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Intensive French in British Columbia: Student and Parent Perspectives and English as Additional Language (EAL) Student Performance

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Abstract: This article examines why students participated in British Columbia's first intensive French (IF) program between 2004 and 2008 and what they achieved as a result, with a particular focus on the effect on the French and English language proficiency of English as additional language (EAL) students. Qualitative case studies found that students and parents believe IF affords short- and long-term benefits, especially for education and employment; some, particularly EAL students and their parents, expect advantages related to Canadian citizenship. Oral French proficiency assessments of all IF students ($N = 357$) found no significant difference between the mean proficiency results of any groups compared, but the distribution of scores showed significant differences between EAL and non-EAL students and between Grade 5 and Grade 6 students in the percentage of students achieving spontaneous communication. English proficiency assessments of EAL students in IF ($n = 43$) showed their improvement over the school year was significantly greater than that of EAL peers not in IF ($n = 43$). The implications of this study for inclusion of EAL learners in FSL programs and future research are discussed.

Keywords: English as second or additional language, intensive French, proficiency, inclusion

Résumé : Cet article traite des raisons qui ont motivé des élèves à s'inscrire au premier programme de français intensif (FI) en Colombie-Britannique entre 2004 et 2008, ainsi que des résultats qu'ils ont obtenus. L'étude s'est intéressée en particulier à l'influence du FI sur la compétence en français et en anglais des apprenants d'anglais langue étrangère (ALÉ ou ALA). Les résultats des analyses qualitatives illustrent que, dans certains cas, les élèves et leurs parents considèrent que le FI représente un enrichissement à court et à long terme, en particulier du point de vue éducation et possibilités d'emploi. Pour certains, notamment les apprenants d'ALÉ et leurs parents, le FI représente aussi la promesse d'avantages reliés à l'identité canadienne. L'évaluation de la compétence orale en français de l'ensemble des élèves en français intensif qui ont participé à cette étude ($N = 357$) révèle peu de

différences dans la moyenne des résultats obtenus dans les divers groupes d'apprenants; cependant, un examen de la répartition des résultats révèle des différences significatives entre les apprenants d'ALÉ et les élèves qui n'étaient pas apprenants d'ALÉ, ainsi qu'entre les élèves de 5^e et ceux de 6^e année, du point de vue du pourcentage d'apprenants qui ont démontré une habileté de communication spontanée. Par ailleurs, les évaluations de la compétence en langue anglaise révèlent une amélioration significative, au cours de l'année scolaire, des compétences en anglais des apprenants d'ALÉ qui étaient en FI (n = 43), par rapport aux apprenants d'ALÉ qui ne faisaient pas partie du programme de FI. L'article se termine par des considérations sur l'inclusion d'apprenants d'ALÉ dans les programmes de français langue seconde et sur des suggestions de recherche.

Mots clés : anglais langue seconde ou additionnelle, anglais langue étrangère, français intensif, compétence, inclusion

In 2003, the federal government unveiled a comprehensive action plan to significantly increase the number of bilingual Canadians by 2013: 'We need to double the proportion of young Canadians who know both official languages from 24 percent to 50 percent within ten years' (Dion, 2003). A challenge was issued by the Director General of the Official Languages Branch of the Department of Canadian Heritage to find ways to 'do things differently' in second language education in response to the markedly low success rates of core French programs in the country (Department of Canadian Heritage, 2004). A new program, called intensive French (IF), was pioneered by Joan Netten and Claude Germain in Newfoundland and Labrador in 1998 and is now in practice in nine provinces and two territories. Intensive French was conceived as a way to revitalize core French, improve its proficiency outcomes, and address attrition (MacFarlane, 2005), and the program has been recognized as a possible strategy for meeting the goals in the federal government's action plan (Department of Canadian Heritage; Canadian Parents for French, 2005). IF is a French as a second language (FSL) program option in which students in Grade 5 or 6 spend half of their year immersed in learning French and the other half following an integrated English curriculum. Math is delivered in English throughout the year. In British Columbia, students then continue to receive an enriched French learning program of four to five hours per week until the end of Grade 7 (also the end of elementary school in most districts), after which a variety of second language course options is possible. In the Surrey School

District, where this study took place, the students who embarked on IF in 2004 will graduate in 2013 and are likely to be bilingual, as envisioned in the federal government's action plan.

IF was introduced in 2004 in Surrey, British Columbia. With a student population of 66,192, of which approximately 42% speak a home language other than English, it is the province's largest school district (Surrey School District, 2008). The district's multilingual spectrum was represented in the IF classes in this study and afforded an opportunity to examine the performance of English as additional language (EAL)¹ learners in a new FSL context.

A number of researchers have examined the effect on English proficiency of learning French as a second or additional language; however, most research has been conducted in French immersion settings (for a review, see Bournot-Trites & Tellowitz, 2002). It has generally been the case that most students in French immersion perform as well or better in English than students in the mainstream program. A positive effect on English performance has also been noted among IF students in general (Germain, Lightbown, Netten, & Spada 2004; Germain & Netten, 2004; Netten & Germain, 2004d, 2005). Studies have been conducted on the effect of learning French on the English proficiency of EAL learners in French immersion and core French settings (for a review, see Mady, 2007); however, there has not yet been a study of EAL learners in an IF setting. Drawing on Cummins' (1979) theory of the interdependence of languages, Netten and Germain (2004d) maintain that 'skills developed through L1 are available for learning and using L2. It also means that the skills that are learned through L2 may be transferred to and used in L1' (p. 286). Does it follow that skills learned through a third or additional language (L3/Ln) may be transferred and used in L2?

