International Language Teaching:
An Exploration of the successes and challenges of the International Language Elementary (ILE) Program in Ontario

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Abstract

For my research, I will look at the issue of inadequate placement in heritage language or international language programs. Many factors are tied to this issue, ranging from lack of resources and support for heritage language acquisition to age grouping, to marginalization of heritage languages as well as discouragement from use of heritage languages within mainstream schooling. The Canadian government’s stance is that they support multiculturalism and heritage language teaching. Nevertheless, while they do so in theory, there is reason to believe this commitment may not be translating into practice. Challenges include lack of funding, no curriculum or formal training for teachers, and no placement tests at the elementary school level. Little has been updated within the program since its inception in the 1970s while demographics in these schools have changed. Second or third generation immigrants, children from mixed marriages and others with little to no background in a given language must now be taken into account as learners in these programs. All of these considerations affect the quality of the program itself. This qualitative study aims to determine ways in which international language teachers teach to different levels of language proficiency in one classroom.

Key Words:
Heritage languages, international languages, multiculturalism/multilingualism, plurilingualism, Culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- Introduction to the Research Study | 6 |
- Purpose of the Study | 9 |
- Research Questions | 9 |
- Background of the Researcher | 10 |
- Overview | 11 |

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

- Laws and Policies Surrounding International Language Education | 12 |
- Developmental Psychology Perspective on Language Acquisition | 14 |
- Bilingualism, Multilingualism, Plurilingualism | 17 |
- Age Grouping at an Elementary School Level | 19 |
- International or Heritage Language Program Research | 20 |
- Addressing Opposing Views to International Language Education | 22 |

## 3. METHODOLOGY

- Procedure | 25 |
- Instruments of Data Collection | 25 |
- Participants | 26 |
Heritage Language Teaching

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Research Study

Canada has a longstanding history of immigration, starting from the ages of colonialism to present day. Over the course of the last 50 years, government officials have slowly moved away from solely teaching Canada’s official languages, English and French, within the school system. As they grew more accepting of diversity, the Canadian identity broadened to include a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

In 1971, with the development of the federal Multiculturalism Policy, government was officially supportive of various cultural identities, desiring to integrate rather than assimilate immigrants (Dewing, 2009). In the course of the implementation of this policy, the government also provided funding for heritage language classes outside of regular day public schooling. When the Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship was established in 1991, policy on heritage language was further developed and meant to “assist Canadians to preserve, enhance and share their cultures, languages and ethno-cultural group identities” (Dewing, 2009).

According to the 2011 census done by Statistics Canada, 20.6% of Canadians (6.8 million people) speak a first language or mother tongue other than English and French. In fact, the study reported that Canadians speak more than 200 languages. Thus, heritage language speakers make up a significant part Canada’s population. For this reason, it is important that their languages, as a core component of their cultural identity, be
preserved through schooling. As a nation which takes pride in its diversity and multiculturalism, more efforts should be placed on heritage language maintenance.

While the government claims to maintain this support of multiculturalism and heritage language learning in theory, this does not necessarily show in practice. International language teaching is typically offered in a rented day school during weekend or evening outside of the regular school day. Schools, students and teachers are not provided with the resources they need in order for proper heritage language education to take place. Furthermore, students attending heritage language programming at the elementary school level, more often than not, are grouped by age rather than language ability and thus, many levels are within one classroom. This is a problem because the language ability of students within a classroom ranges from beginner to fluent. Due to this form of grouping, the learning experience of many students suffers. The students at the beginner level are not given adequate attention, sometimes provided with work of higher level students which they must try to comprehend with little aid which can be very discouraging as a first encounter with any given language. On the other hand, fluent speakers are not provided with challenging enough material and may breeze through it having accomplished and learnt very little. The core purpose of international language education, to teach children another language, often does not come to fruition within this system of schooling. Additionally, the government has not made many amendments to the program since its initial implementation in the 1970s and quality has therefore deteriorated. Second and third generation immigrants are becoming more commonplace, yet the government has not reacted to this within its heritage language programming policies or priorities.
Additionally, tying in to lack of resources, no curriculum exists for the heritage language program at the elementary level. This is problematic as heritage language teachers have no reference as to how to teach or what they must teach. The Ministry of Education in Ontario attempted to remedy the situation to some degree by releasing a resource guide for teachers in 2012 for what they dubbed the International Languages Elementary (ILE) Program. Though Canada has not formed a curriculum for the ILE program, the CEFR or Common European Framework of Reference for Languages has been in place in Europe for over a decade. The framework defines levels of proficiency in order for language learners to be able to identify the stage or level they are at in a given language. (CEFR, 2)

The change of name from “heritage” to “international” was a result of issues surrounding the term “heritage” as it was believed to limit those within the programs to be students with ties to a particular language. It is believed that “international” is more open to students of various backgrounds, and emphasizes the role of the program to allow students to make connections to other parts of the world in an era of globalization through the acquisition of a second language (Cummins, in press).

In a country like Canada which claims to support multiculturalism, the teaching of languages is of the utmost importance. This should be reflected in more of the policies of the government of Canada and Ministry of Education in Ontario. Though the concept of multiculturalism and “multicultural mosaic” is prominent in schools and Canadian society today, international or heritage language teaching, the means of expressing one’s cultural identity, is on the decline. This is a concern as heritage languages are important not just for the expression of cultural identity but in order for multilingualism to be able to exist as well. In a world where speaking more than one language is perceived as a
great asset, beneficial for employment and connecting to the global community, the
government should be more supportive of heritage or international language teaching in
order to build upon students’ multilingual development.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to look at heritage language teaching in
Ontario. Specifically, I am interested in how heritage language elementary teachers cope
with lack of resources and multi-level classrooms to help children acquire another
language. This is important as in order for the International Languages Program to
function properly and do what it mandates, teachers require curricular direction and
resource support. In teaching a class with students of varying language backgrounds and
abilities, the teacher must find solutions to be able to target all students within the
classroom. The education community can benefit from this knowledge as teaching to
students of varying abilities is widespread; however, the most drastic variations can be
seen in language programs where students with little to no background in a given
language are grouped with those who are fluent.

