Increasing Student Enrolment in Core French Programs in Ontario

By

Justine Barbosa

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 Justine Barbosa, April 2017
Abstract

Commitment to French language education in policy documents is not enough; it is time to identify key barriers and realize transformative possibilities in order to increase the number of graduating students who are confident and fluent in both of Canada’s official languages. With a focus on the new FSL curriculum, this study investigates Core French programming in Ontario. The primary objective of my research was to determine strategies that grade 9 Core French teachers use to motivate and inspire more students to continue pursuing French language education beyond the mandatory requirement. In order to learn how teachers are working to increase student enrolment in Core French, I have conducted a qualitative research study using purposeful sampling to interview 3 experienced Core French Educators working in the Toronto District School Board in Ontario. The semi-structured interviews revealed three findings that impact student enrolment in Core French. First, students must value what they are learning and it is important that they progress in their ability to communicate in French. Next, although the new FSL curriculum is making a positive difference in the classroom, the Core French teacher still plays a bigger role than the curriculum itself when looking at future enrolment. Teachers must properly engage students in language learning and must adopt a student-centered pedagogy. Finally, Core French teachers may face several challenges, such as a lack of resources, institutional barriers, and limited elective space that can decrease student enrolment. Several implications of these findings for in-service teachers, administration, school boards, and the Ministry of Education are analyzed in chapter 5. This research study is vital to improving French language education in Ontario.

Key Words: Core French, French as a Second Language, L2, Ontario FSL Curriculum, Enrolment, Student Engagement, Teachers
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my professor and research supervisor, Cristina Guerrero, for all of her support and guidance throughout the entirety of my research study. I am deeply appreciative of her willingness to always go above and beyond when helping her students. My research study would not have been possible without her role of mentor, educator, and researcher.

I would also like to thank the three Core French educators working in the TDSB for participating in my research study. Your dedication to improving French language education is truly inspiring. Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to share your in-depth experience and insights with me.

Finally, I would like to thank the most important people in my life, my family. Words cannot describe how grateful I am for all of your endless support throughout my educational journey. I would not be where I am today if it was not for your unconditional love, encouragement, strength, and sacrifices you made in order for me to follow my dreams.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 7
Introduction to the Research Study 7
Purpose of the Study 8
Research Questions 9
Background of the Researcher 9
Overview 11

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW 12
Introduction 12
Theme 1: Student Enrolment in Core French 12
   Student experiences with French 13
   Student attitude towards French 14
Theme 2: Functional Fluency in Core French 16
   The revised Ontario FSL curriculum 16
   Opportunities to speak French and hours of instruction 17
Theme 3: The Core French Classroom 18
   Classroom environment 18
   Instructional approaches 19
Chapter Conclusion 20

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY 22
Introduction 22
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

Theme 1: Meaningful and Purposeful Learning

Authentic learning via inquiry based learning

Gaining fluency in French

The cultural component

Theme 2: Effective and Innovative Teachers

Engaging Students

Student-centered teaching

Teachers play an important role

Theme 3: Overcoming Systemic Barriers in French Language Education

Program funding and resources

A dire need for qualified Core French teachers
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Introduction

Overview of Key Findings and their Significance

Implications

The educational community

My professional identity and practice

Recommendations

Areas for Further Research

Concluding Comments

REFERENCES

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter of Consent for Interview

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Appendix C: Interview Questions
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Research Context

Canada is a bilingual country committed to preserving the integrity and value of the French language. In the realm of education, this commitment is evident in French language programming at various stages of students’ learning. The Official Languages Act designates English and French as the official languages of Canada with equal status and equal rights (The Minister of Justice, 2015). In Ontario, the Ministry of Education has mandated that all students earn one compulsory credit in French as a Second Language (FSL) in order to obtain an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). Depending on whether the school board is Catholic or public, students in Ontario begin their studies in Core French in grade 1 or 4 up until grade 9, at which point it then becomes an elective giving students a choice of whether or not to continue their studies in French throughout secondary school.

Despite the fact that Canada is a bilingual country, research indicates a steady decrease in the number of Canadians able to conduct a conversation in French over the last 30 years (Statistics Canada, 2014). Proficiency in a second language is a valuable asset that every student should be able to rightfully attain in Ontario. FSL programs have been strengthened to promote greater language learning among Canadian students (Marshall, 2011). These efforts are evident in the new 2013 Ontario French curriculum where oral proficiency is the core goal with a focus on the ability to communicate French in authentic and culturally relevant situations (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013).

1.1 Research Problem

Although bilingualism provides numerous social, economic, political and personal benefits, student interest in learning French is significantly low (Charles, 2012). Only 3% of
grade 9 students who are required to successfully complete a French credit will continue to enrol in Core French in secondary school (Lapkin, Mady & Arnott, 2009). Research also tells us that as many as 75% of Core French students report having a negative experience in Core French (Rovers, 2013, p.6). It is evident that Core French programs in Ontario struggle at retaining and engaging students. Since such a small number of students continue to enrol in French, minimal courses are offered beyond grade 9. Federal funding is dispersed to FSL programs that promote functional bilingualism in Canada (Canadian Parents for French, 2012). However, despite the national support of learning a second official language, the staggering drop-out rates from FSL courses reflect a clear disconnect between the stated commitment and the realities of French language education in Canada. In addition, opportunities to use French outside of school are uncommon for the majority of students (Lapkin et al., 2009), and so the lack of enrolment causes a near impossibility for students to partake in this essential part of Canadian culture, and to embody this vital component of Canadian identity.

1.2 Research Purpose

In light of this problem, the purpose of this qualitative research study is to learn how Core French educators in Ontario are working to motivate students to continue pursuing French language education beyond the mandatory requirement. Specifically, I will be investigating what methods or strategies grade 9 Core French educators use to inspire students to continue on through grade 12 based on the new curriculum. This study will report findings and speak to both their theoretical and practical implications. This research is vital to improving French language education in Canada. Saying that we are committed to French language education in policy documents is not enough; it is time that we identify key barriers and realize transformative
possibilities in order to increase the number of graduating students who are fluent in both of Canada’s official languages.

1.3 Research Questions

I will be collecting data through semi-structured interviews that will permit flexible conversations, guided by specific questions related to my proposed topic. The main question guiding this research is: How do grade 9 Core French teachers engage and motivate students to continue to pursue French language education beyond the mandatory requirement?

The following subsidiary questions reinforce this study’s central research focus:

- In your professional experience, what are some reasons as to why student enrolment and student interest in Core French is low across Ontario?
- What are some significant differences that the new curriculum has made in the classroom and how has this impacted student motivation to learn French?
- How can the education system better support French teachers who work at increasing student enrolment?
- Have you ever taught students who may have had past negative experiences with Core French? If so, what are some strategies you use to overcome these negative experiences?

1.4 Background of the Researcher

My passion for bilingualism began at a very young age. I was raised in a traditional Portuguese home where Portuguese was the language of my upbringing. I would travel every summer to the Azores Islands in Portugal where I was able to immerse myself in a completely different culture. It was during my travels that I realized how beneficial multiple languages are, they essentially unlock a completely different world filled with experiences and relationships.
Thus, my desire to broaden my knowledge of languages continued throughout my studies and I was intrinsically motivated to study French beyond the mandatory requirement. As a product of the Core French system, I recognize that I represent a very small group of students who continued my studies in French beyond secondary school. I graduated from Wilfrid Laurier University with high distinction from the Honours BA French program and participated in a one-year cultural exchange program in France during my undergraduate degree.

While I was intrinsically motivated to learn French because of my passion for foreign languages, this was not the case for the majority of my peers. The Core French program was offered at my former secondary school, however, student enrolment was not significantly high. Many of my peers expressed an aversion or hesitancy to continue their studies in French. This reality in many schools across Ontario gives my research study a purpose. I found myself wondering why my experience with Core French was so rare in comparison to others. As an intrinsically motivated French student myself, how can I inspire those who do not share my experiences?

Thus, my passion for the French language has now progressed into a desire to learn how to support and motivate future students in order to increase enrolment. As an educator, it is important to learn what factors contribute to student engagement and motivation in order for learning to be effective. My personal experiences and exposure to culture, second-language acquisition, and the Core French system fuel my commitment to research in bilingualism and second-language education. I am committed to learning how I can further realize my commitment to French language education and how I can contribute to supporting more teachers to do the same.
1.5 Overview of the Study

In order to learn how teachers are working to increase student engagement in Core French, I have conducted a qualitative research study using purposeful sampling to interview 3 experienced Core French Educators in Ontario. In chapter 2, I will review the literature in the areas of language learning, benefits of bilingualism, student disengagement in French, stigmas and enrollment statistics. In chapter 3, I will further discuss the research design of my study. In chapter 4, I will present my research findings followed by a discussion of their importance in relationship to the existing research literature surrounding this topic. Finally, in chapter 5, I will determine the impact that the research results have on myself, as a teacher, and on my personal performance in the classroom as well as on the educational research community that I belong to. I will conclude by identifying numerous questions derived from my research findings, and suggest areas for future research.
Chapter 2: The Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

I review literature in the areas of educational approaches, language studies, and student engagement throughout this chapter. More specifically, I examine themes related to student enrolment in Core French in Ontario. I start by exploring the literature in the area of students' attitudes, experiences, and challenges with Core French programming. Next, I review research on students' functional fluency in French. Finally, I review research on instructional approaches and the learning environment of Core French classrooms.

2.1 Student enrolment in Core French

The existing research on student enrolment in Core French is important to my study. It is necessary to discover what factors currently account for low student enrolment in Core French in Ontario. These factors will provide an understanding of the instructional approaches secondary school teachers use to engage and motivate students to continue to pursue French language education beyond the mandatory requirement. This research provides a context for understanding the current status of Core French programs in Ontario.

Ninety percent of students studying French in Canada are enrolled in Core French programs. The other 10% of students studying French are enrolled in Immersion, Intensive or Extended French programs (Cummins, 2014). Despite the large percentage of students in Core French programs, only 3% of grade 9 students who are required to successfully complete a French credit that year will continue to enrol in French throughout secondary school (Lapkin, Mady & Arnott, 2009). The staggering decline in enrolment indicates a great challenge for FSL teachers to engage students and sustain their enthusiasm in French language education (Charles, 2012).
2.1.1 Student experiences with French. By the time a Core French student enters grade 9 in Ontario, he or she would have already been studying French anywhere from 5 to 9 years depending on whether the school board is Catholic or public. I am reviewing the existing literature on students' experiences with French that investigates the correlation between experiences and attitudes. These attitudes that stem from previous experiences can influence a student's future enrolment in French. Rovers (2013) reveals that 75% of students participating in her study reported having a negative past experience with the Core French program. Students described their Core French experience as repeatedly filling out worksheets that were too difficult for them and as a boring class where everyone was miserable. In addition, these students also identified a lack of hands-on and interdisciplinary activities as a reason for their poor attitudes towards French. Thus, these experiences with FSL in elementary school had a direct impact on their attitudes towards French by the time they entered grade 9.

