Répétez, s’il vous plait. French Language Anxiety in Intermediate (grades 7 and 8) Core French Classrooms: Historical Curriculum Analysis, Teaching Strategies and Professional Development Opportunities for Core French Teachers in Ontario

By

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Abstract

This research study investigates the experience of French language anxiety in Core French intermediate (grades 7 and 8) classrooms. I identify the revisions in the 2013 Ontario French as a Second Language (FSL) Curriculum, as well as different experiences and teaching strategies that Core French teachers use to help reduce French language anxiety in the classroom. This study also explores the professional development and online support that French teachers receive, within the context of a large school board outside of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). In the beginning stages of my research, I engaged in a literature review of the curriculum over time, second language acquisition anxiety theory, and the professional development offered to French teachers in Ontario. This study also includes findings from two semi-structured interviews with Core French teachers. Findings suggest that educators believe revisions in the FSL curriculum do not address French language anxiety in the classroom and therefore FSL teachers implement various specific pedagogical strategies to address these gaps in their classrooms. The implications for future research are outlined and include recommendations for the inclusion of French language anxiety in the curriculum and increased professional development for French teachers in regards to this topic.

Key Words: Anxiety, Intermediate, Core French, Curriculum
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Research Context

Canada is a country that has numerous languages that build and enhance our diverse linguistic backdrop. However, the country’s official languages are English and French. The 2013 Ontario French as a Second Language (FSL) Curriculum for elementary students quotes that “while the knowledge of any language has value, French is not only a global language but the mother tongue of many Canadians and an integral part of the Canadian identity” (Ministry of Education, p. 7). Many Canadians place a pronounced sense of pride and emphasis on learning French and often discuss why it is so important for younger generations to learn.

Over the years there has been more of an apparent shift towards the significance of learning French and the opportunities that it can offer. This shift was symbolized in the Official Languages Act of 1969 that was passed by Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau, which states that one of the four purposes of the act is to “promote the use of English and French in Canadian society” (Official Languages Act, 1969, p. 5). Thus, we can conclude from this piece of legislation that it completely changed Canada’s linguistic landscape in that English and French were now legally on equal footing. Mollica, Phillips and Smith (2005) state that even though there is frustration in regards to the Core French programs in Ontario many Canadians still see it as valuable (p. 26).

The Ontario Curriculum outlines three primary strands for French instruction in Ontario and they are Core French, Extended French and French Immersion. But for the purposes of my paper, I focussed on Core French specifically looking at the intermediate grades of grade 7 and 8. Leo R. Cole (1969) believes that teaching French to the junior grades (grades 4-6) should be stimulating enough that children are motivated to learn more about French (p. 108). But as this study will illustrate as students transition into the intermediate grades (grades 7 and 8) French
becomes less meaningful and more concrete. The age a student begins to learn a second language has been researched intensely for decades however, it is interesting to analyze and discover how this plays out when students get older.

1.1 Research Problem

The reason I chose this age bracket was because throughout my observations and experiences I have seen that many intermediate (particularly grades 7 and 8) Core French students feel a tremendous amount of discomfort when it comes to French because it is mandatory and they feel that uneasiness as they migrate into high school. MacIntyre, Baker, Clement, and Conrod (2001) state that motivation tends to decrease in grades 7 and 8 that then in turn affects how anxious students feel in the classroom and this has implications for their high school years (p. 369-72). In addition, Robert C. Gardner (2011) illustrates that the language classroom varies and depends on students’ “…prior levels of attitudes, motivation, language anxiety and language achievement” (p. 154). Thus, how students think about second language acquisition in their early years in school has a profound impact on how they will regard the language as they get older. DeKeyser agrees by stating that it is well-known that the earlier a student begins learning the language the better however, if they have negative perceptions and little exposure to French, which happens sometimes in non-Immersion settings then it can be disconcerting (DeKeyser, 2012, p. 455).

Intermediate (grades 7 and 8) Core French classrooms can be a place where students experience different things and interact in a second language often putting them in a position of uncertainty. Smith and Massey (1983) did a study involving intermediate students’ behaviour and one of their conclusions was that students’ feelings towards learning French had a significant impact on their progression with the language (p. 106). Some students developed anxiety (i.e.
concern, worry or fear) that were all emotions that implicated comfort level and learning of the French language. This study shows how even in the 1980s there was a presence of French language anxiety and it is still present in classrooms today. In another document released by the Ministry called the *Capacity Building Series in regards to Teaching and Learning in the Core French Classroom* it underlines a focus on oral proficiency and the key is “…to provide opportunities to talk, opportunities to hear, opportunities to listen” (Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 1). This is an ideal situation but students and their willingness to speak French depends on many factors and one of those is the anxiety and reluctance they have when speaking French. So, teachers should allow ample time for authentic discussions to happen between students but when students are afraid and anxious to speak in the second language they will not be integrating with the language as effectively as they can. Joséphine Rémon (2014) states that “Researchers agree on the importance of taking into account the emotional aspects in the language class, because the affective dimension reaches all aspects of our existence and in a very direct way what happens in the classroom including that of foreign languages” (p. 79). I agree with Rémon because she describes that students can get emotional in second and foreign language classrooms because of the “affective domain” and that is about being human. We all have tendencies to get emotional and stressed in certain situations when you experience uncertainty in one’s abilities.

This research study will specifically look at the anxiety that students and teachers face when learning a second language in this case French. I think it would be helpful to firstly define what foreign language anxiety is according to Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, foreign language anxiety is a “…distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 128). Therefore, learning FSL is something that some students find
stressful and is frequently based on how they see themselves when using the language. Horwitz (2001) also used the foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS) that measures student’s anxiety in relation to them learning a second language within a classroom setting (p. 114). When students feel anxious it as imagined would negatively affect the learning of a second language. In addition, Oxford (1999) states that “language anxiety ranks high among factors influencing language learning, regardless of whether the setting is informal learning language ‘on the streets’ or formal in the language classroom” (p. 59). This type of anxiety is related to performing in the language “…so it is not just a general performance anxiety” (Oxford, 1999). All of the aforementioned definitions are helpful because they inform the research study but the way in, which French language anxiety will be seen in this study is Horwitz’s definition stated at the beginning of the paragraph with the notion of self-perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, etc. related to what students experience when there engaged in the process of second language acquisition.

There is a considerable amount of pressure placed on many students to continue with French throughout their academic career since it reaps many benefits including more employment opportunities and an increase in cultural awareness about Francophone culture (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 7). Many students experience anxiety or what has been coined as “foreign language anxiety” that is seen as a feeling of hesitation and stress when speaking or integrating with a second language (Horwitz et al., 2001). Although French as a second language has been highly encouraged and regarded as a complimentary skill for someone to possess, students in Core French classrooms often feel anxious and nervous when speaking in a second language. I am not discrediting the fact that students do feel anxiety in other subject areas as well but in the case of second language acquisition it is of a distinguished nature. Anxiety when it relates to second language acquisition can interfere with students overall competency levels with
the language that then in turn affects their confidence and self-esteem in the second language as well (Kumaradivaleu, 2008, p. 33-34). Research has found that the anxiety students feel can significantly affect their achievement and motivation to continue with French (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 125). Foreign language anxiety will be an interchangeable term with French language anxiety since the main focus is on FSL.

I also looked at the professional development opportunities offered to Core French teachers and online programs that seek to mitigate the anxiety felt by students and how they can simultaneously lower the anxiety even for themselves. I also provide some cross comparisons and analysis on how effective professional development and online programs are for Core French teachers in Ontario with a specific look at a school board just outside of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). In a 2006 Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT) press release, highlighted a report on FSL Teachers’ Perspectives about FSL teachers and their opinions on the current state of FSL teaching. This press release has a sub-heading of a “call to action” where teachers expressed a need for professional development activities like enhancing their French language skills and new strategies on how to teach FSL (CASLT, 2006).

One of the problems is that many students in particular grade 7 and 8 experience a lot of anxiety and hesitation when learning French as a second language. Aneta Pavlenko (2006) says that anxiety is one of the leading factors that significantly affect second language acquisition “…as the one emotion that most pervasively influences the learning process” (p. 32-33). Furthermore, Oxford believes that language anxiety is a significant factor that can impede language learning (Oxford, 1999, p. 23). However, in the FSL curriculum there is a grey area because it does not really acknowledge or address the fact that students can experience frustration when learning a new language and that, for some, it may spur anxiety. Gregerson and
MacIntyre (2014) studied the gap between theory and actual classroom teaching seeking to understand different issues in foreign and second language acquisition (p.7-8). They engaged in a study where they found that foreign language anxiety is reflected in the classroom when students have a negative emotional reaction that is aroused when learning (Gregerson and MacIntyre, 2014, p. 3). Therefore, students with more self-degrading thoughts about themselves focus their attention on evaluating the way they speak and judging themselves in comparison with others.

This idea can be applied to any grade but I believe that it is even more pressing in the intermediate (grades 7 and 8) FSL classrooms where students are more judgmental and critical of each other because their social interactions and relationships they build are different. Gregerson and MacIntyre (2014) believe that there are different dimensions that can impact the acquisition of a second language but a significant factor is the fact that the classroom is an “interactional and social realm” (p.8). Learning a new language involves precise pronunciation and grammar so it adds to a greater complexity of student learning. Robert C. Gardener (2011) a leading theorist in the field of second language acquisition did a study with English as a foreign language and determined that both motivation and language anxiety influenced how students progressed with the language and the course they were taking (p.150). Although this was not a French study it is about second languages and has implications for this paper. And the fact that anxiety associated with learning a foreign or second language like FSL has been proven in research studies highlights that the curriculum needs to not only take into consideration the physical well-being of their students but also their mental and psychological well-being and even more specifically address the anxiety some students may experience with FSL.

This anxiety is different than other anxieties like math anxiety for example because language anxiety is “situation-specific” (Horwitz et al., 1986). Students experience difficulty
with the language and the second language acquisition process that can be quite unsettling. This means that learning French as a second language or any other language is specific to the certain educational situations that students are exposed to. Situation specific anxiety consists of things such as public speaking, examinations or class participation where students must perform and engage with the language in a more direct and communicative context (Ellis, 2008, p. 691). Learning French is pretty unfamiliar for many students and as a result some students may experience anxiety. The Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (2004) suggested in a news release that student success will be acquired when Core French programs are improved in Canada (p.1). Specifically in the news release by the CASLT they stated that “More than 85% of French second language students are enrolled in Core French while only 16.5% of high school students complete their French graduate requirements” (p.1). This is a staggering statistic that shows the incessant demand for a FSL framework in Canada that paves a way for students to continue with French from elementary to high school and even beyond.

1.2 Research Purpose

The objective of my research is to address and learn how French language anxiety in the intermediate grades (7 and 8) can significantly impact students and even teachers. It will also look at the professional development and online programs offered to FSL teachers in Ontario and the teaching strategies they use in their Core French classrooms. The curriculum should be the first step in raising an awareness of second language acquisition and anxiety that can provide teachers with insight on how to help reduce the stress that students may feel. I have shared these findings with FSL teachers through strands in the French curriculum and, also the educational research community, in order to develop pedagogical strategies that might help reduce some of the anxiety felt by both students and teachers. In addition, I looked at how effective the
professional development opportunities and online programs are in helping to ease French language anxiety for teachers and students. One way that is highly supported these days is CALL or computer assisted language learning, which is second language teaching through a technological medium (Egbert, 2005, p. 3-5). For decades, researchers have deemed foreign language anxiety a significant barrier to students and their learning of FSL however, with the co-existence of teachers, parents, students and other educational stakeholders there must be a way that mitigates anxiety for students. Fotos and Browne (2004) also say that “…CALL [can help] in developing linguistic proficiency and communicative competence in second language learners as well as promoting increased levels of learner autonomy, motivation, satisfaction and self-confidence” (p. 9). CALL oriented activities can help students use the computer as a “catalyst” to initiate conversations between and amongst students (Heift and Chapelle, 2012). They explain further that CALL should not be used on its own but rather in addition to face-to-face interactions, which I completely agree with since both methods would complement each other (Heift and Chapelle, 2012, p. 556). Also, CALL and using a computer can enable stimulus and have students become active learners however not entirely relying on the computers is also key (Fotos and Browne, 2004, p. 5-6).

1.3 Research Questions

The primary question guiding this study is:

How are teachers addressing issues of French language anxiety in the teaching of Core French in the Ontario curriculum particularly in the intermediate grades (7 and 8)? And what are the teaching practices and strategies teachers employ to try to mitigate that anxiety for their students?

Subsidiary Questions to further guide this inquiry include
• How and in what ways are teachers being adequately, supported through professional development opportunities?

• Do teachers use online programs (computer assisted language learning-CALL or computer mediated communication-CMC) in their teaching to help lower the anxiety felt in their FSL classrooms by themselves as educators and by students?

