Exploring Teaching Strategies Used to Teach Reading in French Immersion

A Thesis submitted to the

College of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Education

In the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education

University of Saskatchewan

By

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ABSTRACT

In 2003, the Government of Canada embarked on an ambitious initiative to double the number of young Canadians proficient in both official languages, English and French, by 2013 (Genesee, 2007). The increase in the number of students enrolled in French immersion classrooms has materialized into a simultaneous increase in the variety of learning styles, range of academic achievements, and types of reading difficulties being experienced by students (Mannavaryaryan, 2002). Therefore, school systems and educators now need to explore new instructional strategies to address these additional challenges present in French immersion classrooms across Canada. However, educators are being bombarded with program publishers making claims that their type of learning method or style will increase student achievement (Genesee, 2007).

Students in the early literacy stages in French immersion programs, kindergarten up to and including Grade eight, must be able to read and comprehend increasingly complex content in French as they progress from year to year (Bournot-Trites, 2008; Deacon, Wade-Woolley, & Kelly, 2006). Teachers need to be able to identify students who may be at risk for reading difficulties as early as possible in order to provide these students with additional supports (Bournot-Trites, 2008; Genesee, 2007).

For a certain percentage of students, early literacy learning can be challenging enough in their first language let alone in a second one (Fisher & Stoner, 2004). Therefore, the purpose of

this study was to explore: (1) the methods and strategies that Saskatchewan French immersion teachers are currently employing in their K-8 classrooms; and (2) the interventions they use to assist students having difficulty with the acquisition of reading in French immersion.

One hundred and twelve elementary French immersion educators from ten out of the eighteen Saskatchewan school divisions, who have French immersion schools, participated in this study. The teachers completed the French Immersion Teacher Survey (FITS) on-line via the *SurveyMonkey* (2010) website. Out of the 112 respondents, 95 educators (85%) completed the survey. Seventeen surveys were started, but not completed.

Educators rated the amount of instructional time they devoted to seven different components or activities (independent/silent reading, shared reading, paired reading, guided reading, teaching reading with music, making words, and computer software programs) within their French reading and language arts programs on a scale of *a lot* to *none* (see Figure 3). Fifty-two (54.7%) teachers spend a *moderate* amount of time on shared reading as an instructional strategy to teach reading in French immersion and three (3.2%) spend *a lot* of time using computer software programs with their students.

Educators rated the effectiveness of the seven different components or activities (independent/silent reading, shared reading, paired reading, guided reading, teaching reading with music, making words, and computer software programs) as effective reading strategies to use with students who are have difficulties with the acquisition of reading in French on a scale

from: *very* effective to *not at all* effective (see Figure 4). The majority of Saskatchewan French immersion educators (63 or 66.3%) rated guided reading as the *most* effective instructional strategy to teach reading to their students who are struggling with the acquisition of reading in French, and 38 (40.4%) rated independent or silent reading as a *mildly* effective strategy.

A teacher's selected reading instructional strategies and methods are influenced by many factors: (1) the workshop, (2) the district curriculum policy, (3) teacher implementation of targeted reading strategies, (4) teacher's perceptions of their own instructional efficacy, and (5) teacher's perceptions of student's academic needs and performance (Nichols et al., 2005). After reviewing the results of the FITS, perhaps educators will be better informed on what reading methods and strategies the majority of Saskatchewan teacher's are currently using in their classrooms to assist their students with the acquisition of reading in French immersion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In completion of this Master's Degree, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to all who made it possible.

I would like to convey my sincere and unfailing gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Laureen McIntyre, for her guidance, encouragement, time, and laughter. I would like to thank Dr. Laurie Hellsten for being a member of my thesis committee, and Dr. Linda Wason-Ellam for participating as my external examiner.

A great big thank you to my children, Victoria, Grace, and Gabe, to my mom, Patricia Préfontaine, and to my sister, Lise Bolen, who all willingly contributed their patience, time, support, and encouragement. Finally, without the untiring faith of my husband, Toby, this great undertaking would not have been possible. Thank you for your patience, believing in me, and for being my strongest advocate and friend.

A special thank you to the Greater Saskatoon School Division, its Board of Education, and to my principal, Jacqueline Castilloux for their confidence in my educational desires. Your interest in and support of my course work and thesis was inspirational.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In 1965, second language learning programs were introduced in Canada in response to the concerns of a group of English-speaking parents in Quebec. The existing methods of teaching French as a second-language were not providing their children with the communicative proficiency they would need to be successful in a mostly French environment (Genesee, 1985; Lambert & Tucker, 1972). "Throughout history, bilingualism and bilingual education have been seen as hallmarks of the well-educated person. This is no less true today than in the past" (Genesee, 1985, p. 545). French immersion programs have the ability to provide an enriching education of another culture without travelling abroad and without considerable expense to families (Genesee, 1985).

In 2003, the Government of Canada embarked on an ambitious initiative to double the number of young Canadians proficient in both official languages, English and French, by 2013 (Genesee, 2007). The increase in the number of students enrolled in French immersion classrooms has materialized into a simultaneous increase in the variety of learning styles, range of academic achievements, and types of reading difficulties being experienced by students (Mannavaryaryan, 2002). Therefore, school systems and educators now need to explore new instructional strategies to address these additional challenges present in French immersion classrooms across Canada. However, educators are being bombarded with program publishers making claims that their type of learning method or style will increase student achievement (Genesee, 2007). Without knowing which methods and strategies to teach reading are the most efficient it is difficult to know which one(s) should be common practice in the classroom.

Reading is an essential language skill one must possess in order to be fully functional and independent in today's multi-lingual society (Bursuck, Munk, Nelson, & Curran, 2002; Nelson,

Benner, & Gonzalez, 2005; Torgeson, 2000). Educators must be cognizant of the sequential steps individuals must acquire in order to become successful readers, and what constitutes successful teaching practices for teaching reading skills (Reading 44, 2008). Students in the early literacy stages in French immersion programs, which include kindergarten up to and including Grade eight, must be able to read and comprehend increasingly complex content in French as they progress from year to year (Bournot-Trites, 2008; Deacon, Wade-Woolley, & Kelly, 2006). Teachers need to be able to identify students who may be at risk for reading difficulties as early as possible in order to provide these students with additional supports (Bournot-Trites, 2008; Genesee, 2007). For a certain percentage of students, early literacy learning can be challenging enough in their first language let alone in a second one (Fisher & Stoner, 2004).

The French and English languages share the Latin alphabet, and use the same letters, with the exception of the accent marks (Deacon, Wade-Woolley, & Kirby, 2009). Both languages use similar letter combinations, such as the doubling of consonants mostly in the middle of words, rather than at the beginning (Deacon, et al., 2009). In addition to these similarities, both languages share many of the same letter sounds, such as the case for most of the consonants, and some of the vowels (Deacon, et al., 2009).

The skills required to learn to read in French are fundamentally the same skills needed to learn to read in English (Deacon, Wade-Woolley, & Klinger, 2009; Genesee, 2007; MacCourbey, Wade-Woolley, Klinger, & Kirby 2004; Oller & Cobo-Lewis, 2002) . Researchers have found discriminators between weak and proficient readers in both English and French, which include: the areas of phoneme blending (i.e., blending individual speech sounds such as /c/a/t/ into the word *cat*), sound isolation (e.g., the ability to hear and perceive the individual sounds in spoken language such as /h/"ow"/s/ *house*), rapid naming (e.g., the ability to name familiar letters,

numbers, colours, symbols, and objects as quickly as possible), and word recognition (i.e., the ability to recognize high frequency words such as *and, to, in* etc.). Research has also been conducted into the transference of the many language skills from English to French and French to English (Deacon, Wade-Woolley, & Kirby, 2009). This transference has been coined as the *cross-linguistic transfer* as the relationship between the language skills works in both directions (Deacon, Wade-Woolley, & Kirby, 2009). For example, individuals developing their phonological awareness skills in reading are able to transfer these abilities between their first and second languages (Deacon, et al., 2009). In addition, French immersion students who are at risk for reading difficulties can be identified using English-language assessments starting in the primary grades (Genesee, 2007).

There are significant cross-linguistic relationships between the measures of orthographic processing and reading in both English and French (Deacon et al., 2009). The use of the same alphabet to represent two different languages means that there is a possibility that they will share similar vowel and consonant sounds, phoneme blends, and even historical links between words (e.g. mansion and maison) (Deacon et al., 2009). There are "correlations between all measures of orthographic processing and reading, including that of French orthographic processing" (Deacon, Wade-Woolley and Kirby, 2009, p. 221). The fundamental elements of reading are the same in both the English and French languages (Cisero & Royer, 1995; Comeau, Cormier, Grandmaison, & Lacroix, 1999; Deacon et al., 2009; Durgunoglu, Nagy, & Hanci-Bhatt, 1993; Lindsey, Manis & Bailey, 2003).

The National Reading Panel (2000) recognized five key elements students need in order to become fluent readers: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. If educators have the ability to assess an individual's learning style and academic

needs using English measurements, then they can apply the appropriate supports to the students lacking key elements of reading in French immersion.

There are various programs and teaching methods that early literacy educators are using to teach reading (Murphy & Netten, 2008). Three prominent philosophies educators are using in today's classrooms: (a) whole language, (b) systematic phonics, and (c) balanced literacy approaches. Within these philosophies, there are six commonly utilized reading methods/strategies employed by teachers to teach reading in different types of French immersion programs: (1) guided reading, (2) making words, (3) shared reading, (4) peer tutoring (paired learning), (5) music, and (6) computer software instructional programs (Alberta Learning, 2000; Crombie, 2000; Fisher & Stoner, 2004). Limited research has been completed relating to which methods and strategies are best used with exceptional learners in order to help them meet the objectives of the Saskatchewan curriculum in French immersion.

1.1 Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the study was to explore: (1) the methods and strategies that Saskatchewan French immersion teachers are currently employing in their kindergarten to Grade eight classrooms, and (2) the interventions they use to assist exceptional learners with reading acquisition. Specifically, this study investigated two primary research questions:

1. What methods and strategies do educators predominantly use to teach reading in French immersion classrooms in Saskatchewan?
2. What methods of assessment and intervention are Saskatchewan educators using with students who are demonstrating difficulties with reading acquisition in French immersion classrooms?

1.2 Definitions

Since the conception of French immersion over 30 years ago, various types of French immersion programs have been developed for families to choose from (Genesee, Holobow, Lambert, & Chartrand, 1989). For the purpose of this paper, it is important that the terminology of the four types of French immersion be clearly defined as they clarify the educational environment of Canadian students who are eager to learn French. It is also important to acknowledge the different terms that various school divisions are using to define their special education teachers.

1.2.1 Early Immersion

An early French immersion program starts at the beginning of kindergarten and goes all the way up to Grade 12. All content instruction is in French until grades 2 or 3, depending on the school division, at which time English language arts is introduced for one or 1.5 hours per day (Canadian Council on Learning (CCL), 2009; Genesee, 1985; Toronto District School Board (TDSB), 2009; Vancouver School Board (VSB), 2009). Early immersion programs have generally produced better French language results such as: proficiency, comprehension, and general achievement, than other immersion programs (CCL, 2009; Canadian Parents for French (CPF), 2008; Mannavaryaryan, 2002). Proficiency levels are higher than those for the partial, middle, and late immersion programs as well as the levels attained in the core French program (CCL, 2009; CPF, 2008;). Generally speaking, students in early immersion perform better on tests of French listening comprehension, reading comprehension, general French achievement, and overall French proficiency (CCL, 2009; CPF, 2008; Lapkin, Hart, & Swain, 1991; Mannavaryaryan, 2002). Parents can anticipate that children in early immersion will approach near levels of first language skills in French listening, comprehension, and reading by the end of

elementary school (CCL, 2009; CPF, 2008). However, they still will be distinguishable from native French speakers in speaking and writing (CCL, 2009; CPF, 2008). Numerous students in early French immersion achieve an intermediate or higher level of French language proficiency based on tests outlined by the Public Service Commission of Canada (CCL, 2009; CPF, 2008; Mannavaryaryan, 2002).

1.2.2 Middle immersion

This program is similar to early immersion, but it is implemented at about Grade 4. This program offers 100% French content instruction in the classroom for Grades 4 and 5 (CPF, 2008; TDSB, 2009; VSB, 2009). English language arts is re-introduced in Grade 6 and in most school districts, middle immersion students blend with early immersion students to continue their studies to the end of the educational career (CPF, 2008; TDSB, 2009; VSB, 2009).

In 1988, the Ottawa Board of Education (OBE) studied middle immersion students and compared their academic success to grade alike peers in early immersion programs. The study demonstrated that the French language skills of Grade 6 middle immersion students are equivalent to those of Grade 6 early immersion students in vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and the use of communicative strategies (Parkin, Bonyun, & Unitt, 1989). It also established that middle immersion students are not as proficient as their early immersion peers in the areas of grammar and syntax in both speaking and writing proficiency (Lapkin, Hart, & Swain, 1991; Mannavaryaryan, 2002; Parkin, Bonyun, & Unitt, 1989).

1.2.3 Late immersion

Most late immersion students are 10 and 11 year olds who have successfully completed Grade 5 and do not receive as many hours of French instruction as early or middle immersion students (CPF, 2008; VSB, 2009). Some studies have revealed that late immersion students who

have had recent intensive exposure to French performed as well or better than the early immersion students in French proficiency (Harley, Hart, & Lapkin, 1986). However, it is essential to note that late immersion students represent a self-select group of high academic achievers who are greatly motivated to learn. Care should be taken not to generalize late immersion results as applicable to all students.

1.2.4 Partial immersion

These students spend half of their curriculum content instructional time in French and the other half in English (CPF, 2008; Genesee, 1985; Mannavaryaryan, 2002). There is no period of intensity at the commencement of the partial immersion program, and the French language proficiency goals are not as ambitious as those in other immersion programs (Campbell, Gray, Rhodes, & Snow, 1985; Genesee, 1985). Campbell, Gray, Rhodes, and Snow (1985) stated in their reports, the *Comparative Evaluation of Elementary School Foreign Language Programs,* that partial immersion programs do not result in students having native-like language skills in French as students who are inserted in full immersion programs. However, these students do acquire French-language skills that surpass those of core French students.

1.2.5 Special education teacher

According to Saskatchewan Learning (2009), a special education teacher provides guidance and leadership within the pre-K-12 education system to support their school division and educational partners in meeting the needs of students with learning difficulties and behavioural needs (Saskatchewan Learning, 2009). Special education teachers help to ensure that these students have the same access to, and profit from, the provincial educational team. A special education teacher is sometimes referred to as a: learning assistance teacher (LAT), a resource teacher (RT), or an educational support teacher (EST) in different Saskatchewan school divisions.

The special education teacher is part of collaborative team of personnel who connect with various associations such as: educational partners, early childhood intervention programs, community-based organizations, interdepartmental groups, and local service providers to offer innovative supports and services that meet the needs of the students experiencing difficulties (Saskatchewan Learning, 2009). In Saskatchewan, all special education teachers are required to take an additional 18 credits in specific content areas in order to become certified special education teachers (Saskatchewan Learning, 2009).

1.2.6 Reading

Learning to read requires that individuals develop strategies for making sense of text, and in turn developing letter-sound knowledge and the ability to apply it, in addition to understanding the context of the text and tapping into their prior knowledge (Weaver, 1994; Goodman, 1996). Many individuals are able to use their cognitive resources in order to think ahead and use *fix-it* strategies (Weaver, 1994). Good readers are most often good problem solvers and tend to think ahead and/or predict while they are reading (Weaver, 1994; Goodman, 1996).

1.2.7. Reading Comprehension

Reading research has demonstrated that readers do not simply recognize the meaning that is *in* a text, they construct meaning *with* a text (Wilhelm, 2002). Research demonstrates that reading is a set of operations in which the reader brings prior knowledge and their life experiences to help them derive meaning from the text (Wilhelm, 2002). The reunion of the reader and the text results in what type(s) of meaning(s) they, the reader, extracted from the text, which in turn becomes comprehension (Wilhelm, 2002).

1.3 Significance of the Study

When Saskatchewan educators have a better appreciation of the most widely used methods and strategies that are currently being used to teach reading in French immersion, they can make instructional choices based upon current and authentic research (Charbra & McCardle, 2004; Reyna 2004). This study explored the current methods and strategies that Saskatchewan educators are using to teach reading to their French immersion students. It also explored the various assessments and preferred interventions Saskatchewan educators are using with students experiencing difficulties with reading acquisition in the French language. These results may provide direction for regular and special education French immersion teachers interested in enhancing their understanding of teaching methods and strategies being used in Saskatchewan classrooms.

1.4 Chapter Organization

Chapter two will review: the literature related to the evolution of education in French immersion, key elements of reading dominant instructional methods of reading, and commonly used teaching strategies to teach reading. Chapter three will describe the research methods and procedures utilized to explore instructional methods and strategies Saskatchewan French immersion teachers use to teach reading. Chapter four will discuss the results. Chapter five will review, summarize, and discuss the conclusions obtained from the results.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Teachers use various instructional methods and strategies to teach reading in French immersion classrooms. It would be beneficial to determine which methods and strategies are the most effective in preventing and supporting students experiencing reading difficulties. This review is organized into four major sections. The first section reviews the framework of French immersion that specifically explores: the progression of education in French immersion schools; reading acquisition in French immersion and the challenges some students encounter; and predictors of reading in the French and English languages. The second section investigates teaching methods currently being used in French immersion classrooms. The third section examines the key elements individuals need to become fluent and successful readers. While the fourth section looks at instructional strategies commonly used to teach reading to all types of reading achievers in French immersion.

2.1 Framework of French Immersion

In 1965, French language learning programs were introduced in Quebec for English speaking students so they would be able learn the French language and culture in a school setting, (Genesee, 1985). Various immersion programs were implemented in response to the concerns of a group of English-speaking parents in Quebec that the existing methods of teaching French as a second-language were not providing their children with the communicative proficiency that they would need to be successful in a mostly French environment (Lambert & Tucker, 1972). French immersion is a pedagogical approach, rather than a method of second language learning, which has the distinctive feature of using the French language to teach core curriculum subjects to students of all ages (Genesee, 1985).

In 2003, the government of Canada embarked on an ambitious initiative to double the number of young Canadians proficient in both official languages by 2013 (Genesee, 2007). According to the most recent statistics published by the non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of French Second Language learning opportunities, Canadian Parents for French (CPF, 2008), the number of students enrolled in French immersion is rising in both Saskatchewan and in Canada. In 2003, the Saskatchewan French immersion student enrollment was 177,575. In 2007 student enrollment was 187,603, an increase of 10,028, or approximately 5.6%. In 2003, the national student enrollment in French immersion programs was 293,698. In 2007 student enrollment was 314,608, an increase of 20,910, or approximately 7.1% (CPF, 2008).

Currently, Canadian students have four types of French immersion programs to choose from: early immersion; middle immersion; late immersion; and partial immersion (CPF, 2008; Genesee, 2007). Program availability will vary depending upon student demographics. With French immersion being accessed and utilized by an increasing number of Canadian students, student learning needs have simultaneously increased such as students experiencing symptoms of dyslexia are attempting to not only decipher their first language, but a second as well. School systems and educators now need to explore new instructional strategies to address the various learning styles, academic delays, and reading difficulties that are currently in French immersion classrooms across Canada. Unfortunately, not all children are successful in early French immersion programs; many struggle, and as a result of this, eventually switch to English-only programs (Bruck, 1985; Obadia & Thériault, 1997).

The increasing trend of students and families committed to learning a new language is exciting. As Canada is an officially bilingual country, more English-speaking parents are choosing to place their child in a type of French immersion program so that they can learn to

communicate in both official languages (Jared, 2008). The existence of general cognitive mechanisms that can go between the boundaries of both the English and French languages permits bilingual students to move swiftly towards their ultimate goal of being bilingual (Deacon, Wade-Woolley, & Kirby, 2009). Studies reveal that bilingual education and bilingualism can augment the cognitive development in the majority of students (Mannavarayan, 2002). "It is a fact that there are more bilingual brains on the planet than monolingual ones" (Language Research Centre (LRC), 2006, p. 4). It has been suggested that second language learners develop flexible thinking, which improves their performance on tasks that require originality and creativity (Landry, 1974).

In 2004, the Language Research Centre (LRC) research team consulted literature from a variety of sources including: academic journals; books; conference proceedings; technical reports and online materials discussing the benefits, effects, and challenges that language learners encounter. Some of the more pronounced effects that the LRC (2004) researchers found confirmed that exposure to a second language can:

> 1) enhance the complexity of first-language syntax used; 2) enhance language skills (narrative strategies; reading and writing literacy skills in the first language, vocabulary scores; and 3) enhance non-linguistic skills (divergent thinking, metalinguistic skills, attitudes towards others, mathematics scores and skills). (p. 1)

In order to address these areas of enhancement, educators need to be aware of various instructional strategies that can be used to meet the academic and reading needs of all students in French immersion programs. Meeting student needs will assist them in continuing to enhance their cognitive and linguistic skills (LRC, 2004).

Initial French immersion students were found to have coped well with the complexity of the program according to the evaluations done by the Newfoundland Department of Education's report on the Evaluation of French Immersion Programs for 1990-1991(Murphy & Netten, 2008). In many cases, these same students were out-performing their English counterparts, even in the area of English Language Arts (Murphy & Netten, 2008). However, a broader more academically average group of students began to participate in available French immersion programs. It did not take long to recognize that the initial immersion students had been mostly from middle and upper class environments with a strong support for education in the home, and often had above-average cognitive abilities (Murphy & Netten, 2008).

All students need to feel successful and valued in their language of learning regardless of their level of academic and reading abilities. Students demonstrate more resilience when they feel they are able to succeed in spite of the obstacles and adverse conditions they encounter (Smith, 2003; Waxman, 2003). The evolution of the new challenges within the immersion population has not only forced teachers to adjust teaching strategies in the area of reading, but also has forced principals to have a newly founded appreciation for the development of the demands of the French immersion programs (Murphy & Netten, 2008). All teaching professionals need to have some understanding of what is required for French immersion students to become successful learners.