Intensive French

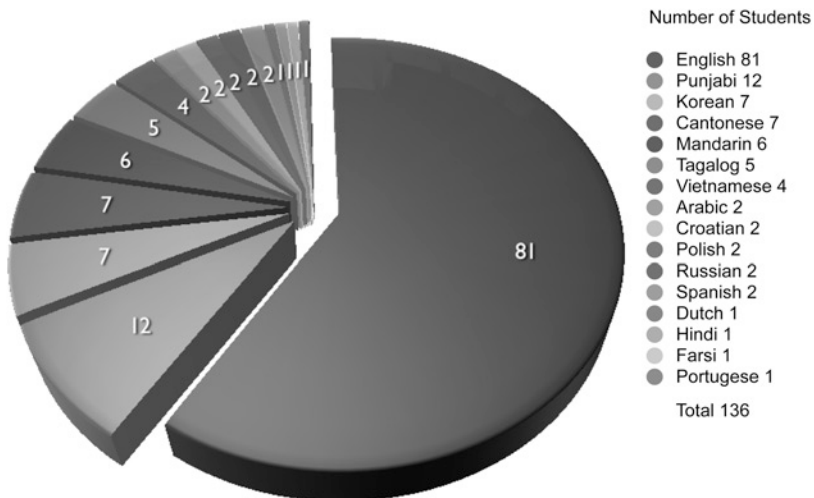
Intensive French is the most recent large-scale FSL program innovation in Canada and, like others before it (for example, French immersion and core French), is predicated on the goal of producing bilingual graduates who have an appreciation for French language, culture, and people. The intensive approach was inspired by 'les classes d'accueil' that began in Montreal in 1969 in which new immigrants learned English in an intensive block of time, focusing primarily on language rather than on subject content (MacFarlane, 2005). IF makes a significant contribution to second language education by building on previous FSL education theory and practice (for example, Leblanc, 1990; Stern, 1982) and infusing

the process of developing communicative competence with new perspectives, strategies, and a neurolinguistic approach (Paradis, 2004). Netten and Germain have published many articles about the program's theoretical conceptualization (Germain & Netten, 2006a; Netten & Germain, 2000, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d, 2005), curriculum development (Netten & Germain, 2004a), pedagogical approach (Germain & Netten, 2006b; Netten & Germain, 2008), and student performance (Germain & Netten, 2004, 2006a; Germain, Netten, & Movassat, 2004; Germain, Netten, & Séguin, 2004). Others have examined the IF program in terms of learner perspectives (Kristmanson, 2006), teacher perspectives (Carr, 2007; Collins, Stead, & Woolfrey, 2004), and overall implementation (Carr, 2007; Kristmanson, 2006; MacFarlane, 2005). It is hoped that the findings from a study based in British Columbia will contribute to a wider view of this program.

British Columbia's language education context

The study took place in a school district and community in which cultural and linguistic diversity is the norm. In four of the five schools where IF is implemented, about half of the students speak home languages other than English. The home languages, in order of frequency in the five IF schools in 2005/2006, are depicted in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1
Intensive French Students' Home Languages, 2005/2006



British Columbia's current language education policy embodies a view of second language education firmly rooted in a global context that recognizes linguistic diversity rather than duality, as indicated in the province's language education policy preamble:

The Government of British Columbia recognizes that the province is culturally, linguistically and economically diverse. A language policy must reflect this diversity and respond to the needs of the community. The Ministry of Education, Skills and Training encourages all students to develop language skills which will assist them to live and function more effectively in British Columbia's ethno-culturally diverse environment and in a bilingual Canada. (BC Ministry of Education, 1997a, p. 2)

Second language education is mandatory in Grades 5 to 8, and the choice of second language is left to individual school boards, with French being the default if an alternative is not chosen. Second language study ceases to be mandatory after Grade 8.

British Columbia's language education policy differs from that of provinces such as Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick,² Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador,³ where French is the prescribed language of study from Grades 4 to 9. British Columbia's policy does not differ from other provinces, however, in terms of its provision for EAL students (for a review, see Mady, 2007⁴). EAL students in the province may be exempted from participation in core French classes if they 'are receiving English as a Second Language services and [are] unable to demonstrate their learning in relation to the expected learning outcomes of the second language course' (BC Ministry of Education, 1997b). As written, this policy should exclude only those EAL students who are unable to meet core French outcomes, but school-based decisions often exclude many more (M. Adrien, S. Bergeron, H. Horban, & D. Tijman, personal communication, December 31, 2008). This practice is not unique to British Columbia. Mady (2006) conducted a study of recently arrived EAL students in Ontario, interviewing school administrators and counsellors, and discovered that many excluded these students from enrolling in core French classes. She noted that the rationale used to exclude EAL learners is based on administrative beliefs that she maintains 'may be founded on myths' about language learning (p. 171).

During the Surrey implementation of IF, a school administrator was observed to resist the inclusion of all EAL students who wished (or whose parents wished them) to participate in an FSL program:

Well, this program is being sold as if it's a program for everyone. But you and I both know that, if you haven't mastered your first language, you shouldn't be starting on a second language. If you've mastered and are adept with your first language, a second language is great; it will make you even stronger in your first language. If you're stuck between mastery of your first and second languages, as some of our Asian kids are, then they shouldn't be attempting the third language because it will mean being dysfunctional in all three languages. (IF school principal, interview, June 2005)

This view regarding the exclusion of some EAL students, based on the belief that these students need to develop proficiency in their L1 and/or English before embarking on additional language learning, is not without foundation. Cummins (1979, 1983, 1984) and Swain, Lapkin, Rowen, and Hart (1990), among others, underscore the important role that a sufficient level of L1 literacy plays in developing L2 and L3/Ln proficiency. Unfortunately, no data on L1 literacy levels were gathered in this study other than on the degree to which EAL students used the L1 in their lives: all reported speaking the L1 at home 50 to 100% of the time.