• What are the implications on students and teachers in regards to their progression with French? (in the context of a school board outside of the Greater Toronto Area/GTA)

• What factors do teachers consider may contribute to anxiety felt by FSL learners?

• Have teachers ever experienced or seen evidence that anxiety is present in the classroom with regards to FSL?

• Do teachers have any teaching strategies in place that can reduce the feeling of frustration and anxiety for students in Core French classrooms? And where did they learn about them?

• What challenges does the FSL curriculum bring about when trying to address FSL and anxiety?

• Does the age of the student influence and/or impact the anxiety felt in any way?

• Do teachers know of professional development opportunities made available to them?

• Are FSL teachers aware of the online programs available to them that might help lower French language anxiety?

• Have they ever heard of CALL (computer assisted language learning)? Or perhaps CMC (computer mediated communication)?

• Are they or do they know someone who is a member of the CASLT or the OMLTA? Does this have an effect on the classroom?
1.4 Background of the Researcher

I was in the Core French program from grade four to grade twelve and then continued my studies in French in my post-secondary education as well with a minor in French as a second language. Initially, I was not very interested in French because I had a difficult time with comprehending the language. It is not easy to learn a new language and I experienced a great deal of difficulty with French until I reached high school. I was consistently worrying about if I was pronouncing something correctly or if I put an extra e on a word that did not need it. I feel like this is an important topic to pursue because I think that in one way or another many people can relate to the experiences of being uncertain of themselves in school when speaking French. Furthermore, I believe that French language anxiety is at its peak in the intermediate grades when students start to change and become more socially aware and judgmental of each other. It is absolutely fundamental for students to learn French but know that if you do not understand something that it is totally normal. Learning a new language can put us in a position where we feel uneasy and I felt that way sometimes in school. I established a strong connection with this research topic because in the future when I may be teaching FSL in my classroom; I want students to always feel both included and supported. And I will try and discover new ways that I can reduce any French language anxiety students may be feeling since I experienced it as well.

1.5 Overview

To respond to the above mentioned research questions I engaged in a qualitative research study using a sample of two current Core French teachers about their personal teaching experiences with regards to them seeing anxiety and apprehensions students may have when speaking or engaging with the French language. In chapter two, I reviewed the literature in foreign language anxiety/French language anxiety, FSL learners and professional and online
support and resources for French teachers in Ontario. In chapter three, I discussed the research
design and methodology of how my study was structured using qualitative methods. In chapter
four, I report my research results and findings and illustrate the significance with the existing
literature. And finally in chapter five I identified the implications of the research results for my
own teaching practices and strategies and the educational community in a broader sense as well.
I also state a series of concluding remarks from the research findings and give recommendations
for future research on this topic of French language anxiety experienced by Core French students
and teachers in Ontario. I also gave some suggestions on how teachers can reduce this anxiety in
their Core French classrooms and how the professional development opportunities and online
support and resources given to French teachers are really important.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter I review the literature in the areas of French language anxiety specifically looking at the Core French program with a main focus on the intermediate grades (grades 7-8). I looked at the curriculum throughout the past and it’s comparison to today that serves as a historical progression analysis. More specifically I review the themes related to French language anxiety. Then I start by reviewing the literature in the area of FSL programs and ensure I adequately explain a historical perspective, so how these programs and curriculum were and how they are now. I also provide some historical context by outlining the impact of the Official Languages Act of 1969 and the use of some older literature to help contextualize French language anxiety in Ontario and Canadian schools. Secondly, I looked at the literature in French language acquisition and French language anxiety and how organizations and online programs have arisen to help deal with this anxiety. And finally, I looked at and if there is professional development opportunities and support for FSL teachers to help them deal with the anxiety they experience while simultaneously helping students who experience anxiety as well looking specifically at a school board outside of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

2.1 Historical Context of Language Education in Canada

2.1.1 Historical Legislation and French Programs in Ontario

The Official Languages Act of 1969 and Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau’s initiative largely spread the idea of the English and French languages being equally valued in Canada (Office of the Commissioner, 1969, p. 5). It began to be implemented in schools through FSL curriculum. As noted by Anthony Mollica (2005), “teaching French as a second language is a complex process…that requires thoughtful reflection about the teaching strategies” (p. 11). Thus, it is necessary for the curriculum to meet the Official Languages Act of 1969 while also ensuring
that French is taught in a way that caters to the diverse needs of both students and teachers. Students from any school board even English ones should have the “confidence and ability” to use French in their everyday encounters (Vision and Framework for FSL in Ontario Schools, 2013). Mollica, Phillips and Smith (2005) illustrate that “while there are many problems attached to the teaching of Core French in Ontario, the learning of French as a second language is still highly valued by Canadians” (p. 26). This is significant for intermediate students because their anxiety is heightened due to their entrenched expectation that they have to know a lot about French in order to be successful with the language and pursue it in their future. This largely goes well with Dornyei and Schmidt’s (2001) argument where they observed that students would panic in language class if they did not have something formally prepared to say and these feelings can often intensify as students get older (p. 369).

2.1.2 Importance of Learning FSL

Many Canadians believe that learning French is a valuable asset for many students to retain as they move through the educational ladder. This sentiment is largely cemented in the FSL curriculum that underlines the importance of the “ability to speak both of Canada’s official languages helps prepare students for their role as active and engaged citizens in today’s bilingual and multicultural Canada” (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 7). Martin Howard (2007) cites a similar idea that Canada has harnessed a bilingual linguistic legislation, which oversees that both French and English be given equal importance and whereby the Office of the Commissioner for Official Languages monitors the public institutions that are supposed to reinforce this like schools for example (p. 7). The idea of valuing both of Canada’s languages encountered some difficulties when it was trying to be incorporated into the FSL curriculum especially in the earlier editions that will be discussed more extensively in the next section.
2.2 Analysis of FSL Curriculum over Time

2.2.1 FSL Curriculum (1998) Analysis

This sentiment of valuing the French language was not transferred into FSL curriculum documents especially those published in 1998 and 2001. Norman Diffey (1992) extends this further by stating that now that there was official policies of bilingualism and biculturalism mandated in the FSL curriculum it moved the curriculum away from being purely grammatical (p.208). But in the earlier decades the 1998 FSL curriculum for example discussed Core French by stating that “Core French is started from grade 4 to grade 8 and that students need a minimum of 600 hours of French instruction” (Ministry of Education, 1998). This is a quantitative way of looking at teaching French. However there is also the other issue of how teachers and the students feel when they are engaging with French. Smith and Massey (1983) did a study where they found that the emotional behaviour exhibited by FSL students in the intermediate grades pertained to their performance and the feelings they felt were of particular importance whether they were happy, frustrated or anxious (p. 107). This study was done before the 1998 FSL curriculum came out and so it’s necessary to include because it outlines the status of Core French in Ontario at the time.

The FSL curriculum in 1998 did not specifically address the emotional dimensions of the second language acquisition process that includes anxiety for some students. Similarly, Edwards and Smyth (1976) also did a study before this curriculum came out and it outlined that the personality and how students view their competence and comfort level with the language largely determined whether they continued with French in high school and beyond (p. 9). The ways students see themselves progressing with their acquisition of a second language can be significantly affected by their emotions: one can be anxiety.
Second language anxiety can easily influence a student’s perception of how they think they do when speaking French and their view on how important learning a second language is based off of things like self-efficacy. Erler and Macaro argue (2011) that “as a consequence, their perceptions of the process of learning the language may affect their desire to continue learning it beyond the statutory level or age imposed by a country’s education system” (p. 500). This quote demonstrates that students and their beliefs in their elementary years can have a profound effect on their decision to pursue French in their high school years and beyond. Another study explained that in order to effectively integrate with French, students must have French instruction beyond 20 minutes per day at the elementary level (Stern, Swain and McLean, 1976, p. 3). This standard is upheld in the curriculum in the past and even today in order to ensure that students get an adequate amount of instruction in the target language. Norman Diffey also offered a slightly different perspective by stating that the Canadian FSL curriculum over the years has become more “multidimensional” or in other words it takes into consideration students’ learning needs (Diffey, 1992).

The curriculum has been revised to recognize the differentiation amongst learners and their learning styles and needs. In the 1980s the different ministries of education in Canada wanted to provide a FSL curriculum that was more comprehensive that modelled “…long term goals and specific learning objectives” (Diffey, p. 208). The Ministry started to be more attentive to how Core French and FSL in general was to progress in the long term.

2.2.2 FSL Curriculum (2001) and (2013) Analysis

In the 2001 FSL curriculum Core French was not included in the curriculum itself; it just had Extended French and French Immersion (Ministry of Education, 2001). However, since then there has been a major revision in the 2013 edition of the FSL curriculum to include all three
strands of French including Core French. Not only is that the case but in the revised curriculum there is a section on supporting students’ well-being and ability to learn. It says that students should strive for excellence and that teachers should foster an environment where well-being is prioritized (Ministry of Education, 2013). Similarly, North American in particular Canadian curricula over the decades have become increasingly different because they outline the different learners and their requirements in terms of what they need to know and learn (Diffey, 1992). This is fundamental for FSL learners to feel at ease when learning a new language without judgment and somewhere they can flourish. Miles Turnbull (1999) believes that French has been incorporated into the Canadian curricula for several years with 90% of students in Canada being in Core French programs (p. 549). As we can imagine, with the growing population of Canada this statistic may be very different today. Turnbull (1999) also examines like Diffey how Canada has implemented the FSL curriculum in the past and up until 1999, he illustrates that the curriculum should not be solely based on grammatical and syntax activities but should be more “multidimensional” (p. 549).

The motivation or lack thereof for some Core French students is connected to their willingness to use French but also is indicative of anxiety. Denies, Rianne and Tomoko (2015) did a recent study in Flanders, Belgium where they found that the willingness to speak a second language is contingent on the students’ motivation but also looked at how the more anxious the learners are than the more likely they are to doubt their abilities and competence (p.720). Furthermore, Denies, Rianne and Tomoko (2015) continue by stating that how the students perceive themselves and their proficiency will inevitably affect their choice of whether or not to communicate in the second language (p. 721). Although this study was done in Belgium I feel that it has implications for Canada as well since the official languages of Belgium are Dutch,
French and German. Similarly, Katy Arnett (2010) conducted a study in a grade eight Core French classroom where she concluded that students should be able to openly discuss and communicate their ideas without worrying about being linguistically accurate all the time (p. 576). When students are concerned about sounding perfect in a second language it can ignite some anxiety in students and that can be quite hard on them.

### 2.3 Second Language/ FSL Anxiety in the Classroom

#### 2.3.1 Definitions of French Language Anxiety

Earlier in the paper, I defined French language anxiety but thought it would be logical to define it once again in this section to ensure clarity on this topic. Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) define foreign language anxiety (i.e. French language anxiety in this study) as the “…distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (p. 128). Students may experience discomfort when speaking a second language due to their limited proficiency and as a result it may initiate anxiety for some students. Many students feel this anxiety when they are expected to speak or integrate with the language in a communicative type of way (Horwitz, 2001, p. 112).

#### 2.3.2 Factors that influence FSL Anxiety

French language anxiety can begin with Core French students when they are first introduced to French but it becomes more pronounced in the intermediate grades. Gregerson and Horwitz (2002) say that students are socially aware of their surroundings and at times can be afraid to make mistakes (p.562). Their study included eight students selected from a group of 78 that had a range when it came to speaking English as their second language each with varying levels of anxiety. Although this study was of ESL learners it has implications for this study since the
students are acquiring a second language and experiencing things that FSL students may experience as well. Students in Gregerson and Horwitz’s (2002) study said things like “I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do” (p.564). This emotion is often experienced by second language learners and can really affect students and their acquisition of the second language. When students have these internalized ideas of themselves it can harbour anxiety. On the other hand, Dornyei (2001) looked at how motivation affected both the anxiety felt by students and that it was often a factor that heavily influenced how students felt about second language acquisition (p.1). Thus, French language anxiety is prevalent in FSL classrooms and there are several factors that influence students and their level of anxiety.

