PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF A GROUP OF GRADE 4 STUDENTS FROM AN ANGLOPHONE COMMUNITY WHILE COMMUNICATING WITH THEIR PEERS FROM A FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITY

by

Taciana de Lira e Silva

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Education
In conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada
(April, 2014)

Copyright © Taciana de Lira e Silva, 2014
Abstract

This qualitative study was guided by the framework of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). In Canada, although researchers recognize that learning French through a cultural context will promote understanding and acceptance of cultural diversity, as well as the learning of the target language, there is little evidence to support the ways in which this methodology may influence the learning of elementary Core French students.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the ways in which a group of Grade 4 students, from an English community, perceived their peers from a French community, and to describe any changes in their attitudes toward learning French as a Second Language in response to the opportunity to learn through a cultural context. This action research study used a questionnaire, an observation checklist of task-related behaviour, and semi-structured group photo-interviews to explore 15 Grade 4 students’ perceptions and attitudes in response to a new research-based teaching approach.

As the cultural exchange unfolded, I sought evidence of the three savoirs (that according to the ICC model, primary students have the ability to develop), in order to promote interculturality: savoir être (related to students’ attitudes towards the other students), savoirs (related to knowledge of the other culture), and savoir apprendre/faire (related to behaviour toward the other culture). Results indicated that students showed evidence of two savoirs: savoir être and savoirs. Savoir apprendre/faire, however, was not shown. In addition to the two savoirs, the exchange promoted the learning of French in the classroom, and supported the development of students’ confidence in communicating in French.

The findings of this study contribute to the teaching of Elementary Core French in Ontario, by providing valuable insights into the possible ways that learning French through an intercultural experience holds potential in developing students’ communication abilities as well as
awareness and acceptance of *otherness*, which is the bedrock upon one can develop effective communicators in the target language.
Acknowledgements

“Veni, vidi, vici”!!! It took a long time and the help of many people to finally complete this thesis. Being a part-time student is not easy and sometimes I became distracted by the various roles I perform in life, and the study I cared so much about got pushed to the side, for later. If it wasn’t for my family and a very special professor, ‘later’ might not have found a deadline.

I am thankful to:

My two children, Laura and Victor, for their unconditional support and patience, throughout this experience.

My sister, my parents and my partner, for believing in me, and for their continuous support and encouragement.

My 15 Grade 4 students who accepted to participate in this research and to share their time and thoughts with me.

The teacher from the partner school who agreed to add an extra task to her daily schedule, to help me complete my study.

Dr. Lynda Colgan, I thank you for providing me with remarkable, academic and psychological support, for most of my time at Queen’s. I will always remember you and your friendly and gentle way of speaking that always made me want to learn more. Thank you for pushing me to think deeply in such a kind and patient way.

Dr. Liying Cheng, thank you for your guidance during the first phase of my research.

I thank all of you for being part of my learning, and for inspiring me to push myself and work hard toward my goals.
# Table of Contents

Abstract .......................................................................................................................... ii
Acknowledgements ......................................................................................................... iv
List of Tables ................................................................................................................... vii
Glossary ............................................................................................................................ viii
Chapter 1: Introduction ....................................................................................................... 1
   Autobiographical Signature ....................................................................................... 2
   Rationale for the Study ............................................................................................... 5
   Purpose ....................................................................................................................... 7
   Overview of the Thesis ............................................................................................... 7
Chapter 2: Literature Review ............................................................................................. 9
   Conceptual Framework ............................................................................................... 9
   Teaching Culture in the Foreign Language Classroom ............................................. 14
   Culture in the Second Language (L2) Classroom in Canada and in Ontario .......... 18
   E-mail Communication in L2 Classroom ................................................................... 20
   Summary ................................................................................................................... 22
Chapter 3: Methodology .................................................................................................. 24
   Rationale for Qualitative Research ......................................................................... 24
   Research Design ....................................................................................................... 28
   Exchange Context Selection and Introduction to Cultural Activity ....................... 28
   Research Context .................................................................................................... 32
   Participant Selection ............................................................................................... 34
   The Five Lessons ..................................................................................................... 37
   Instrument Development and Data Collection ....................................................... 41
   Observation Checklist of Task-related Behaviors .................................................... 41
   Student Questionnaire ............................................................................................ 43
   Semi-Structured Group Photo-Interview .................................................................. 45
   Data Analysis .......................................................................................................... 49
   Credibility and Trustworthiness .............................................................................. 51
   Summary ................................................................................................................... 52
Chapter 4: Presentation of Data ....................................................................................... 54
   Ignorance and Stereotypes ...................................................................................... 59
   Ethnocentrism .......................................................................................................... 62
List of Tables

