

**FLUENCY DEVELOPMENT IN  
SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING**

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## ABSTRACT

### FLUENCY DEVELOPMENT IN SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

Although students may spend several years (up to 12 years) in learning a second language, we must recognize the fact that a great number of these students are still not proficient and fluent in speaking the foreign language. Since the actual trend in learning second languages is directed toward the development of oral proficiency, and since oral fluency is one of its components, students need to speak with a certain degree of fluency in order to demonstrate their oral proficiency. The purpose of this study was to describe factors or conditions which contributed to the development of oral fluency in selected, fluent grade 12 students.

The first step was to define oral fluency, followed by the development of an appropriate device to evaluate it. The selected fluent students were interviewed. The interviews were later analyzed in order to determine the preponderant factors or conditions contributing to oral fluency, and to find the answers to the following questions:

1. Is there a pattern or are there similar factors/conditions among the students that have contributed to their oral fluency development?
2. What are specific ways to promote oral fluency development in a second language?

The main findings of this study were that oral fluency was acquired as a result of several factors: students who are positive and self-motivated, a learning experience which has been positive and enjoyable for the students, parents as well as teachers who have been positive and supportive, teachers who were proficient in the second language, and its having taken place within a second language immersion learning environment.

This study provides a list of requirements and factors that will help to promote oral fluency in a second language.

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Nota Bene: In this research report, the use of the masculine form is intended as inclusive and has been used with a view to simplifying the text for readers.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION: THE ISSUE

#### **Rationale for the study**

Substitute teaching in French as a second language (core French or French immersion program) classrooms has one great advantage: it gives a person the opportunity to compare and appreciate intuitively the students' general second language (L2) level of proficiency. It particularly allows one to be aware of the different levels of oral fluency and proficiency across a variety of classrooms and schools. One must acknowledge the fact that, after several years (from five to eight years) of L2 learning, most of the students are still not proficient and fluent in speaking the language being learned.

As a French native speaker, and one well aware of the difficulties of learning a L2, I thought that it would be helpful to determine the factors contributing to oral fluency in a L2, in order to suggest better teaching procedures and/or a more beneficial environment that would at least promote a reasonable level of oral fluency in the L2.

## **Purpose of the study**

Since the actual trend in L2 learning is directed toward the development of oral proficiency, and since oral fluency is one of its components, it seems logical that one should, if not first, at least along with other objectives, assist students to develop some level of oral fluency in order for them to become proficient speakers. Although general proficiency in a L2 has been widely investigated and has provided ground for a great number of research studies, the topic of oral fluency in a L2 is still an almost unknown and poorly defined field.

The purpose of this study was to describe factors or conditions which contributed to the L2 oral fluency of selected grade 12 students. The following steps were included:

1. Selection of a definition of oral fluency and an appropriate device to circumscribe and evaluate it.
2. Interview of selected students.
3. Interview analysis and determination of the preponderant factors or conditions contributing to oral fluency.
4. Listing of the most productive conditions promoting oral fluency.

## **Assumptions**

The second step (i.e., interviews) was crucial to determine and describe the necessary conditions for the development of oral fluency. The following assumptions were made about what

factors would help to promote oral fluency in the L2:

1. Time spent learning the L2.
2. The methods and the material used in teaching the L2.
3. The teacher: background, attitude, aptitude, level of proficiency, and fluency in the L2.
4. The student: background, personality traits, aptitude, motivation to learn the L2, amount of oral and written practice.

This study consisted, therefore, of a series of interviews of orally fluent students who were selected for their above-average level of oral fluency. These students were interviewed in order to obtain their perception of how and the conditions under which they became fluent in the L2.

From these results, answers to the following questions were obtained:

1. Is there a pattern or are there similar factors/conditions among the students that have contributed to their oral fluency development?
2. What are specific ways to promote oral fluency development in a L2?

### **Limitations of the study**

As there is no consensus on the definition of oral fluency in a language, a choice had to be made about one definition. The operational definition selected for the purposes of this

study was the one most commonly accepted by researchers in this field. This definition, from Bartz and Schulz (in Linder, 1986), lent itself to an evaluation which was inexpensive, easy, simple, and with an accuracy that allowed sound comparisons among different students and classes. Most evaluation devices, developed from the definition of oral fluency on which they are based, are so technical and complex that only highly trained professionals are able to administer them, and, of course, require substantial financial commitment for implementation. However, most of these procedures for evaluating fluency are also severely criticized with respect to their validity. Nevertheless, since we still need to provide some kind of judgment about students' oral fluency, a specific instrument or scale has been chosen, knowing that the results will indicate values with a sufficient precision to allow a comparison between the results across different classrooms.

In this study, the assessment of students' fluency was carried out by the selected teacher and controlled/validated by another teacher in the field. One French teacher was asked to evaluate all the students from the school who could qualify to participate in this study. He was given a note (see Note for the Teachers, Appendix A, p. 74) outlining guidelines for his evaluation of the students. Another teacher, from the same school, who also taught French, was given the same instructions and evaluated the same students in order to

corroborate the first teacher's opinion. Both teachers were able to compare and discuss their results in order to provide a list of students on whom they both agreed. In case of a non-agreement over a case, the teachers called upon a third expert person (a teacher) to resolve the matter.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Introduction**

Oral fluency in a L2, despite its prominent role in L2 acquisition, has not been a major focus of study for L2 researchers in recent years. The concept of fluency is not yet fully understood. Researchers still attempt to define this concept either as a holistic phenomenon that can be tested in a rather subjective way, or as one of the elements of oral proficiency that can be tested in a more scientific and objective way. After considering the holistic and the scientific views of oral fluency, we have selected as our operational definition a more holistic and thus intuitive definition conceived by Schulz and Bartz (in Linder, 1986), which constitutes at the same time a practical, reliable and fairly objective assessment tool. However, one should be aware that most researchers are still questioning the validity of any fluency evaluation. It is their contention that fluency is not yet fully assessed in satisfactory conditions with effective tools. They also hold that oral fluency is not

generally acquired/learned nor effectively taught, and it is not yet tested with objectivity and efficiency in the classroom (Hieke, 1985).

### **The Holistic View of Fluency**

Currently and generally, the notion of fluency in a L2 is interpreted holistically: that is, as a whole concept by itself. In this manner, the holistically oriented researcher grasps fluency in a way that naturally leads to its evaluation in global terms. This type of evaluation therefore relies heavily on the rater's subjective judgments, and the instruments are expensive to administer (Hieke, 1985).

For each particular holistic view of fluency as expressed theoretically by individual researchers, one is presented as well a specific, corresponding instrument of assessment.

Gustein (1983) defined fluency in Fillmore's (1979) terms. According to Fillmore, a speaker is judged to be fluent if he is able to: 1. fill the time with talk, 2. talk in coherent, reasoned sentences, 3. have appropriate things to say in a wide range of contexts, and 4. be creative and imaginative in language use. To assess fluency, Gustein bases his evaluation on Fillmore's parameters which are, for Gustein, reunited and put into practice in dialogue journal writing. He asserts that there is no authentic and real-world interaction practice in a L2 classroom. He offers the idea that the dialogue journal is an interactive, self-generated,

cumulative and functional writing and reading exchange between the teacher and the student. Therefore, by analyzing these writings, one should be able to evaluate the students' fluency in the L2.

Day and Shapson (1987) defined fluency as : "the ease and flow of the student's speech in comparison with native speakers" (p.242). Consequently, they elaborated a four-point fluency rating scale with corresponding descriptors. The four levels are : 1. halting, slow speech, noticeable breaks between words, seems to require much effort; 2. speech is uneven, some noticeable breaks between words, seems to require effort, occasionally halting, tend to but not necessarily have slower speech rate than level three; 3. relatively smooth and effortless speech but rate of speech is slower than native or perceptibly non-native; and 4. relatively smooth, native-like rate of speech. The authors mentioned that the use of fluency as a criterion for measuring speaking has been criticized because "it often wrongly considers a native speaker's fluency as ideal, i.e. uninterrupted by pauses, hesitations and false starts" (p.257). To overcome this problem, the researchers instructed the raters to "accept hesitation and pause phenomena as natural characteristics of the speech behaviour of both native and L2 speakers, and to consider fluency as a relative measure" (ibid).

For Beatens Beardsmore (1972), "oral fluency is understood to imply a 'communicative competence' requiring an

ability to formulate accurate and appropriate utterances of more than one sentence in length" (p.10). He defined his concept of fluency in these terms: "Oral fluency requires the ready availability of this communicative competence for the formulation of appropriate utterances in real time, involving a strategy for the elaboration of sentence structures, as well as the selection and insertion of lexical items. Individual sentences must be integrated into connected discourses". Therefore, Beardsmore selected specific criteria and established them as a function of his aims. They are as follow: 1. fluency (tentatively defined as the ability to give proof of sustained oral production implying a certain communicative competence, as well as the unstilted, spontaneous use of... 'conversational lubricants' (Abercrombie, 1963, p.57); 2. accuracy (structural and lexical); 3. relevance; 4. intelligibility; 5. pronunciation; 6. variety of structures; and 7. variety of lexis. It is interesting to note that fluency is considered here as one element of oral fluency assessment, which in this case one could call oral proficiency.

O'Brien and Langr (1977) associated 'ease' with fluency as one of the five parameters of minimal oral proficiency without any precise definition or rating scale.

### **The Scientific View of Fluency**

As opposed to these holistic views of fluency, some

authors proposed a more specific and scientific framework, and thus, attempted to provide a more objective instrument to assess oral fluency.

First, Lesson (1975) presented three major components defining oral fluency, each being divided into specific criteria. They are as follows : 1. a phonological component (articulation rate, pausal phenomena, phonological production, and phonological discrimination); 2. a syntactic component (error count, 'gap filling', syntactic manipulative skill, anagram sentences); and 3. a semantic component (associative networks in a variety of registers, socio-cultural influences, awareness of the functional value of utterances).

Hieke (1985) affirms that we need an efficient and uncomplicated testing instrument to provide a quick and simple assessment of fluency with group administration capability and ease of objective scoring by the instructor himself. In order to achieve this, Hieke (1984) attempted to divide fluency into its distinct components which are separated broadly into a quantitative and a qualitative domain. The quantitative parameters of fluency are : 1. speech rate, 2. length of runs, 3. rate of articulation, and 4. hesitation devices (stalls, repairs, parenthetical remarks). He also mentioned that speech rate is the most significant and practical measure of oral fluency, but as it is a rather superficial means of evaluation, it cannot serve as the sole indicator of fluency; it must be supplemented by other and more qualitative

parameters. The only qualitative parameter cited by Hieke (1984) is the phenomenon of absorption which occurs in intra-word and inter-word positions, and which is divided into linking (or liaison), levelling, and loss (Hieke, 1985, p.140).

Another researcher, Sajavaara (1978), produced a list of parameters which are thought to be major factors of fluency. These are : 1. linguistic factors (phonological and phonetic, syntactic, semantic, lexical, and textual factors), 2. psychological factors, and 3. sociolinguistic factors. Sajavaara also mentioned the features of speech that should be observed during testing : 1. organization of the message (length, false starts, imprecision, lexical density, and lexical variation) and 2. continuity factors (sentence length, clause length, subordination index, number of pauses, incomplete phrases, revisions and repetitions, extraneous words and phrases, broken words, prolonged sounds (p.21).

All of these scientific views of fluency have not yet led to the development and wide acceptance of definite evaluation devices which could be used as a frame of reference, with the exception of the criterion of speed rate.

#### **An operational definition: Schulz and Bartz**

After analyzing the two main trends in the concept of oral fluency in a second language (the holistic and the scientific views), one finally had to decide on a definition

that could be satisfactorily operationalized in this research. Schulz and Bartz offer us an honorable and positive compromise between these two broad approaches, reviewed above. The researcher was then able to operationalize a definition that adequately isolated the parameters of oral fluency for the teachers participation in this study. This allowed for the existence of objective and reliable criteria, permitting then to utilize this practical and dependable assessment instrument. At the same time, the researcher was able to keep in mind a holistic definition of the concept of fluency.

Schulz and Bartz (1975), recently quoted by Linder (1986), worked first separately to elaborate a scoring system for communicative competence (1974), then cooperated in presenting a complete oral proficiency test in which fluency stands as its first component. For them, the most vital component of a communicative competence test was the scoring procedure. Their criteria were based on the students' ability to produce or comprehend a message in the L2. They considered that linguistic errors should not be the primary criterion for a test of communication, as long as the linguistic error did not interfere with the intended message of the speaker. They recognized, however, that it is difficult to separate totally the two criteria of comprehension and quality of utterance (p.83). Schulz and Bartz accepted the method of testing by rating scales because "attempts to evaluate communicative competence have relied heavily on rating scales as a means for

scoring, especially for the speaking skill. In this way, an effort is made to avoid scoring discrete linguistic errors" (p.84). Bartz used four scales to evaluate the oral components of his tests: fluency, quality of communication, amount of communication, and effort to communicate. Schulz used similar scales. Bartz and Schulz (in Linder, 1986) defined fluency in these terms : "Fluency does not refer to absolute speed of delivery, since native speakers of any language often show wide variations in this area. Fluency refers to overall smoothness, continuity, and naturalness of the student's speech, as opposed to pauses for rephrasing sentences, groping for words, and so forth" (p.7). They offered a six-point scale in which each level is clearly described : 1. very many unnatural pauses, very halting and fragmentary delivery; 2. quite a few unnatural pauses, occasionally halting and fragmentary delivery; 3. some unnatural pauses, occasionally halting and fragmentary delivery; 4. hardly any unnatural pauses, fairly smooth and effortless delivery; 5.no unnatural pauses, almost effortless and smooth, but still perceptibly nonnative; 6. as effortless and smooth as the speech of native speakers. This definition has intuitive appeal on account of its objective breakdown of criteria and, consequently, has gained wide acceptance for use in the field.

#### **How is Fluency Approached in the Classroom?**

Added to the difficulty of defining and assessing fluency

in a L2, the literature on ways to improve or teach fluency is very sparse. Some researchers even affirm that fluency cannot and should not be the aim of L2 learning.

Cohen (1986), although recognizing that the study of another language code and another cultural code as part of a general school education program is surely a valuable beginning for the study of 'life', argued against the effort demanded from students to achieve some approximation of native speaker communication ability until they are sure that they will need the chosen language. He asserted that genuine spoken fluency cannot be mastered in classroom settings since, apart from everything else, it requires "socially inculcated response mechanisms which can only be gained experientially" (p.8).

Another researcher, Loveday (1983), held that, although developing communicative proficiency is the main current trend in L2 learning and teaching, the teacher is still and obviously not interested in the "propositional content" of the student's answer but in "testing his ability to answer". Classroom communication consequently reveals itself to be a trial where learners submit themselves for judgment. In this pattern, language is "reduced to an object instead of being treated as a medium" (p.200). The author stated that native-like fluency is, for most L2 learners, an utopian goal that results in psychological defeatism. Therefore, he pointed out that L2 pedagogy should deal with both non-native and native

L2 variations. The recognition of both of these phenomena will lead to the necessary relaxation of many traditional norms (proficiency levels) in L2 education. This will mean the end of "relentless corrective interaction" and the "socially unrealistic maintenance of an absolutist and artificial standard variety" (p.210).

From these two authors' writings, it can be deduced that fluency can only develop when experience is provided in the native L2 environment, and is impeded by repetitive corrective interaction during language learning as well as the maintenance of a rigid standardized model of language.

Other researchers found that the following techniques are useful to promote oral fluency in a L2:

1. The teacher must get the learner to speak and to practice speaking over and over (Ajiboye, 1985).

2. It is beneficial to use reading as a resource for perfecting skills in oral delivery of the L2. But reading should be done aloud because it improves pronunciation and instills confidence in the learner (Ajiboye, 1985).

3. The language laboratory (Ajiboye, 1985).

4. A "year abroad", the purpose of which is obvious: to promote the chances of the students' developing fluency in and understanding of the L2 (Ajiboye, 1895).