**Research Questions**

The overarching question I will look at is “What are some of the challenges teachers
are confronted with in teaching heritage languages and how do they cope with them?”
Some subsidiary questions will include:
- How are heritage language teachers responding to varied levels of language ability of students within their classrooms?
- What strategies do teachers use within their classroom to be inclusive of students of all language abilities?
- In their teaching experience, how effective do they consider these impacts to be on students’ language learning process?

**Background of the Researcher**

I consider myself to be a Polish-Canadian and while I was born in Canada, my first language was in fact Polish because my parents were new to Canada and were not yet fluent in English. From my own experience learning Polish in a Saturday heritage language school from kindergarten to grade 12 as well as Spanish for one year, I found that inadequate placement was and continues to be quite commonplace. Teachers try to make do with multiple levels of language ability within their classes. Often the learning needs of students who are beginners at the start of the year are commonly neglected and these students-frequently drop courses as a result of their inability to keep pace with more fluent learners in their classrooms.

I felt left out in the Spanish class and this negatively impacted my perception of heritage language education. While in the Polish program beforehand, I also saw a student who was keen to learn Polish drop the class following attending a couple weeks when she saw she was the only beginner and given little attention in the class.

As a volunteer in an international language school now, I also see the changes in population and how they affect the classroom. With numbers of second and third
generation immigrants increasing as well as more and more mixed marriages, demographics within the heritage language school system have changed. Students with no background speaking their heritage language now make up a larger part of the class. Little appears to have been done by the government to prepare teachers for this change and teachers are left to cope with these changes themselves.

As a teacher candidate who will soon embark on a career as an elementary school teacher, it is important for me to learn what can be done to accommodate these students with varied heritage language levels within the classroom. This could potentially open my eyes to new possibilities of teaching to different learners. Therefore this will also prepare me to be a better teacher as I will be more familiar with how to accommodate all students within my classes, not just those in the international language program.

**Overview**

In Chapter 2 I review the literature related to laws and policy on heritage language teaching, developmental psychology relating to language acquisition, issues surrounding age grouping and varying views on international language teaching. In Chapter 3 I provide details regarding the methodology and procedure used in this study including information about the sample participants, teachers, and interviews conducted to gather data. In Chapter 4 I describe the 3 international language teachers who participated in the study and I report the findings data from my interviews. In Chapter 5 I identify the limitations of my study, and I articulate conclusions, my recommendations and implications for teaching practice, as well as areas for further research.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

When children at different levels of language proficiency are inadequately placed together in a single under resourced classroom, their learning experience and education is compromised. The works looked at in my literature review serve to contextualize the issues surrounding inadequate placement in heritage language programs. Themes include laws and policy surrounding support for heritage languages and multiculturalism, language acquisition from a developmental psychology perspective, age grouping at an elementary school level, and various perspectives on heritage language teaching. I also review sources on which heritage language programs seem to be supported more than others, and the potential reasons behind this trend. In order to understand the issues surrounding heritage language programs I need to also look at sources that address how the program functions in depth and in different contexts, which I include here.

Little is written about heritage languages in general, and finding information of any kind relating to grouping within a heritage language teaching context is next to impossible. For this reason, much of the works researched are not directly related to the research questions but serve to contextualize. I will specifically draw upon research done by Cummins as he has opened up new venues for research in the field of heritage language study and as such, many references are made to his works.

Laws and Policies Surrounding International Language Education

In the 1970s there was a lot of immigration to Canada from various countries with speakers of languages other than the two official languages of Canada, English and
French. In response to this, the government of Canada recognized a high demand for heritage language programs. The government developed the Multicultural Act of 1971 and it included provision of support for the development of heritage language education programs.

In recent years the policies surrounding heritage language teaching have changed. Much of this has been as a result of changes to those in attendance of the programs or the desire to appeal to a larger group of students. To be more inclusive, the word “heritage” in the program was change to “international” in 2011. Calling the program “International Languages Program” is believed to be more encompassing of its goals. Now no longer does the government want to use the program solely or predominantly to teach recent immigrant children or those with ties to a given language. Currently, with the new name, it is believed all students, including those with no heritage language background will be encouraged to learn a language other than the two official ones, allowing the program to be more up to date with the era of globalization we are presently in (Cummins, in press).

In making this change, the government has shown some progress in its treatment of heritage languages. Nevertheless, the program still lacks a curriculum. The only reference available for teachers is a research guide created in 2012 which is not widely spread or advertised.

Presently, in accordance with policies of the government of Ontario, school boards must provide continuing education classes, including international language classes (that is, classes outside of the regular school day) if they receive written requests from the parents of 23 students or more (Government of Ontario, 28). School boards also reference this within their own policies, outlining the importance of multiple literacies
(technological, social, cultural, etc.) and the importance of meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students (Amjad, 2009).

**Developmental Psychology Perspective on Language Acquisition**

The ways in which we develop language are important to note in order to be able to gauge whether policies and laws for international language programs are being adequately implemented. An important distinction must be made between acquiring a language, meaning to develop it naturally (as a child would growing up) versus learning a language as one would consciously in school through rote memorization of vocabulary and learning grammar rules (Krashen). In his book Krashen outlines the theory of second language acquisition and reviews ideas and proven discoveries surrounding language learning. Krashen includes five: the importance of input and output for acquisition of a second language, analysis of teaching grammar rules, and language teaching methods in general. In looking at heritage language learning a general sense of the developmental psychology perspective provides much of the context for the various ways in which a person acquires a language. Furthermore, it acknowledges that there are different ways in which languages are acquired and learned. This is useful to note when looking at international language teaching as while there is no curriculum for the program, teachers are coming up with their own ways to help children acquire languages.

Psychologist Lev Vygotsky’s theory of the zone of proximal development is also important to note when discussing language acquisition. According to this learning theory, children should be encouraged to build upon knowledge they had before rather than repeat what they know already. Now called scaffolding, this process involves an
adult helping a child develop their knowledge of something they have not learnt yet which they would not be able to figure out for themselves. According to Vygotsky, if schools and teaching did not do this “In offering the child problems he was able to handle without help, this method failed to utilize the zone of proximal development and to lead the child to what he could not yet do.” (Vygotsky, 200) In discussing International Language Education this is problematic as oftentimes children at different levels are provided with the same material though they have different amounts of exposure to a given language. Thus, some require more help than others as work can be too challenging and they do not understand, while others find the work to be simple and are left stagnant. There is what is known as a “sensitive period” for acquiring particular pieces of knowledge, and in teaching it is evermore important to be aware of this and aid students by scaffolding to allow them to develop their thinking when they are most apt to do so and when language can still be acquired fairly easily.