Mady's (2006) study, which included 51 secondary EAL students, approximately one-third of whom were beginner-level English learners, shows that recently arrived students performed successfully in French second language classes and, in fact, outperformed unilingual Canadian-born students in a number of measures. She argues against limiting their participation in FSL programs. Surrey's international languages consultant is concerned that removing EAL students from FSL classes in order for them to receive English as a second language instruction works against their best interests as language learners:

Students should not be pulled from FSL for ESL instruction unless they really cannot meet the learning outcomes of the French program. This is one area that EAL students can have success along with their peers because the playing field is level—it is a new language for all of them. This helps to build self-confidence for the EAL students as well . . . EAL students have another chance to experience how language works and possibly make transfers to learning English. French is a western language like English and there are many similarities that can help students make connections. (H. Horban, personal communication, January 5, 2009)

Excluding EAL students from FSL learning opportunities can have long-reaching implications, as indicated by Vancouver's former modern languages consultant:

Les conseillers au secondaire, malheureusement, découragent et interdisent même parfois aux étudiants en ESL de s'inscrire aux cours de Core French. Ce qui provoque parfois des situations dramatiques pour les élèves et leurs familles pour qui le français représente une partie importante de l'image et de l'identité canadienne.

[Secondary school counsellors, unfortunately, discourage students, and in some cases prevent them, from registering for core French. This sometimes creates serious situations for students and their families for whom French represents an important part of the Canadian image and identity.] (M. Adrien, personal communication, January 1, 2009⁵)

BC's language education policy in general was brought into question by Reeder, Hasebe-Ludt, and Thomas (1997), who noted that 'the blurring of the distinction between social policy and language education policy raises important questions about the broad societal purposes of public education and its role in promoting particular ideologies, no matter how benign' (p. 375). They argue that the forces undergirding this policy were influenced by factors that were linked as much to the economy as to education. This can be seen in the policy's preamble, which refers to changing economic ties with Pacific Rim countries as a reason for students to learn languages (BC Ministry of Education, 1997a). Viewed in this light, second language education becomes an economically beneficial resource.

Language viewed as capital

Heller (2001) suggests that, in a context of globalization, languages are now considered less as symbols of national identity and more as economic capital, with resulting 'contradictions between language as a mark of authenticity and belonging or identity, and language as an acquirable technical skill and marketable commodity' (p. 47). As such, access to education in French can be perceived as a resource that individuals wish to acquire. The acquisition of and struggle for resources is key to Bourdieu's (1972/1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) theory of social hierarchization. The objective of human activity, according to Bourdieu, is the accumulation and monopolization of

different kinds of capital. Education is seen as an 'academic market' in which capital is conferred, and although education tends to reproduce social hierarchies, individuals can take action to secure benefits and standing. These benefits may accrue in the present and/or in the future as material or symbolic profits.

Norton (2000) applies Bourdieu's economic metaphor of symbolic capital to explain learners' investment in a second language:

If learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources that will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital. Learners expect or hope to have a good return on that investment—a return that will give them access to hitherto unattainable resources. (p. 10)

From this perspective, one could hypothesize that the learners and parents in this study expected that future benefits would result from their investment in language learning.

In a study in British Columbia, Dagenais (2003) reveals that immigrant parents clearly associate language with capital. Families in the Vancouver region enrolled their children in French immersion programs to gain access to powerful official language communities. She suggests that immigrant parents invest in immersion programs because they imagine future possibilities for their children in Canada and the world: 'As multilinguals, their children's identity can be reframed from offspring of immigrants, whose linguistic resources may be unrecognized in the host country, to transnationals whose capital is marketable elsewhere' (p. 281). Extending this work to include immigrant parents' perceptions of their multilingual children's literacy practices in French immersion classrooms and extracurricular first language learning experiences, Dagenais and Moore (2008) discover important links not only to social and academic success but also to full participation as Canadian citizens.

Research questions

This article focuses on the perspectives of students and their parents (from a larger case study conducted from 2004 to 2007 [Carr, 2007]) and expands on proficiency test findings with additional data collected in 2007/2008. The questions addressed in this article are:

- Why did students and their parents choose to participate in IF?

- How did EAL students in the IF program perform in French compared with non-EAL students?
- How did EAL students in the IF program perform in English compared with EAL students in the non-IF program?

Methodology

The methodology used to explore each research question and associated study is described in three sections. The first study used qualitative case study methodology to explore student and parent perspectives about why they chose to participate in IF. The second and third studies examined students' language proficiency by analyzing assessment data. Study 2 focused on the French proficiency of students in the IF program, comparing the performance of EAL students with that of non-EAL students, and Study 3 examined the English proficiency of EAL students participating in the IF program compared to EAL peers in the regular English program.

Study 1: Why did students and their parents choose to participate in intensive French?

A qualitative case study was undertaken to examine this first question. From September 2004 to January 2007, the author interacted with 225 students in nine IF classes and some of their parents in formal and informal settings, such as interviews, questionnaires, meetings, classroom visits, and focus group discussions. To analyze the data generated from these interactions (field notes, transcripts from focus group meetings, interviews, questionnaires, and a researcher journal), direct interpretation and categorical aggregation were used (Stake, 1995). Transcripts were open coded and emergent themes discovered through repeated occurrence.

To discover some of the reasons why students were motivated to participate in IF, the author met with IF students in focus group sessions held in each of five schools. A written invitation was given to each student outlining the three focus questions:

- Why were you interested in this program?
- What do you see as the benefits of learning French?
- Have you had any positive or negative experiences during the program?

All but two students chose to take part. The sessions were audio-recorded and the transcripts analyzed; comments were coded and counted, and patterns identified. Themes mentioned at least three times at any or all of the schools were listed and then ranked according to frequency. The author did not identify groups or individuals at the meetings or on the audio track, but did note when comments related to acquiring French as an additional rather than a second language. These comments were highlighted as a subcategory (EAL students) within the reasons for wanting to participate in IF.