2.1.1 Reading Acquisition in French Immersion

Educators and administrators need to be cognizant that students in French immersion programs must be able to read and comprehend increasingly complex content in French as they progress through the grades (Bournot-Trites, 2008; Deacon, Wade-Woolley, & Kelly, 2006). Their academic achievement can be seriously compromised if they do not attain high levels of proficiency in French reading (Bournot-Trites, 2008; Crombie, 2000). For a student who does not

master the reading process early, deciphering social studies, science and/or math textbooks in French can become a frustrating and overwhelming task (Bournot-Trites, 2008, de Courcy, 2000). For a certain percentage of all students, early literacy learning can be challenging enough in their first language let alone in a second one (Fisher & Stoner, 2004). All students bring to the classroom their own learning styles, strengths, and particular needs (Watson, 2008). Students who have difficulties with reading often have average or above average cognitive skills, but they require additional or alternate teaching strategies in order to be successful (Watson, 2008).

2.1.2 Reading Difficulties in French Immersion

Teachers need to be able to identify students who may be at risk for reading difficulties as early as possible to provide these students with important additional supports (Bournot-Trites, 2008; Genesee, 2007). There a various types of reading difficulties that cane exist in French immersion classrooms, such as: (1) letter and word comprehension, (2) reading speed and fluency, (3) understanding words and ideas, and (4) a lack of French vocabulary (Alberta Learning, 2000). Currently, these reading difficulties may go undetected for many years as they are often attributed to the students' efforts in coping with a new language environment (Murphy & Netten, 2008). Juel (1988) estimated that the probability of a poor reader at the end of Grade one remaining a poor reader at the end of Grade four is 0.88.

Students experiencing such difficulties in reading may be at risk for low self-esteem, feelings of failure, and/or anxiety (Bournot-Trites, 2008). Language anxiety has been known to be associated with "problems in language learning such as deficits in listening comprehension, reduced word production, impaired vocabulary learning, lower grades in language courses, and lower scores on standardized tests" (Kondo & Ying-Ling, 2004, p. 258). When individuals become anxious in various settings, sometimes negative self-related cognition begins (Kondo &

Ying-Ling, 2004); therefore being anxious in the immersion classroom can significantly impact the learning of the French language. These negative emotions may have future potential consequences as research has proven that emotions can significantly influence learning and academic outcomes (Winters, 2001). Unfortunately, there is no exact way to foresee whether a child will have more difficulties in a French immersion program or in a regular English one (Murphy & Netten, 2008).

2.1.3 Predictors of Reading in French Immersion

Both the English and the French language share the same alphabet and many similar words (e.g. alphabet, table) (Deacon et al., 2009). The use of the same alphabet to represent two different languages means that there is a possibility that they will share similar vowel and consonant sounds, phoneme blends, and even historical links between words (e.g. mansion and maison) (Deacon et al., 2009). MacCourbey, Wade-Woolley, Klinger and Kirby (2004) have sought to establish whether predictors of reading in English are equally as useful for predicting the same in French. MacCourbey, Wade-Woolley, Klinger, and Kirby (2004) used reading scores of 175 students in both English and French which were gathered over three sessions during Grade one (October and May) and Grade two (November). They measured the three components of phonological processing (phonological awareness, phonological working memory, and rapid lexical access) of the entire 175 student in both languages (MacCourbey, et al., 2004). The researchers also included two other non-phonological components to predict reading achievement, in order to "rule out the possible competing explanations of findings as the effect of differences in maturation or general cognitive ability" (MacCourbey et al., p. 17). MacCourbey, Wade-Woolley, Klinger, and Kirby (2004) established typical and poor reader groups based on the student's phonological abilities. "Predictive discriminate analysis showed that performance on phoneme

blending and sound isolation, and rapid naming identified poor and typical readers in French" (MacCourbey et al., p.11). These results are significant as they "indicate that early interventions can be implemented to assist students before reading failure occurs" (MacCourbey et al., p. 22).

Oller and Cobo-Lewis (2002) established that bilingual readers are better able to grasp and manipulate the relationships between phonemic and/or syllabic forms across the French and English languages. Comeau et al. (1999) also concluded that "phonological awareness is a general (not language-specific) cognitive mechanism", and that there was a "contribution of phonological awareness to reading from the first language to the second language and vice versa in young English learners of French" (p. 39).

Deacon, Wade-Woolley, and Kirby (2009) examined whether orthographic processing transfers across the languages to reading when the writing systems under acquisition are so closely related. In contrast to phonological awareness, orthographic processing is widely advocated as language specific (Abu-Rabia, 2001). Research with monolingual learners has demonstrated that orthographic processing is related to future reading outcomes (e.g. Cunningham et al., 2001 and Deacon and Wade-Woolley, 2009) (Deacon et al., 2009).

Deacon, Wade-Woolley, and Kirby (2009) conducted a study on orthographic processing of 76 seven year-old English-first-language children in an early French immersion program. The researchers measured the students French and English orthographic processing by using the standardized measures of the Woodcock and the Canadian French Immersion Test (FIAT) to assess their English and French word reading skills. The students came from a variety of economic and social backgrounds and all lived in English-only cultures. Most students were learning to speak and read completely in French during school hours from Kindergarten to the end of Grade two. The researchers discovered that there are "correlations between all measures of

orthographic processing and reading, including that of French orthographic processing" (p. 221). "Orthographic processing measured in English showed a significant contribution to reading in French, and French orthographic processing also showed a significant contribution to reading in English" (Deacon et al., 2009, p. 223). This discovery of bidirectional contributions of orthographic processing to reading is similar to that uncovered by Comeau et al. (1999) for phonological awareness (Deacon et al., 2009).

The combined research has shown that the skills required to learn to read in English are fundamentally the same skills needed to learn to read in French and there is a *cross-linguistic transfer* in regards to phonological and morphological awareness, and orthographic processing (Deacon, & al., 2009). The researchers have found discriminators between weak and proficient readers in both English and French pertained to the areas of phoneme blending, sound isolation, rapid naming, and word recognition (Deacon et al., 2009; Genesee, 2007; MacCourbey et al., 2004; Oller & Cobo-Lewis, 2002).

These findings are significant because they indicate that French immersion students who are at risk for reading difficulties can be identified using English language assessments and these can be done early on in student's education (Genesee, 2007). It is possible to identify students as being *at risk* for reading impairment as early as pre-school (Genesee, 2007.). Educators can make the necessary accommodations early on in a student's academic career by examining their performance on tests that will predict the student's future reading ability, such as their knowledge of letter names and sounds, phonological awareness, and phonological recoding, as measured by the student's speed of access to phonological codes for words, numbers or picture names (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). "Learning to read is a complex process which requires and involves the ability to reflect upon the language. This ability to reflect upon

and manipulate the structural features of language – e.g. phonological, morphological and syntactic structure – has been defined as *metalinguistic skills*" (Demont & Gombert, 1996. p. 315). Educators must know the important sequential steps students need to acquire in order to become a fluent reader, and they also must know what constitutes successful teaching practices for teaching these reading skills (Reading 44, 2008).

2.1.4 French and English Orthographies

Research into first (English) and second (French) language reading has shown that specific skills play a particularly important role in learning to read. These skills include: phonological awareness, lexical awareness, knowledge of the names and sounds of letters, vocabulary, memory, and grammar (Bournot-Trites, 2008; Deacon et al., 2009). English and French orthographies are both relatively complex because each consists of several levels of orthography: phonological, morphological, and orthographic (Deacon et al., 2006). The French and English languages share the Latin alphabet, and use the same letters, with the exception of the accent marks (Deacon, Wade-Woolley, & Kirby, 2009). Both languages use similar letter combinations, such as the doubling of consonants mostly in the middle of words, rather than at the beginning (Deacon, et al., 2009). In addition to these similarities, both languages share many of the same letter sounds, such as the case for most of the consonants, and some of the vowels (Deacon, et al., 2009).

Particularly in French immersion, research has shown that phonological, syntactic, and morphological awareness are essential stepping stones in learning to read (Bournot-Trites 2008; Deacon et al., 2009). Phonological awareness is defined by Bruck and Genesee (1995) as "the ability to reflect on and manipulate sub-lexical phonological units such as syllables, onsets, rimes and phonemes" (p. 308). Syntactic awareness is the level of sensitivity to the grammatical structure of a particular language (Jongeian, Verhoeven, & Siegel, 2007). The last stepping stone

of morphological awareness is the ability to combine familiar spoken units of meaning or morphemes to create new connotations (Bryant, Nunes, & Bindman, 1997).

Monique Bournot-Trites (2008) has done extensive research into what skills students need to be proficient readers in French. She has discovered that the foundational language element needed for effective reading is phonological awareness. Phonological awareness has been shown to be related to learning to read in English as a first language (Adams, 1990). Studies have also shown that phonological awareness skills transfer from one language to another (Cisero & Royer, 1995; Comeau, Cormier, Grandmaison, & Lacroix, 1999; Durgunoglu, Nagy, & Hanci-Bhatt, 1993; Lindsey, Manis & Bailey, 2003).

Comeau, Cormier, Grandmaison, and Lacroix (1999) did a one-year longitudinal study of 122 English-speaking children in French immersion classrooms to ascertain if there is a relationship between phonological awareness and reading achievement in both languages. The 122 students were given measures in both English and French on word decoding, and on phonological awareness, as well as measures of cognitive ability, speeded naming, and pseudo word repetition (this one was done in English only) (Comeau et al., 1999). The researchers discovered that the phonological awareness skills in both languages were specifically associated with one-year increments in decoding skills in French (Comeau et al., 1999). These findings are significant as they support the research that there is a cross-linguistic transfer of phonological awareness skills across both of the alphabetic languages (Comeau et al., 1999). Children with high scores on phonological awareness tasks become more proficient readers (Wagner, 1987); while children with poor phonological awareness skills usually have poor reading skills (Naund & Schneider, 1996; Stuart & Matterson, 1992). The level of a student's phonological skills should continually be monitored until they are deemed to be a proficient reader, and as educators we

should be aware of the key elements in reading that will enable our students to be proficient, good, and fluent readers (NRP, 2000).

2.2 Methods to Teach Reading

There are various teaching methods and approaches that early literacy educators use to teach reading (Murphy & Netten, 2008). Whichever method a particular board of education endorses and recommends is inevitably the method early literacy educators will use in combination with an educators instructional choice (Kennedy, 1998). Effective teachers of reading make several daily decisions in planning their instructional methods and strategies (Mergen, 2000). Proficient educators provide varied, meaningful practice to ensure mastery and transference of a skill to other significant reading situations (Blair, Rupley, & Nichols, in press).

Nichols, Zellner, Rupley, Wilson, Kim, Mergen and Young (2005) examined 33 primary educators' perceptions and knowledge of reading strategies and methods, before and after their participation in a 120-hour professional development workshop. Results of this study established that the teacher's selected reading instructional strategies and methods were influenced by many factors: 1) the workshop, 2) the district curriculum policy, 3) teacher implementation of targeted reading strategies, 4) teacher's perceptions of their own instructional efficacy, and 5) teacher's perceptions of student's academic needs and performance (Nichols et al., 2005). Brady, Gillis, Lavalette, Liss-Bronstein, Lowe, North, Russo (2009) examined the gains of an intensive form of professional development and corresponding teacher attitudes. They discovered that newer teachers more often felt unprepared for teaching students to read and welcomed professional development opportunities, whereas some of the veteran teachers saw less value in further training (Brady, et al., 2009). This difference in perspective from a beginning versus an experienced teacher was expressed in some of the submitted comments to the researchers on a type of

instructional method workshop they had just attended (Brady, et al., 2009). One comment from a beginning teacher was, ‘‘being a first year, first-grade teacher, I feel the techniques and strategies that I was introduced to were extremely helpful and effective’’ (Brady, et al, 2009, p. 20). Another comment submitted by a teacher nearing retirement was: ‘‘I believe this program would be best for beginning teachers, not those with 30 plus years of teaching” (Brady, et al, 2009, p.20).

Teachers are perceived to be the most important factor in the implementation of successful school practices whether they may be in a rural or urban community (Lipsky, 1980). However, the characteristics of the pupils, families, administrative styles, curriculum constraints, and the community affect how a teacher chooses their teaching strategies, methods, and assessments (Dreeben, 1973). Unless administrators, school board members, and the community comprehend this influence; teachers may be unable to implement teaching strategies, methods and assessments that are considered to be effective teaching practices (Deal, 1985). Administrative, rural and urban community attitudes toward student achievement, teacher satisfaction, parental approval, and support for school practices are numerous dynamics that make up the culture of the school and guide teacher’s instructional choices (Rueter, 1992).

After reviewing the literature into the many variables that affect which methods and strategies early literacy educators are using it was determined that, three prominent instructional philosophies are being used to teach reading: (a) whole language, (b) a systematic phonics approach, and (c) balanced reading instruction.

Some professionals have advocated the position of using the whole-word or whole-language approach (Routman, 1996); while other professionals have argued that the systematic phonetic approach works best (Ehri et al., 2001). Kelly (1997) ascertained that a combination of phonics and whole language approaches characteristically define balanced reading instruction

because of children's need to acquire knowledge in both phonemic awareness and in cueing strategies. As well, Carbo (1996) emphasized the role of using student learning styles. She stated phonics instruction benefits students with analytic and auditory learning styles, while whole language instruction supports students with learning styles of a visual, tactile, and global nature. The debate continues among educators on how to implement early reading programs and on which ones to use (Ehri et al., 2001).

The phonics versus whole language argument has deep historical origins, going back to the early 20th century when William S. Gray and others fought for greater balance in reading programs, which at the time, involved significant emphasis on intensive phonics instruction (Baumannn, Hoffman, Moon, & Duffy-Hester, 1998). "This resulted in disagreements about whether phonics should be taught, and if so, how much, and when" (Baumannn et al., 1998, p. 637). Fueling the public debate is the widespread perception that the student's reading achievement has declined in the United States because of whole language literature-based instruction (Baumannn et al., 1998). "Alarmed by low reading scores, state after state is trying to return to phonics" (Hancock & Wingert, 1996, p. 75). In response to these low levels of reading achievement, The California Department of Education Reading Task Force (1995) recommended a "balanced and comprehensive approach to reading that includes phonemic awareness, phonics, and decoding skills to address the needs of emergent readers" (p. 2).

2.2.1 Whole Language

Weaver (1990) has stated in her research that is directed toward teachers, educators, and school administrators in the United States that:

> The whole language philosophy is a belief system about the nature of learning and how it can be fostered in classrooms and schools. It is not an approach,

> though some kinds of activities can reasonably be characterized as whole language because they are consonant with this philosophy. Language is kept whole, not fragmented into *skills*; literacy skills and strategies are developed in the context of whole, authentic literacy events, while reading and writing experiences permeate the whole curriculum; and learning within the classroom is integrated with the whole life of the learner. (p. 285)

Other educators refer to whole language as a reading strategy that has gained popularity in recent years (Weaver, 1990). Some educators have found success with using the various reading and writing approaches and have modified their teaching to include whole language activities (Weaver, 1990).

Whole language reading instruction, also known as *look-say* or *sight* reading, is compromised of two essential features, one factual and one emotional (Baumannn, et al., 1998). Whole language is said to be *literature-based* because students are likely to learn words by *reading* them as teachers read stories out loud. After they have *read* the words enough times they will be familiar with them and be able to read by themselves (Rayner, Foorman, Perfetti, Pesetsky, & Seidenberg, 2002). With this method, students must be able to incorporate certain strategies such as: activating prior knowledge, using graphic organizers, incorporating other sources of print, and studying text structure or text organization in order to enhance their own reading comprehension (Calais, 2008).

Bernhardt (1992) looked at the success of the implementation of whole language in primary French immersion classrooms. It was determined that in spite of good intentions all around, the recommended teaching approach (whole language) appeared difficult for teachers to

implement. This approach seemed to boarder on the verge of unworkable due to a number of contributing factors (Bernhardt, 1992).

One of the premises of the whole language learning style is to encourage social interaction and to empower students to use language to their own ends with students and teachers alike (Bernhardt, 1992). This factor makes the whole language approach in immersion classrooms difficult, as students must continually watch their teachers for key communication cues (Bernhardt, 1992). They do not possess the same foundation of language as their English counterparts to apply to decoding and comprehension (Bournot-Trites, 2008).

To keep students engaged, teachers in French immersion need to be constantly animated to keep and maintain student's attention. As the student's language base is limited and as they are expected to communicate, decode and comprehend solely in French, in addition to the fact that there are a number of children seeking interactions at the same time with the teacher, one can easily see why this approach could be quite daunting to students and educators alike (Bernhardt, 1992).

Another contributing factor Bernhardt (1992) reported was the lack of resources in French to implement the whole language approach. In many classrooms, French collections are limited and lacking in authentic texts to promote the teaching of reading and the personal enjoyment of reading (Murphy & Netten, 2008). Both types of resources are critical and basic elements in the whole language style of learning.

The shortcomings of the whole language philosophy along with the fact that many schools lack the good French resources to combine with the whole-language approach continue to make this teaching strategy problematic (Bernhardt, 1992; Murphy & Netten, 2008). Fisher and Stone (2004) found that in the early literacy stages, many second language learners have a difficult time

retaining the meanings and the sounds of words in a second language even after they have been introduced in the classroom. They further concluded that in French immersion the whole language approach would be an overwhelming method for both teachers and students. Therefore, there must be a better way to teach reading in French immersion.

2.2.2 Systematic Phonics Approach

Current research suggests that teaching reading using a systematic phonics approach, rather than a non-systematic approach which highlights elements as they happen to appear in a text, is more effective, and it recommends students be provided with this type of reading instruction as part of a balanced reading program (Ehri, et al., 2001). A phonics approach to reading is an approach that teaches the relation of the letters (graphemes) to the sounds (phonemes) they represent to teach reading (Halvorson, 1992).

> Systematic phonics instruction teaches beginners the major grapheme-phoneme correspondences and how to use these to decode and spell words. Also it teaches phonemic awareness which is the ability to analyze and manipulate phonemes in speech, for example, how to break the spoken word teach into three phonemes, /t/-/e/-/ch/, or how to blend these phonemes to say the whole word. Because the writing system in English is more complex and variable than in some other languages, it is harder to learn. This makes systematic phonics instruction even more important to teach, because children will have difficulty figuring out the system on their own. A primary goal of is phonics instruction to teach students to read words in or out of text. Readers have available several ways to read words. All of these ways require knowledge of the

> alphabetic system. Unfamiliar words may be read by decoding (Ehri, 1994, p. 1).

The theory behind the phonics approach is based on two assumptions: (1) most languages have consistent phoneme (sound) to grapheme (letter) correlation, and (2) once learners understand the relationships of the letters to the sounds, they can articulate printed words by blending the sounds together (Aukerman, 1984).

2.2.2.1 Phonemic Tasks

Research has also proven that phonemic tasks such as phonemic segmentation which requires students break a word into its separate sounds, saying each sound as they tap it out or count it, then they write and read the sounds (No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), 2001) helps students perform phoneme manipulation tasks (adding and/or deleting a particular phoneme and regenerating a word from the remainder) (Bournot-Trites, 2008). It is these tasks that are the best predictors of reading success in the French language and not solely the performance of syllabic tasks (dividing words into syllables, rimes, and/or blends) (Bournot-Trites, 2008).

The National Reading Panel (2000) identified, through the evaluations of correlation studies, that phonemic awareness and letter knowledge are the two best predictors of how well children will learn to read during their first two years of instruction. Bournot-Trites (2005), through her research study on *Le manuel phonique (Jolly Phonics)*; (Molzan & Lloyd, 2001), discovered that students who were taught reading by using systematic phonics instruction improved significantly on word reading. The collective research findings of MacCourbey, Wade-Wolley, Klinger and Kirby (2004) also stated that students learning to read in French use many of the same learning strategies as their English counterparts; therefore, educators should use similar teaching practices to teach reading in French as they do in English programs.

An important component in the systematic phonics approach is phonological awareness; "Phonological awareness refers to sensitivity to any size unit of sound" (Yopp & Yopp, 2000, p. 130). Such as the units of sounds, as in syllables, word parts (e.g. /th/ and /ing/ in the word /thing/), word families (e.g. /thing/ and /bring/), or individual phonemes in a word. Snow et al. (1998) also proposed that:

> The term *phonological awareness* refers to a general appreciation of the sounds of speech as distinct from their meaning. When that insight includes an understanding that words can be divided into a sequence of phonemes, this finer-grained sensitivity is termed *phonemic awareness.* (p. 15)

2.2.3. Balanced Reading Instruction

Balanced reading instruction proposes an alternative to phonics only or whole language only philosophies by offering a mixture of instructional methods to meet the needs of various students learning styles within the classroom (Calais, 2008). Kelly (1997) stated that a combination of whole language and phonics approaches typically define balanced reading instruction because of the way each method addresses the student's various learning styles. The National Reading Panel (2000) recommended that educators employ a balanced literacy program filled with a variety of phonological awareness strategies in order to meet the needs of all their student's learning styles and they need to be well informed on which activities to implement in their classrooms:

> Knowing that all phonics programs and their components are not the same brings with it the implication that teachers must themselves be educated about how to evaluate different programs to determine which ones are based on strong

> evidence and how they can most effectively use these programs in their own classrooms. (p. 3)

Balanced literacy classrooms include various types of reading and writing experiences where children read and write each day independently and in group settings (both large and small) (Manotick Public School, 2008). Balanced reading programs offer an efficient mixture of instructional approaches to meet the needs of the array of learning styles within the classroom environment (Calais, 2008). The reading strategies that are included in a balanced literacy classroom provide many opportunities for real life reading and writing experiences. Using this type of literacy program allows educators the opportunity to meet the needs of all learners in their classrooms (Manotick Public School, 2008). As an educator, is difficult to determine which methods and strategies in reading instruction are perceived to be the best to use in French immersion classrooms.

2.3 Evaluating Reading Instruction

2.3.1 The First R

Baumann, Hoffman, Duffy-Hester and Moon (1998) decided to revise a survey, *The First R* that was developed in the early 1960's by Mary Austin and Coleman Morrison to determine the state of reading instruction, methods, and strategies to use with second and/or third language learners in the United States. The results of the original *The First R* study painted a not so flattering picture of reading instruction in public elementary schools in the 1960's (Austin & Morrison, 1963). One of Austin and Morrison's (1963) overall conclusions of their research was that early literacy programs were substandard in general and were not capable of preparing students for future literacy demands.

