faced in the classroom. These criteria were used to identify 5.5% of the total U.S. school population as having learning disabilities during the 1996-1997 academic year (U.S. Department of Education, 1998).

In 1990, the U.S. Congress passed Public Law 101-476, which renamed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of PL 94-142 the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The new law did not change the essential definition of learning disabilities that had been included in the original law, but did rephrase a portion of it to say: “a learning disability in one or more basic psychological processes involved or in using spoken or written language, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations” (National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities [NICHCY], 1994). “Disorder” was replaced by “learning disability,” and while that created a somewhat redundant introduction to the definition, it validated the argument that a learning disability is not caused by external forces but does not exclude the influence of the student’s life and learning situation on the manifestation of his/her learning disabilities (Kirk et al., 1997). However, when reading literature that discusses the definitions of learning disabilities in the U.S., IDEA and the Education for All-Handicapped Children Act are often cited interchangeably.

Since all federal programs in the United States relating to learning disabilities use the USOE/Public Law 94-142 definition as the starting point, and since most states, have
adopted it as their definition of learning disabilities, it is the most widely accepted
definition of learning disabilities in the United States (Hallahan, Kauffman, & Lloyd,
1985; Hammill, 1990). The definition of learning disabilities used by Canadian educators
is slightly different.

Because of the mandatory policies regarding Ontarian students’ study of French
and because of an increased awareness of learning disabilities that began in the 1970s,
educators of French in Ontario have been actively involved in the issue of including
students with learning disabilities in the second language classroom for many years
(Trites & Price, 1976; Morton, 1985; Majhanovich, 1993). Policies adopted in the
Province of Ontario, for instance, require that all students, regardless of ability, enroll in
Core French between Grades 4 and 9, (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1998; Ontario
Ministry of Education, 1999a). Therefore, an obligation to modify the second language
curriculum in order to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities exists, as
required under the Ontario Education Act of 1980.4

In 1978, the Ontario Association for Children with Learning Disabilities submitted
a report to the Ministry of Education in Ontario calling for the mandatory special
education of students with learning disabilities in the province. The report was based on
a survey conducted by the chapters of the American Council of Learning Disabilities
located in Toronto, Ontario, and revealed that the overwhelming majority of students who
were believed to have learning disabilities were not being extended special education

4 In Canada, unlike the United States, the federal government does not determine the policies and laws that govern
the education of students. This responsibility is given to the individual provinces and territories, and consequently,
they determine the protocol for educating students with special needs. Therefore, since this research study was
carried out in the province of Ontario, only the Ontarian perspectives on learning disabilities will be presented.
services (Ontario Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, 1978). Part of the problem surrounding neglect of the needs of these students was the lack of a uniform definition of learning disabilities. Therefore, in November of that year, the Ontario Ministry of Education issued a definition of learning disabilities to its provincial school boards (Wayne, 1978):

A learning disorder is evident in both academic and social situations that involves one or more of the processes necessary for the proper use of spoken language or the symbols of communication, and that is characterized by a condition that is not the primary result of: impairment of vision, impairment of hearing, physical handicap, mental retardation, primary emotional disturbance, or cultural difference; results in a significant discrepancy between academic achievement and assessed intellectual ability with defects in one or more of: receptive language (i.e. listening, reading), language processing (i.e., thinking, conceptualizing, integrating); expressive language (i.e. talking, spelling, writing), or mathematical computations; and may be associated with one or more conditions diagnosed as: a perceptual handicap, a brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, or developmental aphasia (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1982).

While this definition was authored in 1978, its full impact on the education of students with learning disabilities in Ontario was not entirely appreciated until the passage of the Education Act of 1980. Under this law, the school boards in Ontario were not only required to provide any and all necessary services for the education of students with special needs, but adopt policies and procedures that would enable educators to
identify those students with special needs within five years of its passage (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1982; Gauthier, 1988). Therefore, the definition of learning disabilities that was released by the Ministry in 1978 quickly became an important tool for identifying which students could be eligible for special education services under this law. However, at this point, it should be mentioned that once these students have been identified as having special needs, teachers undoubtedly view and treat the students differently, and there consequently may be some reluctance to fully “incorporate” them into an “elite” class such as a second/foreign language, no matter what the law may require.

Wayne (1978) points out that the definition of learning disabilities that was published by the Ministry of Education of Ontario was based upon the definition of learning disabilities that was authored by the National Advisory Committee for Handicapped Children (NACHC). This latter definition of the NACHC was also the foundation for the United States Office of Education (USOE)/Public Law 94-142 definition, and directly comparing the Ontario Ministry and U.S. definitions will therefore reveal few differences. All of the criteria and specifications of a learning disability that are mentioned in the Ontario Ministry definition are included in the U.S. definition, but the U.S. definition also discusses the impact of environment, economics, and culture on the identification of a learning disability. Since is not clear what impact these three factors have on the manifestation of learning disabilities, the possible role of these three factors will not be considered during this research study, as this study is only designed to examine the practices used by teachers once students have been identified.

While there have been some critics (Kauffman & Hallahan, 1979; Lynn, 1979; Myers & Hammill, 1990) of the definitions used by the two educational systems, mostly as they
relate to the use of specific concepts and terms (i.e. minimal brain dysfunction) and the challenges in determining a discrepancy between aptitude and achievement (i.e. aptitude and intelligence tests yield different results), the definitions are nonetheless the legal basis for determining if a students can be considered learning disabled.

Types of Learning Disabilities

In order to gain a complete understanding of the accommodations used in a Grade 9 Core French classroom for students with learning disabilities, it is important to understand the variety of learning disabilities that can manifest themselves in the second language classroom. While the learning disabilities of the students in the classroom of the participating teacher were not assessed in any way, a basic understanding of the problems the learning disabilities pose is necessary in order to understand the justification for the modifications that were implemented by the teacher I observed for this study.

In the discussion of the following types of learning disabilities, I assume a medical/psychological approach that maintains that there is an innate deficit in the cognitive faculties of the student that is impeding his/her successful learning. While this discussion is more focused on the deficits that these students exhibit, the discussion is by no means attempting to claim that these students do not have strong abilities as well. In fact, most students with learning disabilities have average or above-average IQs (Kirk et al., 1997). However, as the students' deficits are what pose the most problems in the classroom, they are the focus of this discussion.

Learning disorders of language and communication.

According to Wiig & Semel (1980), between 70% and 80% of the children who have been diagnosed with learning disabilities have difficulty processing and/or
expressing language. Such disorders are not the result of sensory impairment, mental retardation, emotional problems, environmental deprivation, or motor problems (Lahey, 1988). The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association authored a definition of the term *language disorder* in 1992 that will be used as a reference in this section for understanding this type of learning disability:

A language disorder is the impairment or deviant development of comprehension and/or use of a spoken, written, and/or other symbol system. The disorder may involve (1) the form of language (phonologic, morphologic, and syntactic systems), (2) the content of language semantic system), and/or (3) the function of language in communication (pragmatic system) in any combination (p. 949).

As this definition points out, language disorders can manifest themselves in one or more of the components of language: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (Hallahan, Kauffman, & Lloyd, 1985). Understandably, problems vary from one component of language to the other, and in the Core French classroom, it is very possible that any or all of these learning disabilities are present.

It is important to note that students who have language-based learning disabilities (commonly referred to as “specific language impairment (SLI)”) are very likely to have difficulty learning to read and to spell because of the strong relationship between spoken and written language (Leonard, 1998; Prior, 1996). In general students with learning disabilities read at a much slower rate than their non-learning-disabled peers, and do not comprehend nearly as much material (Masters, Mori, & Mori, 1999). Because of the close rapport between reading and writing ability, students with learning disabilities who
have difficulty reading often experience considerable difficulty writing. Newcomer and Barenbaum (1991) found that students with learning disabilities do not perform nearly as well as their non-learning-disabled peers on written-expression activities at the spelling, punctuation, or grammatical levels.

Obviously, any of these deficits can manifest themselves in the foreign language classroom. Many of the aforementioned specific language impairments are very subtle and do not occur on a singular basis; a student with language learning disabilities often has a combination of two or more of those impairments, along with difficulties in reading and spelling (Mercer, 1997).

Reading disabilities.

According to Harris and Sippay (1990), between 10% and 15% of the school-age population has some sort of reading disability, which, if ignored, can seriously complicate the individual’s life as time passes. Bond, Tinker, Wasson, and Wasson (1990) identify eight general classifications of reading difficulties: (1) erroneous word recognition and identification; (2) difficulty processing written directions; (3) deficits in basic abilities of comprehension; (4) difficulty in comprehending and retaining specific pieces of information; (5) lack of or limited study skills; (6) difficulty in adapting to reading requirements of specific areas of study; (7) slower rates of comprehension; and (8) poor oral reading skills. These categories adequately address all of the issues that are associated with general reading disabilities, and the most common reading disability, dyslexia.

The literal meaning of the term dyslexia is “difficulty with words;” so, under that definition, most individuals with learning disabilities would be considered dyslexic.
(Kamhi & Catts, 1989). However, the term is often associated with individuals who have poor reading skills; most American psychologists and educators consider dyslexia to be a reading disability of individuals with average or above-average intelligence (Kamhi & Catts, 1989; Mercer, 1997). While much debate of dyslexia centers on a definition and the identification of subgroups of types of dyslexia, there are four traits of dyslexia that most researchers and educators agree upon: 1) dyslexia has a biological basis and is due to a congenital neurological condition; 2) the problems associated with this reading disability continue into adolescence and adulthood; 3) there are perceptual, cognitive, and language dimensions; and 4) dyslexia has considerable influence on other aspects of life (i.e. self-esteem) (Hynd & Cohen, 1983). Students with dyslexia are also very likely to exhibit difficulty in writing and spelling, and there usually is a history of delayed first language acquisition and development (Bryan & Bryan, 1986). Some students may also have difficulty learning the words and language structures associated with telling time and giving directions, but the most common characteristic of students with dyslexia is the tendency to reverse letters or whole words (Bryan & Bryan, 1986).

Attention span disabilities.

With the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments in 1997, students with attention span disabilities, such as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are now in the position to receive special services in the public schools in the United States under the category of Other Health Impaired (OHI). However, because ADD/ADHD frequently occurs concurrently with at least one another learning disability, most educators in the U.S. incorrectly perceive this to be a type of learning disability, when in fact it is actually
classified as a type of health impairment (Lerner, 2000). It is believed that between twenty-five and forty percent of children with learning disabilities in the U.S. display some symptoms of ADD/ADHD (Silver, 1998; Shaywitz, Fletcher, and Shaywitz, 1995). In addition, attention span disabilities impact more individuals than any other learning disability because the other students in the classroom are often affected by the behavior of the student with attention span disabilities. In Ontario, students with ADD and ADHD are considered to have a behavioral disorder. While the Ontarian classification of ADD and ADHD is different from the one used by the United States, students with these disorders are also eligible for special education services (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999b).

For the most part, the characteristics of ADD and ADHD are very similar. The student is often inattentive, easily distracted, highly disorganized, and a poor listener (Lerner, 2000). The student who has ADD may not exhibit any outward behavioral problems, such as excessive talking. Conversely, students who have ADHD also exhibit some or all of the following traits: impulsiveness, a constant desire to ask questions and make comments/demands, and poor impulse control (Kirk, et al, 1997; Lerner, 2000). It is not uncommon for these students to interrupt others who are talking, or to speak very loudly (Lerner, 2000). Finally, as the name implies, the ADHD student is hyperactive. These students are bouncing off the walls, are constantly out of their seats, and/or fidgeting. Not surprisingly, the student with ADHD is very hard to teach, and the teacher often spends considerable time and effort trying to squelch this student’s behavior (Kirk, et al., 1997; Lerner, 2000). These students are constantly being disciplined, and because of the considerable distraction they cause, these students are often rejected by their peers.
and fail most of their classes (Lerner, 2000; Masters, Mori, & Mori, 1999). In addition, Lerner, Lowenthal, and Lerner (1995) indicate that students with ADD/ADHD often experience considerable difficulties with written-expression tasks because of the amount and intensity of focus required to complete the activities.

Currently, many of students with ADHD are on medications that “slow down” the child in the hope that his/her attention will be able to be “grabbed” by the teacher; the most recent figures produced by the National Institutes of Health [U.S.] (1998) indicate that 96.4 % of students with ADD/ADHD are prescribed some sort of psychostimulant drug to help control their behavior. Often, these medications subdue the child to such an extent that they are almost lethargic, and teachers are forced to change their pedagogy in a new way in order to compensate for the needs of the students (Lerner, 2000). Not surprisingly, this approach to treating students with ADD/ADHD has generated a considerable amount of controversy.

**Foreign language learning disabilities.**

According to some research undertaken in the past fifteen years, there is a new category of learning disability in which the innate cognitive language processing deficits of the individual impede his/her ability to successfully learn a foreign/second language. Because this type of learning disability directly impacts the students’ ability to communicate in a second language, it would be reasonable to assume that this type of learning disability is essentially a variation of a (general) language learning disability. However, there are some key differences. Students are believed to have a foreign language learning disability if there is a sharp discrepancy between the students’ performance in the foreign/second language class and their measured aptitude for
learning a foreign language, as demonstrated through a test like the Modern Language Aptitude Test (as opposed to a general aptitude test used in diagnoses of learning disabilities) (Lerner, Sparks, & Ganschow, 1991; Ganschow, Sparks, & Javorsky 1998). The deficits can occur in many areas—semantics, phonology, pragmatics, morphology, syntax, memory, spelling, writing, reading, listening, or speaking, but some research has indicated that the deficits are primarily restricted to linguistic coding deficits in one or more of the phonological, syntactic, or semantic aspects of the language that impedes their ability to acquire the new sounds and structures of the target language (Mercer, 1997; Sparks, Ganschow, & Pohlman, 1989; Ganschow, Sparks, & Javorsky, 1998). It is believed that these aspects of the new language (phonological, syntactic, and semantic) emphasize differences with the native language and contain several levels of meaning that make it difficult for the student to properly process the new language (Lerner, Sparks, & Ganschow, 1991). However, at this point, it should be mentioned that these students often experience difficulties processing their first language (L1) as well, but their challenges are more readily managed because of the constant exposure to the L1; the students have more opportunities to process and practice problematic aspects of the L1 (Ganschow, Sparks, & Javorsky, 1998).

Further research has revealed that a student who has phonological deficits in his/her native language (as opposed to the syntactic or semantic deficits) is most likely to exhibit considerable difficulty in his/her study of a second/foreign language (Sparks & Ganschow, 1993; Sparks & Ganschow, 1993b). Obviously, such knowledge could become a factor in determining whether or not to admit such a student into a foreign/second language program, but it could also provide the necessary information to
help the teacher and the student plan a course of action that would work with the student’s abilities and learn the second/foreign language nonetheless.

Sociological Concerns Regarding “Learning Disabilities”

Even though it may appear at times that the research, educational, and general populations wholeheartedly accept the existence and implications of “learning disabilities,” there are critics of the field and of its impact on education that are worthy of mentioning. Sigmon (1987) argues that the majority of students identified as having learning disabilities come from ethnic and/or economic minorities and have been identified as such by the ethnic and economic majorities. Gallagher (1986) contends that “learning disability” has become more heterogeneous in nature because administrators and teachers tendency to refer students with difficulties in school for special services—it has become a “blanket” term to identify students who challenging the scholastic status quo in one way or another. Too often, he argues, educators assume that a learning disability is the cause of problems in school and ignore the possibility of a student’s environment (at home and at school) and social experience as having an impact on the student’s learning. Coles (1987) also argues for educators to consider social context in the identification of students with learning disabilities. Furthermore, he contends that researchers in the field of learning disabilities have not paid adequate attention to the processes involved in learning and too much attention to the products. Obviously, what the child is doing to help further his/her learning is more indicative of his/her abilities than the end result of his/her efforts.

While these may be viable concerns that undoubtedly impact the identification and treatment of students with special needs, this study will not be examining the impact
of such socio-cultural influences. I do not dispute any of the claims made by Sigmon and his colleagues, as my personal experience as a teacher find many of their concerns to be valid. However, no matter what social concerns may arise out of the identification and education of students with learning disabilities, the essential issue of this study is that these students have been identified as having learning disabilities and are consequently entitled to help.

Learning Disabilities Research in Foreign/Second Language Programs

In 1998, White conducted a national survey of adult education centers in the U.S. in which he endeavored to identify the most prevalent accommodation strategies used to help special needs learners and how effective the instructors perceived these modifications to be. While this study was not implemented in a second language setting, it appears to be the only study at this point that has endeavored to examine how teachers are modifying their pedagogy and curricula to meet the needs of their students with various types of disabilities (including learning disabilities). The survey, which was developed and implemented courtesy of a grant from the U.S. federal government, was based on the Ecology of Human Performance (EHP) Framework of Dunn, Brown, and McGuigan (1994). This framework has its origins in occupational therapy and describes various ways in which the context in which an individual with special needs operates can be modified in order to help the individual achieve his/her goals. White incorporated four of the five classifications from the EHP framework into his survey: Establish/Restore strategies (which address remediation of the individual’s skills and abilities), Modify/Adapt strategies (which address supportive measures), Alter strategies (which address changes in the physical environment), and Prevent strategies (which
address strategies that are used to "ward off" potential problems). All of the accommodation strategies that were included in the survey could be classified into one of the four categories.

The survey itself was organized around 13 common characteristics of adults with disabilities (as identified through an extensive literature review) and the accommodation strategies that had been most frequently recommended to help the learners. The instructors were asked to indicate if they had ever used any of the indicated accommodations, describe those they may have used but were not included in the survey, and finally, assess the perceived effectiveness of the strategies on a nine-point Likert scale. White found that the most frequently used accommodation strategies involved modifications to the learning task, as opposed to changes made to the learning environment or overall expectations. Some common modification strategies reported include: providing directions in very small steps, providing written back-up to oral directions, and breaking up work time into smaller amounts.

In 1995, Schwarz and Burt published a short article designed to help English as a Second Language (ESL) instructors of adults with learning disabilities better meet their students' needs. Their article was based on Schwarz's experience as an adult-ESL instructor, but most of the article was devoted to describing the nature of learning disabilities, the identification of students with learning disabilities, and impacts of teacher training in regards to students with learning disabilities. The section outlining some modification strategies was the shortest and there was no information provided on the use or effectiveness of these accommodations. In addition to Schwarz and Burt, there have been other researchers and educators in the U.S. who have endeavored to address how
foreign language instructors can modify their pedagogy and/or curricula to better accommodate the needs of students with learning disabilities in their classes (see for example, Arries, 1994; Arries, 1999; Demuth & Smith, 1987; Frost & Emery, 1995; Gersten, Baker, & Marks, 1998), but for the most part, these publications offer little, if any, indication of whether or not these strategies have ever been used in the classroom and/or the effectiveness (teacher- and/or student-perceived or empirically validated) of the strategies.

As previously stated, it is believed that most students with learning disabilities who experience difficulty mastering the target language have some sort of phonological coding deficit. Therefore, in order for the student with learning disabilities to master the target language, he/she needs some sort of explicit phonological training to compensate and hopefully overcome these deficits. Consequently, efforts have been made to develop methods for teaching the target language’s phonology to students with learning disabilities. The most well-known approach to teaching the phonology of the target language is known as the Orton-Gillingham Method, and is described as a “multisensory, structured language” approach (Sparks et al., 1991). In the Orton-Gillingham method, students are explicitly and directly taught the phonology of the target language by simultaneously interacting with the target language at the oral, aural, written, reading, and kinesthetic levels. Students address one sound or sound combination at a time; only when they have mastered this sound do they move on to the next (Sparks et al., 1991). Sparks, Ganschow, Pohlman, Skinner, and Artzer (1992) found that students with phonological coding deficits improved both their native and target language phonological skills when instructed in the multisensory approach of the Orton-Gillingham method, but those
students with phonological coding deficits who did not receive the multisensory training did not improve their phonological skills. Kenneweg (1998), Hurst (1996) and Schneider (1996) offer anecdotal evidence of the positive impact the Orton-Gillingham method had on the acquisition of the phonology of the target language of their respective classrooms. However, despite the apparent favorable impact the Orton-Gillingham Method has on the acquisition of the target language phonology, it appears that it is still not a widely-known pedagogical approach in the foreign language field. In the future, it would be worthwhile to better publicize the approach, as it may help FL/SL teachers better address the needs of their students with learning disabilities.

At this juncture, it appears that Hurst (1996), is the only author to have endeavored to describe accommodation strategies (beyond the afore-mentioned Orton-Gillingham Method) that she has used in her own teaching of Spanish to middle school students with learning disabilities and her perceptions of their effectiveness; for the most part, other publications on this topic have only made recommendations about which accommodation strategies to use—no evidence of their impact has been provided (see for example, Demuth & Smith, 1987; Frost & Emery, 1995; Gersten, Baker, & Marks, 1998; Schwarz & Burt, 1995). If FL/SL teachers are expected to include students with learning disabilities in their classrooms, and have been traditionally denied the opportunity to learn more about special education in relation to their content area (Lerner, 2000), more research is needed to identify which teaching practices have been found to be respectful of both the needs of these students and the goals of the foreign/second language program. Betancourt-Smith (1992) published a study that examined high school teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of accommodation strategies that had been recommended
by the United States Office of Education for students with learning disabilities, but of the
38 teachers who responded to the survey, only one had part-time experience in teaching
students in a foreign language classroom. In a 1995 Mesa Redonda (Round Table)
discussion carried out in Hispania, a publication for Spanish teachers, Barnett and Jarvis-
Sladky outlined their beliefs related to teaching Spanish to students with learning
disabilities and offered some suggestions for better including this student population in
the learning experience. There is no information offered about the extent to which these
strategies have been used or their perceived or validated effectiveness.

Here in Ontario, almost all of the research regarding students with learning
disabilities in second language programs has been restricted to the French immersion
classroom, mostly at the primary level. By 1973, only a few years after the immersion
programs had begun in Ottawa, there had been a considerable increase in the number of
students from the immersion program being referred for testing of learning disabilities
(Trites and Price, 1976). As it was uncertain if the students' difficulties were attributable
to the program's organization or an actual learning disability, Trites and Price (1976)
conducted a study to determine what factors were preventing thirty-two children from
primary French immersion programs from successfully acquiring the language,
examining both the program itself and the abilities of the students. Using an extensive
neuropsychological examination, the authors found that students who experienced
difficulty in the French immersion programs had a possible neuropsychological deficit
that prevented them from successfully learning the language. They recommended that
these students be removed from the immersion program. A follow-up study the next year
(Trites & Price, 1977) reaffirmed these findings, but the studies have been somewhat
controversial. Cummins (1984) argued that Trites and Price failed to provide convincing evidence that the developmental lag in the tested students was the real source of the problem. The study only considered those students who had been referred for testing because of their difficulties; there was no testing done to see if students who did not have problems in the program were more cognitively mature than those who had experienced the difficulties (as the findings would imply).

Cummins (1984) proposed that the students who experienced difficulty in immersion had some sort of processing deficit that was evident cross-linguistically, and the students needed to be provided with appropriate remediation in both English and French. French immersion, with the appropriate strategy instruction, should therefore be a beneficial experience for these students. A previous study by Bruck (1978) also argued that French immersion was a suitable learning environment for students with "language disabilities," as the students' L1 and L2 skills seemed to develop accordingly. Wiss (1987) implemented a case study that validated Cummins' (1984) common underlying proficiency theory, and suggested that the participant, Jenny, be offered remediation in both English and French. She argued that since the native language and target language skills were interdependent, remediation in both languages would have a positive, interdependent, and transferable effect on Jenny's linguistic capabilities. In 1999, Rousseau published her case study of a primary French Immersion program in Alberta devoted to students with learning disabilities. Her findings indicate that the students' linguistic abilities in both languages were positively impacted by their involvement in this program that was tailored to their special needs.
In 2001, the argument has now shifted to whether or not students with learning disabilities should be exempted from the Core French requirement of all students in Ontario (Personal Communication, Asha Mohi, January 27, 2001). Even though this debate is led by a minority of parents and teachers, it does call into question what teachers have been doing to help their students with learning disabilities in the Core French classroom, as it seems to insinuate that the needs of these students are not being adequately addressed; if the students with learning disabilities are able to successfully learn French within the support system currently being offered to them, I do not believe that this debate would be happening in the first place. While the White (1998) study does shed some light on what accommodation strategies are being used to help students with special needs, it was restricted to adult learners, and more importantly, was not implemented in a second language context. Most of the other American articles regarding modification strategies in the foreign language classroom were restricted to the university setting, and the two-page Hurst (1996) article is obviously insufficient for completely identifying helpful practices pertinent to the teaching of foreign/second languages to students with learning disabilities. Furthermore, those studies that have addressed students with learning disabilities in the French immersion programs in here in Canada have focused on the learner, not how the teacher was addressing the needs of the student. In addition, all of these studies were restricted to the primary level and to a program in which only a small portion of the student population is enrolled; approximately 90% of all French students in Ontario are enrolled in the Core French program (Calman & Daniel, 1998). Obviously, a considerable need exists to learn more about how secondary level teachers of foreign/second languages accommodate the needs
of their students with learning disabilities if there is ever to be a resolution to the exemption debate. Hopefully, this study will begin to address this need.

The following chapter will outline the design and methodology used to implement this research study.
CHAPTER 3
Design and Methodology

As the literature review demonstrated, there have been several publications that have endeavored to recommend which accommodation strategies are most appropriate for students with learning disabilities in the FL/SL classroom (see, for example, Arries, 1999; Demuth & Smith, 1987; Frost & Emery, 1995; Gersten, Baker, & Marks, 1998; Nuttall, 1996; Schwarz & Burt, 1995), but these articles offered little, if any, insight as to whether or not these recommendations had ever been implemented and/or whether or not they had a favorable impact on the students' learning of the target language. Furthermore, of the studies that have been implemented to describe teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the modification strategies in the classroom, only one incorporated the beliefs of a foreign language instructor (Betancourt-Smith, 1992). With the exception of Hurst (1996), there have not been any viable attempts to move beyond recommendations and suggestions and actually determine and/or describe which practices FL/SL teachers are implementing in their classrooms to accommodate the needs of their students with learning disabilities. Therefore, my study was designed to identify: a) which pedagogical practices were being used by a second language teacher to accommodate the needs of his/her students with learning disabilities; b) his/her perceptions of the effectiveness of these strategies; and c) his/her beliefs about teaching French to students with learning disabilities. My study included an observation period of 700 minutes (10 classes) in which an observation scheme specifically designed for this study, Modifications in the Language Classroom (MILC) was used (Appendix A). I also conducted a series of seven semi-structured interviews with the teacher participant and completed a document
analysis of all paperwork provided to the students during the observation period. Prior to commencing the study, the observation scheme and document analysis scheme was piloted in two other Grade 9 classes taught by the participant.