To discover why parents enrolled their children in the IF program and what they perceived to be the benefits and drawbacks of doing so, the author sent a questionnaire to the families of 255 IF students in May 2005 and 2006 (of which 120, or 47%, were returned). Furthermore, the author conducted one focus group meeting in each of three schools in February and March 2006 (attended by a total of 16 parents), and interviewed one parent at each of two schools in February 2006. The same three questions asked of the students were also posed to the parents, but with the emphasis on their child. Questionnaire responses and meeting transcriptions were analyzed through the same coding process as was used with the student data. None of the written or verbal responses included direct reference to the home language, nor did the author seek out and interview the parents of EAL students as a specific group; however, several themes emerged from the meeting transcripts and questionnaire responses that related to home languages other than English. These were highlighted accordingly.

Study 2: How did EAL students in the IF program perform in French compared with non-EAL students?

Oral and written assessments were conducted in each year of the study, in February 2005, 2006, and 2008, after the first intensive semester. A formal written assessment was conducted with all IF students in February 2005,⁶ using an instrument developed by the Société de gestion du réseau d'instruments pour les commissions scolaires (GRICS) for use by Québec's Ministry of Education to assess primary students in that province. The instrument and a 13-criteria marking scale have been deemed appropriate for use in an IF context (Germain, Netten, & Séguin, 2004) and are used in a number of provinces implementing IF. Data from this writing assessment, along with oral proficiency assessment results for the same group of students conducted during the same month, were sent to the program founders

to be included in the national set. Surrey's results were consistent with those attained in other provinces (Netten & Germain, 2005); that is,

The communicative ability of IF students at the end of Grade 5 or 6 is similar to that of core French students at the end of Grade 9 or 10. For writing, students in IF are able to produce a narrative composition of several paragraphs in a manner similar to Quebec Francophones at Grade 3.5. (p. 185)

The author continued to conduct and/or oversee oral proficiency assessments in February 2006 and 2008. Three sets of data ($N = 357$), including the first set collected in 2005, were analyzed by group (EAL and non-EAL) and by grade (5 and 6). Individual French oral interviews were conducted using the Oral Proficiency Interview protocol⁷ with 118 Grade 5 students in February 2005, 111 Grade 5 students in 2006, and 128 Grade 6 students in 2008.⁸ (There was no testing of students in 2007 because the IF intake grade changed from Grade 5 to Grade 6 that year.⁹) Interviews were conducted just after the students had undertaken between 280 and 330 hours of French instruction during the intensive semester from September to January inclusive. The number of hours varied according to school and timetable.

The interviews were assessed according to the Government of New Brunswick's (1984) Middle School Scale for the Assessment of Oral Proficiency, used by program founders and others to evaluate the oral proficiency of IF students. The interviewers were experienced core French teachers who had undergone training that replicated the series undertaken by the author (from Ministry- and program founder-approved facilitators). Training involved familiarization with the evaluation scales, calibration exercises using sample recordings, and evaluation of actual interviews that were conducted with students and observed in real time. Each interview took between 10 and 15 minutes and followed a semi-structured format that tracked each student's ability to converse about topics such as the daily schedule, family, school, pastimes, and so on. The scale, with abbreviated descriptors and numeric equivalencies,¹⁰ is shown in Table 1.

All interviews were recorded on audio cassette (and some on video cassette as well), and a sample set, along with evaluator scoring, was sent to the program founders in the first year of testing (2005). Prior to sending the set, the author and an external evaluator reviewed all recordings to calibrate the scores. Of the 20 samples, there were two instances of variance; in both instances, scores were within one level of each other on the scale.

TABLE 1
 Descriptors and Numerical Equivalents for the New Brunswick Middle School Scale of the Oral Proficiency Interview (Abbreviated Version)

| Level | Descriptor | Numerical Equivalent |
|-------------|---|----------------------|
| Novice low | Able to express oneself only in a very limited fashion by using isolated words or expressions | 11 |
| Novice mid | Able to speak in a limited fashion about familiar topics; use of words and memorized phrases rather than complete sentences; can identify objects; frequent, long pauses | 12 |
| Novice high | Able to satisfy immediate needs using longer, memorized phrases; some hesitations; understanding is limited; shows beginning signs of initiative in choice of words and sentences | 13 |
| Basic low | Able to show a certain spontaneity when speaking about familiar topics; uses simple but complete sentences; asks and answers simple questions | 14 |
| Basic mid | Able to show some spontaneity when speaking about a variety of topics; can initiate and sustain simple dialogue | 15 |
| Basic high | Able to show considerable spontaneity when speaking about a wide variety of topics; can initiate and sustain a simple conversation | 16 |

The oral French proficiency of a subsample of students – EAL students who had been identified and tested in English earlier the same year (explained in more detail in the next section) – was compared with the oral French proficiency achieved by the non-EAL students. To investigate whether there were significant differences in the mean scores, a univariate ANOVA was conducted (using SPSS 13.0 for Mac). Descriptive statistics were employed for the two groups (EAL and non-EAL) as well as for the two grades (because of the difference in intake grade between the first two years and the third year of testing), separately and combined. To investigate the distribution of proficiency test results and to determine whether there was any relationship between proficiency and grade (5 and 6) or proficiency and group (EAL and non-EAL), Pearson Chi-Square tests were used. Descriptive statistics were carried out for each group and grade, separately and together.

Study 3: How did EAL students in the IF program perform in English compared to EAL students in the non-IF program?