5. Learn by heart selected texts to acquire some automatisms, a greater assurance in the structure of the language, and also a surer sense of the particular rhythm of

the language (Dejean le Feal, 1976).

6. Repeat in a low voice, or mentally; formulate ideas; overcome timidity by interacting with other L2 learners; correct accent and pronunciation. Techniques 5 and 6 should be practiced with a great regularity, conscious self-analysis, and knowledge of one's own weaknesses (Dejean le Feal, 1976).

7. It is a prime necessity for a L2 teacher to possess native fluency in the language he is teaching (Aronson, 1973).

8. Promoting real-life or authentic communicative language activity can develop patterns that carry beyond the parameters of the classroom (Heffernan, 1986).

### **Conclusion**

In this study, for the selection of the participants, the researcher focused on one of the most commonly accepted definitions of fluency: the Schulz and Bartz definition, as quoted by Linder (1986). Their general definition, worded in intuitive terms, is followed by a six-point rating scale with a detailed definition of each level on the scale. As Linder affirmed, it is also recognized that this specific way of evaluation provides a "complete and objective means of evaluating a communicative performance" (p.5) which is easy, reliable, simple and costless to administer.

After selecting the participants, the research was conducted then by means of interviews. The students were given the choice to speak in either language, French or English.

They all preferred to speak in their mother tongue (English) except in a few instances, when it was more convenient for them to express an idea or concept in French.

These interviews were analyzed in order to discover the preponderant factors that contributed to the students' development of oral fluency. On the basis of this analysis, conclusions have been drawn, and productive procedures likely to induce oral fluency development in a L2 were proposed.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The subjects of this study were grade 12 students who had learned French and were about to complete their high school L2 learning.

To select these students, a teacher from the French immersion program, was asked to select six to ten of his most fluent students, according to the Shulz and Bartz's scale. As it was the only local school that taught the French immersion program up to grade 12 at the time of this research investigation, a Catholic high school in southern Alberta was approached in order to select the subjects for the study.

In the same school, some other potential subjects enrolled in the core French program were approached and tested for fluency. At that time, no students were able to reach the fluency level 3 of the Bartz and Schulz scale. This result could be explained by a number of reasons: the expectations and objectives of the core French program were not as well developed as for the French immersion program. This is the result of less intensive studies, teachers' L2 proficiency level of a different standard, and considerably lower funding

for the core French program. It is also common that, if a student does well in the core French program and enjoys learning the L2, he frequently switches to the French immersion program. Therefore, there were fewer chances to find a fluent student in a core French program. One must clarify, however, that, with the new trend in teaching/learning a L2 now being oriented toward communication, students from the core program are more and more engaged in oral exchange of ideas, and thus are able to reach a higher level of fluency than in the past.

In the present study, the assessment of students' oral fluency was carried out by the French grade 12 teacher, and controlled/validated by a second teacher in the field. Both teachers were given a note outlining the definition and a guideline for the students' evaluation (see appendix A, p.74). Both teachers compared and discussed their results, and produced a list of students on which they agreed. There were no cases of non-agreement.

This study was conducted with a qualitative research design, using an interview format, from which data were gathered, analyzed, and discussed. As mentioned earlier, all the participants chose to be interviewed in their mother tongue (English) except in a few instances, when French was more convenient to express an idea or concept.

## **The interview approach**

Interviews with selected students fluent in a L2 were conducted to discover the process and circumstances that allowed them to become fluent.

The interview as a research method is unique in that it involves the collection of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals. Its principal advantages are its adaptability and flexibility. It permits the interviewer to follow up leads, and thus obtain more data, greater clarity, and much greater depth than other methods of collecting research data (Borg and Gall, 1983). Compared to simple or elaborated questionnaires, interviews tend to be richer in data (Borg and Gall, 1983).

There are different interview approaches which are only differentiated by the amount of structure brought by the interviewer. However, because skillful use of the unstructured interview technique, in which the interviewer has in mind only a general and broad plan, requires a great deal of training and expertise (Borg and Gall, 1983), a semi-structured interview technique was chosen, as it has been qualified as generally the most appropriate for interview studies in education (Borg and Gall, 1983). In this case, the interviewer often includes some highly structured questions in the interview guide, but the general aim is primarily toward a semi-structured level, using open-ended questions (Borg and Gall, 1983; Good, 1972). This provided a combination of

objectivity and depth, which often permitted gathering valuable data that could not be obtained successfully by any other approach (Borg and Gall, 1983; Bogdan and Biklen, 1982).

The interview guide (see appendix D, p.78) was based on the main assumptions which were listed above in the Introduction (chapter I). The part of the interview guide, dealing with the students' personality traits, was adopted from Ely's three aspects of personality (Ely, 1988). This researcher affirmed that, in conclusion to his research, these aspects influenced the students' attitude toward various learning activities in the language classroom. They are: 1. "Language Class Risktaking" (referring to the degree to which an individual tends to assume risks in using the L2 in the L2 language class); 2. "Language Class Sociability" (the degree to which one likes to interact in class by means of the L2); and 3. "Language Class Discomfort" (the degree of anxiety, self-consciousness, or embarrassment felt when speaking the L2 in the classroom).

For each of these aspects of personality, Ely elaborated a questionnaire which helped to investigate the students' affective reactions in the L2 classroom. This part of Ely's questionnaire was used as it corresponded exactly to the specific needs of this research in this area.

### **Recording**

The interviews were recorded. Tape recording is

advantageous as it frees the investigator from the mechanics of note-taking and enables him to devote full attention to the meanings of utterances. It has been proven generally that tape recorders do not increase resistance to the interview, do not decrease interviewer-respondent rapport, and do not alter the responses of the respondent. There are other advantages such as: an important amount of bias is eliminated as there is no selection of material by the researcher; there is an objective basis for evaluating the adequacy of the interview data in relation to the performance of the interviewer; and gain of time (there is no reconstruction of the interview by memory afterwards) (Good, 1972).

However, as full transcriptions are excessively time-consuming, the answers were transcribed in point form. They were also presented to the students for proof-reading and approval. Data were extracted from these transcriptions.

### **Interview guide**

Careful planning and sample field validation are essential in developing procedures that will produce good cooperation and accurate responses (Borg and Gall, 1983). It was thus necessary to develop a guide to be used during the interview. This guide listed, in the desired sequence, the questions that were asked. These questions were usually asked exactly as they appeared in the guide. Likewise, it is preferable to list acceptable and unbiased, probing questions

so that all respondents will be exposed to the same interview situation (Borg and Gall, 1983; McMillan and Schumacher, 1984).

A pretest of the interview specifically designed for this study was successfully carried out with one fluent student in order to gain a better assurance against bias and flaws in its formulation, and to make some minor changes, as required and indicated by this pilot procedure.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

All the students who had learned the L2 for several years did not use or rarely used the L2 at home. They were "good students". They were high in risktaking and sociability. They did not experience any or experienced very little discomfort while speaking the L2 in the classroom, and they acted positively while studying the L2. They were motivated by concerned parents, supportive teachers, and by their own desire to learn the L2. They mentioned the four areas of reading, writing, listening, and speaking as part of the instruction they received.

A more detailed and precise data analysis is developed hereafter in fifteen specific items which are represented in the fifteen figures that have been drawn from the data collected as the students' interviews were analyzed.

All the selected students spent from 9 to 13 years learning the L2 at school in the immersion program (see Figure 1: 25). All the interviewed students were in grade 12 in the French immersion program. Most of them started the program in kindergarten; some started in grade one or two because of the lack of challenge in their original English class placement :

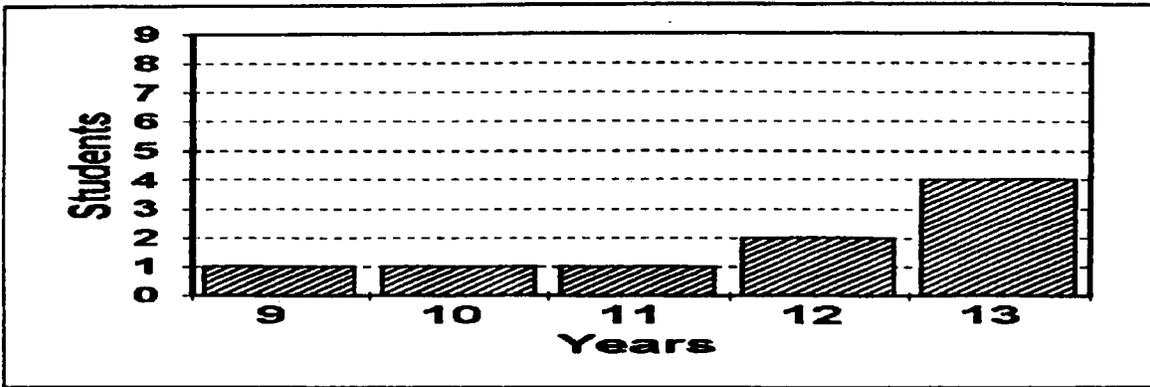


Figure 1: Time spent learning French

"I was bored in grade one (English); it was a challenge to start French in grade two; I had to catch up; this kept me more interested" (Student #1). "I was bored at school; my parents thought it would be more of a challenge to learn a different language" (Student #6).

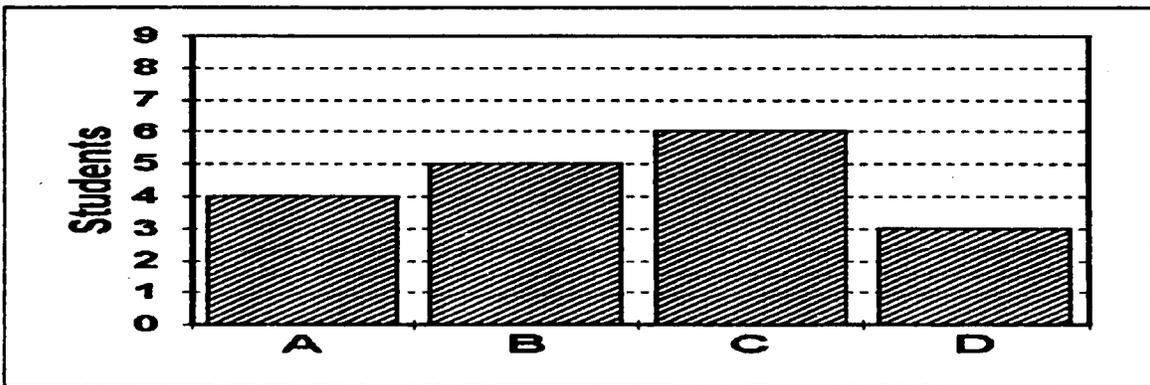


Figure 2: Languages spoken at home.

Legend: A: some French, B: no French, C: English, D: English and German.

Fluent students did not draw their oral fluency from their family environment. They all spoke mainly English at home. Five of the students had, however, a little opportunity to practice the L2 or another language (German) at home with

a family member (see Figure 2: 25): "My father helped me with my French when I started the French immersion program" (Student #1). "My family in Ottawa speaks French; I go and visit them approximately four times a year, but in Lethbridge we mainly speak English at home" (Student #2). "I speak exclusively English with my mother and my sister; with my father, I speak German" (Student #4). "My parents are both from Germany; they speak German at home; I usually answer back in English. German was my first language" (Student #7). "I hear some German when I visit my grandmother" (Student #8).

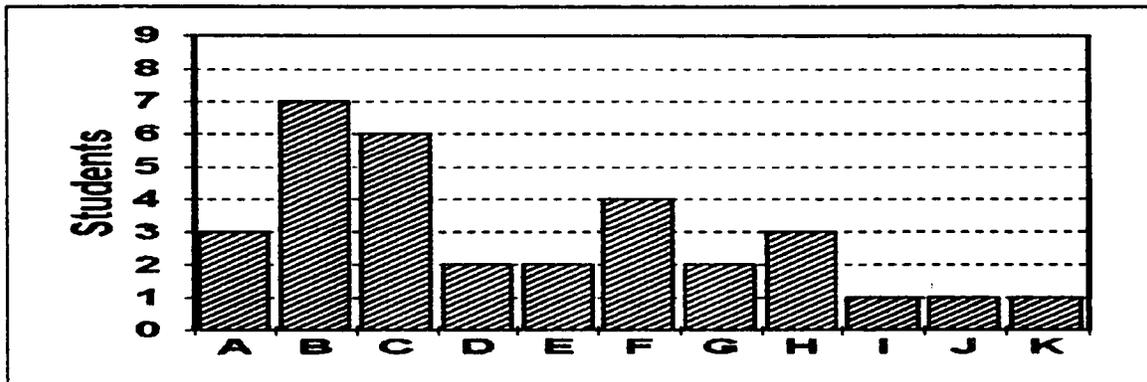


Figure 3: Students' general personality traits as perceived by the students themselves.

Legend: A: musical/likes music, B: likes sports, C: takes school seriously, D: active, E: independant, F: likes reading, G: likes travelling, H: friends are important, I: is a loner, J: likes public speaking, K: ambitious.

Most of the fluent students, as they were asked to describe how they portray themselves, declared that they liked sports, took school very seriously and thought that school was important in their lives (see Figure 3: 26). Most of them enjoyed reading (not especially in the L2). They also were

musical and/or appreciated music. They thought that friends were important in their lives: "School is important to me but I like to have time with my friends" (Student #2); "I like school, to be involved in school activities, and I like being with my friends" (Student #3).

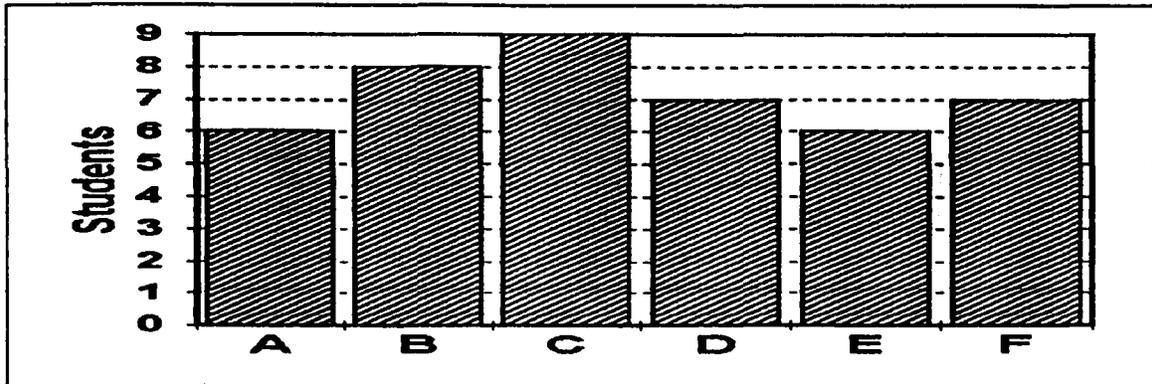


Figure 4: Specific aspects of students' personality.  
I. Risktaking in L2 class.

Legend: A: wait until they know how to use a word, B: try out difficult sentences in class, C: try to express complex sentences, D: do not worry about grammar, E: do not rehearse in mind before speaking, F: do not follow basic sentence models.

Fluent students were high in risktaking. They all tried to express complex sentences in the L2. They did not mind trying out difficult sentences in class. They usually did not follow basic sentence models. They did not worry about grammar when speaking (see Figure 4: 27).

Fluent students were very high in sociability in their class environment. They all enjoyed speaking the L2 and interacting with their teachers and their friends. They had fun in L2 class activities and learning the L2 as a group where all students were involved. They recognized that a

strong group spirit is important for them, and that it contributed to better L2 learning (see Figure 5: 28).

