Exploring the Relationship between Core French Teachers’ Beliefs and their Instructional Practices

by

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Department of Curriculum Teaching and Learning
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Abstract

In this doctoral dissertation, I explore the relationship between beginning Core French (CF) teachers’ beliefs about Core French teaching and their instructional practices. As a former teacher educator, one of my principle preoccupations was the challenge faced by many of my Core French teacher candidates (TCs) to enact practices aligned with their beliefs. In order to explore this topic, I gathered data via an on-line questionnaire on the beliefs and declared practices of 47 Core French teachers in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). By means of in-class observations, I collected detailed information on the actual practices of 13 Core French teachers, nine beginning and four experienced for comparison. In addition, I interviewed these 13 teachers to assess their impressions of their teaching.

In the literature, conflict or incompatibility between teacher beliefs and non-traditional second language teaching approaches, such as a communicative approach, are regularly cited as a key factor contributing to discrepancy between beliefs and practices. However, the incompatibility of beliefs and practices did not in my view adequately explain what I had witnessed as a teacher educator.
In analyzing my data through the lens of a hybrid framework of complexity theory and Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy, I found teachers’ ability to handle periods of chaos, which almost inevitably accompany the introduction of a new instructional approach, to be the key factor contributing to discrepancies between beliefs and practices. Moreover, teacher levels of self-efficacy had important implications for how teachers viewed and navigated the chaos. Participants with a high degree of self-efficacy viewed and navigated the chaos quite differently than participants with a low degree of self-efficacy. Findings also show important differences in outcome (e.g., teacher and student use of the target language) in classes taught by teachers with a high degree of self-efficacy versus those with lower levels of self-efficacy.
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# Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS....................................................................................................................... IV

LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................................... IX

LIST OF FIGURES .................................................................................................................................. X

LIST OF APPENDICES .......................................................................................................................... XII

PROLOGUE ............................................................................................................................................. 1

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 7
  1.1 RATIONALE FOR AND FOCUS OF THE RESEARCH ................................................................. 7
  1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS .......................................................................................................... 8
  1.2 OVERVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY .................................................................................. 9
  1.3 A BRIEF INTRODUCTION OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .................................... 10
  1.4 THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS STUDY .............................................................................. 11
  1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS ......................................................................................... 12

CHAPTER 2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CORE FRENCH PROGRAMS ................................................. 13
  2.1 THE ORIGINS OF CORE FRENCH PROGRAMS IN ONTARIO .................................................. 13
  2.2 BILINGUALISM, FRENCH IMMERSION AND THE EVOLUTION OF CORE FRENCH PROGRAMS IN ONTARIO ................................................................. 14
  2.3 AN OVERVIEW OF FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS IN ONTARIO (DELIVERY MODELS) ................................................................. 15
  2.4 HISTORICAL ISSUES CONCERNING CORE FRENCH PROGRAMS .................................... 16
  2.5 THE 1998/1999 CORE FRENCH CURRICULUM .................................................................. 17
  2.6 THE REVISED CORE FRENCH CURRICULUM (ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY) ............. 18
  2.7 THE STATUS OF CORE FRENCH IN ONTARIO .................................................................... 20
  2.8 THE TEACHING CONTEXT ..................................................................................................... 22
      2.8.1 A general profile of Core French teachers in Ontario .................................................. 22
      2.8.2 An overview of Core French teaching conditions ......................................................... 22
      2.8.3 Perceptions about the Core French program .............................................................. 23
      2.8.4 Core French: An overview of prevailing instructional approaches ......................... 25
  2.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY .............................................................................................................. 26

CHAPTER 3 LITERATURE REVIEW ..................................................................................................... 27
  3.1 SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHER BELIEFS AND COGNITION ............................................. 27
  3.2 FACTORS SHAPING TEACHER BELIEFS AND COGNITION ........................................... 28
  3.3 (IN)CONSISTENCY BETWEEN TEACHER BELIEFS ABOUT SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING AND THEIR ACTUAL CLASSROOM PRACTICES ......................................................... 29
  3.4 THE IMPACT OF TEACHER PRACTICES ON STUDENT BEHAVIOUR AND LEARNING .... 31
  3.5 PROGRAM AND CURRICULAR REFORM, TEACHER BELIEFS AND PRACTICES ...................... 32
  3.6 EXPERIENCED VERSUS BEGINNING TEACHER BELIEFS AND CURRICULUM CHANGE ........ 33
  3.7 SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION, TEACHER BELIEFS AND PRACTICES ............. 35
  3.8 TEXTBOOKS, SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING AND TEACHER PRACTICES ....................... 37
  3.9 SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODOLOGY ............................................................. 39
      3.9.1 A Discussion of the concepts of method and approach ................................................. 40
      3.9.2 Tracing the history of second language teaching methodologies ............................. 44
  3.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY ............................................................................................................. 53
CHAPTER 4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 EARLY MODELS (CONCEPTUALIZATIONS) OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

4.1.1 Cognitive and socio-cognitive theories (models) of second language teaching

4.1.2 Ecological and sociocultural theories (models) of second language teaching

4.2 COMPLEXITY THEORY AND THE THEORY OF SELF-EFFICACY: A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

4.2.1 Complexity theory: An overview

4.2.2 Complexity theory and second language learning

4.2.3 Complexity theory and second language teaching

4.3 BANDURA’S THEORY OF SELF-EFFICACY

4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

CHAPTER 5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

5.1 A GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH

5.2 DATA COLLECTION METHODS USED IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT

5.3 AN OVERVIEW OF THE PARTICIPANTS

5.3.1 The wider participant pool

5.3.2 The focal participants

5.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

CHAPTER 6 PARTICIPANTS’ PROFILES, BELIEFS AND DECLARED PRACTICES

6.1 PARTICIPANTS’ PROFILES

6.1.1 Summary of participants’ profiles

6.1.2 Comparison of participants’ profiles with existing literature on the profile of Core French teachers in Ontario

6.2 PARTICIPANTS’ BELIEFS ABOUT SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING, CORE FRENCH PROGRAMS AND STUDENTS AND COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (CLT)?

6.2.1 Beliefs about second language (FSL) teaching and learning

6.2.2 Beliefs about Core French students

6.2.3 Beliefs about communicative language teaching (CLT)

6.2.4 Difficulties/Challenges in adopting CLT in Core French classrooms

6.2.5 Summary of Participants’ beliefs about second language teaching, the Core French program, the students and communicative language teaching (CLT)

6.2.6 Comparison with existing literature on teacher beliefs about second language teaching, Core French programs and communicative language teaching (CLT)

6.3 PARTICIPANTS’ DECLARED INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

6.3.1 Focus of instruction or content of lessons

6.3.2 Centre of instruction (teacher-centered versus student-centered)

6.3.3 Testing tools

6.3.4 Target-language use in the Core French classroom (by the teacher and students)

6.3.5 Use of different types of classroom activities

6.3.6 Use of pedagogical and non-pedagogical classroom resources/materials

6.4 SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANTS’ DECLARED PRACTICES

6.5 COMPARISON WITH EXISTING LITERATURE ON SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHERS’ DECLARED PRACTICES

6.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

CHAPTER 7 PARTICIPANTS’ ACTUAL PRACTICES AND THEIR IMPRESSIONS OF THEIR TEACHING

7.1 FOCAL PARTICIPANTS’ ACTUAL INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

7.1.1 Focus of instruction/content of the lesson

7.1.2 Focus of instruction (teacher-centered versus student-centered)
CHAPTER 8  SUMMARIZING MY KEY FINDINGS AND PROVIDING ANSWERS TO MY PRINCIPLES RESEARCH QUESTIONS ........................................................................................................... 175

8.1  SIMILAR PROFILES, BELIEFS AND PRACTICES ................................................................. 176
8.2  UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BELIEFS AND PRACTICES: NEGOTIATING CHAOS .................................................................................. 178
8.3  LEVELS OF SELF-EFFICACY: A KEY FACTOR IN UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER BELIEFS AND THEIR PRACTICES ................................................................. 180
8.4  A UNIFYING FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS’ BELIEFS AND THEIR PRACTICES: COMPLEXITY THEORY AND THE THEORY OF SELF-EFFICACY ........................................................................ 181
8.5  ENACTIVE AND VICARIOUS EXPERIENCES AND VERBAL/SOCIAL PERSUASION: FACTORS AFFECTING LEVELS OF SELF-EFFICACY ........................................................................ 185
8.6  CHAPTER SUMMARY .............................................................................................................. 186

CHAPTER 9  FOCAL PARTICIPANTS’ PHYLLIS AND BREND&A: NAVIGATION OF A PERIOD OF CHAOS ... 187

CHAPTER 10  IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS ................................. 196

10.1  IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY FOR TEACHER EDUCATION, CURRICULA, TEXTBOOKS AND OTHER RESOURCES .............................................................. 196
10.1.1  Teacher education ........................................................................................................ 196
10.1.2  The FSL curriculum ........................................................................................................ 197
10.1.3  Textbooks, workbooks and teacher’s guides ............................................................... 198
10.2  LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY ............................................................................................ 199
10.3  FUTURE RESEARCH ............................................................................................................ 201
10.4  CONCLUDING REMARKS ................................................................................................... 201

EPILOGUE ................................................................................................................................... 203
# List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1</td>
<td>Method of Data Collection, Type of Analysis and Software Employed to Answer Research Questions</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2</td>
<td>Primary Focus of Lesson</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3</td>
<td>Focus of Instruction Teacher-centered versus Student-centered</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4</td>
<td>Approach to Instruction of Grammatical Concepts</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5</td>
<td>Teacher Use of L2 (French) by Situation</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 6</td>
<td>Student Use of L2 (French) by Situation</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 7</td>
<td>Instances of Teacher Explicit Expectation of L2 Use by Students</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8</td>
<td>Teacher Use of Approaches to Providing Comprehensible Input/Negotiating Meaning</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 9</td>
<td>Testing Tools</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 10</td>
<td>Speaking Activities</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 11</td>
<td>Reading Activities</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 12</td>
<td>Comprehension Activities</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 13</td>
<td>Listening/Viewing Activities</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 14</td>
<td>Writing Activities</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 15</td>
<td>Resources/Materials</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 16</td>
<td>Comparison of Focal Participants’ Declared Practices and Actual Practices</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 17</td>
<td>Overview of the Focal Participants</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 18</td>
<td>Number of Instances of Teacher Explicit Expectation of Student TL Use</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 19</td>
<td>Observed Instances of Use of Different Techniques to Provide Comprehensible Input to Students (by Focal Participant)</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 20</td>
<td>Relationship Between Teacher and Student Target Language Use: The Case of Zara</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 21</td>
<td>Example of Student Comfort with and Understanding of Teacher TL Use: The Case of Maria</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 22</td>
<td>Example of Student Comfort with and Understanding of Teacher TL Use: The Case of Phyllis</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 23</td>
<td>Example of Student Comfort with and Understanding of Teacher TL Use: The Case of Francis</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 24</td>
<td>Example of Student Lack of Comfort and Understanding of Teacher TL Use: The Case of Brenda</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 25</td>
<td>Comparison of Characteristics of Teachers with High and Low Efficacy</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 26</td>
<td>Focal Participants with Higher versus Lower Self-efficacy: Self-confidence</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 27</td>
<td>Focal Participants with Higher versus Lower Self-efficacy: Impression of the Core French Program</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 28</td>
<td>Focal Participants with Higher versus Lower Self-efficacy: Confidence in Students’ Abilities</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 29</td>
<td>Focal Participants with Higher versus Lower Self-efficacy: Spontaneity and Flexibility</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 30</td>
<td>Focal Participants with Higher versus Lower Self-efficacy: Perseverance</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 31</td>
<td>Focal Participants with Higher versus Lower Self-efficacy: Impressions of Core French Program Materials/Resources</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 32</td>
<td>Focal Participants with Higher versus Lower Self-efficacy: Initiative</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 33</td>
<td>Brenda and Phyllis: Comparison of Excerpts from Lessons Correcting Homework in a Textbook or Workbook</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

**Figure 1.** Schematic diagram of research questions. ................................................................. 9

**Figure 2.** Teacher navigation of chaos. ......................................................................................... 70

**Figure 3.** Teacher A with a high degree of self-efficacy versus Teacher B with a lower degree of self-efficacy: Navigation of chaos with similar initial conditions. ................................................................. 71

**Figure 4.** Teacher A with a high degree of self-efficacy: Navigation of chaos with differing initial conditions. ................................................................. 72

**Figure 5.** Visual representation of an inductive approach. .......................................................... 75

**Figure 6.** An iterative/inductive approach to data analysis. ......................................................... 76

**Figure 7.** Steps in the recruitment of participants and data collection. .......................................... 78

**Figure 8.** Number of years teaching. ......................................................................................... 85

**Figure 9.** Teaching status. ........................................................................................................ 85

**Figure 10.** Teaching program. ................................................................................................ 86

**Figure 11.** FSL program completed as a student. ........................................................................ 87

**Figure 12.** Methods experienced as a student in grade school (elementary and secondary combined). ........................................................................................................ 88

**Figure 13.** Methods experienced in FSL courses taken during undergraduate degree. .......... 89

**Figure 14.** Methods experienced during Bachelor of Education program, FSL AQ courses. .... 90

**Figure 15.** Methods exposed to/employed during FSL practicum. ........................................... 91

**Figure 16.** Comparison of focal participants and wider participant pool “agreement” with statements about second language teaching and learning .................................................................................. 93

**Figure 17.** Focal participants and wider participant pool “agreement” with statements about Core French students ................................................................. 94

**Figure 18.** Focal participants and wider participant pool: CLT employed (yes or no). ............... 95

**Figure 19.** Focal participants and wider participant pool: Satisfaction with CLT (yes or no). ........ 95

**Figure 20.** Focal participants and wider participant pool: Intention to use CLT in future (yes or no) ......................................................................................................................... 96

**Figure 21.** CLT previous workshop participation (yes or no). ...................................................... 96

**Figure 22.** Focal participants’ and pool of wider participant pool’ beliefs about CLT. Percentage of participants who believed statements about CLT were completely or somewhat true .................................................................................. 97

**Figure 23.** Focal participants: Teacher-related difficulties/challenges adopting CLT (level of significance) ........................................................................................................ 98

**Figure 24.** Wider participant pool: Teacher-related difficulties/challenges adopting CLT (level of significance). ......................................................................................... 99

**Figure 25.** Focal participants: Student-related difficulties/challenges adopting CLT (level of significance) ........................................................................................................ 100

**Figure 26.** Focal participants: Systemic difficulties/challenges adopting CLT (level of significance). ........................................................................................................ 100

**Figure 27.** Wider participant pool: Systemic difficulties/challenges adopting CLT (level of significance). ......................................................................................... 102

**Figure 28.** Focal participants: Focus of lesson (frequency of use). ............................................. 105

**Figure 29.** Wider participant pool: Focus of lesson (frequency of use) ........................................ 105

**Figure 30.** Focal participants: Centre of instruction, teacher or student (frequency of use). ......... 106

**Figure 31.** Wider participant pool: Centre of instruction, teacher or student (frequency of use). ........................................................................................................ 107

**Figure 32.** Focal participants: Testing tools (frequency of use). .................................................. 108

**Figure 33.** Wider participant pool: Testing tools (frequency of use). ........................................... 109

**Figure 34.** Focal participants: Amount of teacher TL use in different situations (frequency of use). ........................................................................................................ 110

**Figure 35.** Wider participant pool: Amount of teacher TL use in different situations (frequency of use) ......................................................................................... 111

**Figure 36.** Focal participants: Amount of student TL use in different situations (frequency of use) ........................................................................................................ 112

**Figure 37.** Wider participant pool: Amount of student TL use in different situations (frequency of use) ......................................................................................... 113

**Figure 38.** Comparison of focal and wider pool of participants’ use of different speaking activities. Percentage who answered “yes” they employ these activities. .................................................................................. 114

**Figure 39.** Comparison of focal and wider pool of participants’ use of different listening/viewing activities. Percentage who answered “yes” they employ these activities. .................................................................................. 115

**Figure 40.** Comparison of focal and wider pool of participants’ use of different reading activities. Percentage who answered “yes” they employ these activities. .................................................................................. 116

**Figure 41.** Comparison of focal and pool of wider participants’ use of different comprehension activities. Percentage who answered “yes” they employ these activities. .................................................................................. 117

**Figure 42.** Comparison of focal and pool of wider participants’ use of different writing activities. Percentage who answered “yes” they employ these activities. .................................................................................. 118

**Figure 43.** Focal participants: Use of classroom materials (frequency of use). ......................... 119
Figure 45. Wider participant pool: Use of classroom materials (frequency of use) .................................................. 119
Figure 46. TL use versus L1 use by teacher by course (% of instructional time for each) ........................................... 146
Figure 47. Teacher TL use versus English use (% of instructional time) ................................................................. 147
Figure 48. Student TL use versus English use (% of instructional time) ................................................................. 152
Figure 49. Navigating periods of chaos: Comparison of focal participants Phyllis and Brenda. ............................... 189
List of Appendices

APPENDIX A – TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE ................................................................. 226
APPENDIX B – INFORMATION LETTER FOR PARTICIPANTS IN QUESTIONNAIRE PHASE OF RESEARCH STUDY .................................................................................................................. 237
APPENDIX C – INFORMATION LETTER FOR PARTICIPANTS IN OBSERVATION AND POST-OBSERVATION INTERVIEW PHASES OF THE DOCTORAL RESEARCH PROJECT ............................................................... 238
APPENDIX D – CONSENT LETTER FOR OBSERVATION AND POST-OBSERVATION INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS .................................................................................................................. 240
APPENDIX E - POST-OBSERVATION INTERVIEW GUIDE .............................................. 241
APPENDIX F - ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION LETTER .............................................. 242
APPENDIX G – ADMINISTRATIVE CONSENT LETTER .................................................. 244
APPENDIX H - PARENT/GUARDIAN COURTESY INFORMATION LETTER ....................... 245
Prologue

I feel it is essential to provide first some personal background information to understand the rationale behind this doctoral dissertation, particularly my position in the research as both insider and outsider.

I have been teaching French as a second language (FSL) in Ontario for the past 15 years. I am a former elementary and secondary Core French and French Immersion (FI) teacher as well as a teacher-educator in a ten-month FSL pre-service education program. Presently, I am a French-language professor at a bilingual university.

I was once a student in the Core French program in British Columbia in Grades 5 to 10. I also enrolled for one year in an Early French Immersion program in Grade 12. As such, much of what I know, how I plan my lessons, how I teach in regards to FSL and particularly Core French teaching is the result of experience and intuition.

I do not remember much about my time as a student in a Core French classroom; however, I do remember that there was not much exposure to spoken French and the majority of what I did in class and for homework focused on form, i.e., the memorization of grammar rules and the completion of repetitive grammar exercises. In my case the focus on form was not necessarily a negative. In fact, quite the opposite, focus on form was what I needed. I grew up in a suburb of Vancouver with a Belgian mother whose first language is French, and in the home she usually spoke to me in her mother tongue. However, I almost never responded in French. I spoke French with my Belgian grandparents on the phone and during the summer. However, I rarely wrote in French and did not have the ability to understand and correct my errors.

Thus, my experience was quite dissimilar to the experience of my classmates who had no exposure to the French language other than the 40 to 70 minutes per day of formal classroom instruction. While I benefitted from a focus on form to improve the accuracy of my French, my classmates completed Grade 8 Core French unable to understand more than a few words of French. In British Columbia, students are only required to take Core French up to Grade 8 versus in Ontario where it is a requirement to complete Core French Grade 9.

In my final year of secondary school, I was given permission to enrol in the Grade 12 French Immersion language class, which produced a dramatic difference. The teacher spoke exclusively
in French, students were expected to communicate with the teacher and one another exclusively in French, and the focus was primarily on meaning. We studied works of literature including the Québécois play *Zone* and the famous French novel by Camus *L’Étranger*.

I did not intend to become an FSL teacher; however, job opportunities and my love of the French language resulted in me choosing such a career path. After completing a Masters in Political Economy and spending almost two years abroad, I returned to enrol in a teacher education program specializing in FSL. During my teacher education program, I completed two French Immersion placements. I did not complete a practicum in a Core French classroom.

In my first full-time teaching position, I taught both French Immersion and Core French. I was a full-time Grade 7 and 8 Core French and French Immersion teacher. The school had a variety of old textbooks (e.g., *Entre-Amis*) for the Core French program. However, there were not enough textbooks for all of the students. I found myself having to build my own programs, both for Core French and Immersion. In the beginning with classes of 30 to 38 students and struggling with discipline issues, I taught my Core French classes almost exclusively in English. Any meaningful communication with the students was in English. I found myself focusing primarily on form, teaching the rules of grammar and having students complete repetitive grammar exercises.

I believe I fell into this pattern for three reasons: 1) due to my own experience as a student in the Core French program, 2) because my colleagues were using a similar approach, and 3) because it was much easier to find textbooks and resources and to plan lessons and activities focused on form. I could have chosen to continue teaching this way as I felt very comfortable explaining the rules of French grammar; however, I was not happy employing such an approach. I knew that it would not enable the students to build their French oral production and comprehension. I wanted to teach in French. I wanted meaningful communication with my students to take place in the target language. I wanted the students to understand me when I spoke in French and to be able to respond to in basic French. Thus, I began to focus more and more of my instruction on developing oral and written comprehension. I planned most of my lessons around reading simple texts and listening to short audio and video recordings. I asked students both orally and in writing to answer comprehension questions about the texts and recordings and produce small summaries and critiques. I endeavoured to speak as much French as possible. I found myself instinctively using intonation, gestures, visual aids and different types of questioning techniques
to make myself understood and modeling\(^1\) and scaffolding\(^2\) the language to enable students to answer in French. I began to appreciate and enjoy teaching Core French.

I think I was drawing upon another language teaching experience from my past. I had previously taught English as a second language (ESL) for three months at a Berlitz language school in Brussels, Belgium. The Berlitz method insists on instruction entirely in the target language and the use of gestures, visual aids and questioning techniques. The Berlitz method proved extremely helpful in guiding my efforts to teach primarily in French. I also had my lived experience in French. At that time, I had never heard of the grammar-translation method or the communicative approach, or any other method or approach for that matter. I had no theoretical background to apply. I do not recall discussing different methods and approaches to second language teaching in my teacher education courses.

I obtained a teaching position in a secondary school after 6 years of teaching Core French and French Immersion Grades 7 and 8. At the high school level, there was a common final exam and thus the need to follow more or less the same program as my colleagues. At all grade levels, there was a shared textbook (e.g., Sans Frontières, Quoi de Neuf?, Nouvelles Frontières). These textbooks were focused around a theme and underlying each theme a set of grammatical concepts (e.g., traveling by time machine into the future and how to use the future simple tense to do so). The textbooks were not purely traditional in approach or orientation, rather they focused primarily on comprehension both written and oral. The exercise books focused on a combination of oral, written comprehension and repetitive grammar exercises. However, the evaluations, and particularly the final exams developed by the departments, were almost exclusively focused on

\(^1\) Modeling involves a teacher demonstrating a concept for a student or students (Salisu & Ransom, 2014). In the case of language modeling, this for example involves the teacher demonstrating different ways to formulate or respond to a particular question employing the target language. Bandura (1986) argued that modeling is a highly effective strategy for learning knew knowledge or a new skill.

\(^2\) Scaffolding refers to instructional techniques employed by the teacher to build students’ understanding little by little. As students become more proficient, the scaffolding is gradually removed (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2002). Ovando, Collier and Combs (2003) defined scaffolding in second language teaching as the provision of support for meaning through the use of such things as simplified language, teacher modeling, visuals and graphics.
form (i.e., grammatical concepts). Thus teachers, myself included, spent most of our instructional time teaching to the test. For example, we worked on ensuring that students were able to conjugate verbs correctly in the conditionnel présent or correctly replace a direct or indirect object noun with the appropriate pronoun. As part of each grade level, the 1999 curriculum policy documents for secondary Core French courses contain tables of grammatical concepts. The documents state “Students should recognize and use these language structures in all three strands” (pp. 15 & 24). These grammatical concepts appear to have become the basis for most, if not all, Core French testing at the secondary level in Ontario. While I needed to prepare my students for the final departmental exams, I supplemented my grammar lessons with regular readings, songs, videos and movies.

It was around this time that I began to think seriously about the importance of teaching methods and approaches and teacher education. I saw an ad in the Globe and Mail for a seconded FSL instructor position in the Initial Teacher Education program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). For five years, I taught the FSL curriculum and instruction course and I observed and provided feedback to students during their Core French and French Immersion practicums in secondary schools in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). In the Curriculum and Instruction course, I focused the first few lessons on introducing the students to different methods in second language teaching (i.e., grammar-translation, direct method, audiolingual and communicative approaches). We discussed the importance of teacher use of the target language and lessons, activities and exercises focused on meaning.

I distributed a copy of the draft of the revised Core French curriculum. The revised French as a second language document for Grades 4 to 8 was released in 2013, the document for Grades 9 to 12 was released in 2014. The revised curriculum is an obvious attempt on the part of the province to encourage teachers to employ non-traditional methods and approaches. The curriculum explicitly refers to communicative and action-oriented approaches as well as discouraging the use of form-focused approaches. My teacher candidates responded very enthusiastically to the idea of teaching primarily in the target language and having students communicate more in French. They were also enthusiastic about the prospect of focusing more on meaning.
However, when I went to observe my teacher candidates, I witnessed lessons focused primarily on form, which were taught almost exclusively in English. Those teacher candidates who attempted to use the target language were met with blank faces, long stares and pleas of: “I don’t understand, speak English please.” As a result, most of my teacher candidates ended up translating all of their spoken French or began the lesson in French and then promptly switched to English. Students rarely spoke French with the teacher and never interacted in French amongst themselves. I primarily observed lessons focused on the rules for conjugating the *passé compose* or the rules of agreement between adjectives and nouns in gender and number. After the lesson students completed repetitive grammar exercises.

During debriefing sessions with my teacher candidates, I mentioned the lack of target language use, the almost exclusive focus on form and the prevalence of repetitive grammar exercises. Most of my teacher candidates readily acknowledged that they were employing traditional methods (i.e., grammar-translation and/or audiolingual methods), but that these were the approaches employed by the host teacher and that they had little choice but to teach in the same way. One teacher candidate declared, “When I have my own classroom that is when I will focus on communication.” However, when I did observe significant use of the target language and activities focused on meaning it was because the host teacher was already employing such an approach. This facilitated a teacher candidate’s ability to implement a more non-traditional approach. I observed a handful of situations where the host teacher employed a traditional approach but was open to the teacher candidate employing a more non-traditional approach. In particular, I had one student with whom I had a close enough relationship that she sought out my help during her Core French practicum to implement a new approach. It was challenging for both of us, but in the end the teacher candidate was very proud of her achievements and I gained invaluable knowledge on how to support a teacher candidate through what I termed the transition phase of implementing a new instructional practice.

As a result of my practicum experiences, in my final year as an instructor, I focused my course on helping teacher candidates understand and develop strategies to deal with periods of transition. For example, how to employ the target language with Core French students unaccustomed to large amounts of target language use by the teacher and how to organize
interactive speaking activities with students unaccustomed to interacting in French. It is the nexus of these experiences that informed the direction and focus of this dissertation.
Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 Rationale for and focus of the research

In my observations over the years I have found that teacher candidates enter practicum and their first year of Core French teaching with a good idea of what outcomes they want for their teaching, which is most often for students to develop a basic understanding of French and some ability to speak the language. Teacher candidates also graduate from their teacher education program with some understanding of how to plan a unit and an individual lesson including activities and exercises. However, most teacher candidates graduate (myself included) from the teacher-education program with little or no understanding of how to navigate periods of transition or chaos such as those referred to in complexity theory. Periods of transition or chaos are inevitable, normal, and natural in teaching, which is especially the case when implementing a new instructional approach. However, many beginning teachers are ill-prepared to navigate the transition, and become quickly unsettled if for example, students’ initial reaction to the introduction of an approach is negative or when an activity does not go exactly as planned. As a consequence of the chaos, many beginning teachers modify the approach they had intended to transition to, or abandon it altogether.

On the other hand, there are those beginning teachers who introduce a new approach or activity and persevere rather than modify or retreat when it does not go exactly as planned or students react negatively. More importantly, they persevere regardless of context. For example, I observed a single teacher successfully employ the target language in the majority of class time in an Academic, Applied and Beginner Core French context. I have also seen teachers continue to emphasize meaning over form regardless of the different Core French contexts in which he or she was teaching. What was striking to me in each case was that the teacher was clearly the most crucial factor in explaining how the lesson proceeded and the outcomes of the lesson.

Thus, the rationale for the choice of thesis topic was to understand better how beginning Core French teachers handle periods of transition or chaos. I also sought to understand why some teachers are able to successfully negotiate such periods while others are far less successful or altogether unsuccessful. Furthermore, with the advent in Ontario of a revised Core French curriculum with a communicative and an action-oriented approach to French as a second
language (FSL) instruction, I believed it was important to provide insight into the factors affecting Core French teachers’ ability to adopt and to sustain non-traditional orientations to their teaching.

To better understand the relationship between beliefs and practices, I collected data via an online questionnaire which explored: Core French teachers’ beliefs about how a second language is best taught, their declared practices, their views about the Core French program and the students in the program, and their impressions of and experiences with communicative language teaching (CLT). Forty-eight teachers completed the questionnaire. By means of a series of in-class observations of 13 Core French teachers, nine beginning and four experienced for comparison, I was able to compare teachers’ declared practices with their actual practices as well as to explore in detail actual instructional practices. Finally, through interviews with the Core French teachers with whom I completed in-class observations, I assessed teachers’ impressions of their actual teaching practices and the lessons I had observed.

1.1 Research questions

In this dissertation, I explore the following primary research questions:

1. What is the relationship between Core French teachers’ beliefs and their practices?
2. What factors affect Core French teachers’ instructional practices?

To answer the two primary research questions above, I explore five secondary questions:

a. What is the profile of the 13 focal participants in the study? How does this profile compare with a wider participant pool of Core French teachers?

b. What are the beliefs of focal participants in regards to Core French teaching, Core French programs and communicative language teaching (CLT)? How do these compare with a wider participant pool of Core French teachers?

c. What are the declared practices of focal participants (i.e., what approaches do they employ when they teach; what content do they teach/what resources and activities do they employ etc.)? How do these compare with the wider participant pool?
d. How do the actual practices of participants compare with their declared practices and their beliefs?

e. What are focal participants’ perceptions/impressions of their actual practices and how does this affect their teaching?

Figure 1. Schematic diagram of research questions.

1.2 Overview of the methodology

To complete this study, I employed a mixed methods approach. I sent out a link to an online questionnaire to FSL teachers in the GTA, primarily former teacher candidates in their first four years of teaching French. The online survey was for the purposes of gauging participants’ understanding of, as well as their beliefs and attitudes about, second language teaching, the Core French program and communicative language teaching (CLT) in the Core French context. I
completed classroom observations and individual interviews with 13 Core French teachers, nine of whom are beginning teachers in their first four years of teaching, all former teacher candidates.

While I am unaware of any study specifically focusing on beginning Core French teachers’ beliefs about Core French teaching, CLT and their instructional practices, a number of research studies have assessed the teaching conditions and teaching context in which Core French teachers teach. For example, studies by Lapkin, MacFarlane & Vandergrift (2006), Lapkin, Mady and Arnott (2009), Mollica, Phillips & Smith (2005) and, Richards (2002) have focused on: funding to Core French programs; administrative support; access to resources; student and parent attitudes; class size; support for teaching English language learners and special needs students; length of Core French periods and; number of hours of instructional time. Challenges identified in these studies included factors such as the overall low status of the Core French program, the absence of administrative and parental support, the misuse of FSL funds by boards and schools, the lack of designated classrooms for Core French instruction particularly at the elementary level and insufficient instructional time (20 to 40 minutes per day). While identifying and addressing the difficult teaching or working conditions in which many Core French teachers teach is extremely important, understanding teacher beliefs about their teaching and their behaviour in the classroom is also essential.

1.3 A brief introduction of the theoretical framework

I searched for some time for a theoretical framework that would allow me to test my intuitions and observations. The result is a framework integrating two theories: complexity theory and Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy. Complexity theory helped to shed light on the relationship between beliefs and practices. Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy provided insight into the characteristics of teachers whose instructional practices and the outcomes of these practices match their beliefs, as well as those teachers whose instructional practices and the outcomes diverged somewhat or significantly from their beliefs.

Complexity theory emphasizes the importance of transition and process, of chaos, the inherently unstable and unpredictable nature of all complex systems such as a Core French classroom.
Complexity theory also recognizes the ability of actors operating within the system, in this case the Core French teacher, to influence the trajectory followed by the system.

The concept of teacher self-efficacy can be defined as a teacher’s judgment of his or her ability to achieve a certain level of performance (Bandura, 1986). The concept of self-efficacy emphasizes the importance of teacher perception: a teacher’s perceptions of his or her own abilities; perceptions about his or her ability to introduce successfully a particular approach or activity; perceptions of his or her students’ motivations and abilities and even perceptions about the success or lack of success of an activity. Teachers with high levels of self-efficacy believe that they can achieve their objectives and remain focused and persevere in the face of adversity. Teachers with low self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to doubt their ability to achieve a certain level of performance. They may also feel a sense of uncertainty and insecurity and are more likely to give up in the face of adversity. Levels of self-efficacy are the result of a combination of lived and observed experiences and the feedback, both positive and negative, we receive from others.

1.4 The contributions of this study

In a joint report produced by the Canadian Association for Second Language Teachers (CASLT), the Canadian Teachers’ Federation (CTF) and the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers (CAIT) on FSL teachers in Canada, participants identified information and guidance on how to teach FSL as the number one priority for professional development (Lapkin, MacFarlane & Vandergrift, 2006). I hoped to offer suggestions on how to better prepare FSL, notably Core French teacher candidates on to navigate periods of uncertainty and instability. I wanted this study to empower teachers who wish to adopt non-traditional approaches (e.g., communicative and action-oriented) to follow through on instructional practices consistent with their beliefs in a setting where traditional approaches remain the norm.

The reality is that Core French, is, and will likely remain in the near future, the primary program for French as a Second Language instruction in Canada, and more specifically in Ontario. Alternative models have been proposed and implemented including Immersion, Intensive and Extended programs; however, such models remain alternatives reserved for a small minority of students. Indeed, 84% of students in Ontario studying French as a second language are enrolled
in a Core French program (Canadian Parents for French, 2012). Thus, if there is any realistic chance of meeting the objective of the federal government of Canada of “doubling…the number of graduates with a working knowledge of both English and French” (Government of Canada, 2003, p. 27), the Core French program will require revitalization. Effective Core French teaching is crucial to a revitalization of the program and effective Core French teaching entails the adoption of non-traditional approaches, methods and instructional strategies.

1.5 Organization of the thesis

This thesis is organized as follows: Chapter 2 contains a discussion of the Core French context, the origins, the evolution of the program, past and present issues/concerns. Chapter 3 contains a review of the pertinent literature on teacher beliefs and cognition and second language teaching methods and instructional approaches. Chapter 4 provides a detailed explanation of the conceptual framework. Chapter 5 explains the research design and methodology. In chapters 6 and 7, I present and discuss the results of the questionnaire, observation and interview data and compare my results to the existing literature. In Chapters 8 and 9, I discuss my key findings, revisit my primary research questions, and discuss the findings within my conceptual framework. Chapter 10 contains implications of the study for FSL teaching, teacher education, materials and resources, a discussion of the limitations of the study and a few final concluding remarks.
Chapter 2
Historical Background of Core French Programs

In order to better understand Core French teacher beliefs, their choice and use of different instructional approaches and materials/resources in the classroom, as well as discrepancies between beliefs and practices, it is essential to understand what it means when we speak about Core French programs in the province of Ontario. Thus, in this chapter, I explain the present French as a Second Language (FSL) requirement to obtain a high school diploma in the province. I highlight the three main delivery models offered (i.e., Core, Immersion and Extended). I trace the origins/history of French as a second language (FSL) instruction in Ontario, notably the socio-political context in which these programs have evolved. Finally, I highlight a number of issues and criticisms affecting the Core French program including teaching conditions and prevailing methods and instructional approaches and I discuss attempts to address these issues and criticisms including the National Core French Study and a new curriculum.

2.1 The origins of Core French Programs in Ontario

Core French (CF) programs are the oldest and most common type of French as a Second Language (FSL) instruction offered in Ontario schools both public and private. Core French courses have been offered in Canadian/Ontarian schools since before Confederation (Stern, 1986). French was taught in Ontario high schools as long ago as 1854 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1974). At the time, FSL courses were neither mandatory to graduate nor to gain university acceptance. About 30% of students in the province at the time were enrolled in French courses at the secondary level. As in Europe, the United States and the rest of Canada, the belief was that learning a modern language was an important part of a broader education, a training of the mind. The main concern was not to develop the ability to understand and employ the language outside the classroom with other speakers of that language but to develop better cognition. French was taught in the same way as instruction in Latin, i.e., the emphasis was on learning the rules of grammar and completing translation exercises (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1974).

After 1876, French became mandatory for entrance to universities in Ontario. Examinations developed by the University of Toronto became the final exams for Core French students. These exams evaluated students’ knowledge of grammar, their ability to translate from French to
English and their written communication skills. Until 1967, these exams were the final Core French exams in Ontario secondary schools. The 1974 report from the Ontario Ministry of Education noted that these exams had the effect of “freezing the content, and even the methodology, of the courses in the nineteenth century mould” (p. 15). In the 1960s, French instruction was introduced into the elementary schools. While emphasis on grammar and translation continued at the secondary level, “parents demanded oral French in the elementary panel” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1974, p. 16).

2.2 Bilingualism, French Immersion and the evolution of Core French programs in Ontario

In the 1960s, the Quiet Revolution took place in Quebec. Shortly thereafter, in 1969, the Canadian government adopted the first “Official Languages Act” giving French and English equal status in the Government of Canada. The country became officially bilingual and the Federal Government began its efforts to realize its policy on bilingualism. A few years later, the province of Ontario made FSL instruction compulsory for all students in grades four to nine.

It was also during the 1960s that the idea for French Immersion was born amongst Anglophone parents in Montreal. At present, in French Immersion programs from 40 to 90% of instruction takes place through the medium of French. For example, students take science, math, history and geography classes taught in French. In the early grades, students take all of their courses except English language arts in French. In the later grades, instruction in French falls to 40 to 50%. The Immersion environment seeks to approximate the environment in which first language learning takes place (Safty, 1988). French Immersion programs represent an elite program. That is only a limited number of students can enrol in the program and students who have difficulty are often counselled out of Immersion. This in part helps to explain why they are considered highly successful; parents line up for hours, even days to enrol their children in schools offering French Immersion.

Even with the success of the Immersion and Extended programs, Core French remains the primary method of delivery of FSL instruction in Canada, including Ontario. As noted in chapter 1, 84% of students in Ontario are studying French in a Core French program (Canadian Parents for French, 2012).
2.3 An overview of French as a second language requirements in Ontario (delivery models)

As mentioned above, it is mandatory for students in Ontario to receive FSL instruction in grades four to nine. Students must have accumulated a minimum of 600 hours of Core French instruction by the end of grade eight. They must complete one FSL credit (the equivalent of one course) at the secondary level. The French as a Second Language (FSL) curriculum today comprises three programs in Ontario: Core French (CF), Extended French (EF), and French Immersion (FI). According to the Ontario FSL curriculum documents the programs “reflect students’ differing needs in studying French” (Ontario Ministry of Education & Training, 1999, p. 2). Each type of program is designed to “provide students with different levels of intensity in developing their French language knowledge and skills” (p. 2). Students may opt to enrol in the Extended French or French Immersion program in lieu of Core French.

At the elementary level, students in Core French most commonly receive 40 minutes of FSL instruction per day. At the secondary level, students receive 75 minutes of instruction per day in semetered schools and 60 to 75 minutes every other day in non-semestered schools (Salvatori, 2008).

The aim of the Core French program is the least ambitious of the three. It consists of developing a “basic usable command” of the French language (Ontario Ministry of Education & Training, 1999, p. 2). A “basic usable command” of the French language is defined as follows:

By the end of the four-year program, students will be able to participate in a straightforward conversation in French; will be able to read – with the help of a dictionary – books, magazines, and newspapers in French; and will be able to understand the general meaning of radio and television news and other program. (p. 3)

This is in stark contrast to the much more ambitious aims of the French Immersion program whereby at the end of the program it is expected that students will:

be able to participate easily in conversations and discussions; will be able to take courses at the college or university level in which French is the language of instruction; and will be able to accept employment in which French is the working language. (Ontario Ministry of Education & Training, 1999, p. 3)
2.4 Historical issues concerning Core French programs

Historically, the teaching of French in Ontario has been intertwined with the fight for bilingualism “and the struggle against Quebec separatism” (Stern, 1986, p. 41). Core French programs are seen by many Canadians/Ontarians (administrators, teachers, parents and the public) as an attempt to appease Quebec and therefore a waste of time and money. The following are comments made by two teachers who participated in a study by Mollica, Phillips and Smith (2005) of the working conditions of elementary Core French teachers in Ontario:

I try hard to be a salesperson for French. *On a good day I feel like I’m keeping Canada united by my efforts.* On a bad day, I think the kids hate French and will hold it against the Quebecois! (p. 151)

Unfortunately, students are not willing to work…They see it as a waste of their time. (p. 157)

Core French has had few advocates. Its most vocal advocate was H.H. Stern who consistently affirmed its importance as the “only contact with French” for a majority of students in the province and the country as a whole (Stern, 1986, p. 41). Stern during his entire life regularly argued for a renewal of Core French programs. He emphasized the development of a new Core French curriculum to bring about such a renewal (Stern, 1986).

With the advent and success of French Immersion programs, Core French has frequently been compared unfavourably. In the words of Stern (1983a, p. 237): "the [perceived] success of French Immersion…has been the undoing of the French core curriculum". He goes on to state: "We do language teaching a disservice by overstating its [Immersion’s] success and, incidentally, also by overlooking its problems, but above all by deprecating, devaluing, and disregarding the potential of regular/core language programs" (p. 237). Core French programs are often considered a “lost cause” (Stern, 1983a, p. 238); even by many teachers teaching in the program.

There was a concerted effort in the 1980s to address the concerns associated with Core French programs. Most notably the National Core French Study, a project set up by the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT) in 1985, set out with the goal of strengthening CF instruction in the country (Flewelling, 1994). The study was inspired by the work of Stern and his multidimensional syllabus. The syllabus proposed by Stern (1983c) is
comprised of four components: language, culture, communicative activities and general language education. With his syllabus, Stern advocated a move away from a curriculum based on a conception of proficiency as purely linguistic knowledge. After assessing the multidimensional syllabus and its applicability within the context of Core French programs, the National Core French study recommended its adoption across the country (Leblanc, 1990).