Interestingly enough, some of Austin and Morrison's (1963) recommendations to improve early literacy instruction were:

> That no single method of instruction in beginning reading be advocated but that a variety of approaches be utilized (p. 221); that continued emphasis be placed on helping children develop proficiency in word recognition; that teachers be instructed in the appropriate use of basal readers (p.222); that a definite program be initiated in which all children are taught critical and creative reading skills; and that the results of standardized test be interpreted with the caution advocated by educational researchers. (p. 233)

These recommendations still continue to be early literacy needs that educators need to constantly be aware of, apply, and implement in their classrooms (Baumannn et al., 1998).

It has been documented that numerous surveys in the United States have recently been conducted in the area of early literacy (Baumannn et al., 1998). National surveys such as the ones conducted by: McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) looked at elementary student's attitudes towards reading; and Commeyras and DeGroff (1998) examined the diverse groups of literacy educators on their views towards the various types of professional development in regards to reading (e.g. book clubs, portfolio assessments, etc.). Baumannn, et al., (1998) reviewed many of these of surveys and concluded that none of them addressed the current general status of early literacy instructional methods and strategies. As it had been over 35 years since the achievement of an "empirical benchmark of the state of U.S. elementary reading instruction, Baumannn, et al., (1998) determined that a modified version of Austin and Morrision's *The First R* was overdue" (p. 342).

Baumannn et al., (1998) decided to re-conduct the original *The First R* to reflect the situation of instructional reading practices in today's elementary schools, as the authors concluded that the original *First R* involved a "lack of information, confusion, and had misperceptions surrounding reading instruction practices of the day" (p. 341). It has been well documented that there has been an instructional *reading war* between the prevalence of phonics instruction in beginning reading, or whether a whole language process should prevail in today's elementary classrooms (Baumannn et al., 1998; Collins, 1997). The debate continues…however, missing from these debates is "a baseline understanding of current elementary reading instruction. In other words, all the discussions and debates are not grounded by data that describes contemporary practices" being used in today's classrooms (Baumannn et al., 1998, p. 342).

Baumann et al. (1998) replicated the original survey by distributing surveys to all the original 1,847 public school districts included in *The First R* sampling. Out of the 1,847 school districts 1,023 responded to the survey. Baumann et al.'s (1998) sampling procedures were both similar and different from those employed by Austin and Morrison (1963) in *The First R* survey. The similarities included that Baumann et al. (1998) also collected data from teachers, building administrators, and district administrators. They were different in that Baumann et al. (1998) chose to rely on teacher's opinion and beliefs in their assessment of content and conduct of elementary reading programs.

The results of the revised *The First R* concluded that there continued to be similarities between both yesterday's and today's educators as both:

> (a) work with self-contained, heterogeneously assigned classes; (b) dedicated significant time for reading instruction; (c) provide explicit instruction in phonic analysis; (d) are not overly satisfied with their preservice training in reading

> instruction; (e) administer mandated standardized tests; and (f) report accommodating struggling or underachieving readers as their greatest challenge (Baumannn et al., 1998, p. 339).

It is also important to state that Baumannn et al., (1998) also found significant differences such as: "teachers today have more professional training, and they adopt a balanced, eclectic perspective, in contrast to a strong skills-based emphasis of the past" (p. 339). Baumannn et al., (1998) also noted that the emergent literacy perspective of the 1960's has been replaced with "a reading readiness view, synthetic phonics has supplanted analytic phonics, and alternative reading assessments are in regular use today" (p. 339). Educators need to continue to be cognoscente of the various instructional reading methods, strategies, and alternate assessments, and how to include the elements of reading so that all students can become successful readers (NRP, 2000).

2.4 Key Elements in Reading

The National Reading Panel (2000) recognized five key elements students need in order to become proficient, good, and fluent readers: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. These elements are related to the foundational skills of reading in French already suggested by Burnot-Trites (2008), and with studies demonstrating that phonological and morphological awareness, and orthographic processing skills transfer between the English and French languages (e.g. Cisero & Royer, 1995; Comeau, Cormier, Grandmaison, & Lacroix, 1999; Deacon and Wade-Woolley, 2009; Durgunoglu, Nagy, & Hanci-Bhatt, 1993; Lindsey, Manis & Bailey, 2003), one can assume that the key elements in reading in English are the same ones needed in French.

2.4.1 Phonemic Awareness

The first key element of phonemic awareness is a subset of phonological awareness which "refers to an understanding of how spoken language is linked to written language; specifically, it is the ability to first distinguish and then to manipulate the individual sound units, or phonemes, in words" (Abbott, Walton, & Greenwood, 2002, p. 25). Phonological awareness refers to the student's awareness of the sound structure, or phonological structure, of a spoken word, and also includes one's ability to auditorily distinguish units of speech, such as a word's syllables and a syllable's individual phonemes (McGuinness, 2004). Phonemic awareness and phonological awareness are often confused since they are interdependent, as phonological awareness includes the skills needed for phonemic awareness (Abbott, et al., 2002).

Before students can learn to read they need to be able to understand how the sounds in words work (Put Reading First, 2008). Phonemic Awareness allows children to have the ability to notice, think about, and work with individual sounds in a given word (Abbott, et al., 2002). Phonemes are the tiniest parts of sound in a spoken word that makes a difference in the meaning of the word (National Reading Panel, 2006). For example, changing the first phoneme in the word *pat* from /*p*/ to /*f*/ changes the word *pat* to *fat*, and thus changes the meaning.

Phonological awareness tends to be frequently confused with the second key element of reading, *phonics*, but they are different (McGuinness, 2004). Phonological awareness correlates solely to speech sounds, not to alphabet letters or sound-spellings (McGuinness, 2004).

2.4.2 Phonics

The second key element to becoming a fluent reader is phonics. Phonics is the systematic teaching of the mechanics of written language and is understood as "a way of teaching reading and spelling that stresses symbol-sound relationships (in alphabetic orthographies)" (Yopp & Yopp,

2000, p. 13). Phonics requires students to associate letters or letter patterns with sounds (decoding), and to use this information to read words and/or sounds (McGuinness, 2004). By tradition, phonics has been referred to as a way of teaching children to read by isolating specific sounds that make up words (Popp, 1996). It has also been suggested that:

> Phonics helps new as well as experienced readers make connections between letter patterns and the speech sounds for which they stand. It begins with an awareness and recognition of letters and sounds, then builds connections between them, starting with the most frequent and distinct correspondences. (Wiley, 2006, p. 8)

This type of instructional method is dependent upon the students' ability to increase and develop their phonological and phonemic awareness skills (Ehri, Nunes, Stahl, & Willows, 2001).

2.4.3 Fluency

The third key element to becoming a fluent reader is fluency. Fluency is important because it bridges the gap between word recognition and comprehension in addition to an individual's ability to read words quickly, accurately, and with appropriate phrasing and expression (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998). It is a necessary skill in any language that an individual is learning (Adams, 1990). Readers who have difficulty with fluency spend all their time concentrating on the words, which leaves little time and attention for comprehension (Adams, 1990; Snow, et al., 1998). The National Reading Panel (2000) stated that fluent readers are:

> Individuals who are able to read orally with speed, accuracy, and proper expression. Fluency is one of several critical factors necessary for reading comprehension. If text is read in a laborious and inefficient manner, it will be

> difficult for the child to remember what has been read and to relate the ideas expressed in the text to his or her background knowledge. (p. 4)

Kuhn and Stahl (2003) suggested that reading proficiency is more than the automaticity of single word decoding, and reading fluency development is needed for children to grasp what they read. Reading fluency is not only the automaticity of individual word decoding, but also, the prosodic understanding of the passage being read (Kuhn and Stahl, (2003).

2.4.4 Vocabulary

Vocabulary is the fourth key element needed to become a proficient, fluent, and good reader. When learning to read, children use words they have heard and comprehend in order to make sense of words they see in print (Put Reading First, 2008). "The more children read and are read to, the more words, concepts, and language patterns become part of their listening vocabulary" (Lapp, Flood, Moore, & Nichols, 2005, p. 6). An individual's vocabulary plays an important part in learning to read (Wagner, Muse, & Tannenbaum, 2006). However, students learning to read in another language are not able to make the link from their vocabulary base in order to make sense of the letters they are seeing on paper (Fisher & Stoner, 2004). Unlike their English counterparts, students in immersion are learning to decode the words while still learning the meaning of the word (Fisher & Stoner, 2004; Wagner et al., 2006). Extensive knowledge of the second language vocabulary is one of the greatest challenges second language learners encounter (Wallace, 2008).

2.4.5 Text Comprehension

The last key element of reading is comprehension, which is essentially the essence for reading (Durkin, 1993). If students can read the words but do not understand what they are reading, they are not really reading for understanding (Strickland, Ganske, & Monroe, 2002). In

early French immersion, students who are not able to comprehend what they are reading will continue to fall dramatically further behind their peers (Genesee, 2007). Difficulty with reading comprehension may possibly lead to alternate undesirable behaviors as they attempt to *mask* or *cope* with their deficiencies (Halonen, Aunola, Ahonen, & Nurmi, 2006). Educators need to be cognoscente of how difficult reading comprehension can be and to use diverse teaching strategies to instruct reading in order to attempt to meet the various learning needs of all their students.

> In their research on language learning, Murphy and Netten (2008) reported:
>
> For several years, it was believed that students in immersion programs would just "pick up" or "catch" French while they studied in French. Learning in the immersion program was meant to imitate learning in the natural environment in which students simply absorb their mother tongue without having to actually study it systematically or specifically. Gradually, teachers realized this approach did not always yield the desired results and that immersion students were often not achieving adequate competency in French. It became obvious that new ways had to be found to fine-tune student proficiency in the language. (p. 3)

The instructional methods and strategies that educators use to teach reading depend on the type of method the school district promotes, in addition to what the teacher is comfortable using and has embraced in their classroom.

2.5 Instructional Strategies to Teach Reading in French Immersion

Using appropriate strategies to teach reading fosters *prevention* instead of *intervention* for students with reading deficiencies later in their academic careers. Some of the reading strategies educators are using to teach reading in their classrooms are: guided reading, "making words",

shared reading, peer tutoring (paired learning), music, and computer software instructional programs (Crombie, 2000; Fisher & Stoner, 2004; Lovell, 2008).

2.5.1 Guided Reading

Saskatoon Public Schools (SPS) (2004-2008) posted on their website a description of the guided reading strategy. The SPS (2004-2008) website stated that guided reading is a strategy that assists students to become good and fluent readers. In this type of learning style, the teacher or educational assistant provides support for small groups of readers as they learn to use various reading strategies (context clues, letter and sound relationships, word structure, and so forth) (SPS, 2004-2008). Traditionally guided reading is associated with the primary grades; however, it can be modified and used successfully in all grade levels (SPS, 2004-2008). For instance, older students may need to learn new reading strategies in order to understand how to read an information book in a way that will give them access to the information they are seeking (SPS, 2004-2008). "In primary grades children are learning to read and in upper grades they are reading to learn" (http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/DE/PD/instr/strats/guided/guided.html).

Guided reading is traditionally done within the classroom by dividing readers into small reading groups. It is an "ideal medium for including all students at their own rate" (Popp, 1996, p. 131). The specific books chosen by the teacher match the level of reading ability of the combined readers (Fisher & Stoner, 2004). The teacher selects teaching points based on the vocabulary and semantics presented in the book and can guide the students by showing them how to use pictures when they read (Manning, et al., 1996). The text is usually presented in a shorter sentence format with pictures on most pages (Fisher & Stoner, 2004). The main goal of guided reading, according to the Saskatoon Public School Division (2004-2008), is that students should be able to read with approximately 90% accuracy, when books at the student's reading level are selected. This allows

the students to enjoy the story because there are not significant *barriers* that interfere with comprehension (SPS, 2004-2008). Students are able to focus on the meaning of the story and the application of various reading strategies to problem solve when they do hit *barriers* in their comprehension or reading ability (SPS, 2004-2008). Working in small groups gives students the chance to learn a variety of reading strategies with assistance from a teacher or educational assistant, they will acquire the skills and comprehension required to read increasingly more difficult texts on their own (SPS, 2004-2008). Independent reading is the ultimate goal of guided reading (SPS, 2004-2008). Guided reading instruction provides the scaffolding to ensure that students are able to utilize strategies to make meaning from print (SPS, 2004-2008). Educators must ensure that the student's reading achievement is regularly assessed so they are continually placed in the correct guided reading group (SPS, 2004-2008).

2.5.2 Making Words

Making words or *tempête*, as some teachers call it in French, is a strategy that is helpful in reinforcing sound blending which in turn leads to greater fluency (Cunningham & Cunningham, 1992; Fisher & Stoner, 2004). In 1992 Cunningham and Cunningham introduced an innovative word study and word play activity called *making words.*

> Students are guided through the process of using a limited number of letters to make a series of words. They begin by creating short words and end with longer ones. Through the regular use of this type of constructivist and scaffold word-building activity, students learn about the spelling structure of words to the point where their word recognition improves significantly. (p. 108)

The teacher hands out a set of predetermined letter cards to students who are then guided into forming phonemes and/or syllables. This process eventually leads to forming small words with their letters (Fisher & Stoner, 2004).

This type instructional method has become an effective and popular approach for teaching students about words (Cunnignham and Cunningham, 1992). The effectiveness of *making words* is still being researched, "standardized and informal measures have demonstrated remarkably positive results in the reading development of children in the early grades who receive instruction based on the overall program of which the activity is an integral part" (Cunningham, Hall, & Defee, 1998, p. 655). "In their review of phonics instruction programs, Stahl, Duffy-Hester, and Stahl (1998) categorized *making words* as a spelling-based contemporary phonics approach and claim that it "seems to be effective as part of overall approaches to teaching reading" (p. 347). *Making words* displays several of the principles of effective phonics instruction identified by these authors (International Reading Association, 1999-2000).

2.5.3 Shared Reading

The shared reading model was developed in New Zealand by Don Holdaway (1979) with the input of other educators. The model is derived from research that indicates storybook reading is a critically important factor in young children's reading development (Wells, 1986). "When teachers and students read aloud together from Big Book stories, poetry and plays or sing from lyrics printed on a chart, they are participating in a shared reading experience" (Popp, 1996, p. 130). According to an educational early literacy website, *The Hubboards Cupboard* (2008), the aspects of shared reading that can be an enriching student experience are: (shared reading) "is a time for sharing a story and reading together. Shared reading in classrooms may include echo reading *(students echoing the words after the teacher)*, choral reading *(students reading at the*

same time as the teacher), or fill in the gap reading *(teacher reading the majority of the text and then pausing for students to fill in and say rhyming words or other predictable words in the story)*" (http://www.hubbardscupboard.org/shared_reading.html). All of these methods of reading are techniques to encourage the pleasure of early reading and success with a high level of teacher support (Hubboards Cupboard, 2008).

Shared reading can take on various forms, depending on the needs of the students and the educators teaching objectives (Taberski, 2000). Fisher and Medvic (2000) made two recommendations for educators on how to conduct shared reading in their classrooms: (1) a shared reading lesson with strong teacher support; and (2) a guided reading lesson with less teacher support. These are two methods educators can use to give students practice and instantaneous feedback, as they develop the skills and strategies required for successful decoding and comprehension. Fisher and Medvic (2000) created a shared reading model that is divided into three sections: *Before, During,* and *After* reading.

Before: In a shared reading lesson, the teacher or educational assistant introduces the story by talking about the title, the images on the cover, and the title page (Fisher and Medvic, 2000). This is a good moment to ask the students about what they see in the images on the cover, and what they think the relationship these images have to the story they are about to read (Fisher and Medvic, 2000). Keep in mind to check out the images on the back cover of the book as well, as they often provide an interesting picture clue to what will happen in the story (Fisher and Medvic, 2000). Throughout the introduction, the teacher performs a *picture walk* through the book, momentarily pointing out certain character actions or events, asking specific questions to engage the students in thinking about the images and story, but not telling the story (Fisher and Medvic, 2000).

During: The introduction and first reading of the story is generally for enjoyment (Fisher and Medvic, 2000). The teacher or educational assistant points to every word as it is read (Fisher and Medvic, 2000). Students are asked to track the words *with their eyes* (Fisher and Medvic, 2000). The educator reads the text as naturally as possible, phrased and fluent, though they may decide to reduce the reading tempo just a little so students are able to join in (Fisher and Medvic, 2000). It is important to model genuine reactions to the wording of the text and use suitable voice inflection (Fisher and Medvic, 2000). The educator may pause from time to time to ask students to make predictions about words, images or events (Fisher and Medvic, 2000). During the read aloud, the educator may choose to ask students to confirm their predictions by asking questions such as: "Were you right?" or "Is it what you expected to happen?" (Fisher and Medvic, 2000)

After: After reading the story, the teacher or educational assistant, can take the students back to the places in the book where they made predictions and ask them how they knew they were correct or how they knew if their predictions weren't quite right (Fisher and Medvic, 2000). Giving students the opportunity to discuss their ways of thinking can encourage their full participation in the shared reading lesson (Fisher and Medvic, 2000). The teacher or educational assistant could ask open-ended questions such as: "Victoria, have you ever gone away over the winter break?" (Fisher and Medvic, 2000) This helps students to build connections to the text by activating students' prior knowledge to the premise or central idea of the story (Fisher and Medvic, 2000). The second and later readings of the story, permits the students to *chip in* with now recognizable words and phrases (Fisher and Medvic, 2000). In some cases, students and educators can take turns reading "(e.g. the teacher reads the left side and students read the right side)" (Fisher and Medvic, 2000, p.35).

Shared reading provides an excellent opportunity for teachers to model the integrated use of the cueing systems and strategies for reading that can be applied to reading unfamiliar words or patterns (Taberski, 2000). New concepts and strategies can be introduced during shared reading time, before guided reading or independent reading begins (Taberski, 2000). The shared reading experience also offers the opportunity for educators to share different genres (especially in French immersion), or types of books, with students to familiarize them with some of the features in the text (Taberski, 2000).

2.5.4 Peer Tutoring

Peer tutoring or paired learning is a self explanatory method (CPF, 2008), as it is students helping students to develop their reading abilities and their confidence in deciphering the French language. Peer tutoring is a highly structured but simple strategy that can easily be taught to others, including to school-age children and youth (Topping, 1987). If your school has responsible older students available you may want to create a cross-age peer tutoring program that uses paired reading as its central intervention (Kunsch, Jitendra, & Sood, 2007; Topping, 1987). Peer tutoring can be done within the classroom or in quieter environments such as the library. Morgan (2000) created a paired learning model and has divided it into two stages: *Stage 1 -Reading Together*- consisting of four steps the tutor should follow; and *Stage 2 -Independent Reading*- consisting of five steps the tutor should follow.

Stage 1 - Reading Together: (1) The student chooses a book (but if the student is a non-reader it should be one they are familiar with or if they can read a little, it should be simple); (2) the tutor and student read aloud together, with the tutor pointing to the words while the student reads momentarily behind the tutor or simultaneously if they are able; (3) if the student makes a

mistake, the tutor says the right word and moves on; and (4) repeat this strategy four days a week for about 10 minutes each peer tutoring session (Morgan, 2000).

Stage 2 - Independent Reading: (1) Use the same book the student had previously selected (or a new one for a more skilled reader); (2) create a signal such as two quick taps on the desk or table; (3) the tutor and student begin reading aloud together; (4) when the student wants to read out loud alone, he gives the two quick taps signal so the tutor stops reading; and (5) if the student makes a mistake, the tutor joins in, giving the right word(s), and then continues reading aloud with the student until the student gives the two tap signal for the tutor to stop reading (Morgan, 2000).

It's very important to not bring a lot of attention to the students' mistakes (Morgan, 2000). Paired reading is about developing a student's self-confidence and fluency (Morgan, 2000). It is essential to make sure that the tutor is not allowing the student to use books that are too difficult so that they have the opportunity to improve their reading, fluency, and self-confidence (Morgan, 2000).

Canadian Parents for French (CPF) (2008) has developed and implemented peer tutoring programs in immersion classrooms across Canada. The program is aimed at fostering literacy in French immersion and has demonstrated the following achievements: (1) the readers improved their French reading abilities, their approach towards French-language learning and their enthusiasm to work in the classroom setting and with a tutor; (2) the tutors benefited by enhancing their self-esteem and learning a valuable teaching style while improving their leadership skills; and (3) the tutors discovered a desire to help younger students while playing an important role in their school (CPF, 2008).

Research suggests that, "while low-achieving students may receive moderate benefits from peer tutoring, effects for students specifically identified with a type of learning difficulty may be

less noticeable unless care is taken to pair these students with a more proficient peer who can model and guide learning objectives" (Kunsch, Jitendra, & Sood, 2007, p. 11). The outcomes of this particular program are encouraging for struggling readers. The opportunities for students to have an academic voice in their learning can increase their self-esteem and encourage their academic resilience (Smith, 2003).

2.5.5 Music

Another important teaching strategy to use with beginning readers is music. Music in early literacy has proven to be a very effective way for students to learn phonemic awareness (Fisher, 2001); "whether a child is mastering language or learning music, the foundation is the same: enjoyment" (Jalongo, 1997 p. 2). Most young children love to sing and many of them retain the information that is presented through the musical lyrics (Jalongo, 1997). Music engages children and allows them to learn new or foreign concepts that are sometimes difficult without the beat or without the rhythm of a song (Butler, 2008). Music helps many students build a level of self-assurance they might never have experienced had it not been for music (Butler, 2008). Children accumulate sustenance from music in their classrooms, in their homes, and in their daily routines (Butler, 2008). Sometimes that child who feels no success in the academic side of school finally is introduced to music with that one special teacher.

A young child's developing literacy skills are exercised when:

> …emergent readers hear, sing, discuss, play with and write songs, they are building important background knowledge that they will draw upon during later reading and writing experiences. With each new song, students learn concepts and word meaning that they will encounter in print. (Smith, 2003, p. 647)

From this statement one could draw the conclusion that including musical lyrics filled with French phonemic patterns would benefit all readers; “classroom teachers can readily address early literacy development through classroom musical activity” (Fisher, 2001, p. 112).

