Teachers’ Perspectives on How Stakeholders Can Ameliorate Students’ Attitudes towards Core French

By

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Abstract

The education system in the province of Ontario provides multiple avenues through which students can learn French. All Ontario students are required to at least take Core French, which entails studying the language as a subject from Grade 4 until Grade 9. The purpose of this study is to learn from teachers’ perspectives how stakeholders, namely parents and society, teachers, school boards, and the government, can improve students’ attitudes towards Core French. This research paper includes a rigorous literature review of notable researchers in the field such as Sharon Lapkin and Scott Kissau. In addition, four experienced teachers were interviewed in order to collect data and report new findings. Some recommendations made as a result of the findings include: Parents’ active participation and collaboration with teachers; teachers speaking the target language in the classroom, focusing on the but communicatif (communicative goal), using cross-curricular methods, avoiding strictly grammar lessons, creating a safe classroom environment and fostering a personal and emotional connection with the language; school boards adjusting certain recruitment, funding, and scheduling policies; the government mandating that Core French begin earlier (currently, Grade 4) and continue until Grade 12. Lastly, opportunities for further study are identified based on the limitations and questions raised in this paper.

Key Words: French, language, education, Core French, Ontario, stakeholders, students’ attitudes, teachers’ perspectives, parents, society, school boards, government
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction to the Research Study

Canada is a bilingual country where the English and French languages have been officially used since its establishment in 1867 (Canadian Heritage, 2013). The education system in the province of Ontario provides multiple avenues through which students can learn French. It features two publicly-funded French systems: The French public and the French Catholic system with four and eight school boards, respectively (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). The English public and English Catholic systems also offer French Immersion, Extended French, and at the most basic level, Core French (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). The French Immersion program can start as early as kindergarten and entails taking all subjects in the French language. Similarly, the Extended French program usually starts in Grade 4 and students learn 50% of their subjects in the French language, while learning the other 50% in the English language.

All Ontario students are required to at least take Core French, which entails studying the language as a subject starting in Grade 4 until Grade 9 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). In my own personal experience as a student, teacher and tutor, I noticed that there seems to be a negative attitude towards learning French in the Core French program. My experience is supported by research as only 4.6% of students enrolled in Core French continue past the mandatory Grade 9 level to complete a Grade 12 Core French course (Canadian Parents for French, 2010).
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to learn from a teacher’s perspective how stakeholders, namely teachers, school boards, the government, parents and society, can improve students’ attitudes towards Core French. This topic needs attention because government interventions have done little to ameliorate the situation, with Ontario often being considered as unilingual due to the low rates of French speakers (Statistics Canada, 2014). This study is important to the education community because for teachers and school administrators to be able to change their teaching accordingly, they need to know where their students’ attitudes and thoughts stem from.

It is also important because the drop rates of Core French continue to increase while the job opportunities and compensation for bilingual positions are also increasing in Canada and worldwide. (University of Guelph, 2010) From a personal perspective, globalization has not only increased the likelihood of using a second language for work-related matters, but also for leisurely travel. Thus, by not continuing their studies in French beyond the mandatory Grade 9 level, these students will not be achieving French – English bilingualism and may lose opportunities in Canada and beyond.

Research Questions

As is the case with many education-related issues, ameliorating students’ attitudes towards Core French is a multi-faceted matter because a number of stakeholders can affect and / or are affected by it. The main question that this research seeks to explore is:
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What are teachers’ perspectives on how French education stakeholders, namely teachers, school boards, the government, parents and society can ameliorate students’ attitudes towards Core French?

The sub-questions that I investigate in this research paper are as follows:

- What strategies can teachers employ in order to make Core French more appealing to students?
- What are teachers’ views on the potential influence that funding and policy changes at the school board and government levels may have on ameliorating students’ attitudes towards Core French?
- What are teachers’ observations on the influence that parents and society’s attitudes towards French have on students’ attitudes towards Core French?

**Background of the Researcher**

My experience with the French language started when I was a young child and my uncle was a French professor. I would often hear him speak French, but what really interested me was the fact that he would often go to French-speaking countries, especially France and Belgium, for various workshops and courses. I remember making a connection between knowing a foreign language and the many opportunities that it facilitates, including working and traveling abroad. However, I did not start learning French until I was in Grade 5. I took Core French courses throughout middle school and high school. What I noticed from the beginning was that the majority of my peers did not consider French as an important subject and did not take it as seriously as other subjects such as Math or Science. Although all subjects are mandatory, they
viewed French in particular, as something they were forced to take.

It was not surprising when there was a drastic decline in the number of student enrolment in Grade 10 French, when it became no longer mandatory. Among those students that did decide to continue, I still noticed some negative attitude towards French. It is during my undergraduate degree, where I continued studying the French language, that I encountered people who were genuinely happy and motivated to study the language. After beginning graduate studies in the OISE Master of Teaching program with a teachable in French, I became increasingly concerned because as a French teacher I want to be able to understand my students in order to motivate and engage them in something as important as learning French in a bilingual country.

Overview

This study has been divided into five chapters that represent the five phases that were undertaken during the course of the research. Chapter one provides a general introduction and background to the French language learning system in Ontario, followed by the purpose of the study which outlines its importance to a bilingual society and in particular, to the education community. The research question is then presented and seeks to understand not only students, but all stakeholders, namely teachers, school administrators and parents, involved in French language teaching and learning. Then, I share my background in French and how my own observations as a student inspired me to study this topic. Chapter two includes a review of the literature that aims to be accurate, rigorous, and specific, but cannot be exhaustive due to the volume of related literature. The literature review presented includes research studies by notable researchers in the field of French study, such as Sharon Lapkin and Scott Kissau.
Chapter three provides the detailed methodology used, including information about instruments of data collection, which consist of informal interviews, data collection and analysis, and limitations. It also provides a brief overview of the ethical review process from OISE, which was necessary in order to gather data from teachers. Chapter four presents the findings of the study, and they are arranged according to five major themes. This chapter is comprehensive in that it includes direct quotes from participants. Chapter five concludes the study, as it presents implications and recommendations, limitations and opportunities for further study.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Student Attitude

Williams and Lanverns (2002) completed a large-scale study of approximately 200 students in the South-west of England in regards to foreign language learning. The study differs from others, in that it looked at students in Grades 7, 8 and 9 and revealed that there was a decrease in motivation with an increase in grade level. It also revealed a lower motivation among students to learn the French language when compared to German. After making these preliminary discoveries, students were further probed through in-depth interviews that were conducted by Williams, Lanverns, and their team of researchers. Students were able to articulate their attitude towards French and explained that it is considered feminine, it is tedious, and it is not “cool” to make an effort to learn French, especially for boys (Williams, Burden, & Lanvers, 2002). Related to this mentality, some students simply do not have a comprehensive understanding of the careers that they can pursue with a foreign language, often limiting this view to travel agents or teachers (Carr & Pauwels, 2006).