2.5 The 1998/1999 Core French Curriculum

While the Ontario government of the day did not adopt the four syllabi proposed by the National Core French Study in 1990, the 1998/1999 Core French Curriculum did in fact integrate a number of the Study’s recommendations. It is clear from reading various sections of the curriculum that the framers intended for Core French programs to focus on the development of listening and speaking skills. They intended for French to be used for communicative purposes by both teachers and students in the classroom, for language units to be taught in context and for culture to be integrated throughout each course. The Ontario Curriculum document stated,

The aim of The Ontario Curriculum: French As a Second Language – Core French, Grades 4-8, 1998 is to develop basic communication skills in French and an understanding of the nature of the language, as well as an appreciation of French culture in Canada and in other parts of the world. (Ontario Ministry of Education & Training, 1998, p. 2)

The aim of the new French as a second language (FSL) curriculum is to prepare students to perform effectively in the challenging world they will face by providing them with the skills they will need to communicate in a second language. (Ontario Ministry of Education & Training, 1999, p. 2)

The 1998/1999 curriculum emphasized the importance of oral communication:

…the there must be a strong emphasis on helping students develop the oral communication skills they need to understand and interact with others, to express themselves clearly and with confidence. (Ontario Ministry of Education & Training, 1998, p. 9)

Development of oral language provides the foundation that enables students to learn to read and write. (Ontario Ministry of Education & Training, 1998, p. 8)

This curriculum advocated for the use of French by both teachers and students in the classroom at all times:
French will be the language of communication in class, since classroom interaction provides students with opportunities to speak in French and to hear French spoken. (Ontario Ministry of Education & Training, 1998, p. 4)

French must be the language of communication in class, so students can practice speaking in French and consistently hear French spoken. (Ontario Ministry of Education & Training, 1999, p. 4)

The 1998-1999 curriculum explicitly recognized the importance of teaching linguistic concepts in context and the inextricable relationship between language and culture:

Students should develop and apply the language knowledge outlined below through communicative activities in all three strands. (Ontario Ministry of Education & Training, p. 13)

Since language and culture are inseparable, the cultural study of French-language regions will be integrated into daily instruction rather than presented in an isolated fashion or on an occasional basis. (Ontario Ministry of Education & Training, p. 4)

Regardless of the actual contents of the 1998-1999 curriculum, student and teacher perception was that it was not communicative in nature and heavily grammar-focused (OPSBA, 2007).

2.6 The revised Core French curriculum (elementary and secondary)

In 2013, the Ontario Ministry of Education released a revised elementary grades four to eight curriculum. In the same year as the revised grades four to eight curriculum, the Ministry also released a document entitled: A Framework for French as a second language in Ontario schools. A revised secondary curriculum for grades nine to 12 was released in the fall of 2014.

The revised curriculum and the document A Framework for French as a second language in Ontario schools represents an attempt on the part of ministry officials to transform both perception about Core French teaching and classroom practice. While the 1998/1999 ministry documents are subtle in terms of their ideological leanings and their prescription of a particular approach or method, the methodological orientation of the revised curriculum is quite explicit. While the 1998/1999 curriculum emphasized the importance of oral communication and developing communicative competence (see above), it did not prescribe a particular method or approach to second language teaching. It permitted teachers to “use their professional judgement
when making decisions related to the suitability of instructional approaches” (Ontario Ministry of Education & Training, 1998, p. 17).

Meanwhile, the revised curriculum and the framework openly advocate for the use of communicative and action-oriented approaches while openly discouraging the use of traditional form-focused methods and approaches (e.g., grammar-translation). The revised curriculum states,

> Teaching language as a system of disconnected and isolated components gives learners some knowledge of the language, but does not allow them to use the language effectively. In contrast, communicative and action-oriented approaches to teaching French put meaningful and authentic communication at the centre of all learning activities. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b, p. 9)

The 2013 curriculum document continues by stating,

> Action-oriented and communicative approaches to teaching FSL focus on meaning over form; emphasize meaningful interactive activities; centre on communicative language needs; and, when possible, highlight authentic tasks within the context of a classroom environment. While the communicative approach centres on communicating in the target language, the action-oriented approach requires students to perform a task in a wider social context. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b, p. 31)

> Studies of the use of audiolingual and grammar-based approaches in the classroom have found little evidence to suggest that they lead to second-language comprehension, fluency, or communicative competence. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013a, p. 31)

In the Framework document, the ministry cites Spada and Lightbown (2006) who argued that learners receiving second language instruction via the use of audiolingual or grammar-based approaches are generally unable to communicate in a second language (p. 143).

The revised document and the Framework are heavily influenced by the language and orientation of the Common European Framework of Languages (CEFR) and emphasize the use of an action-oriented approach and the notion that “communication is a social act” and that learners “need to see themselves as social actors communicating for real purposes” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b, p. 9). Throughout the revised document, teachers are urged to “provide explicit classroom instruction regarding the use of French language learning strategies” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b, p. 9) and to ask students questions that encourage them to reflect on their language development and level of proficiency.

The revised curriculum purposefully does not contain lists of linguistic structures to be taught.
The section entitled Instructional tips provides examples of linguistic structures, which “can be modeled” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b, p. 54), they are “illustrations only not requirements” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b, p. 16). The revised curriculum also contains a section on “intercultural communication” at every grade level, which is divided into “intercultural awareness” and “awareness of sociolinguistic conventions” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b, pp. 55-56).

### 2.7 The status of Core French in Ontario

There is little empirical evidence of student achievement in Core French programs in Canada. Nevertheless, research indicates poor outcomes in terms of students’ ability to understand spoken French and to speak in French. A 2014 pilot project by Rehner of 434 Grade 12 FSL students in Ontario found Core French students were strongest at written comprehension and weakest at oral comprehension (p. 3).

There is heavy criticism of Core French programs by both teachers and students. From the teachers’ perspective, complaints are primarily about a lack of instructional time, resources, professional development opportunities, administrative and parental support, and student motivation. Student complaints are primarily about instructional approaches and learning outcomes.

In 2004, the Atlantic Provinces Educational Foundation (APEF) completed a survey of approximately 3000 Grade 11 students who were no longer enrolled in Core French in the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island. Forty-six percent of respondents had dropped Core French following Grade 10, and 42% of respondents had dropped Core French following Grade 9 (p. 8). Participants were asked why they had discontinued their study of French. A majority stated that they had dropped the study of French because they were disillusioned with “their lack of progress and their inability to express themselves in French” (p. 20). They would have wanted to see more emphasis on the spoken language. Moreover, “[s]urvey respondents reported that there was too much stress on the

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3 In the provinces of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, it is mandatory to complete Core French to the end of Grade 9. While in New Brunswick, students must complete Core French Grade 10. In Newfoundland and Labrador, there is no French requirement in high school.
linguistic aspects of the language (e.g., verb conjugations, irrelevant vocabulary lists)” (p. 20).

The Ontario Public School Board Association (OPSBA) completed a study of Core French programs in Ontario. Questionnaires were received from representatives of 18 school boards from across the province. Respondents spoke of a curriculum “focuse[d] on a grammar-based instruction rather than a communicative approach; this is particularly true at the Grade 7 level” (OPSBA, 2007, p. 4). Moreover, findings suggested that “[a]lthough students learn the grammar and can achieve high marks in the subject, there is little development of oral proficiency and ease of communication in authentic situations” (p. 4).

Similarly, at a national level, Lapkin, Mady and Arnott (2009) in a review of research on Core French programs in Canada concluded, “there is widespread dissatisfaction with the outcomes” of the program (p. 3). Indeed, only three percent of students in Core French continue in the program to the end of grade 12. Lapkin, Mady and Arnott (2009) further asserted that students across Canada at every level of Core French are “disappointed with their lack of progress and inability to express themselves in the French language” (p. 3). In a survey carried out by Canadian Parents for French of Canadian (2004), university students who had passed grade 12 Core French, almost half felt that they could not understand spoken French, and most reported that they could not carry on a conversation longer than a few set phrases. These same students criticized “the dryness of most curricula, which is not taught in a meaningful, fresh, and exciting way” (CPF, p. 1). They wanted to see greater emphasis on the spoken language, more hands-on activities and group work (Lapkin, Mady & Arnott, 2009). In 2004, a survey of university students who had taken Grade 12 Core French, over 90% of whom were from Ontario, found that 50% of these students could not understand spoken French and most “said they would not be able to hold a conversation in French beyond a few set phrases” (p. 9).

In a study of 700 Core French students completed between 2002 and 2006, Germain and Netten (2010) concluded that after four years of Core French students could not communicate with any spontaneity and that even after nine years almost no progress had been made in terms of the ability to communicate spontaneously. While, Germain and Netten (2010) acknowledge that this is partly the result of a paucity of instructional hours, they argue that the teaching approaches employed by teachers are the primary factors explaining the poor results of Core French programs.
2.8 The teaching context

An understanding of Core French teacher profiles and their teaching context is equally essential to understanding teacher behaviour. This section reviews the profile of Core French teachers in Ontario, provides an overview of the conditions under which Core French is taught, discusses perceptions of the Core French program and undertakes an overview of the prevailing instructional approaches taken up by Core French teachers.

2.8.1 A general profile of Core French teachers in Ontario

According to an employee of the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), there are just over 26,000 teachers qualified to teach FSL (Core, Immersion and Extended) in the province (Alexandra Madolciu, personal communication, April 7, 2016). In 2006, Lapkin, MacFarlane and Vandergrift produced a report of FSL teacher’s in Canada stating that almost three-quarters of qualified FSL teachers were Core French teachers. This report serves as the most comprehensive profile of CF teachers in Canada (Ontario). Almost 2400 FSL teachers across the country filled out the questionnaire. Teachers were first asked a series questions within the following categories: gender; grade; size of school (large or small), teaching experience (how long they had been teaching FSL); language background and; methodological training (Lapkin, MacFarlane & Vandergrift, 2006). Nation-wide 87% of respondents were female while 89% of respondents from Ontario were female. Nationally 68% of respondents taught Core French, which rose to 78% for Ontario respondents who taught Core French. The majority of participants in the survey taught in schools of approximately 300 to 1000 students. Participants were evenly distributed across grades, with most teaching Grades 4 to 9. This is not surprising as these are the mandatory grades for FSL instruction. More than half or 55.5% of teachers had at least ten years of FSL teaching experience. The percentage was slightly higher for Ontario respondents at almost 58%. The linguistic backgrounds of respondents demonstrated that 61% of respondents reported English as their first language with 26.6% reporting French as their first language. Moreover, the “majority of respondents reported that they had studied French in the Core French program” (p. 12) with 53% having completed a university degree with French as a major.

2.8.2 An overview of Core French teaching conditions

A majority of Core French teachers do not have their own classrooms (OPSBA, 2007). Many
teachers reported traveling from class to class working from a cart, while others still travel from school to school (Mollica, Phillips, Smith, 2006). In the OPSBA study (2007), teachers identified a lack of French resources, notably reading resources appropriate to the students’ level of proficiency. They cited an overall lack of opportunities for professional development in their subject specialty (e.g., instructional approaches). Core French teachers felt ill equipped to deal with students with diverse needs, also citing a lack of professional development opportunities in this area. A study by Lapkin and Barkaoui (2008) found that one-third of Core French teachers Grades 7 to 9 intended to leave Core French teaching within the next 3 years. In a study by E. Richards (2002), a majority of CF teachers indicated that they felt marginalized and isolated from the rest of the school community and that French as a subject was not valued (Lapkin et al., 2009). Moreover, OPBSA (2007) found that student motivation was of significant concern, as “students do not see the importance of learning the French language and its relevance to their future goals” (p. 5). Finally, the teachers in Richards (2002) and those who participated in the study by Mollica, Phillips and Smith (2006) identified a lack of parental and administrative support (p. 21).

2.8.3 Perceptions about the Core French program

Society-based perceptions about French, French Canada, and Quebec and Immersion programs are negatively affecting teachers and students’ perceptions about Core French teaching and learning. Kissau (2006) illustrates how gender-based perceptions about learning French are also negatively influencing the Core French program serving to limit the number of male Core French teachers as well as male student interest and motivation to learn French (Lapkin, Mady & Arnott, 2009). The results of Kissau’s study indicate that teachers, parents and peers are less likely to encourage boys to learn French and to become French teachers. In a 2006 study by the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (ETFO), 90% of elementary FSL teachers in Ontario were female while 10% were male. These findings led the ETFO to suggest,

There's still a lot of sexist thinking that a man doesn't learn languages. A man does math or engineering, or whatever. Sexist behaviour still plays a great role. Learning French, it's not perceived as a man's job. (p. 415)

Core French teacher perceptions about students’ comfort levels with target language use also influence teaching approaches and practices. Almost all of the participants in Majhanovich and
Smith’s (2010) study “made a direct correlation between the percentage of target language instruction and student attitudes and their own self confidence speaking in French” (p. 19).

Levine (2003) surveyed students to find out how they felt about their teachers’ use of the target language (TL). Levine hypothesized that students’ levels of anxiety would rise with greater TL use. In my own observations, this is a belief held by many Core French teachers. However, Levine’s data provided evidence that directly countered his hypothesis as he discovered that teachers with higher TL use perceived their students to be less anxious and students’ whose teachers used more TL reported being less anxious. He surmises that an “important implication of this finding is that greater TL use may not translate into greater anxiety for many learners and that many students feel comfortable with more TL use when that is what they are used to” (Levine 2003, p. 355). His data also reveals that instructors perceive higher levels of TL-use anxiety among students than students themselves report. It has been my experience as both a practicing teacher and supervisor of practicing teachers that students who have teachers who use a significant amount of L2 are far more receptive to being spoken to in the L2 than students whose teachers rarely speak to them in the L2.

A study by Mady (2010) compared the French proficiency of English language learners (ELL) recently arrived to Canada with that of non-ELL students enrolled in Grade 9 Core French. The results of the study reveal that ELL students outperformed non-ELL students, yet ELL students continue to be excluded in far higher numbers from FSL instruction than are their non-ELL peers. Mady (2006) revealed that many Core French teachers express concern about including ELL students.

Lapkin, MacFarlane, and Vandergrift’s (2006) study of FSL teachers’ perspectives revealed that Core French teachers are “most concerned about how to meet the needs of…special education populations included in their classes” (Arnett, 2010, p. 558). Indeed, there is an “underlying assumption…that FSL study is only for a certain population” (Arnett, 2010, p. 558). School boards have developed policies for exempting students with learning difficulties from the Core French program based on the belief that these students’ learning needs cannot be met in the program (Mohindra, 2001).
2.8.4  Core French: An overview of prevailing instructional approaches

Studies completed in Core French classes have revealed instruction primarily focused on form. Frolich, Spada and Allen (1985) attempted to assess the degree to which Core French, Extended, Immersion and ESL (English as a second language) classrooms were communicative-experiential in nature using a framework they developed named COLT (Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching). They found that in Core French more than half of the class time observed involved activities, which focused exclusively or primarily on form in opposition to more communicative approaches observed in the Immersion and Extended classrooms. Each program was placed on a “communicative continuum” depending on the percentage of time spent on the following activities: group work, focus on meaning versus form, topic control by teacher and students, use of semi- and non-pedagogic materials. Instruction in Core French classrooms was compared with instruction in Immersion and Extended classrooms. Core French classrooms were found to be the least “communicative” in terms of the above categories.

Calman and Daniel (1998) completed an important study evaluating the types of instructional approaches and activities in Core French classrooms in a large urban Ontario school board. The researchers identified two main issues: 1) the activities they observed were predominantly grammar-oriented, and 2) there was widespread use of English by teachers and students for classroom communication (As cited in Lapkin, Mady, & Arnott, 2009). Studies by Howard (2006) and Salvatori (2008) also found that Canadian Core French teachers continue to find it challenging to maintain French as the language of instruction. Levine (2003) found that use of the target language in second language classrooms was most often for topic or theme-based communication. The TL was employed far less frequently for communication about grammar, and for communication about tests, quizzes and assignments.

Teachers wanted their student to develop the ability to speak French; however, they acknowledged that they were most comfortable with traditional teaching methods. In a 2010 report by Majhanovich and Smith, found that 70% of respondents, among a total of 56 Core French teachers participating in a summer course in Quebec City, felt most comfortable teaching the form of the language, i.e., grammar rules and pronunciation of vocabulary words. While teachers in the survey were most comfortable teaching grammar, they also indicated that grammar analysis was the “least valuable teaching practice” and they “seemed to indicate
strong belief in using a communicative approach” (p. 16).

Amongst this same group of respondents, almost all of them admitted that they began teaching in French 100% of the time but this had gradually declined to “as low as 35 to 50%” of the time, over the years (pp. 15-16). Teachers identified pressure from students to use less French, pressure from colleagues to use more English, the difficulty of explaining complex grammar rules in the target language and lack of confidence with their fluency as factors affecting the use of French in the Core French classroom.

2.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided background information on FSL instruction in Ontario including an overview of the three models of FSL program delivery (i.e., Core, Immersion and Extended). A number of difficulties and criticisms faced by the Core French program were discussed including: challenging teaching conditions, a debased status relative to other school subjects and to French Immersion programs, the prevalence of traditional (uncommunicative) approaches and most notably student criticism and unflattering testimony related to Core French experiences. Attempts to address these difficulties and criticisms were highlighted including the National Core French Study and most recently a revised curriculum.

The first half of the next chapter is dedicated to a review of key literature notably literature on second language teacher beliefs. In this section factors affecting teacher beliefs, consistency between beliefs and practices, the relationship between curricular reform, beliefs and practices, comparisons between the beliefs and practices of beginning versus experienced teachers, and beliefs related to teacher education as well as textbooks and teacher practices are discussed. The second half traces the evolution of second language methodologies, wherein a discussion of the different methods and approaches to second language teaching is undertaken.
Chapter 3
Literature Review

The first half of this chapter consists of a review of the existing literature on second language teachers and their beliefs and thoughts about second language teaching and learning. This section also draws on the literature related to cognition as defined by scholars such as Borg (2006) in summarizing the research on the factors that are thought to shape second language teachers’ beliefs and cognition. Teacher beliefs are often an important predictor of actual classroom practices. I thus discuss research on the discrepancy between teachers’ beliefs, declared practices and their actual practices. As noted in chapter two, there have been numerous criticisms of the Core French program in regards to prevailing methods and instructional approaches as well as attempts to address these criticisms via the introduction of new methods, curriculum, textbooks and materials. I further summarize the existing literature on second language teacher education, second language teachers and program/curricular change and the beliefs, cognition and instructional approaches of beginning versus experienced second language teachers. The second half of this chapter is dedicated to a discussion of the evolution of second language methodologies and key terms such as method, approach and post-method.

3.1 Second language teacher beliefs and cognition

The term beliefs in cognitive psychology is defined as “one’s representation of reality that guides both thought and behaviour” (Johnson, 1994, p. 439). Basturkmen, Loewen and Ellis (2004) define teacher beliefs as statements made by teachers about their ideas, thoughts, and knowledge. Beliefs are unobservable, they reside inside a teacher’s head. One can only infer them from what teachers say and do. This contrasts with observable behaviours, which include teacher and student behaviours in the classroom and student achievement scores (Fang, 1996). Teacher beliefs are expressions of what ‘should be done’, ‘should or ought to be the case’, and what ‘is preferable’ (Basturkmen, Loewen & Ellis, 2004, p. 244).

It is now widely accepted that teacher beliefs, both implicit and explicit, play a significant role in guiding teachers’ instructional practices positively and negatively. Freeman and Freeman (1994) identified the following key influences on how second and foreign language teachers teach: how teachers themselves were taught; how teachers were trained; the school context and culture, administration and colleagues; exposure to new ideas; materials and resources; the types of
students; and, the teacher’s personal views on teaching and learning. Teachers hold beliefs about the nature of second language teaching and learning including how to best teach a second language, what resources to use, how to evaluate students, the level of student motivation and student abilities (Fang, 1996). Puchta (1999) argued that: “beliefs are…strong perceptual filters” (p.66). Teachers understand and interpret all new information through this filter (Johnson, 1994). Teachers tend to adopt instructional approaches consistent with their beliefs and/or interpret, modify and adjust the official theory (i.e., official curriculum, theories of teaching and learning etc.) to fit their beliefs (Biggs, 1994; Gabillon, 2012). Studies have shown that a teacher’s choice of instructional approaches and a teacher’s expectations of his or her students can have a significant impact on student behaviour and outcomes (Fang, 1996).

Teacher cognition is another term used to refer to what teachers know, believe and think (Borg, 2003). The reality is that it is virtually impossible to separate teacher knowledge from beliefs, conceptions and intuitions. Teacher cognition is thus a combination of all the mental constructs and processes that underlie teacher thinking (Fang, 1996). Just as with teacher beliefs, teacher cognition is concerned with the unobservable dimension of teaching (Borg, 2003, p. 81). Teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who are constantly making instructional choices based on their knowledge, thoughts and beliefs. Classroom practices are the result of a complex interaction between what SLA teachers know, think and believe and the context in which they are teaching.

Lave and Wenger (1991) argued that teacher knowledge/cognition is situated, that it is the result of lived experiences notably participation in communities of practice. Individuals develop as participants in cultural communities, in this case the Core French community, and can only be understood in light of the cultural practices and the socio-political, economic, historical circumstances of that community.

### 3.2 Factors shaping teacher beliefs and cognition

Language teacher beliefs and cognition develop early through life experiences notably through prior schooling, teacher training and previous teaching experiences (Gabillon, 2012). Teacher beliefs/cognition about second language learning and teaching are most strongly influenced by prior learning experiences, notably experiences as a second language learner. Lortie (1975)
referred to this as the “apprenticeship of observation” (p. 61). Prior language learning experiences heavily shape teacher beliefs and cognition about language and language learning. These experiences form the initial conceptualizations of how a language should be taught. Such conceptualizations guide SLA teachers throughout their careers and can be quite resistant to change “even in the face of contradictory evidence” (Borg, 2003, p. 86). These prior learning experiences form “deep-rooted beliefs” affect second language teacher behaviour in the classroom far more than any methodology learned in a teacher education program (Gabillon, 2012, p. 190). Studies on the impact of teacher education programs on learning to teach, “suggest that despite course work and field experiences, pre-service teachers’ beliefs about teachers and teaching remain largely unchanged” (Johnson, 1994, p. 440). It has been argued that understanding teacher beliefs is “essential to improving their professional preparation and teaching practices” (Pajares, 1992, p. 307).

3.3 (In)Consistency between teacher beliefs about second language teaching and their actual classroom practices

While a number of studies have found consistency between teachers’ stated beliefs and observed practices, an equal or greater number of studies, particularly those that have included classroom observation, have found that teachers’ instructional practices do not always correlate with stated beliefs (Basturkmen, Loewen & Ellis, 2004). While a number of factors influence teachers’ beliefs, contextual factors exert a notably powerful influence on teacher beliefs and classroom practices. They can help to explain why teachers’ practices “sometimes contravene their stated beliefs” (Fang, 1996, p. 53). Contextual factors mediate the ability of teachers to act in accordance with their beliefs.

A study by Duffy and Anderson (1984) found teachers’ implicit beliefs about how to teach a lesson on reading did not match their instructional practices. They concluded that contextual factors were responsible for the mismatch. Teachers’ modified their instructional practices based on perceptions about what types of approaches were most appropriate to particular ability groups or grade level. Textbooks were also found to heavily influence instructional practices particularly the perceived need to move through or teach to the textbook. Solomon, Battistich and Hom (1996) also discovered that teachers modify their instructional practices depending on school contextual variables such as “the socio-economic level of the students in the school” (p. 2).
Richards (1998) and Bailey (1996) found that teachers’ perceptions of student motivation and performance, concerns about classroom management, as well as time management were defining factors in explaining the inconsistency between teachers stated beliefs and their actual practices. Kilgore, Ross and Zbikowski (1990) argued that the attitudes of administrators and colleagues result in teachers modifying their instructional practices such that they are inconsistent with their personal beliefs. (Fang, 1996)

The mismatch between beliefs and practices can also be explained by “conflicting belief systems” (Basturkmen, Loewen & Ellis, 2004, p. 246). Teachers must often make dichotomous choices between such things as promoting equality versus excellence, fostering generalized knowledge versus specific skills (Lampert, 1985). Pinnegar and Carter (1990) suggested that there exists a moral conflict between teachers’ beliefs and the theories/methods/approaches presented in textbooks, curriculum documents and other course materials/evaluations. (Fang, 1996)

Phipps and Borg (2009) highlighted the tension between beliefs and contextual factors as hypothetically expressed by a teacher in the following ways:

I believe in X but my students expect me to do Y. I believe in X but my students learn better through Y. I believe in X but the curriculum requires me to do Y. I believe in X but my learners are motivated by Y. (Phipps & Borg, 2009, p. 387)

Graden (1996) investigated six language teachers’ beliefs about reading instruction and observed their actual practices. She found that the six teachers held similar beliefs about appropriate reading instruction. She also found some mismatch between their stated beliefs and their actual classroom practices. Graden (1996) concluded that the mismatch between stated beliefs and observed practices was the result of a hierarchy of beliefs. The teachers in the study “subordinated their beliefs about reading instruction to the beliefs about the motivational needs of their students” (p. 393). Teachers chose to accommodate the supposed needs and wants of students over their beliefs about “appropriate reading instruction” (p. 393).

Phipps and Borg (2009) argued that each teacher has a set of core and peripheral beliefs. Core beliefs are more influential and more stable than peripheral beliefs. Inconsistency between stated beliefs and observed practices is the result of tension between core and peripheral beliefs. In this study comparing teachers’ beliefs about grammar instruction versus observed practices,
participants stated that grammar should be introduced in context, while in actual practice grammatical concepts were most often introduced in isolation. Teachers justified the discrepancy between stated beliefs and actual practices in terms of the need to prepare students for assessments, which focused on isolated grammatical concepts, as well as student expectations that they receive this kind of preparation. Phipps and Borg concluded that while teachers stated practices did not reflect observed practices, their actual practices were in fact consistent with a set of deeper more general beliefs these teachers held about learning. These deeper more general beliefs or core beliefs such as the need to prepare students for tests and exams exerted a more powerful influence on teaching practice.

Teachers’ practices reflected the core beliefs that learning is enhanced when learners are cognitively engaged, when their expectations are met, and when order, control and flow of the lesson is maintained. The above beliefs clearly exerted a more powerful influence than teachers’ beliefs about the limited value of expository grammar and decontextualized grammar work. The authors concluded that core beliefs are “experientially ingrained” (p. 388), in other words core beliefs developed because of classroom experience whereas peripheral beliefs are only “theoretically” (p. 388) understood and embraced. This helps to explain why peripheral beliefs are not held at the same level of conviction as core beliefs. Where core and peripheral beliefs exist in harmony, teaching practices will be “characterized by fewer tensions”, where core and peripheral beliefs are at odds, peripheral beliefs are unlikely to be reflected in practice.

### 3.4 The impact of teacher practices on student behaviour and learning

There exists a body of research focused on measuring the impact of the teacher and his or her instructional practices on student achievement (learning outcomes). Overall, a majority of these studies have concluded that effective teachers positively influence student achievement. Studies by Sanders, and Rivers (1996) and Sanders, Wright and Horn (1997) even found the teacher to be the dominant factor affecting student achievement. Similarly, a study by Aaronson, Barrow and Sanders (2007) concluded that effective teachers influence both low and high ability students and ineffective teachers are ineffective with all students. While researchers affirm that there is such a thing as effective teaching, definitional consensus and clear characteristics of effective teaching remain elusive. Furthermore, while some effective teaching behaviours may be
universal, others may be discipline specific (Bell, 2005). For example, Good and Brophy (1994) describe effective teachers as those who make good use of instructional time; present material in a way that meets students’ needs; monitor programs and progress; plan opportunities for students to apply learning; reteach when needed and; maintain high, but realistic goals for their students. As Fang (1996) noted, initially research assumed a unidirectional causality between teachers’ classroom behaviour, students’ classroom behaviour and achievement. However, more recently it has been acknowledged that the relationship is circular or recursive. Indeed, teacher behaviour affects student behaviour, which in turn affects teacher behaviour and ultimately student achievement.

In the case of second language teaching, I was unable to locate any studies specifically assessing the impact of different approaches to second language teaching on student achievement. However, a study by Bell (2005) evaluated teacher perceptions of “teaching behaviours and attitudes that contribute to effective foreign language teaching and learning” (p. 259). A questionnaire was completed by 450 French, German and Spanish teachers where respondents indicated whether they agreed or disagreed with 80 statements beginning with the phrase “The effective foreign language teacher…”, which generated a strong consensus on most of the statements. Participants (over 90%) overwhelmingly agreed that an effective foreign language teacher uses the TL completely, bases at least some part of students’ grades on their actual use of the TL, frequently uses authentic materials, provides opportunities for students to use the TL and encourages students to speak in the TL beginning the first day of class (p. 262).

3.5 Program and curricular reform, teacher beliefs and practices

Existing research points heavily to the fact that change, such as the introduction a new curriculum for example, will require a significant shift in methodology/approach for a majority of Core French teachers in Ontario. For a change in methodology/approach to take place, an equally significant shift in conscious and unconscious teacher beliefs and attitudes is also required. These play a crucial role in determining the implementation of a reform. These beliefs and attitudes are rooted in a teacher’s identity, which is the product of previous teaching and learning experiences (Karavas-Doukas, 1996). If a teacher is to effectively implement a curriculum with a new approach, the teacher must revise, refine or change those attitudes which are not compatible with the new approach. The need to change attitudes with new approaches
can help to explain the discrepancy between teachers’ expressed attitudes and their practice. If attitudes do not change, teachers return to the classroom and translate new ideas to conform to their existing style of teaching and classroom routines – at the same time believing that they are doing exactly what the new curriculum requires of them.

Fullan (2007) argued that embracing change means seeing problems as both inevitable and helpful. In fact, Fullan (2007) suggests that problems are a friend in the reform process as “[p]roblems are our friends because only through immersing ourselves in problems can we come up with creative solutions. Problems are the route to change, the route to deeper satisfaction” (p. 2). According to Fullan effective teachers “embrace problems” rather than avoid them (p. 4).

3.6 Experienced versus beginning teacher beliefs and curriculum change

Studies of experienced teachers have shown that experience in fact does not necessarily equal expertise (Reynolds, 1992, p. 3). Experienced teachers do not easily change their current practices because they are rooted in beliefs and practical knowledge, which they have accumulated during many years of teaching (Richards, Gallo & Renandaya, 2014; Melnick & Meister, 2008; Tsui, 2003). In addition, experienced teachers have been around long enough to witness numerous shifts in perspectives, methodologies and approaches to language teaching (Stern, 1986). They may even have reached the conclusion that the program is incapable of any real improvement or they may be overly sceptical of the new curriculum. On the contrary, beginning teachers may be highly enthusiastic to espouse a new concept, method or approach, and then begin “to see its limitations, destroy it or “simply abandon it for something else” (Stern, 1986, p. 47).

According to Farrell (2009), one of the main reasons that first year teachers experience difficulties applying new approaches is that “teacher education programs are unable to reproduce environments similar to those teachers face when they graduate” (p. 182). Cherland (1989) stated that:

teacher educators often create in student teachers a sentiment of dissatisfaction with the instructional practice they see in school. Cooperating teachers, in turn, undermine the work of the teacher educators. This leaves many student teachers bewildered as to
whose theory (the cooperating teacher's or the university professor's) they should embrace and be committed to application (p. 412).

Farrell also argued that first year teachers receive insufficient support or little to no mentoring. Yet, novice teachers who are mentored “tend to be more effective in their early years” (2009, p. 184). Shin (2012) argued that teacher education programs set teachers up for failure as they equip them with “new approaches” that often cannot be implemented in “real” classrooms. Therefore, novice teachers generally end up adopting the teaching practices of existing teachers. However, Bullough and Gitlin (1985) argued that many teachers do resist the pressure to conform to a particular approach or teaching practice.

Berliner (1988) noted that the mantra of first year teachers is that of “muddling through until it all makes sense” (p. 61). Fuller and Brown (1975) identified a chronology of focus for novice teachers during their first year. Initially, novice teachers are focused on “survival,” which means they are primarily concerned with issues of classroom management and the day-to-day preoccupation of planning and delivering the basic content of each lesson. Later, novice teachers become more concerned about whether students are learning and the impact of their teaching practices on student learning. They begin to ask themselves how best to plan their lessons and deliver them to maximize student learning. Therefore, Ball and Goodson (1985) suggested that teacher development is not chronological but idiosyncratic.

In 1984, Veenman completed a study of teachers in their first three years to identify the “most serious problems of beginning teachers” (Melnick & Meister, 2008, p. 40). He identified and ranked these serious problems, which included in order of seriousness: classroom discipline, motivating pupils, assessing pupils’ work, dealing with diverse students and parents, insufficient materials/resource, insufficient time to prepare lessons, relations with colleagues, effective use of teaching methods, determining learning level of students, knowledge of subject matter and relations with administrators.

Studies by Walker and Richardson (1993) and Britt (1997) also found the greatest concerns of novice teachers included classroom management/discipline, dealing with diverse students and parents, lesson planning and time management. Melnick and Meister (2008) completed an interesting inquiry into the differences in level of concern of beginning teachers with less than three years of experience versus experienced teachers in the four areas of academic preparation,
classroom management, parent interaction and time management. They found differences in the areas of classroom management and parent interaction, both of which experienced teachers expressed less concern about and felt better prepared to manage.

### 3.7 Second language teacher education, teacher beliefs and practices

Teacher education programs, including FSL teacher education programs, have been widely criticized for their inability to prepare future teachers for the challenges of the actual classroom (Richards, 2008). Tedick and Walker (1994) argued that second language teacher education is plagued by five problems: the failure to consider the interdependence between first and second languages and cultures; the fragmentation and isolation of foreign language teaching (teaching French or Spanish or German is very similar to teaching ESL/EFL); the pervasive view of language as object; a paralyzing focus on prescriptive methods and; a continued failure to reflect in practice connection between language and culture (pp. 300-301).

Historically these programs focused on transmitting discrete amounts of information to teacher candidates; namely language courses which provided the content knowledge and methods courses which provided the pedagogical knowledge. Pedagogical knowledge is mostly derived from the presentation of theories of second language acquisition and second language methods and approaches, which may result in a lack of awareness of the highly complex, situated nature of language teaching. Much research shows that despite the presentation of language theory and methods in teacher training “teachers often fail to implement such knowledge in their classrooms” (Faez, 2011, p. 34).

Johnson (1994) assessed candidates in a second language teacher-education program and found that participants in the study were far more influenced by their experiences as language learners. Here Lortie’s (1975) “apprenticeship of observation” took precedence over teachers’ teacher preparation programs. Moreover, even though these experiences might have been negative, they were nonetheless powerful influences on how the teachers think about teaching and teach. This is captured nicely in a quote from one of the participants in Johnson’s study, who suggested “I found myself falling into the pattern of the way I was taught languages back in the ‘70s. I thought it was boring [then] so why wouldn’t they [students] think it’s boring [now]” (p. 443).
As a result, traditional approaches to teacher education have been called into question. It is now recognized that teacher candidates’ prior experiences about teaching and learning need to be acknowledged, made explicit and reflected critically upon in teacher education programs as they serve as a filter through which all knowledge, pre-existing and new, is interpreted. These beliefs are instrumental in shaping what teachers do in the classroom. Kleinsasser and Sauvignon (1991) emphasized the importance of understanding the contexts in which teachers teach and how they influence the decisions teachers take. Learning to teach is no longer viewed as translating academic knowledge and theories into practice, but rather as “constructing new knowledge and theory through practice”, i.e., participation in specific social contexts (Burns & Richards, 2009). Black and Halliwell (2000) suggest “[d]ecisions made by teachers represent the theoretical principles acquired through formal courses interconnected with knowledge derived from past experiences and numerous other sources” (p. 103). This body of knowledge is known as “personal practical knowledge” (PPK) or “practitioner knowledge” (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 4).

Teacher education programs have a role to play in the development of FSL teachers’ personal practical knowledge as well as their pedagogical content knowledge, which is “the capacity to transform content into accessible and learnable forms” (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 3). For example, FSL teacher education programs can encourage teacher candidates to explore and critically examine different teaching methods and approaches to understand their underlying assumptions about language teaching, and most importantly, why they may work in certain contexts and not in others. Teacher education programs also represent an opportunity for future FSL teachers to experiment with theoretical knowledge as well as to meld the theoretical and the practical.

Gutierrez (1996) found that the knowledge of beginning teachers was positively transformed through participation in her methods course. Her candidates’ teaching practices were equally informed by prior knowledge and knowledge acquired during their initial teacher education program. Richards, Ho and Giblin (1996) in their study concluded that language teacher-education programs equip beginning teachers with the “discourse of teaching” (p. 247) and “a deeper knowledge of the subject” (p. 248). Moreover, practicum provides an opportunity for
classroom observation, which leads to enhanced awareness for teacher candidates. Practicum is an opportunity to experiment and develop one’s own teaching style.

Teacher education programs affect the knowledge and beliefs systems of FSL teacher candidates. In particular, they provide a framework and a discourse through which future Core French teachers filter past and present experiences with second language learning and begin to make sense of, wrestle with, and reconcile prior and new knowledge about FSL teaching and learning. There is a paucity of research available as to the extent to which this new knowledge translates into actual practice (Velez-Rendon, 2000).

3.8 Textbooks, second language teaching and teacher practices

A textbook as defined by Pinto (2007) is a “bundle of curriculum artefacts, designed for use by teachers to deliver a course. This typically consists of a student edition of the textbook as well as a teacher’s guide with lesson plans, black-line masters, assessment instruments, CDs or DVDs and website links” (p. 100). According to the same author, between 60% and 95% of classroom instruction at both the elementary and secondary levels in Canada is textbook-driven (Pinto 2007, p. 100). Efficiency is thought to be the primary appeal of the textbook. The content of most courses is too vast in scope for a teacher to put together a whole program on his or her own. Using such materials can save enormous time and energy. The difficulty is that textbooks including Core French textbooks embody certain values and biases (Pinto, 2007). These values and biases are mostly implicit.

Pinto (2007) argued that there are three types of approaches to textbook use:

1. The dominated approach: the teacher accepts the content of the textbook (teacher’s guide and accompanying materials) at face value. The information in the text is seen as “fact”. The teacher does not seek any alternate perspectives nor does she or he question the content and its underlying assumptions.
2. The negotiated approach – the teacher may dispute portions of the text but tends to accept the overall interpretations, lessons, techniques presented.
3. The oppositional approach – the teacher repositions herself critically in relation to the text, sees the text as subjective, biased, questions the overt and hidden messages and seeks out alternative conceptions and information (p. 101).

Pinto (2007) further asserted that the dominated and negotiated approaches are most prevalent due to context constraints including limited time to address curriculum and limited funds
available for classroom materials. Most teachers receive little or no pre- or in-service training about how to “be critical about textbooks” (Pinto, 2007, p. 102). Many second language teachers may also be “uncomfortable taking a critical approach simply because they do not have sufficient subject-matter and/or pedagogical knowledge and so they rely heavily on the textbook’s format as a professional crutch, and its content as an intellectual recourse” (Pinto, McDonough & Boyd, 2009, p. 78). Even if a teacher would prefer to employ other textbooks or resources, he or she may often be compelled to use a particular textbook by his or her administration or department head. In Ontario, teachers must use textbooks on the “Trillium List” which is a list of accepted textbooks and other resources (p. 102).

Piccardo (2005) asserted that the notion of what constitutes a textbook has evolved from the idea that it is “the” one and only resource that teachers make use to the notion that it is “a” resource, one of many, that teachers rely on to construct their language programs/to teach their language classes.

Loewenberg Ball and Feiman-Nemser (1988) conducted research on teacher candidates in two different teacher education programs to find out what they learned about textbooks. The authors found that candidates in both programs were taught “good teachers don't follow textbooks” (p. 414). Yet, while textbooks were widely criticized most teacher candidates found themselves required to use them during their practicums, and many school districts and individual schools often mandated textbooks. The authors, thus, argued that it was important for teacher educators to maintain a “realistic perspective” (p. 420) in regards to textbooks. Indeed, Loewenberg Ball and Feiman-Nemser recommended that teacher educators help prospective teachers understand how to learn from textbooks and teacher's guides, rather than expect teacher candidates to ignore textbooks (p. 401).

Two studies by Alverman (1987) concluded that textbooks play a key role in regards to the content of a lesson, but more importantly the teaching approach. The reality is that textbooks exert a significant influence on teachers’ approaches and instructional strategies in Core French teaching. As the textbooks in use in Core French classrooms in Ontario continue to be founded on traditional principals of second language teaching wherein learning often emphasises a focus on form/explicit teaching of grammatical concepts, it is not surprising that teachers who depend on these textbooks are focusing on form. For example, the focus of each chapter in the
recommended textbooks *Sans Frontières and Autour de Nous* is a grammatical concept. In one chapter the theme of genetically modified vegetables has been selected as a vehicle through which to teach the future simple; however, the futur simple and its formation or conjugation remains the focus. This differs from a communicative or task-based approach to textbook organization, which would involve selecting a situation or a task and then identifying the competencies necessary to interact in such a situation or to complete such as task: lexical, grammatical, syntactical and sociolinguistic, cultural. The following quote captures concisely the difficulties in using the present textbooks:

> I started off teaching French using the boards recommended textbooks and workbooks, i.e., *Visages*. At the end of the school year upon much reflection and observation, I observed that the students enjoyed the *Visages* program immensely, but they spoke very little French. (Mollica, Phillips, Smith, 2005, p. 155)

A set of textbooks grounded in contemporary research on second language teaching and learning and the principles of CLT would likely have a significant impact on the content of many Core French classes and the approaches employed by Core French teachers. However, Anderson and Tomkins (1983), Moulton (1994) and others noted while teachers are indeed influenced by the materials they use, teachers’ use of pedagogical materials, including textbooks, is equally if not more influenced by their own beliefs, experiences and training. In light of this, a new set of textbooks will not be enough, as Moulton concluded “improving textbook use requires improving teachers” (p. 82). Similarly, Pinto (2007) aptly asserted that “at the end of the line, the practitioner decides how it [a textbook] is to be used” (p. 72).