Participant

The participant selected for this study teaches five Core French classes at a public high school in a metropolitan area in Ontario. Upon the recommendation of my supervisor, I contacted her about possibly participating in the study once I had obtained approval from the school board where my study was implemented; she was the only teacher from the school board who was interested in participating. Both she and the principal at her school signed letters of informed consent (see Appendices B and C for these letters).

Clare5 has been a teacher for over twenty years, but has spent only the past two years at the secondary level; prior to moving to the high school level, she was a primary French immersion instructor. She has achieved Specialist certification in French, French Honors, and Special Education and has published several articles in various teacher development publications on error correction, kinesthetic learning, and character education within the French classroom. Clare is a native speaker of English, but has achieved native-like fluency in French; according to Liddicoat (1991), Clare is considered to be a “balanced bilingual” as she has achieved the same level of proficiency in both languages. In addition, Clare revealed to me during one of our initial meetings that she herself had been diagnosed with dyslexia and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) about fifteen years ago.

5 A pseudonym.
**Classroom Context**

The Applied Core French classroom was chosen as a site for this study because most Grade 9 students with learning disabilities enrolled in Core French are placed in this stream (Personal communication, Miles Turnbull, November 28, 2000). Theoretically, students are not to be directed towards a particular stream based on their abilities, but the practice has become that students with stronger academic skills and potential are placed in the Academic courses, whereas students with weaker academic skills and potential are placed in the Applied courses. The Applied course is more oriented towards having the students use the French language in more practical, concrete manners (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000b).

As previously mentioned, Claire was teaching five Core French classes at the time of the study, but only one of these classes was at the Grade 9 Applied Core French level. This class consisted of twenty-eight students, eight of whom had been formally identified as having learning disabilities and another ten students whom Claire felt should have been formally identified as well. For Claire, she considered a student to be “formally identified” when an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) had been completed and implemented by the special education department at the school. The IEP is a written plan, usually revised every three months, that outlines a student’s needs and abilities, any modifications to the general curriculum that are to be made to accommodate these needs, any special services that the student is to receive, and what measures are to be taken to evaluate the student’s progress and achievement at the end of each three month period (Lerner, 2000; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000a). Teachers are provided with copies of a student’s IEP, so that they can become familiar with the student’s abilities, and
incorporate the suggested modification strategies into their teaching or evaluation procedures (Lerner, 2000, Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000a). While it is possible for a student to have an IEP as a "preventative measure" and consequently, not be formally identified as having learning disabilities, all of the students in Claire's class with an IEP had been formally identified as having learning disabilities (Kirk et al., 1997; Lerner, 2000, Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000a).

At this juncture, it is worthy of mention that I did not classify the behavior of the students for the purposes of this study—the focus of the study was entirely on what Claire was doing to accommodate their needs, not how the students were reacting to the strategies. Occasionally, I would make notations about how many students were offered a modification strategy, but I did not include any sort of identifying descriptors in these notations. I received parental consent from six of the eight formally identified students to learn about the types of learning disabilities with which they had been formally diagnosed and the recommendations that had been made in the IEPs to accommodate the abilities of these students. I did not have access to the students' IEPs; Claire revealed the information about the six students to me during the initial teacher interview and a mid-observation interview. I used this information to draw relationships between the types of learning disabilities and the types of accommodation strategies used by the teacher (see Appendix D for copy of the letter of parental informed consent).

Claire taught the class every other day; each class lasted 75 minutes. Depending on the day, the class was either held immediately following lunch or at the very end of the school day. Claire was the itinerant teacher within the French department at the school. This means that, instead of having her own classroom, Claire had two carts full
of materials that she pushed from class to class. For the first five observation periods of
the study, Claire taught the Grade 9 Applied class in an English classroom, but when a
new teacher was hired in the French department, the classroom allocations were changed.
The class was then held in a classroom within the French department for the remaining
five observation periods. During the time of the study, Claire implemented lessons from
Units 3 and 4 of the Applied Core French program, *Autour de Nous* (Coulbeck, Agro-
DeRosa, & Faulds, 2000).

**Classroom Observations**

The initial goal was to observe Claire for a total of 750 minutes (10 full classes),
but during the latter portion of the study, Claire had a student teacher and consequently
did not teach each class in its entirety. Therefore, this study included 700 minutes of
classroom observation (10 75-minute classes) conducted over a period of six weeks
towards the end of the school year. Turnbull’s (1999) study of Core French teachers
implementing a multi-dimensional project-based curriculum also included a ten-class
observation period. The observations were guided by an observation scheme,
Modifications In the Language Classroom (MILC), developed specifically for use in this
study.

**The Observation Scheme**

**From COLT to MOLT to MILC**

While the number of studies being conducted in the Core French classroom is on
the rise, only a small percentage of these studies have used an established observation
scheme as part of the research methodology. Prior to 1987, only six of the approximately
100 studies that had been implemented in the core French classroom used an observation
scheme (see Foley, Harley, & d’Anglejan, 1987, for a list of these studies). In most of these projects, the observation schemes had been developed specifically for the study and have not been used since (see, for example, McLean, Traub, & Gaudino, 1983). After 1987, it appears as if only two more observation scheme-based studies have been carried out (Allen & Carroll, 1988; Turnbull, 1999).

The COLT

Spada and Fröhlich’s (1995) Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) scheme is perhaps the most well-known observation tool used in second language classroom research. This scheme was initially developed in the 1980s, for use in the Development of Bilingual Proficiency (DBP) project undertaken at OISE/UT (for a general overview of the project, see Harley, Allen, Cummins, & Swain, 1990). As the communicative approach to language teaching had become popular during the early 1980s, the COLT scheme enabled researchers to examine concurrently the “processes” and “products” of this “new” approach to second language teaching and learning (Spada and Fröhlich, 1995). The Core French Observation Study, a component of the DBP project, was the first research project to implement the COLT on a large-scale, examining the classroom practices of over forty Core French teachers (Allen, Carroll, Burtis, & Gaudino, 1987). Each teacher was observed for one class period, and the data were used by the researchers to identify which teachers were more “communicatively oriented” than others.

The researchers’ use of the COLT in this study, in addition to their methodological structure, significantly influenced Turnbull’s (1999) development and implementation of his Multidimensional Orientation to Language Teaching (MOLT) observation scheme.
The MOLT

Turnbull’s MOLT scheme was developed to determine the extent to which four Core French teachers from Eastern Canada had incorporated a multi-dimensional, project-based approach in to their pedagogy. The scheme combined a revised and expanded Part A of the COLT scheme with criteria recommended by the National Core French Study (NCFS). The criteria recommended by the NCFS were inspired by Stern’s (1982, 1983, 1994) four syllabi of a multi-dimensional project-based curriculum (LeBlanc, 1990). Using the MOLT, Turnbull coded (in real-time) the activities and episodes in the participants’ classrooms as they implemented the same thematic unit. Turnbull argued the limitations of making generalizations about a teacher’s classroom practiced based on only one visit to his/her classroom (as demonstrated by the Allen et al., 1987 study), so with the exception of one teacher in the study, Turnbull observed ten of each participant’s approximately 40 minutes-each classes. Turnbull’s study marked the first time in which an observation scheme had been used for repeated analyses of a teacher’s classroom.

The MILC

I drew on both the COLT and MOLT schemes to develop and implement the Modifications In the Language Classroom (MILC) observation tool (Appendix A). As was the case for Turnbull’s design of the MOLT, Part A of the COLT provided the framework for the overall organization of the MILC. In addition, I also closely followed the COLT’s guidelines for the implementation of the scheme.

All of the classifications included in Part A of the COLT are evident in the MILC, however, I have made some modifications and expansions to the criteria. The
classifications in the MOLT regarding the use of the target language and the types of
assessment used in the classroom are also evident in the MILC; again, I made some
adjustments to the criteria. In general, the criteria included from both schemes served to
frame the general context of the classroom where the study was implemented.

The remaining classifications of the MILC scheme (Columns 52-129), those that
relate to the pedagogical and curricular modifications used by the teacher, are taken from
a checklist of suggested modifications (Dover, 1996) that was provided to regular
education teachers at my former school. In my personal experience teaching students
with special needs in the foreign language classroom, I have found this checklist to be a
comprehensive list of the types of modifications that can be found and feasibly
implemented in a “typical” classroom. As this study is the first to endeavor observing the
specific modifications made by classroom teachers, there is no empirical basis that would
justify the inclusion/exclusion of certain criteria. However, as mentioned in the previous
chapter, there have been efforts made to suggest which types of pedagogical strategies
would be most effective in the FL/SL classroom, the evidence of the inclusion of these
accommodation strategies is, at best, anecdotal (e.g., Arries, 1999; Demuth & Smith,
1987; Frost & Emery, 1995; Gersten, Baker, & Marks, 1998; Hurst, 1996; Kenneweg,
1988; Lerner, 2000; Nuttall, 1996; Schneider, 1996; Schwarz & Burt, 1995). While there
has been, however, one questionnaire study (White, 1998) that asked regular education
teachers to indicate which type of accommodation strategies they used with their adult
learners with special needs, White’s classification system was too general to be of use in
my study. Therefore, the modification criteria that are included in the MILC scheme are
based on personal practical knowledge and experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) and
recommendations made in various publications about how to accommodate the needs of students with learning disabilities (e.g., Arries, 1999, Hurst, 1996, Lerner, 2000, Mercer, 1997).

MILC: The Observation Categories

As was the case with both the COLT and MOLT schemes, the MILC scheme describes classroom events at the level of activity and episode. According to Spada and Fröhlich (1995), the beginning or end of an activity is indicated by a change in theme or content, whereas an episode is one component of an activity and is usually indicated by a shift in focus of an activity, but the episode is still organized around the central theme or content. There are a total of seventeen macro-category headings in the MILC scheme, incorporating 129 specific criteria. In the following pages, I will outline the macro-categories and provide some additional information about the descriptors within each macro-category.

Time. (Column 1)

The beginning and end of each activity and episode is recorded in this column.

Activities and episodes. (Column 2)

A brief description of each activity/episode is written in this column; no predetermined criteria are used.

Participant organization. (Columns 3-9)

Taken directly from the COLT, the three sub-categories in this macro-category provide information about how the teacher and students in the classroom are organized, and can be used to determine the extent to which the class is teacher- or student-centered. The first sub-category, “class” (columns 3-5) includes three descriptions of how
information can be presented when a class is working as a whole unit. The teacher can be presenting the information to a particular student or the whole class (T → S/C), a student can be presenting the information to another student or to the whole class (S → S/C), or the students can be engaged in some sort of "Choral" activity, such as when the students are to repeat a model given by the teacher or the text. If the students are working in groups or pairs, columns 6 and 7 are used to describe whether or not the each student within the group or pair are working on the same task as his/her partner(s), or on a different task. If the students are working individually, columns 8 and 9 are used to indicate whether or not each student is working on the same task or on different tasks.

Content. (Columns 10-18)

For the most part, the criteria in this category were taken directly from the COLT and are used to describe the general content/theme of the activities/language being presented to the students. Again, there are three sub-categories within the macro-category. The first criterion under the "management" sub-category, "procedure", refers to directives given to the students. The second criterion, discipline, refers to disciplinary statements or comments made by the teacher about the class behavior or performance. Since teachers make numerous procedural/disciplinary remarks throughout the course of a given class period, these categories are checked only when the episode lasts longer than a minute. Columns 12-16 are devoted to the type of language upon which the emphasis is placed during the activity/episode: "form," (e.g., grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary), "function" (e.g., communicative acts such as requesting, apologizing, and explaining), "discourse" (e.g., organization of sentences into a cohesive and coherent sequence), "sociolinguistic" (e.g., references to forms or styles suitable for various contexts), and
"translation" (e.g., translating from the L1 to the L2 or vice versa). The first four categories were included in the COLT, but the last category, "translation," was added after my piloting process, upon observing several translation activities. The final two criteria, listed under the sub-category "Other," are known simply as "narrow" and "broad" and serve to classify the type of topics that are discussed within the classroom. "Narrow" refers to topics that are directly related to the students' immediate experience/environment, including events within the classroom, whereas "broad" refers to topics that go beyond the students' immediate setting and experience (e.g., international events).

Assessment. (Columns 19-25)

This category was first included in the MOLT scheme, but for the MILC scheme, has been revised. In this category, the type of assessment being implemented, (formative, summative, diagnostic, and "other"), as well as the person who is doing the assessing (teacher, peer, self) is checked off by the observer. Harley, d'Anglejan, & Shapson, (1990: 3) define formative assessment as "the ongoing gathering of information which will inform teachers and students about the degree of success of their respective efforts in the classroom," while they describe summative assessment as "the assessment of students' performance at the end of a course of study." Diagnostic assessment is used to determine which skills or knowledge a student knows or doesn't know (Richards, Platt, and Platt, 1994). The "Other" assessment category was included for portfolio, observational, and performance assessments. While these classifications (portfolio, observational, and performance) have separate columns in the MOLT scheme, I decided to include them under one umbrella in the MILC scheme because I did not anticipate
them to be prominent assessment methods\(^6\). I also excluded the columns from the MOLT regarding the specific criteria being assessed because I felt that later columns on assessment modifications would provide me with insight about what was being assessed, in addition to the information provided in the “Activities and Episodes” description on my MILC scheme. Columns 23-25 determine who is doing the assessment—teacher, self, or peer. The columns in the MOLT scheme that determined how the feedback was presented to the student were omitted from the MILC scheme because later categories on assessment adaptations address these issues.

**Content control.** (Columns 26-29)

This category was taken in large part from the COLT scheme, with some modifications, and was used to describe who selected the topic being discussed or the task being implemented. “Teacher” was checked when the teacher brought up the topic, without help from the text (e.g., asking students about what they did yesterday). “Teacher/text” was checked when the task/topic was selected by the teacher and the text (e.g., asking the students to discuss a certain passage from the book). The “Teacher/text/student” was checked when the task/topic was jointly selected (from)/initiated by the three (e.g., asking the students to pick one of a select number of passages to read and discuss). Finally, “student” was selected when a student or a group of students initiated the topic or task.

**Language use.** (Columns 30-35)

This category was taken directly from the MOLT and was used to determine the extent to which the L2 is being used in the classroom. Turnbull (1999) included this

---

\(^6\) This assumption was confirmed during the piloting process, so the “other” classification remained.
category in his scheme because of the amount of time the target language and L1 are used is a “typical but not defining feature of multidimensional project-based teaching” (p.17). This category was included on the MILC scheme because I wanted to determine if the amount of L2 being used by the teacher was affected by the special needs of the students. Both the teacher’s and students’ use of the target language was examined, and was categorized as either exclusive “L1”, exclusive “L2”, or a “mix” of the two.

**Student modality.** (Columns 36-41)

This category examined which skills the students were using during a particular activity and ultimately determined the mode in which students operate most frequently. In addition to the traditional categories of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, I included a “physical” descriptor, as it has been suggested that students with learning disabilities can benefit from “hands-on” interaction with resources, such as acting out material (Lerner, 2000). There is also an “Other” category, included to cover such activities as singing, arranging displays, organizing notebooks, etc.

**Materials I.** (Columns 42-50)

This is the first of two categories that use the heading of “Materials”. For easier distinction, this macro-category is known as “Materials I” and was used to describe the type and the origin of the materials being used to present the lesson information to the students. While this macro-category exists in the COLT and MOLT schemes, its purpose, especially as it relates to the sub-category of “source,” is somewhat different. In both the COLT and MOLT schemes, the “source” micro-category is used to indicate whether or not the lesson materials has been developed by native speakers in order to determine how the nature of the linguistic input (authentic vs. simplified) may affect learner outcomes.
In the MILC, the "source" sub-category was designed to simply determine who or what provided the lesson materials; I was interested in determining the extent to which the teacher was responsible for generating the materials used with the students with learning disabilities.

Under the sub-category of "Type," there are four possible classifications—text (e.g., textbook, written materials), audio (e.g., verbal information from a speaker, cassette), visual (e.g., pictures, videos), and tactile (e.g., manipulatives such as models of foods). The other sub-category, "Source," includes five categories—teacher, student, textbook/workbook, resource teacher, and other. The first three categories are self-explanatory, but the fourth category, resource teacher (Column 49), was added because of personal experience in which a resource teacher provided me with materials to use with some of my special needs students. The "other" category was included to cover materials that may be provided by the Ministry of Education or another teacher.

Pacing. (Columns 51-55)

This category marks the first of the categories taken from the checklist developed by Dover (1996). As Mercer (1997) points out, many students with learning disabilities are often challenged by time constraints and/or by activity timing. Some students require additional time on assignments and activities in order to properly process all of the information, while other students are stymied by devoting too much time to a particular task. In addition, some students may require the teacher to constantly remind them of an assignment's time requirements to help them with manage their work, which is a common problem of students with learning disabilities (Lerner, 2000, Gersten et al., 1998). Finally, some students, according to Lerner (2000) just "shut down" when faced
with a timed assignment (e.g., make a list of all the verbs you know in 60 seconds), and consequently, should not be expected to participate. The categories in this column take all of these factors into consideration.

**Environment.** (Columns 56-67)

Also drawing on Dover (1996), this category includes classifications to help describe the classroom setting, from both a physical and emotional/supportive standpoint. The first three criteria (columns 56-58) include modifications made to the usual classroom layout to help accommodate a student’s needs. There are times when a student with learning disabilities may need to be seated near the teacher or the front of the classroom, so that the teacher is able to refocus his/her attention or provide additional support. Lerner (2000) also recommends that teachers take steps to minimize potential distractions in the classroom, including limiting the number of posters hung on the walls and the level of noise in the room. The classifications related to distractions are included in this sub-category (Columns 59-61). The “other” classification within this micro-category was included to cover instances in which a fellow classmate distracts the student or if a student “plays” with materials at his/her desk. The next two columns (62 and 63) describe occasions in which special education personnel enter the class to help the student, providing one-on-one attention and/or additional support. Columns 64 and 65 are devoted to using signals (hand, sound, sign) to refocus the student’s attention or to indicate that an activity has changed. Lerner (2000) and Mercer (1997) both recommend this practice, as it catches the attention of the target student without necessarily drawing attention from the whole class.
The last identified descriptor, "Time Out" (Column 66), is checked if the student needs to step out of the class for a few minutes should he/she become too stressed. Some educators may this as a disciplinary tactic if a student, particularly one with ADD, becomes unruly. However, Lerner (2000) argues that this strategy is much more effective when it is used to help a student calm down if he/she becomes too anxious. Often, if the student does not have a chance to "decompress," he/she often manifests his/her anxiety by "acting out" inappropriately (Lerner, 2000). The "other" category (Column 67) is included to cover the instances in which a student is pulled out of the classroom to receive additional support or if the regular classroom teacher meets with special education personnel to discuss ways to better address the student's needs.

Presentation of materials. (Columns 68-80)

This macro-category addresses the modifications made when presenting course material to students. The sub-category "Emphasis" (Columns 68-71) describes which form of input (auditory, visual, tactile, other) is used, and during the analysis stage, this sub-category is separated from the other classifications. The method of input is a crucial factor for students with learning disabilities, as many of them can only rely on one approach to accurately process information (e.g., students with audiolingual learning disabilities rely on written input to gain information).

The subsequent category "Taping teacher talk" is for those episodes in which a teacher tapes his/her class so that a student can listen to it again at home for additional reinforcement. "Change curriculum" refers to episodes in which a student is kept in the classroom, but is placed on a different learning path, with different outcomes (e.g., instead of a student being expected to be able to know and use five tenses correctly by the
conclusion of a course, a student with learning disabilities is expected to be able to know and use two of those five tenses). Arries (1994) advocates this approach as a means of including the student with learning disabilities in the university foreign language class. The remaining classifications in this category are simply alternate ways of presenting information to students—demonstrating concepts, using manipulatives, highlighting (emphasizing orally) certain key information, pre-teaching vocabulary, and writing in large script on the board. In the second/foreign language classroom, using English to clarify a point may also be considered a modification, especially if use of the L1 is considered "taboo" by the classroom teacher, as is the case in many situations (Cook, 2000). The "other" (Column 80) category was included to cover episodes where the teacher entrusts a fellow student to explain a concept to the student with learning disabilities or when the teacher uses a different textbook for the student with learning disabilities.

Materials II. (Columns 81-88)

This category was taken from Dover's (1996) original checklist, with some modifications. It was not combined with the first Materials category because I wanted to maintain a distinction between origin and type (Materials I) and modifications made to the materials (Materials II). Three of the eight modifications (highlighting text, typing handwritten material, and modifying the text) address physical changes to materials. Three of the eight modifications (providing supplements [e.g., extra practice handouts], providing special equipment [e.g., a laptop for the student to type on], and providing manipulatives) describe outside (in relation to resources provided with the original program) resources used to help meet a student's particular needs. The "assist note-
taking” category refers to the episodes where the teacher provides a student with an outline of the lesson or the activity, with prompts for the information needed to complete the notes. The final category, “other” (Column 88) was included to cover episodes where the teacher uses a modified textbook, provides the student with special writing utensils, or uses laminated materials that the student can write on with a wax crayon. Lerner (2000) and Mercer (1997) have recommended all of these strategies, as they contend that most materials are not suitable for students with learning disabilities as they are designed and/or implemented, and consequently require modifications to be better suited to the students’ needs.

Grading. (Columns 89-92)

This category, slightly modified from the original checklist by Dover (1996), describes episodes where grading system used to assess a student is modified to take his/her needs into consideration. For instance, if a dyslexic student is unable to participate in read-aloud sessions, then the teacher should not include grades from these activities in his/her final grade because the student is at an obvious disadvantage.

The last category in the column, “Students help determine total value,” (Column 92) was included because of Mercer’s (1997) recommendation that students with learning disabilities should be able to help identify which assignments best reflect the students’ abilities.

Assignments. (Columns 93-105)

The “Assignments” category was also adapted from Dover’s (1996) checklist. The classifications within this category refer to modifications made in the presentation of a specific assignment/task to the student (e.g., reading directions aloud to the students,
providing directions in steps, giving the assignment in steps, recording/typing the
assignment, providing written back-up to oral directions, and giving the student oral
cues/prompts to help him/her determine where to look for answers), how the student is to
keep track of his/her assignments (e.g., assignment notebook/sheet), and modifications
made to the overall organization/content of the assignment (e.g., shortening the
assignment, adapting worksheets and packets [providing more examples, simplify
language], giving the student an alternate assignment, lowering the level of difficulty, or
lowering the reading level).

Reinforcement/Follow-Through. (Columns 106-118)

The classifications in this category, again taken from Dover (1996), address
modifications made to the teacher’s pedagogy while reinforcing material, assignments,
and assessments. Some of the strategies are designed to provide follow-up (e.g., positive
reinforcement, concrete reinforcement, immediate feedback, checking for understanding)
to students who attempt to contribute to a discussion, complete a task, or finish an
assessment activity. Some of the strategies relate to reinforcing the requirements and/or
contents of an assignment (e.g., student repeats directions, reinforcing assignment
timelines, repeat/review/drill, and providing additional practice). This is supported by
Mercer, (1997), who points out that students with learning disabilities need to be
furnished with many opportunities that reinforce the content and goals of a particular
task. The Orton-Gillingham method advocated by Sparks et al., 1991 and Sparks et al.,
1992 to teach the phonology of the target language to students with learning disabilities
also advocates extensive repetition and review as a means of reinforcing the material.
A few of the classifications in this category relate to student learning habits and practices that are implemented to help the students with learning disabilities be more effective in their studying (e.g., teaching study skills, providing study guides, and having access to peer tutors), as many students with learning disabilities need assistance in developing effective learning strategies that compensate for their difficulties (Lerner, 2000). The classification "Behavioral contracts" refers to episodes where there is a written agreement between the student and the teacher to improve either his/her actual comportment or study behavior/habits (e.g., the student will sign a contract in which he/she promises to spend 20 minutes each night practicing his/her vocabulary). Lerner (2000) contends that these contracts equip students with a sense of empowerment, in addition to providing a somewhat rigid plan of action to guide his/her learning/behavior.

**Assessment Adaptations.** (Columns 119-129)

This final category is used when an assessment activity (test, quiz, oral activity) is being implemented, and is adapted from the Dover (1996) checklist. The strategies in this category have also been recommended by Lerner (2000). The modification classifications included in this category can affect either the format of the assessment or the presentation of the assessment to the student. Modifications in the former classification include: providing answers orally instead of in writing, using a short-answer format instead of a long essay, using a multiple-choice format to limit the scope of the student's required knowledge base, giving the student a different test altogether, shortening the length of the test, and requiring the student to complete only certain sections of the test. Modifications in the latter category include: reading the test to the student, using an audio recording of the test to help guide the student, or allowing
additional time to complete the assessment). The “other” category (Column 129) was included to describe episodes where students work collaboratively on an assessment task, and where the student is allowed to complete the assessment at home and/or with additional resources/references.

The Pilotig Process

Initially, the MILC scheme was to be piloted in the classroom of a teacher other than the one selected for the study. However, as the pilot classroom was in a school board where support staff was on strike, it was not possible to do the piloting there. Therefore, the piloting of the observation scheme took place in other classes taught by the teacher who participated in this study. Over a period of approximately three hours, the MILC scheme was piloted in two Grade 9 Academic Core French classrooms, and modifications were made to both its content and its organization. In addition to providing me with the opportunity to practice and refine the MILC scheme, I was also able to see the teacher’s pedagogy in action in all of other classes. I was able to observe, informally, how Claire interacted with her “normal” students. This informal observation provided me with a basis for comparison; based on what I observed in her “normal” classes, I was in a position to more easily and readily identify which teaching practices in the Applied Core French class represented modifications to her traditional teaching habits.

When the piloting began, there were 114 classifications on the MILC scheme. During the process, some categories were eliminated [e.g., those that referred to the framework used by White (1998)] because they were too similar to other criteria or too

---

7 I was unable to find another Applied Core French class in which I could pilot the scheme in time for the study, so I decided that the Academic class was the next best option because the students were roughly at the same developmental levels.
difficult to observe. The "Assessment" category was revised extensively, as the former four-classification system was too narrow to provide adequate information about the types and origins of assessments being used in the classroom. The "Language Use" category was added upon realizing that the information regarding the use of the native and target languages was needed to provide both a context for the classroom and for the modifications themselves. A few classifications were added to particular categories, such as "Translation" in the Content category, "Teacher" in the Content Control category, and "Use of English to clarify" in the Presentation of Materials category because I had observed them being implemented several times during the piloting process.