Research indicates that students often experience dissatisfaction with their oral fluency and listening comprehension skills. Students may feel incapable of having a conversation in French with Francophones (APEF, 2004). This highlights a lack of French speaking and listening activities in classrooms (Rovers, 2013). The existing research also identifies dissatisfaction with language proficiency as a factor to discontinue Core French studies. Both Rovers and Lapkin et al. reference a survey done in 2001-2002 of grade 11 students in Atlantic Canada who dropped out of the Core French program (APEF, 2004). Many of these students were greatly disappointed with their lack of progress and their inability to freely express themselves in the target language. They would have wanted more importance placed on speaking French (Rovers, 2013; Lapkin et al., 2009). This research is unique in the sense that it looks at students who enrolled beyond
grade 9. These students continued beyond the mandatory requirement but dropped out prior to graduating secondary school.

Although negative experiences with a lack of progress or incapability to speak French can decrease student enrolment, these factors do not always prevent students from continuing their studies in French. A Canadian Parents for French (CPA) survey of university students who remained in Core French throughout secondary school revealed that:

Almost half reported that they could not understand spoken French; one-third expressed little confidence about their ability to function in a francophone environment; and most said they would not be able to carry on a conversation in French beyond a few set phrases (Charles, 2012, p.23; Lapkin et al., 2009, p.4).

These students recognized the gaps in their language learning experience yet it did not have a negative impact on their attitude to the extent that they discontinued their studies in French.

2.1.2 Student attitude towards French. Research indicates that the majority of students’ attitudes towards the study of French are increasingly negative. A study by Pamela Marshall with three grade 7 Core French classes indicates negative attitudes towards French. Some of the students made comments that they "wouldn't ever need [French] in life" and some indicated preference for compacted French schedules where they would have longer periods of French but only for a semester as opposed to shorter periods all year around because this way they could "get it over with faster" (Marshall, 2011,p.195). When completing questionnaires, they also expressed stronger disagreement with statements of wanting to continue their studies in French and with statements that knowing French is important to getting a good job and acceptance into a reputable post-secondary Institution (Marshall, 2011). This research indicates that a high
majority of students at this age do not particularly like French nor do they understand the benefits of French in terms of future academics or careers. Thus, their attitudes towards French language education reflect a great indifference.

Personal dissatisfaction with progress and language competencies can be considered a typical attitude of young Canadian students who decide to discontinue their studies in Core French (Lapkin et al., 2009). Students indicate that their attitudes towards French would improve with more hands-on classroom activities that promote greater speaking in the target language. Students recommended replacing the emphasis on verbs and grammar with new and exciting activities (Lapkin et al., 2009; Rovers, 2013). However, the CPA survey raises questions of how students remained motivated to continue their studies in French throughout post-secondary education despite recognizing their inability to understand and speak French. Merlin Charles (2012) would describe these particular students as intrinsically motivated. Intrinsically motivated students generally have more positive attitudes towards French language learning and find the experience much more rewarding. According to Charles (2012), a student's love of language learning - on its own, apart from any apparent benefit - increases the likelihood that he or she will become fully engaged in their language learning experience and remain life-long learners.

In conclusion, the literature in this area indicates that low student enrolment in Core French programs is greatly influenced by students' previous experiences that led to the development of negative attitudes in Core French. The literature pointed to two main areas of concern regarding negative student experiences and attitudes towards French: 1. a lack of progress in speaking the target language. 2. instructional approaches that were non-interdisciplinary and that focused heavily on written tasks. Given the correlation between oral
proficiency and student enrolment, this literature review will now examine research in the area of functional fluency.

2.2 Functional Fluency in Core French

The literature in this area indicates a consistent inability on the part of Core French programs to develop basic levels of oral proficiency among a large population of Canadian students (Cummins, 2014; Lapkin et al., 2009; Marshall, 2011). Studies done on Core French students' speaking skills indicate a great disconnect between the expectations of provincial government documents and the realities of the students' ability to communicate in French (Lapkin et al., 2009). These troublesome realities led to curriculum revisions and the implementation of Plan 2013, discussed below.

2.2.1 The revised Ontario FSL curriculum. In 2013 and 2014, both the elementary and secondary FSL curriculums were radically revised in Ontario (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013; 2014). There was a massive shift in focus from written to oral competencies since the previous curriculum focused on a grammar-based approach as opposed to a communicative approach. The existing research on Core French in Ontario was done during the time that the 1998 and 1999 curriculums were in effect. During this time, the goal was to develop basic oral communication skills in the earlier years of the program, while emphasizing writing and reading skills as the students' years of study in Core French progressed (Lapkin et al., 2009). However, even at the initial stages of the program, research indicates the Ministry's dissatisfaction with the grammar-based learning and with the lack of focus on the progression of students' oral skills (Lapkin et al., 2009). The curriculum revisions aim to provide students with an authentic and
tangible skill - the ability to communicate in French. This can be understood as a program overhaul to improve and support the goal of making French a real skill (Rovers, 2013).

With oral proficiency at the heart of the new curriculum, there is an action-oriented and communicative approach to learning French. There is a focus on the ability to communicate French in authentic and culturally relevant situations (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). It is evident that these curricular revisions speak to the students’ desires of wanting French language education to be geared towards the goal of speaking the language. Student communication in the target language is more spontaneous and necessitates the development of an internal grammar as opposed to relying on an external grammar or textbook (Rovers, 2013). There is currently a paucity of the impacts that this new, engaging, and action-oriented curriculum has on oral proficiency and the impact that it has in the classroom. When considering literature on students' attitudes towards learning French, the curriculum revisions may portend more positive student attitudes. However, there is no existing research that can substantiate this indication.

2.2.2 Opportunities to speak French and hours of instruction. Students in Ontario have minimal exposure to French beyond the classroom. Research indicates that opportunities to use French outside of school are uncommon for the majority of students (Lapkin et al., 2009). There is a common belief among Core French teachers that students' inability to fully acquire French is a direct result from a lack of class time exposing them to the language, however, research demonstrates that this is not true (Marshall, 2011). Research indicates that there is minimal improvement in a student's language proficiency with an added length of time in Core French studies (Cummins, 2014; Lapkin et al., 2009). Thus, starting Core French at an earlier age or increasing instruction time does not increase enrolment beyond grade 9 nor does it improve proficiency in French any better than those who had significantly less hours of instruction.
(Lapkin et al., 2009). However, more time does in fact yield better language learning results among students in Intensive French programs (Lapkin et al., 2009; Rovers, 2013).

In conclusion, the literature in this area illustrates that the new revised curriculum is closely in line with student attitudes regarding necessary improvements to the program. In addition, the intensity of instruction is much more beneficial to achieving functional fluency as opposed to that of an approach of beginning Core French at a younger age or increasing instructional time. Added time in the program also had no impact on the students' decisions to continue their studies in French. Having concluded that instructional approaches far outweigh time of instruction in terms of increasing language proficiency, this literature review will now examine research on effective instructional approaches used by FSL teachers.

### 2.3 The Core French Classroom

The FSL classroom environment and the teacher’s instructional approach highly influence both the student's attitude towards French and their ability to gain functional fluency. The existing research that investigates language-learning environment is important to my study of understanding low student enrolment in Core French. The literature highlights reoccurring themes that either contribute to or decrease both oral proficiency and student engagement in French.

#### 2.3.1 Classroom environment

In order to successfully acquire a second language, it is helpful if the student is willing to take risks and make mistakes. According to Charles (2013), students are only able to do so when the classroom promotes feelings of belonging and acceptance. Students are better engaged and participate more when they feel secure and comfortable in a classroom (Charles, 2013). Thus, a healthy learning environment promotes risk-
taking and active participation. Furthermore, language anxiety has a negative effect on language acquisition and on the student’s self-esteem. Anxiety primarily inhibits the student’s ability to communicate and causes them to underestimate their actual level of fluency (De Saint Léger, 2009). However, studies indicate that creating an autonomous learning environment lowers the amount of anxiety that students feel. This can be done by giving students more responsibility and self-directed learning. This instructional approach creates an atmosphere that increases student engagement, determination to continue to learn the language, and overall levels of proficiency (De Saint Léger, 2009).

2.3.2 Instructional approaches. The FSL educator's teaching practice has a huge impact on student engagement and language acquisition. Research indicates that interdisciplinary pedagogical strategies increase the student’s positive attitude and motivation in learning French (Rovers, 2013). Teachers are encouraged to incorporate music, drama, visual arts and dance into their Core French lessons (Charles, 2013; Rovers, 2013). A hands-on approach to teaching French has multiple benefits for both the student and teacher. A study on teaching grade 9 applied students French through the arts resulted in an increase in self-esteem, collaboration among classmates, overall student well-being and a positive learning environment (Rovers, 2013). In addition, when Core French educators use English as the language of instruction, student learning decreases and classroom environment is plagued. Despite teachers' challenges to maintain French as the language of instruction, they are expected and encouraged to do so. This is especially true in Ontario since students have minimal exposure to the language outside of the classroom (Lapkin et al., 2009). Charles (2013) also states that effective teachers integrate laughter, creativity, joy, and cultural insights in order to allow their students to fall in love with the language. Incorporating these elements into their teaching style promotes increased learning,
participation, and leads to lifelong learning (Charles, 2013). The existing literature reflects a need for instructional approaches that engage, motivate, and retain students in second language education.

In conclusion, the research in the area of the FSL classroom demonstrates how a healthy classroom environment fosters feelings of safety, belonging, and confidence. This is essential to the students' language learning process. In addition, interdisciplinary and hands-on instructional approaches benefit the teaching-learning relationship. Ultimately, Core French teachers need to incorporate various elements into their teaching style in order to increase student engagement and in return, increase enrolment.