In Ontario, data collected through a case study (Rovers, 2013) of a high school Core French class revealed that “75 per cent of the students wrote that past experience with the Core French program was in some way negative” (p. 6). The statistics clearly show that there is a real negative attitude amongst students towards French as only 4.6% of students enrolled in Core French, continue past the mandatory Grade 9 level to complete a Grade 12 Core French course (Canadian Parents for French, 2010). Harding (2012) found that students have to endure a reading and writing-based curriculum that often requires them to sit for long periods of time to conjugate verbs and do dictation exercises, which they find boring and unrelated to the real
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world. Furthermore, some students already have trouble processing instructional language in English and this tends to amplify in a foreign language, further discouraging them from it (Harding, 2012).

Overall, there is widespread dissatisfaction with the outcomes of the Core French program. Students who find themselves not able to speak, understand or write French, eventually make the decision not to continue (Lapkin, Mady, & Arnott, 2009). Marshall (2002) further added to the research by conducting a study that involved questionnaires and interviews of French as a Second Language (FSL) stakeholders in a rural North Central Ontario community. He found student attitudes to be as follows: “Like, I’m not very good at French, like talking and stuff, and I don’t really like the teachers.” “French…I don’t think when I grow up I’ll need it, what I’ll be doing ’cause you only need it for Grade 9 in high school” (Marshall, 2002, p. 18).

These views are further supported by a survey of 300 Grade 11 students in Atlantic Canada who reported disappointment in progress and ability to speak French. They would have liked to have more communicative approaches and hands-on activities, including group projects and trips, to interact with Francophones (Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 2004).
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Male Students

Past research, as outlined below, has identified that overall student attitudes towards Core French are often negative, especially among male students. I have encountered such attitudes from males first hand. For example, I took my phone in for repair and upon seeing that my language was set to French, the male customer service representative said to me: “Can you change the language, I’m not a girl, and therefore I do not speak French.” I was taken aback by the comment and did not see the link between one’s gender and the French language.

Scott Kissau is a former French teacher and current researcher in the language field. His work which focuses on boys in FSL learning is of particular importance and may shed some light into my experience with the customer service representative. After conducting a survey of 500 Ontario students, both male and female, Kissau (2006) argues that societal perceptions are at the forefront of males not wanting to learn French. Males, more so than females, stated that they had to be lucky to do well in French class. However, teachers and even some female students, think that boys use this as an excuse to explain to others, especially other boys, why they are succeeding in learning French (Kissau, 2006).

Through his studies, Kissau (2007) has found that in our society, the French language is associated “with what are traditionally perceived as more feminine interests such as romance, wine, and perfume” (p. 1). As a result, males fear that if they study French, they will be perceived as effeminate. Kissau (2006) makes the recommendation that in order to dispel the negative connotations associated with French language learning, students need to be exposed to a variety of subjects, including those that are constructed/presented as more masculine in popular
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culture, such as sports and cars. Also, males need to be exposed to male French speakers such as previous students, guest speakers, public figures, and celebrities. The inspiration that this would provide for male students seems to be lacking currently.

**Private School Students**

Carr and Pawels (2006) also mention that boys’ general lack of interest in learning French is not true for all boys, identifying private schools as a place where male students generally view French as more useful. The reason is not that private school teachers are necessarily always better, but rather because the privileged students that have international experience have successfully made the link between foreign language knowledge and the many opportunities that it opens for students (Carr & Pauwels, 2006).

**Francophone School Students**

Another interesting case looked at francophone schools in Ontario, where French is often students’ first language. Larocque (2006) studied approximately 70 Grade 7 and 8 francophone students and found that boys who had a more negative attitude towards French, were less interested in getting to know other French people, and less motivated towards improving their language skills.
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Stakeholders

Teachers

The demand for French teachers in the last decades has led to the hiring of teachers that may not be fully qualified. This certainly has an impact on the quality of instruction, how engaged students are, and if they want to continue learning French (Canadian Parents for French, 2010). On the other hand, teachers are increasingly frustrated over poor working conditions such as lack of resources and a stationary classroom. Kissau (2008) states that he has even interviewed French teachers who teach French in school gymnasiums and kitchens. Lapkin, MacFarlane and Vandergrift (2006), found that “Core French teachers are dissatisfied with their teaching assignments and many are considering leaving Core French teaching” (Lapkin, Mady, & Arnott, 2009, p. 2). The fact that teachers are frustrated with working conditions may be a factor that influences their classroom atmosphere in a negative way. This may lead to students’ forming negative attitudes towards Core French.

Research shows that in order to create a positive classroom environment, teachers need to ensure that students: “feel included and appreciated by peers and teachers; are respected for their different abilities, cultures, gender, interests and dreams; are actively involved in their own learning; and have positive expectations from others that they will succeed” (Gibbs, 2015, p. 1). Gibbs (2006) has developed the Tribes method, which among other elements, suggests defining four basic classroom community agreements: “attentive listening, appreciation/no put-downs, right to pass/participate, and mutual respect” (p. 85). The Tribes method is championed by many researchers, including Charles (2012), who extends the idea of Tribes in a language classroom by stating: “Apart from these human relationships, it is also important to foster a sense of
connectedness to the language itself as well as the related cultural representations – on an intellectual as well as on a more personal / emotional level” (p. 264).

In addressing teachers’ contribution to boys learning French, Carr and Pauwels (2006) completed a study of 200 students and their teachers across three English-speaking countries, namely Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. They discovered that all stakeholders interviewed, including teachers, thought that biology was the reason for girls’ greater achievement in language learning. There seems to be a false sense of girls having longer attention spans and natural communication abilities. Boys on the other hand are perceived by teachers to be more suitable for Mathematics and Science. The authors argue that this is a dangerous perception because when teachers attribute boys’ lack of language engagement to biology, they do not see the need to design methods to attract boys to language classes. Instead, they accept it as the way it is and take little action to try to change the issue (Carr & Pauwels, 2006).

However, the study was hopeful in that it identified teachers who did have some success in keeping boys interested, by making exercises and activities more competitive, interactive and realistic. A specific example of a teacher engaging not only boys but FSL learners in general, is that of a French and drama teacher who combined the two subjects and had students act out traditional folktales in French. In order for French language learning to be successful, teachers must recognize the problem and the need to change teaching methodology (Carr & Pauwels, 2006).
School Boards

Ontario school boards are not officially required to account for how they use what are supposed to be FSL funds. Instead of formally reporting finances, school boards make anecdotal reports, which raise questions as to whether the funds are actually used for FSL programs (Canadian Parents for French, 2010). Another issue is that school boards in Canada are struggling to recruit and retain qualified FSL teachers (Kissau, 2008). Kissau (2006) believes that school boards and faculties of education have an important role to play as they must make more of an effort to recruit, keep and train French teachers, especially male ones.

