Elementary school FSL teachers’ perceptions of the implementation of the Accelerative Integrated Methodology

By

Olivia Cinelli

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

Copyright by Olivia Cinelli, April 2016
Abstract

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to investigating Core French teachers’ perceptions of the implementation of AIM in their classrooms. Using convenience sampling, two participants of the York Catholic District School Board participated in semi-structured interviews to explore their experiences. There were five themes that emerged: teacher commitment to the program, student engagement, program fundamentals, perceived outcomes, and challenges of the program. Overall, the findings were positive and both participants look forward to continuing to use AIM in their classrooms.

Key Words: Accelerative Integrated Methodology, AIM Language Learning, French as a Second Language, FSL, Core French, Teachers’ Perceptions of AIM
Acknowledgements

To everyone who helped me brainstorm and bounce around ideas, revise the countless drafts, and contributed to this final product, thank you for your knowledge, insights, and generosity.

I wish to acknowledge my family, friends, and PJ 241 cohort for their continued support and patience throughout this two-year process. For the countless edits and revisions, snack breaks, and coffee runs, I am eternally grateful.

To Ken and Hilary, your guidance has been instrumental in the completion of this project. Thank you for your valuable support, professional guidance, and constructive recommendations.

A special thank you to my participants, without whom this study would not be possible. You played the most important role in this process. Thank you for sharing your time, passion, and invaluable insights. Your contribution was crucial and is so greatly appreciated.

To all who take the time to read this paper, thank you for making all of the hard work worth it. To all of the teachers out there who continue to dedicate their time to enriching students’ learning of the French language, and especially to those French teachers who inspired me as a student, merci!
# Table of Contents

**Chapter** | **Page**
--- | ---
Acknowledgements | ii
Abstract | iii

## INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the Research Study | 1
1.2 Purpose of the Study | 2
1.3 Methods | 3
1.4 Background of the Researcher | 4
1.5 Overview | 5

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction | 6
2.2 Lack of French Proficiency in Ontario and the Core French Program | 7
2.3 Wendy Maxwell and AIM | 8
2.4 The Research Behind AIM | 9
2.5 The Resulting Questions | 12

## 3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction | 14
3.2 Research Approach and Procedures | 14
3.3 Instruments of Data Collection | 15
3.4 Participants | 16
   3.4.1 Sampling Criteria | 16
   3.4.2 Sampling Procedures | 17
3.4.3 Participant Biographies

3.5 Data Analysis

3.6 Ethical Review Procedures

3.7 Methodological Limitations and Strengths

3.8 Conclusion

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Teacher Commitment to the Program

4.2.1 Program implementation requires significant commitment from the teacher

4.3 Student Engagement

4.3.1 Student engagement in primary and junior grades

4.3.2 Decrease in student engagement in intermediate grades

4.4 Program Fundamentals

4.4.1 Kinaesthetic element

4.4.2 Repetition and scaffolding

4.5 Perceived Outcomes

4.5.1 Student’s increase in oral proficiency

4.5.2 Student’s increase in reading and writing skills

4.5.3 Student’s increased confidence and comfort in French

4.6 Challenges of the Program

4.6.1 Limited resources for lessons

4.6.2 Consistency in AIM instruction in the school
4.6.3 Resistance to adopt all strategies of AIM program 33

4.7 Conclusion 34

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Introduction 36

5.2 Overview of Key Findings 36

5.3 Implications 37

5.3.1 Broad: The Educational Community 37

5.3.2 Narrow: Professional Identity and Practice 38

5.4 Recommendations 38

5.5 Areas for Further Research 39

5.6 Concluding Comments 40

REFERENCES 41

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter of Consent for Interview 45

Appendix B: Interview Questions 47
Elementary school FSL teachers’ perceptions of the implementation of the
Accelerative Integrated Method

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the Research Study

Parlez-vous français? Can you understand the question? Can you formulate a response? Would you be able to engage in an entire conversation using only the French language? According to Statistics Canada’s latest census data, only 11% of Ontarians are able to converse in both official languages of Canada (Lepage & Corbeil, 2013). This is a strikingly low statistic, especially since all students enrolled in English-language public schools are required to take one of three French as a second language (FSL) programs offered in Ontario.

The most common option, which is mandatory across school boards in Ontario, is Core French. This program requires students to learn French from Grade 4 to Grade 8 and experience “a minimum of 600 hours of French instruction by the end of Grade 8” (Ontario Ministry of Education [OME], 1998, p.15). Additionally, if school boards choose, they may offer Extended French or French Immersion, or both. Extended French requires students to be taught in French for “25 per cent of the total instructional time at every grade level of the program and provide a minimum of 1260 hours of instruction in French by the end of Grade 8” (OME, 1998, p.15). Comparatively, in French Immersion, 50% of instruction in French and accumulated hours of French instruction are a minimum of 3800 (OME, 1998, p.15). “The primary goal of the three French as a second language programs in Ontario is to increase, within realistic and well-defined parameters, a student’s ability to communicate in French” (OME, 1998, p. 15). If this is the goal, why
are only 11% of Ontarians hitting the mark? And what can be done to improve this inadequacy?

Wendy Maxwell (2014) proposes a solution to the lack in oral proficiency of Ontarians, specifically those who learn French as a second language (FSL) in the Core French program. She created the Accelerative Integrated Methodology (AIM), which is a program that incorporates the use of gesturing, key vocabulary, content-based instruction, and cooperative learning activities into second language instruction in order to more effectively develop proficiency in students (AIM Language Learning, 2014). Through the use of plays, familiar stories and fairy tales, FSL teachers can engage their students while employing gestures to prompt the students to do the talking. As AIM grows in popularity, many educators are deciding to implement the methodology in their classrooms.

Despite its growing popularity, there is limited literature on the proven effectiveness of AIM. Of the research that does exist, Maxwell herself has published the majority. It is important to ask, therefore, why so many educators have adopted this program when it is not sufficiently supported by research.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of conducting this study is to explore teachers’ perceptions of AIM as it is integrated into Core French classrooms in the York Catholic District School Board. There is very little research that outlines the effectiveness of AIM as a tool to increase French language proficiency in elementary students, and what does exist is inconclusive. According to Mady, Arnott, & Lapkin’s (2009) case study that compared the French proficiency of students exposed to AIM to the proficiency of those who were not, the results were not sufficient to confirm either the effectiveness or the
ineffectiveness of the program. Furthermore, the inconclusive results of Arnott’s (2011) study prove that the success of AIM cannot be uniformly measured because its implementation is dependent upon the philosophy of the educator. These limited findings inspired my interest in this program, and help direct my inquiry toward the perceptions of the teachers and their experiences before, during and after implementing AIM in their classrooms, as well as their perceptions of AIM’s effect on students’ oral proficiency.