2.4 Literature Review Conclusion

In this literature review, I examined research on student motivation to learn French, functional fluency, and the FSL classroom. This review highlights the extent in which attention has been paid to low student enrolment in Core French in Ontario. There is a clear disconnect between the stated commitment of second language learning in policy documents and the reality of the Core French program in Ontario. The literature raises questions about the Core French program's ability to engage, motivate, and retain students, as well as their ability to provide students with a practical tool in life - the capacity to communicate in French. The literature points to the need for further research on the implementation and success of the new Ontario FSL curriculum. As previously mentioned, there is no existing research that investigates the impact that the new curriculum currently has on student enrolment in French. Another limitation is that the existing literature investigates classroom environment and instructional approaches only in relation to its impact on oral proficiency. While oral proficiency plays an important role in
motivating students to continue studying French, there is no research that specifically ties instructional approaches to student enrolment. In light of this, the purpose of my research is to learn how grade 9 Core French teachers are using strategies and practices based on the new curriculum to motivate students to continue their studies in French beyond the mandatory requirement. I seek to understand the impact that the new curriculum has on student enrolment in Core French. We now turn to chapter 3 where I will discuss the research design of my qualitative study.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the research design of my study. This research study aims to learn what methods or strategies grade 9 Core French educators use to inspire students to continue enrolling through grade 12 based on the new French as a Second Language curriculum in Ontario. I will begin by reviewing the research approach, procedures, and data collection instruments. I will then elaborate more specifically on participant sampling and recruitment. Next, I describe the data analysis procedures and I review the ethical considerations related to my study. In addition, I identify several methodological limitations as well as list the numerous strengths of the methodology. To conclude, I finish the chapter with a short summary of key methodological decisions and my rationale for these decisions in light of the research purpose and questions.

3.1 Research Approach & Procedures

I conducted a qualitative research study in hopes of determining how Core French secondary school educators motivate students to continue pursuing French language education beyond grade 9. Qualitative research can be understood as a multidimensional world marked by diverse positions (LaRossa, 2012). This type of research interprets phenomena based on the meanings people attribute to them (Richards, 2009). Qualitative research findings can be generated through several approaches such as field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, and recordings (Richards, 2009). Not only is this type of research invaluable to the education world, researchers continue to demonstrate how qualitative research is effective when trying to learn what happens in second language education classrooms (Richards, 2009).
According to Richards (2009), qualitative research allows us to study teachers’ perceptions of language teaching and their pedagogic practices.

My research approach includes both a literature review on Core French education and semi-structured interviews with three Core French teachers. While the existing literature provides a good understanding of the factors that influence student motivation to learn French, the interviews were necessary components to learning some of what was still unknown. The interviews gave significant insight to the current status of the Core French program with the new curriculum. Furthermore, the interviews identified areas for further research.

The semi-structured interviews, that permit flexible conversations, were guided by specific questions related to my proposed topic. All interviews were recorded using a Smartphone and then fully transcribed. Next, I analyzed what was learned from the data and organized it according to themes related to French language education. Finally, findings were generated by the data categorized by themes. These findings will be discussed later on in chapter 4.

3.2 Instruments of Data Collection

The main instrument for data collection used in my study is the semi-structured interview protocol. Thus, data was collected through the semi-structured interviews I had with three participants. This is a common method of conducting qualitative research. Interviews attempt to understand specific circumstances that tell us how and why things actually happen (Dilley, 2004). Semi-structured interviews are one of the best instruments in determining teachers’ perceptions about what methods or strategies can increase student enrolment in Core French.
3.3 Participants

In this section, I review the sampling criteria I established for participant recruitment. Next, I review a range of possible avenues for recruiting teachers as participants. Finally, I introduce each of the participants with a focus on their professional experience.

3.3.1 Sampling criteria. I have established the following criteria for the 3 experienced Core French Educators in Ontario who are the participants. Firstly, participants will have experience working with grade 9 students in a Core French classroom. It is important that teachers have experience teaching Core French students during the last mandatory year that they are required to study French since it then becomes optional after grade 9. In addition, participants will have experience teaching both the 1999 and the 2013 French as a Second Language curriculum so that they can speak to the significance of curricular revision aimed at enhancing students’ oral proficiency in French. It is important to determine whether the new curriculum is having a positive impact on the students’ ability to communicate in French. Finally, participants must have a minimum of 5 years experience teaching Core French. This is necessary since the study is also interested in learning teachers’ perspectives on enrolment fluctuations over time.

Although it is not a requirement, participants would preferably have experience teaching in multiple French programs (Immersion, Core, and Extended). Experience teaching multiple French programs could be beneficial to the participants’ perspective on negative stigmas and necessary supports to increase student proficiency.

3.3.2 Sampling procedures. Given the small-scale nature of my research study and the methodological parameters, the participants were recruited based on convenience sampling. Convenience sampling entails drawing samples that are easily accessible to the researcher and
who are willing to participate in a study (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). All of my participants serve as volunteer samples (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). As a student in the Master of Teaching program at OISE, I belong to a community of teacher colleagues and professional educators. By being immersed in this community, I was able to use my existing contacts in order to network and recruit participants.

3.3.3 Participant bios. The three participants are addressed by pseudonyms in order to honour the confidentiality clause outlined in the consent letter (Appendix A). All three of these Ontario Certified Teachers currently work in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB).

Lucie has 12 years of experience teaching French in a classroom. She has worked for the TDSB for approximately 20 years. She has taught Core, Extended, and Immersion French programs. Lucie provides support and delivers professional development to other French teachers. Lucie moved to Canada at a young age and was an English as a Second Language (ESL) student. She had an aptitude for learning French because it was very similar to her native language.

Helene has been teaching Core French for approximately 9 years in total. Her teaching career began at a private school in Ontario where she taught French from grades 5 to 12. She then completed the Bachelor of Education program at OISE/University of Toronto and became a certified teacher. Having taught the Junior, Intermediate, and Senior division, she has the most experience teaching grade 9 students. Helene is passionate about sharing her love for languages and culture with her students.

Karine has been teaching Core French for 15 years in total. She was a French Immersion student herself from K-12. Karine has the most experience teaching grade 9 and grade 10 students. She has a preference for teaching the Intermediate division because of the challenge it
presents to keep students engaged in French at this level. Since languages play an important role in Karine's life, she has travelled to over 43 countries across the world.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis procedure began once I fully transcribed all three interviews. The research questions functioned as an interpretive tool when I coded the interview transcripts. Each interview transcript was coded individually, organized under specific categories of data, and then further organized by themes within these categories. Finally, I synthesized the findings and spoke to their significance in relation to what the existing literature has already established. It is also important to look at anything that the participating teachers did not speak to, thus, the null data. The data analysis procedure requires that the researcher critically investigates the participants' understanding of their personal experiences and beliefs based on both what is said and what is not said (Dilley, 2004). The data analysis procedure involves synthesizing new findings as well as determining further areas for study.

3.5 Ethical Review Procedures

As a student in the Master of Teaching program, the Ethics Review Committee at the University of Toronto approved the act of conducting these interviews. Prior to doing any interviews, all three educators had to give their permission to participate in my research study. Participants were contacted via email. They were then sent a letter of consent to be read in detail and filled out, as well as an interview protocol letter (please refer to Appendix A & B). Both letters include key information pertaining to my research study: a brief summary of my study, privacy and confidentiality implications, the data collection process, and participant expectations. Those who agreed to the terms set out in the letters were asked to sign both letters.
and were given a copy for their records. Participants agreed to the 45-60 minute interview while being audio-recorded.

Several procedures are in place to protect the identity of the participant and the school. Firstly, all participants were given a pseudonym. Secondly, their identities will remain fully confidential and any information that directly identifies their schools or students was removed. Thirdly, all of the audio recordings were stored on my password-protected Smartphone and will be discarded after five years. I have thanked all three participants and kept them notified about my research progress, including the release of my qualitative study on T-space.

Most importantly, participants were informed of their right to withdraw their participation at any point of the research study. There are no known risks to participation in this study.

3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths

In this section, I address several methodological limitations and strengths of my research study. In terms of limitations, the ethical parameters that the MTRP is confined to may be considered as the biggest limitation. This study only allows me to interview teachers; thus, I am restricted from having any contact with students or parents. I am also unable to observe any classrooms or conduct student surveys. Critics argue that interviews can be unreliable sources of research since participants "may say what they think researchers want to hear" (LaRossa, 2012, p.681). These interviews will tell me about methods and strategies that increase student motivation to learn French, however, I am not able to observe classrooms while these strategies are being executed.

Secondly, I am limited to a small number of participants. While these interviews will still inform my research study, the findings cannot be generalized to the experience of all Core French teachers in Ontario. While I would prefer a larger sample, research indicates that a small
sample is still legitimate qualitative research (LaRossa, 2012).

In terms of the methodological strengths, semi-structured interviews permit flexible conversations and allow me to gain more in-depth insight than a survey or questionnaire would permit. By giving teachers a voice, we are allowing them to speak to what is most important to them in relation to Core French programs. According to Dilley, interviewing is a means of discovering what others feel and think about their worlds (2004, p.129). The interviews required that each teacher reflects on their pedagogical practices and also gave them the opportunity to describe their understanding of Core French both in theory and in practice. Thus, the biggest methodological strength of my study is the interview process, which allowed me to understand the teachers’ behaviour and perceptions in context (Dilley, 2004).

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has explained the research methodology of my study in great detail. My research seeks to learn how secondary school educators are working to increase student enrolment in Core French programs. I have discussed the research approach, procedures and data collection instruments, as well as the participant criteria and the recruitment procedures. I then described the data analysis procedure and the ethical considerations. I have explored several limitations and strengths pertaining to my research design. In conclusion, I have provided a short summary of key methodological decisions as well as my rationale for these decisions. Next, in chapter 4, I report the research findings.
Chapter 4: Research Findings

4.0 Introduction

This chapter will present the research findings of my qualitative study. The purpose of my study is to learn how Core French educators in Ontario are working to motivate students to continue pursuing French language education beyond the mandatory grade 9 requirement. I specifically focus on the new French as a Second Language (FSL) curriculum when investigating what methods or strategies grade 9 Core French educators use to inspire students to continue on all throughout secondary school.

The foundation of my research is based on two core components: an extensive literature review that investigates factors contributing to low enrolment in Core French, and three semi-structured interviews with experienced Core French teachers in Ontario. All three interviews were first transcribed, and then coded numerous times. Next, I thoroughly analyzed and categorized the data from these interviews in relation to three themes.

I will present and organize my findings in three themes:

1. Meaningful and purposeful learning
2. Effective and innovative teaching
3. Systemic barriers in French language education

All three participants have been given pseudonyms in order to protect their identities. Lucie, Helene, and Karine are experienced Core French teachers who work in the TDSB. These participants were recruited based on convenience sampling. By belonging to a community of teacher colleagues and professional educators at OISE, I was able to use my existing contacts to network and recruit participants.
The first theme, meaningful and purposeful learning, investigates factors that impact enrolment in Core French from the students’ perspectives. All three interviews indicate that students must value what they are learning in a Core French classroom. Thus, the learning must be meaningful and it is important that the student sees a progress in their ability to communicate in French. These factors can have a positive influence when a student is deciding whether to continue enrolling in Core French. I will discuss how these findings are consistent with and substantiate the research presented in my literature review in Chapter 2.