2.3.3 Core French and French Language Anxiety

Students and their discomfort stems from the nature of certain second language programs like Core French where often they feel it is mandatory and something that they do not enjoy because they lack confidence and are anxious about speaking the language (Dornyei, 2001, p. 40). Students in Core French programs have a limited integration with the language since it is one of many subjects. Furthermore, language learning is one of the most intimidating subjects because students are “pressured” into using an unfamiliar language (Dornyei, 2001). As a result, students believe they must use the second language and when they do not feel fully confident and competent yet it can be discouraging. Gardener and Smythe (1997) did a study in a French classroom where they concluded that “…anxiety specific to the language learning situation…tends to interfere with language acquisition” (p. 34). Gardner and Smythe (1997) also state that second language acquisition and the anxiety that sometimes accompanies it is not a general anxiety but rather is “specific to the language acquisition context” (p. 34). When students are placed in the position of learning a second language it’s different because learning a new
language puts them into a territory of uncertainty with themselves and the ways that they are communicating. Learning a new and second language in a classroom shows that the anxiety that occurs is from students themselves and the apprehension they feel when learning and using a language that is for the most part foreign to them. Krashen (1998) states that teaching a second language is most effective when teachers employ a “comprehensible output” done in low anxiety situations containing meaningful messages (p. 176). This is very important to ensure that when anxiety does arise that teachers be equipped with the tools they need in order to reduce the anxiety. Michael John Salvatori (2007) also referenced Krashen in his study that looked at non-native speakers who teach FSL in Ontario and that being able to speak was crucial but that some teachers would become uncomfortable at times with their second language as well (p. 77). Salvatori’s study shows that even French teachers themselves can doubt their abilities to speak French.

Helena Curtain and Carol Ann Dahlberg (2004) express that students need a classroom environment that supports students and their emotional needs and that they are “…valued as people regardless of their performance” (p. 8). This is crucial because often FSL students carry this self-doubt about their ability to speak French and feel that they are only evaluated in accordance with how correct they are with their pronunciation. Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) agree that “…a number of students believe nothing should be said in the foreign language until it can be said correctly and that it is not okay to guess an unknown foreign language word. Beliefs such as these must produce anxiety since students are expected to communicate in the second tongue before fluency is attained and even excellent language students make mistakes or forget words and need to guess” (p. 127-130). Students at times can be so fixated on pronouncing things correctly rather than just viewing second language acquisition as a “volitional or freely
chosen process” where they would have an increased willingness to communicate (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 564). Students may feel motivated to learn but are anxious when they use the second language in certain public contexts like a classroom.

2.3.4 The Classroom and French Language Anxiety

French language anxiety and its presence in Core French classrooms can be especially pervasive. Dornyei (2005) states that when anxiety is present and when there is a “…anxiety provoking climate our knowledge of a second language often deteriorates” (p. 198). Many scholars alike such as Dornyei, Gardner and Mollica, Phillips and Smith just to name a few used throughout my literature review all utilize Horwitz in their arguments. Horwitz (1986) created the foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS) that measured student’s anxiety when they expressed themselves in a second language using 33 variables (p. 129). Many scholars mentioned recognize that Horwitz although did not find a strong correlation of anxiety with all their participants they did find a significant link with three aspects of anxiety, which are communicative apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety (Horwitz, 1986, p. 130). Many agree with Horwitz like Yi-Wen Huang (2014) who brings up a very poignant argument that language anxiety and the self (self-confidence, second language ego) is affected by how anxious you feel when speaking a second language (p. 66). Learning a second language is an entirely new experience for many students and some don’t know what to expect and how to deal with the anxiety. Mills, Pajares and Herron (2006) also coincide with this idea that a student’s belief in their “self-efficacy” when it comes to speaking FSL is contingent on whether they feel competent and confident in their ability to speak French (p. 276). Erler and Macaro (2012) also state that a student’s self-efficacy and their beliefs and perceptions about the second language speaking process may affect their desire to continue learning the language beyond the
mandatory level and age (p. 500). In essence, the way a student sees themselves progressing with the language can often predict if they decide to pursue with the language in the future.

2.3.5 French Language Anxiety and the Learner

French language anxiety can also affect students in different ways depending on many factors. MacIntyre, Baker, Clement, and Conrod (2001) take both Huang and Mills’ arguments even farther by saying that the willingness to speak a second language is influenced by student’s self-confidence but that if students are given a choice to initiate conversation that some anxiety could be lowered (p. 369). In addition, MacIntyre, Dornyei, Clement and Noels (2005) did a study where they concluded that a student’s willingness to speak a second language was based on providing them with authentic ways to communicate (p. 558). FSL teaching in Ontario as discussed in the earlier section encourages French teachers to prioritize conversation and interaction. Vivian Cook and David Singleton (2014) also have a section in their book that discusses ‘the self’ as well and how the way a student views themselves is related to how they will see themselves in the future and if they have negative feelings about second language acquisition as a learner in school then that can continue throughout their life and potentially deter them from pursuing the language further (p. 103).

Additionally, Tammy Gregerson and Elaine K. Horwitz (2002) state that students who experience second language anxiety are exposed to a similar type of anxiety to that of what perfectionist students experience (p. 563). That is, students believe that they must speak correctly where some students “…wait until they [are] certain of how to express their thoughts” (p. 563). Language learning according to Zoltan Dornyei (2002) is “one of the most face-threatening subjects because of the pressure of having to operate using a rather limited language code” (p. 40). Core French programs often have students who are less familiar with the French language
and as a result students are more hesitant to use the language. Nevertheless, there are professional organizations that FSL teachers can be a part of to have dialogue, build networks and receive professional support.

2.4 Professional Development for French Teachers

2.4.1 Professional Organizations in Canada

There are many second language professional organizations for educators to join to converse with other second language teachers and others about different pedagogy and teaching implications for FSL and other languages as well. As stated by Horwitz and Young (1991), the teacher plays a significant role in the language learning process however, in order for teachers to be well informed they must have professional development and support (p. 106). The main organization that helps second language teachers is The Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT) who have a website that outlines various resources for teachers and they also have an annual held conference (CASLT, 2015). The CASLT website greatly aligns with Ontario’s vision for FSL that clearly says that its first goal is to “increase student confidence, proficiency and achievement in FSL” (Ministry of Education, 2013). However, interestingly enough a research report done by the CASLT (2006) found that professional development opportunities and support for Core French teachers is in a state of heightened need for continuing professional development (p. 47).

There is also the Ontario Modern Language Teachers’ Association (OMLTA) that is a professional organization that seeks to “provide members with professional development opportunities and resources” as well as many other things (OMLTA, 2011). The OMLTA also holds an annual spring conference for professional development opportunities as well as online resources like their magazine/newsletter and documents. However, like the CASLT these
professional development resources do not directly reference French language anxiety that can inhibit the actual language learning process for some Core French students.

The final online organization that I found was the Canadian Parents for French Organization (CPF), which is an online forum that supports FSL children and parents who wish to support their children (Canadian Parents for French Organizations, 2016). Once again, like the CASLT and OMLTA there is a limitation that the professional development opportunities and support offered to FSL teachers do not explicitly cite French language anxiety as a prevalent problem encountered by some FSL students and teachers.

2.4.2 Online Programs

Many have suggested that second language learning does not necessarily have to be in a classroom but it can be done online that often helps reduce this sense of anxiety that some FSL learners feel when they are in front of their class (Guichon, 2009, p. 170). The one that figures most prominently is CALL or computer assisted language learning. CALL according to Chapelle (2009) is a communicative outlet for students that aim for them to acquire the language rather than judging them on their oral competence and proficiency (p. 742). Obviously, there are some limitations inherent in this method such as language needing to be facilitated naturally through personal interactions with actual people. In a similar vein, Joy Egbert (2005) outlines that CALL is seen as the use of computers to support both language teaching (teachers) and language learning (students), which can be applied to any language (p. 3). Egbert (2005) realizes that there is not a lot of research done on CALL but that there are a lot of overarching themes with the FSL curriculum that state for example that technology can be used to “support the conditions that help create optimal classroom language learning environments (p. 5). By changing the conditions of the second language classroom, it can create a more positive and inclusive place since students
are able to facilitate and engage through technology. Also, Zoltan Dornyei and Magdalena Kubanyiova (2014) argue that students can be motivated in any subject matter through vision and that if anxiety is experienced that it can be mediated by using “imagery” especially useful in language education (p. 31). For example, using visual cues and helping students truly grasp why French or other languages are beneficial for them to learn, which can assist students in fully comprehending why it’s important to learn another language.

Another highly discussed technique that can be adopted by French teachers is Computer mediated communication (CMC) that is similar to CALL but has some different features. Melissa Baralt and Laura Gurzynski-Weiss (2011) did a study with conclusions that anxiety can have a negative effect on students learning a second language but CMC allows students to do things like correct words that they were not as comfortable doing in front of others since one student participant said it was “embarrassing” and as a result he was more “relaxed” when using CMC (p. 215). However, the study also said that face to face interaction (FTF) was more effective for some students because the teacher was able to encourage them more directly to continue speaking in the language (Baralt and Gurzynski-Weiss, 2011, p. 215). Another website that deals with generalized anxiety is worrywisekids.org that helps students particularly those in elementary school who experience anxiety in general and strategies about how they can mitigate anxiety (The Children’s and Adult Center for OCD and Anxiety, 2016). This website does not specifically look at French language anxiety however, it’s important to include what online resources there are for students and teachers. Kissau, McCullough and Garvey (2010) state that “as anxiety and perceptions of competence in the [second language] may be influenced by the face-to-face nature of traditional [second language] classrooms in, which students are required to communicate in the [second language] in front of their peers, it could be hypothesized that online
discussion may help alleviate student anxiety, increase perceptions of competence, and thus generate a greater willingness to communicate in the [second language] (p. 279). Furthermore, Kissau, McCullough and Garvey (2010) believe that second language classes in general have been transformed into becoming more of a computer-mediated classroom where communication is the focal point while also incorporating technology and visuals to help students with their frustration and anxiety when speaking a second language (p. 280). Viviane Koua (2013) expresses a similar sentiment where she believes that the computer and computer assisted language learning (CALL) has been used in Canada for years in subjects like science and math but that it also has a place in the second language classroom because it can increase student’s willingness to speak that second language in particular French (p. 564-568). MacIntyre and Blackie (2012) found that when you have “hesitant speakers” they are typically the ones who think they are less competent, are not interested and not willing to speak the second language but that computer mediated communication (CMC) could be a potential way for these students to build their competence and confidence with the language and decrease the anxiety they may feel (p. 540).

2.4.3 Professional Development Opportunities in Ontario

Professional development for teachers is significant for two reasons. One it allows teachers to deal with their own anxiety they may experience when speaking a second language. Secondly, when teachers are given the right support they then can become the support for their students who are possibly experiencing a similar type of anxiety. In October 2007, ETFO Voice a newspaper written by different members of the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario stated that FSL teachers in Ontario wanted more opportunities to network with other FSL teachers and wanted “up-to-date resources and training” (Richardson, 2007). Similarly, the
Ontario Public School Boards’ Association (2007) did a survey where some of their findings had a similar connotation to that of Richardson where FSL teachers and their concerns included things like “poor or inadequate educational resource materials… need for more relevant professional development including professional development available during school hours” (p. 3). And as a result the Ministry of Education has responded with various provincial conferences that are held here in Ontario and in other provinces as well such as Quebec and British Columbia, different workshops that FSL teachers can attend and online resources that they can access too (Canadian Teachers’ Federation, 2016). The University of Ottawa also provides some summer professional development workshops for all FSL teachers however, the registration, accommodation and ancillary fees are quite substantial making this just not realistic for some FSL teachers (University of Ottawa, 2015). The Ministry also provides a tutoring system for all FSL students called SOS devoirs that allow tutors to help students online via chat or email about questions regarding their French homework. This is made available to all students between the grades of 1 through 12 during the school year (Ministry of Education, 2015).

However, for FSL teachers they provide a lot of professional support through things like webinars, face to face sessions, digital tutorials, support documents and orientation and sandbox courses (Ministry of Education, 2015). There are also localized workshops made available to French teachers. I selected Saskatchewan so that it can be compared with professional development given to FSL teachers in Ontario. In Western Canada, provinces like Saskatchewan have experienced a high level of dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of Core French programs however, in Ontario there has been an improvement in the support for Core French teachers (Saskatchewan Learning, 2005, p. 51). The Handbook for Administrators: French Language programs by Saskatchewan learning (2005) conveys the province’s dedication to the support of
Core French teachers through things like school division initiated workshops, mentorship programs, community initiatives, web based instructional resources, federal provincial programs providing bursaries and funding and summer and work exchange programs (p. 65). Ontario does have most of the professional development that Saskatchewan has however, there is a lack of evidence that there is funding and bursaries for teachers who feel they need to go abroad and practice the language in a certain linguistic environment.

In Vancouver, they have a French excursion experience with the FLAGS program that is a pre-service teacher program, which is offered to future Core French teachers that may be apprehensive about their French and are sent on a five week summer immersion experience through Explore (Carr, 2010, p. 39). This is an extremely effective way to integrate and interact with French in a more realistic way as noted by Wernicke (2009) that “studying a language abroad is typically considered to be one of the most effective ways to acquire another language, a view predominantly supported by the earliest research dating back to the mid-1960s” (p. 6). Thompson and Lee (2013) also did a study where they concluded that due to the ambivalent nature of second language acquisition many people will experience anxiety in one form or another and that having experience abroad has a potential to reduce those feelings of discomfort and unease (p. 252-269). Magnan and Lafford (2012) agree by stating that the interactions that people are afforded when they go abroad is full immersion with that language and that is something that can only be experienced when studying or learning abroad (p. 525).