The main research question that drives this study is: what are teachers’ perceptions of the integration of AIM into core French classrooms? The supporting sub-questions are: what experiences have teachers had while integrating AIM? What are teachers’ perceived benefits of AIM and potential challenges to its integration? And what outcomes have teachers observed in students’ oral proficiency after implementing AIM?

1.3 Methods

I approached this qualitative study by structuring my research as a multiple case study, a method described by numerous authors (Cresswell 2013; Houghton, Casey, Shaw & Murphy, 2013; Yin 1994). Each individual participant acted as an independent case study, and I will collect data through interviews with FSL educators who have implemented AIM in their classrooms. They were asked open-ended questions in order to facilitate discussions around the implementation of the program and their perceived effects resulting from their use of AIM. From there, I transcribed the recorded interviews and analyze the data using simple coding, as employed by Mady, Arnott & Lapkin (2009), by highlighting similarities and differences in participant responses to determine emerging themes. I paid special attention to the perceptions of the participants as being positive or negative and why they felt this way.
1.4 Background of the Researcher

As a researcher, my lifelong passion for French motivates my interest in this study. I was a student of the Core French program throughout elementary and secondary school, only once having the opportunity to immerse myself in the French language for a month-long high school credit course in Paris. This experience opened my eyes to the lack of oral fluency development in the Core French classroom.

While pursuing a Bachelor of Arts specializing in French Studies at the University of Ottawa, I realized the impact that this type of French language instruction can have on a language learner. After years of rote study with a focus on verb conjugation in various tenses and limited vocabulary study, I was able to easily read, write (with the aide of a dictionary, for unknown vocabulary) and comprehend the language, however my oral fluency was lacking. It came as a result of minimal exposure to authentic, spontaneous conversation in my second language. I was experiencing the challenges associated with striving for bilingualism after years of limited hours of instruction in French.

I was only able to develop my oral fluency once I began using French in an immersed and meaningful way as a part of daily life. This is when I experienced the benefits of using my second language in an authentic way. It revealed to me the lack of emphasis placed on spontaneous oral fluency in the Core French classroom, contributing to my own insecurities while speaking French.

Currently as a pre-service teacher hoping to teach French in a Core or Immersion setting, I am interested in the most effective methods to help my students achieve success in French language acquisition. Once I heard about AIM and its increasing popularity in elementary schools I was interested in the results. I spent some time observing the
implementation of AIM in primary-level Core French classrooms, and at first glance the students speak more French than I remember ever hearing in a forty-minute lesson at that age. My initial impression of AIM was that it is the solution to Core French classroom deficiencies, however, the lack of research and inconclusive results that does exist motivates me to discover the experiences of teachers and their perceptions on the effects of AIM on the oral fluency of their students.

1.5 Overview

Chapter 1 outlines the purpose of this study, including an introduction, the research questions and what led me to this topic. A review of current research is covered in Chapter 2. The methods used for this study as well as the sample participants and data collection instruments are outlined in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 presents the data and its connection to the research question, including information about participants. Finally, Chapter 5 outlines the limitations of this study, the study’s implications, recommendations for practice, and directions for further study. Following this, there is a list of references and appendices.
Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In Ontario, the Core French Program is the least intensive French as a Second Language (FSL) program, of the three, which are offered in the province (the other two being Extended French and French Immersion). Ontario’s Core French enrolment in 2013 was 2,031,195 students, which is approximately 53% of the total number of students enrolled in Canada (Canadian Parents for French, 2014). Although it becomes mandatory in Grade 4 for every student in Ontario who is enrolled in an English-language school, many school boards choose to implement the Core French program earlier, some as early as Kindergarten; for example, the York Catholic District School Board begins French as a Second Language instruction at the first grade level. Despite varying start dates, the Ministry of Ontario mandates that at completion (in Grade 8), the students must have been given “a minimum of 600 hours of French instruction” (OME, 1998, p.15).

The program operates similarly in most schools. French teachers are allotted 30 to 40 minutes per class and, dependent on the grade, they may see students three to five times a week. Some core French teachers must move from classroom to classroom, while other French teachers may have their own room that students travel to. This creates a problem in regards to adequate French instruction time, especially when teachers are losing precious minutes traveling and transporting their teaching resources (Mollica, Phillips, & Smith, 2005). However, these few lost minutes are the least of the province’s worries in terms of FSL education.
2.2 Lack of French Proficiency in Ontario and the Core French Program

According to the Ministry of Ontario’s FSL curriculum document, “the primary goal of the three French as a second language programs in Ontario is to increase, within realistic and well-defined parameters, a student’s ability to communicate in French” (OME, 1998, p. 15). Additionally the Canadian government (2003) set a benchmark that by 2013, half of high school graduates in the country should be able to communicate in both of the country’s official languages (Government of Canada, 2003). Despite these goals, the current rate of bilingualism in Ontario is still only 11% (Lepage & Corbeil, 2013). This is a severely low rate when one takes into account that every student educated between Grade 4 to Grade 8, in Ontario, should have experienced, at the very least, a Core French education. With the way Core French programs are being executed, how are we to increase our provincial or federal rate of bilingualism if we continue to deprive students of second language programming they so desperately need? When discussing problems that are not receiving enough nationwide attention, Stern (1983) confidently states, “if I were asked to pick out one such issue, […] it would be the second language curriculum, and more specifically, the French Core curriculum” (p. 237). More recently, Forsyth (2005) concludes, as well, that “it will be necessary to make changes to the existing Core French programs in Canada [or we risk becoming] hypocrites who do not support what we are promoting” (p. 6).

In 2013, the Ontario Ministry of Education released a document citing three goals for FSL education in the province, the first of which is to, “increase student confidence, proficiency, and achievement in FSL” (OME, 2013, p. 9). As a response to this document, the Provincial and Federal governments funded a pilot project through
Curriculum Services Canada that studied the proficiency and confidence of Core, Intensive and Immersion French students in Ontario. As a result, in the case of proficiency, “the findings suggest that increased focus could be encouraged, in particular, on oral comprehension and written production abilities, specifically as related to the application of grammar and vocabulary” (Rehner, 2014, p. 3). Furthermore, “considerable gains in confidence could still be made in addressing the students’ confidence in conversing” (Rehner, 2014, p. 5). A key point Stern (1983) makes is, “communicative activities [are] most commonly overlooked and is perhaps the most novel contribution of our own time” (p. 240) to the language learning curriculum. “It demands a change of approach [and is] designed to ensure that all learners are exposed to the experience of natural, unedited and unrehearsed language use” (p.240).