In regards to students and curriculum, school directors are not providing sufficient support - whether financial or otherwise - so that French can be seen as a subject that is just as important as Mathematics and/or Science. Scheduling procedures in Ontario perpetuate this message and discourage students from taking French because once the Grade 9, 12, and 11 courses are plotted using a computer program, Grade 10 is then plotted, with French and Physical Education being offered in the same timeslot (Kissau, 2008). This scheduling is of crucial importance because it is in Grade 10 that students need to make the decision as to whether or not to continue studying the French language. By offering Physical Education at the same time as French, students are forced to make a decision that they may not be ready for or may regret in the future. This is especially the case for boys who are tempted by a more active course as opposed to what they perceive to be the tedious work of learning a language.

Carr and Pauwels (2006) make further suggestions that in order to keep students - especially boys - interested, administrators need to emphasize the importance of intercultural
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experiences. This may mean organizing more class trips to French-speaking countries, but also integrating cultural awareness in the everyday curriculum. The members of Canadian Parents for French (CPF) also identify several other issues with the school districts. They claim that there are inequitable caps and fees for certain French programs, especially Immersion. Furthermore, they highlight that school boards do not accommodate academically-challenged students and new Canadians, in order to set them up for success in learning French. Allophones, students whose first language is neither French nor English, are discouraged, as opposed to being encouraged through promotional initiatives, with 80% of Allophone parents reporting that they received no information about French programs (Canadian Parents for French, 2010). There is a lack of collaboration between school boards and cultural and immigrant institutions to provide parents with the information that they need when they first arrive.

In addition, the CPF states that academically challenged students are not sufficiently encouraged by the board, as it puts certain limits on them in regards to more in-depth French enrichment (Canadian Parents for French, 2012). This is unfortunate because as Genesee (2012) found in his research, there is no evidence to support the belief that students who are academically challenged or have a learning disability are at greater risk in French programs. In fact, they have the ability to become bilingual just like all students (Genesee, 2012).

The Government

In 2003, the Privy Council implemented a plan which sought to double the percentage of bilingual students in Canada between the ages of 15 and 19 by the year 2013. Unfortunately, not only has this number not doubled, it has in fact decreased (Kissau & Turnbull, 2008). More specifically, the rates of students taking Core French have decreased in almost all provinces.
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across Canada (Canadian Parents for French, 2010). There are insufficient funds in the Federal
Government’s Official Languages in Education Program. As a result, provinces such as Ontario
lack research in FSL instruction, policy expectations, and FSL consultants at the board level.

There are also inconsistencies across provinces when it comes to mandatory start and end
of FSL study and the minimum number of instructional hours. At the university level, only B.C
universities have a language requirement for entry. (Kissau, 2008) This sends students the
message that French is not important because it is not mandatory after the Grade 9 level. The
government and most universities require Grade 11 or 12 Mathematics. If this were the case for
the French language, a strong message about the importance of learning French would be
transmitted to students.

Parents

After collecting data through questionnaires from approximately 140 parents in a North
Central region of Ontario, Marshall (2002) astoundingly found that parents thought learning a
second language was important for their children, however it did not necessarily have to be
French, as they thought it was rarely used outside of school. In fact, many parents did not support
official bilingualism in Canada as demonstrated by their negative attitude towards it (Marshall,
2002)

The members of the Canadian Parents for French bring to light several key issues. As
only a quarter of the Canadian adult population speaks French, it is evident that the majority of
parents find it challenging to help students with their French homework. As it sometimes
happens, students arrive home frustrated that they do not understand a certain concept in a
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subject and usually parents are able to help. However, with French, that is not always the case and therefore students continue to go to school frustrated. This situation may be exacerbated when parents are new to Canada. Their goal and focus, in many cases, are helping their child learn the English language so they put less emphasis on the French language. This may lead to students picking up on their parents’ thoughts and attitude towards French.

Of course, this is not always the case with all parents. For example, I was new to Canada and learned English and French at the same time as my parents stressed to me the importance of both languages. This is further supported by CPF’s (2010) study that revealed that 60% of Allophone parents felt that it would benefit their children to learn both languages. This may be due to the fact that some of the parents themselves spoke multiple languages and after seeing the benefits of doing so, wanted their children to learn multiple languages as well.

Society

In a literature review focusing on Core French, Lapkin, Mady and Arnott (2009), state that “community attitudes towards the L2 are often negative (especially outside large urban centres) and students may bring these attitudes to school with them” (p. 2). Carr and Pauwerls (2006) suggest that society plays a major role in foreign language learning. In particular, they identify Anglophone society as needing to evolve beyond the attitude that English is enough. Instead, society needs to acknowledge and encourage the fact that knowing a foreign language is an asset and almost necessary in the modern globalized world.
The literature review shows that there have been several international studies that have looked at students’ attitudes and reasons for the dropout rate, particularly among boys. However, the literature review also shows that there has been limited research involving students in Ontario, as a lot of the studies have focused on other provinces in Canada and countries in the world. It would be unwise to generalize that these findings - regardless of the fact that they stem from Anglophone societies - apply in the same way to the province of Ontario. In a lot of the studies conducted in various countries, French is not an official language as it is in Canada, but rather a foreign language. Thus, the situation is different because the government of Canada wants to promote language duality among its citizens (Kissau & Turnbull, 2008). Furthermore, although there is some research on French language learning, the focus is on foreign language learning in general, as opposed to concentrating specifically on French language learning. Yet another limitation is that the studies do little - in terms of identifying concrete recommendations for the education stakeholders to follow - in order to make significant change and improvement in the area.
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Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter provides a detailed description of the methodology used, starting with an explanation of the procedure that was followed. Then, the instruments of data collection are presented, namely informal interviews with teachers. The participants of the informal interviews, four teachers, are described in terms of their background and experience. Related to participants is the process that I went through to select appropriate candidates; I focused on those who had knowledge and experience in the field of Core French language education. Once collected from these participants, the data were analyzed in an organized and systematic way in order to produce results that were consolidated into themes. This chapter also addresses the ethical review process from OISE, which was necessary in order to analyze and report on data collected from teachers. Lastly, the limitations of this research paper are identified in the hopes of encouraging further research.

Procedure

The nature of the research for the purpose of this study is qualitative. I investigate the issue of French language education, which is a field that I am passionate about and one that has been identified as problematic by the literature review. It is my hope that this exploratory study will expand on the issues and ideas identified in the literature review, while also raising questions for further studies. In order to do this, I collected data by conducting semi-structured interviews which were guided by pre-formulated and piloted questions. The data were gathered by recording the conversations, which were then accurately transcribed. The next step in the process was carefully reviewing and analyzing what the data revealed, which was done through a
coding process described in detail below (Creswell, 2009). The next and final step was utilizing the analysis to generate findings that are meaningful in French language education.