In July of 2009, there were 80 FSL teachers from British Columbia that participated in an Explore type of program for two weeks. The program or “sojourn” was called the Centre d’approches vivantes des langues et des Médias (CAVILAM) in Vichy, France. This allowed FSL teachers to immerse themselves in the Francophone culture and language, which is
especially important for Western non-francophone areas of Canada like B.C. The program included French teachers from all three strands of French instruction (Core, Extended and Immersion) and it was a specialized two week course with “…classroom instruction, group workshops and lectures in French language and pedagogy” (Wernicke, 2009, p. 11). This experience was extremely important for all of these teachers as it gave them tools and insights into how they can cater to and accommodate their students when learning a second language. As Wernicke (2009) notes however, in 2003 the federal government of Canada mandated funding for summer language bursaries so that French teachers can study abroad (p. 11).

I noticed a general pattern that all of these research studies and professional development opportunities are offered in British Columbia but I have not found as much offered to French teachers in Ontario. This may be possibly due to our proximity to Quebec and that FSL teachers can do an Explore program there, which is true but at the same time Ontario Core French teachers should be allowed ample professional development opportunities just like the FSL teachers from B.C. The approach in Ontario according to the CASLT Report is that Ontario typically delivers their professional development services to teachers online, which is fine however they should also be afforded the same professional development opportunities by being able to go abroad too (Teaching French as a second language in Canada: Teachers’ Perspectives, 2006, p. 30). As illustrated by Linda Quinn Allen (2010) who did a study with 30 French teachers in the United States who went to Lyon, France that there is a need for teachers to relinquish their language proficiency and broaden their Francophone cultural understandings and one way that is done is through summer excursion programs where teachers are immersed in the French language and culture (p. 93). Some of her findings were that she saw the teachers were more confident in their abilities and their enthusiasm also increased but what she found to be
even more perplexing is that when teachers lived in France for those three weeks they were able to “feel more empathy toward their students’ language learning struggles” (p. 95-101). This is a very important finding that she found because teachers were better able to understand their students and the frustration and anxiety they may go through when learning a second language. The teachers were also able to build a strong support system and networking group where they could share different teaching approaches, ideas, tips, strategies and resources with one another (Allen, 2010, p. 101).

2.4.4 Professional Development in a school board outside the GTA

In various school boards outside of the GTA they overall provide good opportunities for leadership and special education opportunities. In most elementary schools both in and outside of the GTA there are Core French programs being taught and it would benefit teachers if they could learn more about creating a more inclusive classroom that lowers the anxiety felt by students and even themselves. I consulted various websites and there were only a few websites that were cited saying that they were useful for FSL teachers. Salvatori (2007) who was mentioned earlier did a study of non-native French teachers (Core and Immersion) in Toronto and he found that six of his fifteen participants believed that additional qualification courses, workshops and conferences helped them “…maintain and enhance their language proficiency in French” (p. 106). The professional development and online resources offered to FSL teachers in and outside of the GTA are relatively small in size when comparing it to the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) for example that is situated in London where teachers have a website created by Caroline Woodburn that highlights different teaching practices, strategies, websites and online tips that FSL teachers can utilize when teaching French (Woodburn, 2016). This website can be accessed by anyone because it is public and free and so it can be used by FSL teachers wherever
but, some school boards have yet to create their own website that compiles different professional development online resources and support for French teachers and even students.

2.5 Conclusion

In this literature review I looked at research on FSL and/or Core French programs specifically in the intermediate (grades 7 and 8) grades in Ontario and FSL acquisition and anxiety, the online programs and organization(s) involved and lastly the professional development opportunities offered to teachers regarding FSL anxiety. This review elucidates the extent that attention has been paid to second language learning and French language anxiety. It also raises questions about online programs and organizations and how they seek to deal with this and points to the need for further research in the areas of professional development and online organizations and programs with a main focus on FSL and anxiety and how to better help both teachers and students. In light of this, the purpose of my research is to learn that second language anxiety can significantly affect students and teachers. I would also like to see if there are specific teaching strategies that teachers are currently using to reduce French language anxiety in their classroom. In addition, if there is professional development and online programs that specifically addresses French language anxiety it would help support teachers and equip them with strategies that will hopefully increase the confidence of students and encourage students to pursue French in the future. This leads me to chapter three where I elaborate on my research approach and qualitative research methodology as well as discuss my interview questions and participants.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

Throughout this chapter I highlight the research methodology and the structure of my research study that looked at French language anxiety experienced by both students and teachers and the teaching strategies that teachers use. Also, I looked at the professional development opportunities extended to teachers and possible online programs they use to mitigate French language anxiety. Firstly, I illustrate the research procedure and then discuss how I collected my data. I describe the participants in my study with a brief biography and the sampling measures and procedures that I used. Next, I look at the analysis of the collected data meanwhile considering ethical implications that have been recognized and assessed. Lastly, my research methodology will be nuanced because I considered both the methodological limitations of the study but I also outline its strengths.

3.1 Research Approach and Procedures

This research study on French language anxiety that students and teachers may have and the professional development and online programs offered to teachers was conducted using a qualitative research study approach. It included an analysis of the literature through a literature review that is relevant to my research questions and purpose, as well as engaging in semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with two teachers. Crouch and McKenzie (2006) illustrate that qualitative research allows for the interviewer to become closely linked with the interviewee that allows for more in-depth inquiry and conversations in a more “naturalistic setting” (p. 483). Qualitative interviews add an element of authenticity to research studies and the responses of the participants because they can think and reflect on their teaching experiences in their own ways. Furthermore, Crouch and McKenzie (2006) say that it brings clarity to certain social phenomena and situations that add meaning and purpose to qualitative studies (p. 483). Suzanne Campbell
(2014) believes that qualitative research allows for rich data to be produced because this type of research is open-minded and more “…exploratory [in] nature” (p. 3). Qualitative research is specific to my topic of French language anxiety students and teachers in Ontario both face and whether they are given professional development opportunities and online programs to help decrease that anxiety in their classrooms. Jacqueline Jones (2013) states in her study that certain topics like women, childbearing families and newborns for example and other societal topics require a lot of attention to detail and that one way to accomplish this is through qualitative research (p.401). In addition, Jones articulates that qualitative research “…brings richness, context and dimension to the study of human beings and their environments” (Jones, 2013, p. 401). Qualitative research allows research to be done in a way that is unique yet also produces reliable data. Also, people’s stories are able to be told through qualitative research and add quality to the information output (Jones, 2013, p. 401). My research study was seen as a qualitative research process that is fluid and can change and something that the teacher may say could invoke another question from me. Simply this allows for an atmosphere that makes the interviewee more relaxed and comfortable.

Frederick Anyan (2013) argues that qualitative research interviews enable a more comprehensive understanding of what is behind all the data by providing an in-depth look at things like interviews (p. 1). He extends his argument further by saying that qualitative and quantitative methods of research are different in the way the data is collected and analyzed (Anyan, 2013, p. 2). Quantitative research methods are more bound by statistical significance and rely on numerical validity but qualitative researchers are more interested in going beyond the numbers and provide an in-depth insight about certain phenomena in a particular context (Anyan, 2013, p. 2). This is what my research study and purpose is grounded in that it allows teachers to
openly discuss their thoughts and experiences without saying that something needs to be correlated with numerical data. As highlighted by Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2008), qualitative research and then the data analysis that ensues after allows for a comparative analysis whereby interviews or cases are analyzed where researchers can identify themes, similarities and differences amongst people’s experiences (p. 593).

Semi-structured interviews would be the most suitable interview approach for my study according to Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick (2008) because it’s not like structured interviews where there is no elaboration on answers and it is not like unstructured interviews where things can lose focus easily (p. 291). Semi-structured interviews contain a list of compiled open-ended questions about the topic or area being explored and allow both the interviewer and interviewee to go deeper and describe the topic in more detail (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008, p. 291). Also, Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick (2008) say that semi-structured qualitative interviews guide people on what to talk about but are flexible enough where people can add to the information as well (p. 291). My interviews felt like a dialogue piece that was natural and I added questions if needed for further clarification. Furthermore, DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) describe that interviews are a great forum for people to share their lived experiences and leave the interpretation up to the researcher (p. 314). My study was well-informed by my participants and their personal experiences and input are meaningful because they are actually engaged in schools and classroom practice.

3.2 Instruments of Data Collection

Barbara DiCicco-Bloom and Benjamin F. Crabtree (2006) deem semi-structured interviews as being the method most often used by qualitative researchers when doing interviews because they can be adapted for either an individual or group of respondents (p. 315). For the
purposes of my research study, the interviews were done on an individual basis because I did not want anyone influencing each other’s responses and it allows for people to be comfortable sharing certain information that they would not be in front of a group. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) argue that “it is also the means of establishing a safe and comfortable environment for sharing the interviewee’s personal experiences and attitudes as they actually occurred. It is through the connection of many ‘truths’ that interview research contributes to our knowledge of the meaning of the human experience” (p. 316). This is very important in this research study that all participants feel at ease when disclosing certain information and be reassured that the information they do share is solely for the purposes of the research and in no way will they be identified or linked to what they say if they choose not to be.

The interviews were face-to-face, which allowed the participant and I to communicate in a verbal way but also in a non-verbal way through facial expressions and gestures (Know and Burkard, 2009, p. 568). This is significant because in my particular study teachers are asked to reflect on their childhood experiences in school in regards to having anxiety when speaking French and so their non-verbal cues could really assist me in fully understanding their experiences. Knox and Burkard (2009) agree stating that semi-structured interviews are advantageous because you get specific information that gives your study a focus but allow for comparisons between cases to be drawn and flexible enough for respondents to add greater detail if they want (p. 567). Overall, the semi-structured interview is the primary instrument that was employed when collecting data and research for my study on French language anxiety that students and teachers experience, strategies they use and the professional development and online programs that help teachers cope with this in their classrooms.

3.3 Participants
The sampling size is important to develop in the beginning phases of one’s research study whereby most would be relatively small scale studies. Crouch and McKenzie (2006) underline the fact that sample size will help a researcher reach their objectives but also is beneficial to researchers like myself for many reasons (p. 493). The sample size allows “…respondents to embody and represent meaningful experience-structure links” (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006, p. 493).

3.3.1 Sampling Criteria

The following criteria will be applied to teacher participants.

1. Teachers will have to be a contracted full-time Core French teacher who has taught for at least one year.
2. Teachers should be from public elementary schools.
3. Teachers will be working in a school board just outside of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).
4. Teachers should display a good level of French proficiency.
5. Teachers should have experience teaching either Core French at the junior or intermediate level or both.

Qualitative research studies that involve semi-structured interviews like the one I did is purposeful because you are being selective about who to include in your study but it also seeks to maximize the depth and richness of the data that will relate and inform your research approach and questions (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006, p. 317). My particular sample size primarily focused on Core French teachers because that’s who is strictly involved in my main research question. If more time were allowed, I would have considered interviewing Extended French teachers as well, to see the connections and differences between Core
French and Extended French. But this is not feasible due to the nature and scope of this study. Also, the teachers were from elementary schools because my research focusses on elementary Core French teachers specifically intermediate teachers. Initially, I had included high school Core French teachers as well (grade 9) but I realized that I am able to garner information from intermediate teachers at the elementary level about how they think their students will do when they enter high school. Teachers should be from a school board outside of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) because that is the context in which this research study is situated. These Core French teachers should display a certain level of French proficiency and lastly, should have experience teaching either junior or intermediate Core French or both. Teachers who taught both junior and intermediate allow for a more in-depth look at how they teach both division levels.

3.3.2 Participant Recruitment

When I selected participants for my research study, in order to ensure that they connect to the topic being studied I decided they had to be selectively chosen so that they can share information and insight that are related to the research question(s) at hand. Qualitative research is not about making overgeneralizations about certain populations but is rather to allow for each participant’s story and experience to be covered in a holistic way (Knox and Buckhard, 2009, p. 567). The teachers selected for this research study were teachers I encountered in the past and who I had already developed a good rapport with. This is good according to DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) because that rapport that you develop with teachers and respondents is fundamental because you would have already begun the process of sharing and bonding that is a necessary component of qualitative interviews (p. 317). Due to the scale of my research study, I
picked who to include in my study meanwhile also convenience purposes about Core French
teachers I knew within a school board outside of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

3.3.3 Participant Biographies

Both of my participants were born in Ontario and are currently working in elementary
schools in a school board just outside of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). I provide a concise
biography of my two participants but nothing in great detail to ensure I maintain anonymity. My
first participant named Natalie is a teacher who was born in the GTA herself and has been
working as a teacher for four years. However, it is her first year at the school she is at right now.
She currently teaches grades 6-8 Core French as well as Grade 8 Drama and History but last year
she taught Core French grades 4-8. She has also taught at an Immersion School as well but as a
Core French teacher. She is pretty active in the school community as the girls’ basketball coach
and is involved in the organization of the talent show. She considers the school to be diverse with
lower income families residing in the area.