Additionally, in discussing language acquisition with regard to development one should note Piaget’s Stages of Cognitive Development. In teaching children languages this concept can become muddled as a student’s abilities in a second language may not correspond with the cognitive stage which they are at. In summary, the stages are as follows. The pre-verbal sensory-motor stage lasts until a child is approximately eighteen months where the child engages with materials but is unaware of their permanence, as a child may believe an object that is concealed no longer exists. The second stage is pre-operational where a child develops the beginnings of language until they are about six, now being able to reconstruct and describe what they saw at the previous stage. The third stage lasting until a child is approximately eleven is the operations stage where the child can conduct operations like classification, numbers, order, the idea behind a number, and
logic to name a few. The fourth and final stage from age eleven onward is that of hypothetic-deductive operations where a child develops reason behind hypotheses and logic (Piaget, 177). These stages are not always taken into account for children in international language schools. A child in a second language school may only have the beginnings of a second language and come off as similar to one in a pre-operational stage but in fact be in the hypothetic-deductive operations stage but is simply unable to express themselves in a second language. This factor is important to note in looking at second language schooling as it may be helpful for students to express a more complex thought in their first language and then translate it rather than rely solely on what little they know of the second language. Additionally, in teaching to mixed language abilities, it is good to know language ability as well as cognitive development stage as the two are very much interlinked.

The way in which individuals acquire additional languages can vary depending on the time in which they learn the languages. If a child learns more than one language at the same time while very young, they use strategies such as context cues in order to be able to differentiate between when to use each one.

“It is clear that children learning two languages simultaneously acquire them by the use of similar strategies. They are, in essence, learning two first languages, and the key to success is in distinguishing separate contexts for the two languages. People who learn a second language in such separate contexts can often be described as coordinate bilinguals; they have two meaning systems, as opposed to compound bilinguals who have one meaning system from which both languages operate.” (Douglas, 72)

By contrast, children or students who learn one language following another, use strategies from acquisition of the first language to learn the second one and make meaning. International language teachers may be faced with teaching both coordinate and compound bilinguals in their classrooms.
David Ausubel’s theory of subsumption is also important to note when it comes to language acquisition. In order to understand his theory one must contrast rote and meaningful learning. Douglas summarizes Ausubel’s view of rote learning as being “discrete and relatively isolated entities that are relatable to cognitive structure only in an arbitrary and verbatim fashion, not permitting the establishment of [meaningful] relationships” (Douglas, 91). This means that separate pieces of information are memorized, often through repetition, with no clear connections established for the learner. In contrast, meaningful learning is summed up as being “a process of relating and anchoring new material to relevant established entities in cognitive structure. As new material enters the cognitive field, it interacts with, and is appropriately subsumed under, a more inclusive conceptual system.” (Douglas, 91) Subsumption therefore involves connecting information to what the learner already knows to establish meaning and make learning more memorable as it relates to something the learner already knows.

**Bilingualism, Multilingualism, Plurilingualism**

Bilingualism, multilingualism and plurilingualism must be defined in order to be able to conceptualize the importance and benefits of international language education.

Bilingualism, as is implied by the prefix “bi” means an individual is fluent and can read, write and speak in two languages. Bilinguals engage in code-switching when going from one language to another. As Douglas explains, “bilinguals… engage in code-switching (the act of inserting words, phrases, or even longer stretches of one language into the other), especially when communicating with another bilingual” (Douglas, 72)
Multilingualism is the ability to read, write and speak in or the knowledge of more than two languages. The CEFR describes multilingualism as:

“the knowledge of a number of languages, or the co-existence of different languages in a given society. Multilingualism may be attained by simply diversifying the languages on offer in a particular school or educational system, or by encouraging pupils to learn more than one foreign language, or reducing the dominant position of English in international communication” (CEFR)

Noting this, in the form of instruction in the International Language Program or the model of international language education established following the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1985 appears to go hand in hand with multilingualism. Given the changing population, however, and varied language abilities within the current system, plurilingualism should possibly be more of a focus.

Plurilingualism on the other hand goes beyond languages as they are typically described such as English, French, etc. Rather, plurilingualism focuses on the fact that languages are not kept separate in the brain of each person but on the contrary, they are always interrelated. Furthermore, it also stresses the importance of variations within each language (each dialect, each variation or usage in a different context it be at home, in a professional setting). As the CEFR states, plurilingualism

“emphasizes the fact that as an individual person’s experience of language in its cultural contexts expands, from the language of the home to that of society at large and then to the languages of other peoples (whether learnt at school or college, or by direct experience), he or she does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact. In different situations, a person can call flexibly upon different parts of this competence to achieve effective communication with a particular interlocutor.” (CEFR)

Thus, plurilingualism implies that within each language, other than dialects and variations between countries, regions, cities, and the like there are also variations in terms
of the way each individual uses their English their language depending on the setting which one finds oneself in. An individual could use different languages in the workplace, at home, with family, with friends. Therefore, the concept of one pure language does not exist, all these languages and variations constitute the individual’s plurilingual profile.

**Age Grouping at an Elementary School Level**

In a lecture on changing educational paradigms, Sir Ken Robinson acknowledged how problematic it can be to group children according to their age stating “We still educate children by batches, you know, we put them through the system by age group… it’s like the most important thing about them is their date of manufacture” (Robinson, 2010). Robinson further goes on to explain how grouping based on abilities and interests would be much more effective. The same is true for international language teaching. Children come to the program with various experiences and backgrounds. Some have families who have recently arrived to Canada and are completely fluent in the heritage language. Some have been here for a generation or two, and have some knowledge of the language but it needs to be polished and refined. Some have families who have been here for a few generations or come from mixed marriage homes where they have little to no exposure to the language. Others join the program with no ties to a given language whatsoever, simply wanting to acquire the language out of personal interest. Recognizing the various backgrounds of international language students is important as is placing them based on this recognition. When students of varying abilities are lumped together by grade their learning experience suffers. Those who are fluent are not challenged enough, while those who are beginners struggle to keep up.
Research has proven mixed-age grouping can function and be very effective. Montessori schools, which continue to be popular, exist on this basis. Children can learn to self educate as well as learn from one another. Thus, their needs can be addressed while no child is left stagnant due to lack of challenges or behind having been placed with students of higher levels and provided with material they cannot do on their own.