Inter-Rater Reliability

The inter-rater reliability of the MILC scheme was established once the revisions had been made. The second observer used to establish inter-rater reliability was the participant’s student teacher, and I trained him over a one-hour period to implement the scheme. With the permission of the participating teacher, he observed one entire class (75 minutes) and coded the scheme accordingly. Upon comparison and analysis of his and my notations, I determined that he had classified a total of 191 behaviors, while I had observed 196. There was agreement in 181 of the instances, therefore establishing an inter-rater reliability rating of 92.3%.

Teacher Interviews

In order to fully appreciate the impact of the modification strategies used by the participant, it was important to determine what motives and conditions prompted the teacher to implement specific accommodations. Therefore, through a series of seven semi-structured interviews, this portion of the research project provided a forum for
discussing teacher beliefs, types of learning disabilities in the classroom, common
classroom practices, classroom activities and events, modification practices, perceived
student reaction to the modification strategies, and any other issues that arose during the
observation period. Initially, I had only anticipated six interviews, but because of delays
in receiving parental consent letters, the portion of the pre-interview that addressed the
types of learning disabilities with which the students had been diagnosed and the
recommendations that had been made to accommodate the students was implemented
during a separate interview after the observations had begun and I had received parental
consent.

Essentially, the interviews took place at three different times: prior to the
beginning of the observation period (one interview), during the observation period (five
interviews), and after the observation period (one interview). I audio-recorded all of the
interviews and transcribed them within two days. The first interview lasted approximately
30 minutes and was held prior to the beginning of the observation period (see Appendix
E for questions). This initial interview was used to gain insight into the Claire's
pedagogical background, the general demographics of the class (size, when it is held,
boys vs. girls), a "typical" day in her classroom, her general approaches and beliefs
regarding modification strategies, and what topics were to be covered in class during the
observation period. She was also asked to describe her likes and dislikes regarding
teaching French to students with learning disabilities.

Because parental consent relating to the discussion of the types of learning
disabilities identified in the students in the class had only been granted by a few parents
at the time of this interview, the questions related to the number of students formally
identified as having learning disabilities, the types of learning disabilities that had been identified, and the modifications that had been recommended were excluded. Upon receipt of all of the parental consent letters, I interviewed Claire during the observation period, asking her all of the questions that I had initially excluded (see Appendix F for these questions).

During the observation period, I interviewed Claire either at the conclusion of each week or after three classes had been observed (depending on Claire's schedule); each session lasted between 15-30 minutes. These interviews were used to discuss the week's classroom events and activities while they were still fresh in both my and Claire's mind (see Appendices G-J for questions asked at each mid-observation interview). I also used these opportunities to learn more about the formal teaching program, *Autour de Nous*, (Coulbeck, Agro-DeRosa, and Faulds, 2000) or about changes in the classroom "personality" that I had jotted in my notebook during the course of the observations.

The final interview (Appendix K) occurred at the conclusion of the observation period, and provided Claire an opportunity to discuss student reaction to the modification strategies (as she perceived them), her perceptions of their effectiveness, and the resources available to her as a French teacher to help accommodate students with learning disabilities. This interview also provided Claire with an opportunity to make recommendations about particular strategies, techniques, resources, or supplements that could be of use to teachers of French in the United States who have encountered students with special needs in their classrooms.

The questions that were asked during the pre- and post-interviews were based on personal interest about the topic, information revealed in scholarly publications about
modifications and strategies that have been suggested (e.g., Arries, 1999; Hurst, 1996; Lerner, 2000; Mercer, 1997; Schneider, 1996), empirical research about teacher perceptions and beliefs regarding the accommodation of students with learning disabilities and the strategies used to accommodate the students, (Betancourt-Smith, 1992; Kavale & Reese, 1991; Schumm, Vaughn, Gordon, & Rothlein, 1994) and the Ontario legal framework used for accommodating students with learning disabilities in the foreign language classroom. The questions that were posed during the weekly interviews were based primarily on the events and activities implemented during that week. Once I had transcribed each interview, I e-mailed a copy to Claire, who had the opportunity to read over the interviews and make annotations to them if she felt that she had not fully articulated her position during the interview.

Document Analysis

An important feature of a classroom is the materials with which the students are provided. In many instances, these documents are taken from the textbook program that is being used to implement the curriculum. Others are developed by the teacher in order to address a specific topic in the lesson, as written explanations of oral material, reinforcement activities, quizzes, or tests. The final portion of this research study examined the various documents that were provided to the students during the observation period in order to determine the extent to which these documents had considered the needs of the students with learning disabilities. Modification strategies are not restricted to explicit teaching practices; often the materials provided the students to take into account his/her special needs (e.g., a textbook that contains the same information as the one used by other students, but is written at a lower reading level).
These documents included handouts outlining what was to be on a test, assessment grids, behavior contracts, a quiz designed by Claire, and activities that were done in the workbook and textbook. It was my intention that an analysis of these documents would serve to provide a better understanding of the natures of the documents needed in order to fully accommodate students with learning disabilities in the foreign language classroom.

During the observation period, I requested a copy of each handout provided to the students. I was also given a personal copy of the textbook and workbook being used in the Grade 9 Applied Core French program (Coulbeck et al., 2000). When the students worked from the textbook or the workbook, I placed a post-it note on the page, listing the date and corresponding activity from the observation scheme. Furthermore, I noted on the observation scheme that a handout or workbook/textbook activity had been used during this particular episode. These pages were also considered in the document analysis.

All of the documents were analyzed using a modified version of the observation scheme, which essentially listed the types of modifications that could only be made to the document or to the implementation process, as indicated in the initial checklist by Dover (1996) (see Appendix L for scheme). The categories for the document analysis scheme include:

**Document Title** (Column 1)

The title of the handout or workbook/textbook page is listed.

**Date(s) Used** (Column 2)

---

8 For the purpose of analysis, these "documents" were photocopied from the workbook. A considerable portion of the students' written work was done in the workbook, hence the inclusion of these activities in the document analysis.
The dates on which the document was used are noted here.

Source (Columns 3-5)

The origin of the document is indicated; either the teacher, the textbook/workbook or school board/resource teacher are possible sources.

Function (Columns 6-9)

The purpose of the document—supplement/study guide, homework/classwork assignment, test/quiz, or other—is indicated.

Pacing (Columns 10 & 11)

Modifications made to the time requirements of the assignment, or to the format of the assignment that effect its time requirements are listed here.

Presentation of Material (Columns 12-20)

Emphasis. (Columns 12-15)

Written documents can be used to complement or emphasize another form of expression. The classifications within this micro-category are not actual modifications, but they do provide additional context for the function and goals of the document.

Other modifications. (Columns 16-20)

The modifications listed in this category address possible changes that could be made to the implementation procedures for the document. Primarily, this information is delivered orally, so field notes are needed to clarify the modifications.

Materials (Columns 21-24)

The modifications listed in this category address changes that could be made to the document prior to or during the implementation process and require some sort of written alteration to the document.
**Assignment/Testing Adaptations** (Columns 25-35)

The modifications within this category address various components of an assignment or an assessment that may be modified during the implementation process.

**Grades** (Columns 36-37)

The classifications within this category address possible changes that could be made to the grading process, either the system used to determine the final grade, or the percent composition of the final mark.

**Inter-Rater Reliability**

The checklist underwent a test of reliability similar to that for the observation scheme. A second rater (a fellow masters' student) coded a random sample of 25% of the documents provided to me during the course of the study. Prior to my analysis of these documents, I had made a photocopy of each handout so that any sort of notations that I had made on the handouts did not influence the second rater. However, I did provide the second rater access to my field notes, as they often contained additional information/clarification about the types of modifications that were made to the documents. Upon comparison and analysis of her and my notations for the six documents, I determined that she had classified a total of 55 descriptors, while I had noted 57. There was agreement in 52 of the instances, therefore establishing an inter-rater reliability rating of 91.2%.

The following two chapters present the results of the study. Chapter 4 presents the results of the seven teacher interviews that provided insight into the classroom setting, the types of learning disabilities Claire was required to accommodate, and the knowledge and practical experience that has come to influence her pedagogy as it relates to students with
learning disabilities. The following chapter, Chapter 5, presents the results of the
classroom observations and document analysis that revealed the specific modification
strategies Claire used to meet the students' needs during the study. The implications of
the findings presented in the next two chapters will be discussed in Chapter 6.
CHAPTER 4

Results: Teacher Interviews

This chapter will present the analyses of the series of seven semi-structured interviews I had with Claire during the course of the study. One interview took place prior to the commencement of the classroom observations, five were held during the time of the observations, and the final interview was held once all of the observations had been completed. The seven interviews lasted a combined total of 3 hours and 40 minutes.

The interviews were designed to elicit information about Claire’s professional development as it relates to teaching French to students with learning disabilities, her thoughts on the formal curriculum, her conceptions of the modifications she used in her classroom to accommodate her students’ needs, her perceptions of the effectiveness of these modifications, her thoughts about classroom events, and her personal beliefs about teaching French to students who have difficulty processing and/or communicating in their native language.

Upon the recommendation of Seidman (1998), I first read through the transcripts and highlighted those passages I felt to be most relevant to the research questions. I identified six general themes in the comments: professional development and support, the Applied Core French program materials, conceptions of students with learning disabilities, conceptions of modification strategies within Claire’s teaching, perceptions

---

9 As had been previously mentioned in the methodology chapter, part of the pre-observation interview had to be implemented during the observation period, as I had needed to obtain parental consent prior to discussing the nature and needs of the types of learning disabilities that had been formally identified in the classroom. This interview is considered to be one of the mid-observation interviews, but unlike the four other interviews conducted during that time, there was no discussion of classroom events and procedures.

10 Throughout this chapter, I use the term “conceptions” to refer to Claire’s understanding of a particular issue (e.g. learning disabilities).
of the effectiveness of the modification strategies, and Claire's personal beliefs about teaching French to students with learning disabilities. Within each theme, I looked for common patterns, mostly as they related to phrasing and word choice. I also examined Claire's reflections about her teaching practices in relation to what I had observed during the ten class periods, in order to determine how her personal philosophies seemed to be impacting her pedagogy. At times, I consulted the audio recordings of the interviews in order to gain more insight about the Claire's tone of voice, her rate of speech, and the information on which she placed an emphasis during the interviews.

**Professional Development and Support**

Over the course of the interviews, I asked Claire about aspects of her teacher training that she believed to be crucial to her teaching French to students with learning disabilities and the type of support she received that further enabled her to be an effective teacher to these students. A few of her comments regarding this topic are included in Figure 4.1.
Figure 4.1: Selected Comments on Professional Development and Support

- In the time that I have been at this school, I know of no special training for language teachers to help them serve the needs of the special needs students.

- I know very few French teachers who have their Specialist certification in French and in Special Education.

- If we go specifically to the special education people, and if we ask for ideas, we can get them.

- There are older documents [from the Ministry] that are available for special education that we can access, but for French, basically, we only have information on classical languages and on French as a second language, but none of it takes special education into consideration.

- In terms of being able to facilitate language learning, there really isn’t an outside person who can provide support. I think the fact that I have my special education specialist, with a focus on behavior, as well as gifted, as well as language, kind of made me the ideal candidate for getting more of these needier kids.

- I am basically my own support person, although I can go to the special education department for suggestions if I have any questions, and I do have informal discussions with colleagues in that department.

- Gradually, it is brought to my attention by the people who are in guidance and/or special education about which students need modifications. (Claire does not refer to the OSR at the beginning of the year to see which students require modifications).

Claire believed that because she has earned Specialist certification in French and in Special Education (with an emphasis on gifted students, speech pathology, and behavior problems), she is adequately qualified and prepared to teach French to students with learning disabilities. To the best of her knowledge, she is one of a small group of French teachers who have earned this dual specialization. Over the course of her twenty-one year career, she has had at least one student with special needs enrolled each year, and she cited this practical experience as an additional qualification for teaching the Applied Core French class. She also stated that she does her best to keep “abreast of the

11 Claire has also earned French Honors Specialist certification.
most recent literature," regarding learning disabilities and language development in order to help develop and/or revise strategies for accommodating these students.

Regarding professional support, Claire indicates that there are more opportunities for outside assistance at the school level than from the Ministry of Education. The special education department at Claire's high school offers some support, mostly as it relates to identifying the strengths and weaknesses of a student with learning disabilities and offering suggestions as to what types of accommodation strategies should be used to help students meet their academic goals. Claire describes this process:

I do regularly get sheets to fill in on students who are subsequently discussed at in-school team meetings. The special education department collects information from all subject teachers on a given student at least three times a year in order to gain a global picture of the child's performance across the curriculum. Subsequently, we get a sheet with suggestions of modifications based on that student's needs.

The process Claire outlined is the course of action for reviewing and revising a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). As stated in Chapter 3, Both in the United States and Ontario, any student that has been formally identified as having special needs is required to have an Individual Education Plan (IEP), but it is possible that a student who has not been formally identified will have an IEP as a "preventative" measure (Kirk et al., 1997; Lerner, 2000, Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000a). For Claire, and any other teacher for that matter, the IEP is the primary resource for identifying the needs of the student with learning disabilities and learning of the types of modifications she should use to accommodate these students. Support relating to the implementation and revision of a student's IEP is standard in school systems in Ontario and in the United States; it is required by law (Lerner, 2000).
Claire also indicated that she could approach the special education department at any time if she needed help in better understanding a student's needs or in developing/revising/implementing a modification strategy. While not required by law, this is also a common form of support for the classroom teacher, especially those at the secondary level (Mercer, 1997). Lerner (2000) argues that this can be the most important form of support offered to content-area secondary school teachers because many lack appropriate training in and knowledge of the pedagogy related to teaching students with special needs. However, as previously mentioned, Claire has received additional training in both her content area and in special education, so it would be reasonable to argue that Claire may be better-prepared than most of her colleagues.

Some students with learning disabilities or other special needs may require additional support personnel\(^\text{12}\) in the classroom, but Claire did not have any such students at the time of this study. However, she mentioned that there was an aide that offered support to other members of her department, but since the aide is unilingual, she could not offer assistance in the target language. Therefore, the aide's primary role was to monitor behavior. Claire seemed to be troubled by this lack of support personnel who could offer assistance in French, even stating at one point, "In all fairness, given that support would not be available to my students in French, I would not request a support person. I believe that such a person would be better utilized in a class where English is the major focus."

\(^{12}\) Some students with special needs who are in a general education classroom may require assistance from a special education teacher or a special education teacher's aide. These personnel can be used to monitor student behavior, provide more individualized instruction, or help to facilitate communication between the classroom teacher and student (e.g. sign language interpreter).
The Applied Core French Program Materials

During the interviews, Claire made it abundantly clear that the textbook program currently being used for Applied Core French in Ontario, Autour de Nous 9 (Coulbeck, Agro-DeRos, & Faulds, 2000), is not adequately addressing the students’ abilities, needs, interests, and learning styles and requires considerable modifications to make it, in Claire’s words, “palatable” to the students. The textbook was approved for use in the Grade 9 Applied Core French classroom in May 2000; the 2000-2001 academic year was the first year in which the program was used. The publisher of the textbook, Pearson Education Canada (2000), claims: “Autour de nous 9 addresses 100% of the expectations and meets the spirit of the Ontario French as a second language, Core French, Grade 9 Applied curriculum...Each unit provides for the different learning styles and capabilities of a range of students.”

Claire did not make one positive comment about this program during any of the interviews. While it may be reasonable to argue that the newness of the program may have contributed to some of the challenges and frustrations Claire experienced while implementing it with her Applied students, informal discussions with other teachers familiar with the program revealed similar concerns about the program’s inability to appeal to students, present information in a clear and logical manner, and take into consideration a heterogeneous student population in terms of academic ability. Figure 4.2 includes some of the comments Claire made about Autour de Nous 9 (Coulbeck et al., 2000).
Figure 4.2: Selected Thoughts on the Applied Core French Program Materials

- I'm always thinking of the faces in the class, what they need, and how I can take a program that really doesn't suit the needs of these students and make it more palatable to them.

- What bothers me is that the existing program requires significant modifications to be palatable to the students because it doesn't meet their needs, it doesn't meet their interests, and it doesn't meet their learning styles.

- There are some things that are focused on in the program and in the Ministry expectations that really aren't all that important in the end for them as communicators.

- This program throws in all kinds of stuff that's confusing for them.

- The book and workbook alone doesn't work. They don't work for the kids.

- Well, if you have an Applied program, it should contain information that they can learn by doing. This program we have doesn't meet that practical need, and we have to modify it significantly if we expect to hook the students in.

- Sometimes I have a problem with the order in which the program presents the topics.

- The program also has a tendency to introduce tenses within the texts and readings that they will not learn over the course of the year and haven't learned in the past—like the conditional and the imperfect.

- There are also words and expressions that are taught in the program that are just simply wrong. The workbook is full of errors.

- I also find that the text is not visual enough—these are kinesthetic learners and they need that visual stimulus.

- This program is geared to heavy writing and heavy reading, and that's not their mode of learning.

When one speaks of modifications that are implemented to accommodate the needs of the students, it is implied that the current program, as it is, is not suitable for the student and his/her abilities, and should thus be “modified”. However, from what I gathered from Claire during our interviews and from what I gathered from observing the class, the modifications that Claire made to the program were even necessary for the “normal” students to understand what was going on. In fact, there was even an instance
in which Claire had difficulty understanding what the textbook was presenting to and asking of the students. Towards the end of the observation period, the students had been assigned to read a passage from the textbook about the disappearance of a young man while he was on a trip to an amusement park, and I noticed that Claire was more explicit than usual when working with the material. I asked her about this activity during the final mid-observation interview, and she stated, “Well, even for me as a teacher—this is embarrassing to admit—I had to read the passage four times before I realized what was happening. The text and the accompanying pictures were not clear, but since I had finally figured it out, I could walk the students through it and help them understand.”

Claire has native-like proficiency in French, and the fact that she needed to read the passage four times in order to understand what was happening seems to indicate that this program is not appropriate, especially for students with special needs. If the teacher has problems understanding the material, making it relevant and accessible to students with learning disabilities is a very daunting task. Next year, Claire would like to collaborate with her colleagues and create a workbook that would be more suitable to a classroom with a myriad of student needs; they would use this workbook to supplement the current materials.

Conceptions of Students with Learning Disabilities

Kavale and Reese (1991) argue that what a teacher believes about learning disabilities and his/her conceptions of the students with learning disabilities in his/her classroom exert a formidable influence on how a teacher accommodates students with learning disabilities. In Claire’s instance, I would contend that her conceptions of the students with learning disabilities in her class are also influenced by the fact that she
herself has Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and dyslexia. She believes that having learning disabilities herself makes her more empathetic to the experiences her students are having in her class.

Overall, it appears that Claire has a very solid understanding of the general nature of learning disabilities and the effects that learning disabilities have on student motivation, behavior, interest, and performance. She seems to be aware that these students need more individualized instruction and attention, that they prefer structure and consistency, and need to be constantly reminded of "what they know," because they have difficulty retrieving the information. I excluded from analysis those comments in which Claire discussed the specific types of learning disabilities that had been formally identified in this class; these comments were used in a factual manner in order to provide me with an understanding of the classroom context I was observing. These interviews were designed to provide me with information about Claire's personal beliefs and understanding of learning disabilities. Therefore, only general comments about students with learning disabilities were considered in this analysis.

During the transcription process, there were occasions when I developed the impression that Claire had a somewhat negative opinion of these students. However, I wonder if the negativity I perceived during the transcription process was borne of the frustration with poor student behavior on a particular day and/or overall fatigue and not necessarily indicative of her actual perceptions of these students. Some of the comments reveal very frank conceptions of the abilities and needs of students with learning disabilities, and throughout the interviews, it was clear that Claire maintained a very
objective, matter-of-fact approach to her discussion. Figure 4.3 presents some of the comments Claire made regarding her conceptions of students with learning disabilities.

**Figure 4.3: Selected Comments on Claire’s Conceptions of Students with Learning Disabilities**

- They just forget what they know, so they needed to be reminded what they know.

- Those students with learning disabilities who try to be successful, those who have a fairly good level of understanding of the basic concepts will be successful. Those who choose not to listen actively, who choose not to follow the lesson, are going to struggle more.

- These students need individual contact.

- And I think that it’s really important to see them not as learning problems or behavioral problems, but as people who have challenges in different areas.

- I enjoy their personalities. I enjoy their storytelling. I enjoy their energy. I enjoy seeing them get excited when they do something they think they couldn’t do.

- A couple of these students have difficulty thinking inside their heads.

- Most of these students display a high preference for kinesthetic learning. Most are not strong auditory learners and many display task avoidance when it comes to paper and pencil tasks. In order to help these students process oral information, there have to be other forms of support that involve the other senses.

- These are students who have attention deficits and just plain forget. Even if it is really important—like doing well on a test—they still forget to study. So if they forget what is important to them, how likely are they to forget when it is important to me?

- I wanted to feel that there would be enough of a trust level that if I gave these students manipulatives to work with, they wouldn’t disappear into the pockets and get wrecked. I haven’t felt that I have reached the point where I can necessarily have them working well doing that.

- I guess for me, with the special needs students, you have to be focused.

- Any kind of change seems to upset them.

- A number of these students speak or make repetitive noises without being consciously aware of their loud language.
Claire also remarked that these students\textsuperscript{13} seemed to be upset by change, and research on students with learning disabilities supports that assumption (Lerner, 2000). However, during the observations, I noticed several instances in which Claire changed the goals of an activity halfway through or did not follow-through on an activity. Students with learning disabilities need consistency and structure, and although Claire seems to be aware of this, I did observe some instances in which she did not put this philosophy into practice.

There are two other themes within this category that I believe need to be addressed in more detail: student behavior and trust. As previously mentioned, Claire would often be frustrated by the overall poor student behavior in this class, and stated at one point that her colleagues believed that, "The Applied program has become a dumping ground for behavior problems". While I was not aware of which students had been formally or informally identified as having ADD or other learning disabilities, I developed the impression that Claire was most frustrated by those students who seemed to display characteristics of ADD and ADHD. Many of these students would talk throughout the entire class, constantly fidget, have difficulty staying on task and appear frustrated by the lesson or activity. At one point, Claire mentioned that she felt these students' disruptive behavior prevented her from implementing more collaborative activities.

One of the comments listed in Figure 4.3 indicates that Claire did not trust these students to use manipulatives, but every week, when I asked her about what types of modification strategies she wanted to implement or planned on implementing but did not, she always mentioned activities that used manipulatives. I am not sure why there was

\textsuperscript{13} By "these students," I mean those students who appeared to have characteristics of ADD or ADHD.
this contradiction, but I believe that part of her reluctance to use manipulatives with this class resulted from past episodes in which her materials somehow got damaged or destroyed by the students.

Conceptions of Modification Strategies

Extending Kavale's and Reese's (1991) philosophy about the ways teachers' conceptions of learning disabilities impact their teaching of students with learning disabilities, I wanted to identify what Claire thought of modification strategies themselves, to determine how these ideas may have impacted her pedagogy as well. I used three types of questions to gain this information; I asked her about the strategies that had been recommended in the students' IEPs, I asked her which strategies she believed to be prominent in her teaching at the end of each week of observations, and I asked her about the types of modifications that she wanted to incorporate in her teaching during the week, but did not and why. It was my intention that these questions would provide insight about Claire's conceptions of the modifications that had been recommended at the school level, and therefore decontextualized from the second language classroom, and those modifications that she conceived to be a part of her regular pedagogy that may have better addressed second language learning needs. I also inquired about whether or not Claire believed that some of these modification strategies directly compromised her beliefs about how French should be taught. A few of the comments on this topic are included in Figure 4.4.
In terms of modification in the classroom, I encourage working in pairs as much as possible.

If you look at the lists of modifications that are recommended for students with learning disabilities, I think, well, this is just common sense. This is just basic good teaching, whether you have special needs students or not.

For some of them, the suggestion is that they need to take their agendas and write down in their agendas what the homework assignment is.

You'll notice that I make the letters on the board really large and I print.

I am conscious of about ten different modifications per class period.

One of the modification strategies that I would say that I learned from a professor at the university was the little meditation strategy to calm them down at the beginning [of class] because they can come into the classroom higher than a kite.

This week, I wanted to be able to have students working in groups, with activities to help them learn their verbs.

I would say that repeating instructions is one of the most prevalent modifications I make.

So basically, I modify in terms of expectations, in terms of length [of assignment].

I went around and gave a lot of individual help to students with understanding instructions, even though those instructions were explained to them clearly in advance.

I articulate clearly and slowly, and I repeat, I think, patiently, until they get it.

I prefer positive reinforcement.

You have to give the feedback right away.

This week, I was making a conscious effort to acclimatize the students to the new learning environment, making reference to materials on the walls, and helping them work collaboratively in paired groups.

I feel that the major progress that we made this week was in the area of them working collaboratively, on-task—more focused—on-task, but knowing that there was individual support coming around from the teacher, as well as having each other.

I develop and use modifications instinctually, based on what I observed, in terms of how students express themselves over the year.
According to Claire, her use and perception of modification strategies is based on what she instinctually believes is needed or warranted by the situation. While she mentioned that she liked to keep current on the research regarding learning disabilities, it seemed that her approach to teaching this student population was also based on "what felt right" to her.

Claire identified several modification strategies that had been recommended in the Individualized Education Plans of the students with learning disabilities, including "minimal noise," "use of an assignment sheet/agenda," "repeating instructions," "providing written reinforcement of oral directions," "writing in large script on the board," "bolding, italicizing, highlighting, and/or underlining to help reinforce key points." Of these modifications that had been recommended, she felt that those related to making directions clear (i.e. repeating, providing written back-up) and reducing the amount of distractions in the classroom were the most commonly suggested strategies. Claire felt that all of the recommended strategies were reasonable, but there was one in particular that Claire believed was unrealistic to implement at times in a second language classroom—the minimal noise recommendation.

As Claire reported, this was one of the most commonly recommended modification strategies, particularly for those students with ADD and ADHD. It is believed that the fewer distractions in the classroom (i.e. noise, visual, physical), the easier it will be to keep the student with ADD or ADHD on task and attentive (Lerner, 2000). Also, for those students with audio-lingual processing deficits, a reduced amount of audio distractions is believed to make it easier for the student to "track" what is happening (Mercer, 1997). However, Claire believes that since this program is designed
to have a communicative orientation, it would not be possible to meet the goals of the program if she implemented this strategy on a consistent basis, even saying at one point, 

For some of the students, they say 'minimal distractions of any kind'—minimal noise. Though, we know as language teachers, if you want to have students learning language, they have to work in pairs and converse and dialogue. So, for a number of students you have this minimal noise recommendation, but how do you have students communicate and use a second language if everybody is supposed to be quiet?