Ultimately, Ontario’s current Core French curriculum is not successful in meeting the needs of our province, as proven by the statistical data, in creating bilingual citizens. The key fault is the lack of authentic communicative experience (Stern, 1983), which will allow students to increase proficiency and, most of all, confidence in their use of the French language.

2.3 Wendy Maxwell and AIM

In 2001, Wendy Maxwell created a solution to the FSL problem that Canada, and Ontario have been facing for years. She formulated a gestures-based program called the Accelerative Integrated Methodology (AIM) that “is currently being embraced by 2,500 schools across Canada” (Mady, 2008, p. 13). The program is structured to function in a 30 to 40 minute class where, “there are two or three teacher-led activities that each last approximately ten minutes […] as well as] ten minutes of […] class time [that] is spent
away from teacher-led activities” (Maxwell, 2004, p. 9-10). There is a blend of creative, play-based gesture learning, as well as conversational gesture instruction and the program moves from highly teacher led and modeled to more independent study on the part of the student (Maxwell, 2004).

In her own study, Maxwell (2001) seeks to determine the difference in oral fluency between students who have learned Core French through the AIM program and a sample test group who have learned Core French through thematically based instruction. Through a scaffold interview approach, she collected data on the students’ ability to comprehend the language and produce responses as well as their ability to sustain conversation. Due to the small sample sizes of nine in each of the groups, Maxwell struggled to determine statistical results, however her careful consideration of her personal biases allow for a minimally subjective data collection. Additionally, the division of students based on academic level provided even comparison between students in the AIM group and those in the sample group. As a result of the staggering difference in test scores between the two groups, Maxwell (2001) concluded that “the degree of fluency attained by the [AIM group] was quite markedly higher than that of the [non AIM group]” (p. 43).

2.4 The Research Behind AIM

To date, there is very limited research supporting AIM as a single-method approach to solving Ontario’s bilingualism problem. The studies, which seek to prove the success of AIM or evaluate its effectiveness, either result inconclusively or show tremendous success through small sample sizes (Arnott, 2005; Bourdages & Vignola,
Carroll (2011), Michels (2008) and Rousse-Malpat et al. (2012) resulted in staggering differences between AIM and non-AIM exposed student groups. Carroll (2011) discovered a “reversal in normal tendencies” (p. 22) for second language learners. Seven of nine students “achieved a better mark on the oral test compared to the listening by 20%” (p.22). It is also important to note the errors most frequently made on the composition part of the test were consistent with those made by native Francophone speakers and seemingly align with the AIM program’s emphasis on oral language (Carroll, 2011). Similarly, Michels (2008) discovered that “AIM students performed better on average than students who had received considerably more hours of French instruction” (p. 51). These conclusions are also consistent with the findings of Rousse-Malpat et al. (2012) who focused their study on the written performance of AIM students. They concluded that, “AIM students scored higher marks than the [students in the control group] right from the first assessment” (p. 11). Despite the overwhelming success of the AIM students compared to the non-AIM students in these studies, the test group sizes were too small to result in any concrete findings in the effectiveness of AIM on French language fluency.

Alternatively, Arnott (2005), in one of the earliest studies available on the AIM program, opted to take a descriptive approach into her exploration of the emergent program. The researcher discovered that “the defining difference between the participant class and other traditional core French classes is the overwhelming oral involvement of the learners and their willingness to take risks with the language during those initial
stages” (p. 50). Although this finding is promising for the use of AIM in Core French classrooms, she admits that as a result of her small, single class size, in an all-boys, independent school, her “ability to generalize the conclusions of this project to a wider audience could be compromised” (p. 53).

Contrary to the previously mentioned studies, Mady et al. (2009) published inconclusive results in their mixed-methods study. They examined the proficiency of grade 8 students who have been exposed to AIM as French language learners and their attitudes towards French language learning. The two student groups scored similarly in their test results and thus “reveal no significant differences in the French proficiency of students in the AIM and non-AIM groups” (p. 717). Equivalently, Bourdages, et al. (2009), while focusing on grammatical precision in oral proficiency, did not have conclusive results between the AIM and non-AIM student groups.

Despite the inconclusive results of many of the studies, a trend was discovered that could positively affect the Core French learning community. In two of the studies (Arnott, 2011 & Mady, et al. 2009), students who were exposed to AIM reported that they “felt a positive connection to their French class […] as well as] feeling confident in their French speaking skills and being quite excited to speak French” (Mady, et al., 2009, p. 718). Furthermore, these students showed a “willingness to take risks with the language during [the] initial stages” (Arnott, 2005, p. 50), as opposed to students in a non-AIM Core French classroom.

In 2011, Arnott published a study that highlights the near-impossibility of a true evaluation of the success or failure of the AIM program. She focused on the methods employed by Core French educators using the AIM program, and compared how they
chose to implement AIM. Through classroom observation and semi-structured interviews the researcher collected data on the methods employed by the teachers and how they felt they were using the AIM program with their students. Despite using a small sample of eight teacher participants, the varying experience levels as educators and as AIM-trained educators provide a diverse data set. On the other hand, seven of the teachers were female while one was male, which may result in gender-biased results. The researcher concluded that although many of the key concepts of AIM were adhered to by all of the teachers, every teacher supplemented their instruction with other resources and slightly modified the method to suit their teaching style and the students’ needs. Arnott explains that, “AIM teaching does not look the same in different [Core French] classrooms, or across different grade levels” (2011, p. 172). This proves that the success of the AIM program (and any program) cannot be uniformly measured, because its implementation is dependent on the philosophy of the educator. She goes on to suggest that “[assuming] that mandating AIM for [Core French] teaching will lead to some sort of standardized use would also be a risky hypothesis given these findings” (Arnott, 2011, p. 172).

2.5 The Resulting Questions

This review of the literature demonstrates that the effectiveness of the AIM program has not yet been successfully evaluated due to the varying nature of its implementation. This drives my research in the direction of the educators who choose to implement AIM in their programming. What are their perceptions of the integration of AIM into core French classrooms? What experiences have teachers had while integrating AIM? What are teachers’ perceived benefits of AIM and potential challenges to its
integration? And, what outcomes have teachers observed in students’ oral proficiency after implementing AIM?
Chapter 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The following chapter outlines the research methodology of this study. To begin, the research approach and procedures are explained followed by an examination of the instruments of data collection that were used. Consequently, a detailed description of the research participants is provided, including the sampling criteria and procedures used to determine participants’ eligibility as well as brief biographies of the chosen participants. Successively, the process used to analyze the data is defined, followed by an outline of the relevant ethical forethought taken into consideration. Furthermore, the various limitations resulting from the methodology are uncovered, but, more importantly; the methodological strengths associated with this study are highlighted. Finally, this chapter is concluded with a brief evaluation of the methodological decisions it outlines in relation to this study’s questions and overall purpose.