Table 1: Student Description.................................................................................................36
Table 2: Questionnaire ...........................................................................................................52
Table 3: Observation Checklist of Task-Related Behaviours.................................................53
Glossary

AQ: Additional Qualification course

CEFR: Common European Framework of Reference

CMC: Computer-Mediated Communication

Core French: is mandatory from Grades 4 to 8 for all students in English-language elementary schools. Students entering Grade 4 must receive French instruction in every year from Grade 4 to Grade 8 and must have accumulated a minimum of 600 hours of French instruction by the end of Grade 8. Once an instructional sequence has begun, the program must continue uninterrupted to Grade 8. School boards are encouraged to consider alternative timetabling for Core French program delivery to maximize learning for students (The Ontario Curriculum French as a Second Language, 2013)

ESL: English as a Second Language

EU: European Union

FLT: Foreign Language Teaching

FSL: French as a Second Language

GREB: General Research Ethics Board

ICC: Intercultural Communicative Competence

KG: Kindergarten

L2: Second Language
Chapter 1: Introduction

According to Byram and Esarte-Sarries (1991), the transformation to international relations between societies after the Globalization of the economy and the increase in migration changed social and educational philosophies around the world. In the context of these major shifts to nations of culture and identity, intercultural education emerged as a new discipline within the field of education; thereby leading language education researchers to claim that it is in the language classroom that learners should be in contact with other cultures, to develop intercultural relations and intercultural competencies. It is posited that intercultural education has the potential to “shape [positive] attitudes and respect towards all cultures and peoples, tolerance and openness to others, dealing with psychological barriers and problems of intercultural competence development [such as] ethnocentrism, xenophobia, racism, and ethnic prejudice.” (Bleszynska, 2008 p.544).

By the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom (1982), Canada was officially designated to be a bilingual country; thus, all citizens are encouraged to have working knowledge of the two official languages: English and French. The new Ontario French as a Second Language curriculum (2013, p. 10) requires that, in addition to French language acquisition, students develop intercultural awareness and intercultural competence: “Students will develop skills in accessing and understanding information about various French-speaking communities and cultures, and will apply that knowledge for the purposes of interaction.”

The Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) model is used to codify an individual’s ability to communicate with members of another culture, in a foreign
language, while acting as mediator between the two cultures (Byram, 1997). ICC has been used in the classroom as a tool to create acceptance of other groups and, at the same time, motivate students to study another language. According to Byram and Doyé (2005), and Buttjes (1991), ICC should be used to frame second language instruction during the elementary years; however there is a lack of empirical evidence to support this putative recommendation.

To respond to the call for research in the development of ICC during the elementary years and seeking to understand the perceptions and attitudes of a group of Grade 4 students from an Anglophone community while communicating with their peers from a Francophone community, while implementing the expectation on intercultural competence of the new FSL curriculum for Grade 4, I developed this study. As my autobiographical signature demonstrates, I am well positioned to conduct this research.