Research is beginning to emerge on how music could be seen as a possible contributor to the development of an individual’s reading skills (Moritz, 2007). A few studies have shown that musical activity may increase one’s reading skills (e.g., Costa-Giomi, 1997; Fisher, 2001; Overy, 2003; Moritz, 2007). Overy (2003) found that specific types of music may serve as a means of remediation for children with dyslexia. Most young children enjoy and engage in organized musical activity, well before formal reading instruction begins; therefore, using phonemic musical activities in the pre-primary and primary years could increase an individual’s reading readiness (Overy, 2003; Moritz, 2007). Preliminary research has found strong correlations between phonological awareness and musical rhythm sub skills (Anavari, Trainor, Woodside, & Levy, 2002). “The cognitive processes involved in musical activity and reading acquisition overlap in that both require abilities to perceive the order of sounds and to segment longer sound sequences into smaller units” (Moritz, 2007, p. 16). The results from these studies that have demonstrated a significant relationship between music and reading (Moritz, 2007); therefore more educators should be encouraged to use this in their primary classrooms to support students, especially their students with exceptionalities.

2.5.6 Computer Software Instructional Programs

Almost every Canadian classroom has at least one computer in their classroom that students can access, however, Dwyer’s (2007) study of elementary school computer use found that even though educators and administrators supported the use of computers by primary and elementary students, the way in which the allocated computer resources to and used computers

with students varied by age. Many of the primary educators did not see the value of letting their students access the software programs to practice language arts and math activities (Dwyer, 2007). However, having computers accessible to more primary students and educators, is one of the first steps to integrating computer use into the curriculum (Lovell, 2008). Software designed to assist early or struggling readers improve their reading acquisition skills typically target one or more specific areas of focus related to reading and then address those skills through direct instruction, demonstration, and practice (Lovell, 2008).

Macaruso, Hook, and MacCabe (2006) examined the benefits of two computer assisted instructed (CAI) programs designed to supplement regular classroom curriculum in an urban public school system. The two CAI programs provided systematic and structured exercises for mastering phonic word-attack strategies (Macaruso et al., 2006). Their findings indicated that first graders who participated in the programs made significant reading gains over the school year (Macaruso et al., 2006). These results are consistent with the findings of Wise, Ring and Olson (2000) showing that intensive phonics-based CAI can be quite beneficial to low performers in the early grades. Macaruso et al. (2006) also concluded that extremely low-performing children require more intensive instruction in order to make progress in reading, however, in earlier studies, Torgesen (2004) and his colleagues were able to demonstrate significant gains in low-performers when they were provided with highly intensive, individualised phonics-based instruction. These results indicate that using computer software instructional programs in primary French immersion classrooms on a regular basis would most likely compliment the other instructional reading strategies being used.

2.6 Summary

In summation, whole language, a systematic phonics approach, and balanced literacy philosophies are the three primary instructional approaches that educators use to teach early literacy in French immersion classrooms (Murphy & Netten, 2008). The reading process is complex and can be developed by a varying number of strategies. These include strategies such as: (1) guided reading; (2) making words; (3) shared reading; (4) peer tutoring (paired learning); (5) music; and (6) computer software instructional programs (Alberta Learning, 2000; Crombie, 2000; Fisher & Stoner, 2004). Each strategy is important as it links into to the ultimate goal of reading: comprehending the decoded word.

Early identification of reading difficulties in French immersion is critical to the planning of an early intervention program (Genesee, 2007). The French immersion population is diversifying to include children from all ethnic backgrounds and lower income families; ultimately this means that more types of reading interventions may be necessary to meet the needs of all immersion students (Bournot-Trites, 2008). By using selected educational strategies to teach reading to students with deficiencies in reading, the future goal is to provide them with better academic outcomes by encouraging resiliency in the immersion program.

In reviewing the available current research, the best teaching strategies for educators at the early literacy stage would be to implement a balanced literacy program that accentuates a systematic phonetic approach (Kelly, 1997). Educators who integrate a range of teaching styles will tap into the individual learning styles of their students (Calais, 2008). Further research into which methods and strategies Saskatchewan French immersion teachers are currently using to teach reading to all types of language learners would be warranted. There is still a lack of sufficient information to ascertain which interventions are perceived to be the most effective for

students experiencing specific types of reading difficulties in primary French immersion classrooms (Genesee, 2007).

Baumannn, et al., (1998) reviewed many of the national surveys that looked at elementary student's attitudes towards reading (McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth,1995), and the ones that examined diverse groups of literacy educators on their views towards the various types of professional development in regards to reading (e.g. book clubs, portfolio assessments, etc.) (Commeyras and DeGroff ,1998). They concluded that none of them addressed the current general status of early literacy instructional methods and strategies in second language classrooms. Therefore, an inquiry into which methods and strategies Saskatchewan teachers are successfully using in their classrooms to teach reading to their students of all abilities would provide guidance to other Saskatchewan teachers. To date, no research has been done into which teaching methods and strategies Saskatchewan French immersion educators are currently using to teach reading acquisition skills in their Kindergarten to Grade eight classrooms. Nor has any research been found into which are the best teaching practices to use with students who are experiencing difficulties with reading acquisition in Saskatchewan French immersion schools.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Design and Goals

The two primary goals of this study were to: (1) discover the most common teaching methods and strategies educators use to teach reading in French immersion classrooms in Saskatchewan; and (2) ascertain what methods of assessment and intervention Saskatchewan educators are using with students who are demonstrating difficulty with reading acquisition in French immersion classrooms. A survey method was chosen to explore these areas because it can effectively provide a snapshot of the characteristics of a population, and examine the distribution of specific attributes within this population (Lefebve, 2007). The following research questions guided the study:

1. What methods and strategies do educators predominantly use to teach reading in French immersion classrooms in Saskatchewan?
2. What methods of assessment and interventions are Saskatchewan educators using with students who are demonstrating difficulties with reading acquisition in French immersion classrooms?

This chapter describes the research methods that were used in this study. It includes the rationale for the research design, a description of the survey, data collection procedures, and methods of data analysis.

3.2 Participants

There are 18 Saskatchewan school divisions, or approximately 450 Kindergarten to Grade 12 Saskatchewan teachers, who provide French immersion programming to students. All 18 Saskatchewan school divisions were contacted to ask for permission to survey their elementary French immersion educators from Kindergarten to Grade eight. Ten Saskatchewan school divisions permitted their French immersion teachers to participate in the survey. Once permission

was obtained, a participant information letter was e-mailed to all elementary French immersion teachers, special education teachers, and teacher-librarians inviting them to participate in this study.

3.3 Instrumentation

The survey that was used in this research study was modeled after the revised *The First R Survey* used by Baumann, Hoffman, Duffy-Hester, and Moon (1998).

3.3.1 First R Teacher Survey

The original *First R* study (Austin & Morrison, 1963) was developed to investigate the state of reading instruction for students learning to read English as a second language. In 1963, Austin and Morrison surveyed more than 1,000 U.S. school administrators about reading instruction. Baumann et al. (1998) revised Austin and Morrison's (1963) original survey to reflect the situation of instructional reading practices in today's elementary schools. Baumann et al. (1998) constructed three surveys: (1) a Teacher Survey; (2) a Building Administrator Survey; and (3) a District Administrator Survey that overlapped the other surveys and contained group-specific items. For example, all surveys included questions about the participants': backgrounds; education; professional growth and development; reading program goals and instructional philosophies; reading program components; and adaptations for their special learners. Two different Likert scales were used in the revised *First R* survey. Questions used a 4-point Likert scale (i.e., *considerable, moderate, little,* and *none),* or a 5-point Likert scale (i.e., *exceptional, very good, adequate, poor,* and *totally inadequate).* For example, one of the questions asks: "What is your evaluation of the quality of your overall elementary teacher certification program (circle one number)? 1. exceptional 2. very good 3. adequate 4. poor 5. totally inadequate" (Bauman et al., 1998, p. 365). The remainder of the questions asked participants to choose a

statement(s) that best reflected their belief, opinion, or personal/professional reality. For example, question 23 on the revised *First R Survey* asks: "the following statements represent various goals or objectives that teachers might have for a reading instructional program. Circle numbers in front of all of the following statements that apply to you personally (e.g., you may mark multiple responses)" (Bauman et al., 1998, p. 367).

Baumann et al. (1998) analyzed their survey using descriptive analyses. Three thousand one hundred and ninety-nine teachers were randomly selected from the original *First R* study. Only "1,207 responded to the Teacher Survey, resulting in a 37.7% Teacher Survey response rate with a 2.7% sampling error at the 95% confidence level" (Baumann et al., 1998, p. 345). Based upon the summary statistics reported, the researchers identified a series of cross-tabulations to conduct a cluster analysis, in which categories similar in focus were grouped together to identify central themes in the open-ended responses "categories describing remedial and early intervention instruction were clustered under Accommodating Struggling Readers" (Bauman et al., 1998, p. 345). Results were then grouped into nine categories and findings were compared to the original *First R* survey. The original *First R* found a high reliance on basal readers and ability grouping (separating students into reading groups based upon their reading achievement levels). In comparing the results to the original survey, Baumann et al. (1998) also found that basal readers were being used in combination with trade books, and that the predominant mode for instruction had become whole-class instruction. It is important to note there were sample differences between the two surveys. Austin and Morrison (1963) relied on administrative officers (superintendents, principals, and vice-principals) to fill out and return the mail surveys and sought the opinions of teachers via site visits. Whereas Baumann et al. (1998) valued teachers' opinions as their primary source of data collection, and relied exclusively on self-report data. This lack of field

involvement, as in the original *First R*, made it difficult for Baumann et al. (1998) to corroborate their findings with observations and teacher interviews. However, Bauman et al. (1998) were confident of their results since they supported evidence from previous observational studies about reading instruction practices, such as the one conducted by Bauman and Haubach (1996). Bauman and Haubach (1996) conducted a national study to determine if basal readers deskill teachers. The responses suggested that basal materials may assist and promote teachers' instructional decision making in the classroom. Most of the surveyed teachers viewed basal readers as just one instructional tool available to them as they plan literacy lessons. Therefore, these findings corroborate the conclusions found by Bauman et al. (1998) in the modified *First R* that basal readers were being used in combination with trade books, and that the predominant mode for instruction had become whole-class instruction.

After reviewing the elements in the questions from the revised *First R*, and how they could be modified to collect data on the acquisition of reading in French immersion, the *French Immersion Teacher Survey* was created.

3.3.2 French Immersion Teacher Survey

The questions used in the revised *First R* Teacher Survey were modified to explore the reading instructional practices teachers are using in French immersion. The *French Immersion Teacher Survey (FITS)* consists of fourteen questions divided into two sections: (1) a demographics section exploring teacher-level variables (e.g., gender, years of teacher experience, level of educational training, etc.); and (2) a beliefs and philosophical orientation section exploring teachers' perceptions relating to reading instruction. The demographic questions in the first section are similar to the ones in the modified *First R* survey. However, the *FITS* questions

are more specific in regards to the French language aspect. Questions in this section require the respondents to choose only one answer. For example, question four in Part one of the *FITS* asks:

> How effective do you think the following reading strategies are for using with students who are experiencing French reading acquisition difficulties in an immersion program?

The questions in the teacher beliefs/philosophical orientation questions are very similar to the questions in the revised *First R* survey. For example, question two in Part II of the *FITS* asks:

> The following statements represent various perspectives, philosophies, or beliefs toward the teaching and learning of reading. Mark the following statements on a scale of 0 to 3 that best describes your perspective, philosophy or belief towards the teaching and learning of reading.

The format of some of the questions on the *FITS* is modeled after the questions from the revised *First R*; however, the content is different. For example, in Part I of the FITS, respondents are required to select responses from a series of choices (e.g., What is your evaluation of the quality of the preparation you received for teaching early literacy in French immersion within your teacher certification program? 1. exceptional 2. very good 3. adequate 4. poor 5. totally inadequate) In the modified First R, question eight asks: "What is your evaluation of the quality of your overall elementary teacher certification program (circle one number)? 1. exceptional 2. very good 3. adequate 4. poor 5. totally inadequate" (Bauman et al, 1998, p. 365)

Part II of the *FITS* includes questions that are specific to the instructional methods, strategies, and assessments in French immersion. Three questions in this section use a four-point Likert scale (i.e., very effective, moderately effective, mildly effective, or not at all effective). For

example, question five in Part II of the *FITS* asks: How effective do you think the following types of supports are for helping students who are experiencing French reading acquisition difficulties in an immersion program? 1. very effective 2. moderately effective 3. mildly effective 4. not at all effective

3.4 Data Collection

Ethics approval from the Office of Research Services at the University of Saskatchewan was granted in December, 2009 (see Appendix A). Permission was then sought from all 18 Saskatchewan school divisions (see Appendix B) to recruit potential participants. Once permission had been granted by the ten participating school division, elementary French immersion educators from Kindergarten to Grade eight, special education teachers, and teacher-librarians were e-mailed: (1) the French Immersion Teacher Survey tool (see Appendix C); (2) a cover letter explaining the purpose and requirements of the study (see Appendix D); (3) a teacher consent form (see Appendix E); and (4) a voluntary participant incentive letter, giving participants an opportunity to put their names in for a draw for a $50 gift certificate to McNally Robinson bookstore (see Appendix F). One school division asked that a letter be sent directly to the French immersion school principals explaining the survey (see Appendix G).

Given that questionnaires are suggested for data collection about professional practices (Schiavetti & Metz, 2002), the French Immersion Teacher Survey was designed to take approximately ten minutes to complete. Teachers who were interested in participating were asked to complete the questionnaire and return it with a copy of the consent form, and the voluntary participant incentive letter. Participant confidentiality was ensured as each electronically returned survey had no indicating markers such as the school or school division name. Individual participants were not identifiable. Data will be secured and stored by the researcher's university

supervisor for a minimum of five years in a locked filing cabinet. After this time, the data will be destroyed. Results will be reported in the form of a brief summary available upon request.

3.5 Data Analysis

Given that the on-line FITS was done through the *SurveyMonkey* (2010) website, the data from all of the submitted surveys was easily accessed and used to create frequency counts, cross-tabulations, and filters. The data was also entered and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to ensure the accuracy of the results. All teacher survey data was checked by the researcher to ensure that no data entry mistakes were made (e.g., 100% verification of the data).

Independent teacher variables collected from participants' survey responses included: type of education degree; level of education attained; rural/urban school; years of teaching experience; role in the school setting; and grade level taught (Kindergarten through Grade eight). The dependent variables collected from participants' survey responses included teacher beliefs and perceptions of reading instructional methods and strategies, effectiveness of educational supports, and assessments.

For calculating relationships among the data, some of these categories needed to be grouped together as some categories had low numbers which made the relationships difficult to calculate. For example, Teacher-librarians and administrators were combined into one category as they both had low numbers and their responses were not coming from the perspective of a classroom teacher. Respondents, who were special education teachers and another role, were put under the *Special Education Teacher* category as these also had low numbers, were not from the perspective of a classroom teacher, and their responses were considered to be important as these

educators are key players in helping classroom educators to find, plan, and implement various reading strategies for students who are having difficulty with the acquisition of reading.

Educators had a choice to enter what grade(s) they taught, and if they have another educational role other than classroom teacher. Respondents were also asked to list the grades they taught French early literacy skills to. The lowest grade taught was used as it is important to catch our struggling readers as early as possible, therefore, it was of interest to see what strategies and methods primary educators are using to teach reading. In addition to this, they were also combined into three groups to see if the higher numbers produced stronger relationships among the variables: (1) Kindergarten to Grade two, (2) Grade three to Grade five, and (3) Grade six to Grade eight.

Each research question guided the analyses employed for this study. The two research questions guided the data collection and analysis.

3.5.1 Research Question 1

The first research question posed was: What methods and strategies do educators predominately use to teach reading in French immersion classrooms in Saskatchewan?

It was important to consider the amount of time respondents spent on specific reading strategies or methods in order to explore their perceived usefulness of each strategy to teach reading in French immersion. Frequency counts or rather the number of times the various events occurred in the FITS (Utts, 2005) were used to establish which types of methods and/or strategies were most commonly used by Saskatchewan educators in their classroom

A Chi-square test was used to determine the existence of associations between two or more of the variables. Correlational analyses, such as the Pearson's R, was used to see if there were any linear relationships between the variables.

3.5.2 Research Question 2

The second question posed was: What methods of assessment and interventions are Saskatchewan educators using with students who are demonstrating difficulties with reading acquisition in French immersion classrooms?

In order to investigate this second question, the following three questions related to the survey were analyzed: (1) how effective do you think the following reading strategies are for using with students who are experiencing French reading acquisition difficulties in an immersion program, (2) how effective do you think the following types of supports are for helping students who are experiencing French reading acquisition difficulties in an immersion program, and (3) do you use your reading assessments to help you plan additional or varying instructional reading strategies/supports for your student's experiencing difficulties with French reading acquisition.

Frequency counts were used to establish which types of assessments and interventions are most commonly used by Saskatchewan French immersion educators in their classrooms. A Chi-square test was used to determine if there were any associations among these variables. Correlational analyses, such as the Pearson's R, was also used to see if there were any linear relationships between the variables.

The results of Chi-Square and the correlational analyses obtained from the French Immersion Teacher Survey will be discussed in chapter four.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Overview

The purpose of this study was to determine: (1) what methods and strategies educators are predominantly using to teach reading in French immersion classrooms in Saskatchewan, and (2) what methods of assessment and intervention Saskatchewan educators are using with students who are demonstrating difficulties with reading acquisition in French immersion classrooms.

4.2 Sample

One hundred and twelve elementary French immersion educators from across Saskatchewan participated in this study. Seventy educators (62.5%) completed their Bachelor of Education in French and 42 in English (37.5%). Twenty-five respondents (22.3%) were from rural school divisions and 87 respondents (77.7%) were from urban school divisions, and 66 of the respondents (50%) taught kindergarten to grade three.

4.3 Summary of Survey Responses

One hundred and twelve elementary French immersion educators from ten out of the eighteen Saskatchewan school divisions, who have French immersion schools, participated in this study. The teachers completed the French Immersion Teacher Survey (FITS) on-line via the *SurveyMonkey* (2010) website. The survey was composed of 14 questions under two main sections: (1) demographic information (questions one to six; e.g., age, gender), and (2) teacher beliefs/philosophical orientation towards their style of teaching (questions one to eight in Part Two; e.g., an educators perspectives, philosophies or beliefs towards teaching). Upon completion of the survey, teachers were automatically linked to the Consent Form website, where they printed off, signed, and faxed the form back to the researcher.

Out of the 112 respondents, 95 educators (85%) completed the survey. Seventeen surveys were started, but not completed. Ninety-four of the 112 educators had additional training. Twenty-five educators had completed a graduate degree such as a Ph.D. and/or Masters, and 69 educators reported other types of additional training such as a certificate or diploma (see Table 1).

Table1

Demographic Information

Demographic Information	***Number of Respondents***	***Percentage***
B.Ed. in French	70	62.5%
B.Ed. in English	42	37.5%
Rural School Division	25	22.3%
Urban School Division	87	77.7%
First Year Teacher	7	6.3%
Two to Five Years of	27	24.1%
Experience		16.1%
Six to Ten Years of Experience	18	53.6%
Ten+ Years of Experience	60	
Classroom Teacher	89	79.5%
Sp.Ed. Teacher	12	10.7%
Teacher-Librarian	5	4.5%
Administrator	11	9.8%
***Grade Taught*:**		
Kindergarten	10	10.9%
Grade One	15	16.3%
Grade Two	18	19.6%
Grade Three	23	25.0%
Grade Four	16	17.4%
Grade Five	13	14.1%
Grade Six	11	12.0%
Grade Seven	14	15.2%
Grade Eight	13	14.1%

On question seven, educators rated the quality of their pre-service teacher preparation relating to teaching early literacy in French immersion (see Figure 1). Forty-six (47%) Saskatchewan French immersion teachers reported their teacher preparation was *adequate* and 13 (13.7%) reported that it was *totally inadequate*.