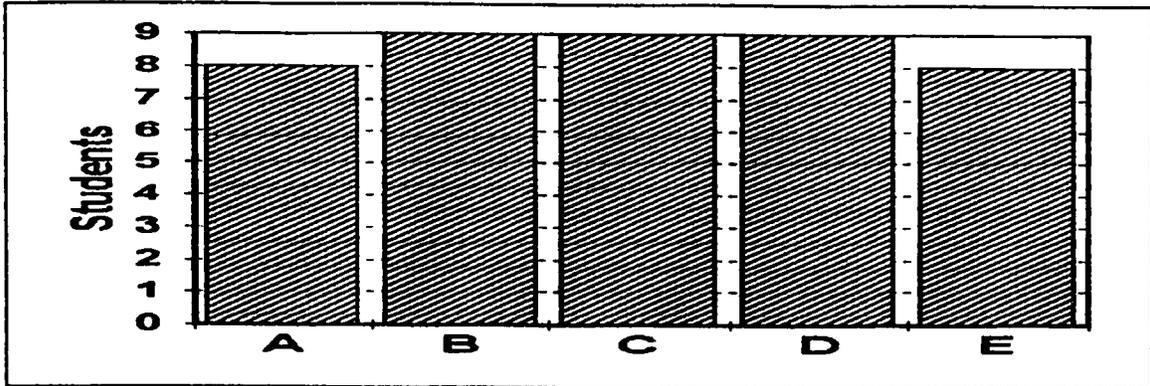


Figure 5: Specific aspects of student's personality II. Sociability in the L2 class.

Legend: A: like class activities using French, B: learning French in group is more fun, C: enjoy speaking French with teachers and students, D: enjoy interacting with other students in French, E: it is important to have a strong group spirit.

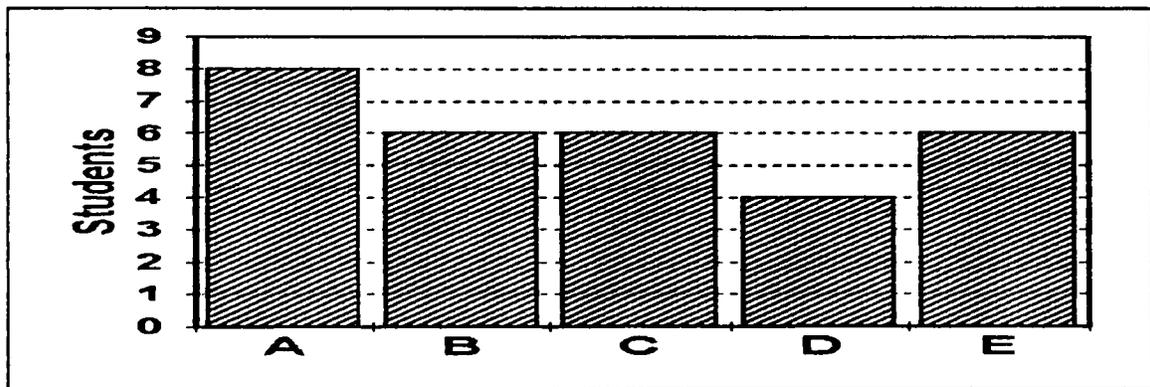


Figure 6: Specific aspects of students' personality. III. Language class discomfort.

Legend: A: feel relaxed when speaking French in class, B: discomfort when speaking will be a barrier for future use of French, C: do not feel embarrassed at times to speak French, D: is less self-conscious about participating in French than other students, E: feel sometimes awkward speaking French.

When asked about language class discomfort, all students asserted that they felt relaxed when speaking the L2 in class. Although one half of the students never felt embarrassed to speak the L2, the other half expressed the feeling of being embarrassed when speaking the L2 only on a few occasions. Still, half of the students declared that they felt awkward sometimes while speaking the L2. Moreover, half of them thought that they would not use the L2 in the future because of having experienced some discomfort in using it, if it had to be done in a L2 environment or with L2 native speakers (see figure 6: 28).

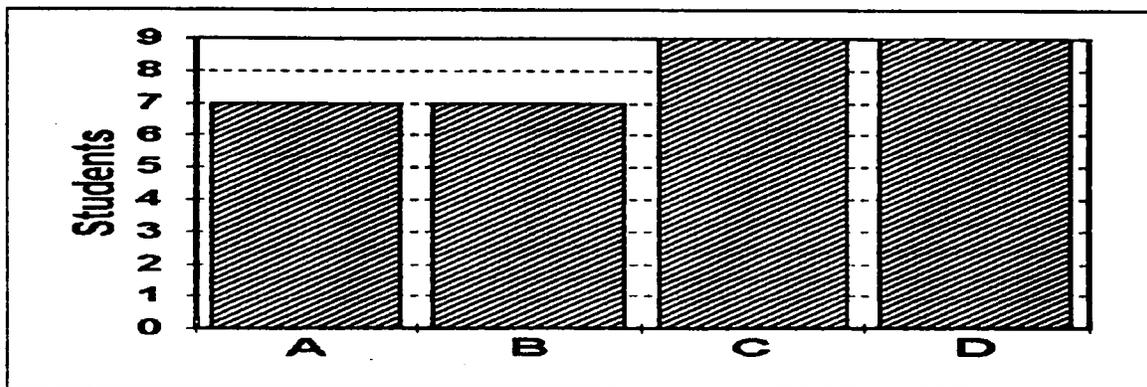


Figure 7: Specific aspects of students' personality.  
IV. Attitude toward language class.

*Legend:* A: do not find class very boring, B: usually interested in class, C: really like French class, D: in general, enjoy French class.

Concerning their attitude toward the language class, all the students declared that they really enjoyed and liked their L2 classes. If most of them did not find their classes very boring, the remainder thought that if their classes were

boring, it depended on the teacher or on the subject taught in the L2. Furthermore, most of the students were usually interested in their L2 classes (see figure 7: 29).

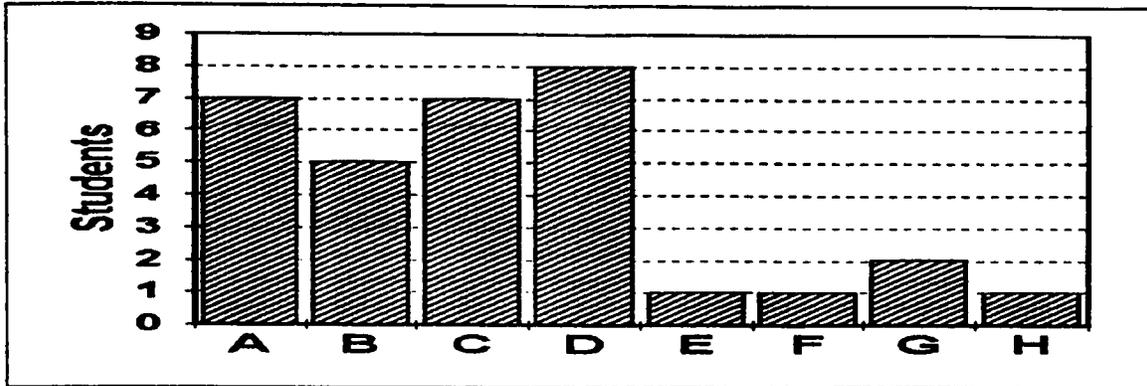


Figure 8: How the students became fluent in the L2.

Legend: A: it was not difficult, B: did not work much, C: French was picked in class, D: mostly practised at school, E: French reading at home, F: writing a lot in French, G: reading French in class, H: study French at home.

All the students agreed that they became fluent in the L2 mostly by practicing at school, that their L2 was picked up in class, and that it was not difficult for them to learn the language. The students who started French later than grade one spoke of their difficulty experienced at the beginning: "It was really tough because I had to catch up on two years of French; I was frustrated, but after the first year, I did not find it difficult at all" (Student #1); "It was difficult at the beginning because everybody was so far ahead of me, but actually the learning was pretty easy" (Student #6). Half of the students noted that they did not have to work a lot to learn the L2: "It was never difficult to learn it because we

started so young. We did not really have to study; we just picked it up" (Student #3). "The studying came more in grade eight because of the stress on grammar; I liked it" (Student #7). One student regularly did L2 reading at home because he enjoyed reading. One student said he studied the L2 at home. They all mentioned that attending all-day classes in the L2 helped them the most in their oral fluency development (see figure 8: 30).

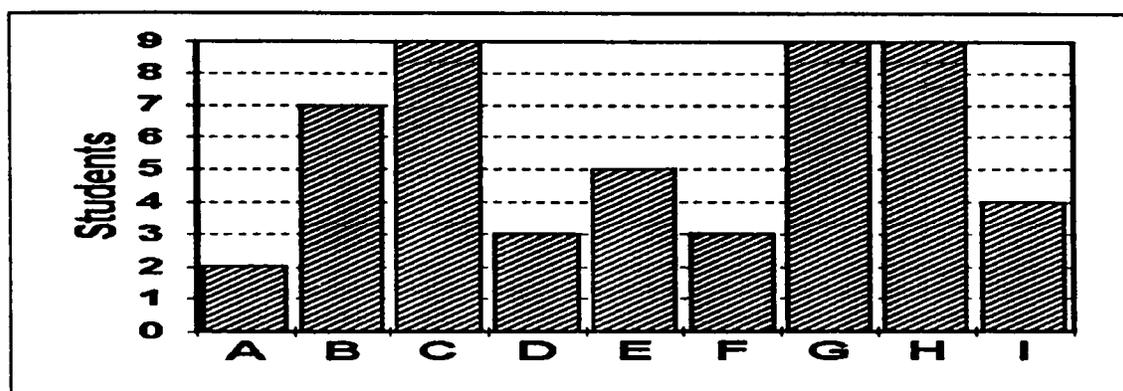


Figure 9: Students' motivation to learn the L2.

Legend: A: find the L2 interesting, B: L2 will be useful in Canada and for travelling, C: enjoy speaking the L2, D: to be able to communicate in the L2, E: want to do well and get good marks, F: to get rewards(in early grades), G: parents wanted students to learn the L2, H: friendship and good group spirit, I: do not want to lose the L2.

The three highest motivations to learn the L2 for all students were: 1) they enjoyed speaking the L2; 2) their parents wanted them to learn the language; and 3) they experienced a great friendship with their classmates. They enjoyed a good and strong group spirit as almost all of them started in grade one and stayed together for nine to twelve

years: "I got a lot of close friendship because we have been together for so long" (Student #6). Furthermore, most of the students found that the L2 (French in this case) will be helpful to them for working in Canada, which is a bilingual country (they are aiming for high government and administrative positions) and for travelling within Canada and abroad. Half of the students admitted that they wanted to learn the L2 correctly and effectively to get good marks at school, as they were trying to do well in all their subjects at school. A few students said that they kept learning the L2 because they did not want to lose it after having spent so many years to acquire it ("It would have been a huge waste of time to stop learning it", Student #7); because they used to get rewards in their early grades; because the L2 would enable them to communicate with L2 speakers; and finally, because they found the language interesting (see figure 9: 31 ).

All the students, when they were invited to talk on how they thought they learned the L2, agreed that, at least at the beginning of their learning, they remembered memorizing a lot of poems, songs, short stories, and texts. They all affirmed that reading (silently and aloud) considerably contributed to their learning the L2. Most of the students felt that they had learned the language by having been immersed in class, by practicing their speaking skills in class (with oral exercises, discussions, and debates), and by working on writing assignments (written exercises, projects, essays).

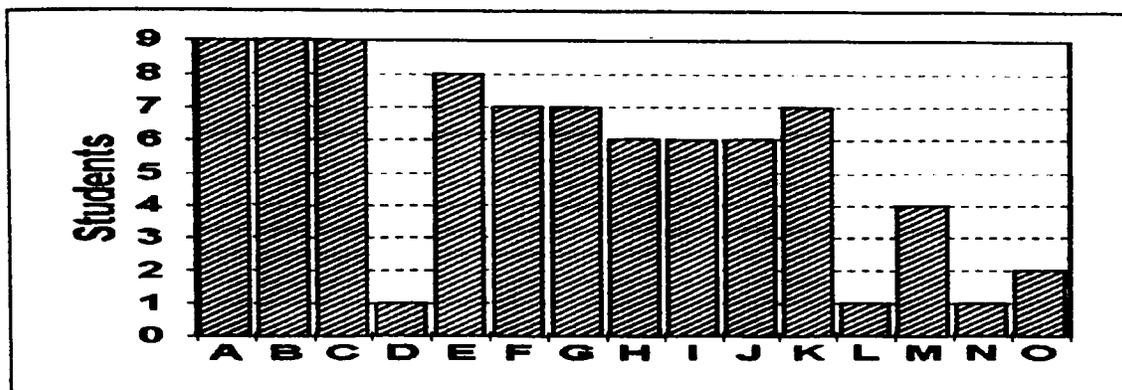


Figure 10: How the L2 was learned, as perceived by the students.

Legend: A: memorizing (poems, songs, texts, stories), B: reading aloud(a lot), C: silent reading(a lot), D: being read by the teacher, E: occasionally watching French TV or movies, F: travelling in French-speaking areas(at least once), G: participation in French clubs or games(a few times), H: working on projects/written assignments/essays, I: being immersed in class, J: oral practice in class(exercises, sometimes radio and TV), K: listening to French (teacher, radio and TV), L: flashcards, M: spelling and grammar, N: games in French, O: dictionary work.

Although the following activities have been engaged in sporadically. they were still mentioned by most of the students: watching L2 television programs (most of them for hockey games) or L2 movies, participating in L2 clubs at school or in the televised L2 game "Génies en herbe", listening to the L2 on the radio or TV and to the teacher, travelling in L2-speaking areas (mostly Quebec), and finally, studying grammar (with "dictées"). A few students talked about flashcards (one student), games (one student), being read to by the teacher (one student), and dictionary work (two students) (see figure 10: 33).

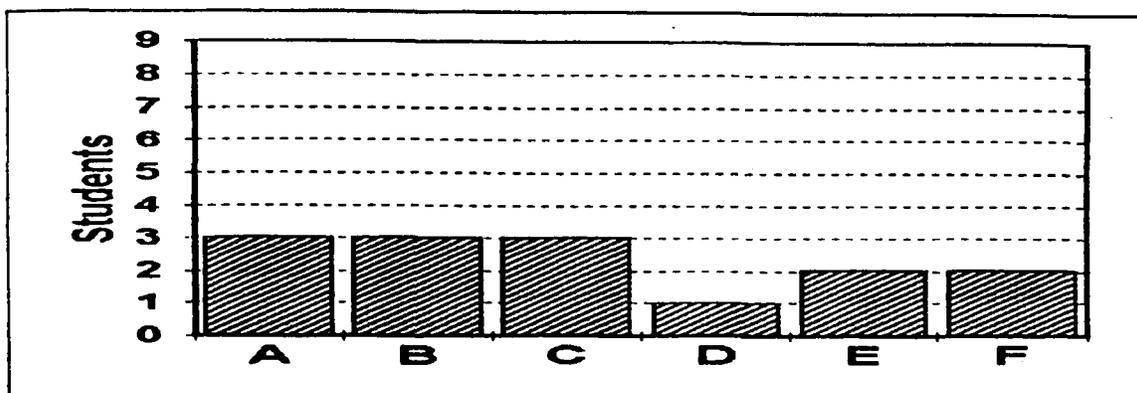


Figure 11: What helped the students most in becoming fluent in the L2.

Legend: A: having the opportunity to speak the L2 in class, B: oral practice in class, C: positive and enjoyable experience, D: starting young to learn the L2, E: written work, F: reading in the L2.

To answer the item concerning what helped the students most in becoming fluent in the L2, the subjects tried to express what they thought was their strongest motivation to learn the language. Out of nine students, three declared that it was the opportunity to speak and to use the L2 mainly in their class environment (some mentioned that they used the L2 to communicate with a friend at school in an anglophone environment for privacy); three students said that it was their oral practice in class: having to communicate and do everything in the L2, discussing and debating in the L2; three students affirmed that living a positive and enjoyable experience while learning the L2 helped them to keep up learning the L2 ("Learning French has been an extremely positive experience both for me and everybody else in the class" (Student #9); two students talked about how much they

learned and became fluent in French by writing (essays and assignments) and reading; one student mentioned the fact that by starting very young to learn the L2 : "I started in kindergarten and you learn better when you start young; it came naturally. I tried to learn Spanish but it's harder than starting young" (Student #3). Finally, one student added that it was the family L2 background that helped and motivated the L2 learning (see figure 11: 34).