My second participant named Caprice is a very experienced teacher who was born in
Kingston, Ontario but moved to Ottawa when she was young. She has been teaching for just
about 30 years now. She currently teaches junior level (grades 4, 5 and 6) Core French but has
done French Immersion, Intermediate Core French and English in the past. She also articulates
that she does a lot of coverage for other teachers for anything from physical education to drama.
She is well-versed in the school because she has been teaching there for 16 years and she has
been a mentor to new incoming Core French teachers. She is also involved in the timetable
committee, the supervision schedule committee and leads French Club. She feels that the school
is very diverse because it has two ME (multiple exceptionality) classes, the gifted and
mainstream classes as well with students coming from a variety of different income brackets.
3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

The data was collected through face to face semi-structured interviews whereby the participants gave their consent. The interviews were audio recorded and notetaking was done during the interviews to ensure that both methods are credible and that if the technology malfunctioned I had my notes. My approach when I collected the data was not about me subjectively extracting the information but I really wanted my participants to feel good and able to discuss comfortably. Obviously, it still needs to be connected to the research topic but participants should not feel constrained by the questions provided and I as a researcher just had to adapt to what was said and not said.

DiCicco- Bloom and Crabtree (2006) argue that the process of data collection and then data analysis are crucial parts of research studies particularly qualitative ones (p. 317). Data analysis involves taking the gathered information, which typically occurs after data collection where the data will shed light and further inform the research study (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006, p. 317). Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2008) consider numerous ways that qualitative data can be analyzed and interpreted such as conversation analysis, discourse analysis, narrative analysis, etc. (p. 588-593). For my research study I used one data analysis technique discussed by Leech and Onwuegbuzie: qualitative comparative analysis. So, I did some cross comparisons amongst my participants and their teaching experiences but also highlighted instances where they differ in opinion. Some questions were personal where they may specifically reference an example so it was necessary that I summarize the main ideas, use a coding procedure of some form (write notes in columns and colour code certain common threads throughout) that largely relates to a comparative analysis. I also used the explanatory method as well. According to DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) this approach is also called the “editing
approach” where I reviewed the interviews and organized the data by creating connections or looking for themes (p. 318). Attride-Stirling (2001) states that explanatory procedures helps hone in and focus on the more common themes that relates to the overall purpose of the study (p. 395). By doing both qualitative comparative and explanatory analysis it helped me clearly explain my themes and then any connections and/or differences I saw amongst my participants and their responses.

3.5 Ethical Review Procedures

As argued by Damianakis and Woodford (2012), qualitative researchers must carefully balance two things: first to acquire knowledge through comprehensive research and then maintain ethical and legal considerations as well (p. 708). Researchers are expected to specify the objectives of their research but also the risks and possible advantages to the participants. There are numerous ethical implications that researchers should consider but one of those ethical considerations that are the hardest to maintain is confidentiality due to the raw nature of some interviews and observations (Damianakis and Woodford, 2012, p. 708). Before the interviews began, I outlaid all the logistics and details about the study and outlined to the participants about the confidentiality that was agreed upon when they signed the consent forms and the use of pseudonyms. Both schools and teachers shall remain anonymous. This increases the chances of the participants really being open and honest and shows your commitment to them (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008, p. 292).

I reviewed the material before going into the interview because it is important that the interview does not come across as being rigid and austere, I wanted it to feel less rehearsed. When the process is more natural and less rehearsed I believe that the interview goes more smoothly and the interviewee will be able to trust you more. It is also important that I developed
good interviewer skills like being an attentive listener and not influence the responses being said. I also worked on probing or follow up questions where participants could provide clarification and elaborate on something they said.

Another ethical consideration is that respondents should not feel that they are bound to answer certain questions and I consistently reminded them that they do not have to answer if they don’t want too. The interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and protects against bias while also giving a permanent representation and account of what was said (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008, p. 292). Field notes were hand written during the interview but after the interview I reflected on my observations and thoughts that I included in an organized chart that then became a part of both my data analysis and my Chapter 4 about findings. The data is stored on my personal computer for up to five years and then the information will be destroyed. I sent my two participants a copy of the transcript to, which they consented to be used before using it in my study so that participants could ensure the reliability of the data. Lastly, the University of Toronto Master of Teaching Ethical approval procedure and protocol under the MTRP guidelines was followed and adhered to throughout the study.

The final ethical consideration that arose from this study is that of building and establishing a good relationship prior to your research study because although participants may feel willing to discuss they may try to answer a certain way or give you answers that you want to hear rather than how they really feel. I still feel it is important that your participants trust you but there are always concerns according to Crouch and McKenzie (2006) where researchers get wrapped up in proving their research question or hypothesis rather than just allowing the participants to inform the research (p. 488). Thus, to make this ethically sound I tried to foster a climate of respect where it is judgment free however; I also knew when it was not appropriate for
me to intervene and just allow the interviewees to bring out their insights and opinions on this topic.

3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths

One of the main limitations of my research study is the research data that was accumulated is not generalizable to a certain population or community due to the small number of participants (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006, p. 490). This is not a goal of my research study however; it can be a useful research study for people to consider when doing further research on this topic. Another identifiable limitation would be the lack of student voice and perspective in the study because students equally have important information to contribute about how they actually feel when speaking French and whether they experience anxiety and if their teacher helps them deal with that.

A strength of taking the qualitative research approach is that it’s a widely held belief that it provides a more in-depth look at understanding French language anxiety that teachers and students may experience and if they are offered professional development and online programs to help them cope with this anxiety. It is much more effective according to Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick (2008) because it is less rigid than quantitative studies that rely on purely quantitative reasonings and outcomes through things like questionnaires (p. 292). I appreciate qualitative interviews because they give first hand experiences of Core French teachers in the field and what their thoughts and perceptions are of the current situation when it comes to Core French in intermediate classrooms in Ontario. This gives ample opportunity to the teachers to vocalize their opinion and/or concerns and just know that their voice mattered and was valued.

3.7 Conclusion
In this chapter I articulated the research methodology and how my research was done through a qualitative research lens. Then I highlighted the research approach and procedure and supplanted that within a literature based context discussing the importance of qualitative research. I explained my main instrument of collecting data, which was semi-structured face to face interviews and discussed how this type of interview is the most suitable to this study. Next, I articulated the participants of this study and the corresponding criteria that was applied to all interviewees. Also, I explained the recruitment procedures and how it was based on selective and convenience purposes to ensure that participants are related to the topic. The following section stated the data analysis and how I examined and analyzed the data output from the interviews looking for common attributes but also points where respondents differ in opinion as well. Ethical issues were also outlined such as anonymity, participants needing to be informed before starting the interview, what the interviewer needs to do in order to be successful and the transcripts and field notes being sent to participants to ensure accuracy and that it is free of bias. Finally, I clarified the limitations and strengths of my research study on French language anxiety that may be experienced by students and teachers and the professional development opportunities and online programs that are offered to them.

Some of the limitations include the sample size and the lack of student voice and perspective but I also upheld the strengths of the study such as it being more in-depth and concrete and giving first hand experiences that allowed the teachers to have a platform to discuss their feelings and opinions on this topic. In the following chapter, I outline the research findings and results of my study.
Chapter 4: Findings

4.0 Introduction

In chapter 4 I discuss and analyze the findings of my study on French language anxiety in Core French intermediate (grades 7 and 8) classrooms and the professional development and online support extended to French teachers in a school board outside of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). I underline the immense importance of my two participants and their perspectives on this topic. My participants are current, in service elementary Core French teachers in a school board outside of the GTA. In order to uphold the confidentiality of my participants I gave them pseudonyms: one is called Natalie and the other Caprice. Natalie is my first participant who happened to grow up around the GTA as a Core French student and now has been a contracted Core French teacher for four years. It is her first year at this specific school. She teaches grades 6-8 Core French and Grade 8 Drama and History. She is pretty active in the school community as the girls’ basketball coach and is involved in the organization of the talent show. She considers the school to be diverse with lower income families residing in the area.

My second participant is called Caprice who was also a Core French student like Natalie, who was born in Kingston, Ontario and moved to Ottawa as a child. Caprice is a very experienced French teacher and has been teaching for just about thirty years now. She currently teaches junior level (grades 4, 5 and 6) Core French but she has done French Immersion, Core French in the intermediate grades and English in the past. She also articulates that she does a lot of coverage for other teachers for anything from physical education to drama. She is well-versed in the school because she has been teaching there for 16 years and she has been a mentor to new incoming Core French teachers. She is also involved in the timetable committee, the supervision schedule committee and leads French Club. She feels that the school is very diverse because it has two ME (multiple exceptionality) classes, the gifted and mainstream classes as well with
students coming from a variety of different income brackets. The participants both have teaching experiences as junior (grades 4, 5 and 6) and intermediate (grades 7 and 8) Core French teachers, which adds nuance to my study since both grade levels are able to be contrasted. By engaging in these qualitative semi-structured interviews, I was able to garner honest and valuable information about French language anxiety, the teaching strategies that my interviewees used to help mitigate that anxiety for their students and professional and online support they receive.

I also talk about the teacher’s experiences teaching FSL in schools today and the professional development and online support that they get. I also link this chapter back to the literature review and the existing literature in the field. I engage in a thematic analysis where I identify key themes that are recurring and ones that are apparent in both of the interviews. I searched for and coded patterns and commonalities as well as instances where they differed in opinion as well. The most logical thing to do was to have themes with some having sub-themes and some not have any as there were certain ideas expressed by my participants in greater detail and as a result needed to be more broken down but the other themes were broad enough to be a standalone theme without sub-themes.

I have noted and will highlight four important themes with corresponding and related sub-themes from the interviews: changes in the FSL curriculum in 2013, the second theme is professional development with sub-themes of opportunities for professional learning, the lack of professional support addressing French language anxiety, inter-collegial support and professional identity as a Core French teacher. My third theme will be teacher pedagogy and reducing French language anxiety with sub-themes about the age of students, signs/indicators of French language anxiety, the social conditions of the classroom and lastly teaching practices and strategies to address French language anxiety in the classroom. My fourth theme will be that both participants
did not use technology in their second language classrooms but see its necessity. These themes will serve as the foundation for this chapter and will greatly connect with both my initial research questions and the literature I have reviewed. In addition, these themes often are interrelated and the corresponding sub-themes also relate to some degree as well. So, it’s crucial to view them as connected entities. Furthermore, in this chapter I am using the terminology of French language anxiety since that’s how it is referenced throughout the study. However, second language acquisition theorists and researchers have used other terminology that one should be aware of such as second language acquisition anxiety and foreign language anxiety for example, which all have a similar meaning.

4.1 Changes in the FSL Curriculum

The curriculum from 1998 and 2001 for FSL instruction in Ontario was outdated and the Ministry, FSL educators and others felt that a revised curriculum was necessary. The revision in the FSL curriculum is something that has been discussed by my participants extensively. The release of the updated curriculum in 2013 allowed for more of a shift in focus away from grammatical and syntax exercises to authentic interaction and communication. The vision of the FSL curriculum explains that a goal of theirs is to ensure that students acquire enough confidence to use the language in a variety of ways and in different “social settings” (Ministry of Education, 2013). As a result, the idea of authentic interaction was integrated into the curriculum in the hopes of making FSL students feel more competent in their speaking capabilities. The new curriculum also referenced students’ health and well-being. The participants illustrated that the curriculum gives them a good starting point and guideline as to what is expected. Natalie states that “the focus [of the curriculum] is more on oral skills now rather than grammar”. Diffey (1992) similarly says that curriculum in the past was very partial in that it favoured grammar but
that now second language programs in general should be more “multidimensional” (Diffey, 1992). The changes in the FSL curriculum have affected the ways that my participants teach Core French to their students to make French more engaging and meaningful. Teaching FSL requires a lot of thought about how the French is taught (Mollica, 2005, p. 11). And the curriculum now allows teachers to think about the best ways to enable their students to be successful with French.