The second theme shifts focus from student learning to teacher practices by investigating factors that impact student enrolment in Core French based on what the Core French educator does in a classroom. The interviews indicate that while the new 2013 FSL curriculum has made positive differences in the classroom, the Core French teacher still plays a bigger role than the curriculum itself when looking at future enrolment. The participants estimate that the new curriculum will likely increase student enrolment in Core French, however, it will ultimately depend on the teacher's disposition and approach in following the directives of the new curriculum. These findings are a significant addition to the literature review in Chapter 2 that draws upon Charles' (2013), Lapkin et al.'s (2009), and Rovers' (2013) research on FSL instructional approaches. While the existing research analyzes low enrolment through a lens of instructional approaches, my qualitative study investigates this theme in relation to the new curriculum. Thus, my research examines the implications of Core French teachers’ practices from an entire new lens that has not been analyzed by the existing literature.

Finally, the third theme investigates systemic barriers that Core French teachers struggle with in Ontario. Despite how hard a teacher may work at motivating students to continue their studies, there are other factors that contribute to low enrolment in which teachers cannot control.
I will discuss a wide variety of issues related to a lack of resources, institutional barriers, and limited space for electives. This theme will segue into Chapter 5, where I will discuss implications and suggest areas for future research.

In conclusion, these three themes will provide educators, like myself, with strategies and methods that can positively impact student enrolment in Core French. All of the research presented in this chapter is crucial to understanding why enrolment is low and how educators can turn this situation around by motivating more students to continue their studies in French. By making the students' learning meaningful and purposeful, teachers can allow for greater rates of motivation to continue with their French studies.

4.1 Meaningful and Purposeful Learning

Student motivation to learn French is influenced by whether or not the learning is meaningful and purposeful in a Core French classroom. Thus, it is important to establish which components students value of the new FSL curriculum. The findings presented in this theme connect to my research question, “what are some significant differences that the new curriculum has made in the classroom and how has this impacted student motivation to learn French?” The three subthemes discussed below provide an understanding of the components in an FSL classroom that students find important. Authentic learning, the ability to communicate in French, and the focus on Francophone culture are at the centre of the 2013 FSL curriculum. All three interviews demonstrate how these aspects of the new curriculum positively impact student motivation to learn French.

4.1.1 Authentic learning via inquiry based learning. All three participants discussed the ways in which the freedom of the new FSL curriculum allows for inquiry and authentic
learning. The new emphasis on authentic learning and the possibility for inquiry have had tremendous benefits on student motivation in French. According to the participants, this can be a key determinant of whether or not a student will continue to enrol in Core French. As such, it is important for educators to recognize that inquiry-based learning and authentic learning are the keys to unlocking a future of high enrolment in Core French. Lucie explains what inquiry-based learning could look like in an FSL classroom:

The action oriented approach in the curriculum is great because it ties in with what English is doing, inquiry-based learning. Inquiry-based learning is very popular and it is in very high demand right now. So what types of inquiries can our students do, even in Core French? It’s almost like they’re on a quest to find something through the use of a language, the use of culture, through the different strands, [teachers] can embed them.

Karine supports Lucie's point of view by stating that the new curriculum requires teachers to create authentic opportunities for their students. This strategy of incorporating inquiry and authentic learning into a Core French classroom is the key to ongoing engagement. According to Karine, students can use inquiry to determine what vocabulary they need to know and to determine how to communicate their ideas. Inquiry, as opposed to endless worksheets, allows for authentic language learning. Students are no longer limited to random phrases or vocabulary on worksheets; they can now use inquiry to facilitate communication in the target language.

These findings validate the research in Chapter 2, section 2.2.1 that discusses the FSL curriculum revisions. Research highlights both the Ministry's and students' dissatisfaction with the old curriculum's grammar-based learning approach and with the lack of developing oral skills (Lapkin et al., 2009). Rovers' (2013) research analyzes how student communication
in the target language should be more spontaneous and necessitates the development of an internal grammar as opposed to relying on an external grammar or textbook. This spontaneous and natural communication is exactly what Lucie and Karine believe that the new curriculum allows for in the classroom. The new curriculum promotes the development of oral communication via inquiry and authentic learning.

Another strategy that Core French teachers can use to motivate students is to simulate authentic situations for students that they may actually experience in life. Inquiry and authentic language learning are the keys to inspiring students to learn French. When students become the facilitators of their own learning and when they make connections between the language learning happening in class and the real world surrounding them, there will be more opportunities for motivating students, which can lead to higher rates of enrolment. The pronounced focus on authentic language learning and inquiry in the new FSL curriculum makes learning meaningful and brings value to the Core French classroom. Authentic language learning also facilitates oral production in the target language, which will allow students to gain fluency in French.

4.1.2 Gaining fluency in French. Students do in fact measure their success in Core French with their ability to communicate. It is quite reasonable that students would want to complete their studies in a language class with the ability to actually speak the target language. The findings indicate that the new curriculum’s focus on oral communication is increasing student motivation to learn French. This subtheme connects back to my research question of how the changes brought about by the new curriculum are impacting student motivation in the classroom.

According to all three participants, the new emphasis on oral communication in French has drastically changed things in the classroom for the better. Whereas the old curriculum
focused heavily on grammar and writing structures, the new curriculum is centered on spontaneous, authentic communication in the target language. Helene believes that the new focus on oral communication, as opposed to grammar, allows each student to flourish in a Core French class. Helene's words mirror the existing research on the FSL program overhaul with the new curriculum. Section 2.2.1 of Chapter 2 outlines the Ministry's shift from writing to speaking in hopes of increased language learning. Helene provides us with a strategy for increasing student communication in French. She executes daily activities in her lessons, such as "la question du jour", which requires students to actively participate orally by answering a new question every day. These questions can become an entry point for a meaningful, class-wide discussion. Core French teachers can easily implement this collaborative and communicative activity in their classrooms at the beginning of each lesson. Helene validates this activity by stating that she has seen progress by doing these activities that engage students in spontaneous oral communication where they have to think about what they want to say on the spot. Likewise, when I asked Karine whether or not students were progressing in their ability to communicate, she stated that students in her classroom are indeed gaining higher levels of fluency in the target language with the curriculum’s focus on oral production.

This data mirrors the research in my literature review in section 2.1.1 that explores students' dissatisfaction with their French language education. Both Lapkin et al. (2009) and Rovers (2013) reference a survey of grade 11 students in Atlantic Canada who dropped out of Core French (APEF, 2004). Many of these students were greatly disappointed with their lack of progress and their inability to express themselves in the target language. Gaining low levels of fluency in French was a prime contributor for abandoning their Core French studies (Lapkin et al., 2009; Rovers, 2013). Lucie’s experiences substantiate Rovers' and Lapkin's research:
We did a study within [TDSB], where we had the students at the end of grade 8, and we asked them what they wanted out of French by the end of their grade 8 experience. Many of them said they wanted to be able to speak French. So I think the whole idea of being able to communicate is a big focus for students. If they’re not able to do it or are finding it hard to do it because there’s a lot of sitting down, writing and filling in blanks and sheets, that becomes tedious after a while. And then if you get out into the real world and you’re not actually able to use your words, it becomes very frustrating.

A bigger focus on oral production in the classroom leads to higher levels of fluency among students. According to the existing research and to my findings, the more a student can speak French, the more motivated they will be to continue enrolling. Students want to complete their Core French classes with a tangible skill, the ability to communicate. This not only validates existing literature, but also points to a hopeful future of increased enrolment. The existing research in Chapter 2 highlights student desire to be able to speak French and the interviews indicate that this is now actually happening in Core French classrooms since oral communication is the focus of the new FSL curriculum. In addition to authentic learning opportunities facilitating the process of gaining fluency in French, students also find the cultural component in the new curriculum meaningful and important.

4.1.3 The cultural component. Another significant improvement of the new FSL curriculum is the focus on Francophone culture. All three interviews were consistent in regards to how this new aspect of the curriculum impacts student motivation to learn French. The participants agree that students find meaning and value in the exploration of diverse cultures. According to Karine, students are engaged and excited about the cultural component because the world is increasingly globalized and so it is meaningful for students to learn about a part of the
world that they know nothing about. As such, this allows for greater cross-cultural understanding. However, Helene focuses on students who find this learning meaningful because the culture is an integral part of their identity:

My students are from a multitude of backgrounds themselves. So whenever I bring in cultural elements, it is really fascinating to them. They often say they have been there, or that is the same continent they lived in, or their parents came from there. They find a connection because our school is so multicultural. I think that is common in Toronto. The students really love the cultural components of the new curriculum.

The cultural component of the new curriculum is successful in making learning meaningful and valuable. It engages students in language learning by providing them with a critical understanding of the global context of French. Students find purpose in learning about different parts of the world. As a Core French teacher, it is important to not only teach a language in a local context, but to also explore cross-cultural connections and the language’s presence across the world. In sum, integrating culture in a Core French classroom, in addition to authentic learning and a focus on oral fluency, allows for more opportunities to inspire and motivate students in French language education.

4.1.4 Conclusion. In brief, the new curriculum is making a significant and positive difference in Core French classrooms. Student enrolment in Core French is highly influenced by meaningful and purposeful learning. The new curriculum’s emphasis on authentic learning, increased oral production, and intercultural understanding is important to students and will surely influence their decision to continue their studies in French. Having discussed the ways in which the key components of the new curriculum motivate Core French students, I will now shift focus from student perception to teacher practices.
4.2 Effective and Innovative Teachers

The data highlights how the method of teaching and course structure plays a bigger role in motivating Core French students than the curriculum and course content itself. Effective and innovative teaching can motivate students in language learning. This theme connects to two of my research questions in particular: "How has the new curriculum affected your instructional approach to increasing student motivation?" and "What are some examples of methods or strategies that grade 9 Core French teachers can use to inspire students to continue on through grade 12?”. The first two subthemes will explore the importance of knowing how to engage students in language learning and the importance of having a student-centered teaching practice. These two factors can positively impact students’ experiences in Core French. The last subtheme will further discuss how a teacher can be his/her own most powerful tool in increasing student enrolment. The three subthemes discussed below will provide educators with methods and strategies that can motivate more students to continue their studies in French. I will begin by analyzing the findings related to student engagement.

4.2.1 Engaging students. Language learning is meant to be an exciting and fun experience for students. All three participants agree that teachers who want to increase student enrolment in Core French must properly engage their students. This requires a lot of self-reflection on the part of teachers.

Firstly, it is important to consider how feasible it is for Core French teachers to engage their students. According to Karine, "The new curriculum is wide open. It gives a lot of latitude for teachers to do what they want in engaging students in doing language". Thus, teachers are in a better position to engage and motivate their students thanks to a more flexible curriculum. The
new curriculum has made it easier for teachers to adapt their teaching style to their unique classrooms.