Mixed age grouping has also proven to help children develop socially. Historically, much of socialization was provided by families and neighbourhoods. In an age where this is declining due to parents working long hours and children being placed in daycare or other child care, children lack inter-age contact (Katz, 8). Allowing students to be placed with other children of various ages would not only benefit them academically but socially as well.

**International or Heritage Language Program Research**

Grouping within the international language school is an area which appears to be overlooked. While some individual case studies exist, many of these tie into multiculturalism, linguistics and language development rather than focusing on heritage languages specifically.

In his book *Heritage languages: The development and denial of Canada's linguistic resources* (1990) Cummins delves into the issues surrounding heritage languages in particular. Cummins stresses the importance of heritage languages through citing of other authors and studies including a survey carried out by the old Toronto Board of Education in which principals, teachers, HLP instructors and children’s parents were asked why they felt children should learn heritage languages. The survey found that
the most common reasons were “to improve communication with relatives; to enhance pride in heritage; to maintain and revitalize culture and religion; and because languages are best learned when young.” (Cummins, 1990; p. 55). Cummins also delves into multilingualism in accordance with social class. He looks at how language ability is treated when regarding immigrants versus when regarding those who are well off and choose to school their children in languages other than Canada’s two official languages, English and French. Cummins emphasizes how bilingualism is beneficial for student confidence and identity. His focus on language as a human resource citing the rationale and research supporting the heritage language program is of particular significance as it shows how additional languages can benefit all, not just heritage speakers as there are many developmental benefits of heritage languages like those which Krashen looks at regarding language acquisition.

A number of studies emphasize the importance of language education. Piccardo and Aden also state “Each of the languages we speak adds its unique dimension to our signifying self(...)it goes way beyond a series of attitudes identity, confidence and positioning related to vis- a-vis language and cultures” (Piccardo, 237) Similarly to Cummins, the two researchers emphasize how each additional language contributes to our identity. This knowledge of an additional language is not just beneficial to self confidence as Cummins notes but also to one’s individualism as it is an aspect that adds to one’s uniqueness and cultural identity.

The purpose of Feuerverger’s study (1997) on heritage language teachers in Toronto was to look at how heritage language students, teachers and schools as a whole are marginalized when it comes to mainstream schooling. The author looks at her experiences as both a child and adult, as well as the experiences of other heritage
language teachers in the Metropolitan Toronto area. She examined the topic in relation to students’ self-esteem and sense of home for those of various cultural backgrounds. Feuerverger spoke with teachers about their experiences teaching in heritage language programs and found they believed the limitations of the programs could be fixed through the program’s development, certification and integration in mainstream society. The study is helpful as it sheds light on issues surrounding the marginalization of heritage language students, teachers and the program as a whole. It provides an in-depth analysis of personal experiences within a heritage language program. It shows how the governments’ support of multiculturalism and heritage language learning does not align with teachers and students lived experiences of these programs. The study concluded that international language programs are not treated fairly, nor are they provided with adequate resources and support that they need to function successfully.

**Addressing Opposing Views to International Language Education**

In their article “It’s not my job!” Lee and Oxelson (2006) interview and survey teachers from Kindergarten to Grade 12 in regular public schools to understand their views on students’ heritage language maintenance. The data was collected from teachers in elementary schools in California. They found that teachers’ attitudes were deeply affected by their own experiences with languages other than English. In contrast to those interviewed by Feuerverger, teachers in this study were often negative or indifferent to heritage language maintenance if they had little contact with language teaching. This article contrasts that written by Feuerverger looking at the study of heritage language teachers’ view on heritage language maintenance. Knowing the obstacles research has
found when it comes to heritage language teaching is beneficial as it helps me evaluate the issue from different perspectives.

Lee and Oxelson were not the only researchers to study teachers’ ignorant attitudes towards maintaining heritage language teaching. Teachers who view international or heritage language teaching negatively often had little contact with language teaching. As Piccardo and Aden find,

“Language proficiency (...) It is a complex endeavor that involves individuals at the deep personal level and is strongly culturally and emotionally connoted. To cope with such complexity a shift in the way language is viewed is needed” (Piccardo, 234)

Language education holds strong ties to individuals’ personal and cultural identity. Teachers who only speak one language and were born in Canada may not see the benefits of learning an additional language as they have not experienced a language or culture outside of the English-Canadian one. In order to accept and embrace heritage language education, a shift in the way they think about language is necessary.

Wallace Lambert (1981) discusses a similar issue when he describes additive versus subtractive bilingualism. These phenomena are outlined as the differentiation between when languages of bilinguals are provided with social value and respect contra to when minority groups are treated as though their language is “lesser than” another. This causes minority groups to feel pressured to lose their heritage language for a “more necessary and prestigious national language” (Lambert, 12). Arguing against this subtractive form of bilingualism, Lambert emphasizes that bilingualism helps people as it fosters creativity. People who are bilingual are more aware that names or words are arbitrary assignments. Moreover, while an idea may be expressed through qualities of a certain thing in one language, this does not necessarily translate and may be expressed
differently in another language. (Lambert, 12) Thus, second languages are valuable as they enable students to be more creative in allowing them to think differently.

In her research, Kim Potowski (2004) looks at dual immersion classrooms in a Spanish Language school. She analyzed how students adapt and act in an environment where the expectation is that students will become equally proficient in both their first and second language (English and Spanish). Potowski uses a sample of 4 students to provide a more in depth explanation of the reasons for particular students’ language use as well as the practices of the school itself. This research shows how international language education can be successful when students are provided with the support, resources and adequate placement that they need.
Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

Procedure

This research is exploratory and qualitative in nature and draws on the literature review as well as the interview method for data collection. I did a literature review to look at heritage language laws and policies, benefits of multilingualism from a developmental psychology perspective, age grouping within the school system, and research on heritage language programs. I also used the semi-structured interview method which is significant as it allows for a firsthand account of teaching within an international language school. Through purposeful sampling I chose three teachers of different languages who taught in International Language Programs in Toronto to be my interview participants. Two were teachers who I knew and one was selected through a recommendation. I conducted the interviews face-to-face. Following the interviews, I transcribed the teachers’ responses. I then read and re-read their answers and primarily looked at how the teachers responded to many levels of language abilities within a class.