Claire raises a valid concern of many teachers of students with learning disabilities—what happens when a modification strategy directly contradicts the pedagogical goals of the classroom? For Claire, she indicated that compromise was important—use the strategy when it does not severely impede the program's goals, but limit its use during activities in which it is imperative that the goals of the program be attained. However, despite her misgivings about implementing this modification strategy, it is worthy of mention that this "minimizing audio distractions" modification was one of the most frequently observed strategies that Claire used during the course of the study, often in combination with other modifications. While she did not offer a clear explanation for this prevalence of this modification, she mentioned at one point that she could not implement a lesson or an activity if the students or outside noises were too loud. She did not like to yell over the students, so she would wait for them to quiet down or make attempts to minimize the outside noises before she began teaching.

During each mid-observation interview, I asked Claire to identify which modifications she believed were most prominent in her teaching over the course of the past week. In all of the interviews, she mentioned three general types of

---

14 Some students with special needs who are in a general education classroom may require assistance from a special education teacher or a special education teacher's aide. These personnel can be used to monitor student behavior,
modifications—those to the classroom environment, those related to the directions of the assignments, and those related to the organization of the students during activities.

Claire believed that she devoted a lot of the time to creating a classroom environment that was more conducive to learning for the students with learning disabilities, whether it was through changing the room layout, changing the seating assignments, providing the students with access to relevant resources, or altering the lighting in the classroom. She maintained that she wanted to create a safe, respectful learning environment for the students, and was constantly making changes to the classroom in order to foster such an environment. The following summary of Claire’s conceptions of the effectiveness of these modifications will provide additional insight into the role of these modification strategies in Claire’s classroom.

Claire also felt that she made considerable modifications to the organization, presentation, and implementation of the directions to various assignments. She cited “repeating instructions” as one of her most frequently used strategies, and the findings from the observation portion of this study support that claim. I observed numerous instances when Claire would repeat the instructions for an activity more than three times, and in those instances in which the directions were given in French, Claire would translate them into English to make sure that the students understood. She often provided written reinforcement for the directions on the board, and she would sometimes have the students underline key words in the directions for their workbook activities so they would know precisely what the task was asking of them.
The final type of modification strategy that Claire mentioned she felt she incorporated into her teaching on a regular basis related to the organization of the students. She often stated that she felt she had succeeded in incorporating collaborative activities into her pedagogy, but during the observation period, I observed only a few instances in which students were given opportunities to work on assignments with one another. However, on a few occasions, Claire indicated that she did not incorporate as many collaborative activities into this class as she did her other classes because of poor student behavior.

During other mid-observation interviews, Claire mentioned other modification strategies that she felt were evident in her teaching, such as "positive reinforcement" and "immediate feedback". During the observations, I noticed that Claire provided consistent immediate feedback to the students whenever they attempted to respond to a question and would always praise the students for their efforts. Claire also mentioned her tendency to write in large script on the chalkboard, and findings from the observation period indicate that she used this strategy frequently as well. However, one of the modifications that had been frequently recommended in the students' IEPs, "use of assignment notebook/agenda" was rarely observed during the course of the study.

During the mid-observation interviews, I asked Claire about the modifications she had wanted to incorporate in her teaching over the previous week, but did not, for one reason or another. In three of the four mid-observation interviews, she mentioned how she had wanted to incorporate manipulatives into her lessons as a means of reinforcing vocabulary and grammatical concepts, but indicated that it was not possible. In one of these interviews, she referred to administrative issues that prevented her from devoting...
the necessary time to locating the manipulatives and developing lessons that incorporated them. In the other two interviews, Claire attributed her inability to implement the manipulatives into her teaching to poor student behavior. Even though Claire seemed to recognize that these students needed kinesthetic reinforcement of concepts, (see Figure 4.3 for some comments), Claire felt that the poor student behavior impeded her ability to implement a more kinesthetic approach.

During one of these interviews, Claire also expressed regret at her inability to implement more collaborative activities during the previous week. As previously mentioned, Claire often regarded this as one of her more prominent strategies for accommodating the needs of those students with learning disabilities, but in the interview where she stated that she wanted to have a more collaborative orientation, she again cited poor student behavior as the reason for the lack of collaborative activities.

Perceptions of the Effectiveness of the Modification Strategies

I wanted to learn whether or not Claire believed that the modifications that had been recommended and/or implemented in her classroom had a positive effect on the students’ learning and second language proficiency. Like the Betancourt-Smith (1992) survey study, I was only interested in learning more about Claire’s perceptions of the effectiveness of the modifications. However, Betancourt-Smith used a written survey to ask one part-time foreign language teacher about his/her perceptions of the effectiveness of the modification strategies; to the best of my knowledge, these interviews were the first attempt to have a foreign/second language teacher offer in-depth insight about the impact modification strategies had on second language development.
Before proceeding to the discussion of her perceptions of the effectiveness of the modifications, I think it is first necessary to identify which indicators Claire used to determine whether or not a modification strategy was helping a student. For Claire, there were three primary indicators: student performance on an activity/test, student behavior/motivation, and personal/general inquiries to the students. Claire looked to see if the student’s performance on a particular group of activities had improved; for instance, when they were studying the passé composé, Claire would check to see if there was improvement in their ability to recall and provide the past participles for those verbs that used être as the auxiliary verb, either by having the students list the verbs orally, or by quickly glancing over their workbook activities. Not surprisingly, the students were provided with numerous opportunities to practice a particular concept, so Claire was able to see how they have progressed. Claire mentioned that most of the students in this class were failing or near-failing, so it was a struggle to provide them with opportunities to improve their performance significantly.

Claire would also look at a student’s behavior/motivation when doing a particular task, as she believed that their body language/comportment could provide some insight on their feelings about a topic. She stated, “If they’re not motivated, and their behavior is really out of whack, it could be because they are not understanding and they’re frustrated,” indicating that she must constantly be aware of student behavior and possible reasons for “misbehavior” when working with these students. Cullinan and Epstein (1985) found that high school students with learning disabilities had higher levels of anxiety and frustration than their “normal” peers, and it seems that Claire tries to be conscious of their personalities and anxieties when making pedagogical decisions.
Finally, Claire used personal and general inquiries to determine how the students were handling a particular assignment. She often asked students for "a show of hands" to indicate whether or not they understood directions, needed help with a particular question, needed more time to complete a task, and so forth. During small group and pair activities, Claire would circulate around the class, asking each student if he/she had understood the task or needed help in any way, often repeating directions and providing concrete examples of what the task was asking. Claire made a considerable effort to provide students with opportunities to give her feedback about what they needed help with in completing a task.

Figure 4.5 includes some of the comments Claire made about her perceptions of the effectiveness of the modification strategies, including some more of her thoughts on the indicators she uses to evaluate how the students were dealing with a particular task.
Figure 4.5: Selected Comments on Claire’s Perceptions of the Effectiveness of the Modification Strategies

- To determine if a modification is actually helping the student, I look to see if the student is being attentive and is focused.

- You sort of see from the body language if the student knows and understands what’s going on.

- Sometimes these students are conscious of the modifications. Sometimes they take advantage of them, but as a general rule, they don’t.

- I will also speak individually with students to help determine if a strategy is working.

- I feel that the strategies I used this week adequately addressed the students’ needs.

- When the lights are off in the class, the students are more focused.

- From the show of hands, I would say that as they went through the pages in the workbooks, they were getting a stronger idea of what direct object pronouns were.

- With the old seating arrangement, I could not have covered as much as I did today.

- And I found what helps, if I have that class right after lunch, I should do the meditation first thing, but if I have them at the end of the school day, I should do the meditation at the end to help calm them down.

- I think the conference calls are a big plus...because they give the teacher a lot more power and support.

For this analysis, I decided to look at the modifications at two levels: the classroom level (changes to the overall classroom environment) and the activity level (changes to a particular activity/task). As Figure 4.5 seems to indicate, Claire had more favorable perceptions of the effectiveness of the modifications that were implemented at a classroom level, particularly those related to the lighting and seating arrangement. Once Claire realized how much the sunlight seemed to influence the moods of the students, she made every effort to light the classroom naturally, even changing the location of the class at the midway point of the observations so the class could be held in a part of the school where more natural light was available during the afternoon. There was a considerable
difference in the students' behavior and overall attitudes after this switch occurred, and Claire seemed to believe that the lighting was partly responsible for this change.\footnote{For more on the effects of natural lighting on student learning and behavior, see Chapter 5.}

Claire also believed that the layout of the classroom had an impact on the classroom environment. When the study began, the desks in the classroom Claire was using were organized in a double-horseshoe pattern and poor student behavior was a considerable problem. After the layout was changed, the students' overall behavior improved noticeably. Claire firmly believed that the new layout (which she retained when she changed classrooms), combined with the natural lighting helped to create a learning environment that was better suited for the needs of her students with learning disabilities.

Surprisingly, Claire did not seem to have a positive perception of the effectiveness of those modifications that impacted particular tasks and activities (e.g. collaborative tasks, additional time to work on an assignment). On several occasions, Claire expressed her frustration at the students' reluctance to take advantage of the modifications she had made to an assignment to help the students succeed. She firmly believed that the students must choose to take advantage of the opportunities made available to them; she can make the modifications as much as she wants, but it is ultimately up to the student if he/she wants to use them to his/her advantage. She referred to instances in which she provided the student with additional time to complete a task, but the student rushed through the task so that he/she could have some free time, therefore submitting work, in Claire's opinion, that was below his/her capabilities.

As discussed in the previous section on Claire’s conceptions of students with learning disabilities, Claire mentioned that she believed that these students needed to take
more ownership in their learning. Initially, I interpreted these comments to mean that the students should become more active participants in the learning process—they should make more concerted efforts to complete assignments, participate in class, study for tests, and so forth, but it appears that Claire believes that part of this responsibility related to the students maximizing the modification opportunities made available to them. Claire believes that it is ultimately up to the student to make the most of a modification strategy—her efforts to accommodate the students can only go so far. Claire felt that she offered the modifications to the students as options; if the students felt they needed the additional support, they could choose to use the modification (e.g. additional time for an assignment) and ignore it if they did not think it would help them. If a student had not completed an assignment, Claire then felt that the student had not taken deliberate and direct advantage of the changes Claire had made to an assignment in deference to the students’ needs.

However, Claire did have positive perceptions of the effectiveness of several modification strategies that she implemented in her classroom. Included in Figure 4.5 is a reference to a meditation that Claire did with her students on a daily basis; she believed that this meditation was one of her more effective modification strategies, as it has a calming influence on the students’ anxieties and frustrations. Claire had adapted the meditation from one that was given to her by a former professor (Dr. Jack Miller, OISE/UT). During the meditation, the students closed their eyes and placed their heads on the desks as Claire recited the meditation. On average, the meditation lasted for three minutes, and for the first few minutes after the meditation was complete (at least on those
days when Claire did it at the very beginning of class), the students were noticeably calmer and more receptive to the information she presented to them.

Claire also believed that phone calls home are an effective strategy for helping students with special needs succeed in her classroom. Every week, Claire made phone calls home to the parents of those students she felt needed extra attention. Both the student and the parent would be on the phone, because she believed that the student had just as much of a stake in the conversation as she and the parent. During these calls, Claire stated that she would first discuss the student's strengths for the week before proceeding onto a discussion of those behaviors she thought needed “fine-tuning”. She felt that it was imperative to have consistent communication with parents to demonstrate to students that others care about their performance and achievement, thus fostering student ownership in the learning process.

**Personal Beliefs about Teaching French to Students with Learning Disabilities**

Again extending the philosophy of Kavale and Reese (1991), it would be reasonable to argue that what a teacher believes about teaching foreign/second languages to students with learning disabilities is going to impact his/her pedagogy to some extent. In Ontario, such a perspective is very important, as there is a small, but growing movement directed towards obtaining exemptions from the Core French requirement for those students with learning disabilities whose challenges are too great to overcome, even with modifications (Personal Communication, Asha Mohi, January 27, 2001). Figure 4.6 presents a summary of Claire’s personal beliefs about teaching French to students with learning disabilities.
Figure 4.6: Selected Comments on Claire’s Personal Beliefs About Teaching French to Students with Learning Disabilities

- And there are some students who take the Grade 9 French who have so much difficulty even struggling in their L1, I personally don’t see why they don’t have them take something like “Learning Strategies” or “Test-Taking Strategies” that could actually help them. I mean, those particular students that are in that situation are not necessarily even college-bound, right?

- If first language learning poses such significant difficulties to the learner that second language learning is a nightmare for them, we need to be ready to make exceptions and to allow such individuals to be exempted if that is what is best for them.

- I do not believe that we have the right to exclude people who want to benefit from language learning.

- I have a learning disability and I’m proficient in a second language. Whether or not a student is capable of becoming proficient in the target language depends on what type of learning disability it is and the amount of desire in the heart of the soul of the learner.

- I have students who are ADD and ADHD. There are people who have behavioral problems that can stem from a variety of areas, so the question is, given whatever the student’s exceptionality, is being in the classroom somehow having a positive effect on the learning and the development of the student? Does the content of the program have something to offer them?

- It’s really important to look at individual students and identify their strengths and challenges before deciding whether or not they can successfully learn the language.

- For some students, they are struggling so much in English that there’s no point in having them suffer in French.

As Figure 4.6 indicates, Claire has a primarily positive view of including students with learning disabilities in Core French. In addition, for Claire, the fact that she herself has Attention Deficit Disorder and dyslexia exerted a considerable influence on her beliefs about students with learning disabilities in Core French. She firmly believes that it is possible for most students with learning disabilities to become proficient in a second language with the appropriate assistance because she became a balanced bilingual despite having dyslexia and ADD. She argued that learning disabilities manifest themselves differently in each individual, so it is possible that a student with formally identified
learning disabilities in another area (i.e. mathematics) could easily learn a second language. She also thinks that the powers-that-be consider all aspects of language learning before deciding whether or not to exclude a student; the student may struggle considerably with the linguistic content of the course, but may greatly enjoy the cultural aspect of the class. Claire asserted on several occasions that the student should remain in the class as long as there is some component of the class that has a favorable impact on the student’s learning and development. Research in the French immersion programs in Ontario has suggested that the LD students can benefit from the program and they can successfully learn the language (Bruck, 1978; Cummins, 1984; Majhanovich, 1993; Wiss, 1987). By extension, it would be reasonable to argue that LD students would also benefit from French instruction in the Core program.

As optimistic as Claire seemed about including students with learning disabilities in the foreign/second language classroom, she also acknowledged that there could be instances in which a student with learning disabilities should be excluded from the Core French requirement. Claire contended that those students who had considerable difficulty processing and expressing themselves in English probably should be exempted from the class, because she did not think it would be fair to essentially double the amount of language-based frustrations in the student’s life. In those cases, Claire believed that those students should be enrolled in life-strategies or study-strategies courses. She asserted that these students were probably not college-bound, and would benefit from a

---

16 In Ontario, if a parent believes that his/her child would benefit more from a course other than Core French, the parent can request a course substitution. The principal will consult with the parents and the relevant school staff (e.g. French teacher, special education teacher) before deciding to grant the substitution (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999c).
type of instruction that would have an immediate impact on their scholastic experience and perhaps help them secure employment after high school. Many researchers advocate the explicit teaching of learning and life strategies to students with learning disabilities, as it would serve to help them make the transition to post-secondary employment (Bender, 2001; Lerner, 2000; Mercer, 1997). Two-thirds of the respondents in the Kavale and Reese (1991) study believed that students with learning disabilities should receive explicit strategies training. This study also concluded that most of the respondents believed that even those students with mild learning disabilities should be removed from the regular classroom for at least a portion of the class; total inclusion was not favored by the majority of the teachers. Therefore, it seems that the ideas and beliefs that Claire expressed during this study are representative of the minority position found in the Kavale and Reese (1991) study.

Claire also indicated that she was not particularly fond of labels to describe students with learning disabilities; this belief that may originate from her own experience with learning disabilities. Throughout our interviews, whenever we discussed beliefs or ideas related to students with learning disabilities, Claire would always say “these students” or “those students,” and it was rare for her to use the term “disability” when describing the students. She preferred to use terms such as “challenges” and “styles” to describe the different aptitudes of the students with learning disabilities. While some could argue that the use of such terminology is simply “politically correct” phrasing that has characterized the field in the past few years, I developed the distinct impression that Claire used such terminology because she adamantly wanted to maintain that these students were people with feelings, too, and should be accorded the same respect and
treatment as "normal" students. While Claire acknowledged that these students needed to be "singled out" in order to help them succeed, it was obvious that she was uncomfortable with the fact that these students were often treated differently once the teacher or their peers realized that these students had special needs.

**Summary**

According to the Ontario of Ministry of Education (1998; 1999a), Core French teachers are to use their "professional judgment" when modifying curriculum or materials to help accommodate students with learning disabilities and other special needs in their classes. In these interviews, I learned what beliefs and conceptions have come to shape Claire's "professional judgment" regarding the accommodation of students with learning disabilities. Not only has her formal training in special and French education and twenty-one years of practical experience influenced her current belief systems, but her experience as an individual with dyslexia and Attention Deficit Disorder have influenced her as well. Claire appears to be highly aware of the challenges students with learning disabilities in her classroom face and of the steps she can take to accommodate them. In the next chapter, I present the results of the classroom observations and the document analysis, which identified the specific modifications Claire made to accommodate the needs of the students with learning disabilities in her class.
CHAPTER 5

Results: Classroom Observation and Document Analysis

In the previous chapter, the knowledge and beliefs that have helped to shape Claire’s pedagogy were revealed. This chapter will present the results of the classroom observation and document analysis portions of the study in which I identified the specific modification strategies Claire, used to accommodate the needs of her students with learning disabilities. I will first present the results of the classroom observations before moving on to a discussion of the findings from the document analysis.

Classroom Observations

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, my total observation time was 700 minutes (8 full class periods and 2 partial class periods). All ten of the observation periods were coded in real-time, and in between each coding period, I made extensive field notes that served to provide further information about the context and events of the classroom. Drawing on Spada and Fröhlich (1995) and Turnbull (1999), I identified one of three levels of focus for each of the activities/episodes. Exclusive focus (identified by a single check mark on the observation scheme within a particular descriptor category) indicated that Claire had spent all of the time of that particular activity/episode on a single descriptor. Primary focus (identified by a circled check mark on the observation scheme within a particular description category) indicated that Claire had devoted most, but not all, of the time of a particular activity/episode to a specific descriptor. Overall, there were very few episodes in this study in which there was a primary focus on a particular descriptor, a trend which is unlike those uncovered in previous studies that have used the COLT or COLT-based observation schemes. Perhaps the low frequency of
primary focus episodes is related to the fact that the classroom has such a high population of student with special needs who have difficulty attending to more than one issue at a time. Equal focus (identified by two or more check marks on the observation scheme within a particular descriptor category) indicated that Claire had devoted the approximately the same amount of time to two or more descriptors within a particular category.

The data were analyzed following Spada’s and Fröhlich’s (1995) recommendations, in which the percentage of time devoted to each classification was calculated in relation to total observation time. At the conclusion of each observation period, I calculated the time (in minutes) devoted to each activity/episode and to the various descriptors. I determined the percentage of time devoted to each descriptor in relation to the total time observed for each class period, and in relation to the total observation time for the complete study. Other studies that have used observation schemes have used this same method of calculating and analyzing the results (see, for example, Allen, Carroll, Burtis, & Gaudino, 1987; Turnbull, 1999).

This method of analysis thus provides insight about the overall organization and content of the class in relation to the types and prevalence of the modifications that were made in order to accommodate the students with learning disabilities. I will present the findings from the observation scheme that pertains to the classroom context before discussing which modifications were implemented during this study.
Classroom Context

Participant organization.

Table 5.1 summarizes the average percentage of observed time devoted to particular ways of organizing the students and the interactions in the classroom. As the table clearly demonstrates, this Core French classroom appears to be teacher-centered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Organization</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher → student/class (T→S/C)</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student → student/class (S→S/C)</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choral</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group, same task</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group, different task</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual, same task</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual, different task</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T→S/C &amp; S→S/C</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T→S/C &amp; choral</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T→S/C &amp; group, same task</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T→S/C &amp; individual, same task</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T→S/C &amp; individual, different task</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T→S/C, choral, &amp; individual, same task</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For over 34% of the time, the teacher was the exclusive leader of the interaction in the classroom and for almost 40% of the remaining time, the teacher was somehow involved in initiating and/or guiding the interaction within a particular activity/episode. However, it should be noted that none of the instances in which Claire was the exclusive leader of an activity lasted for longer than 10 minutes.
Even though teacher-led interaction was the most common approach to participant organization during the course of this study, there were still numerous episodes when the students exclusively or collaboratively initiated and/or maintained the interactions within the classroom. Nearly 26% of the interactions in the classroom observed during the study were characterized by the students assuming the sole responsibility for initiating and/or maintaining the classroom interaction, and in another 39% of the activities/episodes, the students shared this responsibility with the teacher. The 26% figure encompasses five different organizational structures that permit the students to initiate and/or maintain the interaction, three of which (accounting for 23% of the participant groupings) have the students working individually or in small groups or pairs. In only 3% of the interactions that took place during this study did the students have the exclusive opportunity to introduce and continue the interaction in a whole-class setting, whereas the teacher exercised this option nearly twelve times over.

Finally, for slightly over 2% of the observed time, the students worked on individual tasks. This occurred during the third day of observation, when the students were taking a quiz on the formation of the future tense. Claire had developed the quiz spontaneously, as a result of how the students had responded to a review activity on the future tense. As she wrote a question, she read it aloud to the students, and the students were then given adequate time to write their responses. There were no episodes during the observation period in which the students were assigned different individual tasks.

Content.

Table 5.2 provides a summary of the types of content that were presented to the students during the observation period. As chapter 3 indicated, the content could be
classified into one of three categories: Management, Language, or Other. Within each micro-category, there were several classifications. In the table, the micro-category for each descriptor is indicated in parentheses.

Table 5.2
Focus: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive and Equal Foci)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Focus</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Procedure (management)</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline (management)</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form (language)</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function (language)</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation (language)</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse (language)</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociolinguistic (language)</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrow (other)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad (other)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure &amp; discipline</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure &amp; narrow</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline &amp; narrow</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure, discipline, &amp; narrow</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form &amp; translation</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form &amp; narrow</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function &amp; translation</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function &amp; narrow</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form, function, &amp; narrow</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form, translation, &amp; narrow</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of classroom management, the table indicates that Claire spent almost 7% of the total observed time on procedural issues in the class. My field notes indicate that most of these instances involved explaining the activities to the students, but there were a couple occasions in which Claire outlined procedures regarding the correction and submission of assignments. Discipline was rarely the exclusive focus of her presentation to the students, but even when combined with other categories, it had a minimal presence.
Such results would seem to indicate that discipline was not necessarily an issue in this class, but that was not the case. In order for a classification to be checked off on the MILC, the descriptor needed to be evident for a continuous 60 seconds, and under such guidelines, there were definitely very few instances in which Claire had to discipline the students for longer than a one-minute period. However, my field notes indicate that there were usually at least a dozen episodes in each class when Claire had to quiet the students down, change the seating arrangement, or correct students for inappropriate language or behavior. None of these instances took more than thirty seconds to resolve, so they were not included on the observation scheme as separate activities/episodes.

As Table 5.2 indicates, the majority of the content presented to the students during the course of the study had a linguistic focus. Of those activities/episodes in which there was a linguistic focus, an emphasis on the form of the language (in either an exclusive or combined focus) was the most prevalent, accounting for nearly 55% of the time. At the time of the study, the students were learning the simple future and passé composé verb tenses, with approximately five classes devoted to each topic. Approximately 34% of the activities incorporated some type of communicative functional focus (as indicated by the Function classification) that combined an emphasis on the use of the verb form (primarily in the future or passé composé tenses) with activities and tasks that required the students to communicate using the target form. Translation, which was used during approximately 10% of the observed time, was also used as a strategy for helping the students develop their linguistic knowledge, as Claire would have them translate passages in the textbook from French to English from time to time, having them pay particular attention to the verb forms. None of the activities that were implemented during the
observation period focused on the sociolinguistic or discourse functions of the French language.

Finally, there were a few episodes in which the content had neither a management nor a linguistic focus and was classified in the "other" category. In this micro-category, there were two possible classifications: narrow (referring to ideas or experiences within the students' immediate environment) and broad (referring to ideas or experiences outside the students' immediate environment). During the observation period, I noted some episodes in which there was a discussion or inclusion of ideas and/or experiences from the students' immediate environments, as Claire used the students' immediate experiences to help clarify a point in the textbook or demonstrate a grammatical concept. In the fifth class, there was also a short discussion about the organization of the schooling system in Canada and why the students were required to study French for five years; this discussion was classified under the "Broad" category (1.0%).

Assessment.

The results regarding the types of assessment (summarized in Table 5.3) implemented during the study indicate that Claire implemented some form of formative assessment in almost 47% of the activities, the overwhelming majority of which was informal. During the course of the study, Claire implemented two summative assessments (13.8% of the observed time) related to the material from Unit 4 in the curriculum: 1) a reading test, in which the students were required to answer questions on a particular reading passage from the text; the students had access to this passage during the test and it emphasized a particular group of vocabulary and verb forms; and 2) a comprehensive chapter exam in which the students were tested on their knowledge of
vocabulary, the form and function of particular verbs, and their ability to write a short composition on a topic selected from the chapter. Claire implemented an informal diagnostic assessment (1.9% of the time) on the first day of the study. She went around to each student in the room, asked him/her to pronounce a verb in the future tense, then provided immediate feedback on his/her pronunciation strengths and weaknesses.

Table 5.3
Assessment: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive and Equal Foci)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Assessment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formative</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summative</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostic</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formative &amp; other</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results regarding who was responsible for the assessment of the students' performance are summarized in Table 5.4. The results indicate that Claire assumed the role of assessor during nearly 50% of the observed time. There were a few episodes in which self-assessment was used; according to my field notes, these generally involved the students assessing their level of preparedness for an activity or a quiz by writing one or two sentences at the top of the activity/quiz. At the conclusion of Chapter 4, the students were required to complete a self-evaluation form (in French) based on what they felt they had learned from the chapter. These forms were only checked for completion; Claire did not use them to gain any insight about what areas the students felt they needed to practice more before the chapter test. Peer-assessment was often used when correcting workbook activities. Students would often exchange workbooks with one another, checked each other’s work, and assigned a final point value.
Table 5.4
Assessment: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive and Equal Foci)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessor</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>49.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher, self, &amp; peer</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Content control.