Secondly, there are crucial steps that teachers must take in order to be able to properly engage their students in language learning. Effective engagement requires teachers to get to know all of their students. We need to know who we are teaching prior to even considering engagement. According to Lucie, the students' individual interests must be considered. Core French teachers can strengthen the program by discovering what students are interested in and by finding a way to connect these interests to what they are learning in the classroom. A strategy that Lucie recommends is taking big ideas from textbooks but then streamlining them according to individual interests. This is one way that teachers can differentiate tasks and engage students, leading to higher levels of motivation.

Thirdly, engaging students is a continuous process that takes time. However, this process can have tremendous benefits on student motivation when implemented properly. Lucie explains the process of engaging students: "With the new curriculum, students are now given more choice and there is more openness. When we start considering the students' interests and programming, and start building those things into the classroom, they'll be engaged. Once students are engaged they'll want to be there". Lucie's words mirror the research in Chapter 2, section 2.1.1 on negative student experiences in Core French (Lapkin et al., 2009; Rovers, 2013). With the old FSL curriculum's main focus on grammar structures, there was little opportunity to engage students in a variety of ways. As a result, Core French students were heavily displeased with the way that the program was structured as a result of the curriculum. The lack of engagement and low levels of fluency that students developed were prime contributors for their decision to drop
out of Core French. Thus, this research in the literature review substantiates the findings that effective engagement is key to increasing student enrolment.

Thus, the process of engaging students in Core French is now facilitated by the new curriculum as it already promotes student engagement. Teachers must then consider their individual learners’ styles and incorporate them into the classroom. Students will be engaged and in turn, they will be motivated to learn French. The findings indicate that a strategy as simple as getting to know your students can allow for better programming, active engagement, and higher chances of future enrolment. I will now analyze student-centered teaching, which is closely aligned with student engagement.

4.2.2 Student-centered teaching. The data reveals the importance for Core French teachers to be facilitators of learning, as opposed to being the sole focus of the entire classroom. This subtheme will demonstrate how student-centered teaching allows for the formation of positive relationships in the classroom, collaboration, individual participation, and increased functional fluency in the target language. While it is evident that student-centered teaching can be beneficial to all subjects, this subtheme will demonstrate why it is especially necessary in a Core French classroom because it promotes the development of oral communication in a second language.

Helene, who adapted her teaching practice to accommodate the new FSL curriculum, provides us with a personal strategy of how the setup of a classroom can promote student-centered learning: "This grouping of desks works much better with the new curriculum than having desks in rows. Students are in groups of four or six and they work together in their teams. They are constantly talking to their partner, talking to the group, helping each other." The setup of Helene's classroom was non-traditional and very effective in promoting student
communication in the target language. This strategy facilitates student collaboration, a heavily
emphasized component of the new curriculum. It also allows for authentic learning as students
are working with peers on units based upon real life situations.

In a traditional classroom where desks in rows all face the front of the classroom, the
teacher is at the center of everything and is the sole focus. I have experienced teaching Core
French in classrooms with traditional setups where students are in rows, thus I can testify to
the value of Helene's setup strategy. Collaboration and peer-to-peer interaction in the target
language is not as easily facilitated when students are separated into rows as opposed to being
in small learning communities or groups. Students in Helene's classroom are in small
communities and the focus shifts back and forth from teacher to community. The teacher must
now circulate around the classroom since the sole focus is no longer at the front of the room.
Something as simple as the placement of desks in a classroom can make such a significant
difference in students' language learning experience.

While Helene focused on the physical setup for a classroom, Karine describes her
student-centered teaching through activities. When executing oral communication activities,
Karine starts by giving her students a stimulus such as an image. Instead of giving all of her
students an identical and prescribed list of vocabulary, they can use their own knowledge of
the language to communicate ideas about the stimulus. Limiting students to the teacher's own
list of vocabulary would not help students develop their French, it would simply restrict them.
This student-centered activity works well in motivating students in Karine's classroom as they
are in control of the learning while Karine is simply facilitating the activity by way of
providing help with vocabulary and articulation of ideas when needed.
Students in a Core French classroom, at the secondary level especially, all have different knowledge bases of the language. Some students may have an immersion background or experience with extended French, while others may even have access to French through their family members. Karine reinforces how French educators must acknowledge and embrace student-centered teaching in order to allow each student to progress in French at their own pace:

This is where teaching is moving towards. How do you become teacher facilitator instead of a sage on the stage? [Teachers] are not the only knowledge holders in the room. As 21st century teachers, we need to validate what students are coming into our classrooms with and use that to our advantage and as the baseline.

Student-centered teaching changes the atmosphere of a classroom, benefits language learning, and thus, can have a positive impact on student motivation to continue learning French. The old curriculum's focus on grammar and writing structures did not promote student-centered teaching because skill-and-drill exercises and worksheets pervade class-time under teacher-centered instruction.

These findings connect back to section 2.1.1 of my literature review that focuses on students' experiences in French. The grade 11 students in Atlantic Canada who dropped out of Core French were displeased with instructional approaches that were non-interdisciplinary and that focused heavily on written tasks (Lapkin et al., 2009; Rovers, 2013). These students recommended a complete overhaul by replacing the emphasis on grammar with new and exciting activities. This existing research reinforces the importance of student engagement, as discussed in the first subtheme, as well as the importance of student-centered teaching approaches in Core French. These students were not granted the positive experiences in Helene and Karine's
classrooms. This contrast highlights the extent of which the new curriculum is improving the quality of Core French programs. The new focus on oral communication does in fact permit and require student-centered teaching. Although all three interviews highlight the importance of student engagement and student-centered teaching practices, they will not be enough to increase enrolment as stand-alone strategies. The next subtheme emphasizes the importance of effective teaching and points to additional considerations for Core French educators.

4.2.3 Teachers play an important role. The teacher will always be the biggest determinant of student enrolment in Core French. While I will discuss institutional barriers later on in this chapter, two participants agreed that student enrolment is highly impacted by the Core French teacher's efficacy. When Helene was asked whether she thought the new curriculum would impact student enrolment, she indicated that the curriculum in itself is not enough:

Enrolment will only increase if teachers properly implement the new curriculum. They will have to be good teachers who implement the curriculum, who are excited about it, and who bring their own energy. If they don't, then students aren't going to care. It all depends on the teacher. Is the teacher implementing the curriculum and are they passionate about the language?

Similarly, Karine reinforces and substantiates Helene's thoughts on student enrolment when asked the same question. She does not believe that it is the curriculum per se, instead it is the teacher's approach in following the directives of the new curriculum. Put simply, teachers are responsible for making pedagogical decisions that will motivate students to continue. Students will not decide to enrol in Core French solely because of the new curriculum. Rather the new curriculum paired with the teacher's disposition and practices will impact enrolment.
While the findings analyzed in the first theme indicate that the new curriculum is having a positive influence on student motivation, the teacher must properly implement the curriculum into the classroom. These findings are closely aligned with research done by Charles (2013) explored in Chapter 2, section 2.3.2, whereby he claimed that instructional approaches must engage, motivate, and retain students in second language education. Charles (2013) echoes the words of Karine and Helene when stating that effective teachers integrate elements such as laughter, creativity, and joy into their teaching practice in order to allow their students to fall in love with a language. Certain teaching styles promote greater learning, active participation, and can lead to lifelong learning (Charles, 2013). Thus, the teacher's passion and disposition paired with the new curriculum is what can increase student enrolment in Core French beyond the mandatory requirement of grade 9. The curriculum will have absolutely no bearing on future enrolment if the teacher is not effective. In brief, student engagement facilitated by student-centered teaching must be paired with effective and passionate educators who know how to implement the new curriculum, especially the components that students find most meaningful and valuable.

4.2.4 Conclusion. This theme has explored the substantial research related to effective and innovative teaching practices. All three interviews urge French educators, who are committed to increasing enrolment and building their program, to properly engage students, adopt a student-centered teaching practice, and reflect on their own disposition in the classroom. Teachers have the capacity and ability to give students positive learning experiences in the Core French classroom. This theme points to the necessity of educators realizing their own potential in motivating and inspiring students in language learning. Increasing enrolment begins with us.
That is to say, we are our strongest means of improving the current situation despite the systemic barriers that we may face.

4.3 Overcoming Systemic Barriers in French Language Education

The interviews raise legitimate concern regarding challenges that Core French educators in secondary schools face when trying to motivate students to continue studying French. These challenges are often beyond that of a teacher’s ability to rectify and to a certain extent, are often uncontrollable. This theme will explore numerous barriers to increasing enrolment in Core French such as a lack of program funding, a high demand for quality FSL teachers, and the structure of secondary school education in Ontario. This theme connects to three of my research questions in particular:

1. In your professional experience, what are some reasons as to why student enrolment and student interest in Core French is low across Ontario?
2. Do you have any personal experiences challenging negative experiences that students may have had towards French language programming? If so, what are some ways in which you have challenged these negative experiences?
3. How can the education system better support French educators who work at increasing student enrolment beyond grade 9?

This theme will address existing factors that can contribute to low enrolment and will segue into my final chapter where I will recommend future areas for research. This theme also points to a gap in the literature as many of the challenges discussed below are not the main focus of the existing research on factors that contribute to low enrolment in Core French. Thus, while the literature review in Chapter 2 explicitly substantiates the findings in themes one and two, the findings in this theme are not the focus of the existing research. Perhaps the existing research
does not address these challenges, such as a lack of funding or resources and high turnover rates in FSL, because these challenges can vary across the province. Each school board, as well as particular schools in the same board, allocate funding differently. In contrast, research on the Ontario FSL curriculum applies to every Core French classroom in the province of Ontario. The curriculum is standard across the province, whereas funding and resources can vary drastically. I will now begin the analysis of this theme with the findings related to inadequate funding and resources in Core French.

4.3.1 Program funding and resources. All three participants addressed numerous issues related to funding as a prime barrier for educators who are trying to motivate students to continue their studies in French. While it is not unusual that a lack of money causes challenges in the realm of education, the findings indicate that Core French teachers at the elementary level are in an isolated position where it affects them most. This finding is significant to my research study since issues in elementary Core French lead to profound challenges in increasing enrolment beyond grade 9.

The staggering dropout rates in Core French indicate that there may have been a buildup of negative experiences throughout the years, resulting in students making the decision to stop pursuing French language education. Interestingly, two participants discussed negative student experiences as perhaps a cause of elementary school French teachers being itinerant, as they do not have their own classrooms. Helene discussed how hard it is for a grade 9 teacher to turn around years of negative experiences students may have had in elementary school. Helene believes that it is not the teacher’s fault per se, but rather the conditions that the French teacher is subjected to in an elementary school:
At the elementary level, French teachers do not get their own classrooms. I actually just read an article about this earlier. They have to push their little carts around from class to class. They don't have bulletin boards to put up things, to advertise for their subject, to help students learn. They are constantly feeling stressed out and not prepared to begin a 40 minute class because they have to take everything off their cart. It's just a lot harder to teach without your own classroom. So I don't think principals value French as much as other subjects in terms of allocating rooms and resources.