**Autobiographical Signature**

Language learning has been part of my life since childhood. I was born in Brazil, where English was the foreign language taught in most schools from Grade 5 to the end of high school. I began learning English at school in Grade 5 and at the same time, attended a private English language program after school, three times per week, and continued until the end of high school. In Brazil, we were taught from a very young age that language learning is important: “the more languages you know, the more you are worth.” I used to hear adults in my community say that if you know only one language, you were worth one person, two languages, two people; and so on. This reflected the shared cultural belief that the more languages one spoke, the better the odds to acquire employment.
During my university studies, while acquiring my Bachelor of Laws degree, I decided to become a diplomat. For such a position, it was mandatory to learn French in order to fulfill the requirements to write the examinations for the Brazilian Ministry of International Relations. I employed a private tutor for three years to prepare for the examination. By successfully completing the examination, I hoped these doors would open to the job I wanted. During the same period, I worked as a part-time interpreter using the English I had been learning since childhood.

Working as an interpreter made me realize that my knowledge of a foreign language was not only a way of generating revenue, but also a way of establishing relationships. I built friendships with some of the people with whom I had worked as an interpreter and, although they spoke English, their mother tongue was Italian, and so I decided to learn Italian because it would be easier to communicate with my new friends.

I moved to Canada in 1995 to get married. I bore two children and was a stay-at-home parent until my youngest child entered Grade 1. I began volunteering at my children’s school when they started Kindergarten and it was at this point that I realized that I wanted to help other children become successful citizens of the world.

I went back to university and completed a teacher education program. While pursuing my teaching degree, I realized that the best way for me to help children become successful global citizens was to share my love for languages and other cultures; thus, I became a French teacher.

My life as a French teacher in a rural area in southeastern Ontario has been full of peaks and valleys with most of the valleys representing reflections of the students’
opposition to learn French. What had disheartened me the most were the numerous complaints I heard from students as young as kindergarteners, objecting to French being an obligatory subject. I was also discouraged by the increasing frequency of protests and disinterest in learning the French language as students became older. Coming from a country where learning multiple languages is promoted, and knowing implicitly how advantageous language learning can be both professionally and socially, I often asked myself what drove such young children to express such an explicit dislike of the French language.

For many years I saw the learning of languages as an asset limited to better employment. Work as an interpreter helped me see other facets of language learning: the cultural and social benefits of which I only became aware after first-hand interactions with members of other cultures. Being able to communicate with people from other cultures, in their own languages, was an exhilarating experience that made me want to learn more in order to communicate more efficaciously. I have been living in Canada for 18 years, but I still see myself as a learner of English and French.

The promise of better employment as a result of language learning is also promoted in Canada, but for my students in the rural area, this potential outcome meant nothing. It was my concern about the young students’ unwillingness to learn French, added to my aspiration to find ways to improve their learning experience by helping them to see that language learning is not only a medium for better employment, but also an opportunity to see the world through different lenses as they engage in a process of becoming citizens of this planet, that encouraged me to pursue a Master’s degree in Education.
Rationale for the Study

One of the gaps in intercultural education literature is the lack of substantive empirical studies about young learners (Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino & Kohler. 2003). Much of the research was conducted at the high school or university level, where students engage in on-line exchanges with members of another culture, communicating in the foreign language and learning about their peers’ values and beliefs, through authentic interaction. Moreover, the large majority of the empirical studies I encountered while reviewing the literature for my study were completed in the field of ESL (English as a Second Language) and not in FSL (French as a Second Language).

Canada is officially a bilingual country that offers most young Canadians the opportunity to learn French or English as a second language (L2), and Core French is one of the programs offered by the public schools in non-French language provinces. In Ontario, Core French is mandatory from Grade 4 to Grade 9; however, in Grade 10, when French becomes an elective subject, there is a dramatic drop-off in course selection. In the classroom, as an elementary Core French teacher, I already experience the students’ disinterest in learning French and seek different approaches to teach the language, hoping that I will find ways to engage my students in the French learning process.

One of the goals of the new Ontario FSL curriculum (2013) is the development of intercultural competence. Educators are expected to convey both language and culture in context and help students to make connections to different French-speaking communities and understand aspects of their culture while preparing for authentic interactions with members of other cultures. This outcome suggests that, language and culture learning are
primarily cognitive or knowledge-based in nature, and reduces affective learning that is attitude related, to a secondary status in terms of cultural awareness and sensitivity.

The Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) model (Byram, 1997) views culture as the central goal in foreign language education: promoting students’ linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competences in the classroom. The development of intercultural competence is a process that encompasses all three domains of learning: affective, related to attitude; cognitive, associated with knowledge; and behavioural, focusing on the learner’s behaviour during the learning process (Paige, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein, & Colby, 2003).

There are current empirical studies and putative statements by experts that support the teaching of language through a cultural context to stimulate both the acceptance of the other group, and second language learning. In Canada, although empirical research has explored the importance of learning French through a cultural context, there is little evidence to explicate the ways in which this method could influence the teaching and learning in elementary Core French classrooms. This study contributes to the gap in the literature about the practice of Elementary Core French teaching, by contributing in to the possible ways that learning French through intercultural experiences could enhance students’ communication abilities as well as their awareness and acceptance of otherness which is guiding principal in the developing of effective communicators in the target language (Byram, 1997; Buttjes, 1991; Kramsch, 1993).
Purpose

The purpose of this classroom-based study was to identify the ways in which a cultural exchange activity that occurred via e-mail, during Core French instruction, affected a group of Grade 4 students beyond the learning of the mechanics of the French language, by describing the students’ perceptions and attitudes towards a group of students from a Francophone community.

Specifically, this action research explored the following research questions:

1. How did the cultural exchange activity influence the Anglophone students’ perceptions of their peers from the Francophone community?
2. How did the cultural exchange activity impact the Anglophone students’ attitudes toward learning Core French?

Overview of the Thesis

In the first chapter of this thesis, the rationale and purpose for the study that was conducted were described. The second chapter reviews published literature that relates to this study: culture as a component of foreign and second language education, Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) model, culture in the second language classroom in Canada, e-mail communication in second language. In the third chapter, I discuss the measures taken to uphold confidentiality, adhere to ethical standards, and efforts to obtain participant perspectives as accurately as possible. Data collection and analysis, and trustworthiness of the data collected are also described. The presentation of data and findings of the study appear in the fourth chapter. Finally, the implications of this study,
my own perspective on the study, and suggestions for future research are shared in the discussion chapter.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature that is relevant to the present study: the importance of culture as a vehicle of language teaching. The model guiding this study, Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), is described first because it is influential in structuring this thesis. Literature about teaching culture as a component of second language education is discussed second. Following, I explain the importance of culture education in Canada, as a consequence of our national bilingualism, and explore ways in which language learning has received national attention, as well as the vision and goals of the new Ontario Curriculum French as a Second Language. Finally, I review literature which supports the use of e-mail as a vehicle of bringing culture in the classroom. Each of these sections also explains the importance of reviewing this literature in relation to the purpose of the study.

Conceptual Framework

My study was guided by the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) model, which refers to an individual’s ability to interact harmoniously with people from another country, in a foreign language, acting as a mediator among people of different cultural origins (Byram, 1997). In the ICC model, relationships are the focus of content teaching because it is posited that they simultaneously require authentic communication and promote language acquisition (Byram, 1997). In recent years, foreign language teaching (FLT) has been linked to “education for mobility” (Byram, 1997, p.64), which encourages interaction between the language learner and the speaker of the target culture in the form of visits or exchanges, both real and virtual, through the use of technology. To
actualize such interactions, Byram (1997) suggests the use of three interconnected locations to acquire intercultural competence: “the classroom, the pedagogically structured experience outside the classroom, and the independent experience” (p.65). This approach is built upon the premise that communication is interaction based on a “philosophy of critical engagement with otherness, and critical reflection on self” (Byram, 1997, p.71). An intercultural mediator does not portray a neutral role while communicating with his or her interlocutor, but takes into account other identities, beliefs and values that are distinct from one’s own.