### 3.9 Second language teaching methodology

As noted above, second language teaching has been heavily influenced/guided by methods and approaches such as the grammar-translation method, the audio-lingual method, the communicative approach, or most recently task-based and action-oriented approaches. Use of the terms method and approach are widespread in second language teaching. However, although their use is widespread, there remains ambiguity in how these terms are defined and employed. Below, I first discuss the different definitions/uses of these terms. Second, I trace the evolution from method to approach, the movement from prescription to description, from focus on form to a focus on function, action and task completion.
A Discussion of the concepts of method and approach

The most widely used definitions for method and approach belong to Anthony and date back to 1963. According to Anthony's model, approach is defined as the assumptions and beliefs explicit or implicit held about the nature of language itself, how languages should be taught and how languages are learned. Contextual factors such as second language learning and teaching experiences and background, educational trends and practices in different parts of the world, and the priorities of the profession influence the development of approach (Richards & Renandya, 2002). Method is the level at which theory is put into practice and “[w]ithin one approach there can be many methods” (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 15). Method represents an overall plan for the presentation of the language based on a specific approach. It is at the level of method where choices are made about the particular content to be taught/emphasized, and the order in which the content will be presented. Anthony used the term technique to represent the implementation of the method that is how the content is presented in the classroom, i.e., the specific exercises, tasks and techniques consistent with both the method and the approach.

Richards and Rodgers (1986) attempted a useful reconceptualization of Anthony’s model, although Anthony’s definitions continue to be most widely used. Richards and Rogers argued that Anthony’s model is too simplistic as it did not adequately define the term method nor did it provide any details as to how an approach is realized in a method or how method and technique are related. According to Richards and Rodgers, the role of teachers and learners and instructional materials “assumed in a method” was overlooked (p. 37). Building on Anthony’s model, they retained the terms approach and method but proposed the term procedure in the place of technique. Procedure encompasses the day-to-day techniques, practices, behaviours, and activities in teaching the language. According to the authors it is here that a teacher’s method based on his or her approach manifests itself in concrete ways in the classroom. Richards and Rodgers proposed that method manifests itself in the classroom in three ways: the use of teaching activities such as dialogues, games etc. to present/explain/demonstrate use of aspects of the target language; the use of activities to practice language; and techniques, activities, tasks used to provide feedback to the learner and to evaluate learning, informally and formally. As methods are highly “idiosyncratic at the level of procedure” (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 26), teachers may claim to ascribe to a particular approach and method, while classroom observations
reveal that her or his instructional practices are not necessarily consistent with the method to which she or he ascribes.

Bell (2003) defined method as a set of prescriptions for practice. These prescriptions include specific objectives, an elaboration of activities and exercises and narrowly defined roles for the teacher and learner. The teacher’s role is essentially to implement the method. Underlying each method, whether explicitly or implicitly, is an approach, i.e., a view of language and language learning. Mackey (1965) compared shifts in method and approach to a pendulum swinging from one extreme to another. New methods have tended to be adopted at the expense of “both the good and the bad in older methods” (p. 138). The method debate has often involved a dichotomous view of language learning: oral versus written; the L1/L2 dichotomy, the similarities/differences between learning a second language and learning a first language; the form versus meaning dichotomy, whether learning a language is about “knowing the language or knowing about the language” (Mitchell & Vidal, 2001, p. 26).

Contrary to the dichotomous view, Mitchell and Vidal (2001) put forth a more positive view of methods asserting that the evolution of methods has been more akin to “a major river flowing constantly fed by many sources of water” (p. 27). In other words, methods are built on and have contributed to one another. Each method has provided an important contribution to the evolution of thinking, theories and practices in second language teaching. Richards and Rodgers (1986) argued that all current methods and approaches are informed by a theory of language and/or a theory of how languages are learned. Some methods are based on a theory of language, or what language is, while others are based on a theory of language learning.

Theories of language can be divided into three views, the structural view or structuralism, the functional view and the interactional view (pp. 16-17). First, the structural view of language is the view that language is “a system of structurally related elements” (p. 17). Focus is on understanding grammatical structures and vocabulary words. Second, the functional view of language is the view that language is a vehicle for the expression of specific meaning. Functional theory emphasizes the semantic and communicative dimension of language rather than the grammatical characteristics of the language. In language teaching consistent with a functional notion of language content is organized according to “categories of meaning and function [greetings, taking leave, buying something…] rather than…elements of structure and grammar”
Such a view takes into account the functional needs of learners. Finally, the interactional view sees language as a vehicle for interpersonal relations wherein “[l]anguage is seen as a tool for the creation and maintenance of social relations” (p. 17). Language teaching consistent with this view would be organized by patterns of exchange again taking into account the interactive needs of learners.

Richards and Rodgers (1986) divided theories on how languages are learned into process-oriented theories and what they termed condition-oriented theories. Process-oriented theories are those that put forward the notion that languages are learned through such things as “habit formation, hypothesis testing and generalization” (p. 27). Condition-oriented theories emphasize the importance of the physical context (i.e., classroom environment) in which learning takes place. Methods such as the silent way and community language learning are examples of methods based on condition-oriented learning theories. Some methods such as audiolingualism combine a theory of language (i.e., structuralism) with a learning theory (i.e., habit formation or behaviourism). Richards and Rodgers further argued that beyond formal methods, teachers develop their own procedures, their own method or set of instructional practices as I have chosen to call them, explicitly or implicitly informed by language and learning theories. Teachers modify and vary this personal method or their instructional practices based on the reactions and performance of their students. If two teachers share similar beliefs about language and language learning (a shared approach), their methods and techniques may nevertheless differ, as approach “does not dictate a particular set of teaching techniques and activities” (p. 19).

In choosing a method, teachers must consider the overall objectives, the language content and overall objectives, what types of activities the method advocates; the role of the learner, teacher and instructional materials. For example, certain methods emphasize the development of oral skills while others give priority to the development of abilities in reading and writing. Some methods prioritize the ability to express oneself, to make oneself understood, while others are more concerned with the development of correct grammar and pronunciation. Some methods place greater emphasis on developing the abilities of an effective language learner. There is also a choice in regards to what language content to cover. With structurally focused methods, selection of linguistic/grammatical concepts to cover tend to be “determined according to the difficulty of the items” and to some extent “their frequency” (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 21).
Functionally-focused methods tend to be principally organized on the basis of communicative functions (e.g., apologizing, describing, inviting, promising) that a learner needs to know, identifying the ways in which particular linguistic/grammatical forms may be used to express these functions appropriately (Canale & Swain, 1980).

The objectives of the method dictate the linguistic content covered, which determines the interaction between the teacher, learners and the instructional materials in the classroom. The types of activities advocated by a particular method are what distinguish one method from another. As Richards and Rodgers (1986) suggest,

Differences among methods at the level of approach manifest themselves in the choice of different kinds of activities in the classroom. Teaching activities that focus on grammatical accuracy may be quite different from those that focus on communicative skills. (p. 22)

Methods reflect, implicitly or explicitly, beliefs about the role of the learner, the teacher and the instructional materials. For example, newer, non-traditional methods are said to ascribe a greater role for the learner, while more traditional methods such as the audiolingual method have been criticized for the limited role of the learner who was “seen as stimulus-response mechanisms whose learning was a direct result of repetitive practice” (p. 23). Teacher roles are similarly determined by the assumptions held about language learning. Certain traditional methods in particular, tend to be very teacher-directed and teacher-centered. Newer methods tend to prescribe more student-centered activities. Some methods provide little detail on the role of the learner and teacher, other methods specify teacher and student roles in much more detail. Method also determines the role/use of instructional materials in the classroom (e.g., textbooks). However, the instructional materials often in turn, implicitly specify a method themselves, which may or may not be consistent with the teacher’s method. How the teacher makes use of the material will be determined by his or her method. The material similarly will exert an influence on the teacher’s method.

Use of the term approach has become much more commonplace than the term method. The present definition of the term approach is similar to that proposed by Anthony (1963). Approaches are said to be different from methods in that they have core sets of principles but no specific set of prescriptions and classroom techniques (Bell, 2003). Communicative language teaching (CLT) is seen as an approach not a method. Methodology is a term that is also used and
is generally defined as “whatever considerations are involved in how to teach” (Brown, 2001, p. 17).

3.9.2 Tracing the history of second language teaching methodologies

The earliest recognized methods are two pre-war methods grammar-translation and the direct method. Grammar-translation developed for a specific purpose: to allow university students to read and translate classic works written in Latin and Greek. The method also developed as result of beliefs about training the mind. Essentially, second languages were taught in the same way as any other subject matter. The direct method developed in response to a parallel demand to learn spoken languages, and a belief that second and third languages were best learned in the same way as one’s first language.

Post-world war II saw an increased interest in formal language teaching/training, notably in the fields of linguistics and psychology, and with it the elaboration of a number of new methods most famously the audiolingual method. The audiolingual method was based on linguistic theories of the nature of language and psychological theories on how languages are learned. The popularity of the audiolingual method was short-lived. Chomsky vigorously refuted “the linguistic idea that language is purely a set of sentence patterns and the psychological idea that language learning was just habit formation” (Mitchell & Vidal, 2001, p. 30). In the 1970s, the humanistic movement with its emphasis on the type of learner and his or her needs, and the ecological movement with its emphasis on the context in which language learning takes place led to the introduction of a number of marginal “designer methods” including total physical response, suggestopedia, the silent way and community language learning. Moreover, during the 1970s there was a parallel increasingly vocal faction asserting that the primary goal of learning a new language was to “communicate and interact with others” (Finnocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983, p. 10) and that teaching methods needed to better reflect this. It is during this period that the terms communicative competence and communicative language teaching first appeared (Piccardo, 2014).

The search for a single, ideal method was quite popular until the 1980s when a shift occurred from an emphasis on method to greater concern for objectives, language content and curriculum (Stern, 1983b). Methods in Second language acquisition (SLA) research have been criticized as
too top down, too prescriptive and too limiting. There is no longer the belief that there exists a single ideal method to second language teaching. There has been a move away from methods, which led Kumaravadivelu (1994) to argue that we are in fact in a “post-method era”.

On the other hand, a number of researchers such as Bell (2003), Block (2001) and Akbari (2008) disputed the idea that we are in a post-method era. Bell argued that methods are not dead and are in fact useful as they serve to challenge our beliefs and practices and move forward our thinking about SLA. In a 2007 study, Bell asked thirty teachers if they thought that methods were dead and whether teaching had gone beyond methods. Bell’s results showed that 28 of 30 teachers disagreed with the statement. Block (2001) argued that while method has been discredited amongst scholars, methods continue to be widely employed by many teachers in the field. He further argued that in most SLA circles (amongst both researchers and teachers) the search continues for a set of best or effective language teaching practices, which is really not much different than the search for the ideal method. Akbari (2008) contended that we are in fact not in a post-method era but an era of textbook-defined practice. He said, “[w]hat the majority of teachers teach and how they teach…are now determined by textbooks” (p. 647).

Pre-war: The grammar-translation method and the direct method

The grammar-translation method was first developed to teach the classical languages of Latin and Greek. Emphasis was on explicit instruction of grammar rules, repetitive grammar exercises and translation of vocabulary lists and passages. This instructional approach was consistent with learning outcomes as students were learning Latin and Greek to be able to read and write the languages. There were few opportunities to practise the spoken language. Despite the fact that contemporary second language learning outcomes have changed and it is widely recognized that most language learning today takes place so that learners can communicate orally in the language, grammar-translation as a method of second and foreign language instruction has remained popular. Brown (2001) argued that its continued popularity is because it “requires few specialized skills on the part of teachers. Tests of grammar rules and translations are easy to construct and can be objectively scored” (p. 19). According to Prator and Celce-Murcia (1979), classrooms where the grammar-translation method is employed are characterized by instruction in the L1 with little active use of the L2, vocabulary is taught using lists of isolated words, the
focus in on teaching form over meaning with meticulous, explicit explanation of grammar rules, and emphasis is on translation of texts word for word.

The direct method has been around since the late 1800s early 1900s. The method was popularized by Charles Berlitz and is often termed the “Berlitz method”. It is also referred to as the “naturalistic approach” to language teaching. The basis for the method is that second language learning should mirror how children learn their first language. Emphasis is on oral interaction in the L2, particularly between the teacher and the students, with no translation between the L1 and L2 and little to no analysis of grammar rules. Gestures, visuals and other actions are used to help students understand. Richards and Rodgers (1986) identified the following principle characteristics of the direct method: exclusive use of the target language, vocabulary is taught through demonstration, actions and visuals, interaction between teachers and students is through question and answer exchanges led by the teacher, grammar instruction is implicit, correct pronunciation and sentence structures are emphasized. The direct method was criticised for overemphasizing the similarities between first language learning and second language learning in a classroom context. Strict adherence to the use of the target language was seen as counterproductive, since teachers were required to go to great lengths to avoid using the native tongue.

Post-war: Structuralist and behaviourist methods (audiolingualism)

In the 1960s, audio-lingual programs became popular. The audiolingual method dates back to World War II. The US Department of Defense funded early research, and the method was inspired by behaviourist philosophies of language learning. According to behaviourism, language learning was habit formation it did not involve any cognitive processes in the brain. Languages were learned unconsciously through repetition, memorization and reinforcement. The audiolingual method was developed in an era of new technologies such as the tape-recorder. Characteristics of the audiolingual method include the presentation of material in the form of dialogues, memorization by students of set phrases, implicit and inductive teaching of grammar, emphasis on pronunciation, and the expectation that students produce error-free utterances from the beginning (Prator & Celce-Murcia, 1979).
Chomsky: Transformational generative grammar (1965) and the
cognitivist turn

Chomsky’s theories of language learning were responsible in large part for the decline of audiolingualism, although they did not result in the development of any widely used teaching method. Chomsky argued that language learning was not just habit formation that it was “generative and infinitely creative on the basis of a limited set of grammar rules” (Chomsky in Mitchel & Vidal, 2001, p. 30). From this came the development of cognitive learning theory with learners encouraged to work out grammar rules for themselves and to apply effective language learning strategies. Cognitivism reemphasized the intellectual (versus behaviourist) nature of language learning and a grammar-based approach to language teaching, which suggested “rules would be learned and then applied to the elements of language” (Finocchiaro, & Brumfit, 1983, p. 9).

The communicative turn

The 1970s represented a watershed moment in second language teaching and learning. The communicative movement initiated a fundamental shift in the vision of language teaching and a significant shift in paradigm, which has endured to this day. Beginning in the 1970s attention centered on the learner and the environment or context in which language learning takes place. A number of methods were developed that aimed to create a more conducive learning environment and encouraged the learner to assume greater responsibility in the language learning process. Emphasis also shifted to a functional and pragmatic view of language learning wherein a focus on meaning and language learning through language in use in interaction was espoused (i.e., language performance). Following this method, language teaching should concentrate on meaningful pupil interaction in the target language. The communicative movement also shifted the focus away from rigid, prescriptive teaching methods to the more flexible notion of approaches. Task-based, action-oriented and content-based approaches have since supplanted the communicative approach; however, some scholars have argued, and I concur, that they all fall within the paradigm of the communicative approach (Nunan, 2004).

The humanistic thread

A number of new approaches emerged focusing on learner motivation, encouraging the learner to take responsibility for his/her learning and creating the appropriate classroom conditions for
language learning. They include total physical response, the silent way, suggestopedia and community language learning. These approaches came to be known as humanistic as they focus attention on the learner. While none of them gained widespread popularity, they contributed to a significant shift in our view of language teaching and learning as well as the focus of research in the field.

**Communicative competence**

The use of the term communicative dates back to Hymes (1972) who proposed that knowing a language involved more than knowing a set of grammatical, lexical and phonological rules. He argued that in order to use a language effectively, learners needed to learn to use language in context. For this, Hymes coined the term communicative competence, which emphasized personally relevant language use in context. Savignon (1972) used the term communicative competence as a point of departure for defining an approach to language teaching, which was communicatively based. She defined communicative competence as the negotiation of meaning of messages between a speaker and a listener in interaction. She defined functional language use as the purpose of language use rather than the particular grammatical form an utterance takes (Savignon, 1983). Canale and Swain (1980) defined communicative competence as grammatical competence (knowledge about the rules of the language); sociolinguistic competence (the ability to use appropriate grammatical structures and social conventions according to the context); discourse competence (the ability to combine ideas cohesively and coherently and; strategic competence (usage of coping strategies to maintain/sustain communication of the message).

**The functional-notional approach and syllabus**

Almost in conjunction with the redefinition of what constitutes competence in a second language, there was a growing movement calling into question the primary objective of language learning. The communicative approach and communicative language teaching (CLT) evolved from the functional-notional approach. The framers of the functional-notional approach argued that “the ability to use, real, appropriate language to communicate and interact with others is - and should be- the primary goal of most foreign language learning” (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983, p. 10). A major focus of the approach was the push to reorganize the language syllabi. Traditionally syllabi were organized according to a grammatical progression. Wilkins (1972) argued for the organization of a language-teaching syllabus in terms of the “content rather than
the form of the language” (p. 18). Rather than a syllabus organized according to grammatical forms, Wilkins proposed a syllabus based on a semantic progression. A functional-notional syllabus is organized according to functions (e.g., introducing oneself to the host at a dinner party, purchasing a return ticket at the train station) and notions (e.g., expressing time, expressing one’s height and weight, asking how much something costs) (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983). In other words, a functional-notional syllabus is structured according to what sorts of information the learner wishes to communicate. The probable utterances in these situations determine which forms of language are taught (Wilkins, 1972). For example, in Brown’s (1999) advanced-beginner textbook for English language learning, the syllabus is organized into the following “functions”: introducing self and other people, exchanging personal information, asking how to spell someone’s name, giving commands, apologizing and thanking, identifying and describing people, asking for information.

**The communicative approach or communicative language teaching (CLT)**

As with the functional-notional approach, the communicative approach or communicative language teaching (CLT) developed in response to dissatisfaction with second language learning emphasizing the “mastery of language structures and the manipulation of grammatical forms” both of which left students “structurally competent but communicatively incompetent” (Cerezal Sierra, 1995, p. 120). While there is a reasonable degree of theoretical consistency as to what constitutes a communicative approach to language teaching, the way this approach is implemented or translated into practice in the classroom is far from uniform (Hoa Hiep, 2007, p. 195). Some characteristics of the communicative approach include significant amounts of pair work and group work, a focus is on meaning rather than on form, encouragement for students to produce language for genuine, meaningful communication, and an emphasis on fluency over accuracy. Nunan (1989) stressed the use of activities, which involve meaningful tasks and imply the choice (and the use) of language that is meaningful to the learner, should include materials that are task-based and authentic. The role of the teacher is transformed from “transmitter” and “master” of knowledge and information to that of a “guide” or “facilitator.” Learning is centered on the student who is expected to take responsibility for his or her learning (Piccardo, 2014, p. 11). Li (1998) summarized CLT as having the following six characteristics, which include: focus on communicative functions; focus on meaningful tasks; focus on tasks and language relevant to
a target group of learners; the use of authentic materials; the use of group activities; and a secure, nonthreatening environment.

As noted earlier, while CLT has been embraced in theory, there has been disagreement over what it should look like in practice. The place of grammar in the communicative approach has been particularly contentious. Certain linguists maintain that there is no need for any explicit grammar teaching (Nunan, 2004). Others disagree and stress the role of grammar alongside other competences from the beginning (Canale & Swain, 1980; Ellis, 2015). Debate continues about when to focus on form, how much to focus on form and what forms to focus on. However, there is increasing consensus that some form-focused instruction is helpful and even necessary in communicative instruction (Spada & Lightbown, 2008). Small-scale classroom studies that have been carried out suggest that truly authentic communicative classrooms are rare; while most teachers profess to be following a communicative approach, in practice they are following more hybrid approaches often a combination of traditional and non-traditional elements. Broadly speaking, the communicative approach appears to have brought innovation more on the level of theory than on the level of teachers' actual classroom practices. (Karavas-Doukas, 1996)

**Task-based approaches**

While task-based approaches have been employed primarily in English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching contexts, they have also been employed in French Immersion programs, notably at the elementary level. Task-based language teaching continues in the tradition of encouraging the use of the target language for communicative purposes. However, methodological focus is on the completion of “tasks” (Willis & Willis, 2001, p. 173). A task involves the completion of activities aiming at a particular objective that is not a strictly linguistic one. Nunan (2004) suggests “[t]asks involve communicative language use in which the user’s attention is focused on meaning rather than grammatical form” (p. 3). The notion of task has further evolved as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001) as “actions...performed by one or more individuals strategically using their own specific competences to achieve a given result” (p. 9).
The post-modern era

While it is a “generally accepted norm in the field” that we teach a language for communicative purposes, we are in an era where what this means is continually being defined, redefined and refined. In essence, the post-modern era incorporates all of the lessons learned from the past. In learning to understand, speak, read and write a second language meaning is paramount (i.e., getting one’s meaning across and the development of fluency). However, some understanding of a language’s metalinguistic code is necessary to ensure a minimum degree of accuracy and that meaning is indeed made. While some knowledge of a language’s linguistic code is necessary, language learning also clearly involves some conditioning and development of implicit knowledge of a language. We are now presently “probing the nature of social, cultural and pragmatic features of a language” (Brown, 2001, p. 42). In this post-modern era, the role of the teacher is paramount. He or she is expected to “practice their profession with competence and confidence” (Akbari, 2008, p. 642) making use of the latest research on second language teaching and learning to engage in the best possible practices. The teacher is now both theorizer and practitioner. For some teachers this can be empowering, while for others this can be overwhelming. This is why Akbari (2008) has argued that many teachers lack the required skills to teach in the post-method fashion and as a result, the textbook for many in this century has become the new “method”.

Eclecticism

Brown (1994) employs the terms informed approach, enlightened eclectic approach and principled approach (p. 40). Eclecticism builds on the notion that there is no ideal method or approach to language teaching. Brown argues that an informed, enlightened or principled approach to language teaching is one built on teachers experimenting with a variety of methods and techniques from different methods to determine the most effective teaching practices for a particular group of learners and context. A teachers’ choice of methodology, including employing techniques from different methods, should be guided by his or her philosophy of language learning and teaching. This philosophy “should be solidly grounded in the best of what we [know] about second language learning and teaching” (p. 39).
**Principled pragmatism**

Kumaravadivelu (1994) first proposed principled pragmatism as a post-method alternative to eclecticism, which he argued was nothing more than the act of randomly putting together a package of techniques from different methods. He further argued that eclecticism ‘invariably led to unprincipled, uncritical pedagogy’ (p. 30). Stern (1992) similarly argued that eclecticism offered no principles on which to choose the best theory or best techniques. Principled pragmatism emphasizes reflective practice and the use of teacher’s plausibility (first proposed by Prabhu, 1990). Teacher’s plausibility is defined as “a teacher’s subjective understanding of what they do” (Prabhu, 1990, p. 172). Teacher’s plausibility is not linked to any method but to their own experiences as learners and teachers, to their professional education and to peer consultation. Kumaravadivelu (1994) provides teachers with a strategic framework comprised of ten macrostrategies to help guide them in establishing their own coherent pedagogical framework for second language teaching. The 10 macrostrategies include: maximizing learning opportunities, facilitating negotiated interaction, minimizing perceptual mismatches, activating learner’s intuitive heuristics, fostering language awareness, contextualizing linguistic input, integrating language skills, promoting learner autonomy, raising cultural consciousness, and ensuring social relevance.

**An action-oriented approach (l’approche actionnelle)**

The action-oriented approach is the result of work undertaken by the Council of Europe and the elaboration of the CEFR (Common European Framework). The action-oriented approach both encompasses and goes beyond the communicative and task-based approaches. Action-oriented approaches also revolve around the notion of task. The action-oriented task encourages students to employ the target language with the overall objective being a non-linguistic one, which also necessarily implies the use of authentic materials, i.e., materials that have not been developed for the sole purpose of learning a language.

Where action-oriented approaches are novel is on their emphasis on the learner as a social actor. In an action-oriented perspective, the learner must be aware of the nature of the task to be accomplished, he or she must understand the nature of the task, and his or her needs both linguistic and non-linguistic to complete the task and his or her strengths and weaknesses relative to the task (Piccardo, 2014). Action-oriented approaches emphasize the social/contextual nature
of all tasks that they require as learners to cooperate and interact with one another in a particular context or with a set of authentic materials. There is constant bidirectional interplay between the cognitive/affective and the social/contextual. The notion of constraints and competencies are also a key element of action-oriented approaches. In any activity, situation, context there exist constraints. The learner must invoke his or her competencies, linguistic and non-linguistic, to successfully complete a task. Such competencies include knowledge of linguistic concepts such as grammar, syntax, vocabulary, pronunciation, sociolinguistic knowledge, pragmatic knowledge and general knowledge (heuristic, intercultural, practical, strategic etc.).

3.10 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I reviewed the literature on second language teacher beliefs and the factors that shape these beliefs. I also reviewed the research on consistency and inconsistency between beliefs and instructional practices, as well as their impact of teacher practices on student learning outcomes. I then summarized the existing literature on second language teacher education, curriculum change, and the beliefs and practices of beginning versus experienced second language teachers. The second half of the chapter was dedicated to tracing the evolution of second language teaching methodologies from the oldest methods such as the grammar-translation and the direct methods, to the newest approaches such as task-based and action-oriented approaches.

In the following chapter I present my conceptual framework a combination of complexity theory and Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy, a framework which I believe will contribute to awareness of the factors affecting Core French teachers’ instructional practices as well as further understanding of what leads to inconsistency between beliefs and practices.
Chapter 4
Conceptual Framework

This chapter is dedicated to the presentation of my conceptual framework, which was devised to better understand second language teaching. In particular, the framework illuminates the factors affecting Core French teachers’ instructional practices and what leads to consistency or lack of consistency between beliefs and practices. I begin with a discussion of previous attempts to model second language teaching as it was in analyzing previous models that it became clear to me that I needed to develop my own model.

In early models, the teacher was nothing more than a conduit for the implementation of theories and methods developed by linguistics and psychology professors. Yet, with few if any concrete examples of theory translating directly into practice, it is obvious that teaching a second language is neither as simple nor as straightforward as depicted by these early models.

In subsequent models inspired by the teacher cognition movement, the teacher was attributed a more active and important role; these models emphasized the influence of teacher beliefs and knowledge on their practices. To ensure successful implementation of a method or approach (i.e., successful practices), one needed only to ensure consistency between teacher beliefs and a chosen method or approach. Nevertheless, these models did not sufficiently account for the role played by contextual factors, particularly the relationship or interplay between the context and the teacher (his or her beliefs and knowledge).

The rise of sociocultural and ecological theories led to a recognition of the importance of the environment and contextual factors. Teaching was seen as “situated practice” wherein context was primordial in shaping teacher beliefs and influencing practices. However, these models, in my view, did not sufficiently account for the ability of the teacher to shape his or her context—a key ingredient in light of my observations and experiences in understanding second language teaching.

My conceptual framework, a combination of complexity theory and Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy, represents a complex model of second language teaching which recognizes the importance of the teacher, the context, the influence of contextual factors in shaping teacher beliefs and practices as well as the ability of the teacher to shape his or her context.
4.1 Early models (conceptualizations) of Second language teaching

There have been surprisingly few attempts to conceptualize/model the activity of second language teaching. Existing models, (e.g., Campbell (1980), Spolsky (1980), Ingram (1980) and Stern (1983b) are for the most part linear, top-down and unidirectional. They depict second language teaching as the simple act of applying theories of language, language learning and/or a method of language teaching to practice. The teacher was essentially a conduit for theories developed by applied linguists and/or psychologists. The role of the learner and the environment for example were generally absent.

It was assumed that teachers could be provided with knowledge about linguistics, psychology and existing methods of language teaching and this would seamlessly translate into classroom practices as well as outcomes consistent with these theories/methods (Richards, 2008). However, this was often not the case. As Richards asserts, “[d]espite knowing the theory and principles associated with communicative language teaching for example, in their own teaching, teachers are often seen to make use of traditional ‘grammar-and-practice’ techniques in their classrooms” (p. 161).

Overall, there has been a gradual move towards a more complex, multidirectional view of second language teaching. In the 1990s, the focus shifted away from teachers as simply “people who master a set of general principles and theories developed by experts” (Basturkman, Loewan & Ellis, 2004, p. 244). Indeed, models proposed by Brown (1994), Nunan (1991, 1999) and Tudor (2001) depict teachers as active and involved participants in the creation of classroom realities who “construct their own personal and workable theories of teaching” (p. 244). These later models emphasize the importance of the specific context in which teachers operate. They insist that a deeper understanding of second language teaching involves an understanding of what teachers and students bring with them to the classroom and how this influences their practices.

4.1.1 Cognitive and socio-cognitive theories (models) of second language teaching

The teacher cognition movement focused on the “mental lives” (Richards, 2008, p. 163) of teachers, the mental processes of learning to teach, the role of teachers’ prior learning and prior
experiences with second language learning and teaching in shaping teachers’ views of language
teaching, as well as their instructional practices and classroom behaviours. The teacher cognition
movement grew out of the “recognition that teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who
play a central role in shaping classroom events” (Borg, 2006, p. 1). Moreover, psychological
research has shown that beliefs exert a significant influence on behaviour. The teacher cognition
movement has led to the questioning of the traditional knowledge base of teaching (theories of
applied linguistics, psychology and SLE methods) as the major foundation of second language
teaching (Richards, 2008). We no longer see teaching as the simple “application of knowledge
and learned skills” (p. 165). As a result of the teacher cognition movement, research into second
language teaching now focuses on such things as teacher knowledge and beliefs, teachers’
instructional goals and practices, the relationship between teacher beliefs and practices, the
influence of context on teacher cognition and behaviour and teacher responses to “critical
moments during a lesson” (p. 165). Teaching is no longer the exclusive activity of applying
theory to practice, but rather “the theorization of practice”, which includes “making visible the
nature of practitioner knowledge and providing the means by which such knowledge can be
elaborated, understood and reviewed” (p. 6). Teachers and future teachers in teacher education
programs are now encouraged to reflect on those prior experiences and learning and to
understand how they affect their values, beliefs and their teaching practices.

4.1.2 Ecological and sociocultural theories (models) of second language
teaching

Sociocultural theory and the ecological movement have also made significant contributions to
our understanding of second language teaching, teacher behaviour and teaching practices.
Sociocultural theory and the ecological movement have placed importance on the social nature
of language teaching and learning. Second language teaching takes place in a specific context,
within a community of practice with a unique culture of teaching, where a prevailing set of rules
and norms exist. Learning to teach is “constructing new knowledge and theory through
participating in specific social contexts and engaging in particular types of activities and
processes” (Richards, 2008, p. 163). Learning is “socially negotiated and contingent on
knowledge of self, subject matter, curricula, and setting” (Richards, 2008, p. 163). Therefore,
second language teachers are both users and creators of knowledge. They make decisions on how
best to teach their students “within complex, socially, culturally and historically situated contexts” (Johnson, 2006, p. 239).

### 4.2 Complexity theory and the theory of self-efficacy: A framework for understanding the relationship between teacher beliefs and practices

It is essential for teachers to reflect on past experiences and to understand how they shape present beliefs and teaching practice. It is also vital for teachers to understand the context in which they work. Contextual variables affect the way one teaches. Lave and Wenger (1991) spoke of the situated nature of learning that includes “the relationship between learning and the social situation in which it occurs” as well as the influences of communities of practice, that is a group of people who share a common profession and influence and learn from one another (p. 14). There is also the culture of Core French teaching which can be defined as including entrenched patterns of values, beliefs, and traditions that have been formed over the course of the history of the Core French program (Deal & Peterson, 1990).

However, it is important not to overemphasize the uniqueness of each context. Implicit in the notion that each context is entirely unique is the belief that instructional methods, approaches and practices are non-transferable, as no two contexts are the same. This can disempower the teacher as much as an overemphasis on method. Overemphasis on the uniqueness of each context can lead to teacher beliefs such as that their context is not suitable for certain activities, that they can not implement particular methods or that certain approaches will not work with their students. As Prabhu (1990, p. 166) noted: “a concentration on dissimilarities between teaching contexts is likely to obscure similarities between them…”. He continued by suggesting,

If we look for variation merely on the assumption that the teaching context matters for teaching methodology, we are sure to find indefinite variation on many dimensions, thus making it impossible to justify any instructional method for any single group of learners. If the theories of language teaching (that is to say, methods) that we have at present fail to account sufficiently for the diversity in teaching contexts, we ought to try to develop a more general or comprehensive (and probably more abstract) theory to account for more of the diversity, not reject the notion of a single system of ideas and seek to be guided instead by diversity itself. Pointing to a bewildering variety of contextual factors as a means of denying the possibility of a single theory can only be a contribution to bewilderment, not to understanding. (p. 166)
Often implicit in the socio-cognitive movement and much of the literature on educational reform is the notion that the failure of a teacher to acquire what is taught or to implement a new approach is the result of his or her resistance to change (Singh & Richards 2006). Complexity theory and Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy highlight the key role played by actors in a complex system such as a Core French classroom, particularly the teacher and her or his ability to influence the trajectory or path of the system. Viewing the relationship between teacher beliefs and practices through the lens of complexity theory and Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy reveals that it is more often a lack of teacher preparedness to handle or navigate the complex nature of change, termed chaos in complexity theory, which prevents many teachers from adopting and maintaining new approaches rather than a resistance to change.

4.2.1 Complexity theory: An overview

The idea of Complexity Theory was first introduced by Warren Weaver in 1948 in his article entitled “Science and Complexity”. Weaver proposed two forms of complexity, disorganized and organized complexity. He proposed the notion of organized complexity in order to explain the behaviour of a group of persons (p. 5). Organized complexity involves “a very substantial number of relevant variables…all interrelated in a complicated but nevertheless not in helter-skelter fashion” (p. 5). According to Piccardo (2016), the idea of complexity can also be traced as far back as Bachelard (1934) for whom the best theories look not to simplify problems but to deal with them in all their complexity and that a lack of order is an essential phenomenon in nature (p. 47).

Complexity theory recognizes the role played by contextual factors but also gives equal importance to actors in the system and their ability to influence and shape the trajectory of the system. The emphasis in complexity theory is on understanding the process, the journey and the trajectory, which amounts to understanding how to reach one’s objectives. Teachers generally know what they want to achieve, that is they generally have fairly well-defined objectives or clear ideas of the outcomes they wish to bring about (i.e., desired outcomes). Teachers elaborate a set of classroom practices based on these objectives and desired outcomes. The challenge comes not from establishing these objectives and deciding on these outcomes, but in bringing them about. Notably, dealing with instability or chaos as it is known in complexity theory is complex, yet such complexities inevitably arise in the journey. For this reason, the journey itself
and the end of the journey may not turn out exactly as envisioned. Teachers are often derailed by periods of instability and they may fear losing control, possibly losing face and identity. For this reason, many in turn modify their instructional practices, outcomes and even objectives rather than increase their understanding and comfort level in dealing with and navigating instability/chaos.

Complexity theory has been applied to naturally occurring phenomena such as weather systems, planetary orbits or the flight patterns of birds. Just as it was assumed that more sophisticated technology for forecasting weather would enable us to accurately predict weather patterns, it was likewise assumed that the development of new more sophisticated methods and approaches to second language teaching and learning, and new frameworks and curricula would allow us to predict teacher behaviour in the classroom with a high-degree of accuracy. Both assumptions have been proven incorrect. Both weather patterns and teacher behaviour remain difficult to predict with a high degree of accuracy. However, Larsen-Freeman (1997) argued that applying complexity theory to the second language classroom will allow us to cast several enduring SLA conundrums in a new light.

Complex non-linear systems are termed complex because they are comprised of a number of “components or agents” (p. 143). The second language classroom is composed of teachers, students and indirectly parents, colleagues, administrators, and even the public (public opinion). The second language classroom is also complex because the behaviour of the system as a whole is not a product of the behaviour of an individual component or agent, but rather a result of the interactions of all of the components and agents operating within the system (p. 143). These components and agents are constantly acting and reacting to one another. As a result, complex non-linear systems are dynamic meaning they are continuously changing and evolving rather than static. Thus, it is only through studying the interactions of the different components/agents in a system that one comes to better understand the behaviour of the system as a whole, as well as the behaviour of the individual components/agents in the system.

The second language classroom is a non-linear system, which is a system where the “effect is disproportionate to the cause” (p. 143). While in a linear system a cause of particular strength results in an effect of equal strength. In a non-linear system, this is not the case. For example, in nature, a pebble rolling down a steep hill can actually trigger an avalanche or a butterfly flapping
its wings can actually cause a hurricane some distance away, which known as the butterfly effect. The reaction in this case is heavily disproportionate to the cause, and the same is true for the second language classroom. While chaos in any complex non-linear system is inevitable, the onset of the chaos is not entirely predictable (p. 143) nor is it evident when the disorder will end. For example, a second language teacher’s decision to begin exclusively speaking the target language with his or her students may or may not throw the entire system into chaos. Students may react positively and lessons and activities may move forward very smoothly. However, reaction may be very negative, causing the teacher to rethink his/her decision.

Initial conditions in a complex non-linear system are crucial, as complex non-linear systems are extremely sensitive and highly dependent upon them (p. 144). Moreover, a slight change in initial conditions can throw a system into chaos. Following a period of chaos, the system will eventually return to order, but as noted above how, when and exactly what type of order are unpredictable. Thus, a small change in initial conditions can have a huge impact on the future behaviour of the system and the actors within the system. The introduction of a new instructional approach will almost always result in chaos. Sensitive dependence to initial conditions means that systems with similar starting points can diverge exponentially later. This means that small things do in fact matter most.

A lack of predictability is inherent in all complex non-linear systems (Kozden, 2005). Both chaos and order arising from the chaos are natural, inevitable, and even necessary for a system to grow. It is, however, very difficult to predict exactly when chaos and self-organizing conditions will occur and how long they will last. Kozden (2005) suggests open systems are constantly evolving and adapting and are feedback sensitive (pp. 144-145). Moreover, positive and negative feedback contribute to the stability and growth of a system. Patterns do exist but it is impossible to predict precisely what the details will look like at the local level. For example, at the same time that the weather is constantly changing, it also stays within the boundaries of what we call climate (p. 146). Every open system has a strange attractor, a set of boundaries from which the system does not stray. The system’s movement within these boundaries follows a similar pattern but never exactly repeats itself (Gilstrap, 2005, p. 60).
4.2.2 Complexity theory and second language learning

Larsen-Freeman (1997) persuasively argued that language and language acquisition represent complex non-linear systems. That is language is complex, dynamic, nonlinear, chaotic, unpredictable, sensitive to initial conditions, open, self-organizing, feedback sensitive and adaptable (p. 142).

Language is dynamic as the use of language involves the manipulation of static units or products, and it is forever growing and changing. Changes to language are non-linear. Indeed, new forms enter the language and other forms leave and which forms will be introduced and which forms leave, and how meanings evolve and change is not entirely predictable. Every time language is used, it changes and this process of change may lead to change at the global level. In other words, linguistic change is the result of the interactions of actors employing the language. Language is a set of subsystems (syntax, morphology, pragmatics etc.) and each subsystem is interdependent. The behaviour of the whole emerges out of the behaviour of the subsystems.

Larsen-Freeman (1997) further explained that language acquisition (SLA) is both complex and nonlinear. She asserts that the use of the term target language is misleading, as there is no endpoint in language acquisition—the target is always moving. All speakers of a given language, beginner, intermediate, advanced, highly proficient contribute to the evolution of a language. There are many factors at play in acquiring a new language including other languages spoken, amount and type of input, amount and type of interaction, amount and type of feedback received, age, motivation, learning strategies etc. These factors viewed in isolation are not significant; however, the complex interaction of these factors is extremely significant.

Learning a language is not a linear process. Learners do not master items chronologically, rather language learning is filled with progress and setback. It is quite possible to master temporarily a linguistic concept only to see chaos ensue when further concepts are introduced. Improvement in a language is called learning while the absence of learning is known as fossilization. In nature, positive and negative feedback is provided by natural selection, in language learning feedback comes from interactions with other speakers of the language and with teachers (Waldrop, 1992, p. 179).
4.2.3 Complexity theory and second language teaching

"La complexité n’est pas une recette pour connaître l’inattendu mais pour s’y préparer." (Morin, 2005, p. 110)

While there are a number of articles applying complexity theory to second and foreign language learning and learners, there are fewer examples of the application of complexity theory to second and foreign language teaching and the second/foreign language teacher. Kozden in his 2005 unpublished Master’s thesis “explored ways of bringing chaos and complexity into…lesson and course planning” in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context (p. 4). Piccardo (2010) encouraged the application of complexity theory to second and foreign language teacher education and teacher training. She emphasized the need for teacher education and training programs to recognize the complex nature of teaching, to develop teachers’ understanding of and most importantly prepare them to handle complexity.

By viewing the language classroom, and particularly second language teaching, as a complex non-linear system it is possible to see Core French teachers and their teaching practices in a new light. Complexity (chaos) theory can help to comprehend better the nature of Core French teaching. Previously inexplicable patterns in teacher behaviour can be understood. Complexity theory can shed light on Core French teachers’ classroom practices, particularly the relationship between their stated beliefs and their actual practices.

Complexity theory provides a framework for understanding why seemingly like-minded teachers (e.g., those with similar beliefs about second language teaching and objectives for their teaching) teaching in comparable FSL contexts (e.g., grade, curriculum, Core French program, student proficiency in the target language, class size) employing a similar instructional practice can end up with substantial differences in output or outcome. Kozden (2005) suggests,

An effective classroom is dynamic because it changes over time, complex since there are many elements reacting to one another, and nonlinear because the learning process does not always proceed in a steady, upward manner. It is chaotic because the teacher never has complete control, and self-organizing since chaos is only apparent and an underlying pattern that emerges with time is always present. (Kozden, 2005, pp. 10-11)

As Kozden notes, chaos is an essential part of learning. Nevertheless, teachers need to exercise some measure of control. In the classroom, it can be difficult to find a balance between order and
chaos. Teachers can be tempted to intervene or reverse course if they perceive that students are uncomfortable or unable to understand the material or activity. It is crucial to understand that what appears to be chaos is actually the “blueprints for orderly pattern” (p. 21). For example, a second language teacher teaching a beginner course requires an understanding that speaking to students in the target language requires a period of chaos, uncertainty and instability prior to students finding a place of comfort. The duration of the period of chaos is not entirely predictable. What each student or group of students learn during a given lesson or how they react to a given lesson is difficult to predict. Adaptation is essential and it is a crucial skill. Teachers’ reactions to disorder and instability are hugely significant. In the face of chaos, teachers need to be able to remain focused on objectives or desired outcomes. A teacher’s beliefs, his or her classroom practices and his or her daily interactions with the students are hugely influential in the path or trajectory followed by the system.

Complexity theory enables a better understanding of how it is possible to end up with substantial differences in outcomes in similar teaching contexts. Complexity theory provides insight into why certain teachers are able to achieve desired outcomes while others are not, even though they may hold analogous beliefs about second language teaching and employ similar instructional practices. Coupled with Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy it is possible to develop insight into the thought processes of teachers who are able to effectively navigate chaos to bring about desired outcomes versus those who experience difficulty.