**Instruments of Data Collection**

The main instrument used in my data collection was informal interviews. The rationale behind choosing interviews that were informal in nature is because I felt that it would make participants feel more confident and less worried about the formalities of a more structured interview. In addition, it was my intention to give participants a chance to express their opinion freely and even allow them to guide the conversation in a way that felt natural and made the most sense for both parties involved. This type of interview can be referred to as a standardized open-ended interview, which “allows the participants to contribute as much detailed information as they desire and it also allows the researcher to ask probing questions as a means of follow-up” (Turner, 2010, p. 2).

With that being said, I did prepare questions and if I felt that they were not explicitly addressed during the free-flowing interview, I asked participants to express their opinion on the matter. The questions that can be found in Appendix 1.1 were first developed by myself, proofread and edited by my research supervisor, Merlin Charles, who has years of experience in the field of French language education. Furthermore, the questions were piloted on a few people prior to being asked to the participants. This process allows appropriate revisions to be made in order to have a successful interview that is comfortable for the interviewee, and allows the researcher to gather the necessary data (Kvale, 2007). Only after the process of revision and piloting was completed, were the interviewees provided with the list of questions a few weeks in
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advance. This was done in order to increase transparency and subside any concerns that the participants may have had prior to the interview. On the day of the interview, the questions were presented verbally and visually – shown through my computer screen or printed out - in order to appeal to both the auditory and visual senses of the participants.

Another important consideration for the interviews was whether they would be face-to-face, online or in writing. Face-to-face interviews allow the parties involved to exchange information in a natural manner. In addition, research shows that face-to-face interviews are advantageous in that the “social cues, such as voice, intonation, body language, etc. of the interviewee can give the interviewer a lot of extra information” (Opdenakker, 2006, p. 2). Due to the above evidence and the availability of the participants, I conducted two of the interviews in-person at a location of the participants’ convenience, namely at a school.

One of the other interviews was done via Skype, due to the fact that the participant is located in a different city. However, Skype allows for video and voice conversation, which has some of the same benefits of being able to see the participant’s reactions first hand. The other interview was done by sending the questions to the participant and having the participant respond in writing. This was done because although the participant wanted to take part in the research, she did not want to be recorded. As for the logistics, the face-to-face and Skype interviews were about 30 to 40 minutes in length and were recorded on my personal laptop with the knowledge and permission of the participants.
Each interview began by me greeting the participants, reminding them about the topic of my study, explaining the interview process, and thanking them for agreeing to participate, the latter of which was reiterated again at the end of the interview.

Participants

I carefully selected and interviewed four teachers. I used the following criteria when selecting the participants: relevance to my research topic, experience, and location. In order to be recruited for my research topic, the participants had to be teachers that had taught or are currently teaching Core French. In addition to teaching French, the years of experience and the quality of this experience were taken into account in order to select participants that are exemplary in their fields. My participants have all taught for ten years or more. Location was also a factor; as, at the very least, the participants had to be in Ontario in order to address the scope of this research paper.

The four participants are referred to using pseudonyms in order to protect their confidentially as agreed upon in the consent letter. Chantal has been teaching for about 22 years and has had experience teaching all subjects in English and in French, at the junior and intermediate level. Specifically in the French program, she has been teaching at the Core and Immersion level. Esmeralda, who has been teaching for 16 years, started as a Core French teacher in elementary school. Subsequently, as a high school teacher, she taught Core French and other subjects. At the time of my interview with her, she had been teaching at the university level, specifically teaching French language courses for undergraduate students and French courses for Faculty of Education students. Séraphine has been teaching for approximately 13 years and
throughout these years has had the opportunity to teach French both at the Immersion and Core level in Grades 1 to 8. Lastly, Céline has been teaching Core French and other subjects at the junior to senior level for the past 25 years.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

In order to collect data, I recorded the interviews on my personal laptop and also took notes of what I felt were key insights during the interview. The next step in the process was listening to the interviews and transcribing them word-for-word in order to avoid misquoting the participants. For the written interview, I evidently did not have to transcribe. I then proceeded to read and reread the interviews focusing on any emerging themes, which I noted as I went along as suggested by Saldana (2008) and Creswell (2009). Once I had a rough idea of the themes, I used different-coloured markers to highlight the various themes, making them more evident and visible. I also used bold font to stress important quotes and insights. At first, I identified a large number of themes that I then combined into five major themes that encompassed these sub-themes. I worked with my supervisor, Merlin Charles, in order to help avoid any biases and over-analyzing (Turner, 2010). These themes are what helped me to structure and organize the presentation of my findings.

**Ethical Review Procedures**

As a student in the Master of Teaching program, I was granted ethical approval to interview teachers informally. I contacted my participants by writing them an email (Appendix 1.2). I attached a copy of the consent letter, which includes an overview of my topic, explains how their insight would be beneficial to the study and exactly what their involvement would be (Appendix 1.3). As per the ethical protocol, the participants were made aware of the fact that
their identity would be kept confidential, that they could choose not to answer questions that they
do not feel comfortable answering, and that the recording or written submitted answers will be
kept for a minimum of five years in my password-protected personal laptop.

**Limitations**

There are three main limitations to this research, namely: Sample size, time and location. The sample size is limited as it only includes four teachers. These teachers are highly knowledgeable, qualified and experienced in Core French language education. However, data collected from a larger sample could provide further insight that was not found in this paper. Another limitation is the time constraint of the two-year duration of my Master of Teaching program. More time could have allowed me to conduct a more time-intensive study that could have included other aspects such as more interviews, long-term observations, etc. Another limitation of this research is that it is limited to Ontario, as the French language curriculum is different in different provinces of Canada and in other countries of the world.
Chapter 4: Findings

In this chapter, I narrate in detail what I found out from the interviews. In particular, after reading and coding the transcripts of the interviews, I identified five major themes that I used to present my findings, namely: Students, teachers, school boards, government, parents and society. These are precisely the educational stakeholders that can affect students’ attitudes towards Core French that were apparent in the literature review and that shaped my interview questions. Under each theme, I have provided sub-themes in order to be specific and discuss each issue in detail. Under each sub-theme, I have made a connection to the literature review and summarized what each participant said, at times including direct quotes in order to provide authentic findings as described directly by the participants.