Instruments of Data Collection:

I collected the data through informal semi-structured interviews with three international language teachers. I designed the interview questions to focus on teachers’ experiences within the classroom. In particular, the questions targeted their experience with students of varying language abilities in one class. The questions were phrased to be positive and allow teachers to share their successes and challenges within the
international language teaching context. International languages are often marginalized and as such, I used caution and care when phrasing the questions as I wanted to ensure the teachers felt relatively comfortable over the course of the interview process. I also included questions which were more open-ended and allowed teachers to add their own thoughts at the end so they could go beyond what I was asking them.

The full list of questions may be found in the appendices. Questions include:

- What is or are some positive experiences you have had teaching in the international languages program?
- What problems have you encountered in heritage language schools/teaching heritage languages?
- How do you address the different levels of language ability in your classroom?
- Are there any particular strategies you find more or less effective?
- What do you do to be inclusive of students of all language abilities?
- Is this your classroom on a day-to-day basis?
- How do you manage a class in a space which is rented and does not belong to you?
- Reflecting on your experiences teaching in the international language program, do you think the government genuinely supports multiculturalism? Why or why not?

**Participants**

As I mentioned, the teachers I recruited for participation were chosen through purposeful sampling as I was limited to 3 interviews. The teachers fulfilled the following criteria:
- Teachers who are currently working or who have worked in the international language program
- Teachers who feel confident in their ability to adapt their lessons to various levels language learners within their classrooms
- For the participants sampled as a whole, teachers who taught different languages (ex. one teacher teaches Polish, another teaches Mandarin)

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The aspects of the data I investigated were those relating to themes covered in the literature review. I began by transcribing the interviews of the German, Mandarin and Polish teachers. I then read and re-read the transcriptions, paying particular attention to spot information relating to the themes when going through the transcribed interview data. I focused on the themes relating to my research question which were professional development/ preparation of the teachers for the International Language Program, the teachers’ accounts of parental involvement, their views on students’ attitudes towards learning the given language, resources the teachers used, challenges in teaching for the ILP and strategies they found more and less useful. I highlighted the important quotes and insights in the interview data, and copied them into tables coding each interview separately based on the aforementioned themes that came out of the interview data. Next, I selected the findings which I considered to be most important relating to my research question. I then made notes on the transcript as I did on sources for my literature review to structure them into the findings in Chapter 4 more easily.
Ethical Review Procedures

I followed the ethical review procedures outlined and approved for the Master of Teaching program. To ensure the privacy of my participants, I keep all our correspondence and meetings private. Prior to interviewing the three teachers, I provided each of them with a letter of consent detailing their role in my research and review the terms of our agreement before each interview took place, ensuring they were aware that they would remain anonymous. I also provided them with a list of the main questions that would be asked during the interview so they knew what would be asked of them and could prepare if needed. I asked participants to read through the agreement carefully and let me know if they have any questions or concerns pertaining to the letter of consent which they had to sign. I addressed all their questions prior to their signing of the agreement. I informed participants that they had the right to withdraw from the interviews at any point should they wish to do so. I also let them know that I would provide them with a copy of transcripts from our interviews if requested as well as my final project. I let them know that if they would like to change any of their answers at any point during the interviews or once completed in part of the transcripts they could do so. I also ensured the participants who wanted it were given a copy of our interview transcript as well as my final paper for their records. Each of my participants was given a generic pseudonym in my work so that anonymity is assured. Furthermore, I ensured that participants were aware that I will be the only one with access to the recordings of our interviews and they will be destroyed within 5 years of the completion of my MTRP.
Limitations

The most significant limitation of my study was the small sample size of interview participants. Three interviews only represent a small portion of the numerous international language teachers in Toronto. Additionally, I was only able to interview a German, Mandarin and Polish teacher. I interviewed one teacher per language which is also not reflective of the variety of teachers who teach each language and the many other languages taught in Toronto. I tried to select teachers of various backgrounds, including two teachers (Polish and Mandarin) for whom the international language they taught was their first language which they learned in their home country and one teacher (German) whose first language was English as she was born in Canada. The three teachers also taught different grades in different schools though this is still only representational of a few classes. The teachers also have a range of experience and education, two teachers (Polish and German) who have gone through Teacher’s College and teach daily and one (Mandarin) who only teaches in the International Languages program. Even so, the sample is still limited to three teachers.

An additional limitation was that to my knowledge, there is nothing written about ability grouping in heritage or international language programs. The sources I drew upon in my literature review related more to policy, language acquisition, bilingualism/plurilingualism and international or heritage language programs in general. Thus, much of the findings came from the interview participants, personal experience and a combination of the resources cited in the literature reviewed.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

To obtain my data I interviewed three international language teachers in Toronto. In order for them to remain anonymous, I have given each a pseudonym. The interviews were conducted in person and were twenty to thirty minutes in length. Following my introduction to each of my teacher participants, I have organized the data from the three interviews by theme.

The first teacher I interviewed teaches German and will henceforth be referred to as Greta. Greta’s first language was English. Her mother is German and so she travelled to Germany frequently as a child. She went on to study German in high school for four years and then continued in university. She has been teaching for almost twenty years. She began teaching in the International Languages program in 1996 for 3 years in order to gain experience to apply to Teacher’s College. Presently she is a high school teacher but also teaches German to adults. She has taught grade 6 through to adult German in the past.

The second teacher interviewed teaches Polish and will be referred to as Patricia. She was born in Poland and so her first language was Polish. Patricia was teacher in Poland for eleven years before she came to Canada, so her first experiences teaching were in the Polish language. She started teaching Polish in a school where she taught a multi-level class of students grade 1 to 8 for three years. She then moved to the school she is teaching in presently and taught grade 4 for eight years and is now teaching grade 1 for the fourth year. She has been teaching Polish for over twenty years.
The third teacher teaches Mandarin and will be referred to as Maya. She was born and grew up in Taiwan before immigrating to Canada. She continued to learn Mandarin and went to all the heritage language classes while in school taking up to the grade 12 credit course. She does not teach in the public school system as she pursued another career. Maya has been teaching Mandarin in the international languages program to primary students for twelve years.