3.2 Research Approach & Procedures

This study was approached through a qualitative case-study research lens. After a review of the relevant literature and current research on the Accelerated Integrative Method (AIM), data was collected in the form of semi-structured interviews with teacher participants. Due to the exploratory nature of the questions, which rely heavily on the subjective perceptions of teachers’ experiences in the integration of AIM, a qualitative approach allowed the researcher to gently direct the topic of the interview, while allowing the participants the flexibility to freely discuss their experiences.

As Yin (1994) explains, “The first and most important condition for differentiating among the various research strategies is to identify the type of research
question being asked” (p. 7). In this case, the questions are phrased as explanatory “‘what’ questions” (p. 7), which, according to Yin, lend themselves to any research approach (p. 7). However, the most important reason for this choice of research approach is that case studies “explain [sic] the causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies” (p. 15). As highlighted in the review of the literature, AIM has not been conclusively proven effective through qualitative studies, thus the case-study approach was chosen to allow for an exploration of potential outcomes of the use of AIM in an elementary Core French classroom. Furthermore, Simons (2009) defines the case study as “an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution or system in a “real-life” context” (p. 21). In the context of this study, AIM is the ‘project’ being explored from various teachers’ perspectives.

3.3 Instruments of Data Collection

The principal instrument for data collection was semi structured interviews with teacher participants (Appendix B). Cresswell (2013) notes the value of interviewing participants, lies in their ability to describe the experiences they have lived firsthand (p. 3155). According to Brinkmann (2014), “semi structured interviews can make better use of the knowledge-producing potentials of dialogues by allowing much more leeway for following up on whatever angles are deemed important by the interviewee” (p. 10). Furthermore, he explains, “the interviewer has a greater say in focusing the conversation on issues that he or she deems important in relation to the research project” (p. 11).

Interviews began with a section concerning background information of the participant; through these questions the researcher was able to ensure the participant
criteria was met and gain some important insights into the school, the participant and the students involved. Next, the participant was asked to explain their use of the AIM program and elaborate on any notable experiences they had during their integration of AIM. Continuing, the participant was invited to reflect on their reasons for choosing to integrate AIM, and any benefits, outcomes or feedback they had received as a result. Finally, participants encouraged to identify challenges they experienced or could foresee other educators experiencing, during the integration of AIM.

3.4 Participants

This section reviews the various methodological decisions surrounding participants of this study including the sampling criteria and procedures, as well as a brief bio of the chosen participants.

3.4.1 Sampling Criteria

It was imperative to this study that the chosen participants be well-established educators in the York Catholic District School Board as well as have a number of years of experience in Core French instruction. The participants were selected based on the following criteria:

- They were current teachers in elementary schools in the York Catholic District School Board (YCDSB).
- They had been teaching in the YCDSB for a minimum of 15 years overall.
- Of those 15 years, they had been teaching elementary Core French for a minimum of 10 years.
- Of those 10 years, they had been integrating AIM into their elementary Core French classrooms for a minimum of 5 years.
They were willing to share their experiences and participate in this study. It is important that the participant be part of the YCDSB because the focus of this study is within the boundaries of this school board. Furthermore, the participants were required to have a minimum of 15 years teaching experience overall, 10 of which must have been in elementary Core French so that the participants would have a vast knowledge of the Core French curriculum and common instruction practices employed by the board. Additionally, they were required to have been integrating AIM into their classrooms for a minimum of 5 years in order to have a variety of experiences with AIM as well as ample time to observe its long-term results.

### 3.4.2 Sampling procedures

Participants were recruited using a convenience sampling procedure. Cresswell (2013) notes that convenience sampling negatively impacts the credibility of a study (p. 3115); however, participants were also required to meet the criteria outlined in the previous section to ensure a high quality of participant and improve the credibility of this study (Cresswell, 2013, p. 3115).

Participants were sought out through personal connections and networking within the community of educators known to the researcher. Potential participants were given information on the study and invited to contact the researcher if they were willing to participate. In this manner, participants were relieved of the sense of obligation to participate and their cooperation was voluntary.

### 3.4.3 Participant Biographies

Both participants have been teaching in the York Catholic District School Board for 30 years. Anna has spent the past 26 years teaching Core French, while Julia has spent
all 30 teaching the subject. They have both been using the AIM program in their classrooms for upwards of seven years. Anna has implemented AIM in classrooms of students between grades one to six, while Julia has done so through grades one to eight. This school year Anna is teaching grades two, three, five, and eight; Julia is teaching grades four, five, and six. They both decided to go into French as a second language instruction because of their own love and passion for the language.

3.5 Data Analysis

Once interviews were executed and audio recordings complete, each interview was transcribed into text data. Initially, the data was reviewed and memos were added to indicate possible themes. Then, the transcripts were analyzed individually by highlighting and connecting ideas that developed into a variety of emerging themes as related to the research questions. As described by Saldaña (2014), “By reading and rereading the corpus, you gain intimate familiarity with its contents and begin to notice significant details as well as make new insights about their meanings” (p. 4). After this stage of analysis, the data was coded into different categories in order to assist in the following step. The codes assigned “function as a way of patterning, classifying, and later reorganizing them into emergent categories for further analysis” (Saldaña, 2014, p. 5). The codes were then categorized to narrow down the divisions of data by grouping codes by association. Cresswell (2013) explains that this process helps researchers “provide an interpretation in light of their own views or views of perspectives in the literature” (p. 3523). This helped facilitate the analysis of both sets of transcribed data to each other. They were both analyzed comparatively, in order to highlight similarities and differences in the previously identified themes, and categories, as well as the participants’ individual
3.6 Ethical Review Procedures

The importance of ethical considerations is imperative to this study as the data is collected solely from voluntary participants. In order to ensure quality data, certain ethical parameters were observed. Participants were given a pseudonym as well as having their identities and any information that could identify them, their school or their students kept strictly confidential. Participants were also informed that all data (including recordings and transcripts of the interviews) would be stored on a password-protected, personal device and destroyed after five years. These considerations protected their identities and may have afforded them the freedom to express their opinions without fear of repercussions, and as such, are crucial to the validity of the data collected in this study. Furthermore, to avoid miscommunication or misunderstanding, participants were notified that they would have the opportunity to review all transcripts of their interview to clarify or retract any part of their contribution.

The nature of the research question did not indicate any foreseen risks of emotional responses from participants; nevertheless, participants were notified in advance and on the day of the interview that they had the right to refrain from answering any questions or withdraw entirely from the study, at any time. Additionally, the structure of “individual interviews [allows] for more confidentiality and often [makes] it easier for the interviewer to create an atmosphere of trust and discretion” (Brinkmann, 2014, p. 13).