The English proficiency of EAL students participating in Surrey's IF program was tested from 2004 to 2006 and from 2007 to 2008. All

students in the IF program ($n = 43$)¹¹ who had ever received provincial English as a second language funding and service in the form of pull-out instruction were identified by each school's principal according to their level of English: 10 students in 2004/2005, 12 students in 2005/2006, and 21 students in 2007/2008. An equivalent group of EAL students ($n = 43$) who were in the same grade and at a similar English language level but not in the IF program was also identified. All students in the study were classified as at least an Intermediate level of English proficiency, defined by the BC Ministry of Education (1999) as being able to

understand more complex speech, but may require some repetition . . . use English spontaneously, but may have difficulty expressing all their thoughts due to a restricted vocabulary and a limited command of language structure . . . able to speak in simple sentences . . . [and] may have some trouble comprehending and producing complex structures and academic language. (p. 2)

Pre- and post-testing was conducted on an individual basis in October and May of each year.

The instrument used to measure English proficiency was the Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey (WMLS). It was chosen as a pre- and post-test instrument because of its wide range of age norms and broad coverage allowing for 'longitudinal or cohort research data to be gathered using the same set of tests and test content' (Woodcock & Muñoz-Sandoval, 2001, p. 2). The test is often used in schools to determine eligibility for EAL programs and/or to evaluate EAL program effectiveness. The WMLS contains four tests that are clustered for test interpretation. Oral language is measured by having students name familiar and unfamiliar objects and then verbally complete logical word relationships. Reading-writing is measured through verbal identification of words and then written responses to a variety of questions concerning spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and word usage. Broad English ability is a combined measure of the test clusters. The instrument provides an overall measure of language competence and cognitive-academic language proficiency (Cummins, 1984) reported by grade level. Specific scores in broad English ability, oral language, and reading-writing were recorded by grade level and compared across the three periods, (2004/2005, 2005/2006, and 2007/2008) and between the two groups (IF and non-IF) and grades (5 and 6). A two-level repeated measures analysis was employed to assess whether there were differences in proficiency over time and between the groups and grade levels for each measure.

Findings and discussion

Study 1: Why did students and their parents participate in intensive French?

Students

Approximately one-half of the IF students stated that their parents had made the decision for them, about one-quarter stated that they had made the decision themselves, and one-quarter had made the decision with their parents. While the author did not code responses according to which of these three groups each student belonged, she noted that the dominant reasons for participation came from a wide cross-section of students in each focus group meeting.

The first question posed to students and parents in a letter inviting them to participate, and again at the meeting, was: Why were you interested in the program? Of the many reasons offered by individual students, some common themes emerged in IF student focus group meetings from February to April 2006. In order of frequency from most prominent to least they were:

- will open up more possibilities for employment or university
- French is Canada's second language
- able to move up faster and/or get higher grades in high school
- follow others in the family, for example, a sibling in French immersion
- like learning something new; like challenges.

The reasons for enrolling in IF were linked to the acquisition of future resources, such as making advances in high school and university and securing employment opportunities. There was also an awareness of Canada's linguistic duality and the value of acquiring the second official language. In these cases, students expected to gain something as a result of their investment. This anticipated gain is part of an equation that Bourdieu (1972, 1977) theorized is inherent in all social transactions: students are, in fact, already competing for access to specific cultural and social capital in the form of short- and long-term opportunities.

One of the EAL students pointed out that learning French would facilitate future language acquisition: 'I thought it would be fun to learn a third language and my Mom said once you learn another language it will be easier to learn other languages' (IF student focus group, February 2006). Another said that having additional languages

would open up course choices in secondary school: 'I will be able to move up faster in high school because I already have an extra language' (IF student focus group, March 2006). Adding French to an existing repertoire of languages was important because the students themselves were aware of language as a desirable commodity. At least one student even saw IF as having monetary value: 'Normally you have to pay [but] this is a free program' (IF student focus group, February 2006).

The reasons to participate in IF expressed by EAL students were consistent with those expressed by allophone students in Grade 9 core French in Ontario who saw French as being a key part of getting a good education as well as a job (Mady, 2006). Mady also discovered that the allophone students 'invested in learning French in hopes of gaining a Canadian identity which, according to them, involved learning French' (p. 30). This link between language learning and identity construction has also been noted in earlier studies (for example, Berron, 1998; Dagenais, 2003; Dagenais & Moore, 2008; Makropoulos, 1998; Norton, 2000; Toohey, 2000) and surfaced in comments made by IF parents in Surrey.

Parents

Among the parents who responded to questionnaires or attended focus group meetings, there was a consistent rationale of acquiring capital, both linguistically and in terms of future advantage in high school and the job market. There was also acknowledgement that learning Canada's other official language was valuable. The reasons for investment in IF are consistent with those uncovered by research conducted in immersion programs by Hart and Lapkin (1998) and Olson and Burns (1983); that is, the symbolic and material benefits associated with the national promotion of the two official languages in employment sectors. Other reasons for enrolling one's child in the program were the perception of IF as a better option than core French or immersion, the wish to avoid a combined-grade classroom, and the desire to secure additional opportunities.

A better program option than core French or French immersion

Surrey parents expressed a desire to have their children involved in a second language learning program they deemed to be more effective than the core program. Some considered IF to be the 'second best choice' to French immersion, while others had chosen IF instead of

an immersion program. In all schools where intensive French was offered, IF students were placed in a single-grade class, as evidenced in the following questionnaire responses:

We wanted a program that would further conversational French without being total immersion. Our own experience in elementary school of the traditional 1.5 hours per week was not successful for becoming anywhere close to fluent in French.

That was the second best choice available as there is no French immersion program in the school.

I would not have put him in an early immersion program because I don't necessarily support that kind of a program. I believe in establishing the building blocks of the first language. I would have considered late immersion though, but that is not available in our area, so this was sort of the best of both worlds.

A single-grade rather than combined-grade classroom

Some parents expressed strategic reasoning behind the choice to enrol in the program: the avoidance of a combined-grade (or 'split') class. In all schools where intensive French was offered, IF students were placed in a single-grade class. Based on their questionnaire responses, some parents saw this as superior to a combined-grade class:

It would mean a straight Grade 5 class after previous two years in a split.