**Theme 1: Professional Development and Preparation for Teaching**

All three teachers were asked about their background, how they came to learn their given language, if they had gone through Teacher’s College and taught in a day school as well as whether they were provided with any additional training for teaching from the international languages program. Two of the three teachers interviewed teach in a day school as well. As such, they went through Teacher’s College and had a formal education in teaching.

The Polish teacher had experience teaching in Poland and supply teaches in high school presently during the week in addition to teaching in the international languages program. When asked if this helped her teach in the Saturday International Languages Program, Patricia stated “I don’t know if that helps me, because I’m substituting mostly for the high school and I’m teaching in elementary school but it gives me the idea of what kind of expectation there will be from my students in high school in the future.” Having taught Polish for 11 years in Poland she had a wealth of knowledge on how to teach the language before teaching in the program. The Saturday International Languages Program itself did not provide her with any training.
For Greta, the experience teaching in the Saturday International Language program was her first exposure to teaching. She explained “I started with the International Language Program to get experience so you do see how the kids react, how they behave. The group I had in the international program was a lot younger than my high school group and then of course now I have the adults. So, I think you always get some experience from whichever program you teach and some of it overlaps and some of it doesn’t.” She went on to Teacher’s College afterwards and at present teaches to adults.

Maya, the Mandarin teacher only teaches in the International Languages Program. She explained “We have teacher training twice a year, the first one they usually teach us how to use an Epi pen and go over some rules. The second one is more about… it’s supposed to remind us about rules we’re supposed to follow and there’s one workshop that I went to that was a little but more fun where they teach you how to use different games to teach the language. They had different materials prepared for you. That’s one of the more fun and useful workshops but most of them, honestly are quite useless.”

Thus, teachers who do not teach in a regular day school, only in the International Languages Program receive little to no training pertaining to teaching. Much of the training revolves around regulations and emergency procedures. As such, Maya summed up most of the training as being quite useless.

**Theme 2: Student Attitudes Towards Learning**

The students’ attitudes towards language learning appear to be strictly related to their home context. The amount of support students received at home played an integral
role in their willingness to learn the language. If students saw their parents speaking in English at home, very often they did not take the second language education seriously. Parents play a key role in second language acquisition for young learners. As Patricia explains “there are also the kids who are coming from the families that don’t speak Polish every day, they have trouble or they are not willing to repeat what they have to repeat to pronounce the words that you are teaching”. Students are unwilling to learn as their only exposure to the language is in the Saturday school. Parents have not modelled speaking the second language for them and as such, they do not see the importance and value of learning it.

Greta expressed similar views on how parental support of the language in the home influenced the child’s attitudes towards learning it “…it really depends on the kids… Other ones wouldn’t really do homework at home and again, it was kind of like they had to go there on Saturday, and it was babysitting. They got no help from their parents and they didn’t really prepare themselves for the class. So you were really just confined to trying to do something in the class itself which was less effective.” It is important for the parents of the child to show support of the language at home in order to motivate the child to learn. Otherwise, the child views the language schooling as unimportant and acts out when there, presenting a further challenge for the teacher.

**Theme 3: Challenges**

All three teachers expressed a number of challenges when it came to teaching the students. These challenges were instructional and environmental in nature. The instructional challenges were predominantly linked to students’ attitudes towards learning
the language as well as the vast range of abilities within one class. The environmental challenges were mainly revolving around the fact that international language teachers did not have their own space, the classroom was borrowed, and as such they were limited in terms of what they could do in the class. The classrooms were also not catered to their students’ needs and in part due to this the teachers had few resources.

The borrowed space has a huge impact on student learning. Maya stated

“In my case I teach mostly younger grades, elementary. So they’re 5, 6 years old. And they’re much smaller. But the borrowed space is a high school so imagine there is people sitting on the chairs and desks that are not to their proportions. Even the washroom is not properly built… And also the classroom is arranged in a way that we cannot physically rearrange the tables and chairs or we’ll get in trouble and sometimes it’s not I guess to our best interest. Let’s say we want a space for story time we need an open carpet space or a circle and that’s just very hard to accommodate.”

Teachers must deal with the classroom in the setup it is in once they arrive. Frequently elementary language classes are held in high schools and as such the class is not set up for the needs of younger students.

Patricia shared a similar experience.

“…like before we had classes in high school so the space was ok but with the young kids you need space for them for the movement, a place that would be required using music and rhythms so for the rhythmic… for the movement, for the exercises, so that was a little complicated because usually the class was filled with the desks so we had to use the movement and song place we were doing always in the hallways.”

Not only are desks too large but younger students don’t have space for circle time, songs and games which they need at that grade level.

International Language teachers have a limited amount of resources at their disposal. Oftentimes teachers purchase and bring in their own materials in order to teach their students.
Maya mentioned students received a textbook at the beginning of the year after which student and teachers were mostly limited to photocopies they could provide the children. She added “I bring my own textbooks, also posters, I make my own word cards, anything I can make my own let’s say visually or cards or drawings or storybooks I bring them in. Even I buy my own ink and bring those in to add. Also when we’re teaching about fruits. I would actually buy fake apples, and pears, and different fruits or different vegetables and bring them in.” In order to make her program more fruitful and beneficial to students, Maya purchased a number of her resources. Otherwise, she would be limited to books, handouts, pencil and paper.

**Theme 4: Strategies**

Teachers utilize a series of strategies in order to overcome challenges teaching in the International Languages Program. These strategies include the incorporation of technology - specifically tools found online, creating a safe space in the classroom by building a classroom community, changing groupings in the class to allow students to work together as well as using games and songs to further student engagement.

The internet is a tool both Patricia and Maya use frequently for lesson material in order to combat lack of physical resources like books and posters. Patricia explains “Nowadays it’s not a huge deal because you have YouTube, you have other media and you can look for different material, even for the new songs, or for the new published material that will be appropriate for the language, so with the media developed this way as it is, it’s not hard to find something that will be interesting for the student, and that will be proper to the theme that you wanted to work on.”
Maya encourages students to go online to further their learning from home by assigning websites to students for homework. “I would suggest that parents who have the beginner child to go on YouTube or I recommend a website to them so that they get an extra time outside.” The internet is a tool beneficial for language learners both in and outside the classroom.