In order to further consider participants’ comfort, they were provided with a consent letter, prior to participating in the study, which outlined the nature of the study and explains the expectations of participation. Participants were asked to sign this letter,
which represents their consent to be a participant in the interview process, as well as have the interview audio-recorded.

3.7 Methodological Limitations and Strengths

It is important to note that, as with all studies, the decisions made in regards to methodology carry implications as far as the limitations and strengths of this study. As a result of the small-scale nature of the study, any insights drawn from the data can only raise questions on the topic of AIM. Unfortunately, any conclusions drawn from these data are not generalizable. Additionally, the scope of the research was limited to teachers only. More information could have been gathered, potentially leading to greater insights, had the participants included students or parents. Moreover, had classroom observations or surveys been included in the survey, the variety of data collection may have allowed for greater conclusions being drawn from this study.

The opportunity provided to the teacher participants, in the setting of a one-on-one interview affords the data a certain depth that could not be achieved through qualitative surveys. It allows the researcher to explore avenues that may have not been foreseen prior to data collection. In this way, the data remains authentic to the experience of each individual participant, and avoids overlooking key details, which may be the case in qualitative surveys. Furthermore, throughout the interview process, participants are able to reflect on their own methods and opinions, allowing them to continue to develop professionally.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the important decisions made in regards to the methodology employed in this study. The strengths of a qualitative case study approach
as well as the procedures and instruments for data collection were explored and defined. Participant criteria were established and clear data analysis processes were described. Finally, limitations to the study were outlined, but more importantly strengths of the methodology were identified. Next, chapter four will report on the findings of the research.
Chapter 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The following chapter highlights and explores the prominent themes that emerged through analysis of the data collected through the interviews with the participants of this study. Both interviews were conducted early in the school year, in the first couple weeks of October, with Core French teachers who were working in the York Catholic District School Board. The identified themes were organized into the following sections: 1) Teacher commitment to the program, 2) Student engagement, 3) Program fundamentals, 4) Perceived outcomes, and 5) Challenges of the program. Each theme will be discussed below, and participants’ responses will be considered in light of the extant literature.

4.2 Teacher Commitment to the Program

4.2.1 Program implementation requires significant commitment from the teacher

Both participants discussed that a lot of work was required of them in order to adopt this program into their classrooms. They dedicated themselves to studying the methodology of the program as well as learning all of the gestures included, which vary for every play. Anna noted the anxiety associated with adopting this program: “It was very nerve-wracking for me. It’s like learning a different language. […] That’s what I would do at lunch, I would put on a DVD [and practice.]” Similarly, Julia remarked that she spent her personal time learning the program. “The summer before I started the program, I took the time to learn how to gesture the words I would need to teach the first play which was ‘Les Trois Petits Cochons.’ […] I practiced the words and was always a little bit ahead of the students.”

Additionally, both participants emphasized the importance of continuing to
When asked how long it took her to learn the gestures, Anna responded by saying, “I’m still learning every time I learn a new play. Sometimes I forget. It’s also interesting that people will have different gestures.” Julia explains that, “Each year I increased my knowledge of the vocabulary and felt comfortable teaching many different plays.”

When discussing different aspects of the program, specifically the introduction of the gestures and incorporation of raps to aid in grammar instruction, both participants touched upon the difficulties in delivering AIM initially and when some of the components were not within the scope of their preferred teaching style. Julia said, “the first time that you’re delivering the program, you need to show a lot of enthusiasm and be comfortable in your own skin. So if that’s not your personality that’s going to be challenging.” Anna also noted that, “I do some of [the raps], but because I’m not musical, it’s not my comfort level.”

Another aspect of the program the participants had identical views on was the importance of adopting the AIM methodology for all instruction within the classroom and school. For example, Julia explained:

Once you implement the AIM philosophy your whole program is built around a systematic approach to language learning. You could use other resources, but you wouldn't combine the AIM Program with another totally different program because that would be defeating the purpose of what the AIM program is about.

Anna’s remark that, “It doesn’t matter which grade you’re in because you are using the same approach in terms of using paired-down language. The kinaesthetic part of it, the oral review, you’re using that same methodology.” She also mentioned that when
including holiday activities in her classroom she does so, “always through the AIM methodology.”

These findings highlight the importance of the teacher’s commitment to the program. There is a steep learning curve during initial implementation, and a requirement to constant attention and review of the gestures. These findings raise questions about the practicality of the implementation of the AIM program for teachers and highlight a gap in the current literature surrounding the methodology.

4.3 Student Engagement

4.3.1 Student engagement in primary and junior grades

A trend in the findings was the active participation and engagement of students in an AIM classroom. Anna noted, “As soon as you start the class, they’re engaged.” She also asserted “kids are constantly talking, even when I’m giving instructions. There will be 10 minutes that go by where they’re doing all the talking.” Throughout our discussion, Julia also noted that students were very engaged in the kinaesthetic aspect of the program, and that also helps to keep them focused.

Both participants highlighted the end goal of performing the play as being highly motivating for students. Julia said, “The younger students would say ‘Are we doing another play, Madame? What play are we doing this year?’ They enjoyed being a character and acting out their roles.” Similarly, Anna noted, “they love the whole idea of the production, at the end of the year we do a production, and they loved that part!”

These findings align with those found in Arnott’s (2005) study that students were actively engaged in oral production through the AIM program.
4.3.2 Decrease in student engagement in intermediate grades

Despite the overwhelmingly positive responses the participants received from students in primary and junior levels, both expressed hesitation when asked about implementing AIM in intermediate classrooms. Anna mentioned that she does not use AIM when teaching intermediate classes, especially because, “with intermediates, it’s a daily exercise of engaging them.” Julia uses a survey each year to decide if the intermediate students are interested in continuing with the methodology. When asked about challenges of the program, she elaborated on her experience using AIM with intermediate students:

As they get a little older, they may not be as cooperative with you, in terms of wanting them to be more engaged in repeating words after you and saying phrases after you and that’s part of their learning. So that was always a challenge, because they'd rather just sit there and say nothing.

As the current literature does not compare the level of engagement between differing grade levels of students using AIM, these findings bring to light what further research could explore to enrich the existing knowledge of the program.

4.4 Program Fundamentals

4.4.1 Kinaesthetic element

In connection to student engagement and the effectiveness of the program, both participants noted the importance of the kinaesthetic element of the AIM methodology. Julia stated:

The students are encouraged to repeat words and structures and do the actions with you, so that they are really internalizing the language. The process is action
based. So they are repeating, they're working with their hands; they're doing the actions with you.