The development of Intercultural communicative competence takes into consideration the acquisition of both communicative competence (Canale and Swain, 1980) and the other group’s cultural dimension (Byram and Doyé, 2005). Communicative competence encompasses linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competences while the cultural dimension, is described as the suite of factors that define the identity of a foreign language, and which learners acquire through five ‘savoirs’ (Byram, 1997). Attitudes or savoir être refers to curiosity and openness that is a diminished focus on self and an increased sense of other and is shown when students express interest in learning about the other culture, and accept differences between groups. Knowledge or savoirs is the ability of knowing self and other and of the relationship between the two and enables individuals to understand similarities and differences between their world and the world of the target communities. Skills of interpreting and relating or savoir comprendre describe the individual’s ability to interpret documents and history of both groups, without creating biases. Skills of discovery and interaction or savoir apprendre/faire describes the individual’s ability to learn about a culture and its practice and to apply the knowledge,
attitudes and skills learned in other contexts within real-time communication and interaction, respectfully and openly. **Savoir s’engager** is the individual’s facility to evaluate politics and policies in one’s own and other cultures and countries, using the same parameters to analyze both cultures (Byram, 1997). The development of these competences, although a lengthy and networked process, promotes the learners’ **critical cultural awareness**, the ability to question their own beliefs and realize that they are a product of their culture and subject to change (Byram & Doyé, 2005).

According to Kramsch (1993) and Crawford-Lange and Lange (1984) language is the carrier of culture and culture is intertwined into language; therefore, language learners should acquire intercultural awareness in the process of developing intercultural communicative competence. However, the literature does not specify when is the ideal starting point to begin teaching intercultural competence to students. Byram and Doyé (2005), and Buttjes (1991) believe that the best time is during the elementary school years, even if young students may lack full language fluency and developmental maturity at the time (Byram, 1997). This vision concurs with Bruner’s (1960) arguments that elementary schoolchildren develop **learner appropriateness**, (i.e., the intuitive ability to grasp basic concepts of the humanities). Bruner claimed that learners, at any age or stage of development, are able to learn about any subject in some intellectual way, which supports the notion of introducing intercultural education to young students.

**The Three Savoirs.** The aspects of intercultural competence that Byram and Doyé (2005) believe are appropriate to pursue with elementary school children are: **savoir être**, **savoirs**, and **savoir faire**. Similarly, Lussier’s model of ICC (1997; 2003) also proposes these three aspects for the assessment of ICC. Certain behaviours shown by children, aged
10 or 11, of the development of ICC, according to Moloney (2009, p.75) are: “students acquiring knowledge of the target culture (e.g. everyday life, food and what has been called ‘high C culture’), students starting to perceive their interculturality (e.g.; students placing themselves in relationship with the target culture), students negotiating an intercultural identity (they show degrees of physical and emotional identification with the target language), experiencing a sense of change (they imagine a target language that exists for them), and students owning their memberships (they are aware that they belong to another culture).”

In 2009, Moloney carried out a qualitative case study on students’ perceptions of their interculturality. Forty-nine students participated, aged between 10 and 11 years old, and data was collected through focus group discussions using semi-structured questions. Questions were related to preferred activities, attitudes toward target language identification, perceptions of students’ language teachers, understanding of interrelation of culture and language, and discussion of pictures of the target language culture. Focus group discussions were audio-recorded and the transcribed texts were used as the principal source of data. The findings showed that students believed that their view of otherness changed through language learning, and they also acknowledged their place as non-native members of the target language community. The study’s findings indicate that even young children are able to develop aspects of ICC. There are indications of savoir être when students say their view of otherness changed, which signifies the readiness to suspend one’s own beliefs, becoming less ethnocentric and more ethnorelative (Bennett, 1993) as they become more accepting of the other group. Demonstrations of savoirs and savoir apprendre/faire are also shown when students state they are non-native members of the
other group, because they have the ability to understand similarities and differences between both cultures as well as to learn about the culture and its various enactments, respectively.

**Assessment of Intercultural Competence.** It is valid to say that language learning is intrinsically connected to the development of intercultural competence (Lussier, Kostova, Golubina, Ivanus, Retamar, Skopinskaja, & Wiesinger, 2007). In the classroom during the study, assessment of students’ perceptions and attitudes was conducted through *direct assessment*, which assesses students’ performances as they happen, by the teacher-researcher, through anecdotal records and observation checklists of task-related behaviours.