The implications of French teachers not having their own classroom are extremely problematic. It causes a situation whereby students may perceive the French teacher as one with equal status of any other teacher, or simply be considered as a guest in their homeroom teacher’s classroom. But most importantly, Core French teachers do not have a space to promote and facilitate student learning in the target language. Consider the visuals and stimuli that are usually posted around a classroom. Schools use English as the target language, and so this is what surrounds students in a classroom all of the time. Core French teachers cannot use space or setting to reinforce what they are teaching when placed in a classroom that is simply not conducive to helping students learn French.

In addition, being an itinerant teacher automatically takes away from the length of instruction. Preparing classrooms for lessons takes time and time is a valuable resource in a 40-minute period. Whether this preparation requires setting up a computer, taking out and dispersing materials, or getting students ready to begin learning, much of a teacher’s instruction time is lost while having to move around the school from classroom to classroom. Having to travel across the entire school and constantly pack/unpack materials is the everyday reality of a Core French teacher in an elementary school who is not allocated their own classroom.
Lucie also addresses the issue of elementary Core French teachers not having their own classroom, but from the point of view of students. The time spent on setting up a French lesson causes disruption and puts students off-track. Lucie says that, “It becomes a little tough for them. It goes hand in hand with that idea of disruption. By the time [teachers] get settled and set up, it does cause disruption and then kids are like no, we’re not doing it.” This does not seem to be a major concern until you factor in the amount of times that this will happen to a single student in the span of their 5-9 years in Core French. This issue negatively affects both the teacher and students. It is hard to motivate and inspire students without the space to promote learning, with insufficient time to get through a lesson, and with substantial and frequent disruptions. Collectively, these can contribute to low enrolment in Core French in Ontario beyond grade 9.

Helene and Lucie's statements challenge the research on hours of instruction, which was analyzed in Chapter 2. According to Marshall (2011), there is a false belief among Core French teachers that students' inability to fully acquire French results from a lack of class time and exposure to the language (Marshall, 2011). According to several researchers, an added length of time in Core French studies does not drastically improve language proficiency nor does it increase enrolment (Cummins, 2014; Lapkin et al., 2009). This research indicates that periods shorter than 40 minutes will not weaken the student's second language acquisition. However, the fact that Core French teachers are itinerant negatively impacts teachers and students. While less instruction time may not drastically harm a student's proficiency in French, it does cause disruption, which impairs the students' readiness to learn and the teacher's ability to engage learners.

Karine and Helene also address issues concerning a lack of funding in relation to resources, supports, and professional development. The TDSB has been recently restructured and
as a result of certain cutbacks, instructional leaders have been replaced with one learning coach per school. Various instructional leaders would previously work within a secondary school and function as subject-specific support for teachers. Learning coaches are not subject specific and so teachers no longer have guidance from subject-specific expertise. Furthermore, the teacher to support-staff ratio has largely increased being that there is only one learning coach per school. Instructional leaders were also responsible for implementing professional development for teachers. Helene indicated that there is not enough subject-specific professional development available to Core French teachers. Similarly, Karine states that the professional development on the new francophone culture component has not been sufficient. Above all, what is most concerning is how they address the challenges some teachers face in motivating students in French when they have textbooks from the 1990s. It is extremely difficult to make learning meaningful for students when learners do not see themselves reflected in the resources. These barriers do not promote active engagement, authentic learning, or student-centered teaching. The challenges analyzed in this subtheme may also contribute to the high turnover rate of FSL teachers, which will be discussed in the following subtheme.

4.3.2 A dire need for qualified Core French teachers. This subtheme will explore issues on the administrative level that can hamper student enrolment in Core French. While the last subtheme focused on problematic funding realities, this subtheme will speak to the research findings concerning high turnover rates and the quality of Core French instructors. Lucie shed light on the difficulties of finding and maintaining effective French teachers when she explained that:

There are places where there has been a lot of disruptions, a lot of teachers coming in and out. It’s very difficult to find a French teacher. We have many French teachers but
what kinds of qualifications do they need to teach and adapt a program based on the needs of the students they have in front of them? All of these obstacles become an issue as to why a grade 9 student, by the time they get to grade 9, imagine 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, becomes [frustrated]. Then they say ‘hey, let’s get this done and then I’m over it’.

Karine reinforces this buildup of negative experiences that accumulate when emphasizing that students suffer from inconsistencies in teaching and arrive in Core French in grade 9 with gaps in learning due to high teacher turnover rates in elementary schools. This problematic reality provides us with significant insight as to why students may decide to drop Core French as soon as they can. These situations indicate years of negative student experiences that are not conducive to learning. This is a barrier that grade 9 Core French teachers face when trying to motivate students to continue pursuing French language education. Although it may be difficult for Core French teachers to turn it all around in one year, it is certainly possible by implementing the strategies provided in this chapter and with hard work and dedication. In addition to funding related issues and gaps in learning as a cause of inconsistent teaching, Core French educators may also be challenged when trying to increase enrolment by the very nature of secondary education in Ontario.

4.3.3 The structure of secondary education in Ontario. Other factors that are unrelated to Core French specifically can also contribute to low enrolment. Students in secondary schools have many prerequisite courses and little room for electives. In addition to having limited space for electives, the school may offer a variety of diverse courses. An abundance of options can deter students from continuing in French. These are inevitable realities that require Core French teachers to work extra hard at motivating students. Students who attend Catholic schools have even less room for electives, as they must take one religion course per year. Thus, regardless of
everything that Core French teachers can do to increase enrolment, Lucie indicates that there will always be students who do not continue their studies in French:

I’ve seen students who were highly motivated and decided they weren’t going to take French anymore because they have other interests. Often times, one of the biggest things for them is that they have all of the different options at a high school level. When students get to high school, they start thinking already ‘what am I going to do 4 years from now?’ So they start tracking what courses they need in order to do X. By the time they make that decision, maybe French isn’t on the forefront because they want to do a math or a science, or something more directed towards what they want to do.

The struggle for Core French teachers thus becomes showing students the value of learning a second language and the fact that it is an asset to any field or career that students may want to pursue. Teachers must make explicit connections in their Core French classroom to students' individual interests, post-secondary pathways, and to a broader global context. While the main objective is to teach students the French language, the opportunities that open up to bilingual students further on in life are plentiful. As well, the learning does not have to stop at gaining proficiency. FSL educators can teach students how to speak the target language through different lenses. We must ask ourselves how we, as passionate French educators, distinguish our courses from the other electives offered beyond grade 9.

4.3.4 Conclusion. All in all, Core French educators may face numerous barriers that are out of their control when trying to motivate students to continue their studies in French. Students may not always drop French because they dislike the language per se, but rather as a result of cumulative negative experiences, post-secondary pathways, or other interests. Funding, resources, the availability of high quality instructors, and the very nature of secondary school
education contribute to low enrolment in Core French. While this presents an enormous challenge for dedicated teachers who are working to increase student motivation, it can be done. The numerous strategies proposed in the first two themes of this chapter can overcome these systemic barriers. By ensuring that learning is meaningful and by being an effective and innovative teacher, there is more opportunity for higher rates of enrolment.

4.4 Chapter Conclusion

In sum, this chapter has explored extensive findings in relation to factors that influence student enrolment in Core French. The findings were organized into three themes:

1. Meaningful and purposeful learning
2. Effective and innovative teaching
3. Barriers in French language education

The first theme discussed factors that influence enrolment from the students’ perspective. Student motivation to continue studying French comes from learning that is meaningful and has purpose to each individual. Students measure their success by their ability to communicate in French, thus this skill influences enrolment. Authentic learning, the focus on oral communication, and the cultural component are all aspects of the new curriculum that students find meaningful.

The second theme focused on teacher practices and its impact on enrolment. The Core French teacher is a greater determinant of enrolment than the curriculum or course content. The data indicates that the new FSL curriculum will likely increase student enrolment, however, it will ultimately depend on the teacher's willingness and ability to implement the new curriculum.

Finally, the third theme investigated barriers that Core French teachers struggle with in Ontario. This includes a lack of funding and resources, gaps in learning, and the structure of
secondary education. These can create negative experiences for Core French students and thus, hamper enrolment. This theme will lead us into Chapter 5, where I will discuss implications and suggest areas for future research.

These findings are important to helping Core French educators motivate and inspire students to continue their studies in French. This chapter provides insight into why enrolment is low and ways in which the present situation can change for the better. The various strategies and methods discussed in this chapter can positively impact student enrolment and help build a solid Core French program in schools all across Ontario. My research study sheds light on factors that are creating positive differences on students' experiences in Core French, as well as further areas for improvement. With an increased awareness of solutions to barriers, stakeholders can continue to strengthen and improve French language education. With collaboration, passion, and dedication, schools can work together towards resolving the systemic realities challenging Core French teachers.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.0 Introduction

This chapter concludes my research study that investigates factors contributing to low enrolment in Core French in Ontario beyond the grade 9 requirement. With a specific focus on the new French as a Second Language (FSL) curriculum, this study identifies methods and strategies that Core French educators can use to inspire students to continue throughout secondary school. I will begin this chapter with a brief overview of the key research findings as discussed in Chapter 4, and their significance. Next, I will discuss the implications of these research findings for both the educational community and my own professional identity and practice. I will then provide several professional recommendations that address the implications of my research findings. Finally, I will outline several areas for further research on the Core French program in Ontario.

5.1 Overview of Key Findings and their Significance

The research findings analyzed in Chapter 4 are crucial to understanding why enrolment in Core French is low and how educators can turn this situation around by motivating more students to continue their studies in French. As discussed in the previous chapter, my study identifies key research findings that were organized into three themes:

1. Meaningful and purposeful learning
2. Effective and innovative teaching
3. Systemic barriers in French language education

The first research finding indicates that student motivation to learn French is influenced by whether or not the learning is meaningful and purposeful in a Core French classroom. All three interviews identified the key components of the new 2013 FSL curriculum that are making
a significant difference in the classroom: authentic learning, the ability to communicate in French, and the focus on Francophone culture. With a better understanding of what students' value and appreciate in a Core French classroom, teachers can use this knowledge to allow for greater rates of motivation to continue with their French studies.

The second research finding indicates that the method of teaching and course structure plays a bigger role in motivating Core French students than the curriculum and course content itself. Effective and innovative teaching motivates and inspires students in language learning. This finding urges committed French educators to properly engage students, adopt a student-centered teaching practice, and reflect on their own disposition in the classroom. French educators are the strongest means of improving the current situation despite all of the barriers that they may face.