Anna made a point to highlight that, “there are a lot of misconceptions about AIM, that there is constant gesturing going on, on the part of the kids and it’s not.” Julia’s ideas reinforced this notion, she said, “once the students understood the words they did not have to show you the gesture unless you were doing a kinaesthetic review of the gestures. Language acquisition became more motivating and students responded with greater success.” As a result of, “teaching them vocabulary in a very kinaesthetic way” (Julia), what they learned will stay with them. Anna had noticed that in her intermediate classes of students, whom she had previously taught using the AIM methodology, “as I’m speaking to them and they’re not understanding, sometimes they’ll just do a gesture and it’ll click.” This assertion suggests the importance of the kinaesthetic connection students make between words and actions.

Despite the perceived benefits of the kinaesthetic element of the program, both participants experienced resistance from older students as a result. Anna expressed her feeling that “there’s the kinaesthetic part of the lesson where I’m saying the word and they gesture, and it’s always around that, that you get resistance.” Julia described a similar experience with resistance, however the students were resisting speaking. She remarked, “It’s just easier to sit there and see you perform, so that was a challenge. Just getting them to speak.”

These findings suggest that further research may deepen our knowledge on the importance of the kinaesthetic element of the program and its effect on learners.
4.4.2 Repetition and scaffolding

Another important element of the program that both participants highlighted was the structure it employed, which included a great deal of repetition and scaffolding of language to support students’ learning. Julia said, “By repeating the target vocabulary and structures in a meaningful context the students are able to answer questions in full sentences and to manipulate the language to express ideas.” When asked about writing, Anna expressed that “it’s coming from a place of knowledge. They’re so familiar with the play, you’ve gestured the play, they can repeat the play, they’ve memorized the play, and so when they go to do a writing activity they’re very familiar with the words, the structures and everything’s scaffolded.” This repetition and scaffolding of vocabulary is central to the success of the program, according to both participants. Anna remarked that, “you’re always using that paired-down language,” even when supplementing the program with your own resources or themes. Both participants often remarked that the frequent and repetitive connection to authentic situations also supports students’ development and understanding of the language.

4.5 Perceived Outcomes

4.5.1 Student’s increase in oral proficiency

An overwhelming commonality in the findings is the participants’ positive reaction to the perceived increase in oral proficiency of their students since beginning the AIM program. Julia noted, “I find they are able to speak more and they are much more comfortable asking and answering questions. Their understanding is also much better.” She spoke of instances early on in her adoption of the program when she was taken-aback by the results, “I remember getting these moments when I would think, ‘That’s brilliant!"
They put that whole sentence together and they're in grade 1!’ I was so excited about the progress I was seeing.” Anna also shared an anecdote of a new Core French teacher who was shocked at a grade two student’s level of proficiency. “She was asking ‘Comment ça va?’ and in grade two the student was able to say to her, ‘Ça va bien parce que je joue avec mes amis.’ So she was blown away, but that’s because in grade one you play on that oral expression” (Anna). These findings align with those of Carroll (2011), Michels (2008) and Rousse-Malpat et al. (2012) that students in AIM classes demonstrate an increased oral proficiency.

4.5.2 Student’s increase in reading and writing skills

An unexpected commonality between both participants was the perceived improvement in students’ reading and writing skills. Julia explained that, “by repeating the target vocabulary and structures in a meaningful context the students are able to answer questions in full sentences and to manipulate the language to express ideas. […] And I also found that their writing really improved.”

Specifically in a grade 4 setting, Julia noted:

There were many opportunities for students to develop their writing skills through a gradual release methodology. The final activity is to write a story, and writing a story is not easy. However, because the students practiced answering questions and they practiced certain forms and they practiced the words and the expressions and they understand the language, it just comes out of them. They were more comfortable just being able to just write.

Anna described a similar experience:

When they’re writing, it’s coming from a place of knowledge. They’re so familiar
with the play, you’ve gestured they play, they can repeat the play, they’ve memorized the play, and so when they go to do a writing activity they’re very familiar with the words, the structures and everything’s scaffolded.

She shared an experience in a grade seven classroom of students who had been taught through AIM up to that year. “Because of AIM, they know how to attack a question, so they know they have to take up the question starter, use part of the question in their answer, so yes it does benefit the writing as well.”

These findings align with those of Rousse-Malpat et al. (2012) who concluded that the written skills of students in AIM classrooms were superior to those of students in non-AIM classrooms.

Furthermore, Anna noted the incredible ability of students to pick up on reading in French through the AIM program. “I’ll show them the word and they’ve never seen it in written form but they’ve seen me gesturing it, they’ve heard me saying it, they’ve said it, they’ve gestured it and they can read it” (Anna). Through AIM students are becoming so familiar with vocabulary, pronunciation and language structure in an oral capacity, that once reading and writing are introduced, they already have sufficient knowledge to aid them in meeting with success.

4.5.3 Students’ increased confidence and comfort in French

The most overwhelmingly positive outcome that both participants mentioned about the AIM program was students’ increased confidence and comfort using French and participating in class. When asked what she thought was an outcome for students she responded by saying, “I think confidence, because they feel like they are understanding, and they are able to speak and create sentences. I think that was one of the most
important accomplishments.” She further explains throughout the interview that students exhibited more comfort while using French in oral and written capacities. More specifically she noted an increase in comfort while posing and responding to questions orally and producing written compositions. Specifically regarding reading, Anna attributes this to the extensive scaffolding of the program. She explains that, “before they even read, before they even write, they're visually seeing the word, they're manipulating the word through the kinesthetic review. So by the time they actually see it and write it, they're very confident.”

These findings align with both of the following studies: Arnott, 2011 & Mady, et al. 2009. These studies concluded that despite the lack of evidence of an improved proficiency in French, students reported an increase in their confidence and comfort level in the class and while using the language.

4.6 Challenges of the Program

4.6.1 Limited resources for lessons

AIM does come with a variety of resources, however both participants spoke at length about the various ways they feel they are required to supplement the resources provided to them through the AIM program. Julia said, “In the junior and intermediate levels I found the program lacked variety in resources and interesting cultural activities.” She elaborated, “I feel like I needed other resources and ideas to keep the program motivating and to expand the language experience for my students.” Anna also noted that she pulls from various other sources online such as shared PowerPoint presentations, YouTube videos, Prezis, games and songs to supplement the AIM resources in her lessons. She also said, “I do stop and do major themes, for example Thanksgiving and
Christmas.” Despite supplementing non-AIM classroom activities into their program, both participants were certain to note that their use of other resources was always implemented through the AIM methodology and philosophy. Julia explained, “Once you implement the AIM philosophy, your whole program is built around a systematic approach to language learning.” She had also mentioned throughout the interview that the program allots for a significant amount of time for teacher-led, whole-group instruction. In her opinion, this was not feasible, especially in primary classrooms when students’ attention spans are limited.