Theme 1: Students’ Attitudes

**Attitude towards Core French Compared to Other Subjects**

Before the participants were asked questions about how stakeholders influence students’ attitudes, it was important to first discover what teachers’ perspectives on these attitudes were. The literature review revealed that 75% of Core French students have had a negative experience in the Core French classroom (Rovers, 2013). This was further confirmed by the fact that although all students are obligated to take Core French until Grade 9, only approximately 5% graduate with a Grade 12 Core French credit (Canadian Parents for French, 2010). All four participants indicated that in general, students view Core French more negatively than other subjects. Séraphine stated that students “think Physical Education is cool…French is right at the bottom of the ladder.” Céline concurred, adding that students do not value French the same way that they value English or Mathematics.
Esmeralda provided an interesting perspective due to her experience in both private and public schools. She observed that the students she taught in the private schools “really wanted to learn French and they respected the language even if it was Core.” This is supported by Carr and Pauwels (2006), who found that French is viewed as useful among most male students in private schools. Chantal and Séraphine mentioned that they do not necessarily see a negative attitude towards Core French as opposed to other subjects until about Grade 4 to Grade 6. All participants highlighted several times throughout the interview that there is a preference for other subjects partly due to the fact that usually the homeroom teacher views French as preparation, and emphasizes the other the subjects that he/she teaches instead.

**Attitude towards Core French According to Gender**

Prominent researchers in the field have expressed that male students tend to dislike Core French more than female students (Kissau, 2006). When initially asked what difference, if any, that the teachers noticed between male and female students’ attitudes towards Core French, two of the participants responded that they did not notice any difference. However, at other points in the interview, they did allude to the fact that they do observe differences not only in Core French but in language tasks in general whether they are in English or French. Further, Esmeralda stated: “I don't know if the class is always designed for the stereotypical boy way of learning, which I think is more active.” Esmeralda’s thoughts are echoed by another participant, Séraphine. Chantal provided yet another possible reason for the gender difference: “I wonder if it is linked to the fact that girls tend to see themselves as not strong in math. If you don't have math, you need another language?” These findings coincide with Kissau’s (2006) research, where he states that male students tend to favour kinesthetic learning styles.
Before the four participants were asked questions specific to each educational stakeholder, they were asked to rank the influence that each of these stakeholders has on students’ attitudes towards Core French. All participants stated that parents and society had the largest influence, followed by teachers. Three out of four participants ranked school boards and the government in the third and fourth position, respectively, while Chantal ranked the government as third and school boards as fourth. (Appendix 1.4) As a result, I have chosen to present my themes in the order of influence reflected by most of the participants.

**Theme 2: Parents and Society’s Influence**

Some of my interview questions were specifically designed to capture teachers’ perspectives on how parents and society can help improve student attitudes towards Core French. One of the main questions was: “What are your observations on the influence that parents and society’s attitudes towards French have on your students’ attitudes towards Core French?” However, this was not necessarily the only time that participants mentioned the influence of parents and society during the interview as I will highlight below.

**Parents’ Influence**

The literature reviewed revealed that many parents do not support official bilingualism in Canada as demonstrated by their negative attitude towards it (Marshall, 2002). Céline and Esmeralda suggested that parents’ own negative experiences in French class can impact their children’s views. In addition to the indirect negative influence that some parents have, Séraphine revealed that when she and some of her colleagues call home, some parents blatantly respond as
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follows: “I don’t care about French, French isn’t important, I don’t care if my son does well in French or not.” Séraphine felt that even parent groups such as the Canadian Parents for French do not place as much emphasis on Core French as they do on French Immersion. Similarly, Chantal described her encounter with parents as follows:

At curriculum night, we always have a time for when our doors are open for parents to come and visit the rotary teachers. I teach close to 55 students of Core French this year. At our curriculum night, I think I had only 4 or 5 parents come in and say hello. If parents don't place value on core French, kids won't have a reason to take it seriously at home.

All participants agreed that it is important for parents to see that French is helpful to their children, not just in the long-term in terms of getting a job or travelling, but also in the short-term as another way or another tool for learning. Once they value and promote French language learning to their children, student attitudes can be more positive.

Society’s Influence

According to the literature reviewed, community attitudes towards the L2 are often negative, especially outside large urban centers, and students may bring these attitudes to school with them (Lapkin, Mady & Arnott, 2009). Esmeralda, who has lived and taught in Windsor, found that the attitudes of students and parents in her community were “awful”. She, along with Céline also stressed that low socio-economic communities tend to care less about French and this message is transmitted to their children.
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In particular, the literature pointed to Anglophone societies needing to evolve beyond the attitude that English is enough (Lapkin, Mady & Arnott, 2009). The participants generally echoed this sentiment; however, as Esmeralda indicated: “I think a lot of new Canadians do encourage second language learning more so than some of the current Canadians. Having students that can only speak English in our country is embarrassing.” Similarly, Chantal made the following contribution: “If you compare, kids in Europe grow up speaking three or four languages, while in North America it is good enough to speak just English.” All participants agreed that as a society, we need to do more to promote the advantages of speaking more than one language.

Theme 3: Teachers’ Influence

Appealing Teaching Strategies

Céline, Chantal, and Esmeralda said that they always start the year by teaching students the importance of learning French and having a discussion about all the opportunities that this can afford them. The literature review demonstrated that there are many methods that can be used to teach Core French. For instance, Carr and Pauwels (2006) cite a French and Drama teacher engaging FSL learners by integrating the two subjects and having students act out traditional folktales in French. Similarly, Esmeralda conducted a master’s research paper that saw the success of students speaking French through arts-based learning. More specifically, the French lessons were cross-curricular, in that they incorporated an aspect of the arts curriculum such as music, drama, visual arts, and dance. Céline, who has a background in the arts, also successfully incorporates the arts into her French lessons. Séraphine is a proponent of the
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Accelerative Integrated Method (AIM) which uses components such as gestures, plays, and songs to facilitate oral production of language, before written production.

Most of the participants mentioned that there is not one single successful strategy for engaging students. Esmeralda, for example, suggested that a teacher must vary the activity types, adding that: “One day you are focusing on an oral activity and moving around, the other day you might have something where you’re sitting, another day discussing, the other day doing research in the library. If you have all these strategies and ways, you are touching on all students and learning abilities.” All the participants emphasized teaching through students’ interests and working on authentic and tactile activities.

Esmeralda stressed the *but communicatif*, which translates to the communicative goal and means placing an emphasis on the ability to communicate in the target language. Related to this goal, all participants stressed the benefit of teachers using and modeling French as much as possible in the classroom because when students see that the teacher is confident in, and has a passion for the language, they are more likely to be motivated to learn. All participants agreed that using technology, such as various software, Apps, games and websites is appealing to students, but cited having little technology made available to them for use in the classroom.

Séraphine and Chantal said that they do not give homework in Core French, choosing to complete all work in class instead to ensure that students do not become frustrated while working independently at home. In Séraphine and Chantal’s experience, frustration over not fully understanding or being able to complete homework, may lead some students to rely solely on translating software as opposed to using additional resources and collaborating with peers.
Participants further added that students need to feel that the classroom is a comfortable place to make mistakes and improve. More specifically, Chantal stated:

I am always going to have something to correct them on now and then so it is not always going to be the same student making a mistake. I try to make it a very comfortable place for them to be. I tell students that we all make mistakes. If I make a mistake, I play it up to show my students that it is okay to do so in our class.