4.3 Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy

A teacher’s level of self-efficacy influences cognition, instructional practices and student levels of motivation and achievement (Chacon, 2005). Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy as “a judgement of one’s capability to accomplish a given level of performance” (p. 391). Perceived self-efficacy is a judgement of one’s ability to execute certain courses of action. He argued knowledge, which includes skill and level of competence, are inadequate predictors of future behaviour and action as they are “mediated by a person’s belief in their abilities to put the acquired skills to use” (Bandura in Siwatu, 2007, p. 1088). Bandura (1997) further affirmed that “people's level of motivation, affective states, and actions are based more on what they believe than on what is objectively true” (p. 2). In other words, a person’s behavior is more a product of what she or he believes she or he can accomplish than actual ability/capability.
Puozzo-Capron (2009) defined self-efficacy as “the belief that an individual has in his or her capability/skill/competence/ability to achieve an objective” (pp. 1-2). Teacher efficacy can also be defined as a teacher’s belief or perception that any outcome can be produced despite facing external obstacles (Siwatu, 2007, p. 1089). Teachers hold outcome expectations, perceptions about the types of consequences or outcome of engaging in a particular activity. The formation of these beliefs is the result of previous experiences. A teacher’s level of efficacy mediates the relationship between knowledge and behaviours within a particular environmental context. Self-efficacy beliefs can vary depending on the context and specificity of tasks.

In the context of schools, teacher self-efficacy beliefs can be defined as a teacher’s individual beliefs in their capabilities to perform specific teaching tasks at a specified level of quality in a specified situation (Dellinger et al., 2008). Efficacy expectations focus on beliefs about whether behaviours can be performed, whereas outcome expectations focus on beliefs about the outcomes of certain behaviours (i.e., positive or negative outcomes) (Dellinger et al., 2008).

A teacher’s level of self-efficacy influences his or her perceptions of the consequences of choosing certain instructional practices, and thus affects his or her choice of instructional practices (Chacon, 2005). Self-efficacy beliefs predict the outcomes people expect, as people avoid activities they judge to exceed their coping capabilities while undertaking those they feel they can perform or manage successfully. Judgements also determine how long people will persist in the face of obstacles or adverse experience. Those who entertain doubts about their abilities are likely to give up, while those who are confident will persevere and even put in greater effort in the face of adversity or negativity. Those who judge themselves ineffective are more likely to imagine potential difficulties as more formidable than they really are. Focus turns to concerns over failings and mishaps rather than overall objectives (Bandura, 1982). Teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy believe that they can reach even the most difficult students, while teachers with low self-efficacy beliefs feel a sense of helplessness when dealing with difficult students.

Bandura (1977, 1982, 1986) argued that levels of self-efficacy are the result of enactive experiences, vicarious experiences and verbal or social persuasion. Successful enactive experiences heighten perceived self-efficacy while unsuccessful enactive experiences lower perceived self-efficacy. However, enactive experiences are not the only type of experiences that
increase self-efficacy. Vicarious experiences as termed by Bandura also contribute to increases and decreases in self-efficacy. Vicarious experiences wherein one sees others of similar ability, with similar backgrounds, and in similar contexts perform an activity successfully “can raise efficacy expectations in observers” (Bandura, 1982, p. 126). Similarly observing people of similar competence fail can lower observers’ perceptions of their abilities. Verbal persuasion can also influence levels of self-efficacy. Verbal persuasion is employed to encourage people to believe that they possess the capabilities necessary to be successful at a given activity or task (Bandura, 1982).

Teacher self-efficacy can also be defined as a teacher’s belief in his or her ability to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task, or meet a particular teaching objective. Teacher efficacy is future-oriented (Rubie-Davies et al., 2011) as it is about expectations about the outcomes of a particular activity, as well as the progress students can make. Teachers with higher self-efficacy expect to succeed, and expect their students to succeed. They interpret successes and disappointments quite differently than teachers with lower self-efficacy (OECD, 2013).

Teachers have expectations at the whole class level, as well as at the level of individual students and groups of students. Teachers may have high expectations for the whole class or low expectations for the whole class. They may also have higher expectations for some students and lower expectations for others. Caprara et al. (2006), Klassen and Chiu (2010), Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007), Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004), Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) all found a positive correlation between higher levels of teacher self-efficacy and higher levels of student motivation and achievement.

Rubie-Davis et al. (2011) differentiated between teacher beliefs and teacher efficacy. Beliefs are related to what the teacher believes students can achieve, what motivates them, how lessons and assessments should be structured etc. Efficacy is related to a teacher’s belief in his or her ability to get the students to where he or she thinks they should end up. A teacher with high expectations of his or her students has high self-efficacy, while a teacher with low expectations of his or her students has low self-efficacy. In a study by Chacon (2005) teachers who were confident about their abilities and enjoyed their teaching were more willing to implement new and innovative practices.
Bandura (2006) asserted that teachers with a high degree of self-efficacy possess the following characteristics: strong levels of perseverance, confidence in their ability to affect environmental conditions, to exercise control over their environment and high levels of commitment, effort and resilience in the face of adversity. Gibson and Dembo (1984) and Podell and Soodak (1993) associated higher levels of teacher self-efficacy with greater teacher effort and persistence when things do not go smoothly. Evans and Tribble (1986) argued that teachers with high self-efficacy are characterized by a strong degree of professional commitment. Guskey (1988) argued that those with higher levels of self-efficacy display greater openness to new ideas and willingness to experiment. Allinder (1994) found that teachers with high self-efficacy exhibit greater enthusiasm for teaching. Burley, Hall, Villeme and Brockmeier (1991) and Glickman and Tamashiro (1982) found that teachers with a high degree of self-efficacy were more likely to stay in teaching.

It was concluded by Thoonan et al. (2011) that self-efficacy is an excellent predictor of teachers’ teaching practices. Classrooms with a second language teacher with a high degree of self-efficacy were characterized by more student-centered learning (i.e., student interaction, group work etc.). On the other hand, classrooms with a second language teacher with a low degree of self-efficacy were typified by more teacher-centered learning (teacher lectures, individual seatwork etc.). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2013) found that the more experienced teachers with more years of teaching experience (number of years of teaching) also showed greater the levels of self-efficacy. Rubie-Davies (2006) also suggested that more experienced teachers tend to have higher self-efficacy than do less experienced teachers. Chacon (2005) and Eslami and Fatahi (2008) found a correlation between second language teachers’ proficiency in the target language and levels of self-efficacy. Studies also show how teachers who self-reported higher levels of proficiency had higher levels of self-efficacy. Indeed, Faez (2011) argued that, “a teacher’s lack of confidence in their level of language proficiency may limit their ability to conduct all classroom functions through the medium of the target language” (p. 64). Cooke (2013) evaluated the self-efficacy beliefs of novice Core French and French Immersion teachers and discovered that elementary FSL teachers whose dominant language was French had a higher sense of self-efficacy compared to novice elementary FSL teachers whose dominant language was English.
A positive experience, or the successful completion of a task, can powerfully reinforce a person’s sense of self-efficacy. A negative experience, that is failure to complete a task, can undermine a person’s sense of self-efficacy, especially if a person was unsure to begin with of his or her ability to complete the task (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). Moreover, when individuals observe the successful completion of a task by other people similar to themselves, this can also increase their sense of self-efficacy. A person who receives positive verbal reinforcement to attempt a task is more likely to attempt that task, to put forth greater effort into the task and to sustain the effort (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). Finally, if people experience negative physical symptoms such as anxiety or tension, they are likely to have a low level of self-efficacy and little confidence to complete the task. Therefore, a variety of factors are at work in the development of self-efficacy beliefs.

There have been a number of attempts to measure teacher levels of self-efficacy including Sherer, Maddux, Mercandante, Prentice-Dunn, Jacobs and Rogers’ General Self-Efficacy (1982), Schwarzer and Jerusalem’s General Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale (1995), and Chen, Gully, and Eden’s New General Self-Efficacy Scale (2001). Each of these measures contains a series of statements such as: “I can handle whatever comes my way. If I can’t do my job, I keep trying until I can.” (Scherbaum, Cohen-Charash & Kern, p. 1050) Teachers were asked to identify their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement. Higher scores (i.e. greater levels of agreement with each statement) were associated with higher levels of self-efficacy (p. 1051). Bandura himself (2006) proposed a confidence scale whereby respondents were asked to indicate their degree of confidence in their capability to achieve a certain objective or outcome ranging from “highly certain can do” to “cannot do at all” (p. 311).

Bandura argued: “[t]here is no all-purpose measure of perceived self-efficacy. The “one measure fits all” approach usually has limited explanatory and predictive value because most of the items in an all-purpose test may have little or no relevance to the domain of functioning” (p. 307). He further asserted that such measures “are usually cast in general terms divorced from the situational demands and circumstances” (p. 307) of participants. I, thus, chose to explore self-efficacy in the individual interview transcripts versus employing a pre-existing self-efficacy scale or devising my own. In so doing, I believed that I could gain deeper insight into focal participants’ levels of self-efficacy versus analysis of focal participants’ answers to a set of
generalized questions in a questionnaire. Measuring self-efficacy in the interview transcripts also enabled me to assess focal participants’ self-efficacy specific to the Core French lessons I had observed.

I also felt that such a choice would reduce the possibility of “socially desirable answers” (Dörnyei, 2003, p. 12). In response to a statement such as “I can handle anything that comes my way”, focal participants may have felt compelled to respond in the affirmative, in other words to provide what they believed was the acceptable or expected answer to such a question. I also believed that asking focal participants about their degree of confidence in their Core French teaching would have significantly influenced their teaching when I went to observe them. Already, prior knowledge of my views on the Core French program and communicative language teaching (CLT) likely had an influence on focal participants’ teaching practices.

Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy coupled with complexity theory provides an excellent framework for understanding why Core French teachers’ practices do not always coincide with their beliefs. The two theories combined explain why two Core French teachers with similar profiles (e.g., former Core French student, same teacher education program, one to two years of teaching experience) and beliefs (e.g., beliefs about target language use), teaching in comparable contexts (e.g., same grade, textbook, student profiles, class size) can introduce a similar teaching approach (e.g., introduce a unit in the target language), yet end up with very different outcomes (e.g., amount of target language use by both the teacher and students, student level of comfort with interactive speaking activities).

Complexity theory and Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy can also help to explain why a teacher teaching in different contexts (i.e., Academic, Applied, Beginner) can introduce the same instructional approach resulting in similar outcomes (e.g., student ease with interactive speaking activities), despite these varied contexts.

The Core French classroom can be viewed as a complex non-linear system with the teacher as a key actor within the system. The teacher has the ability to influence significantly the trajectory of the system. For example, every time the teacher introduces a new approach, activity or resource, initial conditions are disrupted and chaos and disorder usually ensue. Teacher interpretations of student behaviour during an activity are influenced by their beliefs and perceptions about their
own abilities to affect student behaviour and achieve certain outcomes (i.e., self-efficacy). This in turn determines teacher behaviour during the period of disruption or chaos. It determines whether a teacher sees the activity through to its end, attempts the activity in future, puts an end to the activity in mid-stream, or does not attempt the activity a second time.

During periods of disorder or chaos, teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy are able to navigate the chaos effectively. They are more likely to persevere in the face of chaos, to continue with the outcome or objective always in mind. Teachers with lower levels of self-efficacy find it difficult to navigate the chaos. They are less likely to persevere and to change course and more likely to lose sight of their objectives/desired outcomes. For teachers with a high degree of self-efficacy, the outcomes and the path to reach such outcomes from the use of a given approach, a set of materials or a certain activity may not be exactly as anticipated; however, both the trajectory traveled and the outcomes they achieve remain consistent with their beliefs and desired outcomes. For teachers with lower self-efficacy the road traveled and the resulting new order are inconsistent with beliefs and objectives/desired outcomes. Figures 2, 3 and 4 provide schematic diagrams of the hybrid framework.

Figure 2 illustrates what can happen when a teacher introduces a new approach within a complex system such as a Core French classroom. Chaos usually ensues and a teacher must make choices about how to navigate the period of chaos. The resulting outcome or new order is dependent on how the teacher navigates the chaos. His or her levels of self-efficacy affect how a teacher navigates or handles the chaos.
Figure 2. Teacher navigation of chaos.

Figure 3 contains a visual representation of two teachers with similar profiles and beliefs who introduce a new approach (e.g., communicate with beginner students in French) with comparable initial conditions (e.g., the first week of school in a Core French Applied Grade 9 class). Teacher A has a high degree of self-efficacy, which is a strong belief in his or her ability to implement successfully the new approach. When chaos ensues, for example students react negatively to her or his use of French, she or he is prepared. She or he is able to handle students’ discomfort with being spoken to in French and negotiate understanding without changing his or her approach. Meanwhile, Teacher B (Figure 3 as well) has low self-efficacy in that he or she does not have a strong belief in her or his ability to implement successfully the new approach. Having introduced a similar approach to that employed by Teacher A (i.e., attempting to speak to the students in French), upon observing that a student or students do not understand what she or he has just said, Teacher B is unsettled and as a result modifies (e.g., translates into English everything he or she says in French) or abandons the approach altogether (e.g., switches to English).
Figure 3. Teacher A with a high degree of self-efficacy versus Teacher B with a lower degree of self-efficacy: Navigation of chaos with similar initial conditions.

Figure 4 focuses on the same teacher who introduces a similar approach in differing initial conditions or contexts (i.e., teaching a different grade, an Applied versus an Academic course). The teacher introduces a new approach with his or her Grade 9 Applied and Academic classes; for example, communicating with beginner students in French as depicted in Figure 2. A similar period of chaos or instability ensues to that described above. The teacher navigates the chaos in both contexts leading to similar outcomes.
4.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I presented the conceptual framework through which I analyzed the data collected in this thesis, which is a combination of complexity theory and Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy. These two theories when combined provide an excellent framework for understanding why teachers’ practices do not always coincide with their beliefs. In particular, this model helps to explain why two teachers with similar profiles and beliefs, teaching in comparable contexts can introduce a particular instructional approach with quite divergent consequences. Complexity theory and Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy also highlights why a teacher teaching in different contexts can introduce a similar teaching practice resulting in similar outcomes despite these varied contexts.
In the following chapter, I outline the mixed-methods methodological approach employed in this study. Reasons are provided for the choice of approach. The participants in the study are briefly introduced in order to explain the differences between the wider pool of participants who only filled in a questionnaire and the focal participants who filled out a questionnaire and also took part in classroom observations and an individual interview.
Chapter 5
Research Design and Methodology

Chapter 5 contains an explanation of the methodological approach employed to investigate my research questions. I first explain how I made use of grounded theory to develop my conceptual framework. Secondly, I explain the rationale behind my use of a mixed-method approach and collection of data from three different sources (i.e., questionnaire, observations, interviews) to allow for triangulation. Thirdly, I discuss how I collected and analyzed each type of data including the types of software employed. I then briefly introduce the participants in the study explaining the difference between the wider participant pool and the focal participants.

5.1 A grounded theory approach

I undertook this thesis with the objective of better understanding Core French teachers’ instructional practices notably the relationship between beliefs, instructional practices and lesson objectives or outcomes. Prior to undertaking this thesis, I had already gathered a tremendous corpus of informal data on FSL particularly Core French instructional practices. This was the result of my own teaching experiences as well as observations of and discussion with hundreds of teacher candidates and host teachers. I had also developed a strong set of beliefs about what constitutes effective Core French teaching. However, throughout my own experiences and observations of other teachers a number of key questions had emerged. In particular, I was puzzled by the following question: Why did so many of my teacher candidates who had displayed great enthusiasm and an apparent understanding of communicative language teaching (CLT) during their teacher education program end up focusing instruction almost exclusively on form and rarely employing the target language?

In my experiences and observations, the influence of the host teacher and the culture of teaching in Core French programs were significant. Nevertheless, I witnessed plenty of Core French teachers and teacher candidates whose practices matched their beliefs/objectives. For example, those teachers whose stated goal was to communicate mostly in the target language with his or her students and who achieved this goal. What was most interesting about these teachers and teacher candidates was the diversity of their profiles and backgrounds and most notably the variety of teaching contexts in which they were completing their practicums. These teachers were former Core French, French Immersion and French first language students; they were both
male and female; young and mature; beginning and experienced, highly and less highly proficient in the target language. They were teaching in both public and private settings; in gifted (IB), Academic, Applied and Beginner settings; in Core French Grades 5 to 12. Regardless of context, these teachers were able (more or less) to bring about the outcomes they desired. If context was NOT the deciding factor, then what was? What factors explain these teachers’ ability to achieve their goals?

It was not my intention to develop a hybrid framework, however, existing literature and theories on the subject of teacher beliefs and practices did not provide an adequate explanation for what I had observed and experienced. Given this fact, I ended up combining aspects of two theories to create a unifying theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between beliefs, practices and outcomes. Although unaware at the time, I was employing the research method known as grounded theory. Glaser and Strauss first proposed the notion of grounded theory in 1967. Grounded theory refers to a theory developed inductively from a corpus of data and it is depicted in Figure 5.

![Figure 5. Visual representation of an inductive approach.](http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/dedind.php)
Grounded theory involves an iterative process of mining/coding/recoding and comparing/recomposing the data in order to devise a theory/theoretical framework to help explain the data (see Figure 6). This is the antithesis of choosing an existing theoretical framework and then collecting data to show how the theory does or does not apply to the phenomena under study.

(Re)Coding/analysis of interview transcriptions (comparison with classroom observations and interviews)

(Re)Coding/analysis of classroom observations (comparison with classroom observations and interviews)

(Re)Analysis of questionnaires (comparison with classroom observations and interviews)

Figure 6. An iterative/inductive approach to data analysis.

5.2 Data Collection Methods used in this Research Project

This study employed a mixed-method approach making use of both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis (Creswell & Clarke, 2011; Greene, 2007). A mixed methods approach allowed for complex and comprehensive data collection. The combination of
both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection was deemed to offer the best possibility for answering the research questions posed in this dissertation. (Burke-Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). With complexity theory at the heart of this thesis, it was also deemed appropriate that a complex form of data collection be employed.

The study makes use of triangulation. Triangulation allows for data that originates in several different sources to provide multiple perspectives on a single question. (Janesick, 1994) Furthermore, data from one source (i.e., questionnaire) can help to shed light on data from other sources (i.e., observations and interviews) and vice versa. The following qualitative and quantitative instruments were employed: a questionnaire, classroom observations, individual interviews and document analysis (see Figure 7 for a visual representation of the data collection).

A questionnaire was chosen to gather information on the beliefs about FSL teaching and learning, as well as the experiences and declared practices of Core French teachers across the GTA. The survey consists of a combination of ranking, multiple-choice and checklist questions. A set of multiple choice questions were developed in order to collect information about participants’ FSL backgrounds including number of years teaching, the FSL program participants had completed as students and their FSL teaching qualifications. A rating scale was employed to determine the frequency of use of different types of instructional approaches such as the type of focus or content of Core French lessons, the amount of teacher versus student-centered instruction and use of the target language (French) by the teacher and the students. A rating scale was also employed to gage teachers’ opinions about what constitutes Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the difficulties and challenges involved adopting CLT specifically in the Core French context. Participants were asked to identify the level of truth to a number of statements regarding CLT and the level of significance of a series of difficulties and challenges. (Dörnyei, 2003, p. 44)

The questionnaire was pilot-tested by ten or so teacher candidates, two university professors in Second language acquisition and a teacher with over ten years’ experience teaching Core French in the GTA. The questionnaire was then sent out via e-mail through an online Web link to former teacher-candidates in the consecutive initial teacher education program (four cohorts totalling approximately 100 students) and associate teachers in various GTA boards. These teachers were teaching Core French at both the elementary (Grades 7 and 8) and secondary level (Grades 9 to
The questionnaire was administered on-line and anonymously in an effort to encourage as many Core French teachers as possible to complete the survey. A total of 47 former teacher candidates and associate teachers across a number of GTA boards completed the online questionnaire.

At the end of the questionnaire, teachers were asked if they would be interested in participating in follow up research, which would include observation of their teaching and a post-observation interview. Those teachers who agreed to participate in the classroom observation and interview phase of the study were asked to provide their name and email address and to give consent to remove the anonymity of their questionnaire results.

Figure 7. Steps in the recruitment of participants and data collection.

The data collected via the questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS software. The data was assessed descriptively and for frequencies, i.e., to provide both a written and visual summary of
the data collected. Bar graphs were chosen to report frequencies. The primary objective of the questionnaire was not to generalize the findings to the entire population of Core French teachers, but rather to provide insight into the profile of Core French teachers in the GTA and what sorts of views they hold about how a second language is best taught and learned, about the Core French program and the students in the program and about communicative language teaching (CLT) specifically in the context of the Core French program. These anonymous results also served as comparison and contrast with the survey results of teachers who participated in the observation and interview portions of the data collection. Only the survey results of teachers who were observed and interviewed were not anonymous. This allowed the researcher to present an overview of observed teachers’ views about such things as second language teaching approaches and methods, Core French teaching and Core French students as well as to compare and contrast the views of the teachers I observed and interviewed (i.e., the focal participants) with those I did not observe nor interview (i.e., the wider participant pool). Moreover, this allowed for comparison of declared and/or desired practices (both the survey results and the interviews served such a purpose) with observed/actual practices.

Nine former teacher-candidates in their first four years of teaching were observed as well as three experienced teachers in order to collect information on actual practices. To avoid complications with ethics approval only written notes were taken during the observations. Observation data was collected over a period of approximately eight months. Each observation period lasted two to four days and post-observation interviews of one to two hours were conducted at the end of each observation period. The classroom-observation notes include what was said by both the teachers and the students in French and English, as well as any gestures, intonation and visuals. I took notes on the content of the lessons, the types of exercises and activities, whether students were completing an exercise individually or in groups and the types of materials in use such as a textbook, workbook or novel. Observation notes are limited to what I was able to see and hear. I chose not to translate the French as much of it represents “teacher talk” and “interlanguage.”

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4Ellis (1985) defined teacher talk as the special language that teachers employ when addressing L2 learners. Richards et al. (1992) argued that teacher talk is a simplified speech that teachers often use to communicate with learners in the language classroom.

5The term interlanguage was first proposed by Selinker (1972) to refer to the linguistic system employed by the learner of a second or foreign language.
feel such a translation would have been extremely challenging and I do not believe that it would have even been possible as both the teacher talk and the interlanguage employed by the teachers and students in this study is specific to the learning of French as a second language in the Canadian context.

The analysis of the classroom observation data consisted of three phases. The pre-coding phase involved transcription of the data, writing of analytic memos, and initial development of coding categories. In the coding phase, I used NVivo 9 to organize the data into coding categories. The coding categories were developed from the questions in the questionnaire on participants’ instructional practices to allow for comparison between declared and actual practices.

Post-observations interviews were conducted with each participant to seek his or her views of the lessons they had taught. Individual interviews with observed teachers were chosen for the following two reasons: 1) to gain insight into the beliefs, attitudes and emotions of each focal participant during and regarding his or her lessons and; 2) to gain a deeper understanding of each focal participant’s perspective of the observed classroom behaviours. These are very difficult to capture in observation alone the observer can only infer from non-verbal and verbal cues what the teacher is thinking at the time (Gideon & Moskos, 2012). I gave a copy of my notes of the observed lessons to the teacher before the interview and he or she was encouraged to refer to them during the interview. Guided questions were used to encourage stimulated recall in order to explore participants’ rationales for their instructional choices. The post-observation interviews were semi-structured interviews with mostly open questions allowing for responses in ways the interviewer might not have foreseen (Kvale, 1996). There were a set of questions used to initiate responses, but follow-up questions depended on individual responses. Interviews were recorded with a digital audio recorder and then transcribed.

The characteristics of teachers with higher self-efficacy identified in the literature by Bandura (2006) and Guskey (1998): confidence in one’s abilities, willingness to persevere when things do not go smoothly, resilience in the face of adversity, openness to new ideas and willingness to experiment, formed the “conceptual baggage” (Folkestad, 2010, p. 8) which influenced/guided my analysis of focal participants’ interview responses. I combed the interview transcripts identifying content related to these characteristics. The following characteristics emerged strongly: self-confidence, confidence in students’ abilities, enthusiasm and optimism about
available resources and materials, perseverance, spontaneity and flexibility and, initiative. I then coded key phrases, words and expressions for each of these categories in NVivo 9.

Table 1

*Method of Data Collection, Type of analysis and Software employed to answer Research Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Method of Data Collection</th>
<th>Type of Analysis</th>
<th>Software employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the profile of the Core French teachers participating in the study (comparison of focal participants with wider participant pool)?</td>
<td>Online questionnaire</td>
<td>Quantitative (frequencies)</td>
<td>SPSS (to identify frequencies)/Excel (to produce graphs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are their beliefs about FSL teaching (comparison of focal participants with wider participant pool)?</td>
<td>Online questionnaire</td>
<td>Quantitative (frequencies)</td>
<td>SPSS (to identify frequencies)/Excel (to produce graphs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the declared practices of participants (comparison of focal participants with wider participant pool)?</td>
<td>Online questionnaire</td>
<td>Quantitative (frequencies)</td>
<td>SPSS (to identify frequencies)/Excel (to produce graphs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are their actual practices (i.e., observed practices of focal participants)?</td>
<td>Classroom observations</td>
<td>Qualitative (number of instances observed)</td>
<td>NVivo 9 (written observations coded by node/theme…same nodes and themes used in Questionnaire)/Excel (to produce graphs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do focal participants have to say about their teaching practices (What are their impressions/reactions/opinions?)?</td>
<td>Individual interviews</td>
<td>Qualitative (recurring themes/key words and expressions)</td>
<td>NVivo 9 (transcriptions coded by node/theme…tables containing number of references produced in NVivo)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3 An overview of the participants

5.3.1 The wider participant pool

A total of 47 Core French (FSL) teachers in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) participated exclusively in the online questionnaire phase of the research. A wider pool of participants was sought to determine whether the profile and beliefs of focal participants were more or less consistent with other Core French teachers rather than to make generalizations about Core French teachers. The majority of teachers who completed the questionnaire are public high school teachers with a minority teaching at the elementary level. The questionnaire was designed to establish a general profile of Core French teachers, to assess their beliefs about FSL teaching and learning, and to detail their instructional practices in their Core French courses.

Teachers first identified the number of years they have been teaching, what grade(s) they are teaching (i.e., Grades 4 to 8 and Grades 9 to 12), and in which program(s) they are teaching (Core, Extended, and Immersion). Participants were asked to identify the program they completed as a student (i.e., Core, Immersion, Extended or French first language), the second language teaching approaches/methods they had experienced as students in grade school, university and during their practicum, as well as the second language teaching approaches/methods they were presently employing in their Core French classes. Participating teachers were queried about their beliefs surrounding second language learning, the Core French program in Ontario and communicative language teaching (CLT).

Finally, I asked respondents to detail their instructional practices including the primary focus of their lessons (e.g., treatment of a grammatical concept, a sociolinguistic concept, a theme), their testing tools (i.e., tests on a grammatical concept or concepts, prepared oral presentations), and their use of the target language. I asked participants to identify the types of speaking, listening, reading, viewing, comprehension and writing activities they employ in their Core French classrooms as well as the frequency of use of different types of pedagogical and non-pedagogical materials/resources.

5.3.2 The focal participants

Among the 47 participants who took part in this study, 13 of the Core French teachers who completed the online questionnaire also agreed to participate in the classroom observation and
interview phases of the research. For the 13 focal participants the online questionnaire was not anonymous as it was for the other 47 questionnaire participants. I completed the classroom observations with focal participants over a four-month period. I observed each teacher teach for a total of one to four days. I sat at the back of the class and took hand-written notes of what was said by both the teacher and students. I also took notes on such things as gestures and use of intonation by the teacher and students. I also attempted to describe and collect copies of the types of materials (i.e., textbooks, workbooks etc.), activities and exercises in use. At the end of the observation period, I interviewed each focal participant in private. During the interview, I provided each teacher with a copy of the interview questions. I interviewed each participant at the end of the observation period, thus if the total number of days of observation was three days, I interviewed the teacher at the end of the third school day. The interviews were informal and open-ended, as I knew each participant. My objective was to have participants feeling as relaxed and comfortable as possible so that they would be willing to share their impressions of their teaching/teaching practices honestly and candidly.

5.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter contains an explanation of the methodology employed in this doctoral dissertation. Notably, the use of grounded theory to elaborate a theoretical framework to account for what I had personally observed and experienced in the Core French classroom as well as the use of triangulation, the collection and analysis of data from a variety of sources including questionnaires, observations and interviews. Lastly, I provided details on the participants in this study, as participation was two-tiered. A larger group of participants (47 in total) exclusively filled out a questionnaire on their beliefs about Core French teaching and their instructional practices in the Core French classroom. While a select group of participants (13 in total) not only filled out the questionnaire, but also agreed to participate in a series of in-class observations of their teaching practices as well as a post-observation interview.

Chapter 6 is the first of two chapters presenting and discussing the results of my data analysis. Chapter 6 focuses on the questionnaire data, while chapter 7 focuses on the data gathered during classroom observations and post-observation interviews.
Chapter 6
Participants’ profiles, beliefs and declared practices

In Chapter 6, I discuss the findings from the online questionnaire data in an effort to answer the following research questions:

- What is the profile of participants in the study?
- What are participants’ beliefs about second language teaching, Core French programs, the students and communicative language teaching (CLT)?
- What are participants’ declared practices?

In answering each of the above questions, I compare and contrast the data on the 13 focal participants with the data from the wider participant pool (47 teachers). In the majority of cases, the results are reported in percentages to allow for comparison between the two groups. In many instances, particularly in the case of beliefs and teaching practices, percentages do not add up to 100%. Often percentages add up to greater than 100% as participants were allowed to select more than one answer. The reason for this was to provide a glimpse into what beliefs and instructional practices are prevalent amongst participants rather than to collect hard data on Core French teachers’ instructional practices. I have also graphed (i.e., bar graphs and pie charts) all of the results to make them more reader-friendly. In each case I have attempted to choose a graph, which provides the most appropriate/effective visual representation of the data. I also provide a brief summary of the results and compare my results to the relevant literature.

6.1 Participants’ profiles

In terms of number of years of teaching experience (Figure 8), ten of 13 (77%) focal participants are in their first 5 years of teaching with six (50%) in their first 2 years. This contrasts somewhat with the wider participant pool. One-third (14) are in their first 2 years, one-third (15) in their first 5 years and one-third (14) have taught for at least 10 years. This difference is not surprising as the study targeted for classroom observation and individual interview beginning teachers in their first 5 years of teaching.
All of the focal participants are teaching full-time (Figure 9). In the wider participant pool, 40 of 47 (85%) participants have full-time status.
A significant majority of focal participants (77%) teach one or more sections of Grade 9 and/or Grade 10 Core French (Figure 10). This is also the case with the wider participant pool, where 81% (38 of 47) teachers teach at least one class of Grade 9 and/or 10 Core French. At the time of data collection, I did not think to collect separate information for Grades 9 and 10. However it is very likely that the majority of participants teach one or more sections of Grade 9 Core French (Applied or Academic), as it is mandatory for students in Ontario to successfully complete a Grade 9 French credit (one of Core, Immersion or Extended) in order to receive their secondary school diploma. Moreover, only 11% of students who begin Core French in grade 4 complete a Grade 12 Core French credit (Canadian Parents for French, 2015, p. 2).

In terms of FSL program completed as a student (Figure 8), focal participants and the wider pool of participants, have similar profiles. Fifty-four percent of focal participants were students in the Core French program, while 60% of the wider participant pool were Core French students. Forty-two percent of observed teachers were in the Immersion program versus 36% of the wider participant pool.
As students in grade school (Figure 12), 58% (7 of 13) of main participants experienced the grammar-translation method versus 68% for the wider pool. A higher percentage of focal participants than the wider pool of participants (61.5% to 48.9%) experienced the Immersion method\textsuperscript{6} at some point during their schooling.

Only two of 13 observed teachers indicated exposure to the audiolingual method and communicative language teaching (CLT) as students in grade school. Exposure to these two methods in grade school was equally low amongst the wider participant pool.

\textsuperscript{6} There is a discrepancy between the percentage of participants who indicated that they were in French Immersion and those who indicated exposure to immersion as an instructional method. This could be due to the fact that a teacher spent a year or two in a French Immersion class but was primarily in the Core French program. In addition, a teacher may have been in Core French but experienced immersion as method.
At university during their Bachelor program, both focal participants and the wider participant pool were exposed to a greater variety of methods than in grade school (Figure 13). Exposure to grammar-translation remained high for both groups (54% versus 68%). However, there was much greater exposure at university to the direct method (69% and 66%) and CLT (53% and 43%). Meanwhile, exposure to immersion as a method in university declined considerably from grade school (38% for both groups).

*Figure 12. Methods experienced as a student in grade school (elementary and secondary combined).*
During their one-year consecutive Bachelor of Education program, concurrent Bachelor of Education program or FSL Additional Qualification Course, CLT was the principal method to which all participants were overwhelmingly exposed (Figure 14). Almost 85% of focal participants and 70% of the wider participant pool experienced CLT. Exposure to the direct method was also significant (61% for focal participants and 66% for all participants).
During their French practicum, focal participants indicated greatest exposure to CLT followed by grammar-translation and the direct method (Figure 15). The wider participant pool was overwhelmingly exposed to grammar-translation (over 70%), with lower exposure to CLT and the direct method. Participating teachers were least exposed to Immersion as a method (8% for focal participants and 9% for the wider participant pool).

*Figure 14.* Methods experienced during Bachelor of Education program, FSL AQ courses.
6.1.1 Summary of participants’ profiles

The profiles of focal participants and the wider pool of participants are very similar. The only notable difference is in the average number of years teaching; however, this difference was expected given that observations were focused primarily on beginning Core French teachers. All but three of the observed teachers are beginning teachers (and former teacher candidates of mine).

A majority of teachers participating in the study are women (80%). Their first or dominant language is English and they learned French as a second language. They completed their schooling in Ontario in a Core French or French Immersion program. The participants are similar in the following ways: teaching status (primarily full-time); teaching load (mostly Grades 9 and 10 Core French); method or approach exposed to as students (a majority of Core Students identified grammar translation and a majority of French Immersion students identified immersion as a method); and, university programs completed (major or minor in French studies, one-year B.Ed.). A majority of participating teachers completed a one-year Bachelor of Education program with a specialization in FSL in the province of Ontario (this specialization is a requirement to teach FSL in Ontario).
6.1.2 Comparison of participants’ profiles with existing literature on the profile of Core French teachers in Ontario

The profile of participants in this study is consistent with those reported in the literature. In the most comprehensive report available produced by Lapkin, MacFarlane and Vandergrift (2006) 89% of respondents were female, in this study, 80% of participants are female. In Lapkin et al. (2006), 61% reported English as their first language, and in this study the percentage was 85. In Lapkin et al. a majority had studied French in the Core French program. This was also the case with participants in this study. In the case of program completed as a student, 54% of focal participants and 60% of the wider participant pool were graduates of the Core French program. In Lapkin et al., 78% taught Core French, particularly Grades 4 to 9. In this study, 77% of focal participants and 81% of the wider participant pool are teaching Grades 9 and/or 10 Core French. Fifty-eight percent of teachers in Lapkin et al. (2006) had been teaching for at least 10 years, while in this study percentages were lower with 33% of the wider pool of participants and 23% of focal participants having at least 10 years of teaching experience. This is due to the fact that many of the participating teachers were former teacher candidates of mine, and thus more recent graduates.

6.2 Participants’ beliefs about second language teaching, Core French programs and students and communicative language teaching (CLT)?

6.2.1 Beliefs about second language (FSL) teaching and learning

Teachers were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements about second language teaching and learning. This was done in order to gauge their beliefs about how languages are best taught and learned. The results are graphed in Figure 16 depicting the percentage of focal participants and the wider participant pool in agreement with each statement. One hundred percent of focal participants and 98% of the wider participant pool strongly agreed or agreed that the focus of second language instruction should be on listening and speaking. One hundred percent of focal participants and the wider participant pool either strongly agreed or agreed that large amounts of target language input were essential to learning a second language. One hundred percent of focal participants and 79% of all participants strongly agreed or agreed that student interaction in the target language was similarly essential. In the case of the
statement: learning about the target language culture is essential to learning the language, 92% of focal participants and 87% of the wider participant pool strongly agreed or agreed. One hundred percent of participants (both groups) believed that errors were natural, inevitable and even necessary to learning a second language. Ninety-two percent of focal participants and 94% of the wider participant pool strongly agreed or agreed that explicitly learning the rules of grammar did not guarantee that one would learn to understand and speak the language. The only statement with which a minority of participants expressed agreement was the statement: it is not necessary to teach grammar rules explicitly. Only 33% of focal participants strongly agreed or agreed with the above statement and 36% of the wider participant pool.

Figure 16. Comparison of focal participants and wider participant pool “agreement” with statements about second language teaching and learning.

6.2.2 Beliefs about Core French students

Participants were first asked whether they believed that Core French students were less motivated to learn French than students in the French Immersion program (Figure 17 below). Almost all focal participants (84%) strongly agreed or agreed with the above statement. Opinion was split amongst the wider pool of participants with just over half (53% or 25 teachers) agreeing and just under half (47% or 22 teachers) disagreeing. Only 33% of focal participants
and 29% of the wider participant pool strongly agreed or agreed that Core French students are unable to handle large amounts of instruction in the target language. A majority also disagreed (67% of focal participants and 55% of the wider participant pool) with the following statement: it is difficult to organize effectively interactive speaking activities with Core French students. However, they did agree that Core French students are most comfortable with direct and explicit grammar instruction (67% and 62% respectively).

![Figure 17](image)

*Figure 17. Focal participants and wider participant pool “agreement” with statements about Core French students.*

### 6.2.3 Beliefs about communicative language teaching (CLT)

Participating teachers were first asked whether they presently employed some aspect of communicative language teaching (CLT) with their Core French students. Over 90% of focal participants and the wider participant pool responded *yes* to this question (Figure 18).
Teachers who employed (or had employed) CLT were further asked about their satisfaction with the results. Amongst those teachers who employed or had employed CLT, satisfaction was over 90% (Figure 19).

In regards to whether they intended to employ CLT in future, 92% of focal participants and a resounding 98% of the wider participant pool (all except one teacher) intended to use the approach in future (Figure 20).
Sixty-seven percent of focal participants and 49% of the wider participant pool have had the opportunity to participate in one or more CLT workshops (Figure 21). Participants were asked whether they believed that the following statements about communicative language teaching were completely true, somewhat true or not true. The statements included: CLT focuses mostly on oral communication/interaction in the target language (French); CLT involves no explicit teaching of grammar rules; CLT involves a lot of role-playing; CLT requires the teacher to have a high degree of proficiency in French; CLT requires greater knowledge of the target language culture(s), and; CLT relies heavily on the use of authentic materials. Both focal participants and the wider participant pool believe each of the
statements to be completely true or somewhat true. Beliefs that the statements were completely or somewhat true averaged 90% (Figure 22).

Figure 22. Focal participants’ and pool of wider participant’ beliefs about CLT. Percentage of participants who believed statements about CLT were completely or somewhat true.

6.2.4 Difficulties/Challenges in adopting CLT in Core French classrooms

Participants were asked how significant a number of teacher-related, student-related and systemically related difficulties/challenges were in adopting CLT in Core French classrooms in Ontario. Participants were encouraged to indicate if lack of teacher proficiency in the target language, lack of teacher knowledge of the target language culture, teacher misconceptions about CLT, lack of availability of appropriate materials and resources, and lack of teacher training represented very significant, somewhat significant or insignificant difficulties/challenges in adopting CLT.

A majority of teachers from both the focal participant group and the wider participant pool (over 90% of respondents in both cases) indicated that all of the above represented either very significant or significant difficulties/challenges (refer to Figures 23 & 24). In all, the wider participant pool appeared to perceive the above difficulties/challenges as somewhat more significant than focal participants. Both groups identified a lack of appropriate materials and
adequate training as the most significant challenge to the adoption of CLT (58% of focal participants and 79% of the wider participant pool). Sixty-seven percent of focal participants and 77% of the wider participant pool indicated that a lack of adequate training represented a very significant barrier to the adoption of CLT. Even though 67% of focal participants and 49% of the wider participant pool have attended a workshop on CLT (and other non-traditional approaches) this is clearly seen as insufficient.

Figure 23. Focal participants: Teacher-related difficulties/challenges adopting CLT (level of significance).
Teachers in the survey were queried about how significant the following student-related difficulties/challenges were: inadequate student level of proficiency in the TL; student discomfort with the approach (interactive speaking activities); student preference for teacher-centered instruction and instruction/activities/exercises focusing on form, and; students unused to taking risks and fearful of making mistakes in the TL.

Once again, a large majority of teachers identified all of the student-related challenges as very significant or significant (See Figures 25 & 26). Participating teachers (both focal participants and the wider participant pool) identified Core French students’ fear of taking risks as presenting the greatest challenge to adoption of CLT. Students’ fear of making mistakes was also seen as a very significant challenge (58% of focal participants and 66% of the wider participant pool). Students used to teacher-centered instruction was also identified as representing a very significant obstacle by 58% of focal participants and 51% of the wider participant pool, while discomfort with communicative activities was viewed as a very significant obstacle by 50% of focal participants and 53% of the wider participant pool. The percentage of teachers who identified the two remaining student-related challenges, lack of student TL proficiency and student preference for exercises and activities focused on form, as
very significant was much lower. Thirty-three percent of focal participants and 43% of all participants identified lack of student TL proficiency as a very significant challenge while 33% of focal participants and 28% of the wider participant pool identified student preference for instruction focused on form as a very significant challenge.

Figure 25. Focal participants: Student-related difficulties/challenges adopting CLT (level of significance).
Participants were asked about the following systemically related difficulties/challenges in adopting CLT: there is a lack of support from administration; there is a lack of support from colleagues; the curriculum and departmental expectations are incompatible with CLT; class sizes are too large, and; class composition is too diverse.

Systemic difficulties appear to pose much less of an obstacle to adoption of CLT than teacher-related and student-related difficulties (Figures 27 & 28). Amongst focal participants, the biggest challenge appears to be the existing (1998/1999) curriculum. Fifty-eight percent of focal participants feel the existing curriculum represents a very significant obstacle to adoption of CLT. However, it is important to note that a new more explicitly communicative/action-oriented curriculum was recently released for both the elementary and secondary programs.

Amongst the wider participant pool, lack of funds to purchase materials was identified as the biggest obstacle with 55% indicating that a lack of funds posed a very significant problem. Perhaps surprisingly, lack of support from administration was the least problematic particularly for focal participants. Fifty-eight of focal participants felt lack of support from administration was not significant.
Figure 27. Focal participants: Systemic difficulties/challenges adopting CLT (level of significance).