As Table 5.5 demonstrates, Claire was solely responsible for initiating and controlling the topics/tasks of the class for nearly 30% of the observed time. In fact, for all of the activities/episodes that were observed, Claire had some level of involvement in introducing, maintaining, and/or guiding the topics that were selected to present the relevant material. The students shared this responsibility with Claire and the text for approximately 30% of the time.

Table 5.5
Content Control: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive and Equal Foci)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Control</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher/text</td>
<td>33.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher/text/student</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher &amp; student</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Language use.

Table 5.6 summarizes the teacher’s and students’ use of French and English for the observation period. As the table indicates, a mix between the two languages is the most common practice (56.0% for the teacher, and 47.1% for the students, respectively), and my field notes indicate there was no particular “trigger” that caused the switch from
one language to the other. For instance, Claire often asked a question in English, the students answered in French, and the follow-up question was asked in French but answered in English. The higher prevalence of student exclusive use of French (compared to the prevalence of the teacher’s exclusive use of French) is undoubtedly attributable to: 1) several activities in which Claire would prompt in English but the students were required to answer (orally or in writing) in French; and 2) the fact that the students had to perform several listening activities in French over the course of the observation period.

Table 5.6
Language Use: Percentage of Observed Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Use</th>
<th>Teacher Percentage</th>
<th>Student Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L2 (French) only</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1 (English) only</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mix L1 &amp; L2</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student modality.

Table 5.7 presents an analysis of the students’ modality during the study. In most instances, the students were required to use more than one mode of communication at any given time, a finding that indicates an integrative approach to language learning. Students were exclusively engaged in listening for just over 12% of the time and in writing for just under 12% of the time; during the study, I did not observe any instances in which the students were exclusively engaged in any of the other modes of communication.
Table 5.7
Student Modality: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive and Equal Foci)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Modality(ies)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening &amp; speaking</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening &amp; reading</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening &amp; writing</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening &amp; physical</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening &amp; other</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening, speaking, &amp; writing</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening, speaking, &amp; reading</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening, speaking, &amp; other</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening, reading, &amp; writing</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening, reading, &amp; other</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing, speaking, reading, &amp; writing</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing &amp; other</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results imply that the class had a strong aural emphasis; in nearly 60% of the observed activities/episodes, the students were required to listen in combination with one or more of the other modes of communication—speaking, reading, writing, physical, or other.

Regarding student speech, my field notes indicate that when students were provided with the opportunity to speak, they rarely provided more than one-word or one-
sentence answers to the questions if they were required to use French in their responses. If the students were allowed to use English in their responses, to make a comment, or to ask a clarification question, the students' utterances were much longer and more linguistically complex. The episodes in which students were able to respond or comment in English outnumbered the instances in which the students were expected to use their oral French skills. While this may seem contradictory to the findings regarding student language use (especially as it pertains to the overall percentage of activities in which French and English were used in equal combination), many of these equal-focus activities permitted the students to listen in French and respond in English, thus developing their interlanguage skills.

When the students were required to write, my field notes reveal that they were required to use French the overwhelming majority of the time; English was used in those instances in which Claire asked the students to indicate at the top of an assignment or quiz how much time they had spent preparing. For the most part, the students' writings in French were restricted to one-word or one-sentence responses in the workbook. However, for the summative assessment for the chapter, the students were expected to write a short paragraph in French; this was the only instance of sustained writing in French that I observed during the study.

Episodes of student reading occurred in combination with one or more of the other modes of communication, and rarely required the student to read more than one sentence at a time before having to use another mode of communication to respond. There were a couple instances in which the students were required to read a longer passage from the
textbook, but Claire usually read the passage aloud as the students followed along silently.

My field notes indicate that the use of the "other" classification refers to instances in which the students were peer- or self-correcting assignments or quizzes. At the beginning of the study, I decided that correcting assignments implied the students critically read and analyzed the responses, prior to making written annotations to the answers. During the piloting period, I had classified such instances under "reading" and "writing" as well, but because of the critical element involved in correction, I decided that it would be best to classify these episodes in the "other" micro-category. In most instances, Claire provided the answers orally to the students as they corrected, thus explaining the high prevalence of the Listening & Other classification (23.2% of the time). There were also some limited occasions in which the students were required to either speak or read in addition to listening to the answers and correcting the assignment, and my field notes indicate that these were activities in which the students were either developing or referring to study guides on a particular topic as they corrected the assignment. During the study, there was one activity in which the students used motion to help carry out the task; to help develop their ability to develop questions spontaneously, Claire threw a beach ball to random students. In only 3.3% of the episodes did I observe the students to use all four of the standard modes of communication.

As Table 5.8 reveals, there were several instances in which one of the four primary modes of communication—listening, speaking, reading, or writing—was the primary focus of an activity. My field notes indicate that these instances usually resulted when
Claire had begun an activity, discovered that one particular mode of communication was more effective than others in either conveying the material to the students or being used in the response, and turned her remaining attention to the particular mode (e.g., Claire initially introduced the information to the students orally, but realized that a written presentation of the material would be more helpful).

Table 5.8
Student Modality: Percentage of Observed Time (Primary Focus)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Modality(ies)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Materials I.

The final issue regarding classroom context to be presented pertains to the origin and types of materials used in the classroom. Table 5.9 presents the analysis of the types of materials Claire used, either exclusively or with equal emphasis, during the implementation of her lessons.

Table 5.9
Materials I: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive & Equal Foci)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>57.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tactile</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text &amp; audio</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio &amp; visual</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As the table indicates, text-based materials were the most commonly used type (57.8%) during the time of the study, followed by audio materials (26.0%). According to my field notes, the majority of the auditory materials were texts or scripts from the textbook that had CD accompaniments, but because Claire did not have access to the necessary equipment because she was an itinerant teacher, she had to read the dialogues aloud herself. At this point, I should note that if Claire read aloud what was on a page that did not have an audio accompaniment, I did not consider this to be “audio” material because that was not the original format of the material. Text and audio were rarely used in combination, even though the high prevalence of activities in which students were engaged in multiple modalities would make it reasonable to initially believe otherwise.

My field notes suggest that Claire used either a text or audio activity as a basis for tasks that required the students to engage in more than one mode of communication; she did not like to combine sources of material, but would present the material to the students in various modes of communication. For instance, when correcting a homework activity from the workbook, Claire often read the questions from the workbook (Listening), the students would refer to a study guide for clarification of a particular grammatical point (Reading), and the students would correct the assignment (Other).

Within this micro-category of Materials Type, there was a classification that described a primary focus, Text (12.4%). My field notes indicate that all of these episodes incorporated a visual type of material, usually something that had been written and/or drawn on the chalkboard, to supplement what had been presented in the textbook or workbook.
Table 5.10 presents the percentage breakdown of the source of the materials used to implement the lessons with either an exclusive or equal focus. Again, the results indicate Claire’s high level of involvement in the classroom interactions, as she contributed either a portion or the total number of materials being used for a particular activity whereas students provided less than 1% of the material being used in lessons. In addition, nearly 14% of the instances saw the textbook or workbook as the primary source of the material. My field notes indicate that, in many of these episodes, these materials were used as starting points for the activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>47.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook/workbook</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource teacher</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher &amp; textbook/workbook</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher &amp; student</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher, student, &amp; textbook/workbook</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Modifications**

Now that the classroom context has been established, it is possible to examine the modifications that were used during the implementation of the activities to accommodate the needs of the students with learning disabilities. All of the modifications included in the MILC have been recommended by educators and researchers as strategies that are beneficial to the learning experience of a student with special needs (see for example, Arries, 1999; Dover, 1996; Hurst, 1996; Lerner, 2000; Mercer, 1997; White, 1998). Most
of the students with learning disabilities in Claire’s class have ADD or ADHD, along with either audio-lingual or reading disabilities; all of the students were diagnosed by private or school psychologists/specialists. The percentages in the modification categories rarely add up to 100% because they were not always implemented during every activity/episode.

**Pacing.**

As Table 5.11 demonstrates, the most frequently used modification in this category was “reminding students of the time frame” for an assignment (23.4%). According to my field notes, Claire reminded students every 15-30 seconds about how much time they had remaining on a task, telling them where they should be in their progress at each stage. However, I also noted that some students appeared frustrated whenever Claire announced the “countdown” for assignments; the students seemed flustered as they scrambled to finish the assignment in the allotted time, perhaps compromising the quality of their work because of the more frenzied pace.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifications</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extend time allowed</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow breaks/vary activities</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omit timed assignments</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remind students of timing</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended time allowed &amp; remind students of timing</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended time allowed &amp; omit timed assignment</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My field notes indicate that the "other" classification (6.2%) almost always referred to instances where Claire would intentionally slow the pace of an assignment, especially listening comprehension activities. As she was not able to use the audio materials that accompanied the program, she read the listening activities aloud to the students. She would deliberately slow her pace and enunciate more clearly, so that the students would have an easier time understanding what was being said. Students were provided extra time to complete assignments or to provide a response on a few occasions (2.4% with Remind Students of Timing, and 0.6% with Omit Timed Assignment, respectively).

Environment.

Primarily, the modifications in the "environment" category are intended to make it easier for the student with learning disabilities to focus on the task at hand by altering the classroom environment. The overwhelming majority of the modifications from this category were used in combination with one another, but as Table 5.12 indicates, there were also several instances in which Claire used one of the modifications exclusively. Most of these modifications occurred at the beginning of an activity, as a means of "setting" up the environment for the task at hand, but there were a few instances in which a modification was used during the execution of an activity as a result of student behavior.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environment Modifications</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preferential seating</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change room layout</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define physical limits</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimize audio distractions</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimize visual distractions</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimize other distractions</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education aide present</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education teacher present</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signal to refocus attention</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signal to show change in activity</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time-out</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferential seating &amp; change room layout</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferential seating &amp; minimize audio distractions</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferential seating, change room layout, &amp; minimize audio distractions</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferential seating, change room layout, &amp; define physical limits</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferential seating, define physical limits, &amp; signal to refocus attention</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferential seating, define physical limits, &amp; minimize audio distractions</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferential seating, minimize visual distractions, &amp; signal to refocus attention</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferential seating, change room layout, minimize audio distractions, &amp; signal to show change in activity</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferential seating, define limits, minimize other distractions, &amp; signal to refocus attention</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferential seating, change room layout, define physical limits, minimize audio &amp; visual distractions</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change room layout &amp; minimize audio distractions</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change room layout &amp; signal to refocus attention</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change room layout, minimize audio &amp; visual distractions</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change room layout, minimize audio distractions, &amp; signal to refocus attention</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change room layout, define physical limits, minimize audio distractions, &amp; signal to refocus attention</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define physical limits &amp; minimize audio distractions</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define physical limits &amp; signal to refocus attention</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define physical limits, minimize audio distractions, &amp; signal to refocus attention</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimize audio &amp; visual distractions</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimize audio &amp; other distractions</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimize audio distractions &amp; signal to refocus attention</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimize audio distractions, signal to refocus attention, &amp; signal to show change in activity</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimize audio &amp; other distractions &amp; signal to refocus attention</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As Table 5.12 indicates, the “Minimize Audio Distractions” strategy was the most frequently used modification at the exclusive level (23.2%). In almost all of these instances, this modification referred to Claire reminding the students to quiet down so that other students could concentrate; more often than not, she had to remind students several times to quiet down within a short period of time (less than one minute). There were also a few instances where Claire shut the classroom door or window to filter out the outside noises, thereby minimizing various audio distractions.

The second most commonly used strategy within the “Environment” sub-category, at the exclusive level, was “Signal to Refocus Attention (2.1%). According to my field notes, if Claire noticed that a student was getting off-task during a seatwork exercise or during a whole-class activity, she would often quickly tap one or two fingers on the student’s desk to indicate to him/her to get back on task. There were occasions where the whole class had difficulty staying on task (usually towards the end of the class) and in those instances, Claire would often raise her hand or stop what she was saying to the students as a means of attracting their attention. There were a few instances where Claire would use a similar signal to indicate to a student or a small group of students that there was going to be a change in activity, but this modification was often used in combination with other strategies.

As previously mentioned, and as the results presented in Table 5.12 clearly indicate, most of the modifications within the “Environment” sub-category were used in combination with one another. The most frequent modification involved changing the layout of the room (partially or totally) and minimizing audio distractions (11.0%). Often, Claire would re-position the desks of students who were having difficulty staying
on task, seeing the board, or working with those around them; not one class passed where Claire did not have to change how desks were positioned. However, there were instances when changing desk position was not enough to calm the behavior; occasionally, Claire would have to tell students precisely where they could be in relation to their desks (i.e. whether or not they could be out of their seats) or in which direction their body should be facing during an activity. Some of the students seemed to require constant reminders of their limits—physical or social—if they were expected to complete a task.

On the third day of the observation period, when Claire was still teaching the class in an English department classroom, she arranged with the regular teacher of that classroom to re-organize its entire layout. Claire felt that the double-horseshoe layout of the class made it difficult for her to quell behavioral problems and make sure that those students who needed extra attention were in a position to easily receive it from her. The layout was changed to five horizontal rows, containing six desks each. Two desks were placed side-by-side, with an aisle between each pair of desks. When the students arrived in the class that day, Claire gave the students new seating assignments, placing those students with more demanding needs (behavioral or academic) towards the front of the classroom (i.e. the Preferential Seating modification) where it would be easier for Claire to provide them with necessary support. This new room layout and seating arrangement considerably diminished the amount of behavioral problems in the classroom. When Claire changed classrooms midway through the study, she retained this layout in the new class with similar success.

I also feel that it is important to discuss a modification to the classroom environment that was not indicated on the observation scheme because there was not an
appropriate classification category. On the second day of the study (prior to the room
layout change), I noted that the students were much calmer and more receptive to what
was being taught to them when the overhead lights were off and the class was being
illuminated by natural light. When the lights were somehow turned back on, the students
had more difficulty staying on task and were generally more disruptive. I mentioned this
to Claire, but she said that she had not noticed a difference. However, she decided to
leave the lights off for the next class to determine for herself whether or not there was a
noticeable difference in student behavior. At the conclusion of the third day, she agreed
that the natural light seemed to have a calming influence on the students, but it was
difficult for some students to see everything clearly because the classroom location
minimized the amount of natural light available during the afternoon. When Claire
changed her classroom midway through the study, the new classroom was located on a
side of the school where there were adequate amounts of natural light for the students to
comfortably work. For the remainder of the observation period, the overhead lights were
never used, and Claire firmly believed that the natural light did have a favorable
influence on the students' attention span. Estes (1984) reported how the implementation
of skylights in an elementary school had a positive effect on student behavior, as
discipline problems decreased. In 1997, Lackney presented empirical evidence to the
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Science that provided further support of the
claim that natural lighting had a positive influence on student behavior, health, and
academic achievement—no matter what level of student ability. Given such support, it
would be reasonable to suggest that using natural lighting in a classroom of students with
learning disabilities would be an effective strategy for quelling disruptive behavior and encouraging the students to work on task.

**Presentation of materials.**

The modifications from this category were used during the presentation of information to the students and were primarily used for emphasis or clarification of key points of information. I chose to analyze the "Emphasis" of the material separately from the modifications in the category for two reasons. First of all, describing the emphasis of the material provides further insight to how Claire implements her lessons in general. Second, by defining on which mode (e.g. audio) the emphasis is placed during the implementation of an activity, I was able to determine if the emphasis was congruent with the students' needs (e.g. students with dyslexia may be more challenged by an approach that places more emphasis on gaining knowledge visually).

As Table 5.13 demonstrates, there was a very strong aural emphasis in this classroom; for just over 85% of all activities Claire used an oral/aural emphasis to present the information to the students. This finding is in accordance with the Ontario Curriculum, which promotes a predominantly oral/aural core French classroom (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999). However, Claire revealed to me during one of our interviews that most of the students with learning disabilities in this classroom have difficulty processing aural information, thus creating a conflict between the needs of the students and the goals of the program. She may recognize this conflict, however, as indicated by her tendency to continuously minimize the audio distractions in the

---

17 Please keep in mind that this category refers to how Claire presented the information to the students, not to how the students responded to the material. This information was revealed in the category of Student Modality.
classroom (as indicated in the previous discussion) so that is easier for the students to concentrate. However, does this help explain why some students seemed frustrated whenever they were required to process aural information during the course of the study?

Table 5.13
Presentation of Materials: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive & Equal Foci)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emphasis</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auditory emphasis</td>
<td>85.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual emphasis</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other emphasis</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio &amp; visual emphasis</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remaining Modifications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape teacher talk</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change curriculum</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate concepts</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use manipulatives</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlight information</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use English to clarify</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-teach vocabulary</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write in large script</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate concepts &amp; use English to clarify</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate concepts, use English to clarify, &amp; write in large script</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlight information &amp; use English to clarify</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlight information, use English to clarify, &amp; write in large script</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use English to clarify &amp; pre-teach vocabulary</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use English to clarify &amp; write in large script</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use English to clarify &amp; other</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use English to clarify, pre-teach vocabulary, &amp; write in large script</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use English to clarify, write in large script, &amp; other</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-teach vocabulary &amp; write in large script</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the remaining modifications in the “Presentation of Materials” macro-category, the most frequently implemented (either exclusively or in combination with other modifications) was “Using English to Clarify” (44.9%). This modification was used
whenever Claire was speaking French to the class (i.e. it was the exclusive language of an activity), and she would provide a one or two-word clarification in English for a word or phrase that the students seemed to understand French. As mentioned in the discussion of language usage in this classroom, Claire believed that continuous support in English would enable the students to better understand the material.

Claire would also write in clear, very large script (2.8% exclusively, and used in combination with other modifications) whenever she was required to write on the board, so that the students would not have difficulty reading or interpreting what she was writing. During one of our interviews, Claire indicated to me that this modification also benefited her, as it decreased the likelihood she would reverse letter or word order while writing (Claire is dyslexic). She would also occasionally pre-teach the vocabulary to be used in an upcoming activity as a means of easing the students’ anxiety, especially if this activity had a considerable amount of new material, but such a practice was not a regular part of her repertoire. Claire’s practice during this study of not stressing the vocabulary of the target language may help to explain some of the reluctance the students seem to have when asked to use the target language. In all vocabulary teaching instances, Claire would first give the students the word in French, followed by the English equivalent. Furthermore, it was rare for Claire to demonstrate a concept to the students (i.e. acting out vocabulary) if they were having difficulty understanding, as she often resorted to English since it was a more expeditious strategy.

Materials II.

The modifications listed in this category refer to how the materials being Claire used to implement a lesson or those used by a student to respond to or complete an
activity were altered, or included in/excluded from the lesson, in order to accommodate the needs of the students with learning disabilities. As Table 5.14 indicates, not all of the modifications from this category were implemented during the course of the study; "Type Handwritten Material," and "Providing Special Equipment" (e.g. computer) were not observed at all.

Table 5.14
Materials II: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive and Equal Foci)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modification</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highlight text/guides</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplements provided</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist note-taking</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type handwritten material</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special equipment provided</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipulatives</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modify text</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlight text/guides &amp; assist note-taking</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlight text/guides &amp; supplements provided</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlight text/guides &amp; modify text</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplements provided &amp; assist note-taking</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Highlighting written information (e.g. information in the text/workbook or on study guides) was the most common modification in this category (5.0% exclusively, and used in combination with other modifications). Claire would often have the students underline keys words or phrases on their assignments. For example, she had the students complete several activities in which the students needed to change the verb from the present tense to the past tense. Before beginning the activity, Claire would walk the
students through the text, identify which verbs needed to be changed, and have the students underline those verbs.

Occasionally, Claire would provide students with additional activities (Supplements Provided) on the lesson topic; however, since most of the students in the class had been either formally or informally identified as having special needs, she provided the activities to all of the students. Manipulatives were rarely used to help the students learn or practice a concept (1.4%). It is important to note that the "Manipulatives" classification in this category differs from the "Use manipulatives" classification of the "Presentation of Materials" macro-category in that the former refers to student usage of manipulatives, while the latter refers to teacher usage of manipulatives to help implement the lesson.

Grading.

As Table 5.15 indicates, Claire implemented only one modification within this category on a consistent basis; allowing the students to help determine the point value of an assignment or a question on an assignment was used 12% of the time. Two of the modifications in this category, "Modifying Course Objectives" and "Modifying Course Weight Components" were not observed at all during the course of this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modification</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modify grading system</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modify course weight components</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modify course objectives</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students help determine point value</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assignments and tests.

The modifications in this macro-category affect how the task was presented and/or implemented, and Claire used these modifications most frequently when the class was working as a whole, indicating that she may have been trying to individualize the assignment/task without drawing considerable attention to the student in question.

As Table 5.16 indicates, Claire seemed to be very conscious of the need to provide clear directions to students with learning disabilities. She would often read the directions for a task aloud to the students, and after she read each step, she would stop to see if the students understood what was being asked of them. Furthermore, if the directions were given in French (as was always the case in the workbook and textbook activities), she would provide the English equivalent as a means of ensuring the students understood the task. If she implemented an activity she developed herself that had an aural emphasis, she would write key points from the directions on the board. If she changed the goal of an activity, she would write the new directions on the board and require the students to write down the changes as well.
Table 5.16
Assignments and Tests: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive and Equal Foci)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modification</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shorten assignment</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read directions aloud</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give directions in chunks</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give assignment in chunks</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record/type assignment</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapt worksheets</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment notebook/sheet</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternate assignment</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written back-up to oral directions</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower level of difficulty</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower reading level</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral cues/prompts given</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorten assignment &amp; read directions aloud</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorten assignment, give directions in chunks, &amp; give assignment in chunks</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read directions aloud &amp; give directions in chunks</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read directions aloud &amp; give assignments in chunks</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read directions aloud &amp; other</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read directions aloud, give directions in chunks, &amp; written back-up to oral directions</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read directions aloud, give directions in chunks, &amp; oral cues/prompts given</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read directions aloud, give directions in chunks, written back-up to oral directions, &amp; other</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give directions &amp; assignments in chunks</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give directions in chunks &amp; written back-up to oral directions</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give directions &amp; assignments in chunks, &amp; other</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give directions in chunks, written back-up to oral directions, &amp; other</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give assignments in chunks &amp; other</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give assignments in chunks, assignment notebook/sheet, &amp; other</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral cues/prompts given &amp; other</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower level of difficulty &amp; other</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Claire would also break down an activity into smaller tasks, sometimes adding steps that had not been included in the initial assignment (5.4% exclusively, and between 0.4% and 11.5% when used in combination with other modifications). As previously
mentioned, when the students were working on assignments that required them to change the tense of a verb, Claire would often walk through the passage with them, identifying all of the verbs that needed to be changed. Such a task was never a part of the initial activity, and during one of our interviews, Claire revealed to me that she would often add steps to an assignment because she believed that the students were not capable of completing the initial task and needed help in identifying the areas to where they should focus their attention.

**Reinforcement/follow-through.**

This category examines the modifications Claire made to help reinforce and follow-through on material. There was a very high prevalence of these modifications used in combination with one another. These modifications were usually implemented upon the completion of a task or activity, because as Lerner (2000) indicates, students with learning disabilities need to be constantly provided with opportunities to interact with the information in a variety of ways, in addition to being reminded of their progress within a particular topic.
Table 5.17
Reinforcement/Follow-Through: Percentage of Observed Time (Exclusive and Equal Foci)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifications</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive reinforcement</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete reinforcement</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate feedback</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check for understanding</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student repeats directions</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach study skills</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide study guides</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer-tutoring</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforce assignment timelines</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeat/review/drill</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior contracts</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional practice provided</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive reinforcement &amp; immediate feedback</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive reinforcement &amp; check for understanding</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive reinforcement, immediate feedback, &amp; check for understanding</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive reinforcement, check for understanding, &amp; repeat/review/drill</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive reinforcement, immediate feedback, &amp; other</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive reinforcement, immediate feedback, check for understanding, &amp; repeat/review/drill</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive reinforcement, immediate feedback, check for understanding, &amp; teach study skills</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive reinforcement, immediate feedback, check for understanding, &amp; other</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive reinforcement, immediate feedback, check for understanding, repeat/review/drill, &amp; other</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate feedback &amp; check for understanding</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach study skills, provide study guides, &amp; repeat/review/drill</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach study skills, provide study guides, &amp; behavior contracts</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide study guide, &amp; repeat/review/drill</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide study guide, repeat/review/drill, &amp; additional practice provided</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 5.17 demonstrates, the most prevalent modification strategy from this category was providing positive feedback to the students. Claire constantly commended students for their efforts in class, whether or not their responses were correct. Claire was
also certain to provide feedback immediately to students (between 1.2% and 11.6% when used in combination with other modification strategies). Claire would also check with the students throughout the lesson to make sure that they understood what was being asked of them and to see if they were "on the right track" with their responses. According to my field notes, one of Claire’s preferred methods for obtaining this information was surveying the students. She would do this by asking a question and providing three possible answers. The students were to raise their hands when the response that most applied to their situation was stated; however, my field notes also indicate that Claire never had more than eight students reply to one of these quick surveys. In most instances, it appeared as if the students were not paying attention to what Claire was asking or else they were too frustrated by the task to respond.

Repetition/review/drilling activities were other common modifications from this category (3.0% exclusively; between 0.4% and 10.6% when used in combination with other modifications). In addition, Claire attempted to implement a behavior contract with the students. On one occasion when she was scheduled to be absent for two classes, she drew up a contract where the students were required to monitor and self-report their behavior and work progress over the course of those two classes. Upon her return, Claire was to collect the contracts and use them in her evaluation of the student’s work during those two days. However, I did not observe her collecting these forms from the students.

Assessment adaptations.