Séraphine concurred, saying that students start to not like French in Grade 6 because, among other factors, they are self-conscious about speaking the language in front of their peers. The participants’ perspectives are in keeping with the literature reviewed, which emphasizes the importance of creating a safe classroom community – through attentive listening, appreciation/no put-downs, right to pass/participate, mutual respect – as well as a personal and emotional connection to the language itself (Gibbs, 2006; Charles 2012).

**Unappealing Teaching Strategies**

One of the most common unsuccessful strategies identified by the participants was teachers not speaking French to their students; as a result, the students cannot be expected to speak French either. Yet another common unappealing strategy was focusing on written grammar as opposed to oral production of the language. In their experience, students, especially boys, do not like learning about grammar rules and doing worksheets. The literature reviewed revealed that many teachers believe that biology is the reason for girls’ greater achievement in language learning, this is a dangerous perception because when teachers attribute boys’ lack of language engagement to biology, they do not see the need to design methods to attract boys to
language classes. Instead, they accept it as ‘the way it is’ and take little action to try to change the issue. (Carr & Pauwels, 2006)

Chantal and Séraphine stated that giving Core French students homework was not beneficial as it sometimes leads to students becoming frustrated at their lack of understanding and competence and therefore contributes to the use of online translators to do the work. Lastly, while AIM was identified as a successful strategy by Séraphine, Esmeralda cautioned:

I think they [AIM] are capitalizing on a methodology to teach. And it's been adopted around Canada and school boards are buying into this approach as the only way that works. It’s very gestured, not necessarily authentic, it doesn’t necessarily consider all of the theories that work. I think it's very restricting for different learners. Some learners won’t respond. I have been in the classroom with Wendy Maxwell, the creator of AIM, and it's amazing how much French those kids speak, but let’s keep those doors open to other approaches.

**Theme 4: School Boards’ Influence**

**Recruitment**

According to the literature review, an issue at the school board level in Ontario is that they are struggling to recruit and retain qualified FSL teachers (Kissau, 2008). In order to deal with the shortage, Séraphine’s school board hired her and many other teachers with no teacher qualifications and did not have a French proficiency test as part of its hiring process. The other three participants’ boards do require teaching qualifications as well as French proficiency tests. However, Esmeralda feels that school boards should make it mandatory for teachers to take
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French language courses before and after they are hired. Similarly, Chantal does not support the recruitment policy of hiring teachers with lower levels of French to teach Core French. She and Céline made the link between hiring underqualified Core French teachers and students’ attitudes towards the language, by saying that students lose respect for the subject and are not motivated to learn the language.

**Funding**

School boards make informal anecdotal notes when it comes to reporting how funding is used and are not required to formally report finances. As outlined by Canadian Parents for French (2010), this raises an important question, namely: Are the French-designated funds actually used for FSL programs? Similarly, Céline and Séraphine expressed concerns about the ambiguity of how the budget is spent by their boards and feel that at times Mathematics or school sports are given priority over French thereby sending the message to students that French is not important. One of the main resources that the participants identified as missing is classrooms for Core French teachers, who have to go from class to class with carts. Esmeralda and Séraphine stated that this is an issue because it does not allow them to post visuals in the classroom which make French more appealing to students.

All participants admitted to attending some professional development workshops related to FSL teaching. However, Séraphine felt that while her board provides teaching material, teachers “don’t often get professional development (PD) or training to go with it. PD is expensive and any PD that teachers get now is done in our own time.” Chantal is of the same opinion, highlighting the fact that her board only has four French instructional leaders for all
French programs: Core, Extended and Immersion. In addition, Séraphine and Céline expressed that Core French teachers are not as respected by students and they need more classroom management training to deal with classroom issues.

**Policies**

Scheduling procedures in Ontario are as follows: Once the Grade 9, 12, and 11 courses are plotted using a computer program, Grade 10 is then plotted, with Core French and Physical Education being offered in the same timeslot (Kissau, 2008). Séraphine noticed this scheduling policy, when her own children dropped French in order to continue with Physical Education because they felt that the latter was “cooler”.

In addition to the scheduling policy, some school boards mandate what program or approach teachers must use to teach Core French. Chantal thinks that school boards “should have a comprehensive program that helps to integrate all strands from the curriculum and makes sure that everything is being addressed.” On the other hand, Esmeralda indicated that she has a “fundamental problem” with that because she feels that a single approach does not allow teachers to teach to students’ interests and strengths. This is why, as mentioned earlier, she sees AIM as “a method as opposed to the one and only method.” After ten years of adopting AIM, Séraphine’s school board is now discouraging teachers from using it; however, she does not agree with the recent change away from AIM as she believes students respond well to it.
Theme 5: Government’s Influence

Funding

Evidently the Federal and Provincial Government’s budget is closely linked to school boards, therefore a lot of what was said about the school board budget above (Theme 4: School boards’ influence: Funding) applies here. As per the literature reviewed, there are insufficient funds in the Federal Government’s budget for the Official Languages in Education program. As a result, provinces such as Ontario lack research in FSL instruction and policy expectations (Canadian Parents for French, 2010). The participants believe that the government does try to promote and fund second language learning; however, it falls short in that it does not specify how the funding should be spent and does not hold school boards accountable if the funds are instead used for other subject areas or school initiatives, thereby indirectly encouraging students’ negative attitudes towards Core French.

Policies

There are inconsistencies across provinces when it comes to mandatory start and end of FSL study and the minimum number of instructional hours. At the university level, only universities in the province of British Columbia have a language requirement for entry and thereby require students to take French until Grade 12 (Kissau, 2008). In Ontario, French is only mandatory until Grade 9 and universities do not have a language requirement for entry. This sends Ontario students the message that French is not important and/or necessary. To explore this area further, I asked participants: “Would you support an amendment to the current policy that would require all Ontario students to continue with French until Grade 12?” and “How would this, if at all, influence students’ attitudes towards the importance of French?” All participants said that they would support a policy mandating Core French until Grade 12 because
student attitudes would shift and they would see French as being just as important as Math or English. Céline mentioned that there should be an exception for students with learning disabilities who should be allowed to drop French or continue with the aid of educational assistants, as necessary.

Esmeralda questioned the effectiveness of the Core French program as a whole, stating that: “Core French is not enough to get much learning done. Language learning is all based on extending the time or even the intensity of time.” Esmeralda and Séraphine also think that it is preferable to begin language learning at a younger age as opposed to starting in Grade 4.

Regarding the curriculum, all participants expressed satisfaction with the new Core French curriculum; however, there were two concerns. Firstly, Chantal felt that it took too long for the curriculum to be updated. The latest Core French curriculum was released in 2013, while the curriculum prior to that was released in 2001 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). The second concern brought up by Chantal, Séraphine, and Céline is that there was very little professional development and resources that accompanied the release of the new curriculum.