Figure 12: Teachers' profile I : What was done regularly in class (as perceived by the students)

Legend: A: games, B: a lot of reading(silent/aloud), C: speaking a lot, D: group activities, E: written assignments(grammar, vocabulary, essays, reports), F: oral presentations, G: discussions/debates, H: poems and songs(in early grades), I: watching movies in class, J: spelling(dictées), K: role-plays.

The four main, regular activities done in class quoted by the students were: 1) reading (aloud/silently), 2) written assignments (grammar, vocabulary, essays, reports), 3) learning poems and songs (mostly in the early grades), and 4) discussions and debates in class. Games, speaking a lot, and role-plays were mentioned by half of the students. One student

quoted "discours" (speeches) that they had to present in front of the class. All the students perceived that they did very few group activities, some oral presentations, very seldom watching TV or movies in class, and very few "dictées" (see figure 12: 35).

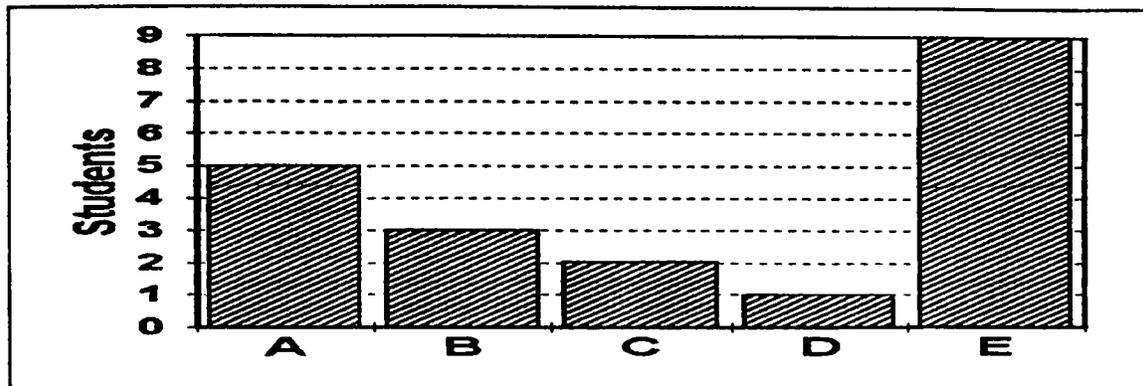


Figure 13: Teachers' profile II : Motivation from the teachers (as perceived by the students).

Legend: A: "I don't know"/ teachers didn't do much, B: rewards in early grades, C: competition among students, D: games and fun, E: from myself/mainly from myself.

As for motivation to learn the L2 generated by the teacher, this research showed that all the interviewed students thought that, if they did well in learning the L2, it was not because their teachers found a way to motivate them, but mainly because they were personally motivated. However, they recognized that the teachers helped them at least partially in being motivated, even if they could not point out or acknowledge any strategy or action from the teachers to motivate them to learn the L2: "I don't know...", "It came from myself...", "I wanted to do well...", "I didn't want to

look stupid in front of the teacher, so I did my work." (Student #2); "The teachers didn't do much", "It was more self-motivation to get good grades." (Student #7); "You are motivated by yourself." (Student #6); "They did not really motivate us, most of it came from inside. I wanted good marks." (Student #8); "We were motivated because of the whole environment of the classroom, but you have to motivate yourself like in any other classes." (Student #9).

One third of the students remembered that they had rewards or punishments in their early grades: "In our early grades, we had rewards, like stars, and it worked to a certain extent" (Student #1); "Teachers would penalize with one cookie if a student was speaking English; at the end of the week, those who never spoke English were to eat the cookies. In junior high, mainly punishments were the main motivation from the teachers to make you speak French or not to speak English." (Student #8).

Two students mentioned, as means of motivation to learn the L2, competition among students devised or not by the teacher: "There was an intense competition between the students in the class, so the teachers never had really to do much to motivate us." (Student #4); "The class was quite competitive." (Student #7). Finally, one student affirmed that the teachers motivated him because they always spoke in French in class, and another one recognized that games and having fun in class were ways of being motivated by the teacher (see

figure 13: 36).

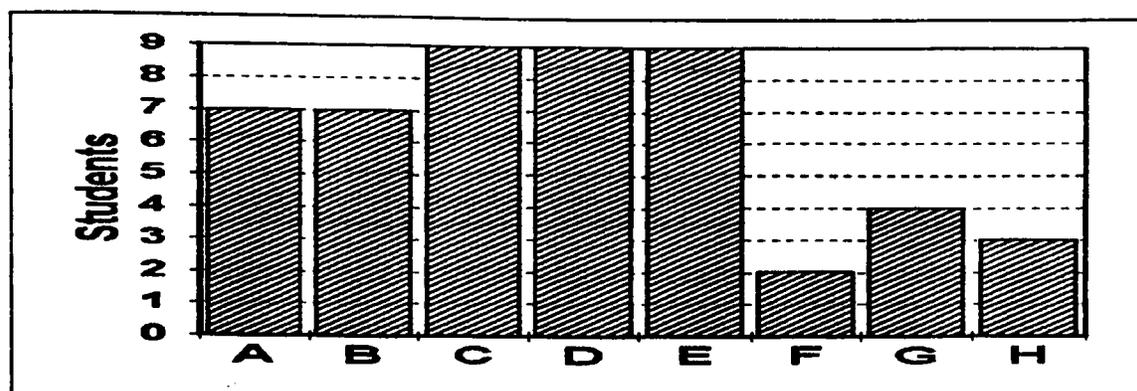


Figure 14: Teachers' profile III : Teachers' methodology (as perceived by the students).

Legend: A: no test on oral fluency, B: no formal instruction on pronunciation, C: specific/formal teaching of grammar, D: formal teaching of vocabulary, E: use of the L2 for communication since the beginning of learning, F: use of creative L2 since grade 1, G: use of creative L2 since grade 4-6, H: use of creative L2 since junior high.

When the students were asked to reflect on their teachers' methodology, they all affirmed that they received specific and formal teaching of grammar, that they went through formal vocabulary lessons, and that their teachers always used the L2 for communication in class right from the beginning (kindergarten or grade one). Students were allowed to use the L2 in a creative way at different times of their schooling: from grade one (two students), from grade 4-6 (four students), and from junior high (three students). Most of the students (seven out of nine) remarked that they did not remember receiving any formal instruction on pronunciation and being tested on oral fluency during their schooling. However,

they recognized that, occasionally, they were corrected for their pronunciation when reading aloud or when learning new vocabulary (see figure 14: 38).

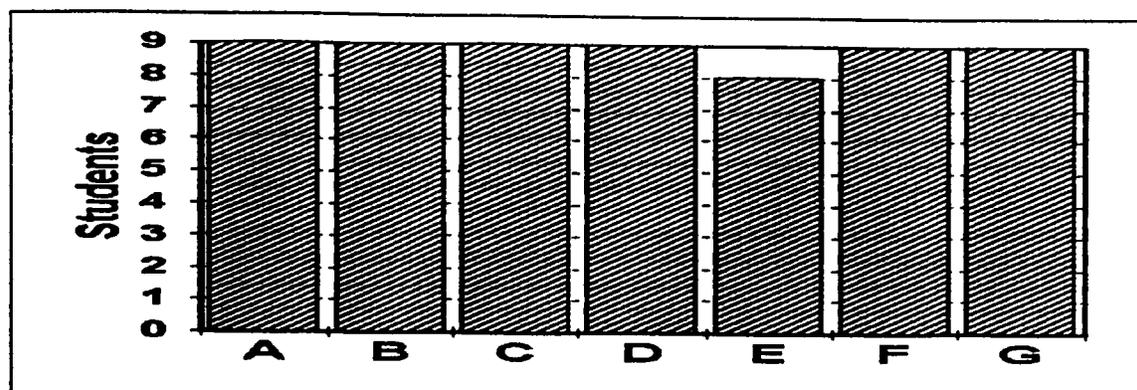


Figure 15: Teachers' profile IV: : Teachers' description (as perceived by the students)

Legend: A: very fluent in the L2, B: always speaks the L2 in class, C: gives all the instructions in the L2, D: do not/rarely translates in English, E: never/very rarely invites L2 guests, F: positive attitude toward the L2 culture and language, G: "good teacher", gets along very well, helpful, encouraging.

All students agreed, as they were describing their former teachers, that they were very fluent in the L2, that they always used the L2 when interacting with them, that they always gave all class instructions in the L2, that they did not translate (or very rarely translated) into English, and that they showed a positive attitude toward the L2 and its culture. They all qualified their teachers as "good teachers", pointing out that they could get along with them very well, that they were helpful and encouraging. They also all mentioned that they never or very rarely had L2 guests invited into their classrooms (see figure 15: 39)

## CHAPTER V : DISCUSSION

### A: Fluent Students' Profile

#### **Social Environment**

All the students studied in a L2 environment in school for a period of at least nine years. Although some students had the opportunity to practice the L2 a little (mostly at the beginning of their learning) with family members, the home environment did not help them directly to become fluent in the L2, as none of the students had frequent and/or regular opportunities to speak and practice the L2 at home with their parents or family members. However, they all indirectly received help, as their parents showed mental and emotional support for them in their study of the language.

In the present research, parents enrolled their children in the French immersion program, because they thought it would be for their immediate (as a challenge) or future (instrumental) benefit. Students, in their interviews, declared that their parents thought that it would be good for them to be "bilingual", as Canada is politically a bilingual country, that it's for the best interest of their children to learn French, that (in two cases) it would be a real challenge

for their gifted child who was bored at school.

Parents' attitude toward the L2 and the second culture (in this case, French) certainly had a positive impact on their children's learning and attitude. The political issue and the feelings engendered by the situation between French and English Canada (in this research) is bound to have had an impact on the atmosphere in the homes, and thus on the parents' and children's attitudes.

When the students started their French immersion program, French language status as a second language in Canada was near its peak. It was, at that time, required by all federal institutions to recognize French officially and legally as one of the Canada's two official languages. This entailed a large movement within each province, Alberta included, which resulted in governmental, provincial, and individual undertakings. One of them was a greater promotion of the French immersion program in schools, in which many anglophone parents foresaw a social and political advantage for their children, envisioning their future within a bilingual setting.

In the present study, as the selected sample came from a largely anglophone environment, one could assume that the low percentage of students staying and succeeding in the French immersion program may also be explained in part by the present political and economical situation, which sees some promoting the reduction in the number and cost of these bilingual programs.

Other issues, such as religion, ethics, or trades, could have affected in the same way the parental and student attitude toward learning a specific L2.

### **Personality profile**

All these students mentioned that, for them, schooling was very important in their lives, and that they were interested in all subjects they were taking at school. They all were serious and studious, they wanted to do well at school and get good marks; they wanted to be successful in their lives. In addition, these students were high risktakers: they were willing to risk and try to express their thoughts in the way it came to them, spontaneously. The meaning of the communication was more important than the way to express it.

Furthermore, they showed a high level of classroom sociability. All interviewed students spoke with warm and enthusiastic feelings about their association with their French immersion classmates. Although they felt, at times, they were discriminated against as a minority group in their schools by the students in English-language classrooms, they still found happiness, comfort, and satisfaction within their own group where friendship, closeness, and unity were part of their daily lives.

It is interesting to note that the negative feelings about being different were largely compensated for by the positive impact of good relationships within the group, which

helped them to withstand and overcome the pressure from outside. Each student felt that this solid friendship had been an important factor in the process of learning the L2. All students stated that they really enjoyed interacting in class in the L2; they didn't feel (or, if so, very infrequently felt) any discomfort when speaking the L2 in the classroom with their teachers and their classmates.

We should take note here that this lack of discomfort did not extend to the out-of-school environment, as they all expressed feelings of embarrassment and shyness in front of native L2 speakers or in an unknown native L2 environment.

They also all voiced their joy and great satisfaction at being and participating in their L2 classes. These findings corroborate the findings of a research study conducted by Christopher Ely, in 1986. At that time, he designed a causal model for his L2 learning investigation. In addition to his three situation-specific constructs (language class discomfort, language class risktaking, and language class sociability), he quoted some other variables in which the students' personality were involved, such as strength of motivation, concern for grades, attitude, aptitude, and classroom participation. In his research, Ely found language class discomfort to be a "significant negative predictor of both language class risktaking and language class sociability, and that language class risktaking was a significant predictor of classroom participation" (p.20).

We also should keep in mind that these results pertained to the classroom environment. It is interesting to underline that the variables mentioned in the classroom research can be recognized outside the classroom, and work in the same way. There, language discomfort affects and has a negative effect on participation, risktaking and sociability. However, one can predict that language discomfort would be a short-term problem, as the students would become aware of the level of their oral performance and thus would adapt to new, real-life situations.

### **Learning process**

They all stated that learning the L2 had not been a hardship. In fact, most of them mentioned that it came naturally, that they did not have to study the language at home, that the language was mostly picked up and learned in class, and that they generally only practiced at school. All students (except those who had to catch up on one or two years of French, as they started the French immersion program later) thought very sincerely that learning French had been an easy and effortless task. They agreed on the feeling that "it's easier to learn a L2 when you are young because you don't even realize that you are doing it. It comes so naturally and gradually". One student mentioned that she tried to learn a third language (Spanish), but she remarked that she gave up because it was too difficult "at her age". Almost all students

made an intuitive connection between learning easily and the age when the learning started.

All students reported that they remembered, in their early grades, memorizing a lot in the L2: poems, songs, stories, and texts. The majority of them thought that the following activities helped them the most to become fluent: reading a lot silently or aloud; working on projects, written assignments, and essays; the fact they had been immersed in the L2 while at school; and finally oral practice when speaking in class (oral exercises, debates and discussions, communication with the teachers).

It seems obvious that the L2 fluency was acquired by not necessarily studying the language itself but by using it to accomplish several other tasks, to communicate and to express feelings and points of view. Notwithstanding students' apparent satisfaction with their oral fluency, one must note here, however, that related research does indicate students need to be challenged by integrated corrective activities and exchange experiences, for example, to get beyond their well-documented immersion interlanguage (Pellerin and Hammerly, 1986; Lister, 1987; Bibeau, 1991).

When asked if they always spoke the L2 in the classroom, all students admitted that, when they had a very personal and private conversation with a classmate, they chose to do it in their native language, except cases where they did not want anglophone students who did not know the L2 to understand what

they were saying. The lack of discomfort when speaking the L2 confirmed by all the students is probably not so absolute if we consider the fact, or simply reflect that, when it really mattered, students generally chose the quickest and easiest mode of expression: their native language.

### **Motivation to learn the L2**

They all stated that the L2 (French) is a useful language for Canadians, especially for a future career at high governmental and administrative levels. It was the parents' decision to make them learn the L2 when they were in their early grades. They were bright students, not interested in the usual routine of the regular classroom and they needed some challenge in their lives. If these students, later, continued to study the L2, they declared that, once the language was learned, it was worth it to keep it for future use and that it would be a waste to lose it. They all mentioned that they really enjoyed speaking the L2.

They all declared, as another reason to continue to learn the language, that they experienced great friendship and a good group spirit in their L2 classes. Some students stayed together in the same L2 classes from nine to 12 years. It appears that the students' social bonds had a great impact on their motivation to continue to learn the language. This is, however, a very specific situation in which, because of the small number of students enrolled in this French immersion

program, all students knew each other for a long period of time and, more or less, they had become good friends. This is probably one optimum social and affective condition for learning the L2.

Nevertheless, in a normal situation in which this optimum condition of friendship does not exist, some bonds could be initiated by the teacher as he organizes and creates a proper physical and emotional environment that would contribute to high sociability, and thus to high risktaking and low discomfort when the student speaks the L2. Activities and games to know each other better, many opportunities given to the students to work together and help each other in a learning situation, allowing discussions on subjects where the students can express their own feelings and points of view are always welcome and well appreciated by the students in their learning process. As they build relationships with their classmates, their rate of sociability increases considerably, allowing then more risktaking and lower discomfort in the classroom environment.