I also felt that if he did not join this class, he would have to be in a split class for the next three years. I did not like the dynamics of split classes.

Although the combined-grade class exemption occurred for all students in this study and is likely to continue for the intake year (Grade 6), the Grade 7 year is not always configured as a single-grade class if the IF cohort is separated into more than one class. In other provinces where IF is the only option at Grade 5 or 6, combined-grade classes do occur, and schools adjust their timetables in the subsequent grades.

Additional opportunities

Other program stakeholders made observations about parents' motivation in enrolling their children in the program. Several school

principals who were interviewed during IF's implementation noted that acquisition of linguistic capital and securing future benefits were evident as reasons for parents to enrol their children, but they also mentioned other factors, such as seeking a certain elite status, using the program to solve learning or social difficulties, or securing opportunities for their children:

I think the benefit is in the second language and the brain development. Some of the parents might think that. Some of the parents like the streaming and the exclusivity of it. Some of them think that their child will have opportunities because of the French and being in Canada with government jobs, national jobs, that French would give you more options in school and university. (IF school principal, interview, June 2005)

Some of the reasons have very little to do with language . . . Another is the parent of a child who is hyperactive and does not do well in school. . . In some cases, it's 'keeping up with Joneses' and not letting an opportunity go by. (IF school principal, interview, June 2005)

While the following may not be considered a representative sample of all EAL parents' views, these verbatim responses reveal that linguistic capital, official language status, and multilingualism are valued:

I enrolled my child in this program because Canada is a multicultural country so I want my child to have a good French speaking ability. (IF parent questionnaire, May 2006)

I make him go into that class. Because I learn French before and I said, 'This is one of the official languages here. Why not go bilingual, I mean . . . multilingual?' (IF parent focus group, February 2006)

I guess there's an advantage that way for them to maybe pick something up that they can use in business. You know, they will have advantages because they already have other languages too, right? (IF parent focus group, February 2006)

The notion of accessing opportunities for one's children via a second language program was explored in an earlier study in Surrey conducted by Berron (1998). She interviewed parents of Indo-Pakistani background to discover their reasons for enrolling their children in a French immersion program. She noted that the parents' frame of reference was 'international rather than Canadian,' and French was 'yet

another language to add to the already existing bilingualism or plurilingualism of their children' (p. iv). Other findings included the fact that parents value education and the learning of languages and want their children to have the same advantages as those offered to the majority. The rationale, which forms part of Berron's thesis title, is, 'When there is an opportunity, take it!'

Study 2: How did EAL students in the IF program perform in French compared with non-EAL students?

There was no significant difference in oral French proficiency between EAL and non-EAL students according to group, grade, or group and grade. The estimated mean proficiency level was very close to 14 (basic low), meaning that students could speak with a degree of spontaneity. EAL students in both grades attained a slightly lower estimated mean (13.8) than non-EAL students (14.2), with the difference being more pronounced in Grade 6 (0.7 year lower in Grade 6; 0.1 year lower in Grade 5). Student performance results are presented in Table 2.

Significant differences were noted in the distribution of scores; that is, the percentage of each group and grade performing at each level of the oral proficiency scale. In particular, differences appeared in the percentage of students attaining spontaneous communication (14 or above). The difference in distribution of scores by grade can be seen in Table 3, in which the total percentage of all students at Grade 6 who achieved a level of 14 (basic low) to 16 (basic high) is 79% compared with a total of 65% of all students at Grade 5. The difference in distribution of scores by group (EAL or non-EAL) is also evident, especially at the Grade 6 level: 83% of the non-EAL students, but

TABLE 2
Oral French Proficiency Scores (Estimated Means) for EAL and Non-EAL Students, Grades 5 and 6

| | EAL Gr. 5 (<i>n</i> = 22) | Non-EAL Gr. 5 (<i>n</i> = 206) | EAL Gr. 6 (<i>n</i> = 21) | Non-EAL Gr. 6 (<i>n</i> = 108) | All Gr. 5 (<i>n</i> = 228) | All Gr. 6 (<i>n</i> = 129) |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Oral test score | 13.8 | 13.9 | 13.8 | 14.5 | 13.9 | 14.4 |
| <i>SD</i> | 1.51 | 1.32 | 1.33 | 1.05 | 1.34 | 1.11 |
| <i>t</i> -test | <i>ns</i> | | <i>ns</i> | | <i>ns</i> | |

Note: *ns* $p > 0.05$

TABLE 3
 French Oral Proficiency Distributions (Percentage of Each Group) for EAL and Non-EAL Students, Grades 5 and 6

| Oral Test Score | EAL Gr. 5, 6 (n = 43) | | Non-EAL Gr. 5, 6 (n = 314) | | EAL Gr. 5 (n = 22) | | Non-EAL Gr. 5 (n = 206) | | EAL Gr. 6 (n = 21) | | Non-EAL Gr. 6 (n = 108) | | All Gr. 5 (n = 228) | | All Gr. 6 (n = 129) | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|------|----------------------------------|------|--------------------------|------|-------------------------------|------|--------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--|---------------------------|--|---------------------------|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 11 | 4.8 | 0.6 | 4.5 | 1.0 | 5.0 | 0.0 | 1.3 | 0.8 | | | | | | | | |
| 12 | 16.7 | 14.7 | 14.8 | 30.5 | 33.6 | 14.8 | 20.3 | 5.5 | | | | | | | | |
| 13 | 21.4 | 13.1 | 13.6 | 13.7 | 30.0 | 12.0 | 13.7 | 14.8 | | | | | | | | |
| 14 | 21.4 | 31.0 | 22.7 | 30.2 | 20.0 | 32.4 | 29.5 | 30.5 | | | | | | | | |
| 15 | 23.8 | 26.8 | 22.7 | 22.4 | 25.0 | 35.2 | 22.5 | 33.6 | | | | | | | | |
| 16 | 11.8 | 13.7 | 13.6 | 12.7 | 10.0 | 15.7 | 12.8 | 14.8 | | | | | | | | |

only 55% of the EAL students, achieved spontaneous communication (14 or above). In Grade 5 the difference between the two groups was much smaller: 65% of the non-EAL students attained 14 or above, compared to 59% of the EAL students.