Natalie has not had a lot of experience without the new curriculum but discusses how Core French in her teaching was heavily geared towards the AIM (Accelerated Integrative Method) program, which teaches the language through imitation where students mimic actions and engage in plays and gestures in French that seek to “build vocabulary”. However, the primary emphasis is now on building their vocabulary but students are engaging and participating in more direct ways by carrying out conversations with each other. The Ministry of Education says that when teaching French there should be numerous occasions to communicate authentically and have it be connected to real life contexts (Ministry of Education, 2013, p.8). Caprice on the other hand had started implementing change in her Core French classroom before the revised curriculum even came out. She discussed the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and how there were about 20 teachers who were also using this framework in their classrooms. For example, “implementing principles like I can statements, talking about what [students] can do versus what they can’t do, concentrating on [students] getting a message across not being so concerned about everything being grammatically perfect and increasing student talking time”. Caprice says that this framework greatly aligns with the new curriculum and so it was not really a big difference for her because she had already changed her teaching to better meet her student’s needs in the Core French classroom. Both participants agree that this
was a positive move by the Ministry to change the FSL curriculum to better support and accommodate students. However, French language anxiety is something that they still express is present in their Core French classrooms even with a more focussed, clear and revised curriculum.

Interestingly, in Caprice’s biographical section she said that she was not enrolled in a French Immersion program as a student because there were not any Immersion programs in Ottawa at the time so she was also in Core French herself. She said that the curriculum then was very different because she entered Kindergarten and began the Core French program right away. In contrast, her brother a few years later entered a French Immersion program as one of the very first students in Ontario.

Even though Horwitz, Gardner, MacIntyre, Dornyei and other theorists defined foreign language anxiety so long ago their theories laid the groundwork for second language acquisition anxiety research and are still relevant to both researchers and educators today. It is necessary to cite these researchers and scholars because their early work and research sculpted the research that is done currently.

**4.2 Professional Development for French teachers in Ontario**

This section will discuss the professional development extended to Core French teachers in Ontario and provides some analysis on the topics. Within this broad theme I have outlined four sub-themes to clarify the insights generated by the participants. During the interviews, both participants shared the opinions of having a good amount of opportunity to engage in professional learning however, nothing specifically addressing French language anxiety, which is my second sub-theme. Thirdly, they also emphasized that there was evidence of collegial support at both of their schools that greatly helped them in their teaching efforts. And the final sub-theme
discussed by the participants express the internalization of ideas of isolation in their professional identities as Core French teachers.

4.2.1 Opportunities for Professional Learning

Alongside the new curriculum, professional development was an obvious next step for the Ministry to ensure that French teachers knew how to implement the changes of the FSL curriculum into their classrooms. Teachers need to be well-informed and one way that can be addressed is through professional development opportunities (Horwitz and Young 1991, p. 106). The CASLT in 2006 said that there was a drastic need for improvements in regards to the professional development offered to French teachers (p. 47). However, what I have discovered in my interviews is that both participants are extremely satisfied with the amount of professional support that they receive. Natalie says that the board offers her different workshops that she takes full advantage of as well as access to a French facilitator and coach that they never really had access to in the past. She also states that she is actively involved in Facebook groups and online networking to see what teachers are doing in other boards in Ontario as well as across the country. Natalie likes the amount of professional development she gets but at the same time she has to go and explore some networking on her own as well. Similarly, Caprice claims that the professional development she receives is also substantial with different workshops on how to teach Core French, general workshops on technology and cooperative learning as well. She said that she also went to an OMLTA (Ontario Modern Language Teacher Association) conference and CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) conference as well to help build her knowledge on how to teach FSL. She is a part of a pilot project of a new French resource for the board and engages in web conferences. Overall, both of my participants vocalize that they are pretty pleased with the professional support they are currently receiving from the school board.
Natalie and Caprice also made brief mention that explore programs and excursions were something that they both did in university but never pursued afterwards when they became a teacher. Caprice explains that “it is not available and plus there is no funding”. Excursions were extremely useful according to my participants because the context was authentic and fully immersive. I have personally been on an Explore program to Quebec and it was extremely beneficial since it heightened both my confidence and competence with French. Michael John Salvatori (2007) argues that in his study of 15 non-native FSL teachers; they discussed that a lack of funds was a barrier to their participation in conferences and excursions (p. 3).

4.2.2 Lack of Professional Support for French Language Anxiety

However, one interesting position that both of my participants stated was that none of the professional development they did was geared towards addressing French language anxiety. But both conveyed their beliefs in the fact that there should be professional development that explicitly looks at French language anxiety that students experience in their classrooms. Natalie claimed that the professional development and French language anxiety that students experience are often seen as “different things”. I asked for further clarification on this and she said that there are workshops with a specific focus on FSL and then other workshops on general anxiety but not “workshops about FSL anxiety itself”. This is a big part of my study that the professional development over the years has gotten better for French teachers in Ontario however; a pressing problem like French language anxiety that has been researched extensively over the decades is still seen as not important enough for teachers to have professional development about. When students are learning a second language and anxiety is present it is one of the main emotions that can negatively interfere with their successful acquisition of the language (Pavlenko, 2006, p.32-33). Similarly, Dornyei (2005) argues that when students are anxious there retention of the
language dwindles (p.198). A similar sentiment is affirmed by Caprice who says that they are in “need” of more professional development like this. She spoke to how she thought there was a gap in the professional development about French language anxiety that was particularly important for French teachers.

Michael Salvatori (2007) also states that professional development like conferences, workshops and AQ’s all help build a teacher’s knowledge and proficiency in French (p.106). However, as communicated by my participants they feel that there is a good amount of professional development in the school board but there is a bit of a lacking when it comes to actual professional development looking at French language anxiety in the classroom that teachers or students may be experiencing. French language anxiety is commonplace in both of my participants’ classrooms and as said by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) students have a lack of confidence in their capabilities in French and as a result they doubt themselves, which can affect their lives as they continue into high school and beyond (p.127). A more contemporary scholar Dornyei (2005) says that when anxiety is present then your knowledge and confidence with the second language is compromised and deteriorates (p. 198). There is an increased satisfaction with the professional development given to French teachers but there was no professional support that specifically focussed on and addressed French language anxiety directly.

4.2.3 Collegial Support

An unexpected sub-theme emerged from the above while talking to my participants in the interviews: collegial support. Both of my participants expressed the importance of the support they have within the schools with their other French colleagues. Caprice discusses that she has built a close relationship with the other French teachers in her school where they can converse
with each other about what works in their classroom, different teaching approaches and how they deal with French language anxiety in their classrooms as well. Likewise, Natalie also emphasizes that there is a good partnership she has with another French teacher and they talk about different teaching strategies and FSL curriculum ideas. Interestingly both of my participants both stated that they feel “lucky” to be a part of such a supportive inter-collegial circle in their schools where they feel a part of a French community and team that can share ideas and insights on teaching FSL and some of the issues like French language anxiety. But both acknowledge the fact that other French teachers are not as fortunate and often they are the only teacher in the school that brings about a lot of stress for those teachers because they have no one to rely on or as Caprice says “some schools they only have one French teacher so you don’t have anybody to bounce ideas or to ask questions too”. Natalie said:

At some schools [she] has seen it where it’s difficult where they are the only French person and so it’s hard to look for that support within your school and with people who don’t know your curriculum, don’t know kind of what your teaching, don’t know what it’s like to be a French teacher.

This is problematic for numerous reasons but relating it back to this study it’s because the French teacher may not know how to cope with the French language anxiety felt by their students or themselves that can have long term implications for both the teacher and students. The collegial support that is experienced by French teachers has not been researched extensively and should be a focus of future research studies. There are numerous scholars who have researched collegial support in general but the collegial support within French teacher niches in schools would be an interesting study to further explore and investigate. In my study, both of my participants conveyed feelings of being fortunate to have collegial support within their teaching
environments because that co-partner relationship can help French teachers particularly in this school board at least, since they haven’t been receiving professional development explicitly to help address French language anxiety in their classrooms.

4.2.4 Professional Identity as a Core French Teacher

Another sub-theme that was necessary albeit unsurprising to include in my findings was the professional identity of French teachers. Both Natalie and Caprice talked about similar ideas in their interviews in regards to the identifying feature of being a French teacher. The participants conferred that French teachers are seen as only French teachers and that they have nothing else to offer beyond their abilities to teach the language. Caprice feels that when students see her outside of the classroom they start talking French to her immediately and only see her in that light as not just their teacher but their ‘French teacher’. And Natalie says that she is quite content with her current school because “[she is] not just seen as a French teacher at this school… [she] is seen as a teacher in general and that’s great”. Although in Natalie’s biographical information she said that she taught both drama and history at this school as well and not just French, which may have contributed to the fact that she felt more included in the school community since she taught more than one subject. Furthermore, Natalie says that other teachers in other schools are often only seen as speaking or teaching French, which largely relates to Caprice’s situation.

Both participants and their responses to the question on how being a Core French teacher affected their professional identity indicated similar notions of alienation and at times isolation. Unfortunately, this is the reality lived by some French teachers today. A study done by Richards (2002) also investigated the idea of the marginalization of French teachers in particular Core French ones (p. 220). Furthermore, French teachers were often excluded and marginalized from
other teachers in a physical and participation standpoint (p. 221). Teachers were often not invited to staff meetings, had separate classrooms and when asked for their input it was only when it was linked to French. Richards’ (2002) findings “indicate that most of the participants did see themselves as marginal and that processes of exclusion emanated from sources both inside and outside the teaching profession” (p. 225). In addition, Caprice says that there is a massive demand for French teachers and they are constantly in need of French teachers. Sometimes French teachers can be “othered” because anyone who is proficient and can speak French will do in terms of doing the job (Roberts, p. 224). In the next theme we further explore, what pedagogy French teachers are engaged in to help students reduce feelings of anxiety in the Core French intermediate classroom.

4.3 Teacher pedagogy and Reducing French Language Anxiety

Both participants spoke of the different factors they considered important when thinking about the strategies they use and the teaching approaches they implement. This section is quite comprehensive so it is divided into interrelated sub-themes so that everything that the participants discussed can be included but in a more organized way. The first sub-theme discusses the factor of age and how that impacts French language anxiety in their teaching experiences. The following sub-theme discusses the signs of anxiety seen by the participants in their students in Core French intermediate classrooms. The third sub-theme outlines the social and overall classroom environment, which is a very poignant factor that heavily influences how my participants’ teach in their classrooms. The final sub-theme is teaching practices and strategies used in Core French classrooms and this serves as a foundation to how the participants in this study teach and what they deem to be successful in their classroom to reduce French language anxiety for their students.
4.3.1 Age

According to the participants in this study, age was a significant factor and determinant influencing students and their level of French language anxiety. It’s well-known that the earlier a student starts learning a language the better off they will be; however, if students have negative conceptions of their abilities in French that can sometimes happen in non-Immersion classrooms then it can be very troubling for students (DeKeyser, 2012). This validated a part of my argument that age in this case intermediate (grade 7 and 8) students experience French language anxiety that is of a particular nature that is different from other grades especially younger grades. Horwitz states that students feel a sense of stress and anxiety when speaking a language that is largely unfamiliar to them and that puts them in an uncomfortable position (Horwitz, 2001). Natalie says that when students are in the junior grades they are enthusiastic about learning French but as they get older that enthusiasm decreases. Similarly, Caprice says that “younger kids are not afraid to take risks but older kids worry about making those mistakes”. Denies, Rianne and Tomoko (2015) argue that how students see themselves and their proficiency when they are younger would affect their decision to pursue the language further (p. 721). Age is an important factor to consider when looking at French language anxiety however, equally important is the behaviours and signs of anxiety exhibited by students in the classroom. The age of the students and the signs of anxiety often sculpt the ways teachers teach and their instructional methods that will be discussed in the next few sub-themes.

4.3.2 Signs of Anxiety

This section focuses on the signs and indicators of anxiety that the participants have seen in their FSL classrooms. Natalie states that students typically misbehave, will shut down and not want to speak because their afraid of speaking incorrectly. However, Caprice goes a little deeper
with her signs of anxiety by saying that students in her classroom have avoided eye contact with her, the student exhibits avoidance types of behaviours by asking to go to the bathroom constantly and some fidget with things. Body language is also a big indicator according to Caprice because some students get nervous and have darting eyes and they feel very uncomfortable. Dornyei states that language learning is one of the most intimidating subjects because students are “pressured” into using an unfamiliar language (Dornyei, p. 40).

Students begin to behave in emotionally driven ways because they feel that sense of hesitation and fear. In her earlier studies, although Horwitz (1986) did not find a strong correlation of anxiety with all of her participants she did find a significant link with three categories of anxiety: communicative apprehension, fear of negative evaluation (that will be described further in the next section) and test anxiety (p. 130). Students are also apprehensive about their communication skills and do not feel they have developed enough proficiency, which can then spur anxiety for some. Likewise, Tammy Gregerson and Elaine K. Horwitz (2002) argue that students who experience second language anxiety are exposed to a similar type of anxiety to that of what perfectionist students’ experience (p. 563). So, students believe that they must speak perfectly or do things perfectly and “…wait until they [are] certain of how to express their thoughts” (Gregerson, 2002, p. 563). Language learning according to Zoltan Dornyei (2002) is “one of the most face-threatening subjects because of the pressure of having to operate using a rather limited language code” (p. 40). As a result, students begin to act and show signs of anxiety due to their lack of confidence in their abilities to speak the language especially in such a socially driven environment like a classroom. This idea will be explained further in the next sub-theme.