In conclusion, for students to become fluent in a L2 seemed to require a certain number of years (about seven years) as, in this study, all students expressed the feeling that they started to feel comfortable in speaking the L2 at least at the beginning of high school. The learning took place in a L2 immersion program. Parents showed concern and moral support for their children during the learning process. All

students were "good" students: serious, hard-workers, committed, academically oriented, ambitious for their future, highly and intrinsically motivated, and successful. They experienced satisfaction, as they enjoyed learning the L2. If memorizing seemed to have been essential at the beginning of the learning process, it had given way to other more fruitful activities in four main domains: reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

If it was the parents' choice in the beginning for their children to learn the L2, the students accepted very positively the decision because it was, on the whole, a positive and enjoyable experience for them both individually and as a group. As they foresaw the potential use of the L2 in the future, they kept on learning it even without their parents' pressure to do so.

Some students also mentioned that they kept on learning the language because it would be a waste to lose what they had acquired over so many years.

#### B. Teachers' Profile.

All students mentioned that their teachers were very fluent in the L2, that they always spoke the L2 in class including when they were giving instructions. They usually did not translate into English but rather they would give an explanation of the word or the concept in the L2, and would use English only as the last resort. They also showed a

positive and often enthusiastic attitude toward the L2 culture and language. They were perceived by their students as "good teachers" who were able to get along very well with them. Students were of the unanimous opinion that they had capable teachers.

They all appreciated, respected, and valued their teachers. With few exceptions, they had positive feelings and good memories about their relations with their teachers. It appears that they have experienced special bonds with these French teachers, different from the ones they had with their English teachers. They explained that this happened because their French teachers were at the same time their "homeroom teachers" and their main teachers for several subjects. As they would see each other very often, they had more opportunities to know them and thus be closer to them.

Students also stated that their teachers were helpful and encouraging. It appears that these fluent students generally felt an active and positive support from their teachers, more than they ever felt from their English teachers (see above).

However, when they were asked how their French teachers motivated them in learning the L2, all students agreed that it was not so much by their teachers' efforts as by their self-motivation that they learned and did well in the L2. More than half of the students said that they did not know how their teachers motivated them or that they felt that their teachers did not do much to motivate them. In this study, it appears

that the majority of the students did not recognize the teachers' ability and actions to motivate them in learning the L2. Nevertheless, these teachers were unanimously qualified as "good teachers" by these students. Could a "good teacher" teach his students without wanting them to maximize their learning? In the researcher's opinion, these teachers did motivate the students in so very discreet and skillful a manner that the students had the impression they were in charge and in control of their own learning, which is a positive reflection on the teachers.

All the students said that their teachers provided them instructions and opportunities to learn the language in the four following areas: reading (silently, aloud), written assignments (vocabulary, grammar, essays, reports), memorization (poems and songs in early grades), and discussions/debates. Four students mentioned "speaking a lot", role-plays, and games. It seemed that oral fluency had been acquired by the conscious practice of the three skills: reading, writing, and speaking, as well as the fourth skill: listening, which is only implied by the classroom situation and what, by its nature, went on in teacher-student interactions in French immersion classrooms.

Students did not recollect being formally tested on oral fluency. They asserted that they practically were never tested on oral fluency and that they did not receive any formal instruction in L2 pronunciation. Here, again, could "good

teachers" not be concerned by the way their students were speaking the L2? If they do not remember formally being taught on pronunciation and tested on oral fluency, modeling and training in these areas must have been done informally, here and there, when needed. On the other hand, perhaps more corrective activities have been integrated in a natural way in the on-going communicative context of the immersion classroom (Lister, 1989, 1990; Harley, 1989).

It was established also that all the students had to use the L2 for communication right from the beginning, and very soon they were able to use the L2 in creative expression. If vocabulary and grammar were formally taught in order to provide the students with adequate tools to use the language orally and in writing, it seems logical to suppose that the teachers were also concerned by the way words were pronounced, their flow of words as well as the intonation used in different situations. In fact, few students mentioned that they learned by imitating the teacher and by being corrected when speaking, reading aloud, or learning new words. The explanation for this non-recognition of the work done in these areas is perhaps that the teachers taught their students in a very casual and informal way. It is also certain that those teachers who were very fluent in the L2 generated correct, efficient and active models for their students.

### C. Conclusion:

Positive, self-motivated students (who were in the majority high risktakers, sociable classmates, and willing participants), positive and enjoyable student experiences, positive and supportive parents' and teachers' attitudes, L2-proficient teachers, and a varied L2 immersion learning environment summarize the main factors that have contributed to oral fluency.

If we consider the main assumptions advanced before the undertaking of the research (p.3), and the proposed list of techniques promoting fluency in the L2 (pages 15-16), we can see that only a small number of items were not part of the students' experiences in this study. They never used a language laboratory and never went for "a year abroad", though one student mentioned visiting his French-speaking relatives in Ottawa about four times a year for short periods of time. All the other listed items have been experienced in the classroom.

The item not explicitly included in this list and on which some light was shed by this study was: the impact of the parents on their children while they were starting to learn the L2. We had anticipated that the L2 learning would be influenced by the students' background, looked at as a general concept, without identifying the particular role of the parents. In the present research, all students were placed by their parents in the French immersion program, and as the

students grew older, then it became their own choice to stay in or opt out of the program. This study made us more aware of the attitude and the impact of the students' parents, which resulting climate positively influenced the promotion and the learning of the L2.

R.C.Gardner began in the late fifties and continued into recent years a series of research studies on motivation in L2 learning. With his associate W. Lambert, he determined that aptitude and intelligence formed a single factor in learning the L2, and that this factor was independent of a second one made up of motivation, type of orientation toward language learning, and social attitudes toward the L2 group.

They defined two kinds of orientation: instrumental orientation (when the purposes of language study reflect an utilitarian value of linguistic achievement), and integrative orientation (when the learning is more oriented toward the other cultural community because of interest or wish to be accepted in that other group) (1959).

Later, R.C. Gardner (1960) asked the following question: "Does the integrative motive facilitate achievement or does achievement in the L2 result in the development of an integrative motive?" The results of his study suggested that the integrative orientation served to motivate the individual to acquire the L2. This factor seems important primarily for the development of communication skills. This study also clearly showed that the students' orientation reflects that of

their parents and, in particular, that an integrative orientation is fostered by favorable attitudes on the part of the parents toward the L2 community.

Furthermore, Gardner (1968) distinguished between two potential roles of parents. One is an active role (encouragement, monitoring learning, reinforcing success,...) and the other one is a passive role, involving the parents' attitudes toward the L2 which, when they were positive, would support an integrative motive in the student. According to Gardner's research, the more potent role of the parent is the passive one.

In a subsequent study, Gardner and Lalonde (1985) verified that there are correlations between "indices of L2 achievement and both attitudinal/ motivational characteristics and language aptitude", and that these characteristics are involved in L2 learning and influence the rate of learning.

Our present study confirms Gardner's findings and affirmations, as applied in the Canadian context, though our research also bore out strong student instrumental orientation vis-à-vis the French language.

## CHAPTER VI: APPLICATIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

As the analysis of the results of this research has been completed, some factors and requirements that might help to promote oral fluency can be determined and are now suggested:

1. Students should be self-motivated and show a positive attitude in learning the L2. However, as it has become evident in this study, for very young students, the parents' choice has been the deciding factor. Parents should be involved then. If they show concern, care, and support (even in a passive way) for learning the L2, students at a young age will be willing to make efforts and will have better chances to be successful. Satisfying, positive and enjoyable experiences in the learning process will be the key factors resulting in students continuing their learning of the L2.

2. Teachers should ensure that the setting of the classroom and the class climate allow language risktaking, high sociability among the students, little discomfort in speaking the L2, and positive attitude toward the L2.

Allen and Valette (1977) adapted the results of Gertrude Moskowitz's study and made up a list of outstanding teachers' classroom behaviours and interactions (p. 6-7). The following items give us some ideas on how to improve the class climate as we read about these outstanding teachers and their

classrooms: "the climate is warm and accepting; the teachers often smile, praise, and joke; there is more laughter in their classes; the teachers personalize the content; student behaviour is very seldom criticized; students speak to the teachers before and after class; the teachers exhibit patience; when correcting student errors, the teachers do so gently."

As an example for the setting of the classroom, it is more advantageous to have the students seated in a circle or in groups of four or six, in order to promote oral communication and team work. In this kind of setting, students have more opportunities to speak and practice as a whole class or in groups, supervised by a teacher who is able to move quickly around the classroom for assistance and help.

3. Teachers should be very fluent and proficient in the L2. They will be a positive role model for their students to look up to.

4. Teachers should be positive and demonstrate a positive attitude toward the L2 and culture.

5. Teachers should act in a supportive and encouraging manner toward their students, showing their concern and genuine interest in their students' learning.

6. L2 teaching should be done not necessarily in a formal way. As the researcher noticed that the high school in which this study took place could not offer any fluent student who reached the third level of fluency (Bartz and Schulz scale)

from their core French program, she drew the conclusion that a complete immersion setting (as it is scheduled in the French immersion program), in which all interactions and learnings are performed in the L2, will ensure a better and higher level of language fluency.

Core French classes presently tend toward an immersion-like approach but the teaching/ learning hours as well as the communicative and experiential occurrences exemplified in the French immersion program are considerably reduced in this setting. This could be a possible explanation for the lack of fluent students in the core program at the time this study was undertaken.

7. Teachers should emphasize their teaching in five areas: a. listening activities: some in formal settings (structured exercises), but mostly in very informal situations (oral interactions during class), b. reading (silently and aloud), c. written assignments (vocabulary, grammar, essays, reports), d. memorization (poems, songs, texts), and e. discussions and debates (with a particular emphasis overall on group and cooperative learning processes and strategies).

8. New strategies and approaches are presently developed and introduced in schools such as experiential learning, cooperative learning, and communicative approach, in order to motivate the students, as they are given the possibility to personalize and share their own learning. These new techniques maximize the students' opportunity to actively learn in a

climate and environment which provide a stronger motivation to learn the 2L. The language teachers' classrooms will offer, as means of learning, dialogs and songs, conversation opportunities with classmates by pairs or small groups, role-plays, discussion activities, etc..., based on and building upon the students' knowledge, experience, feelings, interests, and needs to function within their social environment, using a wide variety of authentic material, in order to promote meaningful communication and discussion. In this manner, the language learner will rapidly develop the necessary skills allowing him to actively participate in his classroom environment.

## CHAPTER VII: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

### A. Strength of this study:

As the present study involved a small number of participants (nine students), the researcher thought that the semi-structured interview would be the most suitable approach, as it allowed her to proceed to a deeper analysis of each subject, to follow leads, to obtain greater clarity in the answers, and more precise details. As Borg and Gall (1983) affirmed, by providing a combination of objectivity and depth, this method allowed her to gather valuable data. By pretesting the interview guide which was designed for this specific study, she was able to use it with confidence and assurance that its design fitted the purpose of this study. The recording was a tremendous help when summarizing the data. To ensure that the collected and summarized data were not biased from the researcher's point of view, all students were invited to read carefully their individual summary and to add any written comments when they wanted to clarify a point or to correct any information.

### B. Weaknesses and limitations of the research:

The participants in this research represented a small sample group. They were chosen because they were at that time the only group of students in Lethbridge from grade 12 who

could qualify for at least an average level 3 in L2 oral fluency (Bartz and Schulz scale).

In the same establishment, not one student from the core French program demonstrated the minimum level (level 3) of oral fluency required to participate in this study. As we said earlier, the restricted amount of time and less communicative-experiential situations in class could have been the main reason for the lack of fluent students from core French able to qualify for this study.

Presently, this situation might be changing as more communicative-experiential orientations and practices are introduced in core French settings. In addition, a level 3 in oral fluency is a fairly high level for high school students whose needs are not so demanding in speaking the L2 in their classroom in which they spend only a few hours a week.

This present research showed how the student personally perceived the way he achieved a high performance in oral fluency. This involved a memory factor, and one could perhaps question the accurateness and the amount of what has been remembered, as well as the influence or the effect of feelings and emotions toward the program and the teachers. Also, because of the great difficulty in contacting the wide range of teachers who, over a 13-year period, taught the subjects of this study, these teachers have not been contacted to collaborate in the study. Another separate study might return to the question we have explored here, but from teachers'

perspectives.

C. Follow-up:

This research could be followed up by other studies that might supply more detailed information and provide a more complete picture of the process of acquiring oral fluency in a L2. Here are some suggestions:

1. Several hundred students have been going through the same French immersion program. In this particular study, few of them have been successful and went through the whole program. Many of them did not reach grade 12 in the same program. What is the local retention rate? How might attrition be explained? Some studies already have given some answers (i.e. the desire to get good marks in the L1 in order to get higher marks for university scholarships; the restricted choice of courses offered in the L2; the desire to leave the same group of students who have been together for up to 13 years). What could have made the difference between the group of achievers and the other group? Aptitude in the L2? Attitude toward the L2? Motivation to learn and continue to learn the L2? The quality of support from parents?

2. In this study, the students' aptitude has not been considered. It could have been interesting to determine, in this precise case, the importance of its role in students becoming fluent L2 speakers.

3. In the high school in which the study took place,

fluent students in the core French program were non-existent. Why? How important is the factor of time in learning and becoming fluent in the L2? How long (how many hours) and how often should the students learn and practice the L2 in order to perform at the level 3 of oral fluency, as defined by Bartz and Schulz as "some unnatural pauses, occasionally halting, and fragmentary delivery"?

4. As a new approach is being introduced in core French programs today in which oral communication is emphasized, it would be interesting to compare the students' level of oral fluency from the French immersion program and the core French program, and verify if there are any changes among the students from both programs in a few years' time.

5. Similarly, one could research the new core French program potential: does this new program (in which a strong emphasis is put on oral communication) allow students to achieve the third level of oral fluency (Bartz and Schulz scale) like students who are working in a complete immersion setting?

6. Another way to study the problem of oral fluency would be to contact the available teachers of these participating fluent students and let them express their point of view on how they helped their students to become orally fluent.

7. Finally, another question could be explored and shed some light on the process of oral fluency: does the testing of oral fluency acquired through schooling motivate students to

achieve better performance? Does the testing in oral fluency motivate the teacher to ensure a minimum of achievement from the students in this area? What role do integrated corrective activities play in enhancing oral fluency?

### **Conclusion**

As the years go by, we are witnessing tremendous efforts being made in education to improve the quality of teaching, and in this case, the quality of teaching a L2. As the world opens its doors, we are more and more in contact with other languages and have more opportunities to communicate with people speaking a wide variety of languages. It is imperative, if we want to keep up with our modern era and its new trends in opening frontiers, and thus multiplying exchanges and relations, that we improve and polish our methods of learning a second, if not a third or a fourth language. We must find ways, structures or means that are the most efficient with a minimum of time, efforts, and cost. Research in this domain will certainly offer answers and solutions as we will be able to determine our weaknesses and strengths, and make gradual improvements on the basis of our new professional knowledge base.

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## Appendix A: NOTE FOR THE TEACHERS

### FLUENCY IN SECOND LANGUAGE (L2)

Study conducted by Marguerite Ascione

The purpose of this study is to discover the best conditions and factors that maximize oral fluency in a second language. Data will be collected from selected fluent students who will be interviewed individually.

For the purpose of this study, fluency in a second language will be defined in Bartz and Shutz's terms, quoted by Linder (1986) in "Oral Communication Testing: A Handbook for the Foreign Language Teacher". He says: " Fluency does not refer to absolute speed of delivery, since native speakers of any language often show wide variations in this area. Fluency refers to overall smoothness, continuity, and naturalness of the student's speech, as opposed to pauses for rephrasing sentences, groping for words, and so forth".

A six-point scale will be used to evaluate the students' oral fluency. Each level is described as follows:

Level 1: Very many unnatural pauses, very halting, and fragmentary delivery.

Level 2: Quite a few unnatural pauses, occasionally halting, and fragmentary delivery.