It is not possible to draw conclusions about the difference in distribution of performance levels according to grade since there had been no pre-test given in Grade 6 to determine the effect of approximately 57 hours¹² of core French in Grade 5. Netten and Germain (2005) have reported that, in one province, testing in Grade 6 after two years (180 hours) of core French and in another province in Grade 5 after four years (360 hours) of core French, the majority of students achieved a level of 11 (novice low), meaning that they could express themselves in only a very limited fashion by using isolated words or expressions. It is therefore likely that the prior experience of core French in Grade 5 had little influence on Grade 6 outcomes.

Two factors that may have contributed to the higher percentage of students able to communicate with some spontaneity in Grade 6 are teacher efficacy and age of the learner. The assessment of Grade 6 students occurred four years after the first year of program implementation; during those years, teachers learned a great deal about the IF approach through experience and continuing education. Netten and Germain (2005) observed that the development of spontaneous communication among students occurred in classrooms in which teachers demonstrated highly effective teaching. Specific observations to measure teaching efficacy did not, however, occur in this study. It has also been noted that older students make more rapid progress in learning literacy-related aspects of a second language, especially in reading and writing (Cummins, 1983). This does not, however, necessarily influence oral skill development, the focus of assessment in this study. Further research is needed to isolate these factors and explore more deeply, and with a larger sample, the differences between the distribution of French proficiency scores of EAL and non-EAL students.

Study 3: How did EAL students in the IF program perform in English compared to EAL students in the regular program?

All EAL students ($n = 86$) showed an increase in English proficiency over time, indicated by the significant difference between the pre- and post-test scores in each category, presented in Table 4. The performance of EAL students in IF, however, was significantly higher than that of their peers in the regular English program ($p < .01$).

TABLE 4
English Proficiency Test Results, Grade 5 (2004/2005, 2005/2006) and Grade 6 (2007/
2008)

| | IF Gr. 5 (<i>n</i> = 22) | Non-IF Gr. 5 (<i>n</i> = 22) | IF Gr. 6 (<i>n</i> = 21) | Non-IF Gr. 6 (<i>n</i> = 21) | Test Significance ^a |
|--|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Broad English | | | | | |
| Pre-test mean score (grade equivalent) | 5.0 | 4.7 | 6.9 | 6.5 | |
| <i>SD</i> | 1.83 | 1.13 | 2.15 | 1.93 | |
| Post-test mean score (grade equivalent) | 7.0 | 6.1 | 8.9 | 7.7 | 1***, 2** |
| <i>SD</i> | 2.20 | 1.43 | 2.59 | 2.20 | 3 <i>ns</i> , 4 <i>ns</i> |
| Gain (grade equivalent) | 2.0 | 1.4 | 2.0 | 1.2 | |
| Oral Language | | | | | |
| Pre-test mean score (grade equivalent) | 4.5 | 3.9 | 6.9 | 6.3 | |
| <i>SD</i> | 2.26 | 1.69 | 3.06 | 2.32 | |
| Post-test mean score (grade equivalent) | 7.3 | 5.7 | 9.6 | 7.9 | 1***, 2** |
| <i>SD</i> | 2.51 | 1.96 | 3.53 | 3.13 | 3 <i>ns</i> , 4 <i>ns</i> |
| Gain (grade equivalent) | 2.8 | 1.8 | 2.7 | 1.6 | |
| Reading-Writing | | | | | |
| Pre-test mean score (grade equivalent) | 5.4 | 5.2 | 7.0 | 6.7 | |
| <i>SD</i> | 1.95 | 1.19 | 2.60 | 2.23 | |
| Post-test mean score (grade equivalent) | 7.0 | 6.4 | 8.9 | 7.6 | 1***, 2** |
| <i>SD</i> | 2.60 | 1.56 | 3.30 | 2.25 | 3 <i>ns</i> , 4 <i>ns</i> |
| Gain (grade equivalent) | 1.6 | 1.2 | 1.9 | 0.9 | |

^a Significance has been calculated using repeated-measures tests:
1 = Time; 2 = Time × Group; 3 = Time × Grade; 4 = Time × Grade × Group.
****p* < 0.001; ***p* < 0.01; *ns* *p* > 0.05

The greatest area of difference occurred in oral language, in which the estimated mean grade level score of EAL students in the IF program increased by 2.8 years in Grade 5 and 2.7 years in Grade 6, compared with gains of 1.9 and 1.6 years, respectively, for their peers in the regular English program. A comparison of proficiency over time between the two groups of EAL students indicated no significant difference in proficiency gains whether students were in Grade 5 or 6.

These findings show that there was a positive effect on English proficiency for EAL students participating in IF in this study. It must be noted that the EAL students in the IF and non-IF classes were classified as intermediate or advanced, and the overall sample was relatively small, so the results are not generalizable for all EAL learners.

Limitations of the studies

The testing process and results were limited by the inability to perfectly match EAL students in IF classes and non-IF classes according to their proficiency in English in relation to broad Ministry of Education classifications. The groups were established as equally as possible, but the pre-test scores for non-IF EAL students were, nonetheless, slightly lower than that of their IF peers. Furthermore, there were no beginner-level students enrolled in IF during 2004 to 2007, so all EAL students tested possessed at least an intermediate level of English.