4.3.3 Social Conditions of the Intermediate (grades 7 and 8) Core French Classroom
This theme revolves around the social conditions of the Core French classroom and both participants explained this in their interviews. The dynamics in a classroom change as students’ age and as a result their social interactions and relationships are different. Students become more judgmental and socially aware of their peers. Natalie stated that the age influences their classroom environment because students are often asked to speak in front of their peers and that can get intimidating for them. Furthermore, she says that learning a second language is a “new concept” for students and they respond with fear of making a mistake or being made fun of for making that mistake. Likewise, Caprice illustrates that students are often again afraid to make mistakes. This largely correlates with a study done by Horwitz (1986) who found that there were three different aspects to anxiety that are apprehension itself, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety (p. 130). The fear of evaluation is what is prevalent in Natalie and Caprice’s observations of the anxiety in their FSL classrooms due to students fixating on correct pronunciation rather than speaking freely. Students can get so subsumed with the accuracy rather than seeing and learning a second language as a “volitional or freely chosen process” (MacIntyre, p. 564).

The classroom can be an intimidating place for students learning a new language because students may be reluctant to speak due to their limited level of proficiency. Dornyei (2001) says that students in Core French programs feel it is a compulsory course, something they lack confidence in and are thus anxious about speaking the language (p. 40) and the combination of this in a classroom makes students feel nervous. Learning a new language places students in a state of unease. Gardner (1997) cites a study that he did with Smythe in a French classroom where they concluded that “...anxiety specific to the language learning situation...tends to interfere with language acquisition” (p. 34). Anxiety is often situation specific because it is based on the situations that students are experiencing and that influences how they feel. Situation
specific anxiety consists of things such as public speaking, examinations or class participation where students must perform and engage with the language in a more direct and communicative way (Ellis, 2008, p. 691). Natalie also noted that as a student she at times experienced anxiety when speaking French in her university classes because her peers were very proficient and often native or Immersion speakers. Interestingly, she said though that it was “not the language itself that made her anxious but rather her classmates”. Also, Denies, Rianne and Tomoko (2015) did a more recent study in Flanders, Belgium where they found that the willingness to speak a second language is contingent on the students' motivation but also looked at how the more anxious the learners are than the more likely they are to doubt their abilities and competence (p. 721). This is in another country but the insights and ideas can be brought into the Canadian context within FSL education. The next section elaborates on the teaching practices and strategies implemented by my participants to help lower the French language anxiety experienced by their students.

4.3.4 Teaching Practices and Strategies in Core French Classrooms

This sub-theme is based on the teacher practices and strategies that my participants used in their Core French intermediate classrooms. Teaching practices and strategies is defined more broadly and takes into account what teachers do in their classroom even when their maybe not teaching French as well because both teachers as stated earlier in the biographies teach other subjects and engage in extra-curricular activities. The shift in the curriculum to focussing on communication heavily impacted the teaching practices of my participants. The Ministry released a document called the Capacity Building Series in regards to Teaching and Learning in the Core French Classroom and it underlines a focus on oral proficiency and the key is “…to provide opportunities to talk, opportunities to hear, opportunities to listen” (Ministry of
Education, 2012, p. 1). They both state that the curriculum has now moved into a phase where students are expected to interact and communicate with each other and not be overly concerned with grammar. The focus as Caprice puts it is now on “oral interaction rather than oral production”. Oxford (1999) argues that language anxiety is ranked high amongst factors that impact language learning (p.59). This makes it even more critical for teachers to be mindful of how they setup their classroom and how they set their learners up for success.

Natalie and Caprice say that their classrooms are very safe, positive and encouraging to ensure that students are open to taking risks especially when learning something so new to them like a different language. Students need a classroom environment that supports students and their emotional needs and that they are “…valued as people regardless of their performance” (Curtain and Dahlberg, p. 8). A classroom atmosphere that is set up how Curtain and Dahlberg suggest ensures students are comfortable and confident in their abilities. Caprice goes into a little more depth about the teaching practices in her classroom. She says that she specifically uses the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference), which has been discussed for many years and the importance there is on how to support and build student confidence in FSL. She also said that cooperative learning was also crucial to her teaching practices because French becomes less intimidating when the kids are learning together as opposed to individually.

Caprice and Natalie also vocalize that authenticity plays a huge role in FSL classrooms today whereby students should be able to see the relevance to their lives and how the language can be used outside of the classroom. In sum, the overall teaching practices of my participants included things like building a positive classroom environment with a main focus on interaction and communication that is authentic, being aware that students should not feel that they are being judged or graded and just is in general a supportive place to learn. The participants got more
detailed when there was a question asking explicitly about the strategies that they use. Anthony Mollica (2005) notes that “teaching French as a second language is a complex process…that requires thoughtful reflection about the teaching strategies” (p. 11). Natalie says to students frequently that she supports them by being open to and welcoming mistakes and telling students to regard them as a moment of growth. To her, the effort and attempt is what is most important. She said that students were happy to know that the teacher knew where they were coming from and were able to relate to what they were going through. Natalie herself even tells her students that she is a proficient speaker of French but even she makes mistakes and that is all about learning. Natalie also embeds accommodations for certain anxious students like for example she allows them to do presentations at recess just in front of her or do it in a small group and is always thinking about who is comfortable participating and sharing with the whole class when she poses a question. Everytime she does an oral and communication based activity she makes sure that students get time to practice before sharing so that the students become more comfortable with saying the words and sentences. Foreign language anxiety is seen in the classroom when students have a negative emotional reaction that is provoked when learning a second language especially in a classroom environment where “self-expression” is present (Gregerson and MacIntyre, p. 3). By self-expression they mean that students have actual opportunities to speak in class but also the ability to express themselves through the different activities provided.

Similarly, Caprice uses a lot of strategies that Natalie uses. Caprice uses cooperative learning a lot because students are constructing meaning and learning from each other in groups. Like Natalie, Caprice pulled students aside at recess and did extra help to ensure that students understood the content being covered. Caprice also established a good routine with students
where they knew what they can expect from her. She also brings up the notion of relevance and she often asks students “why are we learning this, what is our task today and explain to them that we need to know numbers because what if we need to tell people the address of a place or a phone number”. She again briefly mentioned the CEFR model and says that the primary focus is on “I can statements” and focussing on what students can do as opposed to what they can’t. The increase of student talk time was also important to Caprice because she believed that if students are practicing the language more directly with each other than it would be beneficial to them in decreasing anxiety. Stephen Krashen (1998) who is a major theorist in the field of second language acquisition research states that teaching a second language is most effective when teachers employ a “comprehensible output” done in low anxiety situations (p. 176). He is implying that second language acquisition is best when students are actually producing some kind of output in classroom conditions that are supportive containing authentic and relevant information. Spontaneous interaction is a trend that FSL is moving towards in Caprice’s opinion and she teaches in a way that gives students opportunity to practice spontaneity with the activities and lessons she does. The goal is not the accuracy of the language but rather their usage of vocabulary and are they getting their message across even though it may be a little hard to understand at times. The final section sees how the integration of technology was not something the participants in this study used however saw its utility in classrooms.

4.4 Technology, Computer Mediated Communication and Computer Assisted Language Learning

This final theme outlines the effects of using technology in the Core French classrooms to help in addressing French language anxiety. The use of technology as a medium to communicate in French helps in reducing the anxiety felt by students (Guichon, 2009 p. 170). Both of the
participants in this study stated the fact that they did not personally use technology in their classrooms but understand its necessity. Natalie said that using technology in a Core French classroom could be beneficial in numerous ways. Meanwhile, Caprice said that she also did not necessarily use technology but saw that professional development was starting to become more accessible with online webinars, workshops and presentations from the school board. However, Natalie and Caprice did not personally use CALL or CMC in their teaching practices. Kissau, McCullough and Garvey (2010) state that “as anxiety and perceptions of competence in the [second language] may be influenced by the face-to-face nature of traditional [second language] classrooms in, which students are required to communicate in the [second language] in front of their peers, it could be hypothesized that online discussion may help alleviate student anxiety, increase perceptions of competence, and thus generate a greater willingness to communicate in the [second language] (p. 279). Although Natalie and Caprice did not use technology directly in their teaching they both appreciated and valued its importance in FSL classrooms today.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed and reviewed the main themes that were derived from my interviews with my two participants. I first discussed the theme of the FSL curriculum and its revision and changes over the years and its impact on teaching FSL today in Ontario. Afterwards, the second theme of professional development was analyzed with the specific sub-themes of opportunities for professional learning, the inter-collegial support experienced by teachers in schools and the professional identity of Core French teachers. Then, I moved onto my third theme about teacher pedagogy and reducing French language anxiety and discussed the sub-themes such as the age of students, signs of anxiety in the classroom, the social atmosphere of the classroom and teachers’ overall teaching practices and strategies to overcome the second
language anxiety experienced by some students. And finally the last theme involved technology and various computerized programs like computer mediated communication (CMC) for example that were not used by my participants but both understood and respected the importance of technology in second language acquisition and professional development. In the next chapter, I outline the research implications of this study on FSL education in Ontario, offer my recommendations based on the insights identified and express possible areas for future research.
Chapter 5: Implications

5.0 Introduction to the Chapter

In this chapter, I outline a summation of the topics discussed and review the key findings that were in the previous chapter. I then state the implications of the results, in a wide-ranging sense for educators as I address some educational issues about the Core French program in Ontario. And in the subsequent section I discuss implications regarding needs that should be met in the field and how this research has informed my teaching practice. I conclude by making recommendations for those interested and involved in second language acquisition and FSL education in Ontario. And lastly I make suggestions for further research on this topic and provide some concluding remarks for this study.

This research study mainly discussed the question of French language anxiety in intermediate (grades 7 and 8) Core French classrooms in a school board outside the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and how a sample of teachers sought to mediate that anxiety for their students. It also included subsidiary questions about factors that contributed to student’s sense of French language anxiety, teaching strategies, the impact of student ages, challenges with the FSL curriculum, professional development and teachers’ use of online programs. My research explored relevant literature regarding second language anxiety and included interviews with two Core French teachers.

5.1 Key Findings

There were a number of significant findings in my research. Firstly, the most important for this study, was the enduring presence of French language anxiety in my participants’ Core French classrooms. My participants articulated that the revisions in the French as a Second Language curriculum (2013) helped them tremendously but the anxiety that students and even they felt was still there. Another key finding was that my participants were overall very pleased
with the opportunities for professional learning they were receiving however, as stated by both there was no professional development that directly addressed French language anxiety in Core French classrooms. The two participants felt more fortunate than others because they had intercollegial support with the teachers in their respective schools to help them with issues like French language anxiety in their classrooms. Yet, the participants expressed some of the reality that French teachers face today about the profession being alienating at times since French teachers are only seen as speaking and teaching French.

The interviews revealed issues related to teacher pedagogy and the different facets that influence their teaching such as: age, signs of anxiety and social conditions of the classroom. They reflected on how all of this impacted their teaching approaches and strategies. One strategy that both participants suggested was the significance of creating a positive classroom climate that encouraged and motivated students to speak and interact with each other in authentic ways. They both said that students in the intermediate grades (grades 7 and 8) experience more French language anxiety than their junior counterparts. Denies, Rianne and Tomoko (2015) explain that the ways that students view themselves and their proficiency when they are younger will affect their development with the language as they get older (p. 721). Therefore, if students have a negative outlook on their acquisition of French and are anxious when they are young it becomes exacerbated as they get older because those feelings have persisted for a while.

The final finding was that my participants did not necessarily use technology (computer mediated communication or computer assisted language learning) to mitigate French language anxiety in their classrooms but recognized its importance. Although both educators did not use technology in their teaching they both understood the role it can play in their FSL classrooms. They stated that professional development has increasingly moved to being online and as a result
the support and professional development they received was becoming more accessible to them. All of these findings responded to the research questions that guided my study and provided a holistic understanding of Core French teachers and their current experiences in schools and how they mitigate French language anxiety in their classrooms.

5.2 Implications

In this section, I discuss the various implications of my research study starting first in a broader sense by looking at the implications for both the research community and larger educational community. I outline my broad implications focussing on how this implicates Core French educators on the more micro level and then also on the macro level with implications for the Ministry of Education and various school boards within Ontario. I also consider implications for teacher education programs. Finally, I explain possible narrow implications of my study and how this study influences my teaching practices but also my identity as a researcher.