Level 3: Some unnatural pauses, occasionally halting, and fragmentary delivery.

Level 4: Hardly any unnatural pauses, fairly smooth and effortless delivery.

Level 5: No unnatural pauses, almost effortless and smooth, but still perceptibly nonnative.

Level 6: As effortless and smooth as speech of native speaker.

The students to be selected for this study should at least reach level 3.

## Appendix B: PARENT CONSENT LETTER

Dear Parent:

I am a University of Lethbridge student conducting a study entitled "Fluency Development in Second Language Teaching". The purpose of this study is to discover the best conditions and factors that maximize oral fluency in a second language by interviewing some fluent students. I would like your permission to have your child participate in this study.

As part of this research, your child will be asked to answer questions in relation to: 1. time spent in learning the second language, 2. methods and material used in teaching the second language, 3. his/her teachers, and 4. himself/herself (background, aptitude, motivation, and interest to learn the second language, opportunities to practice). Please note that all information will be handled in a confidential and professional manner. When responses are released, they will be reported in summary form only. Further, all names, locations, and any other identifying information will not be included in any discussion of the results. You also have the right to withdraw your child from the study without prejudice at any time.

If you choose to do so, please indicate your willingness to allow your child to participate by signing this letter in the space provided below, and return the letter to the school with your child.

I very much appreciate your assistance in this study. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at my home at 752-4273 (evenings only), my Faculty supervisor, Professor Peter Heffernan (329-2446), or Doctor Nancy Grigg, Chairperson, Human Subjects Research Committee, Faculty of Education, U. of L., (329-2459).

Yours sincerely,

Marguerite E. Ascione  
University of Lethbridge

Please detach and forward the signed portion.



Fluency Development in Second Language Teaching

I agree to allow my child, .....,  
to participate in this study.

.....  
name

.....  
signature

.....  
date



## Appendix D: INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Presentation of the interviewer, purpose of the study, permission to record.

My name is M. Ascione. I am presently a student at the University of Lethbridge, finishing a masters degree in Education. I have taught for nine years in French Polynesia (Polynesians speak French as a second language). I also have been substitute teaching for three years in Lethbridge and Raymond (Alberta). When I came to Canada, it was very difficult for me to learn the English language, thus I became interested in knowing what makes and how people become fluent in a second language. The purpose of this study is to discover the best conditions and factors that maximize oral fluency, by interviewing some fluent students.

Because it is difficult and very impractical to take notes as we talk, I would like to record this interview. I assure you that everything that is said will be kept strictly in confidence.

2. Breaking the ice

- Name, age of the interviewee, family situation,...
- Ask: Could you briefly describe yourself ?
  - What do you do at school (programs and activities)?
  - What are some of your hobbies?
  - What are your projects for the future?

3. Focus on the subject

- How many years have you been learning French?
- Have you been in French immersion?
- Why did you decide to learn French? or why did your parents enroll you in French? Why do you still learn French?
- What is your family background? Do you speak another language than English at home?

You know that you have been selected to participate in this study because you are considered to be fluent in French (if necessary, explain to the student the concept of fluency).

- Do you consider yourself as a fluent speaker? Why?
- When did you become fluent?
- How did you become fluent?

Check questions: Was it difficult?

How much did you have to study?

When were you able to speak French?

When were you able to listen to French?

What kind of things did you do at school to learn and practice French? (if no recall, use the following suggestions: memorizing poems or texts, singing, reading aloud, silent reading, oral and written exercises, role-plays,...)

Did you have some extra-curricular

activities?

- How would you describe your feelings and attitude in your French classroom?

Check questions, from Ely:

**A. Language class risktaking:**

\* Do you like to wait until you know exactly how to use a French word before using it?

\* Do you like trying out a difficult sentence in class? What happens if you don't find the exact word or phrase? What do you do?

\* At this point, do you like trying to express complicated ideas in French in class?

\* Do you prefer to say what you want in French without worrying about the small details of grammar?

\* In class, do you prefer to say a sentence to yourself before you say it aloud?

\* Do you prefer to follow basic sentence models rather than risk misusing the language?

**B. Language class sociability:**

\* Do you like more class activities where the students use French to get to know each other better?

\* Do you think learning French in a group is more fun than if you had your own tutor?

\* Do you enjoy talking with the teacher and other students in French?

\* Do you really enjoy interacting with the other students in the French class?

\* Do you think it's important to have a strong group spirit in the language classroom?

**C. Language class discomfort:**

\* Do you feel very relaxed when you speak French in class?

\* Based on your class experience so far, do you think that one barrier to your future use of French is your discomfort when speaking?

\* At times, do you feel somewhat embarrassed in class when you are trying to speak?

\* Do you think you are less self-conscious about actively participating in French class than most of the other students?

\* Do you sometimes feel awkward speaking French?

**D. Attitude toward the language class:**

\* Do you find French class to be very boring?

\* Would you say that you are usually very interested in what is done in French class?

\* Do you really like the French class?

\* In general, do you enjoy the French class?

We are now going to talk about your French teachers,  
- How did they interact with you when teaching French? What kind of rapport did you have with them?

- What kind of things did you do regularly in class?
- What exercise or practice helped you to become or stay fluent?

Check questions:

- Were you ever tested on oral fluency?
- How did you learn French pronunciation?
- How did you learn vocabulary words?
- How did you learn grammar rules?
- When were you allowed to use French creatively (freely, without any fixed format) or for communication (give and receive information)?

- For most of your teachers:

- How fluent were they when speaking French?
- How often did they speak French in class?
- How did they give their instructions?
- Did they translate for you?
- Did you have French guests?
- What was their attitude toward the French language and the French culture?
- How did they motivate you to do well?

- Do you have something to add that you think might help me better understand the process of becoming fluent in a foreign language?

- What do you think was/were the most beneficial thing(s) that helped you to become fluent in French?

Closing of the interview

- Thanks for the time spent
- Remind that everything will be kept in confidence.
- Remind that they will be asked to approve the transcript.

## Appendix E: Students Summary Interviews

### Student 1

#### 1. Family situation and background

Family of 4 - Parents were both born in Canada - Grandparents were Hungarian and learned English as a second language - Father speaks some French, he went to Paris for a couple of years - My parents do not speak a second language at home - My father helped me with my French when I started the French immersion program.

#### 2. Student's general traits of personality

Loves music (plays piano and viola) - Hopes to be a musician in an orchestra or as a soloist - Loves sports - Takes school seriously (tries to do well) -

#### 3. Years of learning

Started French immersion in grade 2 (11 years)

#### 4. Motivation to learn the language

I was bored in grade one (English), it was a challenge to start French in grade 2, I had to catch up and this kept me more interested.

Now, I think it is useful and important as we are living in a bilingual country, and if you go travelling. For music too, it's useful. It is interesting too, I like languages, I wish I would have learned another language.

#### 5. Own evaluation of fluency

I don't know exactly. I think my French is efficient enough to say what I want to say. I would say I am proficient but not fluent. I think I would say I am fluent in French when I will be able to speak as comfortably as I do in English, it is not the case right now. I do not think it is possible to learn a second language at school to the point to be fluent.

#### 6. When the student became fluent

-no time given as the student thinks that fluency is not attained yet-

It was really tough at the beginning because I had to catch up on two years of French, I was frustrated, but after the first year I did not find it difficult at all. There was no problem. Not much, we picked it up in class with the assignments we had.

I mostly practiced at school.

Opportunities to speak French: tour in Europe, listening and asking questions to a guest speaker from Paris, once in a while I watched the French TV channel (hockey).

#### 8. How French was learned

In class.

A lot of translating, that was very useful (say a word in English and give the translation) - flashcards - memorize stories of Luc and Martine - a lot of songs in the early grades - a lot of reading aloud, that was useful too.

9. Second language extra-curricular activities

Participation in Génies en Herbe for a while - We tried to start a French club but it didn't last long \_ That's what I remember.

10. Specific aspects of student's personality

Ely's questions (see interview guide)

Risktaking:

I don't like to try a word without knowing how to use it, I would say things in a simpler way until I know how to use a "big" word.

It depends, Yes I guess so, I don't mind as long as I can say what I am trying to say.

I go back and say things in another way or I would say the word in English (with somebody knowing English). It happens all the time.

Yes, that's the whole point, I enjoy doing things like that.

No, I think it has to be right, and a lot of people don't worry about that. We have been taught more to speak than to speak right (to get used to it, to not be afraid, but after they should correct themselves. This is useful in the learning stages, but after a certain point, you have to take it upon yourself to clean up your grammar). It is a kind of pride to learn the language well.

Yes, in French I do.

Yes, unless I am really comfortable with what I am saying.

Sociability:

Yes, in fact there is very little French spoken in a French class, most of the time we spoke English to each other. Most of the French spoken in class is done with the teacher.

Yes.

Yes, when we do interact in French, but it's difficult (example of humor in French).

That's extremely important. We were really a group (the French group in the school), we always had to stay together, we were in all the classes, we got to know each other really well. We really kept each other going.

It was a little bit of a problem, especially in junior high: all your friends are inside the classroom and none outside, you get alienated, but once you get to high school or college, there is no problem. Your mates help you going because they are in the same situation.

Discomfort:

I don't have a problem.

No, the problem in fact is to find a situation to use French. Very rarely, because I really try to know what I am saying before I say it, I worry a lot about that, so it doesn't happen very often. Usually I am able to express what I want to express without halting or say something using the wrong word. Probably yes, but there are a lot of factors involved. For some people it's not the French but the interest or the subject.

Sometimes, in front of people that speak French, I feel

gauche. In my class, no, we are all in the same boat. It depends on the teacher, it makes all the difference, especially in the early years, it's hard as it is and if the teacher makes it exciting, it's better.

Yes.

Yes with some restrictions. I wonder about maths and science in French in junior high. In my head, I was doing everything in English (like numbers), I do not know how useful that was. It would have been much easier to learn if it would have been in English. The problem is that you cannot get the students to speak French between themselves.

Yes, the French class was great.

11. Teachers

Teachers were really good to get along with students, and that was important. I remember liking them a lot, all my teachers in general. At the beginning, we did a lot more listening than talking to them. They did a lot of correcting, and that's important.

Playing games and I enjoyed them.

No memorizing.

A lot of vocabulary things.

I don't remember.

We never really were tested on oral fluency, but I remember being always encouraged to speak and write.

The teachers made always sure that we pronounced words correctly, they said words for us, there was some stress on saying things correctly. I don't know how they did it... I remember we had to tell in front of the class what we did during the week-end in French, and they would help us to find the words, and they would correct us.

Vocabulary words: writing them down, learn their definition. We had stories, a lot, and then we had to learn the vocabulary that goes with them. A lot of exercises, quizzes. Whenever we studied literature, the teacher would have us take turns reading the text out loud.

Grammar rules: we did a lot of grammar, we had specific instruction, we used a lot the textbook, but it didn't interest a lot of people, we aren't very great in grammar, I don't know why.

Creative use of French: related to personal experience (example of telling about the week-end), projects, plays (skits), and presentations in front of the class especially in junior and senior high school.

Use for communications: directions, explanations always given in French.

All teachers were very fluent in French.

They spoke French all the time.

No translation except once in a while for a word.

No French guests.

Really enthusiastic about French culture and language, especially the early ones.

Motivation:

I do not know. You've got to make it exciting and fun for the students. In early grades, reward (stars) and it worked to a certain extent.

Finding opportunities to speak French would help me to better speak it, you do not need or use it here. We should have to speak French to get along with people (like in Quebec or France).

Transcription read, approved, and signed by the student.

## Student 2

### 1. Family situation and background

I live with my mom and my brother. My dad lives in Montreal, he is fluent in French. My mom speaks some French. My little brother goes to St-Mary's (French immersion).

My family in Ottawa speaks French, I go and see them approximately four times a year.

Mother: English. Father: French. In Lethbridge, we mainly speak English at home.

### 2. Student's general traits of personality

I am active and independent. I like sports. School is important to me but I like to have time with my friends. I am trying to get a job this summer and go to France next year to study French.

Hobbies: sports, reading, travelling.

Projects for the future: go to university. I am interested in a basic English degree (journalism), in fine arts (advertisement, in English).

I want to acquire a good basis in French so I don't forget it, to be able to communicate with my family.

### 3. Years of learning

since kindergarten, so 13 years.

In French immersion.

I was born in Ottawa, and my family spoke French, so I had some basic French before entering kindergarten.

### 4. Motivation to learn the language

Parents: because my family was speaking French, and because they thought it was good for me.

Own motivation: I enjoy it, it's useful to me, it's good to know French in Canada. Great friendship in our class (we have been together for so long, we always have friends to fall back on), because I have gone so far now and I use it.

### 5. Own evaluation of fluency

I consider myself fluent in French (except slang), but I can express what I want to say.

### 6. When the student became fluent

At the end of last year (grade 11), I felt comfortable in reading and writing. My teacher (grade 12) has a lot to do with that, he is a great teacher. I think it is fairly recent although I could speak and write before that.

### 7. How the student became fluent

Little by little, over all these years that I have been learning French.

It was not difficult to learn the language, I wanted to learn it, I applied myself to do it.

I didn't study much for French itself, except for grammar. I did some reading at home.

### 8. How French was learned

During class time and with my family, when I write to them or

see them.

French was handy when you did not want somebody around to know what is said.

Pretty early I was able to listen and understand French (at 6), to my dad, very seldom to the radio, to the TV (not too often), to popular French songs (grade 6).

Memorizing songs and poems, reading aloud, silent reading.

9. Second language extra-curricular activities

Few movies (ACFA).

Last March, I went to Ottawa for a week ("Forum for young Canadians", an activity organized by the government). I found an extremely good advantage to be bilingual, I could take notes in both languages, I didn't have to rely on translations. I could make friends more easily.

Some projects outside the class (video camera, skits)

2 years participation in "Génies en herbe".

One visit to ACFA. A theatre group from Quebec came in once this year.

10. Specific aspects of student's personality

The fact that we belong to a group in which everybody knows each other very well allows more comfort and less pressure to speak French.

Ely's questions (see interview guide)

Risktaking:

It depends. In class, yes I usually ask how to use a word before using it.

Yes.

I ask "comment est-ce qu'on dit... (word in English)...?", it interrupts me but does not prevent me to express my thought.

Yes, you have to, when you write essays, arguments,...

Yes, I don't worry about the small details of grammar, the meaning is more important.

No.

No.

That's fine. We stay in English when we get to things that are personal.

Yes, it's more to study in group.

Yes, I really enjoy talking French to my teacher because he doesn't correct you to the point he turns you off about French, he encourages you. And with my friends, it's the same thing. It's positive.

Yes I enjoy interacting with the other students in French.

We have a strong feeling that we are all friends, that we know each other in our group.

We are a really good group, we get along really well and we have great discussion because we know each other point of view.

Yes, most of the time I feel relax.

Yes, possibly because of my accent, so I feel a little shy. In speaking, I would use simpler and shorter sentences, but that would be for a first little while.

Sure, when something slips out, but it is the same in English.

Very seldom.

Yes, I think I am less self-conscious than the others.

Sure, sometimes I feel awkward when I speak French in class.

No, I like French classes, like literature. Grammar is a little tedious.

It's a really good class because of the people, we can interact with each other.

Yes.

#### 11. Teachers

I did not have a real problem with any of the French teachers.

The teachers I enjoyed and felt more comfortable were Mrs O. (grade 1), Mrs G. (grade 2), Mr. D. and Mr. M.

To improve my French presently: I take only a Social Studies class. Discussions, group projects, essays.

Pronunciation: mostly from our teachers, listening to them, being corrected sometimes. I remember some formal instruction (repeating words).

Vocabulary: reading, vocabulary exercises, definitions for tests. I did not memorize, I learned by the meaning.

Grammar rules: memorizing, specific teaching, exercises, going over again and again.

Use of creative French: I remember in grade 6 writing poems.

Communication in French: right away at the beginning.

All my teachers were very fluent.

They spoke French all the time, instructions included.

Translation: they would first explain in another way in French, and then would translate if necessary.

French guests: a few.