My study focused specifically on the examination of perceptions and attitudes of a group of Anglophone students while interacting in French, with peers from a Francophone community, through a cultural exchange. The ICC model was used to explore students’ interactions with the other cultural group. Attitude in my study is associated with tolerance (Byram & Esarte-Sarries, 1991). Positive attitude toward learning French as a Second Language (L2) is shown when students express interest in learning. Perception, on the other hand, is related to insights and represents students’ knowledge of a determined group and culture (Byram & Esarte-Sarries, 1991). The students’ perceptions and attitudes were measured by their development of three *savoirs* (*savoir être, savoirs, and savoir apprendre/faire*). The working definition of ICC was based on the ideas discussed in the conceptual framework.
Teaching Culture in the Foreign Language Classroom

Culture is the most studied concept in the history of humankind; however it defies scientists who attempt to bind its many components into a single definition (Kumaravadivelu, 2008). Geertz (1973) explains that culture “denotes a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which [people] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and their attitudes toward life” (p.89). In this definition, culture is expressed through two types of symbols. One that represents the intellectual and aesthetic life of a community, such as art, music, literature, politics, and architecture, also called Culture with a capital C. The other encompasses beliefs, values, behaviours, and practices which are part of the daily life; known as culture with a small c (Halverson, 1985; Kumaravadivelu, 2008).

In second and foreign language education, culture has played different roles throughout history, but has never been the dominant methodology (Phillips, 2003). Early approaches to teaching and learning in second and foreign language education brought culture to the classroom through literature — culture with capital C— which was seen as the ideal representative of culture (Paige et al., 2003). This approach was believed to motivate students to learn another language; however it required a high level of linguistic expertise and many students dropped the study of language before they could begin to learn about the target culture through explicit and nuanced representations embedded in literature-based texts (Paige et al., 2003).

Between the 1960’s and 1970’s, teaching culture in the foreign language classroom had a more anthropological approach, viewed as representing people’s emotions and
needs: culture with a small c. Brooks (1960) used the audio-lingual approach, based on constant repetition of premade dialogues, to promote language learning within a cultural context. Even though he used instructional vehicles such as common greetings, manners, menus, preferences, and special activities of the target group to teach the conventions and use of foreign language, there was no intent to teach about the shared meanings or beliefs of the culture and their roles in the language. Brooks was succeeded by Nostrand (1974) who developed the Emergent Model as a way of structuring knowledge that described the members of the target culture for a practical understanding of its life style. His model consisted of five tenets: culture is related to people’s values and habits; groups within a culture associate unique meanings to the role and importance of structures such as family and religion; an individual’s behaviours are impacted by the cultural context (for example, interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts are solved using cultural norms that are learned); culture determines one’s world view, from knowledge of specific fruits and vegetables and animals, to one’s attitudes towards other cultures.

According to Hughes (1984), Nostrand looked for patterns in behaviours of members of the target culture and assumed that those patterns represented the behaviours of most members of that culture. Nostrand and Brooks viewed culture as something that could be codified and compartmentalized. Their focus was on the superficial aspects of culture, omitting intrinsic values such as the variability of behaviour within the target cultural community, the participation of the individual in the creation of culture, and the interaction between language and culture in the making of meaning.

Globalization has minimized geographical distances and changed approaches to language education and has been posited by some to be the gateway to intercultural
education (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993; Crawford-Lange & Lange, 1984; Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006; Lussier, 1997; Paige, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein, & Colby, 2003). According to Paige et al. (2003), major transformation in perspective has occurred in the new models of culture learning:

…conceptual shifts from culture-specific to culture-general models of intercultural competence, cultural stereotypes to cultural generalizations, cultural absolutes to cultural variations (within and across cultures), and culture as distinct from language to culture as integral to language. Language in this process plays a fascinating and complex double role: it is a medium for as well as shaper of culture (p.176).

The methodology suggested by current intercultural competence models embeds four fundamental learning processes: (1) the learners’ exploration of their own Culture and culture; (2) the learners’ exploration of the target Culture and culture; (3) the discovery of the relationship between language and culture, and (4) “the learning of the heuristics for analyzing and comparing cultures” (Paige et al., 2003, p.179).