The third research finding identifies systemic barriers that Core French educators may face when trying to motivate students to continue studying French. These challenges are often beyond that of a teacher’s ability to rectify and to a certain extent, are often uncontrollable. Students may not always drop French because they dislike the language per se, but rather it is a result of cumulative negative experiences, post-secondary pathways, or other interests. Funding, resources, the availability of high quality instructors, and the very nature of secondary school education in Ontario contribute to low enrolment in Core French. This finding is significant because stakeholders can continue to strengthen and improve French language education with an increased awareness of existing barriers.

In summary, my research findings address factors contributing to low enrolment in Core French and provide teachers with strategies that can motivate more students to continue their studies in French. Firstly, student motivation to continue studying French comes from learning
that is meaningful and has purpose to each individual. Secondly, the Core French teacher is a
greater determinant of enrolment than the curriculum or course content. Finally, Core French
teachers may face numerous barriers that are often out of their reach or control, but there are
solutions to overcome these challenges. Having discussed the key research findings of my study
and their significance, I will now identify numerous implications related to these findings.

5.2 Implications

The key research findings discussed above have several implications on both the
educational community and my own professional identity and practice as an educator.
Understanding the implications of my research is vital to improving French language education
in Ontario. While the existing literature analyzes low enrolment in Core French programming,
my qualitative study investigated this issue in relation to the new FSL curriculum. Thus, my
research findings highlight several implications that are relatively new to the educational
community, seeing as they were not present in the existing literature because they simply did not
exist. I have organized my discussion of implications into two sections: the educational
community and my professional identity and practice.

5.2.1 The educational community. As this is a broad term and encompasses a wide
variety of stakeholders in the realm of education, I want to clearly identify four facets of the
educational community on which I will be focusing: In-service Teachers, Administration, School
boards, and the Ministry of Education. I will discuss implications as they pertain to all four facets
in each section.

5.2.1.1 Implications for how the new FSL curriculum is implemented. A significant
implication that emerged from the research findings is that it reveals a gap in terms of adequate
training on how to implement and teach the new FSL curriculum for in-service Core French
teachers. Administration, school boards, and In-Service Core French teachers are all implicated by this finding. Administration and school boards are responsible for providing in-service Core French teachers with the necessary professional development on the new FSL curriculum. For example, the first research finding indicates that students find meaning and value in the new curriculum's emphasis on authentic learning, increased oral production, and intercultural understanding. These are all components of a new curriculum that were not as highly emphasized in the old FSL curriculum. With that said, in-service Core French educators require professional development in order to implement these new components into their classrooms. While pre-service French teachers are trained under the new FSL curriculum, more experienced Core French educators were not, having been trained according to older curriculums during their teacher preparation programs.

According to Rovers (2013), the new curriculum represents a complete program overhaul in order to improve and support the goal of making French a real skill. With a program overhaul, Core French teachers require training to adapt their teaching practice to the new curriculum. Training should be centered on the core components of the new curriculum, such as, authentic learning, the communicative approach, and Francophone culture. Two participants indicated that this gap has yet to be addressed by administration or the school board. As mentioned in section 4.3.1, Helene indicated that there is not enough subject-specific professional development available to Core French teachers. Similarly, Karine stated that the professional development on the new cultural component has not been sufficient. While all three participants provided me with specific examples of how they themselves incorporate authentic learning, oral production, and Francophone culture into their classrooms, this may not be the case for other Core French teachers. Thus, this implication is significant because without professional development, some
Core French educators may not know how to effectively implement the components of the new curriculum that motivate students to continue their studies in French. In order to fully reap the benefits of a curriculum that can increase enrolment, school boards and administration must provide in-service teachers with training on how to effectively implement the new curriculum into their classrooms.

5.2.1.2 Implications for the programming of Core French. The research findings indicate that the new curriculum gives teachers a great deal of freedom and liberty in the ways in which they can engage and motivate students in language learning. The freedom of the new curriculum can positively influence student enrolment in Core French. However, this finding reveals that the increased freedom can also lead to inconsistent teaching and learning in Core French. All four facets (in-service teachers, administration, school boards, and the Ministry) are implicated by this finding as it identifies a feature of the new curriculum that may negatively impact the learning of Core French students. Helene and Karine both state that one potential downfall of the new curriculum is the lack of structure. Helene, who is a fan of the new curriculum, expresses her concern of inconsistent teaching:

With the old curriculum, we knew exactly what grammar points students would be learning. It was actually listed for us. So every teacher knew based on a student's grade what they already knew. In this new approach, if you don't know who was teaching them previously, you have no idea what they covered. [Core French Teachers] can do whatever they want.

Karine's words mirror Helene's when she questions, "If [the curriculum] is not going to give [teachers] a list of themes or things that teachers must teach, then how can you argue that a teacher at Murphy secondary school is teaching the same thing as a teacher at Burnett secondary
school?" Thus, the research findings indicate that the structure of the new curriculum gives teachers a lot of freedom to engage and motivate students in language learning, but it can also lead to inconsistent teaching among different schools and grades. I will provide several recommendations for the educational community that address this implication.

5.2.1.3 Allocation of funding and resources. A lack of funding and resources presents systemic barriers for Core French teachers and has vast implications for the experiences of students. As indicated in the research findings, a lack of funding contributes to negative experiences that some students may accumulate in Core French. This is significant because it highlights the fact that a student's initial years in Core French programming can highly determine their decision to continue with or drop out of French language education. This finding highlights the correlation between program funding and future enrolment in Core French. As analyzed in section 4.3.1, the participants discussed a lack of funding in relation to resources, textbooks, professional development, and most importantly, the allocation of classrooms. This finding implicates the Ministry of Education, administration, and school boards because they are responsible for program funding. Funding can vary across the province. Each school board, as well as particular schools in the same board, allocate funding differently.

Rovers (2013) reveals that 75% of students participating in her study reported having a negative experience with the Core French program. Lucie substantiates Rovers' research by describing the impact of disruptions and negative experiences that students will accumulate in Core French over the years. This accumulation can be a reason as to why a student in grade 9 may not want to continue their studies in French. These disruptions can be a direct cause of elementary school teachers being itinerant, as many do not have their own classroom. Helene also mentions that teachers who do not have their own classroom are "constantly feeling stressed
out and not prepared to begin a 40 minute class because they have to take everything off their cart”. Thus, this lack of resources at the elementary level can cause disruptions and hamper the Core French teacher’s disposition, which in turn can lead to the accumulation of negative experiences in Core French. This implication is significant as it identifies a major factor that can lead to low enrolment. Administrators, school boards, and the Ministry now have an increased awareness of the correlation between program funding and student experiences, which impacts future enrolment.

5.2.2 My professional identity and practice. I will discuss the ways in which several research findings have implications on my professional identity and practice as a Core French teacher and researcher. The findings have made three significant impacts on my practice. I now recognize the importance of modeling, being a flexible and reflective teacher, and collaboration among Core French educators. These implications will help guide my continued growth as a language teacher and will support my mission of increasing student enrolment in Core French.

Increased enrolment means absolutely nothing to me if my students are not gaining a tangible skill, the ability to communicate in French. The research findings demonstrate how important it is for students to gain fluency in the target language. As a Core French teacher, this goal begins with me. The research findings have made me realize the importance of only speaking in French with my students and the importance of creating authentic language situations in order to help my students gain fluency.

In addition, I have learned the importance of always being a flexible and reflective teacher. The research findings indicate that the Core French teacher is one of the biggest determinants of future enrolment, and so it is imperative that I continuously grow, learn, and adapt my teaching practice in order to be an effective and innovative teacher. This will require
both self-reflection on my own teaching practice and on-going feedback from my students. The findings indicate that students’ experiences in Core French will impact future enrolment, therefore as a teacher, I need to ensure that I am addressing my students’ needs and creating engaging learning experiences.

Lastly, the research findings have provided me with alternate perspectives on collaboration among educators. Prior to doing this research study, I thought that collaboration among teachers within a school was important and necessary. I now realize the importance of collaborating with French educators all across the spectrum, especially elementary Core French teachers. This realization came from several research findings including, students’ initial years in Core French impacts enrolment, elementary Core French teachers often lack subject-specific support, and the freedom of the new curriculum. Collaborating with elementary teachers would provide secondary school teachers with a good idea of where the student stands in their language-learning journey. I will discuss the specifics of what this collaboration would entail in the recommendations section. If all Core French teachers unify and collaborate, we could build a solid Core French program across the province that will increase enrolment, make teaching consistent, and produce fluent speakers in the target language. Collaboration is one of the keys to overcoming many of the systemic barriers that Core French teachers may face when trying to motivate students.

In summary, the research findings have numerous implications on my professional identity and practice as a Core French teacher and researcher. As a result of having conducted this qualitative study, I have gained significant insights that will improve my teaching practice. I will focus heavily on helping students gain fluency, I will always be a reflective teacher and
lifelong learner, and finally, I endeavour to collaborate with Core French educators from different schools and across both the elementary and secondary panels.

5.3 Recommendations

I will now propose several practical and feasible recommendations for the educational community in response to the research findings discussed earlier in this chapter. My recommendations will be organized in relation to the three implications in section 5.2: implications for how the new FSL curriculum is implemented, implications for the programming of Core French, and the allocation of funding and resources.

5.3.1 Recommendations for the implementation of the new FSL curriculum. In-service Core French educators require training and support to effectively implement and teach the new FSL curriculum. If the research findings indicate that students find meaning and value in authentic learning, Francophone culture, and a focus on oral tasks, then teachers need to know how to properly incorporate these components of the new curriculum into their teaching practice. A simple and practical solution for school boards to address this implication is to provide in-service Core French teachers with subject-specific professional development that targets the new curriculum. I am recommending a wide variety of professional development formats such as professional learning communities, mentors, online webinars, lunch and learn sessions, and centrally offered professional development that occurs several times throughout the year. Extensive professional development is the key to bridging the gap between the old and new program. This recommendation would support and prepare Core French teachers to implement the new FSL curriculum. Furthermore, it would also provide Core French teachers with the opportunity to engage and collaborate with one another.
5.3.2 **Recommendations for the programming of Core French.** The research findings indicate that the lack of a rigid structure in the new curriculum gives Core French teachers the freedom in their teaching to motivate students in language learning. However, this freedom is somewhat problematic as it can lead to inconsistent teaching. To address this implication, I am recommending that Core French programs adopt a semi-structured approach that allows educators to freely teach according to the students’ preferences, identities, and needs, but with some sort of guidance from the school board and/or the Ministry of Education. This guidance would ensure that students across the province have more equal opportunities to achieve similar goals and levels of French proficiency. Given that there is no set curricular mandate for grade-level grammar requirements, school boards and/or the Ministry could simply propose a guideline or progression for all Core French teachers to follow. In terms of recommendations for Core French teachers, I recommend a non-formative diagnostic assessment to be completed by incoming grade 9 Core French students. This will give Core French teachers a thorough understanding of what grammar structures students already know and which concepts may need teaching. In addition, grade 9 Core French teachers can collaborate and contact the Core French teachers from the feeder elementary schools in the area to better determine what students have already been taught. Thus, my personal goal of creating and maintaining a collegial relationship with elementary Core French teachers would tremendously benefit grade 9 teachers.