Figure 28. Wider participant pool: Systemic difficulties/challenges adopting CLT (level of significance).
6.2.5 Summary of Participants’ beliefs about second language teaching, the Core French program, the students and communicative language teaching (CLT)

Focal participants and the wider participant pool share the same beliefs about second language teaching and learning. In fact, there was unanimous or near unanimous agreement with all but one of the statements. Teachers’ beliefs were found to be much more in line with the philosophy and objectives of communicative language teaching (CLT) and other non-traditional approaches than with traditional approaches such as grammar-translation and audiolingualism.

Both focal participants and the wider participant pool identified a number of significant barriers to the implementation of CLT, most notably a lack of training and proper resources. They also identified difficulties in the lack of teacher proficiency in the target language, teacher misconceptions about CLT, the existing curriculum, and students’ being accustomed to traditional methods and approaches. Surprisingly, a majority of participants did not see lack of support from administration as a significant barrier. Despite these barriers, teachers are very enthusiastic to employ CLT and very satisfied by the results. Moreover, most participating teachers believe that their students can handle large amounts of target language input and are willing and able to engage in interactive activities in the TL—both of which are key aspects of CLT and other non-traditional approaches.

6.2.6 Comparison with existing literature on teacher beliefs about second language teaching, Core French programs and communicative language teaching (CLT)

As in Graden (1996) the participants in this study share very similar beliefs about second language teaching and learning. However, contrary to most of the existing literature on teacher beliefs in studies by Borg (2003), Gabillon (2012), Johnson (1994), Pajares (1992) and, Phipps and Borg (2009), there was no misunderstanding about what constitutes communicative language teaching or teacher resistance to adopting CLT. Furthermore, Core French teachers’ beliefs are not incompatible with CLT or newer approaches to second language teaching such as a task-based or an action-oriented approach.

It is also often maintained in the literature that contextual factors exert a powerful influence on a teacher’s ability to put into practice his or her beliefs. Contextual factors, it is argued, are
frequently responsible for a mismatch between teachers’ stated beliefs and their actual instructional practices (Duffy & Anderson, 1984; Fang, 1996; Phipps & Borg, 2009). In this study, teachers identified a number of contextual factors, particularly teacher and student-related, impeding the adoption of CLT; nevertheless, teachers remained very enthusiastic to adopt CLT. Many indicated that they had already attempted or were attempting to do so even in the face of obstacles, most notably a lack of proper resources and training.

6.3 Participants’ declared instructional practices

Participants were asked a series of questions about the frequency of use of different instructional practices including the primary focus/content of their lessons, how often lessons were teacher-centered versus student-centered, the use of different types of testing tools and use of the target language. In each case, FSL teachers were asked to choose between always, often, sometimes and never.

6.3.1 Focus of instruction or content of lessons

Teachers were first asked to identify the primary focus of instruction or content of their lessons (see Figures 29 and 30). Teachers were asked if their lessons were always, often, sometimes or never focused on the following: a grammatical concept; a theme such as climate change or natural disasters; a poem, play or short story; vocabulary; pronunciation; culture; sociolinguistics, or; a communicative situation such as buying a train ticket or asking for directions. In all, teachers tend to focus their lessons primarily on a grammatical concept or a theme. Culture appears to receive the least attention from participants.

Seventeen percent of focal participants and 9% of the wider participant pool indicated that their lessons were always focused on a grammatical concept. Meanwhile, 50% of focal participants and 55% of the wider participant pool declared that their lessons were often focused on a grammatical concept. Seventy-five percent of focal participants declared that they often taught lessons focused on a theme. For the wider participant pool, 28% of teachers always taught lessons focused on a theme and 47% claimed that they did so often. Fifty percent of focal participants and 36% of the wider participant pool indicated that their lessons often focused on a novel, play or short story. Fifty percent of focal participants and the wider participant pool sometimes focus on a communicative situation. A majority of focal participants and the wider
participant pool only sometimes focus on vocabulary words or lists, pronunciation and sociolinguistics. Meanwhile, 42% of focal participants and 17% of all participants indicated that their lessons never concentrated on a cultural theme.

**Figure 29.** Focal participants: Focus of lesson (frequency of use).

**Figure 30.** Wider participant pool: Focus of lesson (frequency of use)
6.3.2 Centre of instruction (teacher-centered versus student-centered)

Participants were asked about the rate of occurrence of teacher-centered versus student-centered instruction (see Figures 31 and 32). Teachers were asked about three types of instruction including teacher-centered instruction (i.e., teacher is at the front of the class teaching a lesson), pair or group work and individual seatwork. Teacher-centered instruction was declared to be the most prevalent. Instruction was always or often teacher-centered in the case of 92% of focal participants and 94% of the wider participant pool. Student-centered instruction was less prevalent with 58% of focal participants stating that they often had students working in pairs or small groups while 41% employed small groups sometimes. Amongst the wider participant pool, 68% and 17% used pairs or small groups often or sometimes, respectively. Utilization of seatwork (i.e., work completed individually by students) was also a less frequent occurrence with 50% of focal participants and 49% of the wider pool of participants indicating that students engaged in individual seatwork often, while 50% of the focal and 43% of the wider participants responded sometimes.

**Figure 31.** Focal participants: Centre of instruction, teacher or student (frequency of use).
6.3.3 Testing tools

Teachers were probed about their use of different testing tools (Figures 33 & 34) including grammar tests, vocabulary tests, listening and reading comprehension tests, prepared oral presentations, oral interviews/exams and discussion and debates. Teachers appear to employ prepared oral presentations, grammar tests, and reading and listening comprehension tests regularly and fairly evenly. Vocabulary tests, individual oral interviews/exams, discussions and debates are employed as testing tools the least with 25% of focal participants and 23% of the wider participant pool stating they never employ vocabulary tests, 33% and 17% never employing individual interviews and 50% and 43% never employing discussions and debates.

*Figure 32. Wider participant pool: Centre of instruction, teacher or student (frequency of use).*
Figure 33. Focal participants: Testing tools (frequency of use).
6.3.4 Target-language use in the Core French classroom (by the teacher and students)

FSL teachers were asked to indicate how often they employ the target language in their Core French classes (Figures 35 & 36). Participants were asked to indicate the frequency of their TL use in the following situations: to express routine words and phrases; during drill-type teacher-led question answer exercises; when providing information, introducing a new concept, explaining an assignment or reviewing a test and; when communicating with individual or small groups of students.

In the case of routine situations such as salutations (e.g., Bonjour, Au revoir, Comment allez-vous?), providing classroom directives (e.g., Sortez vos cahiers) and simple feedback (e.g., C’est excellent!), TL use was quite high with 53% of focal participants and 85% of the wider participant pool indicating that they always used the target language in these situations. In regards to drill-type activities (teacher asks prepared questions/students provide answers) again use was high with 53% of focal participants and 72% of the wider participant pool asserting that they always employed French when completing drill-type activities.
TL use drops off when it comes to the teacher explaining new materials or a new concept to students, providing instructions regarding an activity or reviewing an assignment or test. Indeed, only 25% of focal participants and 28% of all participants indicated that they always employed the target language. When speaking with individual students or small groups of students, only 17% of focal participants and 15% of all participants always addressed their students in French.

*Figure 35*. Focal participants: Amount of teacher TL use in different situations (frequency of use).
Participants were subsequently asked about student TL use (Figures 37 & 38). Teachers were asked to indicate the frequency of their students’ TL use in the following situations: when giving a prepared oral presentation; when expressing routine words and phrases; during drill-type teacher-led question answer exercises; when the teacher is providing information, introducing a new concept, explaining an assignment or reviewing a test, and; when communicating with other students.

Student use overall is lower than teacher use, which is to be expected, and student use mirrors teacher use. In other words, student use of French is most frequent in the case of pre-prepared oral presentations, to express routine words or phrases (e.g., Bonjour, Au revoir, Puis-je aller aux toilettes? Comment dit-on?), and to participate in drill-type teacher-led simple question answer exercises. Seventy-five percent of focal participants and 66% of all participants indicated that their students always speak French when delivering pre-prepared oral presentations. Forty-two percent of focal participants and 40% of the wider participant pool asserted that their students always employ the target language to express routine words or phrases. The percentages were similar for drill-type activities with 42% for focal participants and 49% for the wider participant pool suggesting students regularly use the TL for such activities.
When the teacher is giving a lesson, which may include explaining new materials or a new concept to students, providing instructions regarding an activity, or reviewing an assignment or test, TL usage declines considerably once again. No focal participant and only 6% of the wider participant pool (three of 47 teachers) indicated that their students always employed the target language during formal lessons. According to the teachers surveyed, students do not appear to employ the TL very often amongst themselves. Twenty-five percent of focal participants and 28% of the wider participant pool indicated that this never occurs.

Figure 37. Focal participants: Amount of student TL use in different situations (frequency of use).
6.3.5 Use of different types of classroom activities

Teachers were asked to indicate yes or no in regards to the use of different classroom activities. The activities were divided into the following categories: speaking, listening/viewing, reading, comprehension and writing.

Speaking/Oral production activities

Drill-type, teacher-led question-response activities are employed by 100% of focal participants and 98% of the wider participant pool, while oral presentations, skits and dialogues were used by 92% of both groups (Figure 39). When asked if they had their students engage in interactive activities, 75% of focal participants and 70% of the wider pool of teachers answered affirmatively. Almost 60% of all respondents have their students engage in simulations, while 67% of focal participants and 64% of the wider participant pool used class discussions and debates.
In terms of listening and viewing activities, 83% of focal participants and 85% of the wider participant pool make use of sound and video recordings accompanying the textbook (Figure 40). Seventy-three percent of focal and 85% of the wider participant pool, have their students listen to songs or watch music videos. Fifty-eight percent of focal participants and 79% of the wider participant pool show movies or TV shows in French (with or without subtitles). In regards to listening to or watching a recording of a play or short story, 66% of focal participants and 53% of all participants answered yes. On the other hand, teachers in this study do not appear to make use of news clips and documentaries. Seventy-five percent of focal participants and 64% of the wider participant pool indicated no in regards to having their students watch news clips or documentaries.
The most widely read material not surprisingly was the textbook with 92% of focal participants and 90% of the wider participant pool having their students read materials from a textbook (Figure 41). Use of novels, short stories and plays was also high (likely in the higher grades), as 83% of focal participants and 70% of the wider participant pool have their students read a novel, short story or a play. Newspapers and magazines were the least read of materials with only 42% of focal participants and 51% of the wider participant pool reporting that they have their students read a newspaper and/or a magazine.

*Figure 40.* Comparison of focal and wider pool of participants' use of different listening/viewing activities. Percentage who answered "yes" they employ these activities.

### Reading activities

The most widely read material not surprisingly was the textbook with 92% of focal participants and 90% of the wider participant pool having their students read materials from a textbook (Figure 41). Use of novels, short stories and plays was also high (likely in the higher grades), as 83% of focal participants and 70% of the wider participant pool have their students read a novel, short story or a play. Newspapers and magazines were the least read of materials with only 42% of focal participants and 51% of the wider participant pool reporting that they have their students read a newspaper and/or a magazine.
One hundred percent of focal participants and 92% of all participants ask students to complete short-answer written comprehension questions (one or two sentences) (Figure 42). Ninety-two percent of focal participants and 90% of the wider participant pool ask students to complete multiple-choice, true or false or association exercises in order to demonstrate reading or listening comprehension. Fewer respondents employ crossword puzzles and word searches with 58% of focal participants and 68% of the wider participant pool responding that they used such activities. Sixty-seven percent of focal participants and 68% the wider participant pool ask their students to summarize what they have read, heard or watched. Translation activities were also not widely used as 50% of focal participants and 45% of the wider participant pool indicated using such activities.

*Figure 41. Comparison of focal and pool of wider participants’ use of different reading activities. Percentage who answered “yes” they employ these activities.*

**Comprehension activities**

One hundred percent of focal participants and 92% of all participants ask students to complete short-answer written comprehension questions (one or two sentences) (Figure 42). Ninety-two percent of focal participants and 90% of the wider participant pool ask students to complete multiple-choice, true or false or association exercises in order to demonstrate reading or listening comprehension. Fewer respondents employ crossword puzzles and word searches with 58% of focal participants and 68% of the wider participant pool responding that they used such activities. Sixty-seven percent of focal participants and 68% the wider participant pool ask their students to summarize what they have read, heard or watched. Translation activities were also not widely used as 50% of focal participants and 45% of the wider participant pool indicated using such activities.
Figure 42. Comparison of focal and wider pool of participants' use of different comprehension activities. Percentage who answered "yes" they employ these activities.

Writing activities

Short and medium-structured writing activities and grammar sheets are the most frequently employed forms of writing activities (Figure 43). Ninety-eight percent of focal participants and 100% of the wider participant pool have their students prepare short-structured writing activities such as a post card, an email or a simple written invitation. Over 83% of focal participants and 94% of the wider participant pool have their students’ complete grammar worksheets/exercises. Ninety-two percent of focal participants and 90% of the wider participant pool indicated that they have their students produce medium-length written works such as dialogues and/or skits. The use of dictées as well as the use of long-structured writing activities such as essays, book reports and short stories are far less prevalent. Amongst focal participants, 17% employ dictées and 25% use long-structured writing activities. Results from the wider participant pool show higher usage than amongst the focal group with 45% employing dictées and 53% using long-structured writing activities.
6.3.6 Use of pedagogical and non-pedagogical classroom resources/materials

Participants were asked how often they use a variety of pedagogical and non-pedagogical materials (Figures 44 & 45). Respondents were asked to indicate whether they employ these materials always, often, sometimes or never. Both focal participants and the wider participant pool mainly employ pedagogical materials in their Core French classrooms, primarily a textbook or a workbook. Fifty-eight percent of focal participants and 69% of the wider participant pool always or often employ a textbook. And 75% of focal participants and 64% of the wider participant pool always or often employ a workbook (most likely the workbook accompanying the textbook). On the other hand, only 42% of focal participants and 41% of the wider participant pool always or often employed non-pedagogical materials such as novels, short stories and poems.
Figure 44. Focal participants: Use of classroom materials (frequency of use).

Figure 45. Wider participant pool: Use of classroom materials (frequency of use).

6.4 Summary of participants’ declared practices

Just as with their beliefs about second language teaching and learning, Core French programs/students and CLT, the declared practices of focal participants and the wider participant pool are virtually identical. As indicated by both the focal participants and the wider participant
pool, Core French lessons focus primarily on a grammatical concept or on a theme (i.e., climate change, natural disasters). Both focal participants and the wider participant pool declared that their classes are primarily teacher-centered, although they acknowledge that their students do engage in pair and group work. Both groups of teachers most frequently employ oral presentations, listening and reading comprehension tests and grammar tests as testing tools. Both groups identified the most frequent use of French by both teacher and students occurred when expressing routine words and phrases, and when engaging in simple teacher-led question-answer drill-type activities. Teachers profess that TL use is far less common in the case of both teachers and students when they are teaching a lesson, which includes activities such as introducing a new concept, providing new information or giving instructions on how to prepare for a test or complete an assignment. Additionally, the use of the TL is least frequent when teachers are informally addressing individual or small groups of students. Teachers in the survey also acknowledged that there is often little TL use when students communicate with one another.

According to participants, simple teacher-led question-response activities and prepared oral presentations are the primary forms of speaking activities they employ. Listening activities are mostly those accompanying the textbook or workbook. Once again, textbooks followed by novels, short stories and plays are reported to be the most widely employed types of reading materials. Comprehension activities most frequently employed by focal participants and the wider pool of participants are short-answer comprehension questions, multiple-choice, true or false and association questions. The most frequently employed writing activities amongst focal participants and the wider participant pool are grammar worksheets/exercises and short-structured writing activities such as drafting an email or writing a postcard. Both groups report that the materials they mainly make use of are workbooks and textbooks.

6.5 Comparison with existing literature on second language teachers’ declared practices

While there is a paucity of studies on Core French teachers’ declared practices as many studies focus on Core French teachers’ beliefs, working conditions and actual classroom practices, Majhanovich and Smith (2010) study did collect data on Core French teachers’ declared practices. However, the focus of Majhanovich and Smith’s study was not on declared instructional practices, but on teachers’ motivation for taking a summer immersion course in
Quebec City as well as their impressions of the course. The authors interviewed 56 Core French teachers participating in a summer course in Quebec City. Much like the teachers in this study, the Core French teachers in Majhanovich and Smith declared that they focused a majority of their instructional time on form, i.e., explicit instruction of grammar rules. These teachers also admitted that focusing on form/the teaching of grammar rules was “the least valuable teaching practice” (Majhanovich & Smith, 2010, p. 17). This was also the case with teachers in this study as despite the fact that almost 100% of participants believe that the focus of second language instruction should be on listening and speaking French and student interaction in the target language, participants also confessed that their instructional practices focused often on form/the rules of grammar. A majority of teachers in Majhanovich and Smith also acknowledged having begun their Core French career speaking exclusively or almost exclusively in French, but that over the years their use of French had declined considerably (to less than 50% of class time). In this study, teachers admitted that there were situations where they communicated primarily in English with their Core French students. Majhanovich and Smith did not ask teachers about the specific types of activities or testing tools, they employed in the classroom.

6.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented and discussed the data gathered in an online questionnaire. The data was collected in order to establish a profile of the participants in the study including the type of FSL program they had completed as students, the amount of exposure to different second language teaching methods, the number of years they have been teaching, and the FSL courses they are currently teaching. The questionnaire data also provides insight into the beliefs of participants about second language teaching and communicative language teaching as well as their Core French instructional practices. In each case, the results of the wider participant pool were compared with those of the focal participants. It was concluded that the profiles, beliefs and instructional practices of the wider participant pool and focal participants are very similar; in fact, they are almost identical. Core French teachers in this study are overwhelmingly female, they learned French as a second language in a Core French or French Immersion program and completed a one-year Bachelor of education degree with FSL as a specialization. They are primarily teaching Core French to Grades 7, 8 and 9 on a full-time basis in a public elementary or secondary in the province of Ontario. A majority declare that they are presently employing
instructional practices that focus primarily on form, i.e., grammar instruction. However, almost 100% of participants believe that the focus of the Core French program should be on developing students’ listening and speaking skills. Participants are extremely enthusiastic to adopt and employ communicative language teaching and communicative language approaches, even though the adoption of such methods present a number of contextual challenges.

In chapter 7, I focus on the 13 focal participants. I discuss the data collected during classroom observations and individual interviews to detail these teachers’ actual practices. I also analyzed the data to determine to what extent actual practices are consistent with stated practices and declared beliefs about second language teaching. Finally, I take a closer look at individual focal participants’ practices as well as their words to assess their impact on the classroom behaviour of both teachers and students.
Chapter 7
Participants’ actual practices and their impressions of their teaching

In this Chapter, I first discuss the data collected during classroom observations to answer the following research questions:

- What are (focal) participants’ actual classroom practices? Are there differences among individual focal participants’ practices?
- How do focal participants’ actual classroom practices compare with their declared practices? Is there consistency between actual and declared practices?

Second, I discuss the data collected during individual interviews with focal participants in an effort to answer the research questions below:

- What are focal participants’ perceptions/impressions of their practices? Are their differences in individual teachers’ perceptions/impressions? If so, what are the differences and how do these differences influence teacher and student behaviour and learning?

In each case, I compare my findings with the existing literature on second language teachers’ actual practices.

7.1 Focal participants’ actual instructional practices

I observed each focal participant for one to three days to determine the focal participants’ actual practices. In total, I observed 13 teachers teach 42 Core French lessons in a variety of Core French settings (Grades 7 to 12). Lessons were analyzed to determine the focus of instruction; the center of instruction (i.e., teacher-centered versus student-centered); the approach to teaching grammar, and; teacher and student use of the target language. Lessons were further assessed in terms of teacher’s expectation of target language use by students, teacher approaches to providing comprehensible input, types of testing tools, kinds of resources employed by the teacher, and types of speaking, comprehension, reading, listening/viewing and writing activities. For each category, I identified the number of references or occurrences and the number of teachers whose activities/approach fit into each category.
7.1.1 Focus of instruction/content of the lesson

I first analyzed each of the lessons to determine the focus of instruction or the primary content of the lesson. These included: a communicative situation such as ordering a train ticket in French; a cultural theme (e.g., Le Carnaval de Québec or La St. Jean Baptiste); a grammatical concept; a novel, play, short story or poem; pronunciation; a theme; a sociolinguistic concept (e.g., use of vous versus tu), and; vocabulary (refer to Table 2).

The focus of instruction or content of the lessons taught by focal participants was most often a grammatical concept. Almost 60% of observed lessons or 28 of 42 lessons were focused all or in part on form. Twelve of the 13 participants taught at least one lesson or part of a lesson focused on a grammatical concept. This was particularly the case in the Grade 9 and 10 Core French classes regardless of stream/orientation i.e., Academic, Applied, Beginner. Examples of grammar concepts include: a presentation of the object pronoun y with a Beginner Grade 9 class; the use of the relative pronouns qui and que in an Academic Grade 9 class; the impératif in an Academic Grade 10 class, and; conjugation and use of the conditionnel présent also in an Academic Grade 10 class.

Ten observed lessons focused on vocabulary involving six different focal participants. For example, a vocabulary lesson in a Grade 9 Applied class focused on the translation from French to English of vocabulary words associated with certain popular foods. In another Grade 9 Academic class students were asked to copy a list of vocabulary words related to the theme of monsters from the blackboard, and the teacher provided English translations. In preparation for a field trip to a local restaurant, Grade 8 students discussed a list of vocabulary words related to dining in a restaurant. I observed nine lessons taught by six different focal participants focused on a theme. I observed lessons on genetically-modified foods (Grade 9 Academic), natural disasters (Grade 10 Academic), different types of musical genres (Grade 9 Applied) and monsters in the movie industry (Grade 9 Academic). Five lessons centered on practicing pronunciation. The same teacher taught all five lessons of these pronunciation practice lessons. Students practiced pronouncing the different conjugations of the verb boire (i.e., je bois, tu bois, il boit…) in the present tense as well as pronunciation of the u in the past participle bu. In a second lesson, the same teacher encouraged her students to practice the pronunciation of the
letter r in French. This was done via repetition by individual students of the regular endings of verbs in the simple future tense (i.e., rai, ras, ra, rons, rez, ront).

I observed three lessons focusing on a novel, short story, play or poem. Students in the Grade 11 Core French IB classes were reading a simplified version of the Molière play: *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*. In one Grade 10 Academic class, students were reading a simplified version of *Le Petit Prince*. In a Grade 9 Applied class, the teacher had her students act out a modified version of Lafontaine’s poem *Le Lièvre et la Tortue* as she recited the poem. I observed one lesson focused on a communicative situation. Here I use the term communicative in a very narrow sense and it is not congruent or equal to activities/exercises focused on oral communication as defined in the literature on the communicative approach and communicative language teaching. The lesson on a communicative situation took place in a Beginner Core French class of less than ten students. Students prepared a dialogue in French involving an excursion to a shopping centre. None of the 42 lessons focused on a cultural theme or a sociolinguistic concept.

Table 2  
*Primary Focus of Lesson*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus of the lesson (content)</th>
<th>Number of references/occurrences (lessons in this case only)</th>
<th>Number of focal participants (teachers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicative situation (ordering a meal in a restaurant,</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buying a train ticket)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural theme</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical concept(s)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novel, play, short story, poem</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme (e.g., Climate change)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociolinguistic concept(s)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.1.2 Focus of instruction (teacher-centered versus student-centered)

The centre of instruction was primarily the teacher, i.e., the teacher stands at the head of the class and provides instruction, feedback and/or asks students to respond to questions (Table 3). Teacher-centered instruction dominated in terms of minutes/percentage; however, a significant amount of pair and group work did take place. I observed 28 instances or occurrences of pair and group work organized by ten of the 13 focal participants. In at least two Grade 9 Academic classes students produced dialogues in small groups, which they performed in front of the class. I witnessed students working in groups writing a story based on what they observed happening in three separate pictures. I watched groups of Grade 9 Academic Core French students spend the period developing a board game in French. There were fewer instances (13) of individual seatwork. References of individual seatwork primarily entailed students completing grammar or comprehension exercises in a textbook or workbook.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centre of instruction (teacher-centered versus student-centered)</th>
<th>Number of references/Occurrences</th>
<th>Number of participants (# of observed teachers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher instructs whole class</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students working with a partner or in small groups</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students working individually (individual seat work)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.1.3 Approach to instruction of grammatical concepts

Grammar lessons were analyzed to determine whether grammar concepts were treated explicitly or implicitly, as well as inductively or deductively (Table 4). It was established that grammar concepts were almost exclusively taught explicitly and deductively. There were 24 instances of explicit grammar instruction. Of these 24 instances, 21 involved the teacher employing a deductive approach wherein the teacher introduces a grammar rule and then students practice applying the rule while completing repetitive exercises. The only examples of implicit focus on form were when students were asked to repeat conjugation of two or three different verbs in the
future tense. Focus was on practicing pronunciation of each conjugation. There was no explanation/revision of the rules. However, it is possible that this took place during a prior lesson. One teacher who employed simple question-answer techniques insisted students repeat the correct sentence structure without explaining the mechanics. Again, this may have taken place during an earlier lesson. There were only three examples involving two teachers employing an inductive approach to grammar instruction. For example, a teacher provided her Grade 9 Beginner class a series of examples containing the pronoun \( y \) and asked them to infer where to place the pronoun.

Table 4

\textit{Approach to Instruction of Grammatical Concepts}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach to instruction of grammatical concepts</th>
<th>Number of references/Occurrences</th>
<th>Number of participants (# of observed teachers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explicit (explanation/discussion of grammatical rules)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicit (focus on form but no explanation/discussion of grammatical rules)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deductive (teacher instructs students on grammatical rules)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inductive (teacher encourages students to infer grammatical rules based on examples and then provides confirmation)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\subsection{Use of the Target Language (L2/French)}

I analyzed my classroom observation notes to determine target language use by teachers (Table 5) and students (Table 6). I recorded the number of occurrences of teacher L2 use in the following situations: to communicate routine phrases; during drill-type activities; when teaching a new concept, reviewing a previously taught concept, when explaining an assignment or evaluation and when discussing or providing information to the whole class, and; when speaking with small groups of students or individual students. The number of references of L2 use by the students were recorded for each of the following situations: to communicate routine phrases; during drill-type activities; when giving a pre-prepared oral presentation; with the teacher during
formal instruction; with other students during formal instruction and structured activities; with the teacher in informal situations, and finally; with other students in informal situations.

Teacher use of L2 (French)

It was found that the greatest number of instances (65%) of target language use by focal participants was in highly structured, close-ended situations (i.e., communication involving one word or a short phrase) to communicate routine phrases to students and when engaging in drill-type activities with them. All 13 focal participants primarily or exclusively employed the target language to communicate routine phrases to students. Examples of routine phrases include: *Levez-vous; Levez la main s’il vous plait; Silence s’il vous plait, Asseyez-vous, Je vais prendre les présences; Dans vos livres, tournez à la page 100. Ecoutez s’il vous plaît.* This was also the case with drill-type activities. Teachers primarily or exclusively employed the target language to carry out these types of activities. Examples of drill-type activities included simple questions asked by the teacher (primarily closed or known-answer questions) about student preferences, what students did or were planning to do over the weekend or during the holidays, or around pictures or a dialogue or story in a textbook/workbook/or audio recording. There were fewer teachers (nine of 13) and fewer instances of target language use in what I would term more open-ended situations such as introducing a grammatical concept, presenting a new chapter in the textbook, explaining how to complete an exercise or activity, and when discussing or correcting homework. These same teachers were also responsible for the occurrences of French use to communicate with small groups of students and individual students.
Table 5

*Teacher Use of L2 (French) by Situation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of TL by teacher by situation</th>
<th>Number of references/Occurrences</th>
<th>Number of participants (# of observed teachers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher TL use during routine situations/Use of routine phrases</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher TL use during drill/type activities (Teacher asks questions/students respond)</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher TL use when introducing a concept, providing new information, discussing with class, explaining or reviewing a concept etc.</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher TL use when speaking with small groups of students or individual students</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student use of L2 (French)**

Students also primarily or exclusively (49% of references) employed French in closed-ended situations, such as to communicate routine phrases, during drill-type activities and during pre-prepared oral presentations. This was the case with all of the focal participants regardless of grade and Core French program with the exception of one teacher. This particular teacher stated in her interview that she did not see the value in insisting that students be required to use French for routine phrases such as *Est-ce que je peux aller aux toilettes?* However, she did encourage students to employ the target language during drill-type activities and interactive games and other structured communicative activities.
### Table 6

*Student Use of L2 (French) by Situation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student use of French by situation</th>
<th>Number of references/ Occurrences</th>
<th>Number of participants (# of observed teachers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student TL use in routine situations/for routine phrases</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student TL use during drill-type activities/questions-answer exercises</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student TL use during pre-prepared oral presentations</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student TL use with the teacher during formal instruction</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student TL use with other students during formal instruction and structured activities</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student TL use with teacher in informal situations</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student TL use with other students in informal situations</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 7.1.5 Explicit teacher expectation of L2 (French) use by students

I observed 23 instances of teachers explicitly encouraging students to speak in French (Table 7). Examples of explicit expectation of target language use include phrases such as *En français!* *Pourquoi est-ce que tu parles anglais?* The most original was the following phrase: *Si tu parles en français c’est bon... Si c’est anglais c’est non!* Three teachers were responsible for 80% of these instances. Interestingly the observed occurrences of explicit expectation of student TL use were not during routine conversations or drill-type activities. It is hypothesized that this could be because students were explicitly instructed to use French in these types of situations at the beginning of the year, in previous grades, or this expectation is implicit in the Core French classroom culture. In the two Grade 11 IB (International Baccalaureate) classes, no references of explicit teacher expectation of TL use were recorded. This is possibly explained by the fact that students enter this elite program having signed a contract explicitly stating that they must speak the target language or they risk expulsion from the program.
Table 7

*Instances of Teacher Explicit Expectation of L2 Use by Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explicit expectation of L2 use by students</th>
<th>Number of references/Occurrences</th>
<th>Number of participants (# of observed teachers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explicit expectation of student L2 use when speaking with teacher (e.g., <em>En français SVP, Parlez français, Pardon, Je ne comprends pas, Répétez SVP</em> etc.)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.1.6 Teacher techniques for providing comprehensible TL input/negotiating meaning

Focal participants’ observation notes were analyzed to determine what types of approaches Core French teachers employ to provide comprehensible target language input to their students and negotiate meaning. In other words, notes were examined to understand what teachers did to help students better understand what is being said in French. Techniques such as translation of individual words or phrases, code-switching, repetition of a word or phrase, the use of intonation, rephrasing or use of synonyms, the use of gestures and visuals, and the use of questioning techniques such as multiple choice questions were observed (Table 8). Translation and/or code-switching were the two techniques most frequently employed by focal participants to provide comprehensible TL input to students. Fifty-two percent of references involved the use of translation or code-switching. Nine of 13 focal participants employed translation of full sentences or individual words at some point during their lessons and eight of 13 engaged in code-switching. I observed 61 instances of the use of gestures (18% of all references to comprehensible input) to provide comprehensible input. Ten of 13 observed teachers employed gestures to help students understand what they had said in the target language. There were also quite a few instances of intonation (41 references). Focal participants made far less use of visuals, repetition and questioning techniques such as the use of multiple choice and “or” questions.
Table 8

Teacher Use of Approaches to Providing Comprehensible Input/Negotiating Meaning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach to providing comprehensible input</th>
<th>Number of references/Occurrences</th>
<th>Number of participants (# of observed teachers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Translation:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual words or expressions</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full sentences or passages</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code-switching</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intonation</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rephrasing (e.g., synonyms/mots amis)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gestures</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visuals</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning techniques:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Or’ Questions</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple choice questions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.1.7 Testing tools

Focal participants primarily employed grammar tests and prepared oral presentations as testing tools (Table 9). Thirty-three percent (nine of 27 references) of observed testing tools were grammar tests and 22% (six of 27 references) were prepared oral presentations. I observed three instances of students completing a vocabulary test, three instances of students completing a reading comprehension test and, three instances of students completing a listening comprehension test. One teacher employed the same group interview as a testing tool with her three grade 9 Academic Core French classes. There were no instances of discussion or debates to test students’ linguistic competencies.
Table 9

Testing Tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of testing tool</th>
<th>Number of references/Occurrences</th>
<th>Number of participants (# of observed teachers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammar quizzes/tests</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening comprehension tests</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension tests</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared oral presentations</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary tests</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual or group interviews</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions or debates</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.1.8 Classroom activities

Speaking activities

In terms of speaking activities, I observed nineteen instances of drill-type speaking activities where the teacher asks students questions about their personal preferences, about past or future activities or events or about a reading in a textbook (Table 10). Thirty-four percent (nine of 56 references) of drill-type speaking activities were recorded. Interestingly, I observed an equal number of interactive speaking activities (19). While nine of 13 focal participants led their students in drill-type speaking activities, only five teachers had their students participate in interactive speaking activities. These activities included a board game in a Grade 9 Applied class where students moved their pawns from one square to another around the board. Students asked each other questions in French about the musical group Dubmatique, which they had learned about in the textbook. If a student responded correctly, he or she was able to advance his or her pawn on the board. Students in a Grade 10 Academic class circulated around the room asking each other questions beginning with Si (If) such as “Si tu étais riche, qu’achèterais-tu? Si tu étais professeur à cette école qui serais-tu et pourquoi?” During the interactive speaking activities, I observed the students participating with great enthusiasm and making every effort to communicate in French.
I observed nine occurrences of students giving an oral presentation and seven examples of students participating in prepared skits and dialogues. There were only two recorded instances of class discussions or debates. Both took place in a Grade 11 IB class. One of these discussions involved students providing feedback to the teacher about a test they had recently taken and students were very animated. There were no recorded instances of improvisation or role-playing.

Table 10

*Speaking Activities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of speaking activity</th>
<th>Number of references/ Occurrences</th>
<th>Number of participants (# of observed teachers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drill-type (simple question/answer)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared oral presentations</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared skits, dialogues</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive speaking activities</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class discussions or debates</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvisation/role playing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reading activities**

The majority of reading activities (57%) involved passages, stories or dialogues in a textbook or a modified/simplified novel, play or poem (Table 11). As noted earlier, I observed the reading of a simplified version of *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*, a simplified version of *Le Petit Prince* and a modified version of Lafontaine’s poem *Le Lièvre et la Tortue*. I observed one instance of students reading a newspaper or magazine article in a Grade 11 class.
Table 11

Reading activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of reading activity</th>
<th>Number of references/occurrences</th>
<th>Number of participants (# of observed teachers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passages/stories in Textbook or Workbook</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novels, Short Stories, Plays, Poems</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper or Magazine articles</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comprehension activities

The comprehension activities of focal participants (Table 12) were split evenly between true or false and multiple-choice questions (nine references), short-answer comprehension questions (ten references) and translation activities (11 references). The majority of translation activities involved the translation of individual words or expressions. There were three examples in total of comprehension activities involving cross word puzzles, word searches and summarizing the key ideas in a reading.

Table 12

Comprehension Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of comprehension activity</th>
<th>Number of references/occurrences</th>
<th>Number of participants (# of observed teachers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>True or False, Multiple Choice, Association Exercises</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross word puzzles or word searches</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-answer comprehension questions</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarize key ideas</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation activities</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Listening/viewing activities

In terms of listening/viewing activities, I primarily observed students listening to sound recordings on a CD accompanying a textbook or workbook (refer to Table 13). I observed two instances of students watching an American movie dubbed in French with English sub-titles. One observed teacher had her Grade 9 Applied students listen to a series of songs, most of the songs were sung in English with one or two in French, and students were asked to express their opinion about the songs. I did not observe the use of audio-recordings or videos of short stories, novels, poems, plays, news clips or documentaries.

Table 13

Listening/Viewing Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of listening/viewing activity</th>
<th>Number of references/Occurrences</th>
<th>Number of participants (# of observed teachers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sound/video recordings accompanying textbook or workbook</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Songs and music videos</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movies or TV shows</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recordings/Videos of shorts stories or plays</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News clips or documentaries</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Writing activities

In terms of writing activities (Table 14), focal participants mainly had their students complete grammar exercises. There were 20 references (53% of occurrences) of students completing grammar exercises. Six of 13 teachers had their students complete grammar worksheets. I also observed a number of instances of students writing short paragraphs in French (13 references involving seven different teachers). There was far less use of medium-length writing activities such as preparing instructions for a board game and writing dialogues and skits (only five instances involving two focal participants). I did not observe any instances of students engaging
in longer writing activities such as the completion of an essay, short story or a book report or taking a *dictée*.

Table 14

*Writing Activities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of writing activity</th>
<th>Number of references/ Occurrences</th>
<th>Number of participants (# of observed teachers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammar worksheets/exercises</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictées</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short passages (one or more sentences or a paragraph, post card, e-mail)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium passages (e.g., dialogue, skit, interview, letter, game instructions)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long passages (e.g., essay, short story, book report)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.1.9  Materials/Resources

Teachers overwhelmingly made use of pedagogical resources notably textbooks, workbooks and the audio-visual materials accompanying the textbook (57 of 66 references or 86%) (Table 15). At the Grade 9 level, focal participants were using *Sans Frontières* with the Academic classes and *Quoi de Neuf* with the Applied classes, with the exception of one teacher. At the Grade 10 level, the textbook in use was the *Nouvelles frontières* textbook. In the Grade 11 and 12 classes I did not observe the use of a textbook. As noted earlier, I observed the use of an adapted version of a Lafontaine poem (*Le Lièvre et la Tortue*), an adapted/abridged version of Molière’s *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* and an adapted/abridged version of *Le Petit Prince.*
Table 15

Resources/Materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of resource/material</th>
<th>Number of references</th>
<th>Number of participants (# of observed teachers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-pedagogic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movie, TV show, Music Video</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novel, Story Story, Poem, Play (original, unmodified version)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper, Magazine, News clip, Documentary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-pedagogic (adapted resources)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workbook (or exercise sheets)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio-visual materials accompanying textbook and/or workbook</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.2 Summary of findings of Core French Teachers’ actual practices and comparison with declared practices

Focal participants employ very similar, almost identical instructional practices, classroom activities and resources. Moreover, their actual practices are almost identical to their declared practices as depicted in Table 16. Most classes I observed, regardless of the teacher, grade and school, were teacher-centered and largely focused on a grammatical concept and to a lesser extent a theme. Focal participants overwhelmingly employed pedagogical materials such as textbooks and workbooks. This was particularly true in the Grade 9 and 10 Core French classes. Grade 11 and 12 teachers made frequent use of semi-pedagogical materials such as adapted versions of classic plays, poems, novels and short stories. Grammar tests and pre-prepared oral presentations were the most commonly employed testing tools. Oral presentations were a preferred speaking activity along with simple teacher-led drill-type question and answer activities. A minority of focal participants had their students engage in interactive speaking activities in pairs or small groups. Grammar worksheets were the most frequently employed writing activity. Listening/viewing activities almost exclusively involved listening to an audio-
recording accompanying a textbook or workbook. Comprehension activities primarily consisted of true or false, multiple-choice, one word or short answer questions and exercises involving the translation of vocabulary words. Focal participants and their students exclusively or almost exclusively employed the target language in more structured situations such as to communicate routine phrases and during drill-type question/answer activities. Fewer references of target language use were recorded in less-structured (more open-ended) situations such as during class discussions, revision for a test and teacher explanation of a new concept. Translation of individual words and whole phrases, code-switching and gestures were most frequently employed by focal participants to increase the comprehensibility of TL input.
Table 16

Comparison of Focal Participants’ Declared Practices and Actual Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Declared practices</th>
<th>Actual practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus of lesson</td>
<td>Grammar, Theme</td>
<td>Grammatical concept, Theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre of instruction</td>
<td>Teacher instructs whole class</td>
<td>Teacher instructs whole class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing tools</td>
<td>Prepared oral presentations,</td>
<td>Oral presentations, grammar tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehension Tests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most frequent use of</td>
<td>Routine phrases, Drill-type</td>
<td>Routine phrases/Drill-type (teacher question/student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TL by teacher</td>
<td>(question/response) activities</td>
<td>response)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most frequent use of</td>
<td>Routine phrases, Drill-type</td>
<td>Routine phrases/Drill-type (teacher question/student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TL by students</td>
<td>(question/response) activities</td>
<td>response), interactive speaking activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking activities</td>
<td>Drill type (questions/response),</td>
<td>Drill-type, Interactive speaking activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prepared oral presentations,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening/Viewing</td>
<td>Sound/video recordings</td>
<td>Sound/video recordings accompanying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activities</td>
<td>accompanying textbook/workbook</td>
<td>textbook/workbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading activities</td>
<td>Passages from textbook/workbook</td>
<td>Passages from textbook/workbook; novel, play or poem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension activities</td>
<td>Short-answer questions</td>
<td>Short answer comprehension questions, Translation,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>True/False, Multiple choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing activities</td>
<td>Short structure (email, post card,</td>
<td>Grammar worksheets, Short structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>invitation), grammar exercises</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials/resources</td>
<td>Textbook/Workbook and audio-visual materials accompanying textbook and workbook</td>
<td>Workbook, Textbook</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.3 Comparison with the literature on teachers’ actual practices

Participants’ actual classroom practices are consistent with what has been reported in the literature. Previous studies of Core French teachers’ actual practices by Calman and Daniel (1998), Frolich, Spada and Allen (1985), Howard (2006), Lapkin, Mady and Arnott (2009) and Salvatori (2008) all concluded that Core French instruction was largely teacher-centered and form-focused (grammar). Frolich, Spada and Allen (1985) also determined that most classroom activities involved the completion of worksheets with grammar exercises. In the case of this
study, a large percentage of instructional time was also spent on form, grammar exercises were 
the most common classroom activity and the centre of instruction was primarily the teacher. 
Nevertheless, there were a number of instances of pair and group work and interactive speaking 
the widespread use of English by teachers and students for classroom communication. Levine 
(2003) found that use of the target language in second language classrooms was most often for 
topic or theme-based communication and much less often for communication about grammar, 
tests and assignments. In this study, target language use was more prevalent by both teachers and 
students in highly-structured situations such as when expressing routine phrases and engaging in 
drill-type simple question-answer activities. Use of English was more prevalent in unstructured 
situations such as a class discussion, or teacher interaction with individual and small groups of 
students.

7.4 A closer look at individual focal participants’ practices

'Tiny differences in input could quickly become overwhelming differences in 
output' (Gleick 1987, p8).