**Overall Findings**

To sum up chapter four, the participants in this study had both contrasting and similar perspectives in regards to the influence that educational stakeholders have on students’ attitudes towards Core French. All participants agreed that most students, especially boys, display a lack of engagement in Core French; however, Chantal and Séraphine did not observe negative attitudes until Grades 4 to 6, while Esmeralda did not encounter negative attitudes in private schools. Most participants agreed that parents and society have the most influence on how
students view Core French, followed by teachers, school boards, and the government. While the participants provided different ways that parents and society influence student attitudes, they all agreed that it is important for parents and society to promote the benefits of French language learning in order to change student attitudes. The participants suggested a wide range of appealing teaching strategies (e.g. creating a safe classroom environment, teaching through students’ interests, focusing on the *but communicatif*, using cross-curricular methods) and unanimously identified strictly grammar lessons as an unappealing strategy. In regards to school boards, the participants, especially Chantal and Esmeralda, stressed the importance of hiring linguistically qualified teachers. At the government level, the participants all felt that more funding is needed and that Core French should be made mandatory earlier than the current Grade 4 start, and continue until Grade 12.

The contrasting and similar perspectives of the participants is not surprising as teachers’ views are shaped by various factors such as their own experience as students, educational background, teaching experiences, and experiences with various educational stakeholders, which include students, parents and society, colleagues, school boards, and the government. The chapter that follows seeks to synthesize these perspectives in order to present the implications and recommendations of this research paper.
Chapter 5: Discussion

In this chapter, my aim is to use the findings discussed in the previous chapter in order to formulate the implications and recommendations for parents and society, teachers, school boards, and the government. I focus on what I have learned from the data collected from the four participants of this study and consider how, from their perspective, students’ attitudes towards Core French can be ameliorated through the different stakeholders. Furthermore, I restate the limitations in order to serve as a preamble to opportunities for further study. In this final section, I list questions that I still have and that were raised through this research. It is my hope that these questions will inspire further research.

Implications/Recommendations

In order to formulate specific implications and recommendations, I have chosen to individually discuss each education stakeholder, namely: Parents and society, teachers, school boards, and the government. These stakeholders were initially identified in the literature I reviewed. The influence that these stakeholders have on students’ attitudes were the main themes that I generated from the data collected from the participants of this research study.

Parents and Society

The participants agreed that many Canadian parents have a negative attitude towards French language learning due to various factors such as their own negative experiences in French class and their negative attitude towards the bilingual status of Canada. According to the participants, the views of the parents and society have the largest influence on how students perceive Core French. As such, the implications of parents and society’s negative attitudes are
that students share the same negative attitude. It follows then that if we want to change students’
attitudes to be more positive, open-minded, and willing to learn, parents and society have to play
a significant role. Specific recommendations for parents include: Explicitly telling children about
the importance of French language learning, placing as much emphasis on Core French as on
other subjects, inquiring about Core French during curriculum nights and parent-teacher
interviews, as well as collaborating with French teachers to resolve behavioural issues related to
negative attitudes towards French.

Furthermore, while parent organizations such as Canadian Parents for French are strong
advocates for French language learning, their efforts are perceived by some of the participants as
favouring French Immersion; as a result, they need to focus their promotional efforts equally on
Core French. Particular demographic groups that these organizations can focus on include low
socio-economic communities and newcomer parents, as they may not be aware of the benefits
and opportunities that French language learning can provide their children both in the long-term
(employment, travel) and short-term (tool for learning). Only once parents and society value and
promote French language learning to children, can student attitudes be more positive.

Teachers

Following parents and society, the participants ranked teachers as having the most impact on
students’ attitudes. As a future French teacher, I intend to use the appealing strategies and avoid
the unappealing strategies discussed with the participants. The following are recommended to
Core French teachers in order to improve students’ attitudes and motivate them to learn:
Start the academic year by teaching students the importance of learning French and have a discussion about the wide range of opportunities that French can provide both in the long-term and short-term.

Ensure that the classroom is a safe and equitable place for students to ask questions, answer, take risks, fail, and improve by setting clear rules and expectations such as mutual respect, attentive listening, appreciation as opposed to put downs, the right to participate and the right to pass (Gibbs, 2006). More specifically in a language classroom, foster a connection to the language itself on an intellectual, personal, and emotional level (Charles, 2012).

Use and model French as much as possible in the classroom because when students see that the teacher is confident in and has a passion for the language, students are more likely to be motivated to learn.

Appeal to students’ differing abilities by varying activity types to include listening, oral, reading, writing, a wide range of topics, and different groupings.

In keeping with the revised Ontario curriculum, teachers should teach through students’ interests and work on authentic activities. Related to this, the curriculum stresses the importance of spontaneous and authentic oral production or as it can be referred to in French, the but communicatif (Ministry of Education, 2013).

Use cross-curricular methods that incorporate subjects such as drama, music, visual arts, and dance. One such method is the Accelerative Integrated Method, which uses
components such as gestures, plays, and songs to facilitate oral production of language along with written production.

- Minimize strictly grammar lessons and worksheets as students, especially boys do not find these appealing (Kissau, 2008).

- If available in the school, use technology such as various software, Apps, games and websites because according to the participants, most students have an interest in technology.

- If assigning homework, ensure that students have a good understanding of the content and are able to independently complete the work. This helps students become confident autonomous language learners.

**School Boards**

Most school boards require candidates who apply for French teacher positions to complete a French language assessment. Through this assessment, a candidate’s fluency level is rated as appropriate for solely the Core French stream or all three French streams: Core, Extended, and Immersion. In other words, teachers with lower levels of French are allowed to teach at the Core French level, but not at the Extended or Immersion level. The recruitment policy of hiring teachers with lower levels of French to teach Core French is not recommended according to the participants as students may lose respect for French if they find that the teacher herself/himself is not proficient enough in the language.
In addition to the recruitment policy adjustment mentioned above, it is recommended that school boards are more transparent about the funding allocated in the budget for Core French, and how it is used in order to avoid misallocation of the money to other subject areas. More specifically, school boards must budget so that all Core French teachers have their own classrooms as this allows them to post visuals, and house useful student resources. Furthermore, it is recommended that school boards offer more professional development or training specifically targeted towards Core French teachers. In order to achieve this goal, school boards will need to hire more French instructional leaders and increase spending. These changes have important implications, as according to the participants, students benefit from more visuals, resources, and better instruction.

The last, but not least, recommendation for school boards is in regards to scheduling policies. At the high school level, especially Grade 10, school boards must offer Core French in a different timeslot – as opposed to offering it at the same time as Physical Education – in order to send students the message that Core French is important and should be taken throughout high school (Kissau, 2008).