5.2.1 Broad Implications

Within a broader scope, the findings of my research study indicate that Core French intermediate (grades 7 and 8) students and even teachers experience French language anxiety in classrooms today. The FSL Curriculum has changed significantly and my participants valued its revisions but it still did not directly alleviate the anxiety experienced by students. Moreover, the Ministry of Education and the school boards do currently have specialized individuals or curriculum consultants who are hired to work for the school boards who help teachers better understand the curriculum and how to implement it in their classrooms. But the reality is that some French teachers still struggle with understanding the FSL curriculum and need more support. I think that this is an idea that the Ministry and school boards need to revisit. The two teachers in this study had to implement teaching strategies into their classrooms in an effort to
mitigate French language anxiety. In addition, the fact that some of these teaching strategies did work in creating a more inclusive and positive classroom is promising but French language anxiety still occurred according to my participants. This supports the notion that professional development for French teachers in Ontario is fundamental to ensure that students increase their confidence and proficiency with learning the language. However, I must state that even though the Core French teachers in my study implemented different teaching strategies and did get professional development and online support to a certain degree, French language anxiety is a part of learning a second language and teachers are only able to do so much about it.

Overall, the school boards and the Ministry of Education are providing adequate support and professional development to teachers however; there is a limited amount of professional development for French teachers that explicitly addresses French language anxiety. So, I would suggest that there be targeted professional development that helps French teachers overcome the challenges of teaching in FSL classrooms. The research has suggested that the professional development for French teachers in Ontario is better however; there are still gaps in the professional development that French teachers are receiving. This study proposes that in order to sufficiently support Core French teachers and students; professional development and support should be more specific to issues in FSL education like French language anxiety. Furthermore, this should be extending to the institutional level with the Ministry of Education, more localized school boards and teacher education programs that collectively should provide an increase in opportunities for professional development specifically for FSL teachers so that teachers are prepared to teach in French classrooms and overcome the challenges that come with second language programs like Core French. Also, the new curriculum includes information about the well-being of students but the curriculum could include more specific support for well-being
such as, how to support students experiencing French language anxiety that might include specific prompts and ideas for French teachers.

5.2.2 Narrow Implications

As explained by my participants, the strategies that they discussed, including cooperative learning and creating a positive classroom atmosphere, are strategies that can help minimize the French language anxiety felt by students. As a future educator, I really understand and value the strategies that my participants explained to ensure that students feel comfortable and believe in their abilities to speak French. As a result, I hope to encourage and motivate my own students to pursue the French language beyond its mandatory years. It’s really important for me as a reflective teacher to be committed to lifelong learning and pursue professional development through networking. This was also described by my participants that they often network and acquire support and resources by networking with other French teachers across Ontario. This suggests that the role of a teacher in general is to access materials, sometimes this is through the support of professional development but often it rests on the sole responsibility of the teacher to access their own resources. This study suggests that teachers would like more professional development to be up to date on current practices.

My research illustrates that the insights and the importance of teacher interviews have enabled me and others, to have a greater awareness about the challenges of teaching French. This study left me with a greater awareness that I hope will translate into helping me avoid some of the pitfalls that would come up if I was unaware. I will be able to anticipate French language anxiety and be able to either prevent or address it. In addition, I think that subject specific anxiety does exist like French language anxiety but so does general anxiety. From this study, I am also now more mindful of general anxiety that can manifest itself in classrooms. By engaging
in this qualitative research I saw the advantages of doing such meaningful research that interests me and that I have a deep seeded dedication as it expands my knowledge as a teacher and informs and guides my teaching practices on how to cater to my students. Lastly, I will keep up to date on new research on this topic as it arises so that I can stay well-versed on new advances in the field and adjust my teaching to better suit my students and their needs.

5.3 Recommendations

The ongoing presence of French language anxiety in Core French intermediate classrooms, as well as in the junior grades indicates that anxiety to speak French needs to be addressed in schools but also in school boards and above all the Ministry of Education. As explained by my participants they are content with the current professional development and support they are receiving however would value and greatly benefit from professional development that specifically addressed things like French language anxiety. I would encourage the Ministry to recognize more fully how this anxiety can truly interfere with second language acquisition and students continuation with FSL. For example, the direct referencing of French language anxiety in the FSL curriculum could help in increasing the awareness of this topic. Also, more local directives and initiatives by school boards and teacher education programs might provide support. Furthermore, as discussed earlier in this study, there is funding for summer explore and excursion programs in other provinces where FSL teachers are able to visit Francophone communities and practice the language in an authentic fully immersive context. I think that is definitely something to consider for Ontario French teachers; to allocate bursaries to help them not only practice the language but also engage with other teachers globally to share how they teach second languages in their classrooms.
When referring to the actual schools on a more localized level it’s really important as discussed by my participants that teachers feel supported by their colleagues but I would also incorporate principals, as they have a key role to play. The French teachers are able to comprehend and relate to each other within the school but it is equally important for other generalized teachers to be more open and willing to coordinate with FSL teachers. I would argue that many teaching strategies are flexible enough to be revised or enhanced to make it fit into any classroom context, so giving French teachers a voice within the school is crucial. It’s also important for FSL teachers and other teachers to respect one another and what they teach upholding a positive outlook to FSL, and the other respective subjects as well. The modelling of this respectful behaviour towards FSL teachers in the school community conveys a message to students that French teachers are appreciated and valued.

I also recommend that if possible allowing Core French teachers to have their own classrooms instead of subjecting them to movable trolleys that carry all of their work and content. This is important because it gets students more actively involved in speaking and being immersed in French culture and language. When Core French teachers are given their own classroom they are regarded in the same way as other teachers and also the teachers are able to set up the classroom to place significant content or material so that students are able to visualize, interpret and engage in the language more explicitly.

My final recommendation would be for FSL teachers in general to be self-aware and understand how troubling French language anxiety can be for some students and even teachers. It’s important for teachers to be willing to incorporate different teaching strategies so that if French language anxiety does arise that their teaching helps reduce it. There is no magic fix to French language anxiety but the approach one takes and the strategies used by FSL teachers can
really set the tone for the classroom and heavily shape student motivation and perception of French and learning French beyond the compulsory years.

5.4 Areas for Future Research

This research study was relatively small with a very specific focus on Core French teachers and their experiences of teaching FSL in a school board just outside the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). It looked at the presence of French language anxiety in Core French intermediate (grades 7 and 8) classrooms and the teaching strategies teachers used to alleviate that anxiety. In terms of further research on this topic, I think that it would be fruitful for a larger scale research study that focusses on elementary Core French teachers across Ontario and their different ideas, perceptions and experiences about French language anxiety in their FSL classrooms. I think a focus on FSL teachers in general, whether Core French, Extended French, or French Immersion would be advantageous because the study could have a nuanced glance at FSL in various schools as well as different perspectives on French language anxiety. I would also suggest that further research include grade nine and how students transition from their French program in elementary school to high school and their attitudes in grade nine would be particularly informative.

I also believe that some research would be beneficial around the implementation of the FSL curriculum since its revision in 2013 to see how all FSL educators are implementing it in their classrooms. Finally, it would be interesting to research about the effectiveness of computer mediated communication (CMC) or computer assisted language learning (CALL) in FSL classrooms in Ontario, and perform a cross comparative analysis between schools and teachers and its effect on the reduction of French language anxiety for students.

5.5 Conclusion
In this study on French language anxiety in intermediate (grades 7 and 8) classrooms, I engaged in two semi-structured qualitative interviews with Core French teachers and their teaching experiences, strategies, professional development and online support. This study addressed the main question of how the new FSL curriculum is interpreted by French teachers when trying to mitigate French language anxiety in their classrooms and the teaching practices they use to help lower that anxiety for their students. Overall, this research study has conveyed the omnipresent role that French language anxiety can have in intermediate (grades 7 and 8) classrooms and the effects that it may have on students. The research presents ideas of how teachers can prevent and avoid French language anxiety in the classroom. As discussed by the French teachers in this study there are teaching practices and strategies that are useful and effective in reducing French language anxiety for students. Ultimately, this demonstrates that there are ways that students can feel successful and competent in learning French but the teachers have to be positive, incorporate a variety of pedagogical strategies and encourage students to feel confident in their abilities to take FSL beyond the mandatory years.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Letter of Consent for Interview

Date:

Dear ______________________________,

My name is Daniella Naumovski 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 called a Master’s of Teaching Research Project. My research will focus on how French language anxiety in the Core French classroom can affect both intermediate students (grades 7-8) and teachers and the response of the Ministry of Education in regards to professional development opportunities and online programs extended to teachers to help them mitigate anxiety students and they themselves may be experiencing. I am interested in interviewing teachers who teach Core French in elementary schools just outside the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). I think that your knowledge and experience will allow for great insight to be generated about 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. 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,

Daniella Naumovski

Email: daniella.naumovski@mail.utoronto.ca

Instructor’s Name: Rose Fine Meyer

Email: rose.fine.meyer@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 Daniella Naumovski 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

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study and for making time to be interviewed today. This research study aims to learn about French language anxiety in Core French classrooms looking specifically at intermediate students (grades 7-8) and if their teachers also experience anxiety for the purpose to identify professional development and online programs offered to Core French teachers in Ontario to help them decrease that anxiety they may have and also help students with anxiety as well. This interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes, and I will ask you a series of questions focussed on Core French teaching and the anxiety students may feel when learning a second language like French and if teachers experience a similar type of anxiety. The questions will also involve the professional development and online resources given to teachers to help them with French language anxiety in their classrooms. 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. As I explained in the consent letter, this interview will be audio-recorded? Do you have any questions before we begin?

Section A: Background Information

1. Where were you born?
   a) Canada if so, where did you grow up?
   b) If you were not born here, which country were you born in?

2. How long have you been teaching for?

3. What grades do you teach? Do you only teach Core French? Do you teach any other subjects alongside Core French?
4. In addition to being a teacher, do you partake in any other activities or roles within the school (coach, advisor, club leader/coordinator, etc.)?

5. Can you explain the school’s context and/or community in terms of its demographics (diversity, socioeconomic status)? How long have you taught at this specific school?

6. As you already know, my research looks at Core French teachers and the anxiety grade 7 and 8 students may feel when integrating with French and if teachers have a similar type of anxiety and how they cope with it. And if they are given and/or offered professional development opportunities and online programs to support them. You are a Core French teacher hence that is why you are participating in this study. But can you describe a little about what type of role the French language plays in your life?

Section B: Encounters and Teacher Perspectives about French language anxiety when they were a student

7. Can you tell me a little about your experience as a student in the Canadian public school system and which program you were enrolled in (Core French, Extended French or French Immersion)?

a) (If applicable) If you felt any of that French language anxiety or nervousness did that affect your experience of schooling when it came to doing French?

8. (If applicable) Did any of the experiences you previously mentioned influence your decision to become a teacher?

9. (If applicable) Have you shared the experience of French anxiety as a student with your students? If so, why/ in what context? And what were the student’s responses?
10. Do you believe the experiences of your students are similar or differ from your own experiences as a teacher? Does it have an impact on your teaching approach?

11. Have you ever discussed the experiences as a Core French teacher with your colleagues? If so, in what context? How did your colleagues respond?

Section C: Experiences and Beliefs

12. How does being a Core French teacher affect your professional identity and learnings as a teacher?

13. How do you conceive of French language anxiety in the classroom?
   a) What are some signs of French language anxiety that you may have seen?
   b) Do you believe that the age of the student may influence the anxiety felt?

14. Do you currently experience as a teacher and/or see in students’ anxiety to speak French in school? If so, what are some of the factors you think contribute to this anxiety?

15. How do you respond to experiences of French language anxiety in your classroom? Can you give me a specific situation/experience and how you sought to deal with it?

16. If there is anxiety and apprehension that you see in your students how do you mitigate that anxiety? Do you use teaching strategies or reform your teaching approach?

17. The new FSL curriculum was released in 2013, so can you describe if you have changed your teaching to meet the new curriculum expectations? Does the curriculum bring up any challenges for you when teaching French?
18. Over the years, there has gradually been a huge emphasis placed on being able to speak French because it is beneficial in numerous ways however, why do you believe in your opinion that French language anxiety is still in existence?

Part D: Supports and Challenges and Next Steps

19. What kind of professional development and/or online programs are available to you in terms of decreasing French language anxiety in your classroom and/or for yourselves?

20. What challenges and limitations do you feel there is when it comes to the professional development and online programs support and resources Core French teachers get?

21. What do you believe still needs to be done in order to minimize and/or eliminate these challenges and barriers?

22. As a beginning teacher entering the profession as a new potential Core French teacher, what advice or recommendations can you give me?

Thank you for your time.