Creating a safe space is vital in order to get students to participate. Greta explained “…and then I always just tell them… you know, you’re working at your own level and it’s for you and so you have to just… kind of do what you can and not worry about what, you know, the others can do or can’t do and just find your own space… and ask questions… and not be afraid of… you know… making a mistake in front of others.”

Giving students plenty of opportunities to practice the language is necessary in order to develop vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. When building the classroom community as teacher must ensure even if students are performing at a lower level they are comfortable speaking in front of their classmates as this practice is beneficial to their learning.

A variety of groupings over the course of each school day appears to further student engagement and learning. Patricia explained that she uses mixed ability grouping and partnership when teaching in order for the students who are beginners and cannot speak Polish to learn from those who can and are more fluent. “what I realized, the kids who are not speaking Polish they are closer to each other, so I usually try to break the circle, because otherwise they will be very comfortable just speaking English so usually it’s this way that if someone, I will place them if they have to sit on the carpet or we are playing a game, so it will be like connection so someone that is speaking Polish and someone that is not but is able and will repeat what the friend is saying.” The student
who does not speak Polish looks to one who does in order to translate language and learn Polish vocabulary. In this situation, the more fluent speaker also has the opportunity to further practice the language as they must code-switch and learn to translate from English to Polish on the spot.

Games also appear to be a proven way of engaging young learners. Maya described a variety of games she used to develop students’ vocabulary in a fun way.

“for example there is one I recall swat the fly you get the fly swatter and we put out let’s say the words on 6 pieces of paper, we’ll lay them out like this and then some student will call out the word, that we just learned or reviewed and then 2 people will have to swat. Whoever swats that word first wins. So that’s an example. Other examples are writing on the board. Kids at that age love writing on the board so you again, play in teams and then you line them up so for example, again, calling out the word and then they have to write the word on the board but you have to write the fastest.”

By incorporating the building of students’ vocabulary and writing into play, Maya turns what could be a rote learning experience into a fun and engaging one.

Songs are another proven way of engaging and developing the language of young learners. Patricia mentions this as being one of her best strategies.

“I think singing is the most effective part in teaching kindergarten and grade one and two. Songs, if the songs have actions - that is an excellent thing. Then, when we will have songs, actions and illustrations that will connect with what we were just doing that will give kids a good boost to memorize and be able to connect that with other knowledge.”

Songs are great mnemonic devices which help students retain new vocabulary as they associate it with a melody and an action.

Choosing engaging texts is also important to teach young learners. The three teachers described use of a variety of texts with illustrations in order to engage young learners. These are also important in terms of targeting Multiple Intelligences as students learn in a variety of ways and having both visual and text representations of the language
can greatly aid in their learning and memorization of vocabulary. Maya explains “I make my own word cards, anything I can make my own let’s say visually or cards or drawings or storybooks I bring them in.” Maya brings in materials she found or created on her own in order to further engage her students.

Similarly, Greta uses a variety of material in order to engage her students. When teaching grade sixes Maya frequently used the same kind of text as she found the students really enjoyed it. She states:

“they liked the readings depending on what you’d read. So with the kids, I had this little detective story that went in installments so it was one page per chapter and there was a big drawing with some hidden little things you had to find and you had to figure out the missing word or whatever at the end and they really loved that so they were begging for that as soon as they came.”

In looking at this, it is clear that choice of text is important. The detective text was almost like a game for students as they had to find hidden things in the picture and figure out a missing word. Students not only read the text but had to engage with it in some fashion in order to be able to complete the work.

In summary, the three teachers had many strategies in order to be able to cope with teaching a broad range of students. Changing the groupings or the way in which the students had to work (independently, with a partner, in small groups, etc.) appears to engage the students. Additionally, it allows fluent speakers to use language in a different way to teach beginner students. Beginner students also benefit from this as they are able to work with a peer to develop their language which can be less intimidating than working with a teacher. Songs, games and a variety of chosen text were another way to engage young learners. Songs helped students remember what was taught more easily. Games were fun for students to play and so they were less conscious of acquiring knowledge as it was done in an enjoyable and meaningful way for them. The sorts of
texts a teacher chose were also important as they had to be meaningful to the students in order for them to be engaged in the learning.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

I will use this chapter to summarize the main points of the literature in the field of heritage language education as it relates to the findings from the three interviews I conducted with practicing teachers who teach or have taught in the International languages Program. This will be followed by implications of this research for myself as a teacher and researcher as well as the implications for the educational community, including teachers both within and outside of the International Language Program in addition to the students in the program. I will provide recommendations for the International Language Program and the educational community. I will then restate the limitations of my research. Lastly, I will review what I believe needs to be studied further in the field of heritage or international language education.

Implications:

This study has implications in three areas. The first implication concerns my teaching practice as I now have strategies from teachers supported by literature in order to be able to better teach to a class with a range of language abilities. Having researched the importance of heritage language to students’ culture and self-identity, I will also advocate for the importance of heritage language education to students’ self-identity and pride in their culture. I also know how much plurilingualism benefits children intellectually and as such will encourage my future students to learn and practice multiple languages. The second implication regards teachers both in the International Language Program and regular mainstream schooling. Recognizing how pivotal language is to cultural identity, pre-service teachers should be taught how to approach students of
various backgrounds and encourage their use and learning of another language. Teachers who look at this study may also reconsider negative views on the International Language Program and support students of various backgrounds furthering their education in another language. Additionally, the strategies gleaning from my interviews and literature review may prove beneficial even in mainstream schools as presently there are a number of English Language Learners in classes around the Toronto GTA. The third implication is for the wider community as this study shows how prominent other languages are in Toronto. Noting this, residents of various backgrounds living in the area clearly show interest in educating their children in their maternal or native languages. Having said this, it is important to note the challenges within the system and the need for parents to support their children outside of the International Language Program by providing them with opportunities to engage with the language for more than those two and a half hours, it be through using the language at home, learning it alongside their children, finding individuals for their students to practice the language with or using the internet to engage their children in practicing the language even on that level.