Indeed, the “effect is disproportionate to the cause” (Larsen-Freeman, 1997, p.143).

As noted above, focal participants share very similar instructional practices. There were only 
small differences in observed teacher practices. However, a closer look at these small differences 
in input reveals that they result in significant differences in output.

Prior to highlighting and discussing these small differences, I provide a brief description of the 
profile of each focal participant. Table 17 contains an overview of the profile of each participant. 
The table includes the following information: pseudonym, male or female, number of years 
teaching, FSL program completed as a student, FSL qualification, teaching status and teaching 
context.

Zara, Francis, Marina, Brenda, Maria and Phyllis are women in their mid-twenties who 
completed their schooling and university studies in Ontario, whose dominant/first language is 
English and who learned French as a second language. Zara, Maria, Brenda and Phyllis are
graduates of the Core French program. Francis and Marina are graduates of the French Immersion program. Maria teaches Spanish as well as French. Pauline is also in her twenties. French is her first language as she grew up in Montreal. However, she speaks perfect English. Mary is in her early thirties and came to teaching as a second career. She is also a product of the Immersion program. Will is a young man in his late twenties. He completed the French Immersion program. Before becoming an FSL teacher, both Will and Mary taught English as a second language. Zara, Brenda, Mary and Pauline are in their second year of teaching. Maria, Will and Marina are in their third year of teaching. Phyllis and Francis are in their fourth year of teaching.

Zara teaches Grade 9 Core French Academic and Applied in a high school for the arts. Maria also teaches Grade 9 Core French Academic and Applied. She has a Beginner Grade 9 Core French class to go along with her Academic and Applied classes. She teaches in a regular high school. Brenda, Phyllis and Francis teach Grade 10 Core French as well as Grade 9 Academic and Applied. Phyllis like Zara teach in a school for the arts. Will teaches Grade 9 Applied and Academic, Grade 10 Core French and Grade 11 IB French in a public high school. Mary and Marina teach Grade 11 and 12 Core French, but have taught Grade 9 and 10 Core French in the past. Marina also has two sections of Grade 9 French Immersion. Both Mary and Marina are teaching in a public high school. Pauline is the only focal participant teaching in a private school. She teaches Grades 7, 8 and 9 Academic Core French. The above eight focal participants are all considered beginning teachers and are former teacher candidates of mine.

Four of the focal participants are neither former teacher candidates of mine, nor beginning teachers. Max, Fabia and Page have been teaching Core French in Ontario for the past ten years. Max and Fabia were born and raised in Ontario. Max, although from an Anglophone family, completed a significant part of his schooling in a French first-language school. He completed his university studies in an English-speaking university. While Fabia’s dominant language is English, her mother is Franco-Ontarian. Page grew up Anglophone in Montreal. She learned French as a second language in Montreal. She completed a degree in translation prior to becoming an FSL teacher. She also has experience with teaching English as a second language. Faizal has been teaching Core French for five years. English is not his first language. He is an immigrant to Canada. He completed his teaching certificate in the United States. He learned
French in his native country of Iran. Both Faizal and Page teach Grade 7 and 8 Core French in a middle school in the Greater Toronto Area, while Max teaches Grade 9 Academic and Applied Core French and Page teaches one section of Grade 9 Academic Core French in a public high school. Page and Faizal served as associated teachers for two of my teacher candidates.
### Table 17

**Overview of the Focal Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Male or Female</th>
<th>Number of years FSL teaching experience</th>
<th>Program completed as student</th>
<th>FSL qualification</th>
<th>Teaching Status</th>
<th>Teaching Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zara</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>1-year B.Ed.</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Core French Grade 9 (Applied, Academic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>French first language</td>
<td>1-year B.Ed.</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Core French Grade 9 (Applied, Academic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Additional Qualification</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Core French Grade 9 (Beginner, Applied, Academic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Immersion</td>
<td>1-year B.Ed.</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Core French Grades 9, 10, 11 (Applied, Academic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauline</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>French first language</td>
<td>1-year B.Ed.</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Core French Grades 7, 8, 9 (Academic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faizal</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>FSL (out of country)</td>
<td>1-year B.Ed.</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Core French Grades 7, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>1-year B.Ed.</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Core French Grade 9 and 10 (Applied, Academic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabia</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>1-year B.Ed.</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Core French Grades 7, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phyllis</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>1-year B.Ed.</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Core French Grade 9 and 10 (Applied, Academic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Immersion</td>
<td>1-year B.Ed.</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Core French Grades 11, 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Immersion</td>
<td>1-year B.Ed.</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Core French Grade 9 and 10 (Applied, Academic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marina</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Immersion</td>
<td>1-year B.Ed.</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Core French Grades 11 and 12, Grade 9 Immersion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>FSL (out of province)</td>
<td>Concurrent program</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Core French Grade 9 Academic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the literature, inconsistency between teacher beliefs and practices is often attributed to contextual factors or to conflict or incompatibility between teacher beliefs about second language teaching and a particular method or approach such as communicative language teaching (CLT). Researchers such as Gabillon (2012) have argued that teachers tend to adopt instructional approaches consistent with their beliefs or interpret, modify and adjust these instructional approaches to fit their beliefs.

In this study, it was small differences in participants’ practices (input) during periods of instability and uncertainty that proved to be important to the findings. These included the amount of L2 use by the teacher in unstructured and more open-ended situations; the types of techniques employed to make L2 input more comprehensible and to negotiate meaning with the students, and; the instances of explicit teacher expectation of L2 use by students. Meanwhile, important differences in outcome (output) were observed in terms of both teacher and student behaviour. Of notable importance were the amount of TL use by the teacher and students and students’ level of understanding and comfort when spoken to in French.

7.4.1 Small differences in instructional practices (input)

Teacher use of the target language

Comparisons of target language use by focal participants reveals that TL use is much more teacher dependent than grade or program dependent (i.e., context). The ratio of target language use to L1 use varied much more by teacher than by grade or program. This is represented in Figure 46 below which charts L1 and L2 use by teacher and by class in terms of percentage of class time the teacher employed each language. Only teachers at the secondary level who teach at least two different programs (i.e., Academic, Applied, Beginner, University) or two different grades (i.e., 9, 10, 11) are included in the graph. L2 use was highest and L1 use lowest in classes taught by Francis, Phyllis, Will and Maria regardless of program and grade. L2 use was lowest

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7 In order to determine whether teacher TL use varied by teacher, grade and/or program, it was necessary to have data for the same teacher in at least two different contexts, either two different programs–Academic, Applied, Beginner, University or two different grades–7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. Thus, excluded from the graph are Marina as I only observed her teach two grade 11 University preparation classes. Also excluded are Fabia, Faizal and Pauline as I only observed them teach grade 8 Core French.
and L1 use highest in classes taught by Zara, Brenda, Mary and Max, which was also consistent despite program and grade.

![Diagram showing TL use versus L1 use by teacher by course (% of instructional time for each).](image)

Figure 46. TL use versus L1 use by teacher by course (% of instructional time for each).

Most of the focal participants employed either large amounts of the target language or very little of the target language with few participants falling in the middle. The amount of target language employed by each of the 13 participants is shown in Figure 47. The amount of French use was very high and the amount of English use very low in the case of Marina, Francis, Phyllis, Pauline, Will, Fabia, Maria and Faizal. The amount of French use was very low and the amount of English use very high in the case of Max and Zara.
Brenda and Mary employed almost equal amounts of the L1 and L2. However, in the case of Mary, she translated almost all of the French that she employed. Below is an example of this continuous literal translation.

Mary: *Est-ce que vous parlez parce que c’est trop facile? Are you chatting because it’s too easy?*

Mary: *C’est juste pour étudier? This is just to study by?*

Mary: *On utilise...We use...if you go on exchange they often use “veuillez”*

Mary: *Qu’est-ce que vous avez aimé?*

Mary: What did you like about the images? So, now what can you imagine? *A la suite, que pourrez-vous imaginer?*

Mary: What do you think?

Mary: What can you imagine?

Mary: It’s a story?

Mary: The prince likes animals.

Mary: *Le prince aime les animaux.*
In addition, in the case of Brenda it appeared that during my visit she made a special effort to employ the L2 with her Grade 10 classes where she normally would have primarily employed English (as she did with her Grade 9 classes). I came to this conclusion as students in the class expressed discomfort with the use of the TL (e.g., Students says: “Could you just explain in English.”) and expressed difficulty understanding when spoken to in the L2 (e.g., Brenda: Vous pouvez lire le travail à haute voix? Another student: What?).

Explicit teacher expectation of target language use by students

Teachers with the greatest number of instances of explicit expectation of target language use by students (Table 18) were amongst the teachers who employed the greatest amount of target language themselves and their students were those who most frequently employed the target language. Maria was responsible for eight of the 23 instances, Phyllis for six and Pauline for eight.
Table 18

Table 18: Number of Instances of Teacher Explicit Expectation of Student TL Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Explicit expectation of TL use by students (e.g., En français SVP, Parlez français, Pardon, Je ne comprends pas, Répétez SVP etc.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faizal</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabia</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marina</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zara</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauline</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phyllis</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Techniques employed by the teacher to provide comprehensible input/negotiate meaning

The focal participants who most frequently employed techniques other than translation of full sentences and passages into English (refer to Table 19) employed translation of individual words, code-switching, gestures, visuals, intonation and questioning techniques. The teachers who used these techniques rather than translation of full sentences were also the teachers who spoke the most French with their students. Within the data Mary had 12 references and Brenda had 8 references making them responsible for the majority of instances of translation of full sentences and passages. Overall, Zara and Mary employed the fewest number of different techniques and along with Brenda were amongst the focal participants who spoke the least amount of French with their students. The most number of instances of translation of individual words and expressions were observed during Maria’s, and Phyllis’s Grade 9 Core French classes. Maria and
Phyllis accounted for 60% of these references (32 of 53 references). Maria, Brenda and Pauline made the most frequent use of code switching i.e., alternating between English and French. Faizal, Maria and Will were responsible for the majority of the 61 observed gestures. Observed teachers made far less use of visuals, repetition and questioning techniques such as the use of multiple choice and “or” questions. Faizal was responsible for 90% of “or” questions. Or questions were Faizal’s preferred technique for providing comprehensible TL input, for negotiating meaning and for building overall oral comprehension and production. “Or” questions are an integral part of the AIM approach⁸, which Faizal employs with his Grade 7 and 8 Core French classes. Maria was the observed teacher who employed the greatest diversity of techniques. In fact, she was the only observed teacher to employ all of the identified techniques (i.e., translation, code-switching, gestures, intonation, visuals, multiple-choice questions and “or” questions).

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⁸ AIM is a program developed specifically for Core French by Wendy Maxwell. Maxwell, a Core French teacher in Vancouver, was frustrated with the results of traditional approaches to Core French teaching. One of the key expectations of the AIM program is that instruction be in French all of the time. The program relies on the use of: “a controlled vocabulary accompanied by gestures…rehearsed in plays and later becomes the basis for communication in the classes once the students have gained some ease with the words and expressions” (Majhanovich & Smith, 2010, p. 25).
Table 19

*Observed Instances of Use of Different Techniques to Provide Comprehensible Input to Students (by Focal Participant)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code-</th>
<th>Switching</th>
<th>Translation of individual words or expressions</th>
<th>Translation of full sentences passages</th>
<th>Use of repetition</th>
<th>Use of visuals</th>
<th>Use of gestures</th>
<th>Use of intonation /sounds</th>
<th>Use of multiple choice questions</th>
<th>Use of OR questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faizal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marina</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zara</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauline</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phyllis</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.4.2 Important differences in outcome (output)

Student target language use

As depicted in Figure 48, student target language (TL) use proved to be very teacher-dependent. The percentage of class time students spoke in the TL was far higher in classes taught by teachers who themselves spoke large amounts of the L2 (i.e., Marina, Faizal, Will, Page, Pauline, Phyllis and Francis). TL use by students in classes taught by Zara, Max, Brenda and Mary was the lowest in percentage (time), and these teachers spoke the least amount of L2 with their students (refer back to Figures 46 & 47).

![Figure 48. Student TL Use versus English Use (% of instructional time)](image)

The following excerpts from a Grade 9 Academic Core French class and a Grade 9 Applied Core French class both taught by Zara demonstrate an interesting relationship between teacher use of the TL and student use (Table 20). The passages in the left column are from a Grade 9 Academic Core French lesson. Zara begins the lesson in French and the students
follow suit answering primarily in French. Approximately 10 minutes into the lesson, Zara switches to speaking primarily in English and the students follow suit. The passages on the right are from a Grade 9 Applied Core French lesson. This time Zara begins the lesson in English and then switches to French. Interestingly, the result is the same as the students tend to respond and interact with the teacher in English when she speaks English and in French when she speaks French.
### Table 20

**Relationship Between Teacher and Student Target Language Use: The Case of Zara**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zara – Grade 9 Academic Core French</th>
<th>Zara – Grade 9 Applied Core French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zara:</strong> Bonjour!</td>
<td><strong>Zara:</strong> Should I split up the boys? Boys we’ll see, last chance to sit together. Okay everybody (student chatter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students:</strong> Salut!</td>
<td>(Hand-out -&gt; La Maison D’etre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zara:</strong> Comment était la pause? Qu’est-ce que vous avez fait pendant la pause? (Think, Pair, Share. Some students attempting to share a sentence or two in French)</td>
<td><strong>Zara:</strong> On the sheet you have some verbs that may be familiar to you. Does anyone know what <em>il est né</em> means? Student: He is not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zara:</strong> Trois, deux, un. Les yeux sur moi. Zara : Qu’est-ce que vous avez fait pendant la pause? Student: Je vais au Londres. Zara : Tu es allé au Londres. Où est Londrès, à l’Europe. Zara (confirming student response): Tu es allé en Cuba, est-ce que tu as bronzé?</td>
<td><strong>Zara:</strong> It means he was born. <em>Il est mort</em> is the opposite. He is dead. (Student asks question in English) Zara: Don’t worry about that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zara:</strong> Qui est resté à la maison?</td>
<td><strong>Zara:</strong> Il est resté. What do you think that means? Students: He rested. Zara: Close. Student: Does <em>il est passé</em> mean he passed by a window or he passed away? Zara: He passed something. Student: Does it mean he passed a grade?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student:</strong> J’ai visité mon famille. Zara : Tu as visité ton famille. Student: J’ai allé à Texas</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zara:</strong> If I’m the interviewer, I’m going to ask 6 different questions. How do you ask someone to repeat themselves? Evan, how do you ask what <em>fromage</em> means? Look over there -&gt; Poster Student: I don’t know what <em>fromage</em> means. Student: You don’t get what she’s asking.</td>
<td><strong>Zara:</strong> Il est resté. What do you think that means? Students: He rested. Zara: Close. Student: Does <em>il est passé</em> mean he passed by a window or he passed away? Zara: He passed something. Student: Does it mean he passed a grade?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>...</strong></td>
<td><strong>...</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zara:</strong> You’re going to have to know your stories well. You will have a chance to practice. You’re going to ask six different questions in full sentences. You have to Figure out ways to understand. <em>Miranda a dit la vérité, Miranda n’a pas dit la vérité.</em> Then you will say why and answer with parce que. Expression, Body Language, Memorization, Fluency. Does everybody feel okay? Student: Oui. Zara: You’re going to do your own. Student: But can we work with someone? Zara: You will be chosen randomly. After you finish this get up and practice this with two people.</td>
<td><strong>Zara:</strong> (drawing a baby in little bed!): So, un petit bébé. <em>Il est né dans un lit. Il a des bras. Il a une tête. Il a deux pieds et il est né.</em> Zara: <em>Comment il s’appelle?</em> Student: <em>Il s’appelle Bébé.</em> Zara: Non, il ne s’appelle pas bébé. Est-ce qu’il s’appelle François? <strong>...</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student level of comfort and understanding with target language use by the teacher

Student comfort and understanding were observed in classes where the teacher regularly spoke French. Excerpts from Grade 9 and 10 classes taught by Maria, Phyllis and Francis demonstrate this point in both Academic and Applied settings (Tables 21, 22 and 23). The conversations are normal and natural. Students did not necessarily respond in French, however, their responses demonstrate that they understood the teacher.

Table 21

Example of Student Comfort with and Understanding of Teacher TL Use: The Case of Maria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maria - Grade 9 Academic Core French</th>
<th>Maria – Grade 9 Applied Core French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria: Vous êtes prêtes (SIC) à présenter.</td>
<td>Maria: Je veux des volontaires pour mettre les réponses au tableau.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria: Tu as un partenaire (speaking to an individual student)</td>
<td>Maria: Personne n’a fait PARTIE A (Gestures…showing sheet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student #1: I think I have a partner (student)</td>
<td>Student #1 (raises his hand): I did Partie A!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria: Ça c’est un autre groupe.</td>
<td>Maria: Le dernier, une fille.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria: Vous êtes prêts.</td>
<td>Student #2: Can I? (a boy says)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria: Est-ce que tu as présenté? (to another student)</td>
<td>Student #3: I thought you said a girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria: Mitchell avec Chance, troisième groupe.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria: Peter et Calvin, 4e groupe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student #2: It’s not fair. (Calvin responds)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student #2: I missed two classes (same student as above)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria: Tu peux le faire mercredi…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student #2: OK (student responds)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria: Tout le monde a la rubrique, je l’ai donné au début du projet?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student #3: We must have lost it cause we don’t have it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 22

**Example of Student Comfort with and Understanding of Teacher TL Use: The Case of Phyllis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phyllis - Grade 10 Academic Core French</th>
<th>Phyllis – Grade 9 Applied Core French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phyllis: Qui n’ont (sic) pas encore fini le dialogue?</td>
<td>Phyllis: Bonjour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student #1: Est-ce qu’on doit faire la prochaine classe?</td>
<td>Student #1: Bonjour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student #2: Vendredi, je ne serai pas ici.</td>
<td>Phyllis: John, viens ici s’il te plait. Tu peux faire 30 photocopies?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student #3: Je suis absent le jour après...</td>
<td>Phyllis: Siège s’il te plait. Donald siège.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student #4: We have French on Thursday. Another student #5: Never mind Madame.</td>
<td>Phyllis: Paula, qu’est-ce que tu as changé?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student #5: Elle a donné pour chaque groupe. Elle a changé la date.</td>
<td>Phyllis: Où est Corine?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phyllis: Pas de téléphone portable dans la classe</td>
<td>Phyllis: Absente?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student #2: Malade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student #3: Présent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student #4: Ici.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phyllis: Pas de téléphone portable dans la classe</td>
<td>Phyllis: Où est Casper?Absent?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student #5: He’s photocopying.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 23

**Example of Student Comfort with and Understanding of Teacher TL Use: The Case of Francis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Francis - Grade 10 Academic Core French</th>
<th>Francis – Grade 9 Applied Core French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Francis: Si vous avez fini vos corrections....prenez deux ou trois minutes pour étudier le vocabulaire de chapitre 6.</td>
<td>Francis: Bonjour, vous allez faire des recherches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student #1: Do we just type this up?</td>
<td>Francis: Ca va?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis: Non il faut faire une bonne copie... (Students get up for the national anthem)</td>
<td>Francis: Avez-vous choisi votre groupe musical?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis: Sac sur les chaises. (Student understands and puts bag on chair)</td>
<td>Student #1: I don’t have a band.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Francis: On fait de la recherche.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Francis: Vous avez cette feuille (shows sheet).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Francis: Tu veux changer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student #2: A Bruno Mars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Francis: Tu as besoin d’un crayon? (repeats twice and shows pencil)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Francis: Quel artiste?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Francis: Comment s’appelle ton chanteur?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Francis: Il est un musicien à (sic) Toronto?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student #3: Non, Jamaica (attempts to pronounce with French accent).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meanwhile, the opposite was true in classes where the teacher did not regularly speak French. In Brenda’s Grade 9 Applied and Grade 10 Academic classes students experienced difficulty understanding and displayed an obvious lack of comfort when the teacher spoke in French. Excerpts from both of Brenda’s classrooms are depicted in Table 24 below.

Table 24
Example of Student Lack of Comfort and Understanding of Teacher TL Use: The Case of Brenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 9 Applied Core French</th>
<th>Grade 10 Academic Core French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brenda: Bonjour! To start, on va faire de la révision…So you have, if you look in your visual dictionaries, what do you do with tickets? I am about to hand them back. If you need help, tu peux chercher à la p. 98 dans ton cahier.</td>
<td>Brenda: C’est un monologue, c’est toi et seulement toi qui écrit et fait la présentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student #1: p. 98 in your cahier?</td>
<td>Brenda: Si je pouvais changer le monde, je….</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student #2: Yeah.</td>
<td>Student #1: Could you just explain in English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda: You have to start what makes sense…</td>
<td>Brenda: Vous avez fini? Vous avez besoin d’un dictionnaire?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student #3: She said cahier.</td>
<td>Brenda: Qu’est-ce que tu fais avec ton IPOD?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…</td>
<td>Qu’est-ce que tu tapes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda (to an individual student): Well, just keep going.</td>
<td>(Student #1 doesn’t understand at first)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda (to an individual student): En ligne means on line.</td>
<td>Brenda: Est-ce que c’est bien fait?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…</td>
<td>(Student silent teacher reformulates)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda: Maintenant, on va faire l’écoute…</td>
<td>Brenda: Vous pouvez lire le travail à haute voix?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda: Est-ce qu’il faut écouter encore? Encore?</td>
<td>Student #2: What?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two students: Encore? Encore means again?</td>
<td>Brenda: (asking another student) Tu veux un dictionnaire?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda: Oui.</td>
<td>Student #3: (long silence) Oh, oui.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda: Ext-ce que tu as aimé les idées de _________ (name of another student in class)?</td>
<td>Brenda: Ext-ce que tu as aimé l’idée de _________?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student #4: I don’t understand.</td>
<td>(Silence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda: Ext-ce que tu as aimé l’idée de Megan?</td>
<td>Brenda (repeats herself): Est-ce que tu as aimé l’idée de Megan?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student #2: A what?</td>
<td>Same student #2: A soup?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.5 Summary of findings of Individual Core French Teachers’ actual practices

Although far from comprehensive, an analysis of individual focal participants’ actual practices provides interesting insight into the relationship between certain instructional practices and student behaviours. Small differences in teacher practices such as the use of techniques other than continuous translation to provide comprehensible input enable teachers to use large amounts of target language regardless of teaching context (i.e., Applied, Academic, Beginner; Grades, 9, 10, 11, 12). The result is greater student comfort with and understanding of the TL as well as increased student TL use. Students tend to follow suit, in other words, when the teacher employs the TL, students tend to employ the TL as well and when the teacher employs the dominant language, students tend to employ the dominant language. Explicit teacher expectation of target language use by students also contributes to greater student TL use.

7.6 Comparison with the literature on teachers’ instructional practices, student behaviour and achievement

Similar to the results in comparable studies in the literature, results in this study point to the fact that the teacher and his or her instructional practices significantly influence student classroom behaviour and academic achievement. Aaronson, Barrow and Sanders (2007) concluded that effective teachers positively influence all students. For example, in this study focal participants who employed techniques other than translation to provide comprehensible TL input to students increased student comfort with the TL and encouraged greater student TL regardless of grade or program. In classes taught by focal participants who did not employ such techniques there was clear evidence of student discomfort with use of the TL and little student use of the TL amongst all students regardless of teaching context.

7.7 Focal Participants perceptions/impressions of their actual practices

During the individual interviews with focal participants, all but one shared that the primary goal (beliefs) of their Core French teaching was to enable students to speak and understand French, which included creating an environment where both the teacher and students speak
and understand the TL. Of the twelve focal participants who expressed this belief, the actual practices of nine (Fabia, Faizal, Francis, Marina, Maria, Page, Pauline, Phyllis and Will) were more or less congruent with this belief, and in their Core French classes the language of communication was primarily French. Meanwhile, the actual practices of three focal participants (Mary, Zara and Brenda) diverged from their beliefs, as the language of communication in their Core French classes was not primarily French. In comparing the transcriptions of the individual interviews, there was a clear divide or split in the language employed, the impressions and perceptions of teachers whose practices were congruent with their beliefs and those whose practices diverged from their beliefs. Focal participants whose practices matched their beliefs expressed much more confidence and assuredness in their Core French teaching abilities as well as the abilities of their students. Moreover, these participants demonstrated a willingness to persevere, to take initiative, and to be spontaneous and flexible. They demonstrated enthusiasm and optimism for the Core French program and existing resources and materials.

7.7.1 Oral Communication: A primary objective of focal participants’ Core French Teaching

In interviewing the 13 focal participants, all but one teacher emphasized that the primary goal/objective of their Core French teaching was helping students to understand and to communicate in the target language. Key recurring words employed by participants included: “oral communication,” “authentic, meaningful,” “motivating, interactive,” “speaking,” “talking,” “listening and understanding.” Zara, for example, stated that she felt “like students need more speaking and listening rather than writing and reading.” Brenda also stated, “As in talking in French, based on the stuff that’s in the book, I try to make as much of that…oral communication.” Francis’ main goal was also to “have my students producing more language, whether it be spontaneous which is more difficult or through routine questioning.” Mary’s priority was similar as she said “you know I want them to feel more comfortable with spoken French.” Faizal insisted, “If you don’t talk the language, you don’t learn the language.” Pauline shared that during her lessons she was always thinking “is this interesting enough, is this fun, are they speaking French, do they understand what I’m saying?” Phyllis
was similarly preoccupied with “how do I create an environment where the student is going to speak the language in an authentic way?”

Only, Max, who teaches Grade 9 Academic and Applied Core French, did not view “oral communication” as an objective of the Grade 9 Courses. His primary objective at the Grade 9 level was to change “negative attitudes” towards French and in so doing help students “pass the course.”

7.7.2 Important differences in participants’ perceptions/impressions of their teaching

While teachers expressed similar beliefs about the objectives of their Core French teaching, there were important differences in the impressions and perceptions shared by participants during the post-observation interviews regarding their actual teaching. As Bandura (1977, 1982, 1986) noted actual teaching practices/teacher behaviours are as much as, if not more, about self-efficacy, a teacher’s judgment of his or her ability to achieve a certain level of performance and to execute a certain course of action, than they are about actual skill level and competence. Most of the participants in this study completed the same teacher education program, share similar beliefs about the goals of second language teaching and overall employ similar instructional practices, resources and materials.

During the individual interviews, the focal participants, with the exception of Maria, whose primary objective was to help students understand and communicate in the target language and whose Core French practices aligned with this belief, displayed the characteristics of individuals with a high degree of self-efficacy identified by Allinder (1994), Bandura (2006), Evans and Tribble (1986), Gibson and Dembo (1984), Guskey (1988) and, Podell and Soodak (1993). Meanwhile those focal participants whose practices tended to diverge from their beliefs displayed the characteristics of individuals with lower levels of self-efficacy. Eight focal participants spoke with confidence, self-assuredness, enthusiasm and optimism. These participants displayed the characteristics of teachers with a high degree of self-efficacy. These eight participants were: Fabia, Faizal, Francis, Marina, Page, Pauline, Phyllis and Will. Meanwhile four of the observed teachers Brenda, Maria, Mary and Zara expressed far less confidence, self-assuredness, enthusiasm and optimism. Even when I perceived a
lesson or activity to be successful, these four teachers remained less than convinced, or even fully unconvinced by my words. These participants displayed the characteristics of teachers with a low degree of self-efficacy. Table 25 contains a comparison of the characteristics of the participants who displayed a high level of self-efficacy versus those who displayed a lower level of self-efficacy.

Table 25

Comparison of Characteristics of Focal Participants with Higher versus Lower Self-Efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of focal participants with higher self-efficacy</th>
<th>Characteristics of focal participants with lower self-efficacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
<td>Lack of self-confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic and optimistic about the Core French program and existing materials</td>
<td>Pessimistic about Core French program and existing materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in students’ abilities</td>
<td>Lack of confidence in students’ abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perseverance</td>
<td>Lack of perseverance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spontaneity and flexibility</td>
<td>Lack of spontaneity and flexibility (need for preparation, planning, structure, predictability)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong degree of initiative (regularly seeks out new materials, easily modifies existing materials and/or creates own materials)</td>
<td>Low level of initiative (difficulty seeking out new materials, lack of comfort and ability to modify existing materials or create materials)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focal participants with higher levels of self-efficacy demonstrated a high degree of self-confidence, while those with lower levels of self-efficacy expressed a lack of confidence in their abilities (Table 26). Those with higher levels employed expressions such as “I think I had a very successful class” and “I feel like [my personality] works” and “the success I’ve had…”, whereas those with lower self-efficacy could be quite self-deprecating employing words and expressions such as “I am failing”, “I struggle”, “so much anxiety” and, “I don’t know how…”
Table 26

_Focal Participants with Higher versus Lower Self-efficacy: Self-confidence_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expression of self-confidence</th>
<th>Expression of lack of self-confidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Will: It’s fairly typical, <strong>I think I had a very successful class today</strong> in that the activities were doing; I can do almost exclusively in French…</td>
<td>Mary: <strong>I feel like I am failing miserably</strong>…my measure of failing miserably is how much English they’re speaking to me and how much they just bitch and complain when I speak French… I think the other teachers <strong>who are more skilled than I am</strong> are making room for all sorts fun little… <strong>but I waste time</strong>…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauline: I feel like <strong>my personality works with teaching</strong> because, I’m, like a go-getter…</td>
<td>Brenda: <strong>I think I still struggle</strong>… When I started, <strong>there was so much anxiety</strong> when I started teaching and you want to do a decent job, so, it’s changed since I began teaching, but I wouldn’t say it hasn’t changed that much since I was in teacher’s college…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phyllis: now that I’ve had this experience and <strong>the success that I’ve had</strong>…</td>
<td>Zara: Yeah, sometimes it works out I guess… It could have been really fun, the thing is, <strong>I don’t know how to get them there right now</strong>… …when I got to this class, they were the only ones who spoke, it was very difficult to change this pattern where they were the only ones to raise their hands and to speak and <strong>I still don’t know how to change it</strong>…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focal participants with a high degree of self-efficacy about their Core French teaching expressed enthusiasm and optimism for the Core French program. Those with lower self-efficacy expressed some level of dissatisfaction with the program. These differences are depicted comparatively in Table 27.
Table 27
Focal Participants with Higher versus Lower Self-efficacy: Impressions of the Core French Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expressions of enthusiasm and optimism about the Core French program</th>
<th>Expressions of pessimism about the Core French program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Will: But for the most part, <strong>I think the program is very good and has good standards and expectations</strong> for the students.</td>
<td>Brenda: …I find the <strong>Grade 10 course is really, really unstructured</strong> so it’s really difficult to know what kind of evaluations we should be doing, so I find I’m really unbalanced with my Grade 10s…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauline: I think I’ve learned it’s what you make of it. <strong>I think core French can be a drag but I think it can also be exciting</strong> and like, it is pretty amazing when I hear them say <em>je suis désolé</em>, because we’ve been over and over it for the past 6 months. It’s like, alright this is cool, you’re communicating.</td>
<td>Brenda: <strong>I just wanted to get through a book</strong> and that’s the impression I got when I came here…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faizal: One of my colleagues retired, she was doing this program, but in our school, we have about ten French teachers, but they weren’t very optimistic about it, but, she retired, I took over and I just started the program. Now, my colleagues are interested in it, they see it works. No matter what you’re doing in your job, you want to see productivity especially when you’re teaching French, because it’s so boring if at the end of the year, they can’t even say their name in French, that’s so discouraging. So, when you see that they’re responding, you like it and my other colleagues. <strong>I brought the whole program in, they love it now</strong>, they’ve started to use it, everyone is doing it their own way, but students are learning and they’re talking to us.</td>
<td>Faizal: One of my colleagues retired, she was doing this program, but in our school, we have about ten French teachers, but they weren’t very optimistic about it…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focal participants with high levels of self-efficacy also expressed far greater confidence in the abilities of their students. They also demonstrated belief in their ability to influence students’ attitudes, behaviours, and overall performance. Participants with lower self-efficacy lack confidence in the ability of their students. They believe Core French students “know nothing,” “don’t know what I’m saying [in French],” “won’t understand,” “are lost” and
“would be lost” if spoken to in French. The differing perspectives of students’ abilities among participants are shown in Table 28.

Table 28

| Focal Participants with Higher versus Lower Self-efficacy: Confidence in Students' Abilities |
|---|---|
| **Expressions of confidence in student abilities** | **Expressions of lack of confidence in student abilities** |
| Faizal: I’ll be able to speak to a group of girls, *they’ll understand, no problem*, some understand fully, a couple of them don’t get it, so while I was speaking French, I was visually showing them what I meant. *They’ll be able to produce the more they hear.* | Zara: I find I have to really assume they know nothing because if I assume anything, they’re lost. I feel more pressure to be fast with them and to just explain it in English. I have spoken French to them… *but the fact is, they’re slow anyway*, so I didn’t want to waste time. A lot of the time I’ll give instruction in French, but *in my head, I’m thinking they don’t know what I’m saying* so I will translate that for them, even though they might. *It’s my perception they won’t understand*, so I’m doing them a favour by translating… |
| Francis: I have two Grade 9 Applied French, Grade 9 Academic and two Grade 10s. *Both my Grade 10s are wonderful, they’re very, very motivated*, you can tell they’re very interested in the language. My Grade 9 Applieds, *my most motivated* in my four years of teaching… And then *my 9 Academics are great*… a lot of them come from an extended French background, so they have a very, very good skill base… | Max: …we have always at the Grade 9 level, we aren’t aiming for 100% French. Probably with the Academics, we’re aiming for 50% for them speaking in French and me speaking to them in French, with the Applied not even 50%, *just because they would be lost*, so, the Applied a lot of times it’s basically just taught in English. |
| Mary: This class is very afraid of making mistakes… | Maria: *it doesn’t seem they’re capable* of doing that. |

Focal participants with high levels of self-efficacy proved more flexible and spontaneous and more willing and able to handle the unexpected. They insisted that they would follow through on an activity even if it might not go exactly as planned stating that: “sometimes you just have to go with it” and that the most successful lessons were “the ones I planned the
least!” Teachers with lower levels of self-efficacy emphasized the need to “plan” and to “structure everything” and shared that they would shy away from spontaneous situations, discussions or activities if they did not have the time to properly plan, organize and structure everything. Responses that demonstrate the differences in spontaneity and flexibility among participants are depicted in Table 29.

Table 29

**Focal Participants with Higher versus Lower Self-efficacy: Spontaneity and Flexibility**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expressions of spontaneity and flexibility</th>
<th>Expressions of lack of spontaneity and flexibility (continuous need for preparation and planning)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Will: If someone says something, even if it’s an offhand comment, almost anything that’s said becomes important to the whole teaching thing, <strong>sometimes you just have to go with it.</strong></td>
<td>Zara: <strong>It doesn’t happen spontaneously, I have to plan the French part</strong> usually, I have to, because there’s <strong>no way to have a spontaneous conversation</strong> with them so I <strong>structure everything</strong>. So sometimes, I just don’t do it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauline: But <strong>sometimes that’s improvisational</strong>, sometimes, it’s like ok, with the last class when we’re doing the vocabulary, you can feel it starts to get a little heavy for them, so you’re shifting. In my mind, I’m thinking, ok, it’s time for a game…</td>
<td>Brenda: Yeah, I agree. And I thought about doing some of the games but then, I don’t know, games, <strong>organizing</strong> them takes a <strong>lot of work</strong>…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phyllis: It’s funny, the <strong>lessons</strong> I had the <strong>most success</strong> with were the ones I <strong>planned the least.</strong></td>
<td>Mary: <strong>I don’t do them</strong>…I don’t do them…because I’m just…<strong>I’m too last minute</strong>…like to plan a game for me is like…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focal participants with higher self-efficacy insisted that they would persevere in the face of student resistance, hesitance or negativity with statements such as “I don’t give in to the pressure to speak English…” and some “kids will do whatever they can to get you to speak English…as long as it’s not you [the teacher] doing it,” and “I’m not giving up.” Whereas, teachers with lower self-efficacy employed expressions such as “I just gave up” and “I just stop.” Instances of perseverance and hesitation are shown in Table 30.
Table 30

Focal Participants with Higher versus Lower Self-efficacy: Perseverance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expressions of Perseverance</th>
<th>Expressions of lack of perseverance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phyllis: <em>I don’t give in to the pressure to speak English</em> because I feel it’s a bit of a battle, <em>they’re speaking English, I’m speaking French until somebody gives, but it’s not going to be me.</em></td>
<td>Zara: Sometimes it doesn’t work sometimes <em>I cut it off earlier than I need…</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…this one [game] flopped because I didn’t have the dice, it went AWOL last minute, but <em>I’m not giving up.</em></td>
<td>Zara: And then we’re trying to name him, they were having so much disagreement, <em>I just gave up.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis: Yeah, but eventually, I think one of the students will understand you so they might pass along the message in English, <em>as long as it’s not you doing it.</em> I think especially at the beginning of the year, kids will do whatever they can to get you to speak English…</td>
<td>Mary: <em>when I am tired</em> or at the end of my rope <em>I fall back on…</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>if I’m spending more than an hour planning I just stop…I’m just like I don’t have anything left to give</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even though all of the focal participants who teach Grade 9 Core French Academic and Applied employ the same textbooks (i.e., *Sans Frontières* and *Quoi de Neuf*), they had surprisingly different reactions to these textbooks. Teachers with high levels of self-efficacy were quite happy with the existing textbooks and workbooks. Meanwhile, those with lower self-efficacy were ambivalent about or disappointed with these same resources as show in Table 31.
Table 31
Focal Participants with Higher versus Lower Self-efficacy: Impressions of Core French Program Materials/Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expressions of like for Core French textbooks and workbooks</th>
<th>Expressions of ambivalence or dislike for Core French textbooks and workbooks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Will: I like the textbook, Sans Frontières, because most of the units are organized interestingly enough, they’re topical, so, you do the monsters, you do the crime vocabulary, and it gives them something that leads to presentation and the tests and stuff like that.</td>
<td>Zara: No, in this school they don’t use any textbooks. They were using textbooks before but they were far too difficult for the students. The Applied class was using Quoi de Neuf but I’m not using that, the other class was using Sans Frontières, but they’re not using that with me. I’m making photocopies of textbooks, but I’m not giving them textbooks, and they’re not going to look at them anyways. A lot of them aren’t at that point: I also don’t like to use textbooks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauline: I think it’s good, I like Sans Frontières, except for the fact there are 2 units on monsters and thieves. I’m like that’s such a waste I think, in terms of vocabulary, they should do a unit on the body, I think the space can be better used. Outside of that, I think Sans Frontières is really strong.</td>
<td>Maria: Sans Frontières is better than Au Tour de Nous, I’ve only ever taught those. When I started, they were brand new when I started and I’ve just kept them throughout. I don’t have anything to compare it to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phyllis: I don’t mind the textbook and I know that a lot of people complain about it because sometimes the subjects don’t appeal to the interests of the students and I do agree that the interests of the students are primary, but I also understand there are limited resources and you can’t always have the perfect world of resources available to you.</td>
<td>Brenda: Maybe what I’ll try and do eventually is starting moving away from using the textbook for the units I don’t like; it’s just hard to find texts that you want to use.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The eight teachers with a high degree of self-efficacy about their Core French teaching demonstrated high levels of initiative. They actively sought out new materials and resources and demonstrated a high degree of confidence in their ability to create and modify existing materials and resources if need be. Focal participants with lower self-efficacy felt there was a
“lack of resources” and that existing resources “need to be modified,” which “it takes a lot of work.” The results demonstrating the levels of initiative are shown in Table 32.

Table 32

*Focal Participants with Higher versus Lower Self-efficacy: Initiative*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expressions of Initiative (seek out new materials, create original materials, modify existing materials)</th>
<th>Expressions of lack of initiative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Francis: Even if they’re not attached, I find them very easy to modify. There were dialogues, there were board games, there were matching card activities, there’s lot of good things out there that we can modify to fit our theme or our unit</td>
<td>Zara: I would love to, I want to get to that point eventually, but I need to prepare, I find there is a, I have to say there is a lack of resources to help teachers do that…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faizal: It was different in terms of the story, you have to have one ground to build on, I didn’t have those stories. Now I know where I start my program, but even before that, I was ok, I was trying to find interesting stuff for my students…</td>
<td>Brenda: Yeah, I agree. And I thought about doing some of the games but then, I don’t know, games, organizing them takes a lot of work and then these need to be modified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phyllis: I don’t have unfortunately as many of these activities at my disposal as I would like, but I’m on the hunt for them and now that I’ve had this experience and the success that I’ve had, I’ll be looking for them.</td>
<td>Mary: I learned a bunch at PD so I have this ball with the questions and the idea is there’s numbers all over it and If I were more organized I would have different questions depending on the vocabulary that were handling in that unit…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis: Even if they’re not attached, I find them very easy to modify. There were dialogues, there were board games, there were matching card activities, there’s lot of good things out there that we can modify to fit our theme or our unit, but I’d like more.</td>
<td>Maria: it took me forever to find something in French on YouTube, there’s nothing,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Marina: There was a lot of stuff geared towards elementary level too [at the OMLTA Conference], but there are things they can modify, like matching things that everyone knows about. Initially now I can modify it to my level, so, things like that. | }
7.8 Summary of focal participants’ perceptions/impressions of their actual practices

The impressions/perceptions and the language employed by focal participants with a high degree of self-efficacy were quite opposed to the language employed by participants with a lower degree of self-efficacy. In fact, the divide was more substantial than I had anticipated. I had expected teachers to fit more on a continuum in terms of levels of self-efficacy. The words of participants with a high degree of self-efficacy in their Core French teaching abilities exuded confidence in self, in Core French students, in the program, in existing materials and resources. They displayed high levels of flexibility, spontaneity and initiative. Meanwhile, the words of participants with a lower degree of self-efficacy conveyed a lack of self-confidence, and a lack of confidence in the abilities of Core French students, in the program and ambivalence or dislike for current materials and resources. They displayed low levels of flexibility, spontaneity and initiative. They expressed a strong need to plan and structure and were uncomfortable with unplanned, unforeseen and unstructured situations. Such realities explain the minimal TL-use observed in unstructured situations such as those that did not involve the expression of routine phrases or participation in a drill-type activity.