A further limitation of the study is that factors other than participation in a program, such as learner attributes and parental involvement (for example, Breen, 2001; Dagenais & Day, 1999; Mady, 2006; Olson & Burns, 1983) can influence successful outcomes. These factors were not explored in this study.

Conclusions and implications

Just as British Columbia's language policy has broadened the notion of linguistic duality to include learning other languages to prepare for economic prosperity, the rationale for learning French as a second or additional language encompasses benefits over and above acquiring linguistic proficiency. The parents of students in intensive French in British Columbia sought opportunities for their children, such as academic and/or social benefits and participation in a value-added program, but they also wanted access to future benefits, such as the acquisition of one of Canada's official languages and choices in high school and beyond. For some parents, including those whose home language is neither French nor English, learning French and enhancing one's Canadian identity were seen as valuable.

Benefits for students that could be measured in the short term were considerable, most notably in language proficiency. Approximately 72% of students assessed in Surrey's IF program attained a level of spontaneous communication (14, or basic low and above), and EAL

student performance was generally consistent with that of their anglophone peers. Gains in English proficiency among EAL students enrolled in intensive French were significantly higher than those made by EAL peers in regular English classrooms. It appears that skills learned through the L3/Ln were transferred and used in the L2. Policies, whether official or not, that limit the participation of EAL students with an intermediate level of proficiency or above in an IF program are, therefore, not supported by the findings of this study. These findings, combined with those reported by Mady (2006) for EAL learners of beginner to intermediate levels of proficiency in a core French program, show that limiting EAL participation in FSL programs should be carefully reconsidered.

It is important to continue to track the participation and performance of EAL students in IF programs across Canada, including those who speak English at a beginner level. Understanding how students transfer literacy- and language-learning skills from L3/Ln would help teachers to support student learning. Exploring learner attributes, literacy background, and the influence of parental involvement would provide an even richer perspective of this segment of the IF student population. On a wider scale, it is important to learn more about the participation of EAL learners in FSL programs generally. Mady (2007) has suggested that encouraging their participation could increase Canada's chances of fulfilling the goal of the federal government action plan, but there may be even greater long-term gains to be made by developing the linguistic potential of these and all Canadian students.

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Notes

- 1 The term 'English as an additional language' (EAL) has been chosen to indicate that many learners learn English (and French) as second, third, or

fourth languages. English as a second language (ESL) is used in many school contexts but does not accurately reflect the reality of many learners. English language learner (ELL) is also used but may apply not only to those who are learning English as an additional language but also to native English learners learning English—a different context from the one referred to in this article.

- 2 New Brunswick has recently changed its policy of mandated core French from Grades 1 to 10 to one in which all students now participate in a choice of French learning activities from kindergarten to Grade 10. Students wishing to enter early immersion do so at Grade 3; all other students continue with French learning activities for Grades 3 and 4 and enter intensive French at Grade 5, after which they may continue with post-IF or enter late French immersion. All students continue in one of these three options (early immersion, late immersion, or post-IF) until the end of Grade 10 (Government of New Brunswick, 2008).
- 3 Newfoundland and Labrador includes intensive [core] French as an official option for core French students in Grade 6 (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2008).
- 4 Mady (2007, pp. 753–754) includes a number of specific recommendations for federal and provincial government level action to increase EAL students' access to French programming.
- 5 M. Adrien recommends that secondary schools offer a core French course for beginners at the secondary level to students who have not previously had the chance to take a French course, thus addressing the fact that a considerable number of students arrive in British Columbia after Grade 5 and never have the chance to learn French (personal communication, January 1, 2009).
- 6 The year 2004–5 was the only one in which a formal written evaluation was conducted in Surrey and assessed as part of the national IF data set (although writing samples have been routinely collected and analyzed on a school- and district-wide basis).
- 7 Surrey uses the Oral Proficiency Interview protocol used in other IF programs across Canada. It follows a procedure originally developed by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages and explained in detail in Germain, Netten, and Movassat (2004).
- 8 Not all IF students were tested each year for a variety of reasons. In 2005, 118 out of 120 students were tested; in 2006, 111 out of 135 were tested; and in 2008, 128 out of 132 students were tested.
- 9 The intake grade for intensive French changed from Grade 5 (in 2004/2005 to 2005/2006) to Grade 6 (2007/2008 to present), mainly due to administrative concerns. Staffing an IF program in a school requires only one IF specialist if the program starts in Grade 6 (to deliver the intensive year as well as the follow-up program of one hour per day in Grade 7).

- 10 Table 1 provides the levels, their numerical equivalents, and an abbreviated version of the descriptors of the first section of the New Brunswick Middle School Scale (MSS) of the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), which was provided by C. Germain (personal communication, January 13, 2006). The numerical equivalencies are those attributed by Netten and Germain to the scale (Netten & Germain, 2005, p. 208). BC evaluators used the MSS descriptors in their expanded form for the assessment of the oral proficiency of intensive French students.
- 11 This number is much smaller than the total number of EAL students in the IF program. As stated, about half of the IF students spoke a home language other than English; however, English testing for this study was limited to those students who had been assessed according to BC Ministry of Education (1999) guidelines and identified for ESL service. This number is also smaller than the number of identified EAL students in the IF program (and equivalent control subjects), due to a number of factors, among them that several students from each of these groups moved before the post-test could be conducted. Thus $n = 43$ is somewhat less than the total number of EAL students in IF.
- 12 In British Columbia, students receive less than half the national average of instructional time in core French, approximately 600 hours of instructional time by the end of Grade 8 (Turnbull, 2000). BC students receive an average of two 40-minute lessons per week in Grades 5 to 7 and an average of 2.5 lessons of 75 minutes per week in Grade 8, representing a four-year total of 260 hours (Carr, 2006). Surrey's elementary (Grade 5 to 7) core French program is slightly higher than this BC average, with two 45-minute lessons per week or 57 hours per year.

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