The modifications from this last category were only coded when a formal assessment, such as a test or quiz, was being implemented. Over the course of the study, four formal assessments were implemented, the first being a pop quiz on the future tense
given on the first day of the study. The quiz was initially to be in a complete-sentence format, but because of student anxiety, Claire changed it to a short-answer format. In addition, as this was a quiz that Claire created spontaneously, she was the only source of the questions. After she asked a question, she wrote it down on a piece of paper. After asking all of the questions once, she went through and read the quiz to the students two more times. The students did not perform well on the quiz, so Claire decided to give them the opportunity to take the quiz over a few classes later, provided that the students agreed, in writing, at the top of the pop quiz, to study for the re-quiz. The re-quiz was essentially the same as the pop quiz, but Claire re-ordered some of the questions, changed some of the verbs, and made it entirely written (both the questions and answers were written on the same piece of paper and Claire did not read the quiz to the students at all). The students again performed poorly. The students were also given a reading test that lasted the whole period and an end-of-chapter test during the course of the study. During all of these assessments, Claire implemented some modification strategies, as presented in Table 5.18.
As the table indicates, many of the adaptations that were included on the observation scheme were not observed at all during the course of the study. The relatively high prevalence of the "Read Test to Student" modification provides further evidence of the strong auditory emphasis of the classroom. However, given the fact that several of the students with learning disabilities had auditory processing deficits, this action may have caused more harm than good, especially in the case of the pop quiz on the future tense that had no written back-up for the students. According to my field notes, the "other" classification referred to instances where Claire gave students the opportunity
to refer to some notes written on the board to help them respond to some questions. Again, this occurred during the pop quiz.

It is also worthy of mention that the reading and chapter test were taken from the program being used to teach the Grade 9 Applied Core French course—*Autour de Nous* (Coulbeck, Agro-DeRosa, & Faulds, 2000). Theoretically, as Claire indicated, these tests had been designed with the less-academically-oriented students in mind, but during the implementation of the tests, Claire was constantly explaining the directions of particular sections or modifying them slightly because the students had difficulty with what was being asked of them.

**Document Analysis**

This section will present and discuss the results of the document analysis that was conducted on all written handouts/activities provided to the students during the observation period. The purpose of the document analysis was to determine what modifications, if any, were made to the documents in order to meet the needs of the students with learning disabilities in Claire’s classroom. I chose to conduct a document analysis because handouts are an extension of a teacher’s pedagogy; how a teacher accommodates the needs of students with learning disabilities is not restricted to actual teaching practices. For the purpose of this study, a document was considered to be any sort of written handout given to or assigned to the student by the teacher, including study guides, tests, quizzes, and workbook activities.

A document analysis scheme designed specifically for this study, the Document Modifications Analysis Scheme (DMAS), was used in the assessment. This scheme was
organized in a manner similar to the MILC; the classifications on this scheme included modifications made to the document prior to and/or during its implementation.

The DMAS was coded in a manner similar to the observation scheme, with a check mark indicating the use of a particular strategy. The classifications were either implemented as a primary focus (e.g. it was the only type of classification/modification made to the document within a particular category) or a combined focus (e.g. two or more classifications/modifications applied to the document within a particular category). For clarification purposes, I also consulted my field notes for additional insight about the modifications that were made to the documents themselves and/or to the implementation process. As was the case with the observation scheme analysis, the data from the DMAS were analyzed in terms of overall frequency. However, unlike with the observation scheme analysis, time was not the unit of analysis; for this assessment, each modification was considered to be a separate unit of analysis. For insight on how to conduct this type of content-based document analysis, I referred to Beaud and Weber (1998).

I will present the findings of the document analysis in the same manner in which I presented and discussed the classroom observation results. Each sub-category will be presented separately. The first few categories of the scheme identify the date(s) the document was used, its source and its purpose, before addressing the modifications that were made to its organization, content, or implementation. The data regarding which date(s) a document was used to determine its overall prevalence within the study (e.g., the document was used on two occasions). For those documents that were used over the course of several class periods, I only considered them once in the analysis, since the
document was used in the same manner and with the same type of modifications in each instance.

**Document Context**

**Prevalence** ("date[s] used").

A total of twenty-three different documents were provided to the students over the course of the observation period. One of the documents, the *Loving Kindness Meditation*, was used a total of six times during the study. Claire would often begin or end the class with this meditation, and she considered it to be one of her most effective strategies in helping the students with special needs reduce their anxiety levels. Two other documents were used more than once during the course of the study—*La Lecture Orale* (guidelines related to reading aloud and the assessment of such) and *Qui Parle?* (a workbook listening activity in which the students were to identify who was speaking) (Coulbeck, Agro-deRosa, & Faulds, 2000). The remaining twenty documents were used only once each during the observation period.

**Source.**

This category was designed to analyze who or what was the actual source of the documents provided to the students. There was a similar category on the observation scheme (Materials I: Source), but it was expanded to include students as possible sources of material.

There were three possible classifications within this category. "Teacher-developed" refers to Claire designed specifically for use in the class. "Provided by textbook/workbook," indicates that the activity/handout provided to the students came from the program used in Grade 9 Applied Core French. The final classification,
"Provided by the school board/resource teacher," was used to describe handouts that had been developed by a resource teacher or the school board/Ministry for the express purpose of helping to address the needs of the students with learning disabilities. Table 5.19 presents the percentage breakdown of the source of the documents considered in this assessment.

Table 5.19: Percentage Breakdown of Document Source

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-developed</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided by textbook/workbook</td>
<td>65.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided by school board/resource teacher/Ministry</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher developed &amp; provided by textbook/workbook</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the table indicates, the textbook/workbook was the most frequent source of written documents furnished to the students, and in all instances, the document was taken from the workbook. The second most prevalent source of the documents was the teacher. These results are a reversal of the findings from the observation data; the textbook/workbook was identified as the source of an activity's materials on the observation scheme in just over 30% of the episodes while Teacher as source accounted for 47.9% of the observed time. While such results would appear to be contradictory, it is important to note that the MILC classifications included audio, tactile, and other visual materials as well, thus allowing for a higher prevalence of teacher involvement in the development and implementation of the materials; the DMAS considered only text-based documents, so it is therefore not surprising that the majority of the documents were in the textbook/workbook classification, as this is the most readily available source of written information.
There was one instance when the document provided to the students had two origins—the teacher and the textbook/workbook. My field notes indicate that this refers to the chapter test the students were given during the eighth observation period. The majority of the questions that were included on the test were taken from the test database that accompanied the textbook, but Claire included some questions/tasks that she had developed on her own. In an interview, Claire revealed that she included her questions in this assessment because she believed that they were more reflective of what the students had learned over the course of the unit.

Function.

Table 5.20 presents the percentage breakdown of the types of functions the documents were designed to serve. There were four possible classifications: Supplement/Study Guide, Homework/Classwork Assignment, Test/Quiz, and Other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supplement/study guide</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework/classwork assignment</td>
<td>65.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test/quiz</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the high prevalence of textbook/workbook documents in this portion of the study, it is not surprising that the majority of the handouts provided to the students were either homework or classwork. My field notes indicate that there were only three occasions when the workbook document functioned as a homework assignment; the workbook was therefore the primary source of classwork activities. Two of the supplements and study guides provided to the students during the observation period
were oriented towards developing and/or assessing the students' oral proficiency, while the remaining guide provided students with information on strategies to study for tests.

Three of the documents that were provided to the students during the course of the study were assessments—one quiz and two chapter tests. The quiz was actually a re-quiz on the future tense; the students had done poorly on a future quiz that Claire had spontaneously developed and orally implemented in a previous class. The quiz was handwritten and based, in large part, on the original quiz. The two tests implemented during the study were used upon completion of the chapter. One of the tests was designed to assess the students' reading comprehension, and the other test was a summative assessment of all of the vocabulary, grammar, and cultural topics they had covered in the previous chapter. The former was taken directly from the textbook program, while the latter included questions from the textbook program and others that Claire had developed.

Within the "Other" classification, there were three documents. The first document was the *Loving Kindness Meditation* (Dr. Jack Miller, OISE/UT) that Claire was fond of using in this class. Claire had first been provided with this meditation by one of her former university professors, and she had adapted it (e.g. translated it from English to French) for use in all of her classes. However, she adapted it further for use in Grade 9 Applied Core French class (e.g. she would do the meditation at either the beginning or the end of this class—in her other classes, the meditation was always done first). The second document was a behavioral contract Claire wanted all of the students to sign prior to her two-day absence. The final "Other" document refers to an oral assessment rubric Claire provided to the students on the first day of the observations. Claire explained that,
at the conclusion of the school year, the students were to complete a final oral assessment of their spoken French proficiency. To help the students prepare, she provided them with this document so that they would be aware of what aspects of their speech she would be considering and assessing. Claire used this assessment rubric with the Grade 9 Applied Core French class during the following class, but I did not observe any other instances for the remainder of the study, which concluded less than a month before the end of the school year.

**Modifications**

**Pacing.**

A modification related to the pace with which the document was implemented occurred only once; here, Claire eliminated a portion of the workbook activity, *Lisons! Ecrivons!* (Coulbeck, Agro-DeRosa, & Faulds, 2000) because she felt it was too complicated for the students to handle. For all of the documents considered in the DMAS analysis that the students were required to complete, most of which took the form of some sort of written activity (86.9%), I did not observe Claire make any modifications for the time allotments of the activity.

**Presentation of materials.**

As with the MILC observation scheme, this macro-category included a micro-category designed to identify the emphasis of the document (auditory, visual, tactile, multi-dimensional). Even though all of the documents were text-based, I realized during the piloting process that the written documents could be used as a complement to or as a means of emphasizing another form of expression. While these classifications do not refer to specific modifications made to the documents, I decided to include them in the
scheme because they served to better contextualize the function and goals of the document. Again, I separated the analysis of the “Emphasis” from the other modifications in the category.

Emphasis.

According to Table 5.21, most of the documents that were provided to the students during the time of the study were designed to incorporate and/or complement a visual emphasis. A cursory examination of the documents that were placed in this category revealed that all of the documents relied on pictures to help clarify/reinforce what was being asked of the students and/or provided additional reinforcement for other text-based material (e.g. a question-and-answer activity that was based on a reading from the text). The documents that were classified in the “Auditory” emphasis category were all listening comprehension activities taken from the workbook. Claire would read a dialogue to the students, and they would indicate their responses to the questions on the dialogue in the workbook. The workbook did not provide any sort of information or clarification about the text being read to the students; only a list of the possible answers was included on these handouts. Two of the documents provided to the students had an equal emphasis on audio and visual information. Both of these handouts were workbook activities that combined an aural component with a text-based component. Again, Claire would read a dialogue or question prompts to the students, and using the information provided in the workbook, the students were to indicate their responses. None of the documents provided to the students during the observation period complemented and/or reinforced a tactile or multi-dimensional approach to the material.
Table 5.21: Percentage Breakdown of Document Emphasis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emphasis</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auditory</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>56.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditory &amp; Visual</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other modifications.

Within this category, there were five possible modifications: “Emphasize Critical Information,” “Add/Remove Steps,” “Explain Expectations,” “Read to Student,” and “Other” that could be used during the initial presentation of the materials to the students. In most instances, the modifications were implemented in combination with one another.

In support of Claire’s statements during our interviews about the constant need to modify the materials in the Autour de Nous program (Coulbeck et al., 2000), those documents that were taken from the textbook/workbook program had higher numbers of modifications across all categories. However, not all of the documents required modifications from this micro-category (Presentation of Materials), so the percentages do not add up to 100%. Table 5.22 presents the findings from this portion of the analysis.

As the table indicates, the most common modification within this category was “Read to Student”. This category does not consider listening comprehension activities, as Claire had to read these activities to the students since she did not have the audio recordings. All of the documents that were classified in this category had much more text than other documents considered in the analysis, and Claire would read these to the students to help them with their tracking of the questions and their responses. During one of our interviews, Claire indicated that she strongly believed that reading documents to the students provided them with additional reinforcement of the material and whenever
the students were confronted with a document that had a lot of written information, Claire made a point of reading it to the students, sometimes up to three times, before proceeding with the task. At this point, it should be mentioned that even though Claire implemented many of these strategies for the entire class, I still considered them to be modification strategies made for the students with learning disabilities. During one of our initial interviews, Claire indicated that because the majority of the students in the class had either been formally or informally identified with some type of learning disability, she would often extend modifications to the whole class. She acknowledged that doing so would sometimes give the stronger students an even greater advantage, and thus compromise the very purpose of a modification strategy, but she believed that if she had to make a change for one student or a small group of students, the other students in the class should at least be given the option of taking advantage of the modification, as it may be better suited to their learning styles.

Table 5.22: Percentage Breakdown of Presentation of Materials Modifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifications</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emphasize critical information</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add/remove step(s)</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain expectations</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read to student</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasize critical information &amp; add/remove steps</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasize critical information &amp; explain expectations</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasize critical information, explain expectations, &amp; read to student</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add/remove step(s) &amp; read to student</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read to student &amp; other</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Claire was also certain to emphasize key points of information on the documents, either orally (as indicated in my field notes) or by physically showing the students the portion(s) of the document to which they should pay specific attention. In most instances, this "critical information" was related to the directions of a task, usually a key vocabulary word or phrase that, if misunderstood, could prevent the student from accurately completing the task.

Occasionally, Claire would add or remove steps to an assignment (8.7% exclusively, 8.6% in combination with other strategies), and in all cases, she spontaneously decided to add or remove a step once she had begun to go over the directions and/or expectations of the assignment. In all but one instance, Claire added an additional step to the assignment, usually requiring the students to go through the activity and identify all of the verbs prior to answering the questions, even if the activity did not have an emphasis on verb forms. Claire was also careful to ensure that the students clearly understood the expectations of tasks (8.7% exclusively, 26.1% in combination with other modifications), often going over them more than once prior to letting the students begin.

Materials.

Table 5.23 presents the percentage breakdown of the modifications that were made to the documents prior to or during the implementation process. As the table indicates, the most frequently used modification was "Give Assistance with Handout" (60.9% exclusive). During the implementation of many of these handouts/activities, Claire would circulate around the room, always stopping to check on a particular group of students to offer needed assistance, whether it was clarification of the directions,
checking answers, or offering encouragement. Again, while I did not know which students had been formally or informally identified with learning disabilities, I assumed that since Claire usually concentrated her efforts on this particular group during these activities, these were the students who required additional assistance.

Table 5.23: Percentage Breakdown of Materials Modifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifications</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Give assistance with handout</td>
<td>60.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simpler text/materials</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give assistance with handout &amp; simpler text/materials</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give assistance with handout &amp; highlight text/materials</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Claire would also make changes to the text of a document so that the students would easily recognize the key information. For those documents that she produced herself, key information was usually written in a larger font or placed in bold. At times, she would have the students underline and/or highlight key information in the directions or the questions of an assignment. She often did this with the workbook activities because, as she revealed during one of our interviews, she believed that the directions that were used for the workbook activities were often so poorly worded that the students would have difficulty figuring out what was being asked of them. Therefore, to help focus their attention on the precise tasks of an activity, she would have them underline, highlight, or even translate into English all of the important words in the document (13.0% in combination with other modifications). At first glance, it would be reasonable to argue that this modification is not unlike the “Emphasize Critical Information” modification, but “Highlight Text/Materials” was restricted to written changes to the document. “Emphasize Critical Information” referred to key information orally
emphasized or areas on the a that Claire had physically demonstrated (i.e. pointed out) to be crucial. Combined, these modifications serve to provide the student with a clear-cut understanding of the expectations set before them.

During a few of the listening comprehension activities, Claire would simplify the dialogue that she read to the students. She mentioned to me during the piloting process that she was never able to implement a listening comprehension dialogue with this class as it was written in the book because it did not entirely correspond to the grammatical structure and vocabulary that the students had been learning over the course of the chapter, a problem that she said was more characteristic of the Applied program than the Academic program. For instance, one of the listening comprehension activities that she implemented during the course of the study included a verb tense (the conditional) that the students had not been taught, nor expected to learn in Grade 9. Therefore, she felt she had to re-write the dialogue in a tense with which the students were familiar before she could use it with the students. During one of our informal after-class discussions, Claire indicated that she felt that the stronger students in the class would have been able to complete the original listening comprehension task with a better-than-average degree of success, but that the students with learning disabilities, especially those with audiolinguai processing challenges, would have struggled enormously. However, it appeared that simplifying the text as a whole was a more expeditious modification strategy for Claire.

**Assignment/testing adaptations.**

The modifications within this category address the directions for an assignment, its length, its presentation format (e.g., type-written vs. handwritten), its level of difficulty, and the visuals/exemplars used to implement a task. Unlike the modifications included in
the Materials sub-category, the modifications in this category were made to only a portion of the original document. In hindsight, perhaps it would have been wise to include a category on the use of English in the documents, as the observation period revealed it to be one of Claire’s more prominent modification strategies during the implementation of an assignment.

Table 5.24 indicates that the mostly frequently noted modification strategies within this category related to the directions of an assignment. As previously mentioned in this chapter and in the chapter describing the teacher interviews, Claire indicated that clarifying the directions of an assignment was one of the most frequently recommended modification strategies for the students who had been formally identified with learning disabilities. As evidenced by this document analysis, it is obvious that Claire is consistently implementing this modification. It was rare for her to go over the directions of a task (oral or written) only once; for all of the documents included in this analysis, my field notes indicate that she went over the directions of an assignment, on average, three times. As the table indicates, Claire frequently gave the directions of an assignment in small steps. She would read the first line of the directions and ask the students to provide some sort of feedback indicating they knew what was being asked of them before moving on to the next step. At times, if the assignment required the student to complete several tasks, she would read the directions for the first task and have the students complete that portion of the task before going over the directions for the next stage of the assignment. In addition, even though all of the assignments that were included in this document analysis included written directions, Claire would also write the key words/phrases/page numbers related to the assignment on the board as additional reinforcement.
Table 5.24: Percentage Breakdown of Assignment/Testing Modifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifications</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Directions written in small steps</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written back-up to oral directions</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower reading level</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide examples of finished product</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorten assignment &amp; give alternate assignment</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directions given in small steps &amp; alternate assignment</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directions given in small steps, alternate assignment &amp; lower reading level</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directions given in small steps, alternate assignment, &amp; provide examples of finished product</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directions given in small steps &amp; written back-up to oral directions</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directions given in small steps, written back-up to oral directions &amp; provide examples of finished product</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapt worksheet/packet, alternate assignment, lower reading level, &amp; provide examples of finished product</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapt worksheet/packet, written back-up to oral directions, &amp; provide examples of finished product</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were instances in which Claire would alter the original goals of an assignment and would have to change the document accordingly. For instance, there were a few occasions when she determined that most of the students in the class could not easily complete a listening comprehension task; she changed it to a written task. During one of our interviews, Claire indicated that these changes were made with the students with learning disabilities in mind, because she felt it would be easier and less frustrating for them to indicate their understanding by writing one word or a short phrase than by checking one of several boxes. In one of these instances, she felt that the reading level of the document was too advanced for the students (it was the portion of La Lecture Orale document which she developed, describing how students were to be assessed). So, in addition to adapting the document to better fit the needs of the task and the students, changing its original function (from self-assessment based to teacher-assessment based),
she had to change the reading level. On the board, she wrote a simplified version of the
criteria the students were to use in their analysis of the assessment that none of the
students had difficulty reading, even though the text was in French.

Claire was also fond of allowing the students to have a say in how they were to
complete an assignment that came from the workbook. She would indicate to the
students that they could choose one of two ways to complete the task, usually by allowing
them to decide if they wanted to complete it as an oral assignment or complete it as a
written assignment, with some modifications to the types of answers the students would
be required to provide. The students seemed to appreciate being able to be involved in
how they were going to indicate their understanding of a concept. As stated previously,
Lerner (2000) strongly recommends that students with learning disabilities be provided
with opportunities that allow them to choose how they are to express themselves in their
learning process.

**Grades.**

Of the twenty-three documents provided to the students during the observation
period, seventeen had some type of component that required the students to receive a
grade for their performance. Claire did not make any changes to her assessment and
grading process of these students as per the criteria on this scheme.

**Summary**

Over the course of the study, I observed Claire implement fifty-three of the
possible seventy-four modifications (exclusive, primary, or equal focus) that were
included on the MILC scheme (71% of total modifications). The most frequently
observed modification strategies included (based on exclusive and equal foci data):
"Remind Students of Timing," "Minimize Audio Distractions," "Use English to Clarify," "Read Directions Aloud," "Give Directions in Chunks," "Written Back-Up to Oral Directions," "Positive Reinforcement," "Immediate Feedback," and "Check for Understanding." A few of the modifications that Claire did not implement during the course of the study (e.g. "Special Equipment Provided," "Special Education Aide Present") were not necessarily required in order to accommodate the needs of the students with learning disabilities in this class. During the document analysis, I found that Claire had implemented sixteen of the possible twenty-four modifications (66% of total modifications). The most common modifications revealed during the DMAS analysis included: "Read [Document] to Student," "Give Assistance with Handout," "Give Directions in Chunks," and "Written Back-Up to Oral Directions."

The final chapter of my thesis will discuss the implications of the findings revealed in the two previous chapters, including an examination of how Claire’s beliefs shaped her pedagogy, how her pedagogical choices appeared to impact the students, and how the results of this study compare to other core French and learning disabilities studies. I will also address the limitations of this study and make recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 6

Discussion

This chapter will discuss the study’s findings and their implications, in addition to limitations and directions for future research. The discussion will be organized according to the research questions, as opposed to the methodologies, because I believe it permits a more “integrated” discussion of Claire’s beliefs and pedagogy. Each research question will be addressed individually, but the limitations and the implications of the study will be discussed at a more general level.

**Teacher Beliefs about Accommodating Students with Learning Disabilities in Core French**

It seems that, overall, Claire’s beliefs towards accommodating the needs of students with learning disabilities in her class were positive. During our interviews, Claire indicated that she believed that, in general, these students should be given the opportunity to learn French, as she contended it could be a beneficial experience for the student, provided adequate support is offered. Claire argued that the students’ linguistic and cultural knowledge would certainly benefit from being in a second language classroom, as evidenced by her own experiences becoming fluent in French despite having learning disabilities. She also seemed to be very aware of the various ways in which learning disabilities could manifest themselves in students. She demonstrated clear knowledge of the multitude of strategies teachers can use to accommodate the needs of these students, all the while being conscious and respectful of successful second language pedagogy and the goals of the program. Claire was confident that her formal

---

18 Research question one: What does a Grade 9 Applied Core French teacher believe about accommodating the needs of students with learning disabilities in his/her classroom?
training and practical experience had provided her with a solid foundation for teaching French to a class where the majority of students had been either formally or informally identified with learning disabilities.

I believe that Claire’s attitudes vis à vis the accommodation of the students with learning disabilities in her class were undoubtedly influenced by her own personal struggles to compensate for her own learning disabilities. Not only did she have the theoretical knowledge related to the teaching of students with learning disabilities, but she had personal, practical experience as well. She could identify with this student population in ways that most other teachers cannot, making pedagogical adjustments somewhat natural for her. For instance, she felt that her own learning disabilities and experience enabled her to more easily identify the components of the formal curriculum with which the students would struggle; she predicted the problematic topics based on which topics she had more difficulty working through during the planning process. Despite having native-like proficiency in French, there were occasions when Claire’s learning disabilities impeded her ability to understand the goals of an activity after the first, second, or even third reading. Equipped with this knowledge, Claire could modify the activity accordingly, making it more suitable, or in her words, “palatable” for this student population. Even though she had earned her Specialist certification in Special Education, it was her personal practical experiences that often shaped her pedagogy and modification strategies—the formal training seemed only to provide the validation for her practices.

It would be reasonable to argue that Claire has an unparalleled level of experience and knowledge regarding teaching students with special needs in the second language
classroom because of her own learning disabilities. Therefore, it is quite possible that her teaching strategies and beliefs regarding students with learning disabilities are exceptions to the norm and therefore not representative of typical teacher beliefs and practices in the first place. Calman and Daniel (1998) conducted a study in a large urban school board in Ontario and found that the participating Core French teachers did not have favorable attitudes towards including students with exceptionalities (primarily students with learning disabilities) in the program. Almost fifty percent of the surveyed teachers believed that these students created significant problems for the teacher and would be better off in a different class. However, additional research is needed, in my opinion, to determine the state of Ontario Core French teachers’ beliefs about accommodating the needs of students with learning disabilities in the program. Calman and Daniel (1998) restricted their study to Core French teachers at the Grade 5 and Grade 8 levels, and my study only considered the thoughts of one Grade 9 teacher’s thoughts and practices. A study that incorporates the perspectives of Core French teachers from all mandatory grade levels would be useful.

I think it is also important to examine the issue of student behavior in relation to this research question. During a few of the interviews, I developed the impression that Claire did not expect the students to be well behaved in class, particularly those I suspected suffered from ADD or ADHD. It would be reasonable to argue that such an opinion was based on seven months of experience working with these students, but there are times when I wondered if Claire’s opinion may have provoked the students to misbehave more—as a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy. There were times when Claire
expressed to the students that she held low opinions of their behavior and it is possible that the students somehow wanted to live up to this expectation.

Closely related to the issue of student behavior is the issue of student trust; I firmly believe that developing trust in the students and their opinions has a positive impact on student behavior. Throughout many of the interviews, Claire indicated that she did not necessarily trust some of the students in the class, whether it was because of previous poor behavior, poor attitude, or overall performance in the class. She made several comments in which she indicated that she did not trust the students to take responsibility and ownership in their learning, and at one point indicated that she felt she preferred to have exclusive control over the students’ learning.

Overall, Claire had a positive attitude regarding the accommodation of students with learning disabilities, but did seem to have some concerns about student behavior and student trust. While it is uncertain how Claire’s feelings regarding the students’ behavior and ability be trusted was perceived by the students, they undoubtedly impacted her pedagogy, as evidenced by her reluctance to implement certain types of activities in this class. However, as previously mentioned, it appears that Claire’s personal experience with ADD and dyslexia has perhaps exerted the most influence on her beliefs and pedagogy.

Modifications Used to Accommodate the Needs of the Students with Learning Disabilities

Research question two was interested in identifying the specific modification strategies that Claire used to accommodate the needs of the students with learning

---

19 Research question two: What types of curricular and pedagogical modifications are used to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities in a Grade 9 Core French classroom?
disabilities. Many of the modification strategies that were included in the MILC and DMAS schemes were implemented on only one or a couple of occasions during the study, but there were several strategies that were incorporated into her pedagogy on a daily basis.