Figure 1
Quality of Teacher Preparation

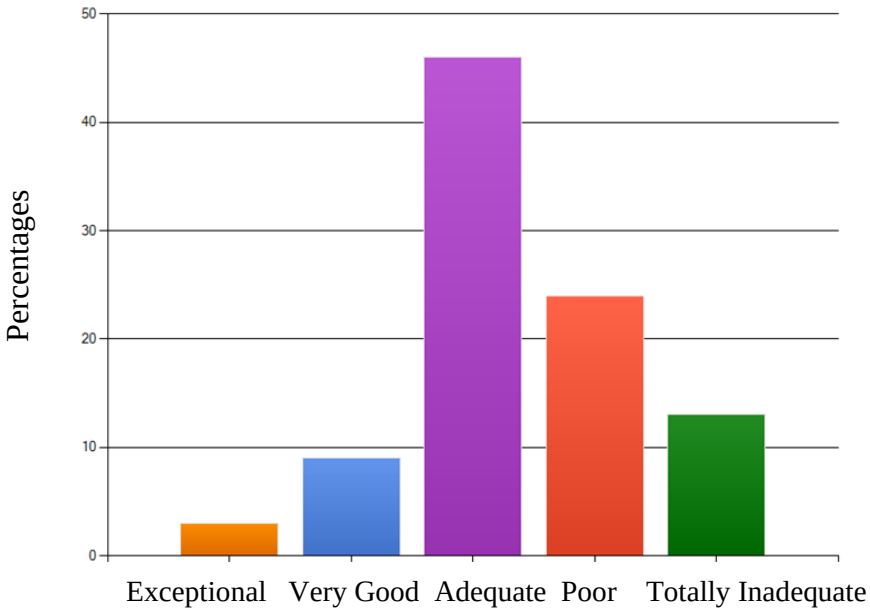
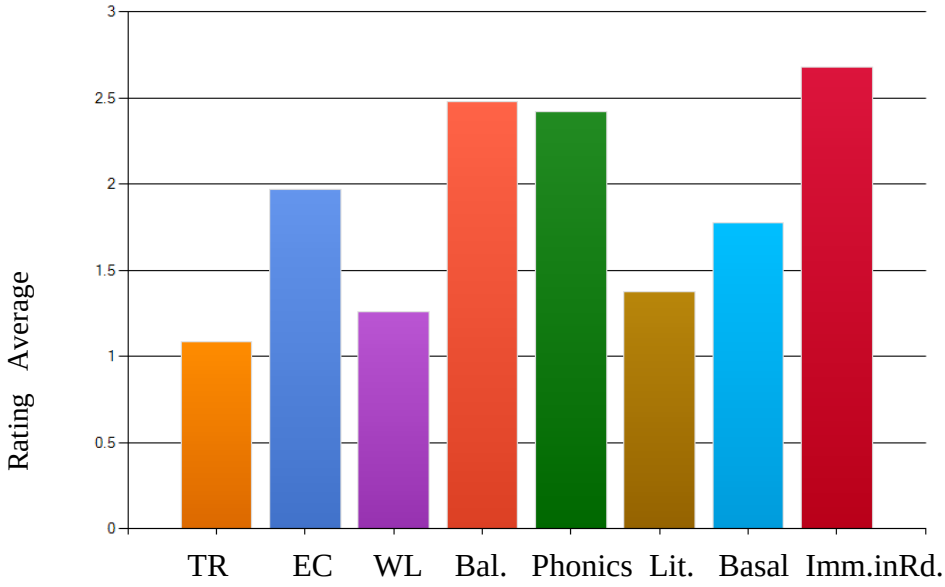
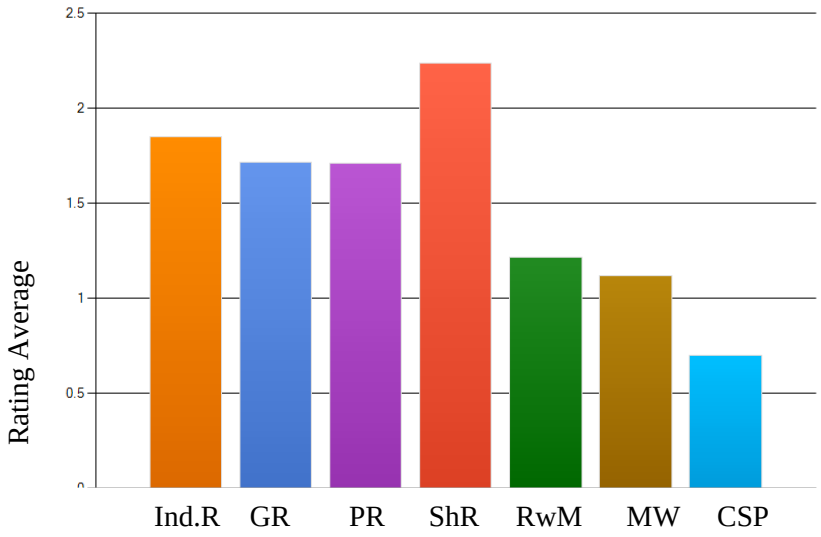


Figure 2
Teachers Beliefs and Perceptions



Note. TR=traditionalist, EC= eclectic, WL=whole language Lit. =literature based, Basal=uses basal reading material, and Imm.inRd.=immersed in reading

Figure 3
Devoted Instructional Time

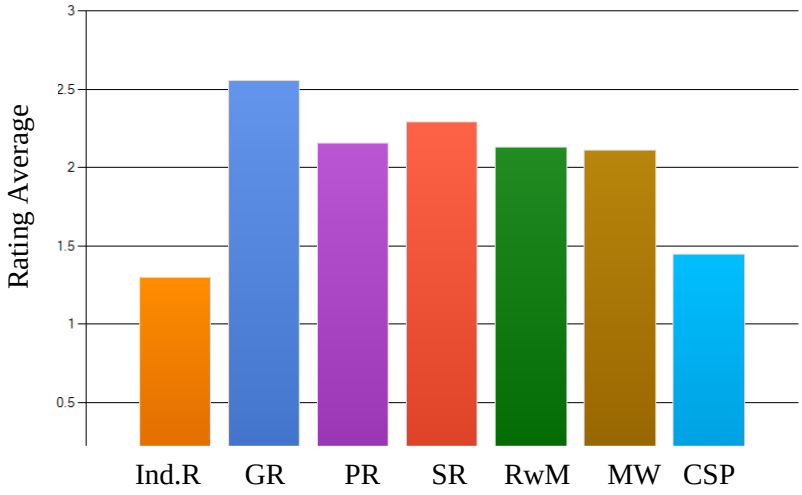


Note. Ind.R=independent/silent reading, GR=guided reading, PR=peer or paired reading, ShR=shared reading, RwM=teaching reading via music, MW=making words, CSP=computer software programs

Educators rated eight statements on their various perspectives, philosophies, or beliefs toward the teaching and learning of reading on a scale (e.g., Does Not Describe Me At All to Very Much Describes Me; see Figure 2). Sixty-six (70.2%) educators felt students need to be immersed in literacy and literature experiences in order become good and fluent readers. Four educators (4.3%) viewed themselves as traditionalists when selecting strategies to teach early literacy skills in French immersion.

Educators rated the amount of instructional time they devoted to seven different components or activities within their French reading and language arts programs on a scale of *a lot* to *none* (see Figure 3). Fifty-two (54.7%) teachers spend a *moderate* amount of time on shared reading as an instructional strategy to teach reading in French immersion, and three (3.2%) spend *a lot* of time using computer software programs with their students.

Figure 4
Effectiveness of Reading Strategies



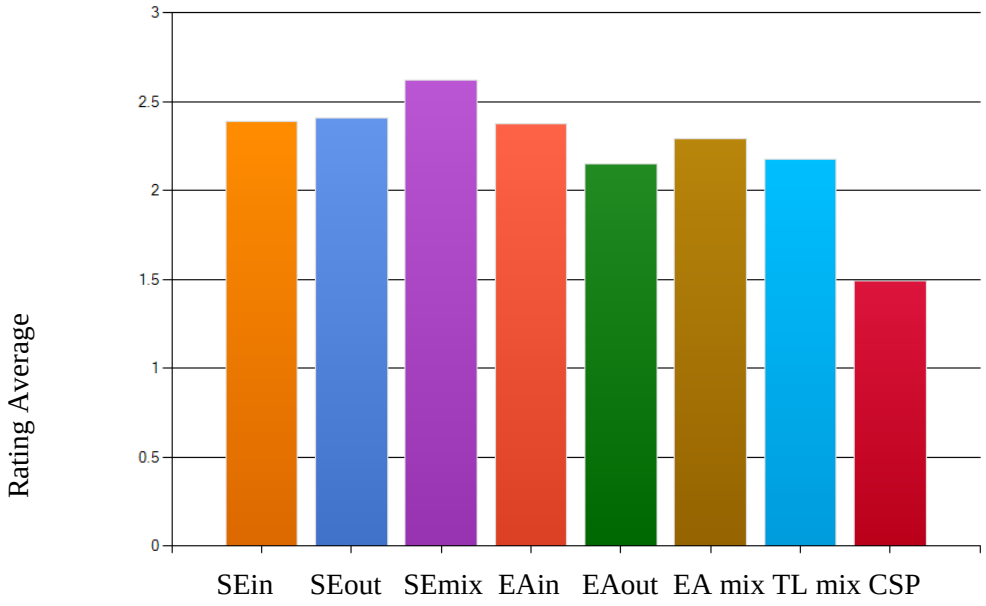
Note. Ind.R=independent/silent reading, GR=guided reading, PR=peer or paired reading, ShR=shared reading, RwM=teaching reading via music, MW=making words, CSP=computer software programs

Educators rated the effectiveness of the seven different components or activities as effective reading strategies to use with students who are have difficulties with the acquisition of reading in French on a scale from: *very effective* to *not at all effective* (see Figure 4). The majority of Saskatchewan French immersion educators (63 or 66.3%) rated guided reading as the *most effective* instructional strategy to teach reading to their students who are struggling with the acquisition of reading in French, and 38 (40.4%) rated independent or silent reading as a *mildly effective* strategy.

Educators rated the effectiveness of the types of supports for their students who are experiencing difficulties with the acquisition of reading in a French immersion program on a scale from *very effective* to *not at all effective* (see Figure 5). The majority (63 or 67.0%) of Saskatchewan French immersion teachers prefer to have the special education teacher use a mix of in and out of classroom supports and/or interventions to assist their students with reading difficulties. Thirty-eight Saskatchewan French immersion educators (42.7%) rated the use of

Figure 5

Effectiveness of Supports



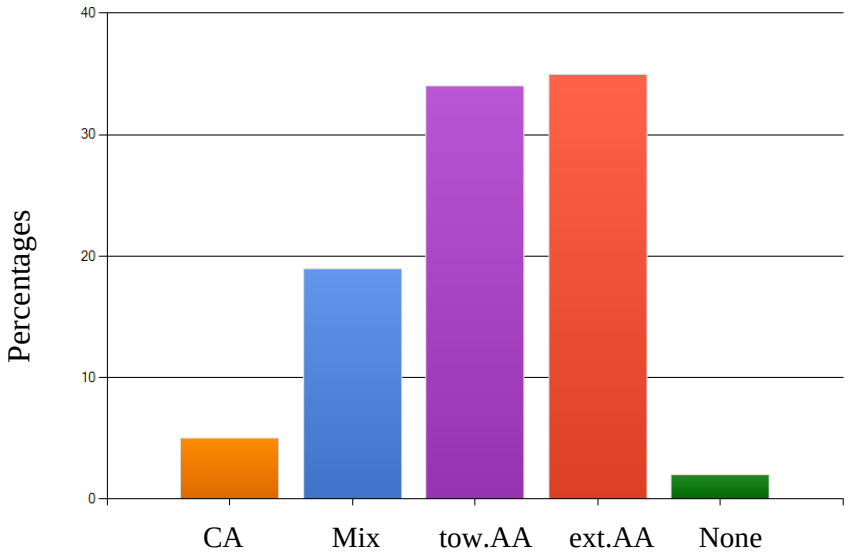
Note. SEin=special educator in the class, SEout=special educator out of the class, SEmix=special educator in and out of the class, EAin=educational assistant in the class, EA out=educational assistant out of the class, EAmix=educational assistant in and out of the class, TLmix=teacher-librarian in the class or in the library, CSP=computer software programs

computer software programs as the *least effective* support and/or intervention for their students with reading difficulties.

Educators rated their overall approach to classroom reading assessments on a scale from v*ery effective* to *not at all effective* (see Figure 6). The majority (35 or 36.8%) of Saskatchewan French immersion teachers reported relying extensively on alternative reading assessments (e.g., running records, anecdotal records, observational checklists, informal inventories, DRA or Benchmarks) in their classrooms. Only two respondents (2.1%) reported they do not use any type of assessments at all.

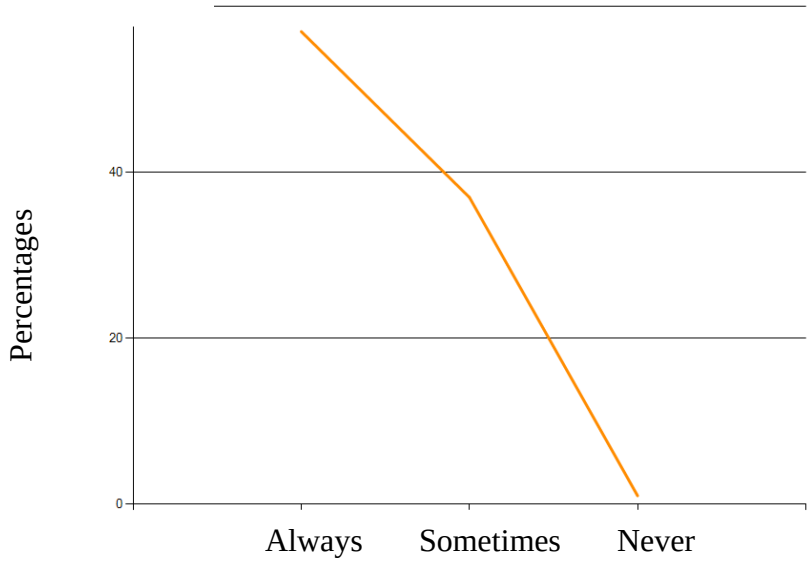
Educators were also asked to rate how often they use different types of reading assessments to plan for their students with reading difficulties in French immersion (see Figure 7).

Figure 6
Approach to Reading Assessments



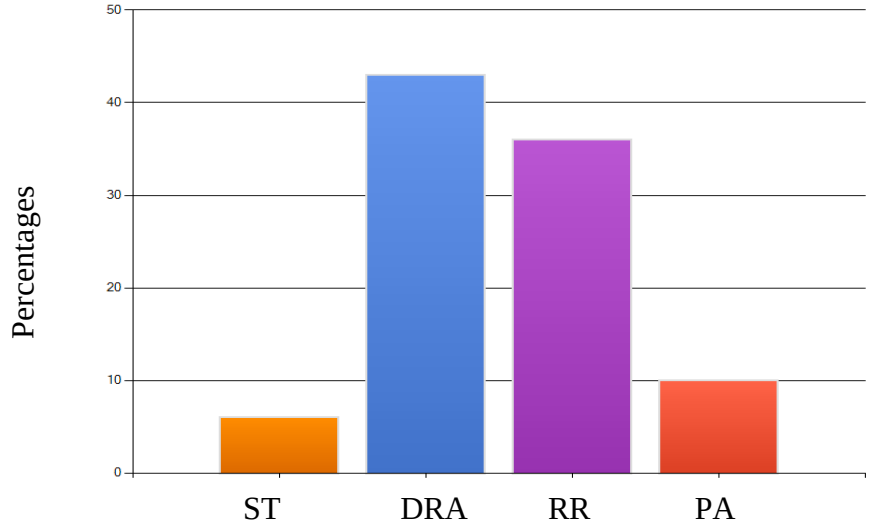
Note. CA=conventional assessments, Mix=a mixture of conventional and some informal assessments, tow.AA=moving towards alternative assessments, ext.AA=rely extensively on alternate assessments

Figure 7
Frequency of Assessments



Fifty-seven respondents (60%) reported they were using reading assessments to help plan additional or varying instructional reading strategies/supports for their students. Only one

Figure 8
Assessments for Reading Level



Note. ST=standardized tests, DRA=diagnostic reading assessments, RR=running records. PA=portfolio assessments

respondent (1.1%) reported that he/she never uses assessments to assist them in planning interventions and/or alternate strategies.

The final question asked participants to indicate which types of reading assessment they felt were the most useful in helping them gauge their students reading level (see Figure 8). The majority (43 or 45.3%) of Saskatchewan French immersion educators are using diagnostic reading assessments (DRA) in their classrooms to help them gauge their student's reading levels, and six reported using standardized assessments (6.3%).

4.4 Research Question One

Survey responses were combined differently for each question, and then cross-tabulated to explore the existence of relationships among the various variables to discover how educators' responses related to the two research questions. The first research question explored was: what methods and strategies do educators predominantly use to teach reading in French immersion classrooms in Saskatchewan? On the survey respondents were asked: how much instructional

time do you devote to the development of the following components or activities within your classroom French reading and language arts program? Respondents rated the amount of time they spent on a particular reading strategy or method using the following rating scale: *a lot* of time (daily), *moderate* time (three to four times a week), *little* time (once or twice a week), or *no* time (never). It is important to consider the amount of time respondents spent on specific reading strategies or methods in order to explore their perceived usefulness of each strategy to teach reading in French immersion. Forty-three educators (45.3%) reported they *moderately* devote time during their French reading or language arts program to both independent (silent) reading and guided reading. Forty-six educators (49.5%) *moderately* devote time to peer or paired reading, and to 52 educators (54.7%) shared reading. *Little* time was devoted to reading, phonics and/or phoneme instruction through music (33 educators or 35.5%), and to making words (37 educators or 38.9%). *No* time to computer software instructional programs (48 educators or 51.1%).

4.4.1 Crosstabs

In order to consider if educators' years of experience guides them to choose one instructional strategy to teach reading more than another, an educators' years of teaching experience and the amount of time educators devote to a particular component or activity as a teaching strategy for early literacy reading in French immersion were combined to determine if relationships exist. A Chi Square statistical test was performed using SPSS to explore if there were any statistical significant relationships between a teachers' years of experience and guided reading (χ^2 (12, N = 112) = 0.192, p = .56), peer reading (χ^2 (12, N = 112) = 0.288, p = .25) , shared reading (χ^2 (9, N = 112) = 0.109, p = .69), music (χ^2 (12, N = 112) = 0.015, p = .81), making words, (χ^2 (12, N = 112) = 0.173, p = .56), computer programs (χ^2 (12, N = 112) = 0.383, p = .19), and independent reading (χ^2 (12, N = 112) = 0.153, p = .13). None were found.

Teachers who described themselves as: (1) Whole Language teachers, (2) believe in a Balanced Approach to teaching reading, and (3) believe that Phonics needs to be taught directly, were compared with the amount of time educators devote to a particular component or activity as a teaching strategy. These categories were combined to determine if *how* a teacher views them self philosophically guides them to spend time on one particular reading strategy more than another. No statistically significant results were found for the three separate variables (e.g., whole language, a balanced approach, and phonics) *and* guided reading ($\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.000$, $p = .39$, $\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.000$, $p = .48$, $\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.000$, $p = .88$), peer reading ($\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.000$, $p = .39$, $\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.000$, $p = .21$, $\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.000$, $p = .39$), shared reading ($\chi^2(9, N = 112) = 0.000$, $p = 1.48$, $\chi^2(9, N = 112) = 0.000$, $p = .59$, $\chi^2(9, N = 112) = 0.000$, $p = 1.08$), music ($\chi^2(16, N = 112) = 0.000$, $p = 1.28$, $\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.000$, $p = .70$, $\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.000$, $p = 1.28$), making words ($\chi^2(16, N = 112) = 0.000$, $p = .88$, $\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.000$, $p = .16$, $\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.000$, $p = .29$), computer programs ($\chi^2(16, N = 112) = 0.000$, $p = .29$, $\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.000$, $p = .16$, $\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.000$, $p = .29$), and independent reading ($\chi^2(16, N = 112) = 0.000$, $p = .20$, $\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.000$, $p = .11$, $\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.000$, $p = .20$).

Lastly, the responses from urban/rural teachers and the amount of time devoted to a particular component or activity as a teaching strategy were compared. Rural versus urban educators were chosen to see if an educators environment would have an influence or effect, on the amount time they use the various instructional strategies to teach reading. No statistically significant relationships were found when an educators teaching environment (rural or urban) were compared with guided reading ($\chi^2(4, N = 112) = 0.135$, $p = 2.01$), peer reading ($\chi^2(4, N =$

112) = 0.017, p = .89), shared reading (χ^2(4, N = 112) = 0.045, p = 2.46), music (χ^2(4, N = 112) = 0.022, p = 2.90, making words (χ^2(4, N = 112) = 0.306, p = 2.01), computer programs (χ^2(4, N = 112) = 0.583, p = .67), and independent reading (χ^2(4, N = 112) = 0.572, p = .45).

4.4.2 Correlational Analyses

The null hypothesis of this research question was that a teacher's experience influences the types of methods and/or strategies they use to teach reading in French immersion. The alternate hypothesis of this research question was that a teacher's experience does not influence the types of methods and/or strategies they use to teach reading in French immersion.

Correlational analyses were conducted between the independent variables, years of teaching experience with the dependent variables: (1) time on particular components or activities as teaching strategies (see Appendix J), (2) teaching styles (see Appendix J), and (3) rural/urban educators (see Appendix J) to see if there were any other types of relationships that may exist between them.

The Pearson's R was calculated using a teacher's years of experience and the amount of time they spend on a particular component or activity as teaching strategies, no relationships among the variables were found. Cohen (1998) describes the strengths of correlational relationships being: 0.0-0.3 as very small to small, 0.3-0.5 as moderate, 0.5-0.9 as large to very large, and 0.-1 as almost perfect.

There was a moderate relationship found between an educator's years of experience and those who use guided reading *and* shared reading (r (112) = .541, p < .01), music (r (112) = .596, p < .01), and independent reading (r (112) = .507, p < .01). A large relationship was found between an educator's years of experience and those who use guided reading *and* peer reading (r

(112) = .756, $p < .01$), making words (r (112) = .663, $p < .01$), and computer programs (r (112) = .743, $p < .01$.

Correlational analyses were calculated between an educator's teaching style and the amount of time they spend on certain strategies to teach reading in their early literacy French language arts and reading programs. A*ll* correlational analyses reported the likelihood of relationships when correlations tests were compared among all the categories (see Appendix J).

Next, correlational analyses were calculated to see there were any correlations between rural/urban teachers and the amount of time spent on using a particular reading strategy. In line with the Chi Square test results, no significant relationships were found (see Appendix L). It was noted that there were moderate relationships among rural and urban educators who use guided reading *and* shared reading (r (112) = .541, $p < .01$), music (r (112) = .596, $p < .01$), making words (r (112) = .663, $p < .01$), and 6) independent reading (r (112) = .507, $p < .01$. A large relationship was found between rural and urban educators who use guided reading *and* peer reading (r (112) = .756, $p < .01$) and computer programs (r (112) = .743, $p < .01$).

4.*5* Research Question Two

The second question that was explored was: what methods of assessment and interventions are Saskatchewan educators using with students who are demonstrating difficulties with reading acquisition in French immersion classrooms? It is important to know which assessments and interventions Saskatchewan teachers find effective to use with their students who are experiencing difficulty with the acquisition of reading so it can be shared with other educators. In order to explore this second question, the following questions from the survey were analyzed: (1) how effective do you think the following reading strategies are for using with students who are experiencing French reading acquisition difficulties in an immersion program, (2) how effective

do you think the following types of supports are for helping students who are experiencing French reading acquisition difficulties in an immersion program, and (3) do you use your reading assessments to help you plan additional or varying instructional reading strategies/supports for your student's experiencing difficulties with French reading acquisition.