Furthermore, both participants spoke of the need to create their own assessments, as they are not included in the program resources. Anna mentioned that:

The programs are divided into different cahiers so there’ll be a cahier for choisis le bon mot and they do tons of activities with choisis le bon mot. There is always a cahier A and a cahier B. A lot of teachers will use the cahier B as their assessment. I tend to make up my own assessment.

On the same topic, Julia said:

The program provides reading comprehension and writing activities that can be used for evaluation purposes. You will also need to create other ways to evaluate student achievement through oral questioning, short presentations, story retelling, self-evaluation and other activities that assess a student’s understanding of written text.

Despite having activities included in the program that can be used as assessments, both Anna and Julia expressed that it is required of the teacher to create their own in order to vary the form of assessment they are using. Julia did add that:
The way that you should be marking is I find really beneficial for the kids where they're working through their *cahier* and then what you do is you just simply circle their mistake. You're not putting checks or whatever, you're just circling their errors, then you're giving it back to them and they locate their error and they correct it and then they hand it back to you. So there's always room for improvement, I think every kid feel success that way.

These findings raise questions about the feasibility of the program’s implementation, as well as demonstrate a gap in the literature of teacher experiences regarding AIM implementation.

Additionally, Anna spoke openly about having only limited access to the resources AIM does include:

The Ministry doesn’t allocate money anymore like it used to, to specific programs so there’s no money at the board level. It comes down to the school level. It depends on fundraising, whether the principal will use some of the GSB towards new materials. [...] We’ve had to beg and borrow from schools that don’t use AIM but for some reason were given all the kits.

Julia did not express the same difficulties in accessing AIM resources, however this seems to suggest inconsistency throughout the board.

4.6.2 Consistency in AIM instruction in the school

When speaking about other Core French teachers in the school, Julia mentioned that often they were not all trained in the AIM program, “so they wouldn’t do it. So maybe those students would not have received the AIM program for that year. Then I get them back the next year so we’d continue with AIM. It wasn’t always consistent.” Anna
spoke about a similar experience, “You may go into one school and there may be one teacher doing AIM and the rest using the more traditional approaches. You may go to another school where it’s entirely AIM.” She added that she “would like the board to take a stand on it” in hopes of some consistency in schools for the teachers, but more importantly for the benefit of the students.

Anna also raised a point of concern in terms of consistency, in her school AIM is only implemented up until grade six, because, “high school is more grammar driven.” So the concern at the intermediate level is that the AIM program prepares students for the best understanding and use of the language, however it does not prepare them for the traditional, writing-focused instruction they will likely be met with in high school.

These findings indicate a gap in the literature surrounding the impact that inconsistency of AIM instruction between grades and schools may have on students’ achievement in French.

4.6.3 Resistance to adopt all strategies of AIM program

Both participants expressed their reluctance to adopt certain strategies within the AIM program. Julia spoke about maintaining that students speak only French in class, and the response recommended by the program is to stop the lesson and address the student who spoke in English individually. She explained that she does not feel it is conducive to the class, or to the child to be singled out. Anna also expressed her resistance to the strategy, “I don’t do that. I think it’s because of my own personality; I have difficulties singling out a child. That’s just not my approach at all. […] I will just say generally ‘tout le monde doit parler en français, pas en anglais.’” Their resistance to adopting all strategies within the program stem from their philosophies of education and
suggests that each teacher may implement AIM with slight variations in their classroom. Both participants also discussed their use of a point or ticket system. The AIM program provides a ticket system to reward students individually for their use of French in the classroom. Anna and Julia both spoke about using a similar system, however for rewarding students in groups rather than individually.

These findings align very closely with the findings of Arnott (2011). She discovered, through interviews and observations, that teachers implemented the AIM program in a variety of ways depending on their philosophies and experiences.

4.7 Conclusion

Despite working in different schools and having unique experiences, the data indicates a significant overlap in the participants’ experiences integrating AIM and perceived outcomes of the program. They highlighted that a commitment to the program and adoption of the methodology on the part of the teacher is crucial to its integration and success. Having experienced difficulties learning the gestures for themselves and expressing the anxiety it caused, they continue to support the program for its perceived benefits. Anna and Julia were both overwhelmingly positive about the engagement exhibited by students in primary and junior grades, as well as the improvement in oral, written and read French in their students. Not only did the students experience increased academic success, but the participants noted observing an increase in students’ confidence as well. Central to the program, is the kinaesthetic element that contributes to the engagement of primary and junior students as well as the resistance of participation on the part of intermediate students. For this reason, both participants have expressed a reluctance to integrate the methodology into their intermediate classes. Finally, the
challenges presented by the participants include: limited resources, especially in regards to assessment; a lack of consistency of program delivery in their schools; a disconnect between intermediate French instruction using the program and the traditional approach often delivered by high school teachers; and a resistance on the participants’ parts to certain aspects of the program. Despite these challenges, both participants remain positive about continuing to use AIM in their classrooms and hope to see constant growth and development in their students’ French proficiency.
Chapter 5: IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Introduction to the chapter

The following chapter will provide an overview of the key findings of this study and highlight the implications of this research. Broad and narrow recommendations, formulated based on this study’s findings, will be explained as well as recommendations for stakeholders in education. Finally, areas for further research raised from this study’s findings will be identified.

5.2 Overview of key findings and their significance

Both participants in this study highlighted a number of important factors to consider when implementing AIM into Core French classrooms. Initially, they expressed the importance of teacher commitment to the delivery of the program. They then shared their experiences during the initial learning of the methodology, and the anxiety it caused. They emphasized the dedication required of the teacher to learn and implement the gesture method across their entire language program.

In terms of student engagement, both participants noted an increase in that of students in primary and junior grades. These findings align with those found in Arnott’s (2005) study that students were actively engaged in oral production through the AIM program. However, students in the intermediate division were more reluctant to participate. The reason for this dissonance lies in the foundation of the program: its kinaesthetic element. This element, along with the program’s focus on repetition and scaffolding, are fundamental to the methodology.

Both participants observed an increase in students’ proficiency in oral, written, and read French. These findings align with those of Carroll (2011), Michels (2008) and
Rousse-Malpat et al. (2012) that students in AIM classes demonstrate an increased oral proficiency. Not only did students experience increased academic success, but also participants observed an increase in students’ confidence and enthusiasm for the language. These findings align with both of the following studies: Arnott (2011) and Mady, Arnott and Lapkin (2009), where students reported an increase in their confidence and comfort level in their Core French class, and while using the French language.