As stated in the previous chapter, some of the more prevalent modification strategies found upon the analysis of the MILC and DMAS data included: “Minimize audio distractions,” “Use English to clarify,” “Read directions aloud,” “Give directions in chunks,” “Give assistance with handout,” “Written back-up to oral Directions,” “Positive reinforcement,” “Immediate feedback,” and “Check for understanding.” With the exception of the “Use English to clarify” modification, all of the afore-mentioned strategies have been frequently recommended by learning disabilities researchers and educators for accommodating the needs of this student population (see for example, Bender, 2001; Lerner, 2000; Lerner, Lowenthal, & Lerner, 1995; Mercer, 1997). During our interviews, Claire revealed that the most frequently recommended modification strategies (as stated in the students’ Individualized Education Plans) related to the implementation of the directions of an assignment/task; it was often encouraged that the directions be repeated more than once, key words in the directions be highlighted/underlined/emphasized, and that written back-up to the directions be given. Results from the classroom observation and document analysis seem to indicate that Claire has successfully incorporated this accommodation into her pedagogy for this class.

To help guide the remaining discussion of the types and impact of accommodation strategies I observed during the observation period, I will use the macro-category headings of the MILC scheme to help organize this summary, but will incorporate
perspectives from all three methodologies. All of the headings except for "Materials I" are included.

Participant Organization

The results of the observation period indicate that Claire's Core French classroom was very teacher-oriented, a similar finding to Calman's and Daniel's (1998). During one of the interviews, Claire revealed to me that she usually prefers to restrict teacher-oriented interaction in most classes to less than 20% of total class time, but she felt that such a percentage was not feasible to attain in this Applied class since she constantly needed to be "on top" of what was happening if she hoped to ensure that the students were learning. Therefore, it appears that Claire considered a teacher-oriented classroom to be a modification of her traditional teaching approach, and thus, a means of accommodating the needs of the students with learning disabilities in the class.

Combining theoretical perspectives and practical experience, Richardson-Coombs and Norman (1998) contend that significant amounts of teacher-led instruction can contribute to feelings of frustration and low self-esteem on the part of the student with special needs in the general education classroom because they feel that this type of instruction impedes the ability of the teacher to effectively modify the material in order to help the student. Therefore, they argue that teachers should implement an integrative approach to teaching students with special needs that is much more student-centered in order to overcome the students' feelings of frustration. While such an argument undoubtedly supports the Ontario Ministry of Education's contention that the classroom, second language or otherwise, should be student-centered, Richardson-Coombs' and Norman's (1998) position regarding the organization of classrooms that include students
with learning disabilities appears to be in the minority (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000). Hurst's (1996) account of her approach to teaching Spanish to students with learning disabilities describes several activities in which she was responsible for initiating and maintaining the interaction within the class, thus giving the impression that while students were often actively engaged in the learning activities, the teacher was primarily responsible for initiating and/or maintaining the interaction within the class. Lerner (2000) and Mercer (1997) also describe how teachers of students with learning disabilities need to maintain an active role in these students' learning process, providing constant assistance, reinforcement, and/or encouragement; teacher-directed instruction is the only way, they contend, to ensure that the needs of the student with learning disabilities are being met. In some ways, it would be reasonable to argue that because a student with learning disabilities requires a particular kind of attention from the teacher, a higher-than-average prevalence of teacher-led interaction would be expected in this classroom. However, the opposite argument would also hold true; because a student with learning disabilities has different needs, providing him/her with the opportunity to engage in more student-centered learning would enable him/her to have an educational experience more suited to his/her needs and abilities. Obviously, more research on the effects of student-centered and teacher-centered learning on the learning experience of students with learning disabilities is needed.

**Focus**

As mentioned in Chapter 5, there were at least a dozen episodes in each class in which Claire had to address discipline issues, either by quieting the students down, changing the seating arrangement, or reprimanding poor behavior. Lerner (2000) and
Mercer (1997), among others, have commented on how students with learning disabilities often pose discipline problems in class. In the early days of learning disabilities research, this poor behavior was considered to be a characteristic of students with learning disabilities, but further research (see for example, McLeskey, 1992; Smith, 1994) contends that the misbehavior is often the manifestation of the student's frustration in not being able to succeed in school or because he/she is not able to easily form friendships because of his/her limited communication abilities. During one of our interviews, Claire indicated that she used student behavior to help determine whether or not the modifications were helping the student perform better, and mentioned that students with learning disabilities who misbehave in class are often frustrated with the material. Therefore, based on the numerous episodes in which I observed Claire to be disciplining the students in one way or another, it would be reasonable to argue that there were obvious levels of student frustration in this class. Claire did seem aware of the students' frustration, and during one of our informal, after-class discussions (which I included in my field notes), she told me that when she entered the classroom each day, she was determined to somehow ease the students' anxieties and create a more positive learning environment.

With regards to the linguistic focus of the classroom, the results of the observation period indicate that the primary emphasis was on linguistic forms, accounting for nearly 55% of the time (in either an exclusive or combined focus). While an approach that has such a high prevalence of decontextualized focus on form has been argued to be detrimental to developing L2 proficiency (see for instance, Doughty & Varela, 1998), Calman and Daniel (1998) observed a similar prevalence of focus on form in their study.
For 34% of the observed time, I noted that the activities had a communicative-functional focus, which required the students to apply their knowledge of a specific language form to a particular communicative task. The current Ontario Core French curriculum advocates a communicative approach to learning French, but there is no indication as to how many classroom activities should have a communicative focus (Ontario Ministry of Education & Training, 1999). In Turnbull’s (1999) study, a communicative focus was the most prevalent among his participants, but it should be noted that the frequency of a communicative emphasis in Claire’s classroom was similar to that of the teachers in Turnbull’s study. I did not observe Claire implementing lessons in which there was a sociolinguistic or discourse focus; this finding is similar to the results of the Calman and Daniel study. During one of our interviews, Claire indicated that it was sufficiently challenging to teach students the forms and functions of the French language; she may have eliminated the sociolinguistic and discourse foci from her repertoire in this class because of the challenges in helping them master the forms and functions. In her other classes (which I informally observed), I did see some episodes in which Claire addressed the sociolinguistic and discourse functions of the French language, so therefore it is possible to argue that their exclusion from this Applied class was indeed a modification to her traditional pedagogy.

Assessment

For almost 50% of the episodes I observed during the ten classes, I noted that Claire implemented some form of formative assessment, usually in an informal manner. Lerner (2000) has advocated that students with learning disabilities be provided with the
opportunity to be informally assessed often throughout the class period, as it enables them to be better aware of their status in the class and with the material.

Informal self- and peer-assessments were also noticeable assessment tools in Claire’s classroom (7.4% and 6.3%, respectively). Riley (1996) contends that students with learning disabilities should be provided with numerous opportunities to self-assess, as self-assessments provide more accurate insight about what the student knows at a particular point than any other form of assessment would be able to do. While many researchers in the field of learning disabilities advocate peer-collaboration on activities (see for example, Hurst, 1996; Lerner 2000; Mercer, 1997), peer assessment is not included as a favorable strategy for helping students with learning disabilities. The belief is that the self-esteem of the student with learning disabilities may be compromised, because other students in the class become aware of the extent of his/her deficits. (Masters, Mori & Mori, 2000). However, even though it is uncertain how the use of peer-correction in Claire’s classroom impacted the self-esteem of the students with learning disabilities, Claire believed that peer correction was a valuable assessment tool, as she contended that the students more readily identified mistakes in their classmates’ work than in their own, but as the observations revealed, she did not use this strategy extensively. While she acknowledged that self-assessment was also an important strategy, she seemed to believe that peer-correction was more effective in helping students further their proficiency in French. However, as the results of the observation period indicate, self-assessment was more prevalent than peer-assessment.
Content Control

As revealed by the MILC, Claire was primarily responsible for initiating and/or maintaining the topics that were covered in class; the students were somehow involved in this process in approximately 37% of the episodes. Lerner (2000) contends that by incorporating the opinions of students with learning disabilities into program development and implementation, the students are going to feel more empowered in their learning. On those occasions in which I observed Claire providing students with the opportunity to have more of a say in their learning, the students seemed to respond favorably. In addition, when I observed Claire incorporating student input and showing trust in their judgment, the students seemed to be more receptive to the instruction, more respectful of Claire and of each other, and less frustrated by their classroom experience; Lerner (2000) argues that involving students with learning disabilities in the selection and implementation of topics and activities is an effective strategy for maintaining a high level of interest in the class and for reducing levels of student frustration. Arries (1999) also contends that involving students with learning disabilities in the selection and implementation of activities in the foreign/second language classroom allows the teacher to become better acquainted with the needs and abilities of the student, so that the teacher may be able to better individualize the curriculum and/or pedagogy for the student. While I did observe Claire to incorporate student input into the decision-making process, she may have diminished the amount of student involvement because of her own experience with ADD and dyslexia; because she had personal knowledge of how these learning disabilities impacted learning, she may not have felt it necessary to consult with the students to decide which activities would be more helpful.
Language Use

In this study, I observed English to play a strong role in the classroom, sometimes serving as the primary language of instruction. The most common pattern of French-English language usage in the Applied class involved an equal mix of the two languages (56.0% for the teacher, 47.1% for the students), but I do know from informally observing Claire’s other classes that French was the exclusive language for her and her students the majority of the time. This class apparently seemed exceptional in terms of TL and L1 usage, perhaps as a result of the special needs of many of the students.

In those instances in which the lesson or the activity was administered in French, Claire would use often English to clarify the directions or questions of the task, because, as she revealed to me during one of our interviews, using English was the only way to ensure that the students were understanding the material. Furthermore, Claire indicated that she felt that it was not possible to maintain French as the predominant language in the classroom because too many of the students had enough difficulty understanding the material when it was presented in English. While she also acknowledged during one of our interviews that she firmly believes that students with learning disabilities can successfully learn a foreign/second language, she contended that it is only feasible with considerable support in the L1.

According to the Ontario Ministry of Education Guidelines (1999) for French as a Second Language programs, “French must be the language of communication in class, so students can practise speaking in French and consistently hear French [being] spoken.” While there is no information available in the guidelines regarding how much French teachers are expected to use in class, the above statement does seem to imply that the use
of English, in any manner, is highly discouraged. Claire only used French exclusively in slightly over 10% of the observed activities and episodes, a finding similar to Teacher 4's use of French in Turnbull's (1999) study; of the four teachers observed in his study, Teacher 4 had the lowest percentage of exclusive French usage (9%). In addition, it is also important to note that the students had a higher prevalence of exclusive French use, as they were often required to respond in French when the prompting question or comment had been made in English. French was indeed used as language of communication in Claire's classroom, but it remains to be seen whether or not the percentage level would be deemed acceptable by the Ministry.

In their 1998 study, Calman and Daniel found that 20% of the Grade 8 Core French teachers observed in their study used English more than 40% of the time, whether it be the primary language of an activity or used in combination with French (i.e. during a translation activity). Under the guidelines used by the school board where the study took place, such a practice was deemed unacceptable; in fact, the school board considered use of English during more than 5% of total class time to be unacceptable. However, before arguing that such evidence provides further support that Claire's extensive use of English was counter-productive to developing student proficiency in French, it is important to consider research conducted by Sparks, Ganschow, Pohlman, Skinner and Artzer (1992). They found that students with learning disabilities and/or foreign language learning difficulties who were taught Spanish using a multi-sensory approach that integrated English outperformed on all measures of native language phonological skills and on both

---

20 See, for example, the Carroll (1975) study of French as a second language programs in eight countries. He found that students who achieved the highest levels of proficiency in French were in classrooms where French was the dominant language the overwhelming majority of the time and English use was as minimal as possible.
the Short and Long Forms of the Modern Language Aptitude Test another group of students with learning disabilities and/or foreign language learning difficulties who were taught using a multi-sensory approach that excluded English. Therefore, it seems that students with learning disabilities may benefit more when English is incorporated into the teacher’s pedagogy, but additional research is needed to determine how much and when English should be used to help these students.

When considering the amount of French used in the Applied Core French class, it is also important to keep in mind Claire’s comments about how the students’ often had trouble processing information when it was presented in English. If Claire felt that the students had difficulty with the material when she used English, it would be therefore reasonable to argue that she was reluctant to make French the exclusive language of many of the interactions out of a fear that the students would be totally lost in the material. Such a concern is very viable in second language classrooms where students with special needs are enrolled; if the student cannot properly function in the first language, how will it be possible to develop his/her proficiency in a second language? As much as the teacher may want to use the TL and make it the predominant language of the classroom, the students’ linguistic processing capabilities would undoubtedly influence a teacher’s use of one language over another. Therefore, the question then becomes how to ensure that the students with learning disabilities are able to understand the material without compromising their burgeoning second language proficiency. While Sparks et al. (1992) argue that English is more effective in helping the students with learning disabilities become more proficient in the target language when the teacher incorporates it, not excludes it, from his/her pedagogy, they did not provide any
guidelines as to how much or when. Therefore, it may be of use to turn to the ideas of Stern (1992) for some guidance. He acknowledges that the first language is the frame of reference for learning the second language, but recommends that educators gradually diminish the role of the first language in the class as they develop their new reference system in the second language. This recommendation parallels Vygotsky's (1978) notion of scaffolded instruction that has been advocated as an effective teaching strategy by special education researchers (e.g. Stone, 1998); in order to help the student achieve the next level of cognitive and linguistic development, the teacher provides assistance and support to the student. As the student becomes more adept at interpreting and conveying the material, the support (in this case, the first language) is gradually withdrawn. Several second language education researchers (see, for example, Antón & Dicamilla, 1998; Brooks & Donato, 1994; Swain & Lapkin, 2000) have argued that allowing students to use the L1 while negotiating meaning the TL helps to further the students’ TL proficiency more readily than if they were denied access to the L1. However, it is uncertain how much English usage is sufficient for providing adequate support. Obviously, more research is needed to determine the role of the L1 in second language learning, especially when considering students with learning disabilities.

**Student Modality**

The results of the classroom observations revealed that Claire’s students were engaged in listening more so than any other mode of communication. These findings echo those of the Calman and Daniel (1998) study, which found that students were engaged in listening the majority of the observed time. In addition, the students in Claire’s classroom did not have many opportunities to use their spoken or written French
skills beyond one-word or one-sentence utterances during the study. Swain (1993) contends that producing oral or written language in the second language classroom is crucial for developing and furthering proficiency in the target language, but it is uncertain how the limited opportunities to interact with the target language, especially at the oral level, impacted the proficiency of the students with learning disabilities. Based on what is known about how students with learning disabilities process language, it would be reasonable to contend that these students would require more opportunities to interact with the language than their peers if they are expected to achieve similar levels of proficiency.

Lerner (2000) and Mercer (1997) both stressed the importance of providing students with learning disabilities access to as many modes of communication as possible during the implementation of a task; they argue that this enables LD students to select which mode is best-suited to their needs at that particular point. Sparks, Ganschow, Kenneweg, and Miller (1991) and Sparks, Ganschow, Pohlman, Skinner, and Artzer (1992) contend that using all four modes of communication is the most effective way to help students with learning disabilities, especially those with auditory challenges, learn the phonology of the target language. In addition, all of these researchers indicate that integrating kinesthetic learning techniques into a teacher’s pedagogy is highly effective for students with learning disabilities. While Claire mentioned during several interviews that she wanted to incorporate a more kinesthetic approach into her pedagogy, she primarily relied on an oral/aural approach to teaching, an approach that may have hindered some of the LD students.
During many of the interviews, Claire indicated that she believed the students with learning disabilities needed to be taught in a manner that was more kinesthetic and integrated as many modes of communication and expression as possible. She cited the textbook’s lack of visual stimuli as being detrimental to the kinesthetic nature of LD students, which she finds to be somewhat ironic, as the Applied program is intended to have a more kinesthetic approach to French (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999a). When examining the findings from the classroom observations, Claire’s pedagogical approach incorporated little, if any, kinesthetic techniques. The class had an overwhelming aural emphasis, even though she acknowledged that many of these students had difficulty processing such information. Also, Claire mentioned that most of these students did not respond as well to paper and pencil tasks, yet these were the primary types of tasks used during the observation period. Therefore, one begins to wonder whether Claire was prevented from integrating the techniques to which she felt the students would more favorably respond because of the non-kinesthetic orientation of the textbook. It could be that modifying the textbook materials to be more appropriate for kinesthetic learning is too daunting and time-consuming of a task for Claire to undertake alone.

Pacing

The MILC found that the most prevalent pacing modification strategy was “Remind students of timing” (23.4%), which Lerner (2000) contends is especially important for students with attention deficits, as they often have difficulty managing their time and, consequently, require constant reminders of how much time remains to complete an assignment. However, I did not observe many episodes in which Claire
extended the time requirements of an activity. Moreover, the DMAS did not find any instances in which Claire extended the time requirements for the written assignment. Providing extra time for assignments is one of the most frequently recommended modification strategies for teaching students with learning disabilities, as it is generally accepted that these students require additional time to process and respond to information presented to them (see for instance, Arries, 1999; Gettinger, 1991; Lerner, 2000; Mercer, 1997, United States Department of Education, 1997; Waldron, 1992). In addition, students with ADD and ADHD often struggle to keep their attention focused on tasks, so they usually require additional time to complete them (Lerner, 2000). For example, White (1998) found that teachers extending the time requirements of an assignment was one of the most frequently used modification strategies, and in the opinions of the surveyed teachers, one of the most effective in helping the student successfully complete a task. Somewhat surprisingly, Claire did not give any indication during any of the interviews that this strategy had been recommended for any of the students in their IEPs. However, since most of the students with learning disabilities in her class had ADD or ADHD, it does call into question whether this modification would have been beneficial for these students.

Environment

Lerner (2000), Mercer (1997), and Waldron (1992) all point out that students with learning disabilities, especially those with attention deficit disorders, require learning environments in which potential distractors are minimized, so that they can more easily focus their efforts on the task at hand. As the results of the classroom observations indicated, "Minimizing Audio Distractions" was one of Claire's most prevalent
modification strategies, despite her belief that it sometimes conflicted with the very nature of language classrooms (e.g. students need to talk in the target language, but talking creates noise). It appeared, therefore, in this instance, that Claire favored the need for the modification over classroom objectives. This raises an interesting dilemma: which pedagogical recommendations are more important—those to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities, or those to meet the goals of the second language program? Legally, it would be reasonable to argue that the needs of the students would be more important, but at the same time, if the goals of the program are compromised somehow because of the modifications, the student is being denied the “regular education experience” the law was designed to guarantee (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999b, United States Office of Education, 1977).

While none of the students with learning disabilities in Claire’s class required assistance from a special education aide or teacher during class to accomplish tasks, Claire was troubled by the lack of bilingual support personnel. During one of our interviews, she indicated that some students in her colleagues’ classes required assistance from special education personnel, but because the support personnel was monolingual, the aide was relegated to being a behavior monitor for the student; the aide was not in the position to provide valuable assistance in the content area. Therefore, it would be reasonable to argue that foreign/second language educators are at a disadvantage if they have students who require support personnel to be present in the classroom, because funding restrictions limit school boards’ ability to seek out bilingual support personnel. Bilingual support personnel are obviously needed.
Presentation of Materials

Most of the material that Claire presented to her students had a decidedly aural emphasis (85.2% exclusive, 6.9% in combination with a visual emphasis), even though she acknowledged during one of our interviews that some of the students with learning disabilities may have difficulty processing information aurally. In Schneider's (1996) outline of a program for teaching the second language phonology to students with learning disabilities, she remarks how many LD students' aural processing deficits necessitate the use of visual aids to explain and/or reinforce material. Sparks, Ganschow, Kenneweg, and Miller (1991), in the outline of their phonology-teaching method, also stress the importance of using a multi-sensory approach that enables the student with aural processing deficits to better utilize other sources of input. In addition, students with learning disabilities, especially auditory processing deficits, may benefit more from physical demonstrations or visual reinforcements for confusing concepts, as they may provide them with more salient information, and be more representative of the multi-sensory approach that Hurst (1996) advocates in her teaching of Spanish to LD students.

While only a few of the formally identified students with learning disabilities had auditory processing challenges, one does wonder how Claire's oral/aural emphasis may have impacted their learning. If these students could not properly process the information being presented to them, how much and/or what did they learn from the class? And, once again, it seems that there is a conflict in terms of the students' needs and the goals of the program. In this case, the goals of the second language program appeared to have been favored. Future research is needed to determine how the oral/aural emphasis
characteristic of the communicative approach advocated by the Ministry of Education and Training affects the proficiency of the student with auditory processing deficits. 

One of the ways in which Claire attempted to help the students process new information was by pre-teaching vocabulary. In 1982, Morris and Crump reported that students with learning disabilities, in comparison with their peers at four age levels, consistently use fewer words and less complex vocabulary, thus making it reasonable to argue that students with learning disabilities would benefit from instances in which the teacher explicitly taught vocabulary. During those activities in which Claire had pre-taught the vocabulary, I noticed lower levels of student frustration with the task.

Materials II

These modification strategies addressed materials that may have been included, excluded, or altered in some way in order to accommodate the students with learning disabilities. The most frequently implemented modification in this category from the observation period was “Highlight text/guides” (5.0% exclusive, 10% in combination with other modifications). Lerner (2000) recommends highlighting or underlining key information in an activity helps keep LD students on task; drawing the students’ attention to pertinent information may help him/her be more aware of what is being required for the task. When working on an activity on verb tenses, Claire would often have the students underline the verbs prior to commencing the study, in addition to key words in the directions to help remind the students of their task.

Grading

Claire often involved the students when deciding how much an assignment should be worth. Incorporating the view points of students with learning disabilities into the
grading system is a worthy practice, because it allows the students to indicate which areas of an assignment or question are more reflective of their knowledge and ability in that area (Arries, 1999).

One of the more recommended grading accommodation strategies, modifying the grading system used to indicate student performance, was rarely implemented during the study (see, for example, Lerner, 2000; Mercer, 1997; Waldron, 1992). Salend (1994) describes eight different ways in which teachers can modify their grading systems from the traditional letter-grade approach to provide LD students more informative, and in some ways, more positive feedback about their performance. He argues that the traditional system of grading students with special needs is not sensitive to their diverse needs and abilities. Claire seemed to adhere to the traditional grading format, but would make allowances to exclude low grades and allow students to take re-tests or re-do assignments.

Assignments and Tests

Three types of modification strategies from this macro-category deserve particular attention because of their prevalence in the literature (see, for example, Bender, 2001; Lerner, 2000; Mercer, 1997): 1) directions (e.g. chunking, providing written back-up, reading them aloud); 2) assignment notebooks or sheets; and 3) lowering reading levels (of text).

As mentioned in Chapter 4, Claire believed that the most commonly recommended modification strategies pertained to making assignment/activity directions to the student. The results of the MILC and DMAS analyses found modifications relating to directions to be some of the more prominent strategies in Claire’s repertoire. Rosenshine (1997) and
Rosenshine & Stevens (1986) found LD students who receive clear and detailed instructions from their teachers have little difficulty in successfully completing tasks. Lerner, Lowenthal, and Lerner (1995) provided evidence that giving directions in small, concise steps and repeating them as often as necessary not only helps to ensure that LD students are aware of the expectations of the task, but helps them to acquire better listening skills.

Claire did not seem to require her students to use assignment notebooks or sheets to help them keep track of their work, even though she indicated to me during one of our interviews that this was one of the most frequently recommended modification strategies in the students’ IEPs. This modification is also frequently recommended by researchers and educators for LD students (see for example, Lerner, Lowenthal, & Lerner, 1995; Lerner, 2000; Mercer, 1997). While Claire never offered an explanation for the absence of this modification, she did say that the students had a tendency to lose important papers and other materials, so it is possible that she may have thought using this strategy would be ineffective.

On a few occasions, I observed Claire simplifying an activity’s text, usually by changing the verbs to a tense with which the students were more familiar. Simplified texts have been recommended for both reading and listening comprehension activities for LD students because it reduces the chance of exposing students to unfamiliar vocabulary and grammar (Bender, 2001; Mercer, 1997). Furthermore, MacInnis and Henning (1995) point out that students with learning disabilities experience considerable difficulty learning and recalling letter sounds, sound combinations, and vocabulary. For these students, even working within their current level of vocabulary and phonetic knowledge
can be sufficiently challenging in a reading task. Scaffolded instruction, as advocated by Vygotsky (1978), would be a means of enabling LD students to complete a more complex reading/listening task, but as there were several students with this type of special need in Claire’s class, it probably would have been very difficult to implement such an approach.

Reinforcement/Follow-Through

Lerner (2000) argues that providing continuous positive reinforcement to students with learning disabilities, especially adolescents, not only helps to raise self-esteem, but reduces behavior and discipline problems. If teachers create an environment in which positive reinforcement is a prominent feature, then students are more likely to feel comfortable and take risks with their learning (Mercer, 1997). Deshler, Schumaker, and Lenz (1984) also contend that adolescents with learning disabilities need to receive continuous positive reinforcement, as it can be used to help promote the social acceptance that is so important to adolescents; if teachers perceive and verbally indicate to a student with learning disabilities that his/her behavior or efforts are appropriate, then peers are more likely to develop positive attitudes towards the student with learning disabilities. Claire was obviously conscious of the students’ need for positive reinforcement, as it was one of the most frequently observed modification strategies.

However, corrective feedback is also recommended even more than positive reinforcement on its own, as it provides these students with a better understanding of what issues they still need to address (Mercer, 1997). For instance, Bryan (1986) argues that providing corrective feedback to students with learning disabilities promotes a more positive self-concept than omitting corrective feedback because it can convey to the
student that the teacher has a positive opinion of the student’s potential. I did not observe any instances of such feedback during the study.

Lerner (2000) insists that teachers provide immediate follow-up to student utterances in the classroom; the sooner the feedback follows the student’s utterance, the more likely it is going to make an impact on the individual’s learning. However, in second language education research, it has been argued that one of the most common forms of immediate feedback—the recast—does not provide students with sufficient information about what was incorrect about his/her initial utterance (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Again, it appears that second language research and research relating to teaching LD students are contradictory. The challenge then becomes to devise a system in which neither the linguistic abilities nor the self-esteem of the LD student are compromised.

Repetition, reviewing, and/or drilling of key material are also a highly recommended modification strategies. Pritikin (1999) advocates a foreign language curriculum that provides LD students numerous opportunities to practice a particular concept or construction as they do not process information with the same speed and efficiency as “normal” students. Claire would often drill her students on verb forms, especially the conjugation of the verb “être” in the present tense and on the past participles of those verbs that used “être” as an auxiliary verb in the past tense. During one of our interviews, she indicated that she believed that using such drills was the only way to really get the information to “stick” in the minds of the students.