In response to question one, the effectiveness of reading strategies, 38 (40.4%) rated independent (silent) reading as *mildly* effective in their French reading or language arts program, 63 (66.3%) rated guided reading *very* effective, 46 (48.4%) rated peer or paired reading as *moderately* effective, 46 (48.9%) find shared reading *very* effective, 36 (39.1 %) rated phonics and/or phoneme instruction through music *very* effective, 35 (37.6%) rated making words as *very* effective, and 39 (42.4%) rated computer software instructional programs as *not at all* effective.

On question two, the effectiveness of the various types of supports, 48 (50.5%) participants rated the special education teacher working with certain students in their classroom to be *very* effective, 47 (50%) rated the special education teacher pulling out certain students to review reading strategies to be *very* effective, 63 (67%) rated the special education teacher doing a mixture of in-class and pull-out reading assistance to be *very* effective, 46 (48.9%) rated the educational assistant working with certain students in their classroom to be *very* effective, 42 (44.7%) rated the educational assistant pulling out certain students to review reading strategies to be *moderately* effective, 43 (41.3%) rated the educational assistant doing a mixture of in-class and pull-out reading assistance to be *very* effective, 38 (41.3%) found the teacher-librarian working with students in the classroom or the library setting to be *very* effective, and 38 (42.7%) rated computer software instructional programs to be *mildly* effective.

Lastly, in response to question three, the use of assessment to help plan interventions, 57 (60%) responded that they *always* use reading assessments to help plan for the students with reading difficulties, 37 (38.9%) responded sometimes, and 1 (1.1%) responded *never*.

4.5.1 Crosstabs

The years of experience an educator has, and how effective they deem a certain instructional strategy to teach early literacy skills in French immersion to be, were compared to see if any relationships may exist. This comparison was calculated to determine if an educators experience would influence how they viewed the effectiveness of the various instructional strategies. No statistically significant results were found when the years of experience and effectiveness of each of the reading strategies were compared with guided reading ($\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.192, p = .56$), peer reading ($\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.288, p = .25$), shared reading ($\chi^2(9, N = 112) = 0.109, p = .69$), music ($\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.015, p = .81$), making words ($\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.173, p = .56$), computer programs ($\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.383, p = .19$), and independent reading ($\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.153, p = .13$).

Next, an educator's years of experience and how effective they felt various types of instructional supports are in the classroom to assist their students who are having difficulty with the acquisition of reading in French immersion were compared. No statistically significant results were found when comparing an educators years of teaching experience *and* each type of instructional support (special education teacher working with certain students in the classroom ($\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.45, p = .06$), special education teacher pulling out certain students to review reading strategies ($\chi^2(9, N = 112) = 0.279, p = .63$), special education teacher doing a mixture of in-class and pull-out reading assistance ($\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.237, p = .06$), educational assistant

working with certain students in the classroom ($\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.214, p = .06$), educational assistant pulling out certain students to review reading strategies ($\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.10, p = .13$), educational assistant doing a mixture of in-class and pull-out reading assistance ($\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.106, p = .13$), teacher-librarian working with certain students in the classroom or library setting ($\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.296, p = .25$), and computer software programs ($\chi^2(12, N = 112) = 0.45, p = .06$)).

Lastly, an educator's years of experience with how often they use reading assessment results to help them plan additional or varying instructional reading strategies/supports for students who are demonstrating difficulty with the acquisition of French reading were compared. Again, no statistically significant relationships were found ($\chi^2 (9, N = 112) = 0.10, p = .13$).

4.5.2 Correlational Analyses

The null hypothesis of this research question was that the number of years of a teachers' experience influences the types of assessments and interventions being used by Saskatchewan French immersion teachers. The alternate hypothesis of this research question was that the number of years of a teacher's experience does not influence the types of assessments and interventions being used by Saskatchewan French immersion teachers.

Correlations were looked at between the independent variable, years of teaching experience, with the dependent variables: (1) effectiveness of various teaching strategies used to teach reading (see Appendix J), (2) various instructional supports (see Appendix J), and (3) the frequency of use of reading assessments to determine if an educators years of experience influenced the outcomes of the dependent variables. No statistically significant relationships were found between these variables (see Appendix J).

It was noted that there were moderate relationships found among an educator's years of experience, educator's who find guided reading effective *and* the effectiveness of shared reading (r (112) = .464, $p < .01$), music (r (112) = .563, $p < .01$)), and independent reading (r (112) = .406, $p < .01$). There were large relationships found among an educator's years of experience, educator's who find guided reading effective *and* the effectiveness of peer reading (r (112) = .610, $p < .01$), making words (r (112) = .669, $p < .01$), and computer programs (r (112) = .637, $p < .01$).

Next, the data from an educator's years of teaching experience and their responses to the effectiveness of the various types of instructional supports were combined to see if there were any correlations. No statistically significant relationships were found (see Appendix J).

Correlational analyses were calculated to determine the existence of a statistical relationship between an educator's years of experience and the frequency they use their reading assessments to help plan additional or varying instructional reading strategies/supports for their students who are experiencing difficulties with the acquisition of reading in French. Again, no statistically significant relationship was found: r (112) = -.076, $p < .01$.

The Pearson's R was also conducted on the following two categories: (1) an educator's years of experience, and (2) the types of assessments they found to be the most useful to help them gauge a student's reading level to determine if a relationship existed. It was established that there was a small relationship between the two categories when the Pearson's R was conducted: r (112) =.23), p<.01.

4.6 Other Comparisons

Sixty-one respondents who completed the survey, completed their Bachelor of Education in French. Out of these 61 respondents only one (1.6%) of these respondents evaluated the quality of their preparation for teaching early literacy skills in French immersion, within their teacher

certification program, to be exceptional. Eight (13.1%) evaluated their preparation as *very good*, 32 (50.8%) as *adequate*, 13 (21.3%) as *poor* and 8 (13.1%) as *totally inadequate*. When comparing these results to the 34 respondents who completed their Bachelor of Education in an English program, 2 (5.9%) found their training to teach early literacy skills in French immersion to be *exceptional*, 1 (2.9%) found their training to be very good, 15 (44.1%) to be *adequate*, 11 (32.4%) to be *inadequate*, and 5 (14.7%) to be *totally inadequate*.

The ratings of what special education teachers and classroom teachers found to be the most effective instructional reading strategies were also compared. Nine out of nine (100%) special education teachers responded that guided reading, phonics and/or phoneme instruction through music was *very* effective, compared to 43/70 (61.4%) of classroom teachers who found guided reading to be *very* effective, and only 21/70 (30%) responded that phonics and /or phoneme instruction through music to be *very* effective. Thirty-five out of seventy (50%) of classroom teachers and 5/9 (55.6%) of special education teachers found shared reading to be *very* effective. Both groups (31/70 (33.3%) classroom teachers, 3/9 (44.3%) special education teachers) found the use of computer software instructional programs to be *mildly* effective.

The additional training an educator has may play a role in types of assessments they use to plan additional and/or varying instructional reading strategies for their students experiencing difficulties with the acquisition of reading in French. The responses from 46 Kindergarten to Grade four classroom teachers, who also have additional training, were then combined to see how many use the various types of assessments to gauge their student's reading levels (see Appendix K). These grade levels were selected as these educators are responsible for introducing French literacy to students.

The results obtained from teachers with 10 plus years of experience (see Appendix K) and teachers with one to five years of experience (see Appendix K) were also compared to see how much instructional time they both spend on various strategies to teach reading in French immersion. This was done to see if an educators experience made a difference on the various reading strategies they used with their students to teach reading in French.

4.7 Summary

Comparisons and correlational analyses were calculated among the different variables using the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) and from the SurveyMonkey (2010) website to determine the existence of possible relationships among the categories in the French Immersion Teacher Survey. Educators who viewed themselves as whole-language, balanced or phonics based approach were cross-tabulated and compared with the time they spend on various teaching strategies. In addition, a teacher's years of experience to their responses on: (1) the time spent on various strategies to teach reading in French immersion by rural/urban educators, (2) their ratings of the effectiveness of various reading strategies and instructional supports, and (3) the frequency they use reading assessments to plan additional supports/interventions for their students struggling with the acquisition of reading were also compared. The next chapter will discuss the relationships of these results and their implications for further research in the area of reading difficulties in French immersion.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Summary

5.1.1 Purpose and Procedures

The purpose of this study was to determine what methods and strategies educators are predominantly using to teach reading in French immersion, and what methods of assessment and intervention Saskatchewan educators are using with students who are demonstrating difficulties with reading acquisition in Saskatchewan French immersion classrooms. The French Immersion Teacher Survey was created and completed on-line via the SurveyMonkey (2010) website by 112 Saskatchewan elementary French immersion teachers from ten different rural and urban school divisions. Seventeen surveys were started, but not completed. It is likely that superintendents, coordinators, and/or administrators started the survey to *check it out*, but never completed the second page. Therefore only 95 surveys were completed in full.

5.2 Findings

Chi Square statistical tests and correlational analyses were performed using SPSS to explore if there were any statistical significant relationships between the various variables. The results of the first series of analyses indicated that an educator's years of teaching experience and the amount of time educators devoted to a particular component or activity as a teaching strategy for early literacy reading in French immersion *did not* affect the types of methods and/or strategies they used to teach reading in French immersion.

Secondly, teachers who described themselves as: (1) Whole Language teachers, (2) using a Balanced Approach to teaching reading, and (3) using a Phonics approach, *did not* affect the types of methods and/or strategies they use to teach reading in French immersion.

Thirdly, urban/rural teachers and the amount of time devoted to a particular component or activity as a teaching strategy *did not* affect the types of methods and/or strategies they used to teach reading in French immersion.

And last, the number of years of a teachers' experience *did not* affect the types of assessments and interventions being used by Saskatchewan French immersion teachers. Based upon the results of all the various relationships, the alternate hypotheses for both research questions are found to be true: (1) that a teacher's experience does not influence the types of methods and/or strategies they use to teach reading in French immersion, and (2) that the number of years of a teacher's experience does not influence the types of assessments and interventions being used by Saskatchewan French immersion teachers.

Cohen (1998) describes the strengths of correlational relationships being: 0.0-0.3 as very small to small, 0.3-0.5 as moderate, 0.5-0.9 as large to very large, and 0.-1 as almost perfect. Keeping this scale in mind, moderate relationships were found between an educator's years of experience and those who used guided reading *and* shared reading r (112) = .541, $p < .01$), and a large relationship was found between an educator's years of experience and those who use guided reading *and* peer reading (r (112) = .756, $p < .01$), making words (112) = .663, $p < .01$), and computer programs (r (112) = .743, $p < .01$).

There were also relationships found between an educator's teaching style and the amount of time they spend on certain strategies to teach reading in their early literacy French language arts and reading program. There were statistically significant relationships found among the variables when the Pearson's R was calculated for teachers who viewed themselves as: (1) whole language, (2) balanced, and (3) phonics based. Moderate relationships were found for those who perceive themselves to be whole language and use peer reading (r (112) = .475, $p < .01$), and use music (r

(112) = .481, $p < .01$. Large relationships were found for those who perceive themselves to be whole language and use independent reading (r (112) = .525, $p < .01$), guided reading (r (112) = .500, $p < .01$), shared reading (r (112) = .586, $p < .01$), making words (r (112) = .500, $p < .01$), and computer software (r (112) = .578, $p < .01$).

Moderate relationships were found among educators who perceive themselves to use more of a balanced approach *and* independent reading (r (112) = .454, $p < .01$), shared reading (r (112) = .484, $p < .01$), music (r (112) = .484, $p < .01$), and computer software (r (112) = .473, $p < .01$). Large relationships were found among educators who perceive themselves to use more of a balanced approach *and* guided reading (r (112) = .565, $p < .01$), peer reading (r (112) = .524, $p < .01$), and making words (r (112) = .532, $p < .01$).

Modertate relationships were found among educators who perceive themselves to use more of a phonics approach *and* independent reading (r (112) = .462, $p < .01$), and guided reading (r (112) = .487, $p < .01$). Large relationships were found among educators who perceive themselves to use more of a phonics approach and peer reading (r (112) = .505, $p < .01$), shared reading (r (112) = .570, $p < .01$), music (r (112) = .510, $p < .01$), making words (r (112) = .510, $p < .01$), and computer software (r (112) = .519, $p < .01$).

Moderate relationships were found among an educator's years of experience, educator's who find guided reading effective *and* the effectiveness of shared reading (r (112) = .464, $p < .01$), and independent reading (r (112) = .406, $p < .01$),. There were large relationships found among an educator's years of experience, educator's who find guided reading effective *and* the effectiveness of peer reading (r (112) = .610, $p < .01$), music (r (112) = .563, $p < .01$), making words (r (112) = .669, $p < .01$), and computer programs (r (112) = .637, $p < .01$).

A small relationship was also found when the following two categories were compared: (1) an educator's years of experience, and (2) the types of assessments they found to be the most useful to help them gauge a student's reading level ($r(112) = .234$), $p < .01$).

The available current research into the best teaching strategies for educators to use at the early literacy stage would be to implement a balanced literacy program that accentuates a systematic phonetic approach (Kelly, 1997). The National Reading Panel (2000) recommended educators employ a balanced literacy program filled with a variety of phonological awareness strategies in order to meet the needs of all their student's learning styles and they need to be well informed on which activities to implement in their classrooms. The results of this research contribute to the existing body of research that support a systematic phonics approach and also include instructional strategies such as: (1) guided reading, (2) shared reading, (3) paired reading, and (4) music. These are all effective strategies to teach reading in French immersion. Educators who integrate a range of teaching styles will tap into the individual learning styles of their students (Calais, 2008). The results of this research also indicate that educators do not see much value in using computer software programs as an effective strategy to teach reading in French immersion or as an intervention.

5.2.1 Teacher Data and the French Immersion Teacher Survey

5.2.1.1 Instructional Time on a Reading Strategy

The reading process is complex and can be developed by a varying number of strategies. These include strategies such as: (1) guided reading; (2) making words; (3) shared reading; (4) peer tutoring (paired learning); (5) music; and (6) computer software instructional programs (Alberta Learning, 2000; Crombie, 2000; Fisher & Stoner, 2004).

It was of interest to discover if newer teachers, who often feel unprepared for teaching students to read (Brady et al., 2009), and more experienced teachers spend different amounts of time on the six reading strategies. Therefore, in this research study, teachers with 10 plus years of experience and teachers with one to five years of experience were cross-tabulated and compared with how much time they devote to the various instructional strategies to teach reading in French immersion.

In comparing the cross-tabulated frequency counts, it was found that *both* groups spend a *moderate* part of their classroom time using shared reading, independent reading, guided reading, and paired reading as instructional strategies to teach reading, and *little* to *no* time on computer software programs. Based on this research study, Saskatchewan French immersion teachers with various years of teaching experience find *equal* value in the various reading strategies, however, a larger sample size may change affect this response.

Using appropriate strategies to teach reading fosters *prevention* instead of *intervention* for students with reading deficiencies later in their academic careers. Some of the reading strategies educators are using to teach reading in their classrooms are: guided reading, making words, shared reading, peer tutoring (paired learning), music, and computer software instructional programs (Crombie, 2000; Fisher & Stoner, 2004; Lovell, 2008).

The majority rating percentages of special education teachers and classroom teachers, and their responses were cross-tabulated and compared on what they deem to be effective instructional strategies to teaching reading to students who are having difficulty with the acquisition of reading. Both majorities rated guided reading to be the *most* effective, and computer software programs to be the *least* effective. In comparing these results (see Figure 4) with all respondents, the majority also rated guided reading as the *most* effective and computer software programs as the *least*

effective. One can conclude from these responses that the majority of Saskatchewan French immersion teachers feel that guided reading is an effective instructional strategy to use with students who are experiencing difficulty with the acquisition of reading. Continued research into which strategy(ies), method(s), and interventions work best for Saskatchewan students who are struggling with the acquisition of reading in French immersion would be warranted.

5.2.1.2 Teacher Beliefs

A balanced reading philosophy proposes an alternative to phonics only or whole language only by offering a mixture of instructional methods to meet the needs of various students learning styles within the classroom (Calais, 2008). Kelly (1997) stated that a combination of whole language and phonics approaches typically define balanced reading instruction because of the way each method addresses the student's various learning styles.

Whole language, a systematic phonics approach, and balanced literacy instruction are the three primary instructional approaches that educators use to teach early literacy in French immersion classrooms (Murphy & Netten, 2008). In comparing these three beliefs in which educators see themselves: (1) whole language, (2) a balanced approach, and (3) a phonics approach and the amount of time they spend using various instructional strategies to teach reading using the Pearson's R, relationships were found among all three variables.

These results were deemed to be questionable because of the strong relationships among the variables. How is it that educators who view themselves as "whole language" *also* spend similar amounts of time on the *same* instructional strategies as do "balanced" and "phonics" based educators? Are teacher's who view themselves as whole language really more balanced than they think? Even though the survey was anonymous, did teachers just give a "middle of the road" answer to complete the survey quickly or is this how they view themselves as educators in

relationship to the various strategies to teach reading? Perhaps with more educational experience, knowledge, and/or pressure from their current school division, educators who identify themselves with one particular belief are using all of the various strategies because they need to or have to.

5.2.1.3 Environment

Administrative, rural and urban community attitudes toward student achievement, teacher satisfaction, parental approval, and support for school practices are numerous dynamics that make up the culture of the school and guide teacher's instructional choices (Rueter, 1992). Twenty-five out of the 112 (22.3%) respondents were from a rural school division. This is considered to be a good representation of the Saskatchewan rural community considering the response rate of 112 was out of approximately 450 Kindergarten to Grade twelve teachers or 25%. In addition to this, the respondents needed to be Kindergarten to Grade eight Saskatchewan educators only, therefore the approximation number of 450 would be much lower.

It was remarkable to discover that no statistically significant relationships were found when an educator's teaching environment (rural or urban) were compared with guided reading, peer reading, shared reading, music, making words, computer programs, and independent reading. Research states (Dreeben, 1973; Reuter, 1992) that the characteristics of the pupils, families, administrative styles, curriculum constraints, and the community affect how a teacher chooses their teaching strategies, methods, and assessments. It would be interesting to discover if all Saskatchewan English Kindergarten to Grade eight educators who teach reading in rural communities, would share these same perceptions and opinions.

5.2.1.4 Experience and Education

Newer teachers often feel unprepared for teaching early literacy skills to teach reading (Brady, et al., 2009). Does this statement reflect the thoughts and feelings of French immersion teachers in Saskatchewan who currently teach early literacy reading skills?

Thirty-four out of the 112 (30%) had one to five years of experience, and 78 out of the 112 (70%) had 6 or more years of experience. Out of the respondents who completed the survey, 61 completed their B.Ed. in a French program, and 34 in an English program. Out of the educators who took their B.Ed. in French, only 1.6% (1) evaluated the quality of the preparation for teaching early literacy skills in French immersion within their teacher certification program to be exceptional. Thirteen point one percent or eight educators evaluated their preparation as *very good*, 50.8% (31) as *adequate*, 21.3% (13) as *poor* and 13.1% (8) as *totally inadequate*.

In comparing these results to the 34 respondents who completed their B.Ed. in an English program, 5.9% (2) found their training to teach early literacy skills in French immersion to be *exceptional*, 2.9% (1) found their training to be *very good*, 44.1% (15) *adequate*, 32.4% (11) as *poor*, and 14.7% (5) to be *totally inadequate*. The percentages in the "exceptional" category were found to be interesting as 4.3% more English B.Ed. teachers found the quality to teach early literacy skills in French in to be *exceptional*. Are teachers going through the B.Ed. program in English being taught better early literacy skills within their teacher certification program than their French counterparts? Or were these respondents already experienced English Language Arts teachers now teaching in French immersion? Also, interesting to note that most educators, in both programs, only felt that the quality of their teacher preparation to teach early literacy skills in French immersion were just adequate. Thirty-four point four percent or 21 French B.Ed. educators and 47.1% (16) English B.Ed. educators in Saskatchewan found the quality of their teacher

preparation to teach early literacy skills within their teacher certification program to be *poor* to *totally inadequate*. These percentages were found to be quite high, therefore the statement that *newer teachers often feel unprepared for teaching early literacy skill to teach reading* (Brady et al, 2009) is found to also apply to Saskatchewan early literacy teachers in French immersion within the limitations of this survey.

There are various teaching methods and approaches that early literacy educators use to teach reading (Murphy & Netten, 2008). Whichever method a particular board of education endorses and recommends is inevitably the method early literacy educators will use in combination with an educators instructional choice (Kennedy, 1998). Effective teachers of reading make several daily decisions in planning their instructional methods and strategies (Mergen, 2000). Proficient educators provide varied, meaningful practice to ensure mastery and transference of a skill to other significant reading situations (Blair, Rupley, & Nichols, in press).

A teacher's selected reading instructional strategies and methods are influenced by many factors: (1) professional development, (2) school board influence on instructional strategies, (3) teacher implementation of targeted reading strategies, (4) teacher's perceptions of their own instructional efficacy, and (5) teacher's perceptions of student's academic needs and performance (Nichols et al., 2005). The additional training an educator has may play a role in types of assessments they use to plan additional and/or varying instructional reading strategies for their students experiencing difficulties with the acquisition of reading in French.

The responses from 44 Kindergarten to Grade four classroom teachers, who also have additional training, were combined to see how many use the various types of assessments to gauge their student's reading levels. Kindergarten to Grade four was selected for data collection as these educators are responsible for introducing French early literacy skills to students. In comparing

these results, the highest percentages for early literacy educators with some type of additional training are using DRA or Benchmark Assessments (43.2 % or 19 educators), as well as Running Records or checklists (45.5% or 20 educators). In looking at the frequency counts found (Appendix K), it is also noted that the majority of educators are using the DRA or Benchmark Assessments to assess and plan additional supports/interventions for their students struggling with the acquisition of reading in French immersion. Therefore, one can conclude that the majority of Saskatchewan educators teaching in French immersion are using diagnostic reading assessments and running records to gauge their student's reading level.