Attitude: depends on the teachers. Mr. D. and Mr. M. were very proud of the French and Quebec culture. Not one put it down, they pointed out some biases, they never were negative.

Motivation: I don't know. It comes from myself, I want to do well. I don't want to look stupid in front of the teacher so I do my work. The motivation is personal. Good marks. It's interesting, I enjoy speaking the language, I use it.

No third language learning.

Main thing that helped to become fluent in French: the interest, the desire to do well, my French background, I like it.

Transcription read, approved, and signed by the student.

### Student 3

#### 1. Family situation and background

Brother of 15, in French immersion. Mom and Dad, they don't speak French.

Background: Poland and Czechoslovakia (Mom) and England (Dad). We speak only English at home.

#### 2. Student's general traits of personality

I like school, to be involved in school activities - I like being with my friends - Hobbies: music (piano), reading - Project for the future: go to child psychology, do something with French (not sure what).

#### 3. Years of learning

13 years (since kindergarden), in French immersion.

#### 4. Motivation to learn the language

Parents: they thought and they heard by other people that it was a good program - more chances for the future -

Student: I had no reason to leave the program - I am glad I am in it, I think it's good to have a second language.

#### 5. Own evaluation of fluency

I think I am fluent in French because I can write in French, I understand it, it comes almost as naturally than English.

#### 6. When the student became fluent

I don't know, it seems a so natural process - Probably by grade 5 or 6.

#### 7. How the student became fluent

Just because in class we spoke it and we heard it - everything was in French.

It was never difficult to learn it because we started so young.

We didn't have to really study, we just picked it up.

French practice: by speaking and writing it.

Able to speak French: not much at school other than in the class, we still spoke English to our friends except when we did not want some people to understand what we were saying - We spoke to the teacher (if not, we had some kind of punishment).

Able to listen to French: in the classroom, some TV (not very much).

#### 8. How French was learned

Everything we did in class was in French - memorized poems (grades 1 and 2) - memorized things in high school too - songs - reading aloud (a lot) - silent reading (all the time).

#### 9. Second language extra-curricular activities

French club in junior high (once a week).

#### 10. Specific aspects of student's personality

Same attitude and feelings than in an English class.

Ely's questions (see interview guide)

Risktaking:

Yes, usually.

Yes.

I look into French dictionary (written assignment) - If the person knew English, I would use the English word, but it doesn't happen very often. Usually I find another way to say it.

Yes, without problem.

Yes, my grammar is not great, but I still try to express myself. The meaning is more important than the way to say it.

No, I just say it. Sometimes, I do it, but also even in English. Usually I say it the way it comes.

Sociability:

I don't think it makes a difference.

Yes.

Yes, because it's neat to talk to people in another language, I like it.

Yes.

Yes, everybody in the group has to like to speak French. We have a lot in common in our group, we've grown up all together since kindergarten learning French, we are all happy to know the language.

Discomfort:

Yes, I feel relax most of the time.

I might be a little nervous, because I wouldn't know the other person, and I would worry about my own level of French.

No.

Less self-conscious.

No, I think our French is fairly advanced. Very seldom.

I find grammar boring, but in English too. It's rather the subject that I find boring rather than the language.

It depends according to the subject.

Yes, personally I feel more at home in the French class than in any other classes, because all my friends are there.

Yes, in general I enjoy the French class.

11. Teachers

They were always helpful, I always liked my teachers and I still remember them. They always encouraged us to learn French.

They always spoke French.

Things done regularly in class: a lot of reading, dictées, reading stories, writing stories, games in French - Now: constant reading and writing (essays), discussions and debates.

Never tested on oral fluency.

Pronunciation learned by listening to the teacher, repeating words, being sometimes corrected - no formal lessons.

Vocabulary: writing the words, mostly by reading, some lessons, some definitions of words.

Grammar rules: lessons, exercises.

Use of creative French: since we had projects to write.

Use of French for communication: since the beginning.

All the teachers were very fluent.

They always spoke French.

Instructions given in French, no translation but explanation in French.

Very few French guests.

Attitude: they were from France or from Quebec, they always taught us about the culture.

Motivation from the teachers: Just do well in that class. I wanted to speak well.

What helped the most to learn the language: I started young (you learned better when you start young), it came naturally. I tried to learn Spanish but it's harder than starting young.

Transcription read, approved, and signed by the student.

## Student 4

### 1. Family situation and background

Family of 4. Sister in grade 6. Mother and father.

I am German (from father side) and Canadian (mother).

I speak exclusively English with my mother and sister, with my father I speak German. Neither of my parents are comfortable in French.

### 2. Student's general traits of personality

A little bit more of a loner by nature, I spent quite a bit of time alone. I like to read, I like individual activities. I read a lot so it helped me to increase my vocabulary, to have a better feel of the language.

Projects for the future: In July: going to Europe for 9 months, to improve my German. After: university, don't know what field.

Hobbies: model railroad, hockey, reading in French and English.

### 3. Years of learning

Since kindergarten up to grade 12, except grade 5 spent in Germany. So, 12 years in French immersion.

### 4. Motivation to learn the language

My parents thought it was a good opportunity for me to get a second language, particularly because Canada is a bilingual country.

Camaradery formed in the classroom, friendship developed because we stayed together for such a long time.

I had excellent teachers that were really special.

### 5. Own evaluation of fluency

I consider my ability in French pretty good. I can express my thoughts and feelings, my personal opinions as well I could do in English.

### 6. When the student became fluent

Speaking the language came very soon. It's quite a gradual process but I remember speaking quite well in grade one.

It wasn't difficult, but I consider that I had excellent teachers -sometimes a little bit frustrating.

I studied no more than for the other classes.

### 7. How the student became fluent

Reading library books at home.

Watched some cartoons at school.

French TV (hockey).

Several visits in France (helped a lot).

Participation in "Génies en herbe".

Attend to French debates (last year was the first time, in Calgary).

### 8. How French was learned

I started to listen to and comfortably understand French in high school (hockey on TV, and CBC programs that I really enjoyed).

Grade 6: a teacher used to read to us a novel that we really loved (La porteuse de pain).

Discussions, getting people involved in discussions.

Skits in junior high (we felt comfortable because we knew each other for such a long time. No inhibition to role-play).

Writing assignments.

Memorizing poems and texts.

Singing (not much).

Reading aloud in elementary and junior high school (a lot).

Grammar drills (orally).

Written grammar (a lot), I didn't like it, I don't know if it helped me.

Writing essays, and being corrected.

9. Second language extra-curricular activities

Speech debates.

"Génies en herbe".

10. Specific aspects of student's personality

Attitude: comfort in our group that gave us support - I really enjoy being in my French classes.

Ely's questions (see interview guide):

Risktaking:

Yes, but when I know how to use it, I use it right away.

Yes, sometimes you have to, like in Social Studies.

I'll give a synonym, or something that it's close, or I'll ask the teacher, or look in the dictionary (for written assignments).

Yes, especially during debates.

Now we do not make too many mistakes, but I don't think that anybody worries too much about grammar, and I certainly don't worry.

No, I just say it.

No.

Sociability:

Yes.

Yes, I think so. I never had a tutor myself so I don't know - Fun, joie de vivre, experience when learning with friends.

Yes, definitely. Especially with teachers. I got really good teachers, and I don't fear to speak to my friends (we feel secure, we do not worry about making a mistake).

Yes, especially in debates and literature class. And it's a lot of fun.

For sure, definitely.

Discomfort:

Yes.

No.

There are times, it happens even in English.

Perhaps, but nobody seems really self-conscious.

Sometimes, when we get to make complicated sentences, that's the exception rather than the rule.

Attitude:

Never boring.

Yes.

Yes.

Yes.

#### 11. Teachers

I had a very good rapport with all my teachers, I have been lucky with the teachers I had over the years. They were supporting (it was important at the beginning) and understanding. At higher levels, they started to challenge us and stimulate our interest. I think I have been very fortunate with my teachers.

Basically speaking every day and the reading (poems and stories), the grammar exercises. Everything you do helps: listening, reading, writing, speaking all the time.

Oral fluency: I think we did, certain years, not recently.

Pronunciation: Modeling from teachers that were comfortable with French, songs with the first readers helped. Very little formal teaching.

Vocabulary: Lists of words to learn, give the definition from reading stories, by reading a lot.

Grammar: specific teaching.

Creative French used in high school.

Communication: in grade one for the basics in class.

They were excellent (in fluency).

They spoke French all the time, instructions included.

Not very often they would translate.

Guests: 3 or 4 times a year.

Their attitude: Most have been positive.

Motivation: intense competition between the students in the class, so the teachers never had really to do much.

Nobody wants to stay back.

Very little from the teachers.

Learning French has been an extremely positive experience both for me and everybody else in the class.

Transcription read, approved, and signed by the student.

## Student 5

### 1. Family situation and background

Family of 4 - brother in French immersion - mother and father do not speak French - mostly Ukrainian background - speak English at home.

### 2. Student's general traits of personality

Likes sports (soccer, racketball, ski) - don't mind school - likes maths a lot more than reading and writing - would like to go to university and become an accountant.

### 3. Years of learning

13 years, since kindergarten, in French immersion.

### 4. Motivation to learn the language

Parents: getting a better job, to work for the government, it's a great asset to know French.

Student: don't want to waste all the years spent to learn the language. Also interested in getting a good job, especially being an accountant.

### 5. Own evaluation of fluency

In Lethbridge, I consider myself fluent but not as well if we were in a French-speaking environment.

### 6. When the student became fluent

In senior high, where teachers were better.

### 7. How the student became fluent

By writing, by the essays, the assignments, to have better marks - reading (I can get the general meaning without knowing all the vocabulary).

Yes, it was difficult to learn the language, especially in the early years.

I still have difficulties (grammar).

I had to study a fair bit (at home, grammar books, reading French), less now.

### 8. How French was learned

Memorizing poems, songs, that was the best practice for us - conjugate the verbs systematically -

Able to speak French at school but very few opportunities outside the school -

Able to listen to French on TV (news, hockey), to French singers (grade 6) in class.

Things done regularly in class: Prayer and anthem in French, reading aloud ( a lot in the early grades ), "discours" (speeches), in front of the class.

### 9. Second language extra-curricular activities

Participation of two years in "Genies en herbe", it helped a lot.

### 10. Specific aspects of student's personality

"I like it, we practice a lot (reading, writing) and we improve our knowledge."

Ely,s questions (see interview guide).

Risktaking:

No.

No, if I have to speak aloud in class, I'll try something simpler. I try to find a synonym, or ask for the translation of the word "comment est-ce qu'on dit .....?" I start, and the teacher helps me when I can't.

It depends on how small the details are. If I know I am making a ton of mistakes, then I would not like that. But if it doesn't take the meaning away of what I am saying, yes I would say it.

Yes, that helps a lot. This way, I do not make a fool of myself.

Yes, but it depends. Sometimes I like basic models, sometimes I try something more complicated.

Sociability:

I think it helps us to use the language when we are talking to each other. Yes, I like class activities using French.

Yes, it is more fun in a group, when you know each other, people will correct you when you say something wrong.

It depends. For something simple, yes. But when it is something more complicated, if I do not know to say it in French then I would use English.

It is important to have a strong group spirit because you are not afraid to say something, they won't laugh at you if you say something wrong, they help you to correct your mistakes.

It depends on what I am trying to say.

It could be a problem. Our class has been together for a number of years, so we do not worry too much, we don't feel too self-conscious about the correctness of the language in our class, but with people who are new to you it would be different.

If I know I am doing something wrong, yes it could be embarrassing, but I don't worry too much in our group.

No, I do not think so.

Sometimes.

Attitude:

Not really. They are more interesting than some of other classes. We learn the language, we do class activities, we talk to each other in French, we watch movies. It is not boring as in other classes.

Sometimes. The choice of the books is not always to my liking (some are too long, or boring). I like class activities.

I do not really like it but I do not like a whole lot of things about school.

Yes, it's pretty good, but the periods are too long (80 minutes). It certainly helps with the language.

11. Teachers

Pretty good relations with actual teacher. Before, with some, it was not that great. In general, they were OK. In the early grades, they were good, they read us stories, we had class activities. I enjoyed class with them.

Things done regularly in class: group activities (3 or 4 people) - reports - grammar lessons - discussions on stories

that have not been read - presentations in front of the class - a lot of assignments, of writing which helped us to learn the language, of reading, a lot of discussions.

Maybe once or twice we were tested on oral fluency.

Pronunciation learned by listening to the teacher, to classmates (they correct us).

Vocabulary learned by the dictionary, by the bottom section of a text, by asking the teacher the meaning of a word, a very few memorizing.

Grammar rules learned in specific lessons (a lot).

Creative use of French in assignments, essays (junior and senior high).

Use of French for communication in grade 2 or 3.

At the time, my grade 1 and 2 teachers seemed to know everything in French, but when I started to know more about French, then I realized that maybe those teachers did not know quite that much. At this level (grade 12), they are fairly good.

They spoke and gave instructions in French all the time, except one.

They try to explain in a different way in French rather than translate.

No French guests (maybe once or twice).

Teachers: good and appreciative attitude and good understanding of French.

Motivation from teachers: They always talked French - not quite as well than my parents and myself - good grades -

Essays, assignments, and reading helped me the most in becoming fluent in French.

Transcription read, approved, and signed by the student.

## Student 6

### 1. Family situation and background

I am the only child at home - Dad and Mom (teacher) working -  
Background: Scotland and Ireland - Speak English at home -

### 2. Student's general traits of personality

Like dancing (ballet), school, being with friends, laughing, music.

Projects for the future: University of Edmonton for medicine.

### 3. Years of learning

Started French immersion in grade 3 (9 years).

### 4. Motivation to learn the language

My parents put me in French immersion at the end of grade 2 because I was bored at school, they thought it would be more of a challenge to learn a different language.

I am still in the French immersion program because I enjoy it. I got a lot of close friendship, because we have been together for so long.

### 5. Own evaluation of fluency

Yes, I think I am fluent because I can think and function in the language in different situations like in school, travel.

### 6. When the student became fluent

I had to learn the language very fast because I started in grade 3. It took me about two years to speak and communicate on my own.

### 7. How the student became fluent

Just by speaking to people and practice, being the whole day in the French class.

It was difficult at the beginning because everybody was so far ahead of me, but actually the learning was pretty easy.

I had a tutor at home to help me at the very beginning (few months) to catch up.

### 8. How French was learned

Just at school, talking to people, to the teacher - reading - Was able to speak French at school, and when travelling (once in Quebec), but I speak French with my family in Ottawa (few weeks on the whole).

Listen to French when travelling, watching TV, with French exchange students at home from Quebec (quite a few times, they would stay three months).

At school: studies - games (motivated us to learn) - memorizing poems and stories for festivals - a lot of songs - reading - few plays -

### 9. Second language extra-curricular activities

French club in junior high - I remember we always spoke English at recess and lunch time - we would speak French when we didn't want anybody else to understand what we were saying -

### 10. Specific aspects of student's personality

Attitude and feelings in the French classroom: No difference

with an English class - wouldn't notice the transition from English outside the class to French in the classroom - Ely's questions (see interview guide):

Risktaking:

No.

I just speak the way I want.

I stumble, I try to think of another word, I ask in English what it is, or I try to find a substitute.

Yes, we have to, like in social studies.

Yes, I rather not think about it.

Sometimes I do that, when I have time, not in argument or debate.

Probably not, it doesn't matter if we make a mistake, nobody is going to laugh at you.

Sociability:

We already know each other so well.

Yes.

Yes.

Yes.

Yes, and we have a strong group spirit in our class.

Discomfort:

Yes.

A little bit, I am sure, I would be worried because I wouldn't know the people.

No.

Not in my class. The only time I feel awkward is when I can't find a way to express my thought.

Attitude:

It depends on the subject, it's not the language itself.

Yes. I like literature, but grammar is a little boring even if I have still problems with it. I don't like repeating over and over.

Yes.

Yes.