7.9 Comparison with the literature on teacher self-efficacy (teacher impressions of their teaching and perceptions of their abilities)

Focal participants in this study whose Core French teaching practices (in particular use/role of the TL) were congruent with their beliefs displayed the characteristics mentioned in the literature of individuals with a high degree of self-efficacy. While those whose practices tended to diverge from their beliefs displayed the characteristics of individuals with a low degree of self-efficacy. Consistent with Bandura’s (1982) conclusions, teachers in this study with a high degree of self-efficacy about their Core French teaching abilities demonstrated perseverance in the face of adversity. They made statements such as “I’m not giving up” and “I don’t give in”, whereas those with lower self-efficacy said such things as “I just gave up,” “I’m too last minute,” “I’m failing miserably,” and “I don’t know how.” This study also found evidence of Bandura’s (1982) assertion that those who judge themselves to be ineffective are more likely to imagine potential difficulties as more formidable than they
really are. When I shared with one teacher with a lower level of self-efficacy that I though her activity “had worked out great”, she replied with “Yeah, sometimes it works out I guess.”

Rubie-Davis et al. (2011) affirmed that a teacher with high expectations of his or her students has higher self-efficacy, while a teacher with low expectations of his or her students has lower self-efficacy. This was true of the teachers in this study as those with higher self-efficacy used words such as: “wonderful”, “great”, “very motivated”, “very good” to describe their students, whereas teachers with lower levels of self-efficacy used words such as: “slow”, “lost”, “afraid”, “know nothing” to refer to students. Chacon (2005) found that teachers who were confident about their abilities and enjoyed their teaching were more willing to implement new and innovative practices. In this study, those with higher self-efficacy were eager and willing to seek out new resources, create materials and modify existing materials to fit their needs and the needs of their students. Focal participants with higher self-efficacy used words and phrases such as: “I’m on the hunt for them”, “I’ll be looking for them,” “There’s lots of good things out there” and “I find them very easy to modify.” Conversely, those with lower self-efficacy made statements such as “there is a lack of resources” and “it takes a lot of work [to modify them].”

While Siwatu (2007) argued that self-efficacy beliefs vary depending on the context and specificity of tasks, in this study, teacher self-efficacy beliefs varied little by Core French teaching context. That is, teachers with a high degree of self-efficacy demonstrated similar levels of self-efficacy regardless of Core French teaching context, e.g., Grade 9 Academic, Grade 9 Applied, Grade 10 Academic etc. The same held true for focal participants with a lower degree of self-efficacy. There was, however, some variation depending on the specificity of tasks. For example, Maria demonstrated a lower level of self-efficacy in terms of her ability to modify existing materials and her confidence in students’ abilities. Meanwhile, she exhibited a high level of self-efficacy in her ability to employ the target language with her students and to make herself understood without translation, i.e., via the use of intonation, gestures, visuals and questioning techniques. Maria said,

Yeah, even the beginners who had no idea and who had never been exposed to French definitely understand me, because I make sure I use key words that they’ve learned in the beginning of the year, I keep repeating those ones over and over
again, and then, I use visual aids to help them understand. I know it takes more time to tell them and I feel stupid doing it, but I’ll draw things on the board even though it’s so much easier for me to say it in English, and they’ll be like, why’d you make us guess what you’re drawing on the board? But, I’ll still do it…

…I’ll be honest, I think in class, I speak a little more French than other teachers when I pass by certain rooms. And I teach Grade 9’s and other teachers teach higher levels and I hear a lot of English.

In the case of Brenda, while she displayed lower levels of self-efficacy in her ability to communicate with her students in French, she displayed a high level of self-efficacy in her ability to successfully organize interactive communicative activities such as games using the target language. She successfully did this with all of her classes, Beginner Grade 9, Applied and Academic Grade 9 and Academic Grade 10 Core French. Brenda said,

this year especially because I’m teaching the Applieds and they really like the games and they’re provided so I might as well use them.

…That game…we worked on building those for the four different classes, 9 Academic, 9 Applied, 9 Beginner and Grade 10. And the idea that they speak in French in order to advance on the board and then the game is good I guess because you can modify it, other members of the group can ask questions, you can make sure you give more than one sentence answers…

7.10 Differences in the enactive and vicarious experiences of focal participants with higher self-efficacy versus lower self-efficacy

As noted in earlier chapters, Bandura (1977, 1986) argued that levels of self-efficacy are the result of one or more of the following: 1) enactive experiences; 2) vicarious experiences, and; 3) verbal and social persuasion. Enactive experiences involve the implementation of a particular practice. A positive enactive experience can powerfully reinforce a person’s sense of self-efficacy, while a negative enactive experience can undermine a person’s sense of self-efficacy. Enactive experiences are not the only types of experiences; vicarious experiences also contribute to an increase or decrease in levels of self-efficacy. Positive vicarious experiences such as seeing others perform an activity successfully can raise levels of self-efficacy. While observing people fail can in contrast lower one’s level of self-confidence. Verbal persuasion can similarly influence levels of self-efficacy. Verbal and social
persuasion can encourage people to believe that they possess the capabilities necessary to be successful at a given activity or task.

An important finding of this research is that three of the focal participants with higher levels of self-efficacy—Will, Page and Phyllis—had had positive enactive experiences teaching English as a second language (ESL). During their individual interviews, they referred to these experiences and explained how they had positively informed and influenced their Core French teaching. Will stated, “ESL is useful to me just because, in doing the ESL you learn a lot of games and just little things.” Page spoke about how her ESL background had provided her with ideas on how communicate with students in French. She stated,

I point to posters in the room of how to ask to go to the washroom, a drink, the date, the weather, they start producing. And they have a sheet of paper, your general sayings you would use on a day to day basis. And I think from there, I think just keep building.

While Mary also had ESL teaching experience, and appeared to have had a positive enactive experience, it did not inform her Core French teaching. She perceived the experience to be too dissimilar from present teaching responsibilities. When asked if any of her ESL knowledge and experiences had proved useful in teaching Core French. She answered “I wish no…I wish…essentially the kids that I was working with were high enough in their language that I didn’t need to do anything special.”

Marina alluded to a positive enactive experience during practicum. She specified, “I got to plan my own lesson and it was, I really got my hits and misses and that’s what inspired me when I got my real job.” Conversely, Brenda, Max and Mary acknowledged having had negative enactive experiences during their Core French practicums. Mary used the word “disappointment” when speaking about her practicums. When speaking about her practicum teacher Brenda divulged, “I mean, the way she taught I didn’t like…it wasn’t who I wanted to be as a teacher…” Max indicated that his practicum experience had been “ok…that his associate teacher was an older teacher who was in her last year before retiring”. He further added, “she wasn’t going out of her way to train me in much of anyway to be a French teacher or anything like that, it was more like, here, you can teach my class.”
Both Faizal and Phyllis had had positive enactive experiences learning languages other than French in the classroom. Faizal spoke positively about his experience as an ELL. Phyllis shared, “I studied Russian, Spanish, Croatian, I’ve studied a lot of different languages. I know how difficult it is, so, I’ve just had my own experiences learning those languages.”

Interestingly, negative enactive experiences as Core French and French Immersion students appear to have served as a catalyst to become a Core French teacher rather than a deterrent for a number of focal participants. Zara a former Core French student expressed that “I don’t really even remember having really positive experiences… I didn’t learn French from my school.” Because of her experience with Core French, she stated that when she entered teacher’s college “I already had the idea that I was going to teach French differently.”

Meanwhile, three focal participants had developed, either vicariously or because of verbal persuasion (i.e., my verbal persuasion in particular), a high degree of confidence in their ability to teach Core French in the way that they wanted. Phyllis, Francis and Marina indicated in their individual interviews that teachers’ college had fostered in them the conviction that they could communicate exclusively with their students in the target language. Phyllis spoke about verbal persuasion during teachers’ college, which had convinced her of the importance of communicating with her students in French. Phyllis stated,

…I really believe it was a message that was really clear, you should always speak the target language in the classroom and that should be the goal, to try to get them there. I guess I never thought that was possible before but, I was told it was possible so I believed it was.

Francis mentioned, “I did take a lot from you in teacher’s college, you’re the one who always told me you can do it in French, you don’t have to resort to English. You’ve always been in the back of mind to try and keep that up, so that’s helped. Marina also acknowledged that “I did not come into teacher’s college convinced that I could do that [teach in the target language and employ a communicative approach] but I graduated thinking I could do that.”
7.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter highlighted the actual practices of Core French teachers. I compared and contrasted actual practices with declared practices from the questionnaires. I identified small differences in individual focal participants’ actual practices, which appear to contribute to important differences in student behaviour. Individual interviews were analyzed and it was determined that there were important differences in focal participants’ beliefs about themselves and impressions of their teaching. Eight focal participants displayed the characteristics of teachers’ with higher levels of self-efficacy, while four displayed the characteristics of teachers’ with lower levels of self-efficacy. Focal participants shared numerous examples of positive and negative enactive experiences, verbal persuasion, and vicarious experiences as students, teacher candidates and beginning teachers. There is evidence that these experiences have exerted/exert considerable influence on levels of self-efficacy.

In the following chapters, I provide a synthesis of all of the main findings of this study. I revisit my research questions and conceptual framework. Finally, in light of my findings, I discuss the implications of this study for second language teaching particularly Core French teachers and their teaching, curricula, resources, teacher education programs and other types of training.
Chapter 8
Summarizing my key findings and providing answers to my principle research questions

In this chapter, I summarize the key findings from the data, provide answers to my research questions and explain the complex relationship between teachers’ beliefs, instructional practices and the outcomes of their teaching through the lens of my conceptual framework.

As an FSL teacher, researcher and former teacher educator, the principle goal of this thesis was to understand why so many of the teacher candidates I worked with experienced difficulty during their practicum employing instructional practices consistent with their beliefs about second language teaching. While they demonstrated great enthusiasm for communicative and other non-traditional approaches during my teacher-education classes, the majority ended up employing traditional second language teaching methods (e.g., focus on form, continuous translation or communicating with students exclusively in English) during practicum. In order to understand this phenomenon, I collected data on Core French teachers’ beliefs and their practices. I employed three types of data-collection methods including an on-line questionnaire, classroom observations and individual interviews.

I first collected data via an online questionnaire. Gathering data from a wider pool of participants allowed me to establish whether my 13 focal participants were representative of the wider pool of Core French teachers in terms of profile, beliefs about Core French teaching, and instructional practices. The objective of the classroom observations was to document actual teaching practices. I conducted individual interviews with each focal participant to assess their impressions of and reactions to their teaching.

I cross analyzed the three types of data in order to provide answers to my two main research questions, which were:

1. What factors affect Core French teachers’ instructional practices?

2. What is the relationship between Core French teachers’ beliefs and their practices?
Forty-seven teachers completed the on-line questionnaire, among whom 13 (the focal participants) agreed to participate in the classroom observation and interview phases of the study. Ten of the 13 focal participants are former teacher candidates of mine in their first five years of teaching. The three remaining teachers had hosted one or more of my teacher candidates. The results from the questionnaire of the wider participant pool were collected anonymously, while the results of the 13 observed teachers were not anonymous.

The first part of the online questionnaire consisted of profile questions aimed at establishing how many years the participants had been teaching Core French, whether they were teaching full or part-time, what grades they were teaching, which FSL program(s) they had completed as students and the types of second language teaching approaches to which they had been exposed. The second half of the questionnaire focused on determining the types of beliefs teachers hold in regards to second language teaching, as well as their attitudes toward the Core French program and communicative language teaching (CLT). I gathered classroom observations in the form of hand-written notes. I transcribed as faithfully as possible what teachers and students said. I also made note of any gestures, intonation and visual aids that were employed. The individual interviews consisted of a set of open-ended questions about the objectives or desired outcomes of the lesson, the approaches employed to plan and carry out the lesson, whether the teacher felt the lesson was successful and what the teacher might have done differently. In the end, because I had a personal connection with the 13 participants, each interview was unique. I asked slightly different follow-up questions depending upon participants’ initial responses, what I had observed in the classroom and my prior knowledge of the participant.

8.1 Similar profiles, beliefs and practices

The first main finding from an analysis of the completed on-line questionnaires and individual interviews is that focal participants who participated in this study not only share very similar profiles with one another, but also with the wider participant pool. Moreover, my participants and the Core French teachers in the literature, notably a study by Lapkin, MacFarlane & Vandergrift (2006), shared many similarities. The majority of participants graduated from a one-year Bachelor of Education program with a specialization in FSL. This specialization is a requirement to teach FSL in Ontario. Almost all of the focal participants
are women (80%) whose first or dominant language is English. Furthermore, 80% teach full time and have at least one Grade 9 Core French class in their timetable. A majority completed their schooling in Ontario with 55-60% having fulfilled their FSL requirement in the Core French program and 30-35% having completed all or part of their requirement in a French Immersion program.

The second key finding is that as students in elementary and secondary school, a majority of the participants who were students in the Core French program identified grammar-translation as the method most employed by their teachers. Less than 20% of participants indicated exposure to communicative language teaching (CLT) in elementary and secondary school. Participants also indicated that grammar-translation was the primary method or approach to instruction in their FSL courses at university.

Given the amount of exposure to grammar-translation as students, one would expect Core French teachers to hold beliefs consistent with this method. Yet, 100% of focal participants and 98% of the wider pool of participants believe that the focus of Core French teaching should be on helping students learn to speak and understand spoken French. An absolute majority also believe that it is essential for Core French teachers to employ large amounts of the target language with students, and regularly provide opportunities for meaningful student interaction in French. All of the above are key aspects of CLT and other non-traditional approaches. Despite identifying a number of perceived barriers to the use of CLT in the Core French classroom, most notably a lack of training and proper resources, focal participants and the wider pool of participants are extremely enthusiastic to employ CLT and are very satisfied with the results of previous attempts to employ CLT.

Another important finding in this study is that the declared practices of focal participants and the wider participant pool are virtually identical. Participants indicated that their Core French lessons focus primarily on a grammatical concept or a theme (i.e., climate change, natural disasters). Classes also tend to be heavily teacher-centered. Both groups of teachers most frequently employ oral presentations and grammar tests as testing tools. In terms of the use of French, focal participants and the wider participant pool indicated that they always or almost always employ the target language in closed-ended situations, such as when expressing
routine words and phrases, and when engaging in drill-type activities with students. Fewer participants employ the TL in more open-ended situations such as explaining a new concept, providing information about a test, giving instructions on how to complete an activity or assignment and when informally addressing individual students or small groups of students. Student patterns of target language use mirror teacher use. That is, students are most likely to employ French to express routine words and phrases, and when participating in teacher-led drill-type activities. They are least likely to use the TL when communicating with one another. The types of speaking activities employed by Core French teachers are primarily simple teacher-led question-response activities and prepared oral presentations. According to participants, listening and comprehension activities mainly involve exercises from a textbook or workbook. The most frequently employed writing activities amongst focal participants and the wider participant pool are grammar exercises. Both groups primarily make use of textbooks and workbooks as classroom resources.

In analyzing, the notes from my classroom observations, focal participants’ actual practices are consistent with their declared practices. Moreover, individual focal participants employ similar instructional practices, classroom activities and resources. Similar to the conclusions of previous studies by Calman and Daniel (1998), Howard (2006), Lapkin, Mady and Arnott (2009) and, Salvatori (2008), the Core French classes of the 13 focal participants are primarily teacher-centered; however, I did observe quite a bit of pair and group work. The lesson focus is most often on a grammatical concept or a theme, and exercises completed in class are most frequently form-focused (grammar exercises).

8.2 Understanding the relationship between beliefs and practices: Negotiating chaos

As mentioned in earlier chapters, studies by Basturkmen, Loewen and Ellis, 2004, Duffy and Anderson (1984), Fang, 1996, Kilgore et al. (1990), Phipps and Borg (2009) and, Solomon and Battistich (1996) argued that the discrepancy between teacher beliefs and actual classroom practices is often the result of resistance to change and/or conflict or incompatibility between teacher beliefs about second language teaching and non-traditional approaches such as CLT. The beliefs of the Core French teachers who participated in this study were not found to be in conflict or incompatible with CLT. In fact, a key finding of this
study is that Core French teachers’ beliefs are much more in line with the philosophy and objectives of communicative language teaching (CLT) and other non-traditional approaches than with traditional approaches such as grammar-translation and audiolingualism.

In analyzing my data on participants’ beliefs and practices, I was able to rule out certain answers to my principle research questions. In terms of my first question: What factors affect teachers’ instructional practices? I was able to conclude that exposure as a student to traditional methods such as grammar-translation and resistance to the adoption of CLT were not key factors affecting Core French teachers’ choice and use of instructional practices. In regards to my second research question: What is the relationship between Core French teachers’ beliefs and their practices? I was able to determine that the relationship is not one of compatibility or incompatibility between beliefs and practices.

To more fully answer my research questions, I engaged in a more detailed analysis of my data on individual focal participants (i.e., analysis of my classroom observation notes, and individual interviews). A closer look at my classroom observation notes revealed what I would term small differences in teacher behaviour or teaching techniques—differences that were not apparent when comparing overall instructional practices. Importantly, I found that these small differences in teacher behaviour resulted in significant differences in output or outcome. It was in cross analyzing the small differences in teacher behaviour, the significant differences in output or outcome and through closely examining the individual interviews with focal participants that I was able to provide answers to my two main research questions. That is, I was able to shed light on the relationship between Core French teachers’ beliefs, their instructional practices and the factors affecting instructional practices and outcomes.

In the interviews and questionnaires twelve of the thirteen focal participants expressed their desire to employ large amounts of the TL and to have their students attempt to employ the TL. Nine of the twelve focal participants who expressed this desire were successful in meeting this objective, while three were less successful. There were small differences in terms of how focal participants delivered comprehensible TL input to their students, for example. Teachers who were successful in meeting their objectives employed techniques other than translation such as the use of gestures, intonation, visual aids, repetition,
reformulation and multiple-choice questions. Such techniques enabled teachers to use large amounts of target language regardless of teaching context (i.e., Applied, Academic, Beginner; Grades 9, 10, 11 and 12). There were also minor differences in teacher expectations of student target language use. The teachers who were successful in meeting their objectives regularly and explicitly encouraged students to employ the target language using phrases such as \textit{En français!} and \textit{Pourquoi est-ce que tu parles anglais?}

A key finding in this study is that in classrooms with teachers who exclusively or almost exclusively employed French, students responded and reacted in ways that demonstrated comfort and understanding with teacher use of the TL. Whereas in classes where the teacher primarily communicated with students in English, there were numerous examples of students expressing discomfort and lack of understanding with teacher use of the TL. In addition, in contexts where the teacher primarily employed French, there were far more instances of students attempting to employ and actually employing the target language. In fact, it was observed that student use of the TL mirrored teacher use. Thus, when the teacher employed French, students tended to employ French and when the teacher employed English, students tended to employ English.

The amount of teacher TL use varied far more by teacher than by grade and program. Fabia, Faizal, Francis, Maria, Marina, Page, Pauline, Phyllis, and Will communicated almost exclusively with their Core French students in French, while Zara, Brenda and Mary communicated almost exclusively with their students in English. In other words, Fabia, Faizal, Francis, Maria, Marina, Phyllis, Pauline and Will communicated exclusively or almost exclusively in French whether they were teaching a Grade 8, Grade 9 Applied class, a Grade 9 Academic class, a Grade 10 or 11 class. Meanwhile, Zara, Brenda and Mary primarily communicated in English with their students regardless of whether they were teaching a Grade 9 Applied class, the Grade 9 Academic class, a Grade 10 or 11 class.

8.3 Levels of self-efficacy: A key factor in understanding the relationship between teacher beliefs and their practices

Analysis of the individual interviews provided insight into the thoughts, perceptions, impressions of focal participants regarding their Core French teaching. In terms of reactions
to their teaching, focal participants can be divided into two camps. Key findings are that those who were successful in employing large amounts of the TL held positive opinions of their Core French teaching, while those who were less successful held more negative opinions. Successful focal participants expressed confidence in themselves, in their abilities, in their Core French students, in the Core French program and in existing materials and resources. They were prepared to be flexible and spontaneous if need be when planning lessons, and during a lesson or activity. Less successful focal participants conveyed far less confidence in themselves and their abilities, as well as in the abilities of their students. They were less than impressed by the Core French program and ambivalent about or expressed a dislike for current materials and resources. They felt they were unable to employ certain instructional practices such as the use of the TL without translation successfully or engage in certain types of activities with students if they had not planned the lesson or activity.

The data collected for this study reaffirms the crucial and defining role individual teachers play in the second language classroom, regardless of context. Therefore, it is not that Core French teachers are unwilling to adopt CLT and other non-traditional approaches. Nor is it that Core French teachers do not want to speak French with their students or that they do not want their students to learn to understand and speak French. Rather, the findings suggest that many Core French teachers are ill-prepared to navigate the process of implementing a new approach or a new activity. They lack adequate understanding of the process and the strategies and techniques to effectively navigate the process.

8.4 A unifying framework for understanding the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and their practices: Complexity theory and the theory of self-efficacy

Viewing teacher beliefs and practices through the hybrid lens of complexity theory and Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy enables an effective understanding of the complex relationship between teacher beliefs, practices and even outcomes. This hybrid lens enables one to comprehend how two teachers teaching in similar contexts, with comparable profiles and beliefs can introduce a similar teaching practice, yet end up with substantial differences in outcome. Complexity theory combined with the theory of self-efficacy provides insight into why one teacher is able to employ a particular instructional practice and achieve desired
outcomes regardless of teaching context, while another teacher can attempt to utilize the same instructional practice but is unable to meet his or her objectives.

Compatibility/incompatibility between certain approaches and teacher beliefs and resistance to change are often cited as key in explaining the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and their practices. However, in this study, it was preparedness or lack of preparedness to handle periods of chaos involved in implementing a new approach that was found to be the key factor. It was the preparedness or lack of preparedness of individual focal participants to negotiate periods of chaos (i.e., instability and uncertainty) involved in attempting a new or different instructional practice, which lead to different outcomes. It was not about the use of traditional (grammar-translation) versus non-traditional approaches (CLT, action-oriented, task-based), the content of participants’ lessons or the resources they employed. Participants were found to employ very similar approaches and practices in their Core French teaching. It was about the small differences in the ways that focal participants handled periods of chaos.

In this study a majority of focal participants succeeded in employing the TL, even in the face of chaos in situations such as those wherein a student or students insisting the teacher speak in English, insist they cannot understand French or refuse to answer in French. Fabia, Faizal, Francis, Maria, Marina, Page, Pauline and Will used gestures, intonation, visuals and a variety of questioning techniques and avoided the use of English. They used these techniques to successfully navigate the period of transition from minimal student comprehension to a comfortable level of student understanding. Brenda, Mary and Zara rarely employed these techniques, if they employed them at all. When they had the impression that their students did not understand they immediately switched to English or translated what they had said in French into English. Fabia, Faizal, Francis, Maria, Marina, Page, Pauline and Will regularly and explicitly encouraged students to speak French, or at the very least to make an effort.

The theory of self-efficacy is essential to a more complete understanding of the factors affecting teachers’ instructional practices and the relationship between beliefs and practices. As noted in earlier chapters, Bandura (1986) termed perceptions about one’s ability, in particularly one’s ability to execute a certain course of action and bring about a certain outcome, self-efficacy. Levels of self-efficacy affect teacher behaviour during periods of
instability or chaos. Teachers with a high degree of self-efficacy are confident in their ability to navigate periods of chaos. They understand that the use of a given approach, a set of materials or the implementation of a certain activity may not go exactly as anticipated; however, they are not bound by the need for the lesson to go exactly as planned. They embrace the need for spontaneity and flexibility. For example, focal participant Phyllis acknowledged that a number of her most successful activities had been spontaneous and unplanned, a sentiment echoed by Faizal, Pauline and Francis. These teachers are able to effectively employ appropriate strategies and techniques to influence the trajectory taken by the system. They are able to overcome challenging contextual factors such as a culture of Core French teaching rooted in a tradition of grammar-translation and, a culture of Core French teaching where the language of communication has been primarily English and a discipline where the focus has been almost exclusively on form.

Focal participants who regularly made use of strategies and techniques such as the use of visual aids, gestures, intonation and questioning techniques to negotiate students’ understanding of the TL displayed a higher level of self-efficacy during their individual interviews. Phyllis, Marina, Francis, Paulina, Will and Faizal all made regular use of these techniques and demonstrated a high degree of self-efficacy in their Core French teaching abilities during their individual interviews.

On the other hand, Maria was an interesting case as she was the only focal participant who displayed a lower level of self-efficacy in her overall Core French teaching abilities during her individual interview, yet she regularly employed the above techniques. In fact, Maria was the participant who made the most use of gestures, visuals, intonation and questioning techniques to maximize her use of the target language, and she regularly explicitly insisted that her students attempt to communicate with her in French. However, she expressed strong reservations about the ability of her students to communicate more in French and to engage effectively in interactive speaking activities. The result was that she perceived that she was not meeting her objectives for her Core French teaching related to the amount of French she and her students employed. Even though Maria spoke quite a bit of French with all of her students, she believed she employed far less than what I had observed. Although she employed almost the same amount of French with all of her classes, two Grade 9 Academic
classes, one Grade 9 Applied class and one Grade 9 Beginner class, she was under the impression that she spoke much less French with her Applied classes. Because of these negative perceptions, she believed she was not meeting her objectives. As a result, Maria was not enthusiastic to continue teaching Core French and was seriously considering a career change. In fact, as noted in Chapter 7, she is one of two focal participants who have since left the teaching profession.

It was also found that a higher degree of self-efficacy could be restricted to certain instructional practices. Brenda, for example, displayed a high degree of self-efficacy about her abilities to successfully implement interactive speaking activities and games. She proved very effective at organizing interactive speaking activities with her students. She was the focal participant who organized the largest number of interactive speaking activities and games. She displayed confidence in her abilities and clearly possessed the techniques required to negotiate the successful implementation of such activities. However, Brenda was far less effective at communicating with her students in the target language. She made little use of different techniques to provide comprehensible input and negotiate meaning with students. She primarily resorted to translation or communicating altogether in English.

Core French teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy have the ability to positively influence actors in the system, which includes both students and colleagues. A teacher with higher self-efficacy can both overcome and reverse negative student attitudes toward the French language, including Core French students’ fear of taking risks and making mistakes when speaking the target language. A teacher with higher self-efficacy can also influence his or her colleagues. For example, Faizal “started a new program” and in the end encouraged his colleagues to adopt his program. At first, according to Faizal, the other Core French teachers (nine of them!) were not very enthusiastic. However, they observed him achieving the results they wanted for their own students, and according to Faizal, eventually they all “started to use [the new program].”
8.5 Enactive and vicarious experiences and verbal/social persuasion: Factors affecting levels of self-efficacy

As higher levels of self-efficacy correlate positively with a teacher’s ability to successfully navigate periods of chaos, it is crucial to understand what factors affect levels of self-efficacy. As noted in earlier chapters, the OECD (2013), Ross (1998) Rubie-Davies (2006) all concluded that the broader teaching experience (number of years of teaching), the greater the level of self-efficacy. Chacon (2005) and Eslami and Fatahi (2008) found a correlation between teachers’ proficiency in the target language and levels of self-efficacy. Thus, teachers who self-reported higher levels of proficiency also had higher levels of self-efficacy. In this study, focal participants possess similar levels of French proficiency. The nine beginning teachers passed the same proficiency test upon entering their teacher education program. In addition, the amount of instruction received in the use of CLT and other non-traditional approaches such as action-oriented and task-based approaches was about the same for all participants. None of the focal participant had attended more than five such workshops or information sessions.

According to Bandura (1977, 1982), differences in the enactive and vicarious experiences of teachers and the verbal and social persuasion they receive account for differences in levels of self-efficacy. Focal participants, Will and Page, identified positive enactive experiences as ESL/EFL teachers as influencing their Core French teaching. Faisal alluded to a positive enactive experience as an ELL student. Maria had positive enactive experiences as both a student and teacher of the Spanish language. She affirmed in her interview that her background in Spanish language teaching had contributed to her ability to provide comprehensible TL input to students. Three participants (Marina, Phyllis and Francis) shared that entering their first year of teaching, they held vicarious beliefs developed during their teacher education program about their ability to effectively teach Core French, particularly their ability to employ large amounts of the target language. As an experienced teacher, teacher educator and mentor, my verbal persuasion appears to have played a role in the formation of these beliefs. However, it is important to note that Brenda, Zara and Mary, teachers with lower self-efficacy, are also former teacher candidates of mine and they do not appear to have developed the same vicarious beliefs about Core French teaching as those
held by Phyllis, Francis, and Marina. Differences in enactive experiences as both students and teachers as well as vicarious beliefs provide possible explanations for higher levels of self-efficacy in some beginning teachers compared to lower levels of self-efficacy among others.

8.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I highlighted the key findings from the questionnaire data, provided answers to my two main research questions and analyzed the complex relationship between focal participants’ beliefs, practices and teaching outcomes. All of these findings were discussed and analyzed through the lens of my hybrid conceptual framework of complexity theory and Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy. In the next chapter, I analyze lesson excerpts from two focal participants to demonstrate more intimately how a teacher with a high degree of self-efficacy in her Core French teaching abilities responded to a period of instability or chaos compared with a teacher with a lower degree of self-efficacy.
Chapter 9
Focal participants’ Phyllis and Brenda: Navigation of a period of chaos

Complexity theory posits that when a teacher introduces a new practice or activity, initial conditions are disrupted and chaos and disorder ensue. Discomfort with the instability, unpredictability and chaos when implementing change is what prevents or discourages many teachers from following through on new approaches, practices and activities. Complexity theory emphasizes the importance of the small things. Indeed, it is the small things such as differences in instructional practices or techniques to handle the chaos which matter a great deal. They can have a huge impact on the outcome, on the ability of teachers to follow through on a particular instructional practice and to meet their objectives.

The relationship between beliefs, instructional practices and outcomes is equally about levels of self-efficacy, a teacher’s perception of his or her ability to effectively employ a certain practice, successfully organize a particular activity, positively affect student behaviour, and most importantly, to achieve desired outcomes. Levels of self-efficacy affect teacher behaviour during periods of instability or chaos. In fact, teachers with a high degree of self-efficacy are prepared for chaos, understand that chaos is normal and natural, are not intimidated by chaos, and may even welcome it.

In this chapter, I analyze excerpts from lessons taught by two teachers teaching in a comparable context, that is a Core French Grade 9 Academic class. Brenda and Phyllis have similar profiles. They are young women in their mid to late twenties. Their first language is English. They completed the Core French program as students in Ontario. They are former students of mine who teach full time in a secondary school specializing in the arts (i.e., drama, dance, music). Brenda and Phyllis have similar FSL timetables as each teaches at least one Grade 9 Applied Core French class, one Grade 9 Academic class and one Grade 10 Academic class. Brenda also has a Grade 9 Beginner Core French class. Phyllis has two years of Core French teaching experience, while Brenda has completed one year of teaching. They hold similar beliefs in regards to the objectives of the Core French program, notably that French should be the primary language of communication in the classroom.
Phyllis is a teacher with a high degree of self-efficacy in her Core French teaching abilities, while Brenda is a teacher with a lower degree of self-efficacy. Both teachers attempt to lead the students in the correction of homework from a textbook or workbook. They employ a similar approach of asking individual students questions in the target language to begin the lesson. However, despite these similarities it is fascinating to observe the divergence of behaviours/techniques between the two teachers when faced with a period of instability or chaos as the resulting outcomes are significantly disparate.

Figure 33 contains a visual representation of what happened when Phyllis and Brenda navigated a period of chaos in their grade 9 Academic Core French classes. Figure 33 builds on Figures 2, 3 and 4 in Chapter 4. During the two lessons depicted in Figure 49, both Brenda and Phyllis corrected homework in the textbook and workbook with a Grade 9 Academic Core French class. Both teachers employed a similar approach (instructional practice) to the homework correction wherein the teacher corrected the homework asking individual students to contribute answers. In both cases, the teacher attempted to lead the correction in French.

At some point during the lesson, Brenda and Phyllis were faced with a situation that introduced an element of chaos or instability. A student expressed a lack of understanding when the teacher employed French, or insisted the teacher switch to English, or a student responds in English rather than in French. These situations presented challenges for both Brenda and Phyllis. Faced with navigating these challenges, it is here that the reactions or behaviours of Brenda and Phyllis diverged.
Figure 49. Navigating periods of chaos: Comparison of Focal participants Phyllis and Brenda.
A detailed analysis of Brenda and Phyllis’ reactions or behaviours (see Table 33 for excerpts from the two lessons) reveal small but important differences in how they responded to these challenges, or how they navigated the chaos and instability.

Phyllis used French throughout the lesson employing visual aids, gestures and intonation to make herself understood. She explicitly insisted that her students speak in French through prompts such as “Pourquoi tu parles anglais?” and provided positive encouragement to this end, “Tu es capable!”. She also scaffolded the language for students and modeled how to respond in French. For example, in one case she supplied a word or expression when a student said “Est-ce que je peux go get my crayon?” Phyllis added “chercher”. In another instance Phyllis translated a students’ sentence into French when the student said “I can’t find my copy”, Phyllis translated “Je ne peux pas trouver….”

Brenda also began correction of the homework in French, through stating “On va corriger les devoirs.” “Sortez-vos cahiers s’il vous plait.” However, when a student insisted that he or she did not understand by saying “I have no idea what you said”, Brenda immediately switched to English to communicate not just with that particular student but also to communicate with the entire class. She switched to saying “…we did E let’s take up E. Some of you had trouble with F.” Brenda did not utilize any visual aids, gestures or intonation to help the student understand. For example, she could have held up the workbook and gestured toward it. When students spoke or responded in English, I did not observe any instances of Brenda explicitly requesting that students speak French or employing scaffolding or modeling of the target language for individual students.
Table 33

*Brenda and Phyllis: Comparison of Exerts from Lessons Correcting Homework in a Textbook or Workbook*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phyllis – Grade 9 Core French (Academic)</th>
<th>Brenda - Grade 9 Core French (Academic)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correction of homework p. 88 in the workbook <em>Sans Frontières</em></td>
<td>Correction of homework pp.206-207 in the textbook <em>Sans Frontières</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student: Can I get a drink?  
(Silence…teacher does not respond)  
Same student: *Est-ce que je peux boire de l’eau?* *Est-ce que je peux aller aux toilettes et boire de l’eau?*  
Phyllis: *Est-ce que tu es allé boire de l’eau?*  
Phyllis (to another student): *Tu attends qui?*  
Phyllis: *Pourquoi est-ce que tu parles anglais?*  
Phyllis: *Tu es capable!* (with intonation)  
Student: *Est-ce que (2 students attempt to ask a question in French)*  
(teacher helps students « *enseignes* »…)  
Phyllis: *Est-ce que vous avez des copies de la rubrique pour madame?* (shows rubric)  
Student: I can’t find my copy.  
Phyllis (models for student how to say in French): *Je ne peux pas trouver…*  
Female student: *Est-ce que je peux aller à mon casier?*  
Another student: *Est-ce que je peux go get my mon crayon?*  
Phyllis: (helps student) « *chercher* »  
Phyllis: *Les éléphants paragraphe où il faut remplir avec la bonne conjonction.*  
Student (provides an answer): *Ils peuvent obtenir l’argent pour les défenses…*  
Another student: *capturer un trois (un tiers teacher corrects) des éléphants pour les sauver.*  
Another student: I just came up with one— *Protéger les élèves dans un parc spéciaux.*  

Brenda: *On va corriger les devoirs. Sortez vos cahiers s’il vous plait. Est-ce que tu veux sortir ton cahier?*  
Student: I have no idea what you said  
Two other students: Take out your cahier.  
Brenda: We did “E” let’s take up “E”.  
Brenda: Some of you had trouble with “F”.  

(Student arrives late.)  
Brenda: *Pourquoi tu es en retard? Où est ton cahier?*  
Brenda: *Est-ce qu’on peut corriger A?*  
Brian, *Attention! Remember les pronoms disjoints, je becomes moi.* When do we use a pronom disjoint?  
Brenda: You use them after *c’est* or *ce sont.*  
Brenda: Qui sait?  
Brenda: Can you say, *c’est “il”?*  
…  
Brenda: *Est-ce qu’on peut lire?…*  
Brenda: *Qui veut jouer le rôle d’Anne? Qui veut être?…*  
Brenda: Can you be Naismith? (translates as student didn’t understand the French)  
(Students take turns reading.)

The fact that Brenda and Phyllis dealt with these challenges, navigated the instability and chaos quite differently, lead to a significant divergence in outcomes. In Phyllis’ class, the outcome is that the teacher and students are comfortable with French as the language of
communication. Students do not protest or oppose teacher use of the target language, as they are aware that she will scaffold their understanding with visual aids, gestures and intonation. They are more likely to attempt to answer in French knowing that their teacher will insist that they make an effort to use the target language, that she will provide positive reinforcement, and most importantly, that she will model how to respond and scaffold their responses if they require help. In Brenda’s class, the outcome is that the teacher and the students are uncomfortable with the use of French as the primary language of communication with Brenda switching to English when a student does not understand. Additionally, students make little or no effort to employ the target language knowing that the teacher is unlikely to insist that they do so or to scaffold their responses.

A key factor explaining the differences in behaviours is that Phyllis is a teacher with high levels of self-efficacy, while Brenda is a teacher with lower self-efficacy. Phyllis is prepared to handle any chaos and instability. She is confident in her abilities and has a strong command of the strategies and techniques to do so. Brenda is not confident in her abilities and lacks a command of the strategies and techniques that would allow her to meet her objectives.

In her individual interview, Phyllis demonstrated a strong degree of preparedness to deal with the chaos, whether it be a student pressuring her to speak English, a student requiring support to understand her use of the TL, or help to respond in French. She admitted that there was “pressure to speak English” in her Core French classes and that “[i]t’s a lot of energy” to speak French, but she expressed a high level of self-efficacy in her ability to handle the pressure. Phyllis stated, “they’re speaking English, I’m speaking French until somebody gives, but it’s not going to be me.” She regularly employed visual aids, or cues as she called them, to help students understand her use of French. She said, “I continuously go point at the poster…I ha[ve] all those visual cues, I think those are important.”

Phyllis recognized the importance of certain small behaviours and actions such as “connecting with the students,” “caring about them,” “asking them about themselves,” “asking about what they do on the weekends” as “so key to getting them to buy in, and they have to buy in.” She understood that the little things make a big difference. She also
emphasized the need to scaffold the language for her students to help them respond in the target language. Brenda said, “I find that if you can explain it in French, if you start simply…in steps, that you can really do it in French, but if you can really start from something that they know.” She even went on to say. “It’s a scaffolding thing.”

In contrast, Brenda was not prepared to handle chaos and instability in the system admitting that when a student responded in English she tended to switch to English as she found it hard “to not answer questions in English when I’ve been asked them in English.” She acknowledged that “it’s really hard to come in and to remember to speak in French” that “it takes a lot of work to remind yourself that they should be asking this in French and then remind them they should be asking in French and encourage them to keep trying.” She provided an instance of a student capable of speaking French who on a particular day (when I was observing) insisted on speaking English and how she found “it was odd he didn’t switch” even though she was addressing him in French. However, during the lesson, she did not explicitly ask the student to switch to French. Furthermore, it did not occur to her during the post-observation interview that explicitly asking the student to speak French and encouraging him to do so might have provided sufficient motivation for him to switch languages.

While the above would seem obvious to an outside observer, when under pressure the small things such as the teacher continuing to speak French when students are responding in English can prove very difficult. This difficulty may be particularly acute for a teacher with lower self-efficacy who has not consciously prepared herself to handle the chaos. In Brenda’s own words, “I definitely didn’t have a plan, that’s something to think about.”

Phyllis has a strong, confident identity as a Core French teacher. On the other hand, Brenda’s identity as a Core French teacher is uncertain, even ambivalent. Phyllis has developed her own set of French expressions to encourage her students. For example, she calls them “superstars” with French intonation, with a French accent, when they have done well. Meanwhile, Brenda admitted that there was “a lot of anxiety” when she began teaching Core French and reflected “I think I still struggle.” She found it hard to remember to speak French
with her students or not to respond to her students in English when they addressed her in English.

Brenda and Phyllis both have very similar proficiency levels in French. Both spent time in France. Brenda spent time in France in high school and Phyllis after her Bachelor’s degree. Neither had a positive experience as a Core French student. Brenda had a negative practicum experience, while Phyllis had a mixed reaction to her practicum experience.

What factors can account for the discrepancy between Phyllis and Brenda in the levels of self-efficacy? Phyllis spent time teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in France. Even in France, she demonstrated initiative stating that she was “always looking at course outlines and getting information from schools about what their philosophy is and what their approach is to learning languages.” Phyllis has also studied a number of other foreign languages including Russian, Spanish and Croatian. She shared that these varied language-learning experiences inform her Core French teaching. She also shared that during her teacher education program, she was convinced vicariously and via verbal persuasion that she could teach in the target language. As she said, “I guess I never thought that was possible before but, I was told it was possible so I believed it was.”

In the case of Brenda, her only language learning and teaching experiences are related to the French language. Neither verbal persuasion nor vicarious experiences during her teacher education program convinced Brenda that she could successfully communicate primarily with students in the target language and have her students regularly attempt to respond to her in French. In regards to teacher’s college, she stated that it was “always in the back of my head what I should be doing, what the ideal practice is.” However, she expressed regret at not being able to remember the activities discussed during her teacher education program and wished she had “been told in the beginning of the year to write down what they were.”

It is probable that were Brenda to spend time with Phyllis for example, she would quickly notice the little things that Phyllis does that make a huge difference. She would realize the importance of explicitly encouraging students to make an effort to respond in French. She would observe the effective use of visual aids, gestures, intonation and a variety of other techniques other than the use of English translation to provide comprehensible input. She
would witness multiple examples of how to model and scaffold. Most importantly, she would observe the normal and natural use of French as the language of communication in the Core French classroom.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, through the lens of my conceptual framework combining elements of complexity theory and the theory of self-efficacy how the implementation of a similar instructional practice in a Grade 9 Academic Core French classroom can lead to very divergent outcomes. In the following chapter, my concluding chapter, I discuss the implications of this study for Core French teaching. I highlight areas for further research, describe the limitations of this study and end with a few closing remarks.
Chapter 10
Implications of this study and concluding remarks

In this final chapter, I discuss the implications of this study for FSL teacher education and curriculums and Core French textbooks. Finally, I discuss its limitations, propose areas for further research, and provide a few concluding remarks.