5.3 Limitations

The first limitation of this study was the sample size. Out of 112 respondents only 95 completed the survey, and only 10 out of the 18 Saskatchewan school divisions participated in the study. Since a larger sample is more representative of a population, the small sample size may have reported results that are only currently used in the 10 Saskatchewan school divisions with French immersion schools as opposed to what *all* French immersion educators in all the Saskatchewan school divisions are using. However, considering there are approximately 450 Kindergarten to Grade twelve Saskatchewan French immersion educators and only Kindergarten to Grade eight French immersion educators were targeted, the response rate (112/450= 24.8%), although small, was still considered to be good (Utts, 2005).

The second limitation would be that it would have been beneficial to have had a higher response rate from Saskatchewan special education teachers. It is important to ascertain what this population deems to be the most effective types of reading strategies and instructional supports for students who are experiencing difficulties with the acquisition of reading in French immersion. Special education teachers are responsible for assisting classroom teachers with their planning of

additional supports and/or interventions for students with various types of learning difficulties and/or disorders. In retrospect, it would have been a good idea to make contact with all the special education teachers in the participating school divisions to encourage them to participate in the study by letting them know how valuable their perspectives are.

The third limitation of this study was the focus on the province of Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan curriculum has many similarities to those in the other western provinces as it is governed by the Western Canadian Protocol (WCP, 2009). In December 1993, the ministers responsible for education in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon Territory and Northwest Territories signed the Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education (WCP), Kindergarten to Grade twelve. The WCP (2009) has developed common curriculum frameworks with learning outcomes in mathematics, language arts and international languages such as French as a second language. Therefore, it would be interesting to see the similarities and differences of the responses on the FITS in *all* the western provinces. This may help future planners of our early literacy curriculum in French immersion to continue to work together on being consistent across the western provinces.

Lastly, it may have been helpful to have added more open-ended questions to the survey. Open-ended questions do not give respondents answers to choose from, but rather are written so that the respondents are asked to explain their answers and reactions to the question with a sentence, a paragraph, or even a page or more, depending on the survey (Metagora, 2010). This does make the data more difficult to evaluate. However, it would be beneficial to *hear* what Saskatchewan educators are choosing to use as effective instructional strategies and assessments for their students who are having difficulty with the acquisition of reading. It is possible that the

researcher may have overlooked an instructional strategy to teach reading that other educators may deem to be important and effective.

5.4 Conclusion

The current research explored: (1) what methods and strategies educators are predominately using to teach reading in French immersion classrooms in Saskatchewan, and (2) what methods of assessment and intervention Saskatchewan educators are using with students who are demonstrating difficulties with reading acquisition in French immersion classrooms. A teacher's years of experience in relationship to their responses on: (1) the time spent on various strategies to teach reading in French immersion by rural/urban educators, (2) their ratings of the effectiveness of various reading strategies and instructional supports, and (3) the frequency they use reading assessments to plan additional supports/interventions for their students struggling with the acquisition of reading were cross-tabulated and compared. Also, teachers who view themselves as: (1) whole language, (2) balanced, and (3) phonics based were cross-tabulated and compared with the amount of time they spend on various instructional strategies to teach reading.

How an educator perceives themselves to be (whole language, balanced or phonics based), an educators years of experience, or whether they were rural or urban, did not affect the instructional methods and strategies they chose to use within their Saskatchewan French immersion classrooms. The instructional strategy the majority of Saskatchewan French immersion educators are using the most frequently in their classrooms is shared reading. The type of assessment that Saskatchewan educators are using to the most frequently to evaluate their students in French immersion is diagnostic reading assessments. An educator's years of experience did not influence their choice of preferred assessment that they use with their students.

The strategy Saskatchewan educators found to be the most effective with their students who are experiencing reading difficulties in French immersion is guided reading. The type of support and/or intervention that Saskatchewan educators deem to be the most useful is having a special education teacher in and out of the classroom.

This research indicates that Saskatchewan French immersion educators do not see much value in using computer software programs as an effective strategy to teach reading in French immersion or as an intervention. It has also been well documented that educators who integrate a range of teaching styles, methods and assessments will tap into the individual learning styles of their students (Calais, 2008).

Based on the reported results of the relationships in this research study, the alternate hypotheses for both research questions is found to be true: (1) that a teacher's experience does not influence the types of methods and/or strategies they use to teach reading in French immersion, and (2) that the number of years of a teacher's experience does not influence the types of assessments and interventions being used by Saskatchewan French immersion teachers.

5.5 Implications for Practice

Given the high percentages that educators rated the quality of preparation for teaching early literacy skills in French immersion as just *adequate*, *poor,* and *totally inadequate* are alarming. The fact that more teachers who graduated from an English B.Ed. program rated their quality of teacher preparation as exceptional should also be taken into account because this could possibly mean that English B. Ed programs are better preparing our future educators in early literacy skills. Possibly our educational institutions responsible for preparing our future early literacy educators need to look at what and how they are teaching future Saskatchewan educators. Are English B.Ed. programs doing a better job at teacher preparation than French ones? If our

future educators are better educated on what instructional methods, and strategies, our current Saskatchewan educators are using in their classrooms, in addition to their perceived most effective assessments, it is possible that teachers enrolled in French B.Ed. programs would feel better prepared to teach literacy skills in French immersion. If our future Saskatchewan French immersion teachers are better educated to teach early literacy skills, the earlier our future elementary students will learn to read more efficiently in French.

Saskatchewan school divisions may want to look at the results that this research has highlighted in order to see what our Saskatchewan educators perceive to be the most effective strategies to teach reading in French immersion, and to look into researched based early literacy programs that utilize these strategies. If all our Saskatchewan school divisions have more uniformity among them on what strategies and methods all their schools are using, French immersion teachers would have a larger base to draw support from on: (1) how to teach curriculum, (2) French resources, and (3) how to make adaptations for certain students. Also, students who move from one division to another would perhaps have an easier time with transitioning. It would be interesting to have a representative from each Saskatchewan school division with French immersion schools, to form a Saskatchewan French early literacy committee to discuss and share: (1) strategies, (2) methods, (3) early literacy programs, (4) types of support and/or interventions, and (5) various assessments. These representatives must be knowledgeable about what their school division is doing in all these five areas, be able to share, and then report back to their French immersion teachers for further sharing, discussion, and support. These representatives could potentially be mentors for newer teachers teaching early literacy skills in French immersion. The more guidance and support educators have the better our students learn (Crombie, 2000). Prevention fosters intervention.

5.6 Implications for Further Research

There is limited research into which types of reading strategies, methods, interventions and assessments are the most effective for students who are having difficulties with the acquisition of reading in French immersion in Canada. Research into which strategy(ies), and intervention(s) work best for students with specific exceptionalities (eg; dyslexia, auditory processing disorder, disgraphia, ect…) in French immersion would be warranted. This research could potentially assist classroom and special education teachers determine a starting point with which types of effective adaptations and/or interventions to use, help them create personal programs plans, and assist their families on the academic possibilities, goals and expectations to have for their children. The results obtained from this research study only include what Saskatchewan educators are currently using in their classrooms. It would be good to compare these results with foremost the other western provinces due to our shared curriculum, and secondly with the rest of Canada to see if all French immersion educators have the similar perceptions on the best instructional strategies and methods to teach reading in French immersion and what assessments and interventions they deem to be the best utilized with their students with exceptionalities.

Limited research has been done into which universities, colleges and/or programs in Canada offer the best teacher preparation for early literacy skills in French immersion. In addition to this, research should also be conducted into *what* and *how* new educators are being taught within their teacher certification program. It would assist teacher certification programs into what course content they should be teaching future educators so they can start their educational careers prepared to teach early literacy skills in French immersion. Most often new educators learn what is perceived to be *best practice* in the early years of their careers, in addition to using the educational resources provided by their school division. If they were more informed on what

current Saskatchewan educators are using as instructional methods, strategies and assessments, maybe they would feel better equipped to ask questions about the provided educational resources or would know where to look and what to use if none were provided for them. It would also assist future educators in the selection of a teacher certification program, and also the expectations they should have of their educational institution's teacher certification program.

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APPENDIX A

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB)

Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR	DEPARTMENT	BEH#
Laureen McIntyre	Educational Psychology and Special Education	09-218

INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CONDUCTED
University of Saskatchewan

STUDENT RESEARCHERS
Tanya Prefontaine-Becker

SPONSOR
UNFUNDED

TITLE
The Best Educational Practices to Use to Teach Reading to Students Experiencing Reading Difficulties in French Immersion

ORIGINAL REVIEW DATE	APPROVAL ON	APPROVAL OF:	EXPIRY DATE
05-Oct-2009	04-Nov-2009	Ethics Application Consent Protocol	03-Nov-2010

Full Board Meeting ☐ Date of Full Board Meeting:

Delegated Review ☒

CERTIFICATION
The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named research project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this research project. and for ensuring that the authorized research is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol or consent process or documents.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS
In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: *http://www.usask.ca/research/ethics_review/*

John Rigby, Chair
University of Saskatchewan
Behavioural Research Ethics Board

Please send all correspondence to:

Research Ethics Office
University of Saskatchewan
Box 5000 RPO University, 1602-110 Gymnasium Place
Saskatoon SK S7N 4J8

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF INTENT TO THE SCHOOL DIVISION

LETTER OF INTENT TO THE SCHOOL DIVISION

Tanya Préfontaine-Becker
Masters Candidate
631 Delaronde Crescent
Saskatoon, SK
S7J 3Z9

January 1st, 2009

Dear Participant:

I am a master's student in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education at the University of Saskatchewan. As part of the requirements for my master's degree, I am conducting an on-line survey to discover a) common instructional methods and strategies that Saskatchewan French immersion teachers are using to teach reading in primary classrooms, and b) the types of interventions they use with struggling readers. This information may assist classroom teachers with their selection of instructional methods and strategies for the teaching of reading.

All primary and elementary French immersion educators who are classroom teachers up to and including grade eight, special education teachers, and teacher-librarians are invited to participate in this survey. The survey will take approximately **10 minutes** to complete. If you are interested in participating, please complete the on-line questionnaire which can be found at: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MWMMBJD.

After you have completed the on-line survey, you will be linked automatically to the Teacher Consent Form and the Voluntary Participant Incentive Letter, which enters your name for **a chance to win a $50 gift certificate** to McNally Robinson.

The information gathered from teachers who participate in this study will be used for my thesis, for scientific publication, and for presentations to professionals, parents, and educators. The confidentiality of all information gathered from participants will be ensured. Data from this study will be kept for at least five years by my supervisor. Participation in this survey is completely voluntary. **However, your *cooperation in completing this portion of my project would be greatly appreciated.***

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, I can be contacted by e-mail at tdb050@mail.usask.ca or at my home phone number (306) 374-8106. You may also contact my research supervisor, Dr. Laureen McIntyre, at laureen.mcintyre@usask.ca for more information. If after participating in this study you are interested in the results, a brief executive summary will be available upon request.

Thank you, in advance, for your consideration and cooperation in participating in this project.

Respectfully yours,

Tanya Préfontaine-Becker, B. Ed.
Masters Candidate
Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education
University of Saskatchewan

APPENDIX C

TEACHER SURVEY TOOL

Part 1: Demographic Information:

1. What type of B.Ed. program did you graduate from?

□ B.Ed. in French (ie. U of R –le bac. or U of A -la faculté St. Jean) □ B.Ed. in English

2. Do you have any additional training?

□ Diploma or Certificate □ Masters □ Ph.D. □ Other _____

3. Do you teach in a rural or an urban centre?

□ rural □ urban

4. How many years have you been teaching literacy skills to students in French immersion?

□ first year □ 2-5 years □ 6-10 years □ 10+

5. What is your role in the school setting?

□ classroom teacher □ special education teacher □ teacher-librarian □ other_____

6. If you are a classroom teacher, what grade(s) do you teach French reading to?

□kindergarten □ grade one □ grade two □grade three □ grade four

□grade five □ grade six □ grade seven □grade eight

Part 2: Teacher beliefs/philosophical orientation

1. What is your evaluation of the quality of the preparation you received for teaching early literacy in French immersion within your teacher certification program?

□ exceptional □ very good □ adequate □ poor □ totally inadequate

2. The following statements represent various perspectives, philosophies, or beliefs toward the teaching and learning of reading. Mark the following statements on a scale of 0 to 3 that best describes your perspective, philosophy or belief towards the teaching and learning of reading. (**0- Does Not describe me at all, 1- Mildly describes me, 2- Moderately describes me,** or **3- Very much describes me**) (**check one box for each row**).

- I would describe myself as a "**traditionalist**" when it comes to reading methods and materials.

Not at all **Very Much**

□ 0 □ 1 □ 2 □ 3

-I have an "**eclectic**" attitude towards reading instruction, which means that I would draw from multiple perspectives and sets of materials when teaching reading.

Not at all **Very Much**

□ 0 □ 1 □ 2 □ 3

- I would describe myself as a "**whole language**" teacher.

Not at all **Very Much**

□ 0 □ 1 □ 2 □ 3

- I believe a **balanced approach** to reading instruction, which combines skills development with literature and language-rich activities.

Not at all **Very Much**

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3

- I believe that **phonics** needs to be taught directly to beginning readers in order for students to become fluent, skillful readers.

Not at all **Very Much**

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3

-I believe in a **literature-based approach** to reading instruction in which trade books (i.e. children's books or library books) would be used exclusively.

Not at all **Very Much**

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3

- I believe that **basal reading materials** are useful tools for teaching students to read, either as the primary instructional material or along with trade books (i.e., children's books or library books).

Not at all **Very Much**

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3

- I believe students need to be **immersed in literature** and literacy experiences in order to become fluent readers.

Not at all **Very Much**

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3

3. How much ***instructional time*** do you devote to the development of the following components or activities within your classroom French reading and language arts program? Check the **appropriate box** which indicates the amount of time you use each type of instructional reading strategy: **A Lot** of time (daily), **Moderate** time (three to four times a week), **Little** time (once or twice a week), or **No** time (never) (**check one box for each row**).

Instructional Reading Strategy	**A Lot 3**	**Moderate 2**	**Little 1**	**None 0**
Independent or Silent Reading				
Guided Reading (small groups at student's reading level)				
Peer or Paired Reading				
Shared Reading (read aloud as a group)				
Reading, phonics and/or phoneme instruction through music				
Making Words (using phoneme cards to blend together word sounds and/or make words)				
Computer Software Instructional Programs				

4. How effective do you think the following ***reading strategies*** are for using with students who are experiencing French reading acquisition difficulties in an immersion program? Check the **appropriate box** which indicates how you value the effectiveness of each instructional reading strategy: **Very** effective, **Moderately** effective, **Mildly** effective, or **No**t **at all** effective (**check one box for each row**).

Instructional Reading Strategy	**Very 3**	**Moderately 2**	**Mildly 1**	**Not at all 0**
Independent or Silent Reading				
Guided Reading (small groups at student's reading level)				
Peer or Paired Reading				
Shared Reading (read aloud as a group)				
Reading, phonics and/or phoneme instruction through music				
Making Words (using phoneme cards to blend together word sounds and/or make words)				
Computer Software Instructional Programs				

5. How effective do you think the following ***types of supports*** are for helping students who are experiencing French reading acquisition difficulties in an immersion program? Check the **appropriate box** which indicates how you value the effectiveness of each type of support: **Very** effective, **Moderately** effective, **Mildly** effective, or **Not at all** effective (**check one box for each row**).

Support	**Very 3**	**Moderately 2**	**Mildly 1**	**Not at all 0**
Special education teacher working with certain students in your classroom.				
Special education teacher pulling out certain students to review reading strategies.				
Special education teacher doing a mixture of in-class and pull-out reading assistance.				
Educational assistant working with certain students in your classroom.				
Educational assistant pulling out certain students to review reading strategies.				
Educational assistant doing a mixture of in-class and pull-out reading assistance.				
Teacher-librarian working with students in the classroom or in the library setting.				
Computer software instructional programs.				

6. Select the following statement that best characterizes your **overall approach** to classroom reading assessment (**check *one* box only**).

	Approach to Reading Assessment
	I rely primarily on **conventional assessment** measures, for example, basal reader tests and school district-administered standardized reading tests (e.g., CAT-3).
	I use a **mix** of conventional assessment measures (e.g., basal and standardized tests) and some informal assessments (e.g., Informal Reading Inventory; Diagnostic Reading Assessments (DRA) or Benchmarks).
	I am moving toward adopting various forms of **alternative reading assessments** (e.g., running records, anecdotal records, observational checklists, DRA or Benchmarks, and informal inventories) and/**or portfolio approach** to assessment in my classroom.
	I rely **extensively** on **alternative reading assessments** (e.g., running records, anecdotal records, observational checklists, informal inventories, DRA or Benchmarks), and/or I am using a **portfolio approach** to assessment in my classroom.
	I basically don't engage in **any** conventional or alternative reading assessments.

7. Do you use your reading assessments to help you plan additional or varying instructional reading strategies/supports for your student's experiencing difficulties with French reading acquisition?

□ Always □Sometimes □Never

8. Which type of reading assessment do you think is the most useful in helping you gage your students reading level (**check *one* box only**)?

□ Standardized Tests (e.g. CAT-3, Woodcock Reading)

□ DRA or Benchmark assessments

□ Running records or checklists

□ Portfolio assessments

□ Other _____.

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER

Tanya Préfontaine-Becker
Masters Candidate
631 Delaronde Crescent
Saskatoon, SK
S7J 3Z9

January 10th, 2009

Dear Participant:

I am a master's student in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education at the University of Saskatchewan. As part of the requirements for my master's degree, I am conducting an on-line survey to discover a) common instructional methods and strategies that Saskatchewan French immersion teachers are using to teach reading in primary classrooms, and b) the types of interventions they use with struggling readers. This information may assist classroom teachers with their selection of instructional methods and strategies for the teaching of reading.

All primary and elementary French immersion educators who are classroom teachers up to and including grade eight, special education teachers, and teacher-librarians are invited to participate in this survey. The survey will take approximately **10 minutes** to complete. If you are interested in participating, please complete the on-line questionnaire which can be found at: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MWMMBJD.

After you have completed the on-line survey, you will be linked automatically to the Teacher Consent Form and the Voluntary Participant Incentive Letter, which enters your name for **a chance to win a $50 gift certificate** to McNally Robinson.

The information gathered from teachers who participate in this study will be used for my thesis, for scientific publication, and for presentations to professionals, parents, and educators. The confidentiality of all information gathered from participants will be ensured. Data from this study will be kept for at least five years by my supervisor. Participation in this survey is completely voluntary. **However, your *cooperation in completing this portion of my project would be greatly appreciated.***

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, I can be contacted by e-mail at tdb050@mail.usask.ca or at my home phone number (306) 374-8106. You may also contact my research supervisor, Dr. Laureen McIntyre, at laureen.mcintyre@usask.ca for more information. If after participating in this study you are interested in the results, a brief executive summary will be available upon request.

Thank you, in advance, for your consideration and cooperation in participating in this project.

Respectfully yours,

Tanya Préfontaine-Becker, B. Ed.
Masters Candidate
Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education
University of Saskatchewan

APPENDIX E
TEACHER CONSENT FORM

TEACHER CONSENT FORM

Title of Study:

Exploring Teaching Strategies Used to Teach Reading in French Immersion

Researcher and Supervisor:

Tanya Préfontaine-Becker,
Master of Education candidate
Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education
University of Saskatchewan
E-mail: tdb050@mail.usask.ca
Home Telephone: (306) 374-8106

Dr. Laureen McIntyre
Assistant Professor
Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education
University of Saskatchewan
E-mail: laureen.mcintyre@usask.ca
Office Telephone: (306) 966-5266

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of the study is to explore the methods and strategies that Saskatchewan French immersion teachers are currently employing in their primary classrooms, and what interventions they use to assist their special learners with reading acquisition.

Specifically, this study will investigate two primary research questions:

1. What methods and strategies do educators mainly use to teach reading in French immersion classrooms in Saskatchewan?
2. What methods of assessment and interventions are Saskatchewan educators using with students who are demonstrating difficulties with reading acquisition in French immersion classrooms?

Whole language, a systematic phonics approach, and balanced literacy instruction are the three primary instructional approaches that educators use to teach early literacy in French immersion classrooms. The reading process is a complex set of intricacies which can be developed by a varying number of strategies. Strategies such as: 1) guided reading; 2) making words; 3) shared reading; 4) peer tutoring (paired learning); 5) music, and 6) computer software instructional programs. Each is important as it links into to the ultimate goal of reading: comprehending the decoded word. Early identification of reading difficulties in French immersion is critical to the planning of an early intervention program.

Data from the teacher survey tool will reveal the most utilized educational methods and strategies Saskatchewan teachers are using to teach reading to students in French immersion and what they perceive to be the most effective interventions for struggling readers. This knowledge will assist teachers and special education teachers with their planning of what types of interventions to use, and perhaps to implement prevention methods and strategies in their classrooms as a regular routine.

As a participant in this study:

1. You are provided with an invitational letter to participate in this study that provides project information, contact information, and research procedures. You are also invited to have your name entered in a draw for a $50 gift certificate to McNally Robinson bookstore if you wish to fill out the Participant Incentive Letter.

2. You are asked to sign the consent form, and fill out the Teacher Survey Form that may take 10 minutes to complete. Data will be kept confidential. Consent forms will be stored separately from the survey completed by participants. Identifying information will be removed and replaced with code numbers, so it is not possible to associate a name with any given set of responses. Arbitrary identification codes will be used that will not allow the identification of any individual participants. Therefore, researchers will only have access to anonymous information.

3. You are asked to complete the consent form, the voluntary participant incentive letter, and the on-line Teacher Survey Tool. Please fax the consent form, and voluntary participant letter to (306)374-8787. The on-line survey can be found at: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MWMMBJD.

4. The raw scores from the survey will serve as the data used in the statistical analyses on which the results and discussion of this study will be based. Data will be kept confidential. The researcher intends to begin data analysis by February 15th, 2010.

5. Your data will be stored in a locked cabinet accessible only by the researchers' supervisor, and safeguarded for at least five years. Information identifying participants will be destroyed. After the five year period, the researcher will destroy all data beyond recovery.

If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to contact the researcher at the number provided. The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) approved this study on ethical grounds on December 11th, 2009. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office (966-2084). Participants interested in the results of the study will receive an executive summary upon request by contacting the researcher by phone or e-mail.