11. Teachers

At the beginning, the teacher did not realize I could not understand French, so I was rather shocked and often in tears. The teacher was very strict with me, he wouldn't do anything in English to help me, he wouldn't try to favour me or help me in any way, so I had to learn by myself. I liked him but I was scared at the beginning, we got along and he taught me a lot. With the other teachers, we had a fairly close relationship, because they were all the time with us (they were teaching everything).

Things done regularly in class: reading, work, games.

Now, to stay fluent: writing essays, speaking (debates, group things, speaking aloud, presentations - social studies helped me a lot in French with arguments, debates, and essays).

Never tested on oral fluency.

Pronunciation: learned by listening, and repeating words - no formal teaching - correcting what we were saying -

Vocabulary: through exercises, studying, by reading and

checking the vocabulary.

Grammar rules: memorizing them, specific teaching, essay writing corrections.

Creative use of French in stories right at the beginning.

Use of French for communication: right at the beginning. We had prizes if we wouldn't use any English (stars). We were encouraged to speak French even at lunch time.

All teachers were very fluent.

They spoke French all the time.

Instructions in French, no translations. They would explain everything in French.

We used to have theatre groups coming to our French class, but no guests.

Motivation from teachers: awards - you are motivated by yourself, you are having fun - we played games, we had many activities.

Teachers' attitude: positive.

What helped the most to become fluent: my own desire to learn the language. It is exciting to speak another language, I enjoy it. I do not have a third language.

Transcription read, approved, and signed by the student.

Student 7

1. Family situation and background

Parents both from Germany (came here 30 or 40 years ago) - two brothers and a sister -

Parents speak German at home - I usually answer back in English - I speak some German (was my first language).

2. Student's general traits of personality

I like to learn few things, don't mind school, like to play sports.

Hope to go to University of Alberta, to take business.

3. Years of learning

12 years - from grade one - in French immersion -

4. Motivation to learn the language

Parents: thought it would be important and interesting to learn it - they were right - it was interesting to learn it -

Student: It would have been a huge waste of time to stop learning it. I hope to continue to take it at university. It wasn't difficult to learn it and it was very interesting.

5. Own evaluation of fluency

I think I am fluent in French because I can carry on a conversation with someone who is francophone (except slang and humor).

6. When the student became fluent

I became fluent at about grade seven, we were totally immersed in French, we had great teachers, and were scolded and punished to speak English, it was a big help. In high school, it got a little bit worse because there was more English in class.

7. How the student became fluent

From practice and from reading - it was not very difficult, as far as I can remember, I never had any difficulty, we did it gradually.

Outside the class: mostly reading (even comic books in French) - the studying came more in grade eight because of the stress of grammar, I liked it.

8. How French was learned

I practiced with my sister who learned French at university - by just being in class -

Summer camps in French (a week).

I keep my French by speaking with a friend who graduated last year, by listening to French TV (hockey), watching movies (harder to follow), news, some talk shows.

Regular activities in class: reading (out loud helped because we could be corrected), dictionary work, writing, poems, songs, role-plays.

9. Second language extra-curricular activities

Summer youth groups organized by Le Carrefour -

Watching plays and movies in French -

10. Specific aspects of student's personality

Attitude and feelings in the French class: I enjoy French, I really like being there, I find the French language interesting and I like to learn it.

Ely's questions (see interview guide):

Risktaking:

Yes, to use it properly.

Yes, as long as I know what I am saying.

I usually use several words, or I will ask the meaning to the teacher (comment dit-on ....?)

Yes, it's challenging and I like that.

I always try to pay attention to grammar.

No, not usually.

I like to try new things but I will use basics if I can say it the way I want.

Sociability:

People don't use French when they are talking to each other, I would rather speak French.

It's more fun and you can learn by hearing and listening to others in a group.

Yes.

Yes.

Yes, it really helps to have a strong group spirit. Our group is probably the most fluent that I know of.

Discomfort:

Yes.

No.

No.

I have no hesitation in participating in class.

Maybe with someone who is francophone. I have to plan my speech and be slower in expressing myself, otherwise no.

Attitude:

No, I find literature very good. I like grammar also.

Yes.

Yes.

Yes.

11. Teachers

They are very friendly. Relationships are closer than English students with their teachers. We have been together for so long, and some teachers have been with us for few years, so we got to know them better. They are more lenient with us because of this relationship.

Things done regularly in class: games, fun things at the elementary level. In junior high, we started to study more (exercises of grammar, a lot of reading, poems). In senior high: reading, discussions, arguments, reports and essays, speaking French with teachers.

No formal test on oral fluency but we were marked on our ability to speak.

Pronunciation learned by hearing, repeating over some words, by being corrected.

Vocabulary learned through usage, by reading, by seeing words in context, by looking into the dictionary.

Grammar learned by studying it, doing exercises.  
Creative use of French since grade four, in writing since grade seven.  
Use of French for communication since the beginning.  
All teachers were very fluent.  
They always speak French.  
Instructions were given in French, no translation.  
Some guests, not too many.  
Teachers' attitude toward French culture and language: neutral, it was an exposition of facts - one French teacher was very influential - one was favorable -  
Motivation from the teacher: grades (grades are a motivation to do well) - class quite competitive -  
Self-motivation to get good grades - Own motivation: knowing French will probably help me in the future (for a job). I will probably use it in the future.  
What helped me the most to become fluent: discussions and debates (with the teachers and the class), and reading (from French books). Everything else helped too, even writing essays.

Transcription read, approved, and signed by the student.

## Student 8

### 1. Family situation and background

Four people in the family - Mother: teacher - Father: regional planner - Brother: 8, grade 3, in French immersion.

Very few French spoken at home.

Background: Irish (father) and German (mother). English and German are spoken at home. When I visit my grandmother, I hear German.

### 2. Student's general traits of personality

Athletic, likes sports - likes speaking (public speaking, debates).

Ambitious, tries to do as well as possible, wants to improve herself.

For a career, would like to do something where I can speak (like in the government ).

### 3. Years of learning

Since kindergarten, always in French immersion (13 years).

### 4. Motivation to learn the language

Parents: it was during Trudeau's government (time of emphasis of bilingualism) and they thought that it would be an advantage for their child.

Student: would like to know as many languages as possible. I would like to master my French more, because in the future I would be using it to communicate with people. Definitely, I will have some use of it.

Trip to Quebec in grade 9 gave me the determination to learn more the French language ( I had problems to communicate with the people when I was there ).

### 5. Own evaluation of fluency

I could be more fluent - I consider myself quite fluent - I am not as fluent as the Quebecois, but I could communicate, get my ideas across.

### 6. When the student became fluent

The peak was probably in grade 9, because after we had more and more English classes, thus less time to practice French. However, in grade 6 we could already carry a conversation (although it was anglicized).

### 7. How the student became fluent

By just being immersed completely in the French at school - I went to Quebec a couple of times, it helped a lot to be in a French environment -

### 8. How French was learned

It was not really hard to learn French because we learned it at a so early age, it seemed natural, but there was a lot of social pressure (grades 7-8, French speaking students were quite outcast, it complicated things a little bit).

Reading aloud in class, a lot.

Memorizing grammar rules and grammar practice, dictées.

Students-teacher communication (asking questions to the

teacher, because you don't speak French to your friends).  
Trip to Quebec (end of grade 9 for 2 weeks, and end of grade 11).

Mainly at school.

We use French when we don't want people around us to understand what is said.

By listening (a fair bit) to French TV, very little to the radio.

By memorizing (plays, in grade 10-11, oral presentations in class).

Songs (a lot in grade 8).

A lot of silent reading.

Continually looking in the dictionary.

9. Second-language extra-curricular activities

They were very rare. We tried to have a French club in grade 9 but was never a great success. It lasted a few months and we gathered every week.

In grade 6, we had a carnival.

One day, we made crepes.

10. Specific aspects of student's personality

In the French classroom, I feel the way I am in the other classes. It is hard to express what I want to say coherently. I don't think I have mastered French yet because it doesn't come as easy as English.

Risktaking:

same as in English, I like to try a word first by experimenting it first before using it.

I don't mind to try out difficult sentences in class, people don't make fun of you and I feel comfortable to try something difficult.

I use English to substitute for words or things I do not know how to say in French.

I like to try difficult sentences, it is not always successful, I want to improve, I keep trying.

I prefer not to worry about the small details of grammar.

I speak a lot in class, I don't really think before speaking aloud word for word what I am going to say.

I prefer to use complex sentences rather than basic models.

Sociability:

Yes.

Definitely.

Yes, as long as the teacher doesn't overcorrect, it's discouraging.

In class discussion, yes. But personal communication is always in English.

Not necessarily, it's beneficial, it's good to know the people of your group. Our group is really good, everybody knows each other, there is no discrimination.

Discomfort:

No, I don't feel very relax, I am self-conscious and concerned about what I am saying. I am a little uncomfortable.

Yes, at the stage I am now, but I plan to go to Quebec or to

France to learn more how they speak.

Not usually, because of our class, nobody cares if you make a fool of yourself.

Yes, specially when asking questions in class.

Not at all, grammar is a little bit tedious, but I find interesting to learn a language.

Yes.

Yes.

#### 11. Teachers

I had great teachers, they were excellent. They encouraged everyone (grades one and two).

Teacher very strict in grade 4.

Teacher very nice, making things even too easy for the students (most students got honors) in grade 5.

In grade 6, the teacher was excellent, talked a lot about the French culture.

In grade 7, the teacher was great too.

Conflict with the teacher and the whole class (she was teaching a lot of grammar and the class was not interested), in grade 8.

In grade 9, the teacher made French fun, it was really good. In high school, one teacher was fully bilingual, he was really good. Another one was very boring, not exciting at all, we didn't want to go to his class.

I had mainly good teachers during those 12 years of French.

I stay fluent just by going to the French class, travelling to places where French is spoken. Classroom discussions, writing essays, watching movies in class (even if we don't understand all that is said) help us to stay fluent in French.

I don't remember being tested in oral fluency.

French pronunciation was learned by practice, by being corrected when reading, but no formal teaching.

Vocabulary was learned by asking the teacher when I did not understand what the teacher was saying, by writing essays, by consulting the dictionary, by seeing over and over the same words, by reading.

Grammar rules were learned by writing essays (they were marked by the teacher and the student had to hand them back corrected), by formal teaching in lessons (rules to memorize and tests).

Creative use of French as early as grade 5 and 6.

Communicative use of French started at the elementary levels. All my teachers were very fluent in French, they spoke all the time in French, they gave all instructions in French, they wouldn't translate in French but they would explain in a different way so they could be understood.

We did not have French guests.

Teachers had either a positive attitude for French culture and language, or a more reserved (neutral) attitude.

Motivation to learn from the teachers: they did not really motivated us, most of it came from inside (wanted good marks).

Grade one: teacher would penalize with one cookie if a student

was speaking English; at the end of the week, those who never spoke English were to eat the cookies. In junior high, punishments were the main motivation from the teachers to make you speak French (or not to speak English).

Own motivation: to get my high marks. Also, I want to be able to communicate with French speakers and not feel inferior to them. I want to feel accepted in the French society, to be able to translate for people who do not understand French.

I am learning Spanish right now because I am going to Mexico, I find it difficult compared to the easiness to learn French and English. It is a lot different to learn at 17 than it was at 6.

What helped me the most to become fluent: being in the French environment in Quebec (the learning was more effective there, by being completely immersed in the French society), and classroom discussions.

Transcription read, approved, and signed by the student.

## Student 9

### 1. Family situation and background

Family of 4 - Mother from England - Father from Germany -  
Speak English at home -

### 2. Student's general traits of personality

Likes doing sports, team sports, running, tennis, swimming,  
sailing, ... I am an outgoing person.

I intend to travel next year (choice between New Zealand and  
England). I would like to go to Africa (for a mission) and I  
am looking forward about this.

### 3. Years of learning

10 years - started French immersion in grade - last year I  
went as an exchange student (one school semester)

### 4. Motivation to learn the language

Parents: I don't really know, I think to give more  
opportunities.

Now: up to last year, because all my friends were in French  
immersion - this year, because I realized how badly my French  
was dropping when I was away from it, so I wanted to come  
back.

### 5. Own evaluation of fluency

Yes, I consider myself rather fluent, more in reading. I went  
to Quebec two years ago and I could not understand people  
talking around me (maybe because of the accent).

### 6. When the student became fluent

It took me a couple of years to speak fluently in French.

### 7. How the student became fluent

I worked with my teacher after school during two or three  
months so I could understand, because I was behind everybody  
else. Everybody spoke French in class all the time up to grade  
6, so you had to speak French.

It was difficult just for the first couple of months, after it  
was easier.

I don't think I really studied at home.

My mom tried to make me watch TV but it didn't work. I  
practiced by talking to people in class, mainly in class.  
There were not too many opportunities to speak French outside  
the class.

I went two summers in Quebec.

I listened to the Tv, the radio, some songs (but it was  
difficult to understand the words in some songs).

### 8. How French was learned

At the beginning, after school: writing words on the board. It  
helped to increase my vocabulary.

Memorizing definitions (translation of words) - poems - a lot  
of songs - reading (a lot of silent reading, I had to write  
book reports) - skits in grade 10 - oral and written  
exercises.

### 9. Second language extra-curricular activities

None.

#### 10. Specific aspects of student's personality

Everybody in French is like a family but in High School we are becoming more apart because we do not have so many French classes. And also people tend to speak English a lot more in the classes to each other. We do speak in French to the teacher. We lose quite a bit of French in High School.

Ely's questions (see interview guide)

Risktaking:

No, I don't wait.

I try first, and if it does not come right, I simplify. If I do not find a word, I try to replace it. I usually don't think in English, I think French when I speak French. I ask for a translation only when I am desperate and I cannot figure anything else.

Yes we have to try to express complicated ideas, specially for Social Studies.

Yes, usually when I speak I don't worry about grammar, but if I notice a mistake I correct myself.

No.

No.

Sociability:

Yes, quite a lot.

Yes, it's a lot more.

I enjoy to talk to the teacher in French with students in class discussion. We don't speak French outside the class, we used to when we were younger. We lost the habit because everybogy speaks English in the street.

Yes, I enjoy interacting.

Strong spirit in the group: I don't know how it is important, it is probably, you learn more that way.

Discomfort: sometimes I can't express my ideas and I feel frustrated (after not speaking French for two years), but now it's pretty good.

Yes, after school I won't use my French and if then I have to use it I would feel uncomfortable.

Not really anymore.

No, I am more self-conscious (because I left for two years and came back), but now I am less and less self-conscious.

Not really anymore, no I don't.

Attitude:

No, I don't find French classes boring, I only take social studies and religion. If it's boring, it's the material not the French itself. I like class discussions. Too many written assignments is boring.

Yes.

Yes, I do like the French class, because we get the chance to get to know each other which is not the case in other classes (like biology).

I enjoy very much the French class.

#### 11. Teachers

I was probably closer to my French teachers than any other teachers (maybe because they were my home-room teachers). At elementary level, I got along very well with all of them - good rapport with teachers.

Things done regularly: I don't know, I can't really remember what we did in class. Now, in social studies, we have discussions. I remember doing a lot of definitions, a lot of reading, a lot of grammar, a lot of speaking. And also writing essays helps a lot because you can check for your grammar, for spelling. After that you can speak mostly the way you wrote. Not tested on oral fluency.

No formal teaching on pronunciation, learned by listening to the teacher and repeating.

Vocabulary: regular exercises from readings.

Grammar rules: studied them over and over, drills. That was the hardest part of learning French.

Creative use of French: right at the beginning (write a paragraph).

Use for communications: from the beginning.

A lot of my teachers were from French background.

They spoke French all the time.

No translation.

No French guests.

They were most of them from French background, so they had a positive attitude for the French culture and language.

Motivation:

From teachers: because of the whole environment of the classroom, but you have to motivate yourself like in any other classes.

I think that extra-curricular activities in French would have helped for us anglophones.

What helped me the most: just the whole class about French, and everybody speaking and having to learn French, to be in a position when you have to communicate. I wish we had a French University here. I will probably study French for a long time.

Transcription read, approved, and signed by the student.