10.1 Implications of this study for teacher education, curricula, textbooks and other resources

10.1.1 Teacher education

The findings of this study reinforce Freeman’s (2002) argument that teacher education needs to move away from “the pervasive view that content and process are separate” (p. 4). In other words, FSL teacher education needs to focus as much on the process of teaching, how to teach, as on the content of one’s teaching, what to teach. As Piccardo (2010) asserted, complexity should be at the core of all FSL teacher education programs (p. 90). Future second language teachers would benefit greatly from a teacher education program which prepares them for the unpredictable, uncertain, human dimension of teaching, not just a program where teacher educators present different second language approaches, methodologies, activities and materials (Piccardo, 2010, p. 89). If beginning Core French teachers are to adopt successfully new instructional approaches and activities, which they were enthusiastic to do in this study, it is vital that they understand that teaching is first and foremost a complex activity. Indeed, new teachers must be prepared for the reality that chaos and instability are inevitable, normal and natural when introducing a new approach or activity. It is important that they learn to be adaptable, flexible and spontaneous in the face of periods of chaos. In FSL teacher education programs, teacher candidates, via discussion and role play, could explore different scenarios involving periods of chaos in the Core French classroom and strategies and techniques to navigate these periods of chaos. They could discuss possible difficulties/challenges they might encounter with the introduction of an approach or activity. Candidates could anticipate the consequences of choosing a particular type of strategy as well as techniques for handling the chaos.
The following section provides examples of scenarios specific to the Core French classroom and discusses approaches FSL teacher education programs may use to provide new teachers with necessary skills for dealing with complexity. In this section I describe how teacher candidates may be trained to deal with negative student reactions to the Core French program and teacher TL use, as well as how teachers can negotiate meaning with a student without the use of translation.

FSL teacher education programs must address teacher levels of self-efficacy. As noted earlier, three of the four focal participants in this study with lower levels of self-efficacy regarding their Core French teaching abilities have since left the teaching profession. It is essential that beginning teachers be afforded opportunities to engage in positive, enactive and vicarious Core French teaching experiences. It is vital that beginning teachers work with host and mentor teachers who help them understand and deal with the complexities of teaching, and who provide them with much-needed verbal and social persuasion during their practicums (i.e., You can do it! It is possible for you…). For example, teacher candidates and beginning teachers require host and mentor teachers who can provide guidance on and demonstrate how to effectively handle Core French students who insist that the teacher speak English, or students who refuse to attempt to speak the target language, or who are exposed in the home to the view that learning French is a waste of time. Teacher candidates and beginning teachers require host and mentor teachers who will share advice, strategies and techniques on the small but hugely important things such as how to negotiate student feelings of discomfort, uncertainty and anxiety in the face of a new language. Moreover, teacher candidates need to learn how to provide comprehensible target language input to beginner students, how to negotiate meaning without translation, and how to encourage students to make the effort to communicate in the target language with the teacher.

10.1.2 The FSL curriculum

This study underscores the importance of an FSL curriculum that focuses on the complexities of teaching, and it addresses how to teach as much as what to teach, i.e., linguistic and cultural content. The 2013-2014 revised curriculum, in contrast to the earlier curriculum, focuses much more on how to teach. For example, the revised curriculum provides suggestions for how to make target language input comprehensible. This thesis demonstrates
that focus on the small things such as effective provision of comprehensible TL input can have enormous consequences for the outcome of a lesson. Indeed,

One of the key terms in second-language learning is “comprehensible input”. It is the teacher’s responsibility to provide comprehensible input, ensuring that the messages that students receive are understandable. Making the input relevant – to the learner, the context, the situation – is one way of doing this. Repetition and recycling are also integral to making input comprehensible. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 9)

Two ways to emphasize how to teach when working with teacher candidates are to focus on modeling and scaffolding. These terms can be found throughout the revised curriculum. The revised curriculum includes a number of teacher prompts, which model for teachers what questions to ask when introducing a concept. Additionally, the curriculum includes instructional tips, which contain suggestions of what linguistic concepts to scaffold. For example, in the Grade 9 curriculum, to develop listening and comprehension skills, teachers are encouraged to have students “extract key information from an oral text about environmental issues” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 59). The teacher prompts which follow model for teachers what types of questions to ask students. Questions such as: “Quelles sont les idées principales dans cette présentation? And Comment peux-tu démontrer ta comprehension?” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 59). While these prompts are helpful, it would be equally beneficial to have prompts demonstrating how teachers can scaffold student responses to these questions depending on student level of French. For example, scaffolding responses by offering students a set of answers from which to choose.

10.1.3 Textbooks, workbooks and teacher’s guides

Available textbooks, workbooks and teacher’s guides for Core French also tend to focus almost exclusively on what grammatical and lexical (vocabulary) concepts to teach. It is clear from the results of this study that teachers continue to rely heavily on textbooks and workbooks. Thus, it is equally important that textbook/workbooks deal with the complexities of Core French teaching, and that they address how to teach the content as much as what to teach. A full articulation of how such revisions may be undertaken is beyond the scope of this thesis; however, future Core French textbooks must be flexible, dynamic, adaptable, even modifiable (Piccardo & Yaiche, 2005, p. 455). Moreover, as Kramsch (2008) noted they
should help both teachers and students learn to “mediate…complex encounters” (p. 390), “navigate much less predictable [linguistic] exchanges” (p. 390), and “develop a much more flexible capacity” (p. 391).

10.2 Limitations of this study

With only 47 participants having completed the questionnaire and 13 participants having participated in the classroom observations and individual interviews, this study did not seek to provide generalizations in regards to Core French teachers’ beliefs about second language teaching or their teaching practices. Rather, the objective was to capture the thoughts and behaviours of a select group of Core French teachers in the Greater Toronto Area to provide insight into the relationship between their beliefs and practices. However, I believe, this study paves the way for a larger quantitative or mixed-methods study investigating the instructional practices of Core French teachers and their beliefs about Core French across the country.

There is the possibility of a response bias due to social desirability in both the questionnaires and individual interviews. Participants may have provided what they believed to be the “desirable/ acceptable/expected answer” (Dörnyei, 2003, p. 12) to questions about the best way to teach Core French, the role of the target language in the CF classroom and how they felt about communicative language teaching (CLT). Participants were aware of my personal biases and this may also have influenced their answers.

Another limitation of this study is that classroom observations involved maximum two or three days within the same week with each participant. It would have been ideal to observe teachers for two to three days at the beginning of the year, in the middle of the year, and at the end of the year to determine if there were any changes in levels of teacher self-efficacy, instructional practices and student behaviours. A longitudinal case study would allow for collection of data throughout the process of implementing a new instructional practice. It would be possible to document the types of chaos, disorder and instability that ensue, and teacher perceptions of and responses to the chaos (strategies/techniques employed) as well as student reactions and behaviours.
Despite these limitations, in my view, this study provides a significant contribution to theoretical knowledge in the field of Core French teaching, FSL and second language teaching in general. Analyzing my data on Core French teacher beliefs and practices through the lens of the hybrid conceptual framework of complexity theory and Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy enabled me to highlight periods of chaos in the Core French classroom and the crucial and defining role played by the teacher’s navigation of periods of chaos. Two Core French teachers can begin the school year teaching with fairly similar initial conditions. They may have similar objectives and beliefs for their Core French teaching and attempt a similar instructional practice, yet teacher understanding and handling of periods of chaos are what determine the eventual outcome. The findings of this study also point to the fact that perceptions about one’s ability to achieve a particular outcome are far more important than actual ability/knowledge. It is self-efficacy, the level of confidence in one’s ability to achieve a particular outcome in the face of chaos, to handle the uncertainties of teaching, and the unexpected bumps along the way, which are defining factors in explaining consistency and inconsistency between teacher beliefs and practices. Teachers with a high degree of self-efficacy do not necessarily possess greater knowledge about Core French teaching approaches, methodologies, activities and lesson planning. However, they have greater confidence in their abilities to effectively implement a particular approach, to achieve a particular outcome, and to reach their objectives even in the face of challenges and setbacks. They have a high degree of confidence in their ability to handle periods of chaos. They are prepared to be flexible, spontaneous, and open to modifying aspects of the lesson if need be. Indeed, teachers with high self-efficacy are not deterred by setbacks; they persevere with the objective in mind.

I believe this study can assist Core French teachers in successfully implementing new and desired approaches and activities, most notably the revised curriculum. Most importantly, it can help teachers ensure greater consistency between beliefs and practices and thus meet their objectives for their Core French teaching. As well, it will provide a framework for teacher educators, host and mentor teachers so that they may provide effective supports and materials to teacher candidates and beginning Core French teachers.
10.3 Future research

Further study is required to determine how teacher education programs and in-service professional development opportunities can best prepare Core French teachers to understand the complexities of teaching and handle periods of chaos. Further study is also required to gain a deeper understanding of the types of chaos Core French teachers face, what sorts of chaos might ensue based on the introduction of a particular instructional approach or activity, and what sorts of strategies and techniques can be effective in navigating the different types of chaos. It is also important to better understand what factors contribute to higher levels of teacher self-efficacy. Such studies could examine the types of enactive and vicarious experiences, and verbal/social persuasion that contribute to higher levels of self-efficacy and best prepare teachers to handle chaos. Further study is required to better understand how and why certain individuals are able to benefit from vicarious experiences and verbal/social persuasion, while others secure less benefits from the same experiences. Finally, it is important to further explore the relationship between teacher understanding and preparedness for the complexities of teaching and levels of self-efficacy. Questions linger related to if teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy are more likely to understand, accept, even welcome chaos and if they are more likely to employ appropriate strategies and techniques to handle the chaos. Further research could explore whether increased understanding of the complexities of teaching and the types of strategies and techniques to handle chaos contribute to greater levels of self-efficacy among teachers.

10.4 Concluding remarks

It has been approximately forty years since the communicative language teaching (CLT) movement first gathered steam in the mid-1970s. It has been over thirty years since the National Core French Study attempted to bring about a renewal of Core French teaching by proposing a Multi-Dimensional Curriculum (Leblanc, 1990). Nevertheless, the document had limited success in influencing Core French teaching and teacher education in Ontario. With a new revised curriculum for the province and recently released and soon to be released textbooks, the opportunity is once again here to bring about a renewal of Core French teaching.
The findings in this study indicate that less time and resources should be spent outlining the principles of communicative language teaching and convincing Core French teachers of its effectiveness. Indeed, two of the key findings of this study are that Core French teachers have a good understanding of what constitutes CLT and are enthusiastic to adopt such an approach. While teachers in this study were excited to adopt CLT, many felt that they were ill-prepared to handle the implementation of what represents a fairly dramatic change in approach. Gour (2015) similarly concluded that Core French teachers “hold favorable views of the revised curriculum,” (p.114) but emphasized the need for adequate supports and professional development to prepare them to implement what is “a new and vastly different FSL curriculum” (p. ii). There is much emphasis in the literature related to teacher education programs and the need for teachers to model and scaffold learning and language for their students. In this case, it is the teacher who requires modeling, scaffolding and opportunities; modeling and scaffolding of the knowledge, tools and supports for navigating periods of chaos, which are an inevitable part of introducing any new instructional practice.
It has been over three years since I completed data collection. I remain in contact with focal participants. During this time, participants have married, had children or are awaiting a child, and have taken maternity or paternity leave. Three novice focal participants have changed schools due to program cuts, a reality today for most beginning teachers. Two of four experienced focal participants have also transferred schools out of their own volition. Of the thirteen focal participants, ten are still teaching Core French and/or French Immersion. The revised curriculum has since been released and participants are in the early stages of implementation. I have not had an opportunity to gauge participants’ reactions to and experiences with the revised curriculum.

As noted earlier, of the four focal participants with lower levels of self-efficacy in their Core French teaching abilities, three have since left the profession altogether. This is evidence in and of itself that levels of self-efficacy are a crucial factor in retaining Core French teachers. The fourth participant with lower self-efficacy continues to teach Core French at the same secondary school. She had completed one year of teaching when I observed and interviewed her. She is now in her fifth year of teaching. It would be interesting to find out if there has been an increase in her level of self-efficacy in regards to her Core French teaching abilities, especially her level of self-efficacy in regards to her ability to communicate with her students in the target language.
References


Appendices

Appendix A – Teacher Questionnaire

SECTION ONE: TEACHER BACKGROUND

1. How many years have you been teaching?
   □ 1-2
   □ 3-5
   □ 6-10
   □ 10+

2. What is your current teaching status?
   □ Full-time, Permanent
   □ Part-time, Permanent
   □ Full-time Extended Occasional Teaching Contract
   □ Part-time Extended Occasional Teaching Contract
   □ Other (Please specify):_______________________________________________

3. What kind of pre-service teacher training did you complete?
   □ B.A. or B.Sc. and a 9 or 10-month teacher education program (consecutive program)
   □ Concurrent teacher education program
   □ Master of Teaching
   □ Other (Please specify):_________________________________________________________________

4. When/how did you obtain your FSL qualification (FSL part 1)?
   □ While completing Consecutive teacher education program
   □ While completing Concurrent teacher education program
   □ As an AQ (additional qualification or ABQ (additional basic qualification)

5. What is your current teaching context? (Check all that apply)
   □ Core French grade 7-8
   □ Core French grade 9
   □ Core French grade 10
   □ Core French grade 11-12
   □ French Immersion
   □ Extended French
   □ Other (Please specify):___________________________________________________________

6. What French/FSL program did you complete as a student?
   □ Core French
   □ Early Immersion
   □ Middle or Late Immersion
   □ Extended French
   □ French first/native language
   □ Other (Please specify):_________________________________________________________________
SECTION TWO: TEACHING APPROACHES

Please read the descriptions of the following approaches to second language teaching in order to answer the questions below. Please choose Other if none of the approaches or an alternative approach applies.

_The Direct Method_ (Teaching is done exclusively in French, grammar is taught implicitly, focus is on speaking and listening)

_Immersion_ (French is used to teach math, science, social studies, literature, history etc.)

_Grammar-Translation_ (Focus is on learning grammatical rules/structures & vocabulary explicitly & deductively. Exercises focus on verb conjugations and memorization/translation/definition of lists of vocabulary words. Emphasis on reading and writing)

_Audiolingual_ (All teaching is done in French, focus is on speaking and listening, instructor presents correct model of a sentence, students repeat it in drill form, may take place in a language lab)

_Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)_ (Emphasis is on interaction in French. Syllabus organized according to different communicative situations, i.e., shopping - how to shop in Quebec City, linguistic structures introduced, taught & used functional to the different communicative situations.)

1. What approach(es) did you primarily experience as a student in school? (Check only those that apply most.)
   - [ ] The Direct Method
   - [ ] Immersion
   - [ ] Grammar-Translation
   - [ ] Audiolingual
   - [ ] Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)
   - [ ] Other (please describe):

2. What approach(es) did you primarily experience as a student in university? (Check only those that apply most.)
   - [ ] The Direct Method
   - [ ] Immersion
   - [ ] Grammar-Translation
   - [ ] Audiolingual
   - [ ] Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)
   - [ ] Other (please describe):

3. What approach(es) were presented/discussed in your FSL methods course? (Check all those that apply.)
   - [ ] Direct Method
   - [ ] Immersion
   - [ ] Grammar-Translation
   - [ ] Audiolingual
   - [ ] Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)
   - [ ] Other (please describe):

4. What approach(es) did you observe/employ during your FSL practice teaching? (Check all those that apply.)
   - [ ] Direct Method
   - [ ] Immersion
   - [ ] Grammar-Translation
   - [ ] Audiolingual
   - [ ] Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)
5. How would you characterize your approach to Core French teaching? (Check only those that apply most.)
- Direct Method
- Immersion
- Grammar-Translation
- Audiolingual
- Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)
- Other (please describe):______________________________________________

SECTION THREE: TEACHER BELIEFS

Read each statement, then decide if you: strongly agree, agree, tend to agree, tend to disagree, disagree or strongly disagree.

1. Learning a second or third language is much the same as learning our first language.
   - strongly agree
   - agree
   - tend to agree
   - tend to disagree
   - disagree
   - strongly disagree

2. Attitude contributes as much as intelligence to language learning success.
   - strongly agree
   - agree
   - tend to agree
   - tend to disagree
   - disagree
   - strongly disagree

3. A student’s motivation to continue language study is directly related to her or his success in actually learning to speak the language.
   - strongly agree
   - agree
   - tend to agree
   - tend to disagree
   - disagree
   - strongly disagree

4. Girls have a greater aptitude for learning languages than boys.
   - strongly agree
   - agree
   - tend to agree
   - tend to disagree
   - disagree
   - strongly disagree

5. It is difficult to learn more than one language at once.
   - strongly agree
   - agree
   - tend to agree
   - tend to disagree
   - disagree
   - strongly disagree

6. Students with special needs have greater difficulty learning a second language.
   - strongly agree
   - agree
   - tend to agree
   - tend to disagree
   - disagree
   - strongly disagree

7. Core French students are less motivated to learn French than students in French Immersion.
   - strongly agree
   - agree
   - tend to agree
   - tend to disagree
   - disagree
   - strongly disagree

8. For most students, language is acquired most effectively when it is used as a vehicle for doing something else and not when it is studied in a direct or explicit way.
   - strongly agree
   - agree
   - tend to agree
   - tend to disagree
   - disagree
   - strongly disagree

9. The primary emphasis in second language classes should be on the development of speaking and listening skills.
   - strongly agree
   - agree
   - tend to agree
   - tend to disagree
   - disagree
   - strongly disagree

10. To learn to speak a language one must first receive lots of input (hear lots of the target language spoken).
    - strongly agree
    - agree
    - tend to agree
    - tend to disagree
    - disagree
    - strongly disagree

11. It is important to understand what each part of a sentence (each word in the sentence) means when learning to understand or say it.
    - strongly agree
    - agree
    - tend to agree
    - tend to disagree
    - disagree
    - strongly disagree
12. Simulated real-life situations should be used to teach conversation skills.  
   strongly agree  agree  tend to agree  tend to disagree  disagree  strongly disagree

13. Interactive speaking activities and real-life simulations are difficult to carry out successfully with beginners.  
   strongly agree  agree  tend to agree  tend to disagree  disagree  strongly disagree

14. Interactive speaking/conversation skills are difficult to evaluate.  
   strongly agree  agree  tend to agree  tend to disagree  disagree  strongly disagree

15. It is easier to read and write a language than to speak and understand it.  
   strongly agree  agree  tend to agree  tend to disagree  disagree  strongly disagree

16. It is important to learn the rules of grammar to speak a language.  
   strongly agree  agree  tend to agree  tend to disagree  disagree  strongly disagree

17. It is difficult to teach grammar in the target language.  
   strongly agree  agree  tend to agree  tend to disagree  disagree  strongly disagree

18. Knowledge of the rules of a language does not guarantee ability to speak the language.  
   strongly agree  agree  tend to agree  tend to disagree  disagree  strongly disagree

19. Grammar should be taught only as a means to an end and not as an end in itself.  
   strongly agree  agree  tend to agree  tend to disagree  disagree  strongly disagree

20. It is really important to have your errors corrected from the start when you are learning a language.  
   strongly agree  agree  tend to agree  tend to disagree  disagree  strongly disagree

21. When a student makes errors, this should be considered a natural and inevitable part of language acquisition.  
   strongly agree  agree  tend to agree  tend to disagree  disagree  strongly disagree

22. Opportunities for student self and peer-evaluation are essential to learning a new language.  
   strongly agree  agree  tend to agree  tend to disagree  disagree  strongly disagree

23. Group work activities are very important in learning to speak a new language.  
   strongly agree  agree  tend to agree  tend to disagree  disagree  strongly disagree

24. Group work activities are difficult for the teacher to monitor students' performance notably their use of the target language.  
   strongly agree  agree  tend to agree  tend to disagree  disagree  strongly disagree

25. Use of authentic materials is essential in second language instruction.  
   strongly agree  agree  tend to agree  tend to disagree  disagree  strongly disagree

26. Learning about the target language culture is essential to learning a second language.  
   strongly agree  agree  tend to agree  tend to disagree  disagree  strongly disagree

27. The Ontario Core French curriculum requires that teachers teach students the rules of French grammar explicitly.  
   strongly agree  agree  tend to agree  tend to disagree  disagree  strongly disagree

28. The Ontario Core French curriculum requires in all courses that the language of instruction be French.  
   strongly agree  agree  tend to agree  tend to disagree  disagree  strongly disagree
SECTION FOUR: INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES AND CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

I. If you could please indicate how often the following occur in your Core French classes:

A. Teacher/Student organization

1. Teacher to student or class (One central activity led by the teacher is going on; the teacher interacts with the whole class and/or with individual students.)
   
   Never  Almost Never  Sometimes  Often  Almost Always  Always

2. Choral work by students (The whole class or smaller groups participate in choral work, repeating a model provided by the textbook or teacher.)
   
   Never  Almost Never  Sometimes  Often  Almost Always  Always

3. Student(s) to class (a student or group of students is completing a presentation or a speech in front of the class, a group of students act out a skit or an interview with the rest of the class as the audience.)
   
   Never  Almost Never  Sometimes  Often  Almost Always  Always

4. Student to student (Students present to a partner or a small group of students, talk to each other either as part of the lesson or as informal socializing).
   
   Never  Almost Never  Sometimes  Often  Almost Always  Always

B. Seat work

1. Individual work with students working on their own, on the same task.
   
   Never  Almost Never  Sometimes  Often  Almost Always  Always

2. Individual work with students working on their own, on different tasks.
   
   Never  Almost Never  Sometimes  Often  Almost Always  Always

3. Group work with groups at work on the same task
   
   Never  Almost Never  Sometimes  Often  Almost Always  Always

4. Group work with groups at work on different tasks
   
   Never  Almost Never  Sometimes  Often  Almost Always  Always

5. Some students are involved in group-work; others work on their own.
   
   Never  Almost Never  Sometimes  Often  Almost Always  Always

C. Focus of the lesson

1. Focus on teaching the rules of one or more grammatical concepts
   
   Never  Almost Never  Sometimes  Often  Almost Always  Always

2. Deductive instruction (teacher explains rule then students apply rule) of one or more grammatical concepts
   
   Never  Almost Never  Sometimes  Often  Almost Always  Always

3. Inductive instruction (students given examples in context and attempt to Figure out rule, teacher confirms rule) of one or more grammatical concepts
   
   Never  Almost Never  Sometimes  Often  Almost Always  Always
4. Focus on vocabulary words (translating, providing or finding definitions, synonyms, antonyms for individual words or expressions)

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5. Focus on pronunciation

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6. Focus on a theme (e.g., discussion of organic fruits and vegetables, capital punishment, junk food…)

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7. Focus on a novel, play, short story, poem etc.

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8. Focus on a cultural theme (e.g., Le Carnaval de Québec, le Joual, Mardi Gras, La musique Zouk…)

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9. Focus on a situation of communication (i.e., ordering food in a café in Montréal, speaking to a telephone operator in Nice, buying a bus ticket in St. Boniface…)

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10. Focus on socio-linguistics (i.e., differences in expressions, register, pronunciation etc. in different francophone contexts)

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D. Use of the target language (French) in classroom discourse

**Teacher Use**

1. For routines: i.e., salutations (Bonjour, Comment ça va? Au revoir, À demain…); classroom directives (Levez-vous pour au Canada, Sortez vos devoirs, Tournez à la page cinq dans vos cahiers…); disciplinary statements (Silence s’il vous plaît! Assoyez-vous!…); providing feedback (i.e., Excellent, C’est correct, Super!…).

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2. For ordinary teaching and learning activities (providing instructions on how to complete an activity, exercise; explaining a test, exam or assignment; teaching a lesson on a linguistic/grammatical concept…)

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3. For question-response/simple interactions about such things as what students did on the weekend, their likes and dislikes, favourite movies and songs, family, holidays…

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4. For discussion about topics beyond the classroom and immediate environment and including reference to public issues, world events, abstract ideas, reflective personal information, and other academic subject matter, such as math or geography.

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**Student Use**

1. Students use French for routine purposes: i.e., salutations (Bonjour, Comment ça va? Au revoir, À demain…); to ask for direction, permission and clarification (Puis-je aller à mon casier? Puis-je aller aux toilettes? Comment dit-on?)

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2. Students use French to engage in pre-prepared communication activities (i.e., oral presentations, speeches, dialogues, plays, skits)

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3. Students speak French in drill-type and structured communication activities (i.e., choral repetition, one-word answers, multiple choice, question-response)

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4. Students speak French with teacher, both solicited and unsolicited, during ordinary learning activities and classroom interaction.

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5. Students speak French, solicited and unsolicited, to communicate with the teacher and other students in both structured and unstructured activities (group work, personal discussion, topics beyond the classroom...)

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II. If you could please place a check mark (✓) beside those activities you employ regularly in your Core French lessons.

Speaking

- Question-response (i.e., teacher asks individual students simple questions in French, students respond in French)
- Choral repetition (by one or more students)
- Prepared speeches and oral presentations
- Prepared dialogues, skits, interviews
- Games
- Singing
- Information-sharing activities (i.e., students ask & answer personal questions/discuss a topic or share opinions...)
- Information-gathering activities (i.e., students collect information from other students to present to class...)
- Information-gap activities (i.e., students instruct other students to produce a drawing or find an object in room, jig-saw)
- Simulation activities (i.e., role-playing, improvisation)
- Class discussions and debates
- Other: ____________________________

Listening/Watching

- Students listen to song recordings or watch music videos
- Students listen to recordings which accompany textbooks and/or workbooks
- Students listen to or watch dialogues, interviews, news broadcasts online or on TV
- Students listen to recordings of stories/poems/plays
- Students listen to a guest speaker
- Students watch movies/TV shows/videos/plays
- Other: ____________________________

Reading

- Teacher reads passages in textbook or workbook out loud
- Students take turns reading passages in textbook or workbook out loud
- Students silently read passages in textbooks or workbooks
- Students silently read novels/shorts stories/plays
- Students take turns reading out loud chapters in a novel/passage in a short story/roles in a play
Students read newspapers/magazines (hard copies or online)
Students read brochures/flyers/ads/menus
Other: ________________________________________________

Oral and Written Comprehension
Association (associate vocabulary words with appropriate definition or drawing)
Multiple choice/True or false comprehension questions
Short-answer (one or two sentences) comprehension questions
Provide a definition of vocabulary words or expressions
Translation exercises
Cross word puzzles and/or word searches
Follow instructions to complete a drawing, make an object (e.g., origami), prepare a recipe, find an object in the classroom
Complete a Cloze passage (text with every fifth/sixth word missing...students must fill in blanks with an appropriate word)
Read a passage to solve a problem/identify an unknown piece of info. (e.g., a whodunit, Figure out who wrote the note…)
Read a passage and then represent the big ideas (demonstrate understanding) in the form of a drawing or sketch, etc.
Other: ________________________________________________

Writing
Grammar worksheets/exercises from textbook or workbook
Copying notes/information from blackboard, overhead projector, PowerPoint, Smartboard
Identifying written errors in a passage (and correcting them)
Dictation (Dictée)
Short structured writing activities (i.e., question/answer, post card, email, note, Facebook page, twitter)
Medium structured writing activities (i.e., dialogue, interview, script for a skit, letter)
Longer semi-structured or open-ended writing activities (i.e., essay, poem, descriptive paragraph, story, song)
Other: ________________________________________________

III. If you could please put the following assessment tools in order of use with 1 being the type of assessment tool you use the most often and 3 being the assessment tool you use the least often in your Core French courses.

Teacher summative assessment of student work (assessment for a mark)
Teacher formative assessment of student work (assessment with feedback, no mark)
Student self-assessment
Peer-assessment

IV. If you could please put the following types of materials in order of use with 1 being the type of material(s) you use the most often and 3 being the type of material(s) you use the least often in your Core French courses.

Pedagogic (specifically designed for L2 teaching)
Semi-pedagogic (utilizing real-life objects and texts but in a modified form)
Non-pedagogic (materials originally intended for non-school purposes)

V. If you could please put the following pedagogical resources in order of use with 1 being the type of resource(s) you use the most often and 3 being the type of resource(s) you use the least often in your Core French courses.

Textbooks
Workbooks (and/or worksheets which come with the textbook)
Audio or video materials which come with the textbook
SECTION FIVE: COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (CLT)

1. Have you ever tried Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)/Communicative Activities with your Core French classes?
   □ Yes  □ No

2. If yes, were you happy with the results?
   □ Yes  □ No

3. Will you use CLT (Communicative Activities) in your Core French classes in future?
   □ Yes  □ No

4. Have you ever participated in any in-service programs such as workshops, special training or programs devoted to CLT?
   □ Yes  □ No

5. In your view, what is involved in the CLT approach? (Please circle one.)
   a. CLT is student/learner-centered approach.
      Not true  Somewhat true  Completely true
   b. CLT emphasizes fluency over accuracy.
      Not true  Somewhat true  Completely true
   c. CLT emphasizes communication in a second language (L2)
      Not true  Somewhat true  Completely true
   d. CLT relies heavily on speaking and listening skills.
      Not true  Somewhat true  Completely true
   e. CLT requires teachers to have a high proficiency in French.
      Not true  Somewhat true  Completely true
   f. CLT involves only group work or pair work.
      Not true  Somewhat true  Completely true
   g. CLT requires a higher knowledge of the target language culture.
      Not true  Somewhat true  Completely true
   h. CLT involves no grammar teaching.
      Not true  Somewhat true  Completely true
   i. CLT involves teaching speaking only.
      Not true  Somewhat true  Completely true
6. Difficulties/challenges in adopting CLT in Core French courses

Please indicate how big an issue these challenges are by circling the appropriate number according to the following response scale:

4 = Significant challenge
3 = Somewhat of a challenge
2 = A bit of a challenge
1 = Not a challenge at all

TEACHER-RELATED DIFFICULTIES & CHALLENGES
i. Teachers’ proficiency in spoken French is not sufficient. 4 3 2 1
ii. Teachers lack of knowledge about the appropriate use of language in context. 4 3 2 1
iii. Teachers lack of knowledge about the target language culture. 4 3 2 1
iv. There are few opportunities for teachers to get CLT training. 4 3 2 1
v. Teachers have little time to develop materials for communicative classes. 4 3 2 1
vi. Teachers have misconceptions about CLT. 4 3 2 1
vii Teachers see CLT as unsuitable/ineffectual in the Core French context 4 3 2 1
viii. Most Core French teachers’ views on how languages are learned and should be taught are incompatible with CLT.

STUDENT-RELATED DIFFICULTIES & CHALLENGES
i. Students’ level of proficiency is not high enough. 4 3 2 1
ii. Students are uncomfortable participating in communicative class activities 4 3 2 1
iii. Students prefer grammar/paper exercises 4 3 2 1
iv. Students are not used to taking risks 4 3 2 1
v. Students are afraid to make mistakes when speaking 4 3 2 1
vi. Students are used to and comfortable with teacher-centered classroom instruction 4 3 2 1

DIFFICULTIES AND CHALLENGES RELATED TO THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM
i. There is a lack of support from administration. 4 3 2 1
ii. There is a lack of support from colleagues. 4 3 2 1
iii. Teachers lack proper materials (lessons plans, textbooks etc.). 4 3 2 1
iv. Classes are too large for the effective use of CLT. 4 3 2 1
v. Classes are too challenging for effective use of CLT (ELLs, Special Needs) 4 3 2 1
vi. Curriculum and departmental expectations/examinations are heavily weighted toward grammar and writing which is incompatible with CLT.

vii There are a lack of effective and efficient instruments to assess interactive oral communication activities 4 3 2 1

7. Additional Comments on the Core French teaching and learning, Core French curricula, CLT/Communicative Activities: ________________________________

______________________________
Questionnaire prepared based on following existing works:


Appendix B – Information Letter for participants in questionnaire phase of research study

Use of different teaching approaches, instructional strategies and classroom activities in Core French classrooms

Dear ____________________________:

I am writing to invite your participation in a research project focusing on teachers’ use of different second language teaching approaches, instructional strategies and classroom activities in Core French courses in Ontario. I am completing my doctorate in second language education at OISE. My particular area of interest is Core French programs. I am very keen to explore which approaches, strategies and activities teachers such as yourself are employing in your Core French courses and what influences choice and use of different approaches, strategies and activities.

As an FSL teacher educator in the Initial Teacher Education program at OISE for the past four and a half years and a French Immersion and Core French teacher with the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) for over 9 years, at both the middle and secondary school levels, I understand and appreciate the many unique challenges encountered in Core French teaching. I respect and admire your commitment to teaching one of Canada’s official languages.

I wish to document and observe the teaching approaches, instructional strategies and classroom activities used by Core French teachers. I wish to record their beliefs about second language teaching and learning, their views on the Core French program (past, present and future) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). In so doing, I hope to gain a greater appreciation of what influences the choice of different approaches, strategies and activities. I am particularly keen to highlight successes and challenges with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)/communicative activities. I sincerely hope that Core French teachers such as yourself, who participate in the project, will benefit from an opportunity to reflect upon your teaching practice as well as sharing issues and concerns relating to Core French teaching and learning. The success of my research relies upon teachers’ commitment to sharing information about their Core French teaching experiences and practices. For this reason, I would be extremely grateful if you would consider taking some time out of your busy schedule to fill out an online questionnaire, which should take approximately 30 minutes.

I anticipate that participating in this questionnaire will be useful to you, providing an opportunity to reflect upon this area of your teaching practice. If you are interested in taking part, please click on the following link (or cut and paste) to proceed to the questionnaire: __________________. Thank you so very much for your time and attention. If you have any questions about the project, please feel free to contact me at the email or telephone number listed below.

Sincerely yours,

Usha Viswanathan
Appendix C – Information Letter for participants in observation and post-observation interview phases of the Doctoral Research Project

Use of different teaching approaches, instructional strategies and classroom activities in Core French classrooms

Dear ____________________________:

I am writing to invite your participation in a research project focusing on teachers’ use of different second language teaching approaches, instructional strategies and classroom activities in Core French courses in Ontario. I am completing my doctorate in second language education at OISE. My particular area of interest is Core French programs. I am very keen to explore which approaches, strategies and activities teachers such as yourself are employing in your Core French courses and what influences choice and use of different approaches, strategies and activities.

As an FSL teacher educator in the Initial Teacher Education program at OISE for the past four and a half years and a French Immersion and Core French teacher with the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) for over 9 years, at both the middle and secondary school levels, I understand and appreciate the many unique challenges encountered in Core French teaching. I respect and admire your commitment to teaching one of Canada’s official languages.

I wish to document and observe the teaching approaches, instructional strategies and classroom activities used by Core French teachers. I wish to record their beliefs about second language teaching and learning, their views on the Core French program (past, present and future) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). In so doing, I hope to gain a greater appreciation of what influences the choice of different approaches, strategies and activities. I am particularly keen to highlight successes and challenges with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)/communicative activities. I sincerely hope that Core French teachers such as yourself, who participate in the project, will benefit from an opportunity to reflect upon your teaching practice as well as sharing issues and concerns relating to Core French teaching and learning.

The success of my research relies upon teachers’ commitment to sharing information about their Core French teaching experiences and practices. For this reason, I would be extremely grateful if you would consider taking some time out of your busy schedule to fill out an online questionnaire, which should take approximately 30 minutes. Please click on the following link (or cut and paste) to proceed to the questionnaire: ________________.

In addition, I would invite your participation in a subsequent observation and interview phase of the research. The observation would entail me coming in to your class to observe you teach your Core French classes for approximately one week. I would take only hand-written notes of what I observe. A post-observation interview would be conducted to seek your views of the lessons. I would request your permission to audio-record the post-observation interview.
I anticipate that participating in this study will be enjoyable and useful to you, providing an opportunity to reflect upon this area of your teaching practice. If you are interested in taking part, please read and sign the attached consent form. You will receive a copy of the form for your records. Thank you so very much for your time and attention. If you have any questions about the project, please feel free to contact me at the email or telephone number listed below.

Sincerely yours,

Usha Viswanathan
Appendix D – Consent Letter for observation and post-observation interview participants

Doctoral Thesis Research Project: Choice and use of different second language teaching approaches and instructional strategies in Core French classrooms

I, _________________________________, agree to take part in the observation and post-observation phases of the research study. I understand that as a participant in this study, I will be observed teaching and will participate in a post-observation interview. I understand that participation in the study may involve answering questions about:
- my education and teaching experience;
- my beliefs about teaching and learning;
- my teaching practice;
- my knowledge and understanding of research in second language teaching and learning;
- my knowledge, feelings and attitudes about Ontario Core French programs
- my feelings and attitudes toward my teaching practice

I understand that it will take approximately one week to complete the observation and one to two hours to complete the post-observation interview. I understand that the observation and post-observation interview will take place at a time and place convenient to me. I understand that I am under no obligation to agree to participate in the observation and complete the post-observation interview. I understand that my participation in this study will have no consequences on my future employment. I understand that I may refuse to answer any questions, to stop the observation and interview at any time or withdraw from the study. I understand that my specific answers and comments will be kept completely confidential. I understand that neither my name nor the name of my school or district school board will be identified in the thesis or any report or presentation which may arise from the study. I understand that all data will be encrypted and be kept in a secure cabinet and/or in password-protected electronic files. I understand that only the principal investigator and the thesis supervisor will have access to the data collected during the study. After a period of five years, all records will be erased, and all notes will be shredded and disposed of.

Should you have any further questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this project, please contact the University of Toronto Ethics Review Office at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.

I have read both this consent form as well as the letter that describes the project. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time with no negative consequences.

Please select one option:

☐ I agree to participate in the observation and post-observation phases of the research study.

☐ I do not agree to participate in the observation and post-observation phases of the research study.

Name:___________________________________

Signature:________________________________ Date:__________________________
Appendix E - Post-Observation Interview Guide

Sample questions

Teacher Directions: asking types of questions below from different categories.

General thought process
1. What were you thinking about during the lesson?
2. What was going through your mind as you were teaching?

Description of lesson
3. Can you describe for me what you did/said?

Teaching approaches and instructional strategies
4. How would you characterize your teaching approach and instructional strategies? Can you describe this in some detail?

Discussion of Specific Activities
5. Can you describe for me the activities of the lesson?
6. Can you tell me a bit about what your motives were for choosing the activities used

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)
7. How communicative would you say your lesson was? Could you please rate your lesson on a scale of 1 to 4?
8. a) If lesson is communicative in whole or in part – can you explain how you came to successfully implement CLT?
   OR
   c) If lesson is not communicative - have you ever considered/attempted adopting a communicative orientation to your teaching? If yes, could you describe your experience? If answer is no, could you explain why not?

Reflection
9. How do you feel now about the lessons? – your choice of teaching approaches and instructional strategies?
10. Would you do anything differently? If so, what would you differently?

Other
11. Is there anything else you’d like to add?
Appendix F - Administrative Information Letter

Doctoral Research Project
Use of different teaching approaches, instructional strategies and classroom activities in Core French classrooms

Dear ____________________________:

I am writing to invite your participation in a research project focusing on teachers’ use of different second language teaching approaches and classroom activities in Core French courses in Ontario. I am completing my doctorate in second language education at OISE. I am very keen to explore which approaches and activities Core French teachers are employing in their Core French classes and what influences their choice and use of different approaches and activities. As an FSL teacher educator in the Initial Teacher Education program at OISE for the past four and a half years and a French Immersion and Core French teacher with the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) for over 9 years, at both the middle and secondary school levels, I understand and appreciate the many unique challenges encountered in Core French teaching. I respect and admire Core French teachers’ commitment to teaching one of Canada’s official languages.

The success of my research relies upon teachers’ commitment to sharing information about their Core French teaching experiences and practices. For this reason, I would be extremely grateful if you would consider taking part in the study. I will invite former teacher-candidates teaching Core French at different schools in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) to participate in follow-up research which would include observation of their teaching and a post-observation interview. It is my intention to observe and interview six to nine of my former teacher-candidates. These participants will also be invited to participate in the focus groups. I have been granted approval to conduct research in the TDSB by ERRC.

Observations will involve me coming into the class of one of your Core French teachers (whose permission will be sought with your approval) to observer him or her teach for three to four periods (60 to 75 minutes for each period). I will take only field notes to document events. Students will be in the classroom when I am observing however focus will be exclusively on the teacher and hand-written notes will focus ONLY on teacher behaviours/actions, instructional approaches and activities OBSERVED DURING THE LESSONS.

Observation data will be collected in the months of March and/or April at the convenience of the participating teacher. Courtesy letters of information will be sent out to families/parents/guardians of students informing them of the study. A post-observation interview of one to one hour and a half will be conducted after observing each participant teach. The post-observation interview will take place again in March or April at a time most convenient to the participant.
I sincerely hope that the Core French teachers, who participate in the project, will benefit from an opportunity to reflect upon their teaching practice as well as sharing issues and concerns relating to Core French teaching and learning.

If you are interested in taking part, please read and sign the attached consent form. You will receive a copy of the form for your records. Thank you so very much for your time and attention. If you have any questions about the project, please feel free to contact me at the email or telephone number listed below.

Sincerely yours,

Usha Viswanathan
Appendix G – Administrative Consent Letter

Doctoral Thesis Research Project:

Choice and use of different second language teaching approaches and instructional strategies in Core French classrooms

I, ________________________________, agree to take part in the above Doctoral research study.

I understand that the observation of my Core French will take approximately three to four 60 to 75 minute periods to complete. I understand that the post-observation interview will take one to one and a half hour to complete. I understand that the observation and post-observation interview will take place in March and/or April at the teacher’s convenience. I understand that the post-observation interview will take place at a time and place most convenient to the Core French teacher. I understand that I am under no obligation to agree to participate in the study. I understand that all data collected will be kept completely confidential. I understand that neither me or my Core French teacher’s name nor the name of my school or district school board will be identified in the thesis or any report or presentation which may arise from the study. I understand that all data will be encrypted and be kept in a secure cabinet and/or in password-protected electronic files. I understand that only the principal investigator and the thesis supervisor will have access to the data collected during the study. After a period of five years, all records will be erased, and all notes will be shredded and disposed of.

Should you have any further questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this project, please contact the University of Toronto Ethics Review Office at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.

I have read both this consent form as well as the letter that describes the project. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

Please select one option:

□ I agree to participate in the research study.

□ I do not agree to participate in the research study.

Name:___________________________________

Signature:________________________________

Date:__________________________
Appendix H - Parent/Guardian Courtesy Information Letter

(Date)

Dear Parent or Guardian:

I am a doctoral student at the University of Toronto studying the factors that influence teachers’ choice and use of teaching approaches, instructional strategies and classroom activities in Core French courses. The External Research Review Committee of the TDSB has granted approval for this study. The school Principal has also given permission for this study to be carried out in your son/daughter’s school.

As I wish to observe and document the teaching approaches, instructional strategies and classroom activities used by Core French teachers, I have invited your son/daughter’s teacher to participate in the observation phase of the research. She/he has very graciously agreed. The observation will entail me coming in to your son/daughter’s class to very discreetly observe his/her teacher as she instructs the Core French class. I will observe for approximately one week, two to three class periods. With the permission of your son/daughter’s teacher, I will be taking hand-written notes. Your son/daughter will be in the classroom when I am observing the above teachers but **focus will be exclusively on the teacher** and notes will focus ONLY on the teacher’s behaviours/actions, instructional approaches and activities observed during the lessons. It is my hope that this research will expand current understandings of second language teachers’ practice with a view to developing effective Core French teaching practices.

Please contact me (via the telephone number or e-mail address below) should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Usha Viswanathan