I have read and understood the description above. I have been provided with contact information to have any questions addressed. I consent to participate in the study described above,

understanding that I may withdraw this consent at any time. I have printed a copy of this consent form for my records.

Name of Participant (please print): _____
Signature: _____
Date: _____
Signature of Researcher: _____
Tanya Préfontaine-Becker
Masters Candidate
University of Saskatchewan

APPENDIX F

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPANT INCENTIVE LETTER

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPANT INCENTIVE LETTER

I would like my name entered for the $50 gift certificate to the *McNally Robinson* bookstore for completing and sending in my consent form and filling out the on-line questionnaire.

My name and address is (so I can send it to you if you win!):

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX G
INFORMATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE TO PRINCIPALS

INFORMATIONAL CORRESPONCENCE TO PRINCIPALS

Tanya Préfontaine-Becker
Masters Candidate
631 Delaronde Cres.
Saskatoon, SK
S7J 3Z9

February 2nd, 2010

Dear Administrator:

I am a master's student in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education at the University of Saskatchewan under the supervision of Dr. Laureen McIntyre. As part of the requirements for the completion of my masters degree, I am conducting a survey to discover the most common instructional methods and strategies that Saskatchewan French immersion teachers are using to teach reading in primary classrooms, and to determine what they feel are the best interventions for struggling readers. This information may assist classroom teachers with their selection of instructional methods and strategies in order to teach students to read. There are no known risks of this research study.

All elementary educators up to and including Grade 8, special education teachers, and teacher-librarians will be invited to participate in this survey. The survey will take approximately **10 minutes** to complete. The raw scores from the survey will serve as the data used in the statistical analyses on which the results and discussion of this study will be based.

The information gathered from teachers who participate in this study will be used for my thesis, scientific publications, and presentations to professionals, parents, and educators.
The confidentiality of all information gathered from participants will be ensured. All responses obtained from you will remain confidential. Responses on any material associated with the study will be identified by a code number and not by name, and a pseudonym will be used when referring to the school division. Data from this study will be kept for at least five years by my supervisor. Participation in this survey is completely voluntary.

Consent forms and participant incentive letters will be returned by filling out them out and sending them by fax. The survey will be filled out on-line at:
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MWMMBJD.

I am attaching the participant information letter so you may send it out to your teachers.

The survey has been approved by your Board of Education on January 28th, 2010. In addition, this research has been granted approval by the Office of Research Services at the University of Saskatchewan on December 11th, 2009. Any questions regarding rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office (966-2084).

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, I can be contacted by e-mail at tdb050@mail.usask.ca, or at my home phone number (306) 374-8106. You may also contact my research supervisor, laureen.mcintyre@usask.ca for more information. If after participating in this study you are interested in the results, a brief executive summary will be available upon request.

Respectfully yours,

Tanya Préfontaine-Becker, B. Ed.
Masters Candidate
Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education
University of Saskatchewan

APPENDIX H

STUDENT APPLICATION FOR

APPROVAL OF A RESEARCH PROTOCOL

TO THE OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

University of Saskatchewan
Student Application for Approval of a Research Protocol

Information Required:

1. **Name of researcher(s)** and/or supervisor (s) and related department(s).

1a. Name of student(s), if a student study, and type of study (e.g., B.A., Hon., M.A., Ph.D.)

Student: Tanya Préfontaine-Becker
Masters Candidate
Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education
College of Education
University of Saskatchewan
Type of Study: Masters Thesis – M. Ed.

1b. Anticipated start date of the research study (phase) and the expected completion date of the study (phase).

Project Deadlines:
Starting date (yy/mm/dd): 09/11/01 Ending date (yy/mm/dd): 09/11/14

2. Title of Study

Project Title: *The best educational practices to use to teach reading to students experiencing reading difficulties in French immersion*

3. Abstract (100-250 words)
Provide a brief statement of the hypotheses to be examined.

The purpose of the study is to explore the methods and strategies that Saskatchewan French immersion teachers are currently employing in their primary classrooms, and what interventions they use to assist their special learners with reading acquisition.

Specifically, this study will investigate two primary research questions:
1) What methods and strategies do educators dominantly use to teach reading in French immersion classrooms in Saskatchewan?
2) What interventions are educators using with students who are demonstrating difficulties with reading acquisition?

Whole language, a systematic phonics approach, and balanced literacy instruction are the three primary instructional approaches that educators use to teach early literacy in French immersion classrooms. The reading process is a complex set of intricacies which can be developed by a varying number of strategies. Strategies such as: 1) guided reading; 2) making words; 3) shared

reading; 4) peer tutoring (paired learning); 5) music, and 6) computer software instructional programs. Each is important as it links into to the ultimate goal of reading: comprehending the decoded word. Early identification of reading difficulties in French immersion is critical to the planning of an early intervention program.

Data from the teacher survey tool will reveal the most utilized educational methods and strategies Saskatchewan teachers are using to teach reading to students in French immersion and what they perceive to be the most effective interventions for struggling readers. This knowledge will assist teachers and special education teachers with their planning of what types of interventions to use, and perhaps to implement prevention methods and strategies in their classrooms as a regular routine.

4. Funding

Indicate the source of funds supporting the research.

Not applicable. The graduate student will fund the research.

5. Expertise

Not applicable. No special or vulnerable populations are involved in this study.

6. Conflict of Interest

The relationship between the researcher and participants will be anonymous as several educators from all across Saskatchewan will be surveyed. No financial benefits will accrue for recruiting participants or conducting the research. No foreseen limits exist on the publication or distribution of findings.

7. Participants

Describe the procedures for recruiting, selecting and assigning participants.

There are two main issues of concern to the committee:
a) the potential for coercion that arises.
b) a possible loss of privacy or anonymity.

Approximately 100 Saskatchewan French immersion primary teachers, special education teachers, and teacher librarians will be recruited to participate in this study. Upon the approval from four Saskatchewan School Division Boards who have French immersion schools, informational correspondence will be provided to in-school administrators, a letter of invitation will be sent to all French immersion primary teachers, special education teachers, and teacher-librarians, and then distributed through mail and/or by dropping them off at the schools. A written description of the study and the researcher's contact information will be included with the letter. Those teachers who volunteer will sign a consent form, and complete a 14-item survey. Volunteers for the study will return required coded forms (consent form, teacher survey tool, and a voluntary participant incentive letter) to the researcher's supervisor, Dr. Laureen McIntyre in

the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education in the College of Education, to eliminate a release of identifying information of teachers and school divisions to the researcher. A position of power between the researcher and participants does not exist.

This is a minimal risk project as only the data from anonymous teacher survey tool will be analyzed to determine the most utilized and preferred outcomes. No identifying information of potential participants will be collected.

The teaching methods, strategies, and assessment practices have been routines adopted by teachers through their professional development and experiences. Background questions have been incorporated into the perception questionnaire to identify teacher level/independent variables (i.e., years of practice, philosophical orientation and beliefs). The confidentiality of all information gathered from participants will be ensured. All responses obtained from participants will remain confidential. Responses on any materials associated with the study will be identified by a code number and not by name.

7a. Letters of invitation should provide the following information:

1. Clear statement that the project is a research study.
2. Name and contact information of the researcher.
3. Procedures of the study and what is expected of the participant.
4. Amount of time required to participate.
5. The following standard statement, “If you are interested in learning more about this study, please contact X and more details will be provided”.
6. REB approval and contact information statement.

Refer to Appendix D and H:

Participant Information Letter and Informational Correspondence to Principals

8. <u>Consent</u>

In addition, the committee requests that researchers describe:

1. The process by which participants consent to participate in the research project.
2. The procedures that will be in place to ensure timely opportunities to give or withdraw consent.

The researcher will present a letter of invitation (Appendix D) that includes a description of the study to potential participants. At that time, a written consent form will be provided to volunteer participants to endorse. The letter and consent form describing the project informs participants of their rights.

Refer to Appendix D and F: Participant Information and Consent Form

Participants' involvement in this study consists of spending approximately 10 minutes completing a written questionnaire. A letter of invitation to participate is provided outlining contact information (e-mail and telephone number) of both the researcher and her supervisor. This ensures participants are able to contact the researcher at any time with questions, and/or concerns.

Consider whether any of the following concerns apply:

a) Alternative consent protocols

The completion of the survey by teachers on its own is not being considered to mean consent to participate has been given. Teacher participants will be asked to sign a written consent to participate. This method is not considered to be impractical, since teachers are the subjects being recruited to participate. Therefore, concerns such as ability of subjects to read and understand the form will not be an issue.

b) Recruitment from organizations

Refer to Appendix B: *Letter of Intent to School Divisions*

Once ethics approval has been obtained, school division's Boards of Education will receive a letter of intent. The letter will seek permission to survey their French immersion primary educators, special education teachers, and teacher-librarians.

c) Children under 18 years of age

Not applicable.

d) Participants are in a dependent relationship to the researcher

The researcher has no relationship with potential participants. As previously indicated, the invitation to participate in the form of a letter will be delivered by mail or by dropping them off with the school secretary will help to alleviate a feeling of coercion by potential participants.

e) Participants are not able to given either consent or assent

Not applicable. The researcher does not foresee any participants not being able to give written consent.

f) Participant-Observation research

Not applicable. Participant-observation or naturalistic-observation research is not being conducted.

g) Research involving small groups

Not applicable

9. Methods/Procedures

Describe the procedures to obtain research data.

Teacher surveys will be distributed by mail and/or by dropping them off with the school secretary. The survey will include a *Participant Information Letter, a Participant Incentive Letter,* and a *Participant Information and Consent Form* addressed to primary educators, special education teachers, and teacher-librarians. Upon completion, surveys will be returned by mail to Dr. Laureen McIntyre Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education in the College of Education, by fax or will be placed in a designated envelope for pickup.

Refer to Appendixes C, D, E, and F: *Teacher Survey Form, Participant Information Letter* and *Participant Information, Consent Form, and Participant Incentive Letter*

In November, teachers will be provided with the teacher survey form, participant information letter, consent form, and participant incentive letter by mail or from the school secretary. The participants will be given two weeks to complete and return the forms to the researcher.

10. Storage of Data

Upon completion of the study, all data will be securely stored and retained by the researchers' graduate supervisor, Dr. Laureen McIntyre, Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education in the College of Education in accordance with the guidelines defined by the University of Saskatchewan. The data will be placed in a locked cabinet for a minimum of five years. After the five year period, the researcher will destroy all data beyond recovery.

11. Dissemination of Results

Results from this project will be used for my thesis, scientific publications, and presentation to educators. The confidentiality of all information gathered from participants will be ensured. All responses obtained from participants will remain confidential.

12. Risk, Benefits, and Deception

This research will provide information to educators and administrators as to which teaching methods, strategies, and interventions teachers are most effective when teaching students to read in French.

No perceived risk or deception is involved in this study. Participants will not be exposed to harm, discomforts, or perceived harm. Potential participant names will be removed and replaced with a

code number. Therefore, there is limited opportunity for loss of privacy, confidentiality, or anonymity.

When assessing the degree of risk entailed by your procedure, please consider the following questions:

a) Are you planning to study a vulnerable population?

No.

b) Are you planning to study a captive or dependent population, such as children or prisoners?

No.

c) Is there is an institutional/ power relationship between researcher and participant?

No.

d) Will it be possible to associate specific information in your data file with specific participants?

No.

e) Is there a possibility that third parties may be exposed to loss of confidentiality/ anonymity?

No.

f) Are you using audio or videotaping?

No.

g) Will participants be actively deceived or misled?

No.

h) Are the research procedures likely to cause any degree of discomfort, fatigue, or stress?

No.

i) Do you plan to ask participants questions that are personal or sensitive? Are there questions that might be upsetting to the respondent?

No.

j) Are the procedures likely to induce embarrassment, humiliation, lowered self esteem, guilt, conflict, anger, distress, or any other negative emotional state?

No.

k) Is there any social risk?

No.

l) Will the research infringe on the rights of participants by, for example, withholding beneficial treatment in control groups, restricting access to education or treatment?

No. All participants will have equal opportunity to benefit from the results of the research through debriefing.

m) Will participants receive compensation of any type? Is the degree of compensation sufficient to act as a coercion to participate?

Refer to Appendix F: *Participant Incentive Letter*

Yes, responding participants have the option to have their name entered in a draw for a $50 gift certificate to the McNally Robinson bookstore. Participants do not need to fill out the Participant Incentive Letter if they do not wish to do so. No, the degree of compensation does not act as a coercion to participate.

n) Can you think of any other possible harm that participants might experience as a result of participating in this study?

No.

13. Confidentiality

All participant surveys will be assigned a code prior to analysis and collected in unmarked envelopes. The code will consist of digits representing school division number, and school number. For example, in '1403', the first two digits will designate the school division, and the second two digits will designate the school number.

The data link will be destroyed upon completion of the study. Data will only be reported in aggregate form. A pseudonym for the school division will be used. Therefore, there is limited opportunity for loss of privacy or anonymity even though the researcher was able to identify potential participants in advance of their consent to participate.

14. Data/Transcript Release

Not applicable.

15. Debriefing and feedback

Participants are provided with information on how the researcher can be contacted if they have questions or concerns in the letter of information describing the study they received. All participants will be informed about the public access to the finished study at the University of Saskatchewan. A copy will be deposited at the University of Saskatchewan library. A copy of the study will also be provided to the school division. A brief executive summary of the project will be provided to each of the participants upon request.

16. Required Signatures

(1) Student Signature

Tanya Préfontaine-Becker

Tanya Préfontaine-Becker
Masters Candidate
Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education
University of Saskatchewan

(2) Supervisor Signature

L. McIntyre

Dr. Laureen McIntyre
Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education
University of Saskatchewan

(3) Department Head Signature

Dr. David Mykota
Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education
University of Saskatchewan

17. Contact Name and Information

(1) Student Contact Information

Tanya Préfontaine-Becker
Masters Candidate
Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education
University of Saskatchewan
Telephone: (306) 374-8106
E-mail tdb050@mail.usask.ca
Mailing Address: 631 Delaronde Cres.
Saskatoon, SK
S7J 3Z9
Fax: (306) 374-8787

(2) Supervisor Contact Information

Dr. Laureen McIntyre
Assistant Professor
Department of Educational Psychology and
Special Education
University of Saskatchewan
Telephone: (306) 966-5266
E-mail: laureen.mcintyre@usask.ca
Mailing Address: 28 Campus Drive
College of Education
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, SK
S7N 0X1
Fax: (306) 966-7719

(3) Department Head Contact Information

Dr. David Mykota
Department Head
Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education
University of Saskatchewan
E-mail: david.mykota@usask.ca
Telephone: (306) 966-5258
Mailing Address: 28 Campus Drive
College of Education
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, SK
S7N 0X1
Fax: (306) 966-7719

APPENDIX I
CERTFICATE OF APPROVAL
STUDY AMENDMENT

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB)

Certificate of Approval
Study Amendment

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR	DEPARTMENT	Beh #
Laureen McIntyre	Educational Psychology and Special Education	09-218

INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT
University of Saskatchewan

STUDENT RESEARCHER(S)
Tanya Prefontaine-Becker

SPONSORING AGENCIES
UNFUNDED

TITLE
The Best Educational Practices to Use to Teach Reading to Students Experiencing Reading Difficulties in French Immersion

APPROVAL OF	APPROVED ON	CURRENT EXPIRY DATE
Revised Survey	11-Dec-2009	03-Nov-2010

Full Board Meeting ☐ Date of Full Board Meeting:

Delegated Review ☒

CERTIFICATION

The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named research project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this research project, and for ensuring that the authorized research is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol or consent process or documents.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: *http://www.usask.ca/research/ethics_review/*

John Rigby

John Rigby, Chair
University of Saskatchewan
Behavioural Research Ethics Board

Please send all correspondence to:

Research Ethics Office
University of Saskatchewan
Box 5000 RPO University, 1602-110 Gymnasium Place
Saskatoon SK S7N 4J8

APPENDIX J

CORRELATIONS

1. Correlations Between an Educator's Teaching Style and Time Spent on a Reading Strategy

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Whole Language		.546**	.536**	.525**	.500**	.475**	.586**	.481**	.500**	.578**
2. Balanced Approach			.562**	.454**	.565**	.524**	.484**	.484**	.532**	.473**
3. Phonics Approach				.462**	.487**	.505**	.570**	.510**	.587**	.519**
4. Independent Reading					.507**	.635**	.546**	.444**	.426**	.541**
5. Guided Reading						.756**	.541**	.596**	.663**	.743**
6. Peer Reading							.684**	.651**	.674**	.700**
7. Shared Reading								.708**	.671**	.691**
8. Music									.790**	.750**
9. Making Words										.743**
10. Computer Software										

Note. 1 = Whole Language, 2 = Balanced Approach, 3 = Phonics, 4 = Independent Reading, 5 = Guided Reading, 6 = Peer Reading, 7 = Shared Reading, 8 = Music, 9 = Making Words, 10 = Computer Software

2. Correlations Between Rural/Urban Educators and Time Spent on a Reading Strategy

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Rural/Urban		.048	-.007	-.095	.009	.111	.074	.058
2. Computer Software			.541**	.743**	.700**	.691**	.750**	.743**
3. Independent Reading				.507**	.635**	.546**	.444**	.426**
4.Guided Reading					.756**	.541**	.596**	.663**
5. Peer Reading						.684**	.651**	.674**
6. Shared Reading							.708**	.671**
7. Music								.790**
8.Making Words								

Note. 1 = Rural/Urban, 2 = Computer Software, 3 = Independent Reading, 4 = Guided Reading, 5 = Peer Reading, 6 = Shared Reading, 7 = Music, 8 = Making Words

3. Correlations Between an Educator's Years of Experience and Time Spent on a Reading Strategy

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Computer Software		.541**	.743**	.700**	.691**	.750**	.743**	.027
2. Independent Reading			.507**	.635**	.546**	.444**	.426**	-.069
3. Guided Reading				.756**	.541**	.596**	.663**	.048
4. Peer Reading					.684**	.651**	.674**	.091
5. Shared Reading						.708**	.671**	.046
6. Music							.790**	.043
7. Making Words								.119
8. Years in Fr. immersion								

Note. 1 = Computer Software, 2 = Independent Reading, 3 = Guided Reading, 4 = Peer Reading, 5 = Shared Reading, 6 = Music, 7 = Making Words, 8 = Years in French immersion

4. Correlations between teaching experience and effectiveness of instructional reading strategies

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Years of Teaching Experience		.038	.109	.141	-.037	.093	.099	.102
2.Effective Independent Reading			.406**	.614**	.654**	.482**	.417**	.541**
3. Effective Guided Reading				.610**	.464**	.563**	.669**	.637**
4. Effective Peer Reading					.677**	.546**	.642**	.629**
5. Effective Shared Reading						.543**	.508**	.425**
6.Effective Music							.711**	.617**
7. Effective Making Words								.620**
8. Effective Computer Software								

Note. 1 = years of teaching experience, 2 = effective independent reading, 3 = effective guided reading, 4 = effective peer reading, 5 = effective shared reading, 6 = effective music, 7 = effective making words, and 8 = effective computer software

5. Correlation between years of experience and type of instructional support

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Years of Experience		.123	-.008	.180	.073	-.094	-.026	.034	.097
2. SpEd. In class			.554**	.620**	.715**	.489**	.588**	.646**	.660**
3. SpEd. Pull Out				.617**	.608**	.727**	.582**	.509**	.581**
4. SpEd Mixture					.657**	.523**	.724**	.596**	.555**
5. EA in Class						.656**	.780**	.668**	.673**
6. EA Pull Out							.783**	.593**	.572**
7. EA Mixture								.657**	.603**
8. Teacher-Librarian									.716**
9. Computer Software									

Note. 1 = years of experience, 2 = Special education teacher in class, 3 = special education teacher pull out, 4 = special education teacher mixture, 5 = educational assistant in class, 6 = educational assistant pull out, 7 = educational assistant mixture, 8 = teacher-librarian, 9 = computer software

APPENDIX K
READING ASSESSMENT, GRADE LEVEL TAUGHT AND ADDITIONAL TRAINING

1. Reading Assessments and Grade Level Taught

Assessment	*Kindergarten to Grade four*					*Response*	
	K	Grade One	Grade Two	Grade Three	Grade Four	Percent %	Count #
Standardized Tests	1	0	0	1	1	6.8%	3
DRA or Benchmark	3	4	6	7	4	43.2%	19
Running Records	5	6	7	7	6	45.5%	20
Portfolio Assessments	0	0	0	2	0	4.5%	2
Other							1

2. Reading Assessments and Additional Training

Assessment	*Additional Training*				*Response*	
	Diploma or Certificate	Master Degree	Ph.D	Other	Percent %	Count #
Standardized Tests	3	0	0	1	5.1%	4
DRA or Benchmark	17	11	0	8	45.6%	36
Running Records	13	8	0	12	41.8%	33
Portfolio Assessments	4	1	0	2	8.9%	7
Other						1

APPENDIX L
INSTRUCTIONAL TIME DEVOTED

1. Instructional Time Devoted to the Development of the Following Components or Activities Within Your Classroom French Reading and Language Arts Program

1 to 5 Years of Teaching Experience	*A Lot*	*Moderate*	*Little*	*None*	*Rating Average*	*Response Count*
Independent or Silent Reading	7	15	8	0	4.17	30
Guided Reading	5	13	8	4	3.15	30
Peer or Paired Reading	2	15	11	2	3.08	30
Shared Reading	10	17	3	0	4.06	30
Phonics Instruction through Music	1	9	13	7	2.58	30
Making Words	0	6	12	10	1.85	30
Computer Software Programs	1	4	9	15	1.22	30

2. Instructional Time Devoted to the Development of the Following Components or Activities Within Your Classroom French Reading and Language Arts Program

10+ Years of Teaching Experience	*A Lot*	*Moderate*	*Little*	*None*	*Rating Average*	*Response Count*
Independent or Silent Reading	5	25	14	1	1.76	45
Guided Reading	7	22	15	3	1.70	47
Peer or Paired Reading	6	24	14	2	1.74	46
Shared Reading	15	28	4	0	2.23	47
Phonics Instruction through Music	7	9	17	13	1.22	46
Making Words	6	12	17	12	1.26	47
Computer Software Programs	2	7	13	25	0.70	47