5.3.3 **Recommendations for the allocation of funding and resources.** The research findings indicate a correlation between a lack of program funding and students' negative experiences in Core French that may hamper future enrolment. As such, committed and dedicated school administrators must consider the importance of properly funding the Core French program at their schools. While it is not always possible to give every Core French
teacher their own classroom, some sort of cart should be provided for teachers to easily travel with their materials across the school. Administrators should also consider the classroom locations in the school and schedule French instruction times in a practical and logical manner that would minimize the teacher’s travel time from classroom to classroom in order to prevent disruptions and give the teacher more time to set up their lesson. Finally, Core French teachers should have access to new resources and materials, especially considering the complete overhaul of the FSL curriculum. Teachers need resources that are up-to-date with the new curriculum focusing primarily on oral production. Thus, teachers’ resources should reflect the new curriculum’s objectives and key components to reap the benefits that meaningful and purposeful learning can have on future enrolment.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

I will suggest two possible academic extensions of my research based on the nature of my qualitative study. The Master of Teaching program required me to complete my qualitative research within a limited scope and timeline. In addition, my research was governed by ethical parameters determined by the University of Toronto that did not allow for any interaction with or observation of students.

Firstly, I recommend a longitudinal mixed-methods study with a duration of 4-5 years whereby researchers can follow students from their initial years of Core French in elementary school to their transition into grade 9 Core French. I am making this recommendation because of the findings that indicate a correlation between student experiences in Core French and future enrolment. This would provide the educational community with a more in-depth understanding of what students are experiencing, the extent to which the curriculum is promoting fluency
among students, and students’ reasoning behind their decision to either pursue or drop out of Core French beyond grade 9.

Secondly, I would recommend that more research be conducted on the new curriculum’s impact on future enrolment. Given that the FSL secondary curriculum was published in 2014, it was still too early to have any sort of statistics or exact figures that determine how it has affected enrolment. Thus, I am proposing that a similar research study be done in the near future once students have had the opportunity to begin their studies in Core French under the new curriculum. For example, this could begin next year with students in grade 4 for a total of 5 years. My reasoning behind this recommendation comes from the fact that by then teachers would have had more experience implementing the new curriculum and students would have had more exposure to oral French. All the existing literature on Core French is based on the old curriculum, therefore my study would benefit from additional research on the same topic in the future. The extension that I am recommending, with statistics and numbers, has been done in the past by the non-profit volunteer organization, Canadian Parents for French (Canadian Parents for French, 2012).

5.5 Concluding Comments

I have provided a thorough conclusion for my research study throughout this chapter. First, I introduced the topic of my qualitative study and provided a summary of the purpose. I then summarized the key findings discussed in Chapter 4 and their significance to my research. These findings were organized into three themes: meaningful and purposeful learning, effective and innovative teaching, and systemic barriers in French language education. Next, I discussed the three significant implications of my research findings on both the educational community and my own professional practice and identity. Firstly, teachers require proper training on
implementing the new FSL curriculum. Secondly, the freedom of the new curriculum may lead to inconsistent teaching in Core French among different grades and schools. Lastly, there is a correlation between program funding and student experiences in Core French which impacts enrolment. I then provided numerous professional recommendations that both in-service teachers and school boards can use in order to address the implications of my research findings. Finally, I outlined two possible extensions of my academic work by proposing a longitudinal study and an analysis of statistics on enrolment in the future.

Research studies, such as mine, are imperative to the work of educators who are committed to increasing student enrolment in Core French. My study identifies what is currently working, what still needs to be done, and how the educational community can bridge this gap to promote enrolment and bilingualism in French. Saying that we are committed to French language education in policy documents is not enough. It is time to put plans into action. My study has identified key barriers and transformative possibilities that can increase the number of graduating students who are fluent and confident in both of Canada’s national languages.
References


Dilley, P. (2004). Interviews and the philosophy of qualitative research Ohio State University Press, 180 Pressey Hall, 1070 Carmack Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1002.
STUDENT ENROLMENT IN CORE FRENCH

Retrieved from


Appendix A: Letter of Consent for Interviews

Date:

Dear ______________________, 

My Name is Justine Barbosa 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 low student enrolment in Core French beyond grade 9. I am interested in interviewing teachers who have years of experience teaching French in a secondary school in Ontario. 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. I may also present my research findings via conference presentations and/or through 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. Any information that identifies your school or students will also be excluded. The interview data will be stored on my password-protected computer and the only person who will have access to the research data will
be my course instructor Dr. Cristina Guerrero. 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 during the interview. 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 to participation, and I will share a copy of the transcript with you shortly after the interview 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,

Justine Barbosa

Justine.Barbosa@mail.utoronto.ca

Course Instructor’s Name: Dr. Cristina Guerrero

Contact Info: Cristina.Guerrero@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 Justine Barbosa 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

Introductory Script: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study and for making time to be interviewed today. This research study aims at investigating how Core French educators in Ontario are motivating students to continue pursuing French language education beyond grade 9, the mandatory requirement. The purpose of this research study is to explore methods or strategies based on the new FSL curriculum that can increase student enrolment in Core French. This interview will last approximately 60 minutes, and I will ask you a series of questions focused on Core French in a secondary school setting. I want to remind you that you may refrain from answering any question, and you have the right to withdraw your participation from the study at any time. The interview is confidential, the only person who will have access to the research data other than myself will be my course instructor, Dr. Cristina Guerrero. As I explained in the consent letter, this interview will be audio recorded. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Background Information

1. How long have you been teaching Core French in a secondary school?

2. What was your own experience with learning French? (For example: Are you a native French speaker? Were you a student in a French schoolboard? Were you a Core French student? Did you live in a French speaking country or region?)

3. Why did you choose to become a French language educator?
Teacher Perspectives/Beliefs

1. Research tells us that approximately 4.6% of grade 9 students who are required to successfully complete a French credit that year will continue to enrol in Core French all throughout secondary school. In your professional experience, what are some reasons as to why student enrolment and student interest in Core French is low across Ontario?

2. Are there stigmas in a secondary school associated to language learning? If so, what are some of the stigmas?

3. What are some of the strengths and shortcomings of the new 2013 French as a Second Language curriculum in comparison to the previous 1999 French as a Second Language curriculum?

4. Have you observed any significant differences that the new curriculum has made in the classroom and, if so, how has this impacted student motivation to learn French?

5. Out of the four language skills (speaking, reading, writing, and listening), Core French students in Ontario struggle most with speaking French. Why do you think a lot of students in the Core French program gain low levels of fluency?
6. Do you anticipate that the new curriculum will have an impact on increasing student enrolment in Core French beyond grade 9?
   ° If not, why?
   ° If so, in what ways?

Teacher Practices

1. How has the new curriculum affected your instructional approach to increasing student motivation?

2. What are some examples of methods or strategies that grade 9 Core French teachers can use to inspire students to continue on through grade 12?

3. Which tactics are most effective in developing the students’ oral proficiency? (For example, the communicative approach, languaging, the CEFR, grammar drills, etc.)

4. Do you have any personal experiences challenging negative experiences that students may have had towards French language programming? If so, what are some ways in which you have challenged these negative experiences?

Supports and Challenges

1. What factors and resources do you have available to you that support you as a French educator?

2. Are there any other challenges you encounter as a French educator and, if so, how do you respond to these challenges?

3. How can the education system better support French educators who work at increasing student enrolment beyond grade 9?
Next Steps

1. What is some advice you could give new teachers who are committed to increasing student enrolment in Core French?

Thank you for your participation in this research study.
Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Introductory Script: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study and for making time to be interviewed today. This research study aims at investigating how Core French educators in Ontario are motivating students to continue pursuing French language education beyond grade 9, the mandatory requirement. The purpose of this research study is to explore methods or strategies based on the new FSL curriculum that can increase student enrolment in Core French. This interview will last approximately 60 minutes, and I will ask you a series of questions focused on Core French in a secondary school setting. I want to remind you that you may refrain from answering any question, and you have the right to withdraw your participation from the study at any time. The interview is confidential, the only person who will have access to the research data other than myself will be my course instructor, Dr. Cristina Guerrero. As I explained in the consent letter, this interview will be audio recorded. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Background Information

1. Do you want to start by telling me about your current position with the TDSB? What are your responsibilities? What does a typical work day look like for you?

2. Prior to working in your current position, how many years did you teach Core French? Elementary or Secondary?

3. Why did you initially choose to become a French language educator?
4. What aspects of French as a Second Language inspired you to become a French teacher?

5. What components of French were you hoping to teach your students?

6. Have you taught other French programs such as immersion or extended?

7. Do you tend to work more with a certain type of FSL teacher? I.e. elementary vs. secondary, core vs. immersion/extended?

Teacher Perspectives/Beliefs

1. Research tells us that approximately 4.6% of grade 9 students who are required to successfully complete a French credit that year will continue to enrol in Core French all throughout secondary school. In your professional experience, what are some reasons as to why student enrolment and student interest in Core French is low across Ontario?

2. Are there current stigmas in secondary schools associated to language learning? If so, what are some of the stigmas?

3. What are some of the strengths and shortcomings of the new 2013 French as a Second Language curriculum in comparison to the previous 1999 French as a Second Language curriculum?

4. Have you observed or heard of any significant differences that the new curriculum is making in the classroom and, if so, how has it impacted student motivation to learn French?

5. Out of the four language skills (speaking, reading, writing, and listening), Core French students in Ontario struggle most with speaking French. Why do you think a lot of students in the Core French program gain low levels of fluency?
6. Do you anticipate that the new curriculum will have an impact on increasing student enrolment in Core French beyond grade 9? If not, why? If so, in what ways?

Teacher Practices

1. Based on the new curriculum, what are some methods or strategies that grade 9 Core French teachers can use to inspire students to continue their studies in French until grade 12?

2. Which tactics are most effective in developing the students’ oral proficiency? (For example, the communicative approach, languaging, the CEFR, grammar drills, etc.)

3. Do you have any personal experience with helping teachers challenge negative experiences that students may have had towards French language programming? If so, what are some ways in which teachers can challenge any negative perceptions or negative experiences students may have?

Supports and Challenges

1. How can the education system better support French educators who work at increasing student enrolment beyond grade 9?

Next Steps

1. What is some advice you could give new teachers who are committed to increasing student enrolment in Core French?

Thank you for your participation in this research study.