Despite the benefits experienced by participants, they also highlighted the challenges associated with the implementation of AIM. Notably, both participants highlighted a lack of resources available through the program, as well as through school funding. Most importantly, Julia and Anna felt it necessary to supplement the program with their own resources, especially in regards to assessments. Additionally, both participants experienced a lack of consistency in program delivery within their schools, as well as a concern for intermediate students who are instructed through AIM and are required to succeed in high school through more traditional instructional strategies. Furthermore, both participants shared their own resistance to specific aspects of the program that conflict with their teaching philosophies. Similarly, Arnott (2011) concluded that as a result of teachers’ individual philosophies of education, teaching styles, and experience, their adoption of the program varied and was unique to each teacher.

5.3 Implications

5.3.1 Broad: The Educational Community

The broad implication of this research is that there are some indications that AIM may be able to contribute to a wider problem of deficiency in French language fluency in
Canada. Despite the limited scope of the study, the findings suggest that if teachers are seeing improvements in students’ enjoyment of the French language and confidence in their abilities as a result of implementing this program into their classrooms, there is a likelihood that it can become part of the solution and contribute to Canada’s action plan for national French fluency.

5.3.2 Narrow: Professional Identity and Practice

The narrow implications for teachers are two-fold. Firstly, teachers must be aware that adopting a program, such as AIM, into their classrooms is a great undertaking. It requires commitment on the part of the teacher as well as the learning of a unique methodology and program. Secondly, the program does not come without its challenges. It requires teachers to continually tailor lessons to their class, as well as find or create supplemental resources, especially assessments, in order to provide a well-rounded curriculum. As a future educator, this research highlights the importance of using a variety of programs and resources to teach any subject, and avoiding reliance on a sole source.

5.4 Recommendations

The findings of this study lead to the two following recommendations:

a) School Board:

In order for the implementation of AIM to be consistent, the school board must take a stance. If they choose to implement the program, resources should be made readily available to all teachers, if possible even through online databases for ease of access and ability to share. Additionally, professional development should be provided for all teachers in the form of workshops or another form of group learning, to facilitate teacher
adoption and implementation of program methodology. This will help develop consistent training, as well as encouraging the development of a larger network of peer-support. This network can work towards a shared bank of supplementary resources to support AIM implementation board-wide, and enrich program delivery.

b) AIM:

The program itself could work towards filling the gaps that the participants noted in regards to the resources provided, especially assessments. Modifications to the program’s lessons to include opportunities for differentiated instruction, and greater variety of level-appropriate activities per lesson would contribute to the ease of implementation for teachers as well. Additionally, a choice in rewards systems and management of unwanted behaviours that avoid singling out individual children and focus on positive reinforcement would minimize teacher resistance to the adoption of these aspects of the current program.

5.5 Areas for further research

Based on the findings of this study, two areas of focus for further research are suggested. Firstly, the practicality and feasibility of the implementation of AIM for teachers is in question. There is a gap in the current literature surrounding the methodology, as well as teachers’ perceptions and experiences using and implementing it into their classrooms. The findings have highlighted the challenges experienced by both participants in implementing AIM, however the small-scale nature of the study leaves further research into other teachers’ experiences to be desired.

Secondly, the findings of this study indicate a gap in the literature surrounding the impact that inconsistent delivery of AIM instruction within a school may have on
students’ achievement in French. Further research surrounding the implications of the inconsistency of French instruction on students’ academic achievement could yield a deeper understanding of the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of AIM in improving students’ language proficiency.

5.6 Concluding Comments

The Accelerative Integrated Methodology (AIM) has been explored through the current literature and discussion with participants of this study. The positive endorsement of both participants, combined with findings from the literature (Arnott, 2005; Carroll, 2011; Mady, 2008; Mady et. al., 2009; Maxwell, 2001; Maxwell, 2004; Rousse-Malpat et. al., 2012), indicate the value of AIM and its potential contributions to student achievement in Core French classrooms. However, the discussion of challenges in integrating this methodology suggests modifications to be necessary for ease of implementation as well as potential for more widespread adoption of the program. The inconclusive nature of these findings imply that further research is required to shed light on teachers’ perceptions while integrating the methodology.
References


and Ontario Modern Language Teachers Association. (Eds.).


Appendix A: Consent Letter

Date: 

Dear Participant,

My Name is Olivia Cinelli and I am a student in the Master of Teaching program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). A component of this degree program involves conducting a small-scale qualitative research study. My research will focus on teachers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the Accelerated Integrative Method (AIM) in Core French classrooms in the York Catholic District School Board. I am interested in interviewing teachers who have over 15 years experience teaching Core French and have been integrating AIM into their classrooms for at least 5 years. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

Your participation in this research will involve one 45-60 minute interview, which will be transcribed and audio-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient for you, outside of school time. The contents of this interview will be used for my research project, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a research conference or publication. You will be assigned a pseudonym to maintain your anonymity and I will not use your name or any other content that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information will remain confidential. This data will be stored on my password-protected computer and the only people who will have access to the research data will be my course instructor Ken McNeilly. You are free to change your mind about your participation at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may also choose to decline to answer any specific question. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published, which may take up to a maximum of five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to participation, and I will share with you a copy of the transcript to ensure accuracy.

Please sign this consent form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. I am very grateful for your participation.

Sincerely,

Olivia Cinelli
Course Instructor’s Name: Ken McNeilly  
Contact Info: kenneth.mcneilly@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 from this research study at any time without penalty. I have read the letter provided to me by Olivia Cinelli and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature: ________________________________________

Name: (printed) ________________________________________

Date: ______________________________________
Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Part A: Background

1. How many years have you been teaching? How many teaching Core French?
2. What inspired you to teach Core French?
3. What grades and subjects are you teaching this year? (to clarify whether teachers are teaching Core French or French Immersion)
4. Can you describe the community in which your school and/or former school is situated (e.g. diversity, socioeconomic status)?
5. How engaged are your students in their Core French classes?

Part B: Teacher Practices

6. How long have you been using Accelerated Integrative Method (AIM) in your classroom?
7. To what extent do you integrate AIM into your FSL classroom?
8. What are your experiences integrating AIM in Core French classrooms?
9. How are these experiences similar or different depending on the grade level of the class?

Part C: Beliefs/ Values

10. Why did you integrate AIM into your Core French classrooms?
11. What might students gain from the integration of AIM in their Core French classroom?
12. Do these benefits change dependent on the extent or degree of AIM integration?
13. Have you observed any outcomes in students’ oral proficiency since integrating AIM into your Core French classroom?
14. What kind of feedback have you received from within the classroom?
15. What kind of feedback have you received from outside the classroom?

Part D: Next Steps/ Challenges

16. What challenges have you encountered while integrating AIM?
17. Can you think of any challenges you may not have encountered but could envision other educators encountering while integrating AIM?
18. What kinds of resources do you rely on to support your integration of AIM?
19. What are your future goals surrounding AIM integration in your Core French instruction?
20. What advice would you give to a beginning teacher looking to teach Core French at the elementary level?