**Recommendations:**

All three teachers interviewed found teaching the more formal aspects of a language, particularly letters or characters (in Mandarin), basic vocabulary and grammar to be the more challenging aspects of teaching international languages. In order to tackle this roadblock with students, the teachers would use strategies like games, songs and group or partner work to make the learning more engaging and meaningful to their students. This practice is consistent with Ausubel’s subsumption theory. Ausubel
recognized rote learning was not as effective as meaningful learning or subsumption. Rote learning involves acquiring knowledge through repeating isolated parts without clearly established relationships between the material being memorized. Ergo, “rote learning involves the mental storage of items having little or no association with existing cognitive structure” (Douglas, 91). By contrast, subsumption, that is learning with meaning, is “a process of relating and anchoring new material to relevant established entities in cognitive structure. As new material enters the cognitive field, it interacts with, and is appropriately subsumed under, a more inclusive conceptual system” (Douglas, 91). Considering this, it is clear that the more in depth teachers go with material through games, songs, readings, and the like, the more meaningful the learning, and the more likely the students are to retain it.

As noted in the literature review, there are mixed beliefs when it comes to teaching grammar specifically. Krashen for example, believes that no grammar should be taught. Researchers such as Ellis debunk Krashen’s notion that zero grammar should be taught in schools, recognizing its importance for students to be able to communicate in a language effectively. The teachers interviewed all taught some form of grammar to students. Maya and Patricia, teaching to primary grades taught more vocabulary and basic sentence structure while Greta, teaching older grades taught grammatical cases. There is research to support this. As Douglas states, “Instruction in conscious rule learning and other types of form-focused instruction… can indeed aid in the attainment of successful communicative competence in a second language.” (Douglas, 297)

Acquiring or studying a second language to build upon children’s cultural identity is another important aspect discussed both in the literature and in the interviews. As Cummins notes, common reasons for studying languages are “to improve communication
with relatives; to enhance pride in heritage; to maintain and revitalize culture and religion; and because languages are best learned when young.” Maya noted that she teaches students about Chinese culture in order to further engage them in learning. Additionally, Patricia and Greta both use a variety of Polish and German texts, songs, games, and other resources respectively which show students aspects of culture as well.

From what the participating teachers stated, a majority of students in the program have some connection to the language in terms of their backgrounds so it is evident that parents want students to learn the language for cultural connection to some degree. Many also learn the international languages as they have relatives remaining in another country and the acquisition of the language enables them to be able to communicate with these family members. I myself am such a case.

**Limitations**

As stated, the small sample size of interview participants was the most significant limitation in my study. There are hundreds if not thousands of international language teachers in the Toronto area and dozens of languages are being taught (over 50 in the Toronto District School Board alone) (TDSB website). The three teachers are a minute sample of the numerous teachers teaching in the International Language Program. The participants were a German, Mandarin and Polish teacher so I also only had one teacher per language interviewed in my study. I tried to select teachers who varied not just in terms of language taught but also in terms of experience teaching, education, first language and grades taught though still the sample size is minimal considering the vast amount of teachers in Toronto. I was also limited to the teacher perspective on the
International Language Program. Given the nature of the selection process by which I came to interview each teacher (purposeful sampling) I knew all three teachers before I interviewed them which may also result in some bias in terms of their responses as they all knew me before and may have responded in certain way as a result. My literature review is another limitation of this work. Due to time constraints, I only reviewed a selection of literature related to policy, language acquisition, bilingualism/plurilingualism and international or heritage language programs generally speaking. From what I could find, there was not anything written on teaching to multiple language abilities in the International Language Program or heritage language programs. As such, my findings come from a combination of the literature I found that related in part to the topic as well as the three interviews. Additionally, there is a vast amount of literature written on the themes in my literature review and therefore my review only contains a portion of what is out there on, language acquisition, bilingualism/plurilingualism and international or heritage language programs.

Further study

There is still much to learn about teaching to multiple language abilities in the International Language Program. My findings only represent a small portion of the strategies used by International Language teachers in order to teach to classes with a range of abilities. To look at the issue more in depth I would recommend interviewing a larger sample of teachers in the Toronto area, including multiple teachers of the same language and grade to see how they compare. I would also suggest researchers go into classrooms and observe students and teachers in the heritage language program in order
to see these strategies put into action. Students and principals are two other stakeholders in this program and could also potentially be interviewed. The international language program enables students to learn an additional language in the public school system outside of the regular school day but some private schools teach students additional languages during the regular school day. This too would be worth looking at as it could be a potential alternative to the current international language program that is in place. Lastly, a study of second language teaching in other provinces and countries could also be done to garner information on other ways to teach languages and compare them to the International Language Program structure.
REFERENCES


Appendix A: Letter of Consent for Interview

Date: ___________________

Dear ________________,

I am a graduate student at OISE, University of Toronto, and am currently enrolled as a Master of Teaching candidate. I am studying teachers of international languages for the purposes of investigating an educational topic as a major assignment for our program. 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 Dr. Mary Lynn Tessaro. My research supervisor is Dr. Enrica Piccardo. 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 20-30 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 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,

Agatha Mycek
647-567-3134
agatha.mycek@mail.utoronto.ca
Instructor’s Name: ________________________________________
Phone number: ________________ Email: ___________________________

Research Supervisor’s Name: ______________________________________
Phone #: ____________________ Email: ____________________________

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 __________________________(name of researcher) and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described.

Signature: ________________________________

Name (printed): ______________________________

Date: ____________________________
Appendix B: Interview Questions

Background

- How long have you been teaching in the international language program?
- Was your first language ________ (the one you are teaching)? If not, how did you come to learn this language?
- Are you a classroom teacher in a public school as well? (OCT – yes/no)

Experience

- If so, how do you think the international language program differs from public school teaching? What is similar?
- What is or are some positive experiences you have had teaching in the international languages program?
- What challenges have you encountered in international language schools/teaching international languages?

Class Management and Facilitation

- What kind of physical resources are available to you on a weekly basis as an international language instructor?
- Are there any ways in which the borrowed space influences class management? (as international languages are often offered in other schools)
- Have you noticed an increased range of language abilities in your class in recent years? (greater difference between highest and lowest performing student)
Strategies

- How do you address the different levels of language ability in your classroom?
  What kinds of instructional strategies do you use?

- Are there any particular strategies you find more or less effective?

- What do you do to be inclusive of students of all language abilities?

- Is there anything else you would like to add?