**The Government**

One of the main recommendations is for the government to specify how the funding should be spent and hold school boards accountable in regards to how the funds are used. This will encourage school boards to use Core French funds solely for the Core French program as opposed to other subject areas or school initiatives. Appropriate use of funding ensures that Core French students have sufficient resources and thus view Core French more positively (Canadian
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Parents for French, 2010). The other main recommendation in regards to the government is to start Core French instruction earlier than the current Grade 4 start and to make Core French mandatory until Grade 12. As a result, participants believe that student negative attitudes may shift to be more positive because they would see French as being just as important as Math or English.

Limitations

Although the limitations of this study were stated in chapter three: methodology, they are restated again here in order to remind the reader of the context in which the recommendations of this study were made and in order to serve as a preamble for the next section, which identifies areas for further research. There are three main limitations to this research, namely: Sample size, time, and location.

This study includes four participants, which is a limited sample size. The participants are experienced Core French teachers and were able to offer important insights; however, a larger sample size may provide further significant findings. Another limitation of this research paper is the two-year time restriction of my Master of Teaching program. A longer time period may permit a more time-intensive study featuring more in-depth interviews with participants, long-term observations, etc. The last major limitation is related to location, namely the paper is limited to Ontario, as the French language curriculum is different in other provinces in Canada and in other countries.
Further Study

In order to expand on my research, more teachers would need to be interviewed. If a large sample of teachers share similar perspectives on how education stakeholders can ameliorate student attitudes towards Core French, then the findings of this study would be more significant. Furthermore, while this research paper made reference to a number of education stakeholders, only teachers’ perspectives were considered, as all participants were in fact teachers. Further research can be done in order to investigate the direct perspectives of the other education stakeholders, namely parents and society, school boards, and the government. Their views may differ greatly and offer new insights into how students’ attitudes towards Core French can be ameliorated.

With additional time, many of the recommendations made in this research paper could be implemented in a number of classrooms in order to observe whether they are effective in ameliorating students’ attitudes towards Core French. Based on the results, the recommendations can be revised to yield the best results. Understandably, not all recommendations can be implemented immediately (e.g. government policy to begin Core French in Grade 1 and continue until Grade 12), due to the various steps required in this process, and amount of time needed to implement them.

Related to location, this research paper raises questions for further study, such as: Might teachers in other provinces of Canada and in other countries share similar perspectives as Ontario teachers in regards to Core French? Why might they have different perspectives and how might Ontario learn from them in order to improve students’ attitudes towards Core French? A
comparative study among Canadian provinces and other countries may yield insights useful to all participating countries.
References


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Appendices

Appendix 1.1- List of Interview Questions

Background Information

1. How long have you been teaching and what subjects have you taught?

2. Could you please describe any post-secondary education and training you had in French?
   In what ways, if any, did it inform your current professional practice?

3. Have you completed any Additional Qualifications and / or Professional Development workshops in French after teachers’ college?

Student Attitudes

4. What are your perspectives and observations of students’ attitudes towards Core French?
   a. What difference, if any, do you notice between students’ attitudes towards Core French and other subjects? Why do you think that is?
   b. What difference, if any, do you notice between male and female students’ attitudes towards Core French? Why do you think that is?

Stakeholders

5. How would you rank the following stakeholders in terms of the influence they have on student attitude towards learning French and why? [NB: stakeholders include: Teachers, school boards, the government, parents and society].
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**Teachers**

6. What strategies are you currently using in order to make Core French appealing to students? What other strategies - encountered through colleagues, professional development workshops, academic literature, etc. - would make Core French more appealing?

7. How does the teacher’s perception of students of different genders and abilities influence students’ attitudes towards Core French?

**School Boards**

8. In your opinion, what are the strengths and / or weaknesses of the recruitment and hiring process in ensuring that only qualified Core French teachers are hired?
   
a. In your opinion, what are the effects, if any, of underqualified teachers on students’ attitudes towards Core French?

9. Do you feel that your school board is providing you with sufficient resources to ensure that students have a positive attitude towards Core French?
   
a. What resources, if any, that are not currently provided would be beneficial?

**Government**

10. Do you believe that the Federal and Provincial Government allocate sufficient funds for French education in Ontario?
   
a. In your view, does the sufficient or insufficient provision of government funds influence students’ attitudes towards Core French? If so, how?
11. Would you support an amendment to the current policy that would require all Ontario students to continue with French until Grade 12?
   
a. How would this, if at all, influence students’ attitudes towards the importance of French?

*Parents and Society*

12. What are your observations on the influence that parents and society’s attitudes towards French have on your students’ attitudes towards Core French?
Appendix 1.2 – Initial Email
(varied depending on the relationship that I have with the participant)

Hello ___________.

My name is Zerina Zaimi and I am a Master of Teaching student, at OISE, UT. I obtained your contact information from __________ because I am currently completing a research paper and require insight from experienced and exemplary teachers such as yourself. I invite you to consider meeting with me for a brief 30 to 40 minute interview regarding French language education. I have attached a consent letter and form as well as the potential interview questions in order to provide you with more information.

I would greatly appreciate your time and insight.

Thank you,

Zerina Zaimi
Appendix 1.3 – Consent Letter and Form

Date: September 26, 2014
Dear participant,

I am a graduate student at OISE, University of Toronto, and am currently enrolled as a Master of Teaching candidate. I am exploring teachers’ perspectives on how stakeholders (teachers, school boards, government, parents and society) can ameliorate students’ attitudes towards Core French, for the purposes of a graduate research paper. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

I am writing a report on this study as a requirement of the Master of Teaching Program. My course instructor who is providing support for the process this year is Arlo Kempf and my research supervisor is Merlin Charles. The purpose of this requirement is to allow us to become familiar with a variety of ways to do research. My data collection consists of a 40-minute interview that will be tape-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient to you. I can conduct the interview at your office or workplace, in a public place, or anywhere else that you might prefer.

The contents of this interview will be used for my assignment, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and / or potentially at a conference or for publication. I will not use your name or anything else that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information remains confidential. The only people who will have access to my assignment work will be my research supervisor and my course instructor. You are free to change your mind at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may decline to answer any specific questions. I will destroy the tape recording after the paper has been presented and / or published, which may take up to five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to you for assisting in the project, and I will share with you a copy of my notes to ensure accuracy.

Please sign the attached form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher information: Zerina Zaimi, z.zaimi@mail.utoronto.ca, (647) 899-0580
Instructor information: Arlo Kempf, arlo.kempf@utoronto.ca
Supervisor information: Merlin Charles, merlin.charles@utoronto.ca
Consent Form
I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without penalty.
I have read the letter provided to me by Zerina Zaimi and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described.

Signature: ________________
Name (printed): ____________
Date: _____________________
Appendix 1.4 – Ranking of Stakeholders

Seraphiné, Céline and Esmeralda:

1. Parents and society
2. Teachers
3. School boards
4. The Government

Chantal:

1. Parents and society
2. Teachers
3. The Government
4. School Boards