Assessment Adaptations

Arries (1999) and Salend (1995) argue that assessing LD students in the foreign/second language class must be organized and implemented in a manner that does
not further hinder a student’s performance. It seemed to me that Claire made an effort to assess her LD students fairly, often allowing them to take a test or quiz again if they felt they could do better. On one occasion, Claire allowed these students to refer to notes on the chalkboard while completing a quiz; she told me after that class that she had done this to keep the students’ anxieties to a minimum. While Mercer (1997) and Dover (1996) have recommended that students with learning disabilities be assessed with different criteria or point/percentage system, Claire did not seem to make any changes to the system she used to evaluate the students. She indicated to me at one point during an informal after-class discussion that she felt her grading system was well-suited for the students with special needs.

Teacher Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Modification Strategies

The third research question for the study was designed to determine if Claire perceived the modifications she used helped the LD students acquire French. Generally, she believed that the modifications that she implemented during the study enabled the LD students to better understand the material, and consequently, gain a more complete understanding of the forms and functions of the French language. She felt that the most effective strategies were related to the explanation and clarification of the directions for assignments, in part because these strategies were the most frequently recommended, and in her opinion, the most important to consider. White (1998) found in his survey of teachers of students with special needs that reinforcing and clarifying directions were some of the most frequently used modification strategies, but more importantly, some of the most effective strategies for helping the students succeed, and the results of this study

---

21 Research question three: How effective does the teacher perceive these modifications to be?
indicate that modification strategies related to an assignment’s directions were some of
the more prevalent accommodations in Claire’s pedagogy.

Arguably, one of the best ways to determine if a student with learning disabilities
is succeeding in a class (e.g. the modifications are helping him/her) is to consider the
student’s grade. Claire mentioned that most of the students in the Grade 9 Applied class
were failing or close to failing the course, thus making it reasonable to question whether
the modifications were effective. According to Blackorby and Wagner (1997) and
Wagner (1990) nearly one-third of students with formally identified learning disabilities
fail regular high school courses, (e.g. a Core French class); such figures would seem to
indicate that not enough is being done to help these students succeed in the general
education high school classroom or that the criteria used to evaluate these students are
biased towards “normal” students.

With the exception of one suggested modification strategy (Minimize Audio
Distractions), Claire believed that the modification strategies that she used in her teaching
did not compromise neither the students’ needs nor the goals of the second language
program. Claire indicated that she was frustrated by the common suggestion to minimize
audio distractions in the classroom because she believed that in order for the students to
develop their proficiency in French, they needed to speak, and thus, create noise—a silent
classroom would not be conducive to language learning. However, based on what I
observed during the study, it appeared that Claire sacrificed the “noise” for the sake of
the students who needed silence. I observed Claire to minimize audio distractions in the
classroom on a daily basis, whether it was by reassigning seats of the more talkative
students or by shutting doors and windows to keep out the outside noises. There was
considerable talking in the class, but most of the student noise was generated by social communication in English, not French. Claire was continuously struggling to keep the students quiet, and in order to do so, resorted to written, individual activities to help them practice their French. She was certainly successful in minimizing the auditory distractions in the class during these activities, but perhaps at the expense of their spoken French development. While there were some activities in which the students could use their spoken French, none of them were marked by any attempts by Claire to minimize the audio distractions—this modification strategy could not be effective during an oral French activity in Claire’s opinion. The needs of the students who used this modification in order to work more effectively were compromised; the needs of the second language program took precedence. This issue reiterates an interesting dilemma regarding teaching students with learning disabilities in the foreign/second language classroom—when the modification strategies and the standard pedagogy for the subject are at odds, which is compromised? In Claire’s instance, it appears that the needs of the LD students were often compromised for the sake of the goals of the program, a practice that is definitely controversial, as these students have a legal right to these modifications.

In the future, it would be of use to determine empirically whether or not different modification strategies are actually helping the students learn the target language. Self-reports on the part of the teacher and the students would provide some insight about the salience of the modifications to the learning process, but it could be more helpful to determine through pre- and post- treatment proficiency tests how the modifications are helping the student. Such quasi-experimental research would be invaluable in the Core French exemption debate; if it could be proven that the students can successfully learn
French with the help of the modification strategies, I believe that the debate could be resolved. Bruck (1978) and Wiss (1987) found that students with learning disabilities who remained in the French immersion program, with the proper support, were able to become proficient in the target language. However, this finding cannot be extended to the Core French program because of the differing contexts of the program—empirical evidence is needed to demonstrate that students with learning disabilities can become proficient in a language to which they are only exposed during a small portion of the school day. It may also be of use to examine which modification strategies are more effective in helping the LD students learn a second language, but it is uncertain whether or not denying students access to certain modifications in order to determine the efficacy of other modifications is an ethical and legally acceptable practice.

**Limitations of the Current Study**

The most obvious limitation of this study is the fact that it only considered the perspectives and practices of one Grade 9 Applied Core French teacher, so it is not possible to make any sort of generalizations about how Core French teachers in Ontario are accommodating the needs of LD students. While I am in the position to make generalizations about Claire’s pedagogy and beliefs as it relates to students with learning disabilities, I believe that Claire’s experience as an individual with learning disabilities made her an atypical participant. Because of her personal experience with ADD and dyslexia, I firmly believe that what I observed in her classroom was not representative of the norm, as she was able to relate to and accommodate the students with learning disabilities in ways of which most other teachers of students with learning disabilities may not be capable. In the future, I would like to conduct similar research in a larger
number of classrooms with different teachers in order to gain a more comprehensive and perhaps more representative understanding of the issue. I would also like to incorporate LD student insight into future research, since they are the only ones who can really reveal whether or not a modification strategy is helping them learn.

With regards to Claire's perception of the effectiveness of the modification strategies she used, I feel that it would have been more helpful to have her rate her perceptions of the modifications' effectiveness on a Likert-type scale. While it was helpful to have her verbal opinions about the strategies, I believe that quantification of this data would provide a more complete picture of how Claire perceived the modifications themselves and in relation to one another. White (1998) used a Likert-scale to determine the perceived effectiveness of the modification strategies, and I believe that his approach yielded much more comprehensive results because the values assigned to the modifications from the scale afforded easier comparison and discussion. Even though I had a fairly clear understanding of how effective Claire perceived the most prevalent modifications in her pedagogy to be, I was not as certain about my perceptions and interpretations of the less frequently used modifications.

The document analysis, in my opinion, did not have as much of an impact as I had initially intended because I felt that I overlooked some topics that should have been considered, namely first vs. second language usage. I realized this in hindsight, after I had completed the analysis of the observation scheme data and had discovered the strong opposition between the first and second languages in the classroom. Obviously, this shortcoming could be addressed in future studies.
In the future, it may also be of use to video-tape the classes and have the teachers and/or students engage in a stimulated recall session to describe the reasons behind pedagogical decisions or how the modifications were being perceived at that point in time.

**Conclusion**

As this study embarked upon an of research long-ignored in both the second language and learning disabilities literature, I am hopeful that this thesis will provide some impetus for further examination of how LD students in the foreign and second language classrooms. I believe that an understanding of accommodation practices is especially crucial for foreign language teachers in the U.S., where the long-held practice of teaching only the "crème de la crème," has resulted in many foreign language instructors who are ill-prepared to accommodate special needs students who now populate their classes. Furthermore, in this age of accountability, it is imperative that educators, administrators, and policymakers be made aware of how classrooms are operating prior to introducing assessments that use student performance to gauge teacher efficacy—especially when students with special needs are involved. I believe this study begins to provide such insights. However, at this point, I feel unable to make any sort of assessments about how all Core French teachers in Ontario are coping with the needs of their LD students, but I am encouraged by what I have seen so far and feel fortunate and grateful to have had the opportunity to observe Claire over an extended period. However, there is clearly much more to learn.

I am also hopeful that by quantifying and qualifying the types of modifications used to help LD students in this Applied Core French will help classroom educators and
policymakers make more informed decisions about exemption policies and practices. I personally do not believe that exemptions are necessary; in my experience with Ellen and other students with learning disabilities that I tutored in college, they were able to become proficient in French with the proper support. The issue therefore becomes whether or not teachers are willing to make that sort of time and emotional commitment and whether they receive the required training, support, and materials.
REFERENCES


Ontario Ministry of Education. (1999a). *French as a second language: Core extended, and immersion French: The Ontario curriculum, grades 9 and 10*. Toronto,


# Appendix A

**MILC: Modifications In the Language Classroom Observation Scheme**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Visit No.</th>
<th>Observer(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>ACTIVITIES &amp; EPISODES</th>
<th>PARTICIPANT ORGANIZATION</th>
<th>CONTENT</th>
<th>ASSESSMENT</th>
<th>CONTENT CONTROL</th>
<th>LANGUAGE USE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Indiv.</td>
<td>Manage</td>
<td>Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7-9 SC</td>
<td>8-10 SC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Indiv.</td>
<td>Manage</td>
<td>Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36
## MILC: Modifications In the Language Classroom Observation Scheme Part II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Visit No.</th>
<th>Observer(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENT MODALITY</th>
<th>MATERIALS</th>
<th>PACING</th>
<th>ENVIRONMENT</th>
<th>PRESENTATION OF MATERIALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Listening | Speaking | Reading | Writing | Physical | Other | Total | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 | 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 | 45 | 46 | 47 | 48 | 49 | 50 | 51 | 52 | 53 | 54 | 55 | 56 | 57 | 58 | 59 | 60 | 61 | 62 | 63 | 64 | 65 | 66 | 67 | 68 | 69 | 70 | 71 | 72 | 73 | 74 | 75 | 76 | 77 | 78 | 79 | 80 | 81 | 82 | 83 | 84 | 85 | 86 | 87 | 88 | 89 | 90 | 91 | 92 | 93 | 94 | 95 | 96 | 97 | 98 | 99 | 100 |

|                  |           |         |            |                          |
|                  |           |         |            |                          |

182
Appendix B

Letter of Informed Consent for Teacher Participant
Printed on OISE/UT Letterhead

Dear colleague:

My name is Katy Arnett, and I am enrolled in the Second Language Education M.A. program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. For my thesis, I am interested in examining modification practices in the French classroom. The title of the study is “The Accommodation of Grade 9 Students with Learning Disabilities in the Applied Core French Classroom,” and I invite you to participate. It is my intention that this study will provide you with the opportunity to reflect upon your teaching practices as they relate to students with special needs, and will provide teachers of foreign languages in the United States, where I teach French at the secondary level, with some insight about modification strategies that may be of use in the foreign language classroom.

This study involves an observation period of 800 minutes (approx. 10 of your classes), a series of 6 interviews (none more than 60 minutes each, approximately 3-4 hours in total) that will occur prior to, throughout, and after the observation period, and an analysis of the documents you use in the classroom during the observation period, from study guides to tests. During the observation, I would only be examining you and your classroom practices as they pertain to students with special needs; the students are not the focus of my observation. I am only interested in what you, as the teacher, do to help these students, and I will, in no way, critique your practices. I am simply interested in looking for ideas on how to accommodate the needs of these students. I will use an established observation scheme (attached) to guide this part of the study. To help establish my reliability as an observer, an additional observer will come to the classroom after a few classes have past. He/she will observe the class as well using the observation chart, and his/her notations will only be used to establish the reliability of the scheme and will not be considered in the actual data analysis. The interviews will be held at the school, in a room that would ensure our privacy. The interviews would occur after school or during a free period at your convenience. I will tape record, then transcribe the interviews. These interviews will be used to gain insight about how you perceive the success of the modifications you make to accommodate students, your attitudes about teaching French to students with special needs, and your reasoning for using a particular strategy during a particular activity or episode in the classroom. Finally, the document analysis will be done to see the modification practices that are used with written material that is presented to the students. I will also be interested in learning the source of these documents, in order to determine how much teacher initiative is required to meet the needs of these students.

Should you agree to participate, the confidentiality of your responses and actions will be ensured. A pseudonym will be used during all portions of the research process and any identifying traits about yourself, from your name and physical appearance, to the identity of your school, will not be disclosed in any written reports, publications, or
conference presentations. However, as I would be in your classroom for an extended period of time, I cannot ensure that your colleagues would not be able to identify you if they have the opportunity to read the written reports. The tapes of your interviews will be destroyed after one year, but transcripts will be made of the interviews, and all files that are related to this study will be kept in a locked room at my residence that is only accessible to me. My thesis supervisor may have access to the data, but he will only use his knowledge of the information to help me with the data analysis and writing of the thesis. The possibility exists that I could use this information for later comparison studies of the pedagogical practices of foreign language teachers in the United States, so all transcripts and notes will not be shredded until 5 years have passed. Upon the completion of my thesis, a summary of my findings would be available to you. There also exists a strong possibility that the data gathered in this study will be used as a basis for scholarly articles and conference presentations. In addition, should you agree to participate in this study, you could, of course, withdraw at any time, without fear of any repercussions and without giving a reason. All data that I would have gathered to that point would be immediately destroyed.

Should you agree to participate in this study, please complete the information/consent form below.

Very sincerely yours,

Katy Arnett

I agree to participate in this study, and understand that it requires 13.3 hours of observation of my classroom practices, a series of 6 interviews that should last no longer than 60 minutes each, and an analysis of all documents that are given to my students during the observation period.

I do not agree to participate in this study, and understand that this decision will in no way adversely affect me.

Signature ___________________________ Date ______________

Home telephone number ___________________________

E-mail address ___________________________
Appendix C

Letter of Informed Consent for Principal of Teacher Participant
Printed on OISE/UT Letterhead

Dear Principal:

My name is Katy Arnett, and I am enrolled in the Second Language Education M.A. program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. For my thesis, I am interested in examining how teachers of secondary French classes modify their instructional practices to accommodate the learning needs of students with learning disabilities. The title of the study is "The Accommodation of Grade 9 Students with Learning Disabilities in the Applied Core French Classroom," and I would like to invite one of your teachers to participate. Participation in this study will provide your teacher with the opportunity to reflect upon his/her teaching practices as they relate to students with special needs, and will provide teachers of foreign languages in the United States, where I teach French at the secondary level, with some insight about modification strategies that may be of use in the foreign language classroom.

This study involves an observation period of 800 minutes (approx. 10 classes), a series of 6 interviews (none more than 60 minutes each, approximately 3-4 hours in total) that will occur prior to, throughout, and after the observation period, and an analysis of the documents used in the classroom during the observation period, from study guides to tests. During the observation, I would only be examining the teacher’s classroom practices as they pertain to students with special needs; the students are not the focus of my observation. I am only interested in what the teacher does to help these students, and I will, in no way, critique his/her practices. I am simply interested in looking for ideas on how to accommodate the needs of these students. I will use an established observation scheme (attached) to guide this part of the study. To help establish my reliability as an observer, an additional observer will come to the classroom after a few classes have past. He/she will observe the class as well using the observation chart, and his/her notations will only be used to establish the reliability of the scheme and will not be considered in the actual data analysis. The interviews will be held at the school, in a room that would ensure our privacy. The interviews would occur after school or during a free period at the teacher’s convenience. I will tape record, then transcribe the interviews. These interviews will be used to gain insight about how the teacher perceives the success of the modifications he/she makes to accommodate students, his/her attitudes about teaching French to students with special needs, and his/her reasoning for using a particular strategy during a particular activity or episode in the classroom. Finally, the document analysis will be done to see the modification practices that are used with written material that is presented to the students. I will also be interested in learning the source of these documents, in order to determine how much teacher initiative is required to meet the needs of these students.

Should you agree to allow one of your teachers to participate, the confidentiality of that teacher’s responses and actions will be ensured. A pseudonym will be used during all portions of the research process and any identifying traits about him/her, from name
and physical appearance, to the identity of your school, will not be disclosed in any written reports, publications, or conference presentations. However, as I would be in his/her classroom for an extended period of time, I cannot ensure that colleagues would not be able to identify the teacher if they have the opportunity to read the written reports. The tapes of the interviews will be destroyed after one year, but transcripts will be made of the interviews, and all files that are related to this study will be kept in a locked room at my residence that is only accessible to me. My thesis supervisor may have access to the data, but he will only use his knowledge of the information to help me with the data analysis and writing of the thesis. The possibility exists that I could use this information for later comparison studies of the pedagogical practices of foreign language teachers in the United States, so all transcripts and notes will not be shredded until 5 years have passed. Upon the completion of my thesis, a summary of my findings would be available to you and your teacher. There also exists a strong possibility that the data gathered in this study will be used as a basis for scholarly articles and conference presentations. In addition, should you agree to allow a teacher to participate in this study, he/she could, of course, withdraw at any time, without fear of any repercussions and without giving a reason. All data that I would have gathered to that point would be immediately destroyed.

Should you agree to allow one of your teachers to participate in this study, please complete the information/consent form below.

Very sincerely yours,

Katy Arnett

[Form]

[Signature] I agree to allow a teacher at my school to participate in this study, and understand that it requires 13.3 hours of observation of his/her classroom practices, a series of 6 interviews that should last no longer than 60 minutes each, and an analysis of all documents that are given to the students during the observation period.

[Signature] I do not agree to participate in this study, and understand that this decision will in no way adversely affect me.

Signature _______________________________ Date __________

School telephone number ________________________________

E-mail address ________________________________
Appendix D

Letter of Informed Consent for Parents of Formally Identified Students
Printed on OISE/UT Letterhead

Dear Parent/Guardian:

My name is Katy Arnett, and I am enrolled in the Second Language Education M.A. program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. For my thesis, I am implementing a study entitled “The Accommodation of Grade 9 Students with Learning Disabilities in the Applied Core French Classroom,” and I have invited your child’s teacher to participate. At this point, I extend an invitation to you and your child to participate in this groundbreaking study as well.

During the observation period of this study (10 classes), I will be examining your child’s teacher’s classroom practices as they pertain to students with special needs in the Core French classroom; the students are not the focus of my observation and I will not interact with them in any way. I am only interested in what the teacher does to help these students when learning French. However, in order for me to distinguish between teaching strategies that accommodate a student’s special needs from a general teaching strategy, I will need to know which learning disabilities have been identified in a student’s IEP and what recommendations have been made to help him/her in the classroom.

- The teacher has provided this document to your student without my knowledge, so I am unaware of the identity of your child.
- None of the data gathered in this study will be used to assess your child, either for the purpose of this study, or for classroom purposes.
- To help establish my reliability as an observer, an additional observer will come once to the classroom. His/her notations will only be used to establish the reliability of my notes as the observer and will not be considered in the data analysis. He/she will not be told of any of the information regarding your child and will not discuss anything he/she observes with anyone other than myself. He/she will also sign a confidentiality agreement that prevents him/her from discussing this study with anyone other than myself.
- All files that are related to this study will be kept in a locked room at my residence that is only accessible to me, and all notes will not be shredded until 5 years have passed.
- The possibility exists that I could use this information for later scholarly articles and conference presentations of the pedagogical practices of foreign language teachers in the United States.
- Upon the completion of my thesis, a summary of my findings would be available to you.

Thank you for considering allowing your child to participate in this groundbreaking study.

Very sincerely yours,
Katy Arnett
I consent to the granting the researcher permission to learn of the types of learning disabilities that have been identified in my son/daughter’s IEP and the recommendations that have been made to help him/her. I can, of course, withdraw my child at any time, without fear of any repercussions and without giving a reason. All data that would have been gathered to that point (as it pertains to my child) would be immediately destroyed.

I do not agree to allow the information contained in my son/daughter’s IEP to be disclosed to the researcher, and understand that this decision will in no way adversely affect my child.

Signature ___________________________ Date ________________

Home telephone number ___________________________
Appendix E

Questions: Pre-Observation Interview

1. How long have you been teaching?
   a. How many of those years have been at the secondary level?
   b. How long have you been teaching Core French?
   c. For how many years have you taught students with learning disabilities?
   d. How would you describe your teaching?

2. How long do your classes last?
   a. On what days is the class [the Grade 9 Applied class] held?
   b. What is a typical day like in your classroom?
   c. What topics are you currently covering?
   d. How often do you formally assess the students?

3. When you plan a lesson, do you consciously think of the types of modification strategies that need to be used?
   a. How much individualization of the curriculum do you do for these students?
   b. Do you try to individualize the curriculum for each student or just more so for those students with special needs?
   c. Are there certain modifications you prefer over others? If so, why?
   d. At the beginning of the school year, is there a point where you sit down with these students that have been formally identified with learning disabilities and ask them what their needs are? If not, why not?

4. What do you enjoy the least about teaching students with learning disabilities in a second language classroom?

5. What do you enjoy the most about teaching students with learning disabilities in the second language classroom?
Appendix F

Questions: Students with Learning Disabilities Interview

1. How many students in your classroom have been formally identified with learning disabilities?

2. Are there any students you believe should be formally identified with learning disabilities, but have not been, for one reason or another? How many students fall into this category?

3. What sorts of learning disabilities have been formally identified in these students?

4. What sorts of modification strategies have been suggested in the formally identified students' IEPs?

5. Do any of the students require assistance from a special education aide or special education teacher in the class?

6. Are there any students who have audiolingual processing deficits? If so, how many?

7. Do you think that there are any suggested modification strategies that “clash” with one another or with the goals of the program? If so, what are they?

8. How many modifications do you think you use on a daily basis?

9. What indicators do you use to determine whether or not a modification strategy is really helping the student? Does student performance and/or motivation factor in to your assessments of the modifications’ effectiveness?

10. Do you feel that the modifications that have been suggested, or the ones you may have developed and implemented yourself, have been appropriate for the needs of the students? Do you believe that you are aware of what they need and how/what you need to modify? What gives you this impression?

11. Do you think that some of the modifications that have been recommended and/or ones that you may use somehow compromise your own personal beliefs about how French should be taught?

12. Have you developed any modification strategies yourself that, while not necessarily recommended in the IEPs, you think help the students? If so, what are they and why do you think they help the students?
Appendix G

Questions: Mid-Observation Interview I

1. Were there any modifications you wanted to incorporate into your teaching this week that you were not able to because of things that came up in the classroom?
   a. Why do you think that you were unable to implement these modifications?
   b. Was it because you did not meet your program goals?
   c. Is there anything you think the school could do to provide additional support with this class?

2. Why do you have the students help to decide what their grade is going to be on an assignment?

3. I’ve noticed that there is often a steady hum of noise in the class. How do you feel about the noise level in this class?

4. I also noticed that when the lights were off and the class was being illuminated naturally, the students were much calmer. Did you notice this?

5. How well do you think the textbook appeals to the interests of a Grade 9 student?

6. Do you think that if the case is severe enough a student with learning disabilities should be exempted from the core French requirement if the modifications are too challenging to implement? Why or why not?

7. How would you say your colleagues feel about exempting students with learning disabilities from the core French requirement? Is this something you have discussed with them?
Appendix H

Questions: Mid-Observation Interview II

1. What modification strategies do you think were most prevalent in your teaching this week?

2. When you say that you modified the lesson content, what is your basis for making the modifications? Is it instinctual or is it based on student performance or behavior?

3. Do you feel that the strategies you used this week addressed the students' needs adequately? Were the modifications what they needed? Or was there something "lacking" in your approach, do you think?

4. How well do you think the new room layout is working?

5. Have you ever given a collaborative test where the students can work with each other to answer?

6. Do you think the students perform better when they have the opportunity to work collaboratively?

7. How are the behavioral challenges affecting your teaching?
Appendix I

Questions: Mid-Observation Interview III

1. What modifications do you think were most prevalent in your teaching this week?

2. How do you feel after working with a class with such a myriad of needs? Frustrated? Fatigued? Optimistic?

3. How do you think your experience as an individual with dyslexia and ADD has impacted your teaching?

4. Do you think your experiences make you more effective as their teacher since you have first-hand knowledge of how learning disabilities impact lives? Why or why not?

5. Were there any modifications that you wanted to incorporate into your teaching this week, but did not, for one reason or another? What were they and why weren’t they implemented?
Appendix J

Questions: Mid-Observation Interview IV

1. What modifications do you feel were most prevalent in your teaching this week?

2. Do you believe that the strategies you used this week adequately addressed the students’ needs? Why or why not?

3. Were there any modifications you used this week and felt that they did not work? Why or why not?

4. Do you think the activities you did yesterday on the Vandertramp verbs were more effective or less effective in providing additional reinforcement than other methods you may have used in the past? Why or why not?

5. Were there any modifications that you wanted to use this week, but did not, for one reason or another? If so, what were they?

6. What do you identify as the shortcomings of the commercial program?

7. What are your thoughts on the sequencing of the topics within the program?
Appendix K

Questions: Post-Observation Interview

1. When students with learning disabilities first entered your classroom, what sort of special training or information did you receive, if any?

2. So, what you are saying is that the only form of input that you receive from the school is what modifications you should use with these students?

3. What resources, if any, are made available to you by the Ministry to help accommodate these students?

4. So, what you are saying is that all of the modification strategies you use in the classroom are ones that you have developed on your own?
   a. What sort of information did you use to develop these strategies?
   b. Did you refer to literature or did you base your decisions on practical experience?

5. What are your beliefs about teaching French to students with learning disabilities? Do you think they have a place in the core French classroom? Why or why not?

6. How proficient in French do you think students with learning disabilities can become?

7. How much of an effect, if any, do you feel the presence of students with learning disabilities in the class has impacted the learning of the “normal” students? Can the modification strategies work against the “normal” students?

8. How do you think the students with learning disabilities respond to the modifications?
   a. Do you think they are conscious of the fact you are using them?
   b. Do you think the students expect the modifications?

9. How much one-on-one communication would you say you have with the students?

10. What sort of suggestions would you make to foreign/second language teachers just beginning to encounter students with learning disabilities in their classes?

11. What strategies do you think are the most effective? Why?

12. Are there any strategies that you do not think are effective? Why or why not?
### Document Modifications Analysis Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Title</th>
<th>Date(s) Used</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Pacing</th>
<th>Presentation of Material</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Assignment/Testing Adaptations</th>
<th>Grades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasis:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Auditory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tactile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multi-dimensional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasis:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Auditory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tactile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multi-dimensional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasis:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Auditory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tactile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multi-dimensional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasis:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Auditory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tactile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multi-dimensional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasis:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Auditory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tactile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multi-dimensional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasis:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Auditory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tactile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multi-dimensional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasis:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Auditory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tactile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multi-dimensional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasis:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Auditory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tactile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multi-dimensional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasis:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Auditory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tactile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multi-dimensional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasis:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Auditory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tactile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multi-dimensional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasis:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Auditory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tactile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multi-dimensional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasis:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Auditory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tactile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multi-dimensional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasis:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Auditory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tactile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multi-dimensional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasis:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Auditory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tactile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multi-dimensional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasis:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Auditory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tactile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multi-dimensional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasis:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Auditory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tactile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multi-dimensional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasis:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Auditory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tactile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multi-dimensional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasis:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Auditory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tactile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multi-dimensional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                |              |        |          |        | Emphasis: | | | | 197