Byram & Esarte-Sarries (1991) investigated, through empirical study, how learning French influenced young British students’ perceptions and attitudes towards French people and culture. The study compared two groups of students from different schools; the choice of two schools was an attempt to generalize the findings. There were two cohorts, each having 200 students. The first group was in the third year of secondary education, (which is equivalent to our Grade 9 [British Council, 1999]), and the final year of compulsory French. The second group was in the last year of primary school (which is equivalent to our Grade 6 [British Council, 1999]) and had not yet begun to learn French. Participation
was voluntary, as long as students had parental approval. All students answered a questionnaire; 12 students from the secondary school and 12 from the primary school were interviewed. The main topics of discussion, during the interviews were “family and daily life, food, and people” (p.32). Findings suggest that whether in primary or secondary school, girls have a more positive attitude towards the French than boys. Furthermore, students’ attitude, or level of ethnocentricity, was related to the students’ background, rather than experience of other languages and countries, and they perceived French people to be different physically and stylistically (e.g., they were old-fashioned in their dress). Both groups admitted that their view of French people was influenced by “books and magazines, visits abroad with friends or parents, meeting French people in Britain, friends’ and siblings’ accounts and parents and other adults.” (p.41). French teaching, as well as the teacher’s own view of the French people was mentioned by the secondary students as having influence on their perception of the French, in addition to the reasons above mentioned.

The study’s findings show that the assumption that language teaching has a positive influence on students’ attitudes towards and understanding of foreign peoples and cultures was not a reality in these schools. In fact, many external factors strongly influenced the learners; from students’ backgrounds and television, to family and friends. With the increase in migration worldwide, there is need for educators to prepare students to better understand and accept cultural diversity, and second language researchers, have suggested that language instruction must provide the students with opportunities to become immersed in the target culture in order to learn the cultural meanings and beliefs of that group (Paige et al., 2003).
Culture in the Second Language (L2) Classroom in Canada and in Ontario

Linguistic and cultural diversity are part of the Canadian landscape. In 1982, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms declared Canada a bilingual country, reinforcing the language rights. In addition, language issues have been addressed by the federal and provincial governments through different policies, such as the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (government of Canada, 1985); Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) in Québec, 1997; Ontario’s Aménagement Linguistique Policy, 2005; and Two official languages, one common space. 40th anniversary of the official languages act (Graham, 2009), which provide young Canadians access to learning a second and even a third language as a way of becoming more open-minded and more accepting of other cultures (Graham, 2009).

Byram and Doyé (2005) state that a country’s educational policy reflects its political, economic, and social position. L2 education in Canada is influenced by the growing diversity of the population, as well as the increasing possibility of employment of skilled bilingual individuals in the Public Service Commission (Turnbull, 2011). This dualism has encouraged stakeholders in our country’s educational system to develop policies that support second language education.

Second language learning received national attention with the release of the policy, The Next Act: New Momentum for Canada’s Linguistic Duality (Government of Canada, 2003), by the government of Canada, a plan aiming to double the number of functionally bilingual youngsters in Canada by 2013 (Turnbull, 2011). Subsequent to this policy, Canadian Heritage supported the development of the study Strategies for a National Approach in Second Language Education, Plan twenty thirteen (Rehorick, 2004) with the
purpose of designing concrete steps that would support *The Next Act: New Momentum for Canada’s Linguistic Duality* policy and make its goal attainable. Rehoric (2004) sought, among other goals, to conceptualize an evaluation tool to assess learners’ improvements made in FSL programs based on the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference), a policy that uses an intercultural approach to promote a holistic development of the learners through language and culture education (CEFR, 2009). The CEFR resulted from the need of the European Union (EU) to create a system that described language and cultural proficiency of European citizens, for employment and schooling, in a way that was accepted in all the countries that were part of the EU (Canadian Parents for French, 2011).

In Canada, the goal of increasing the number of bilingual students by 2013 created the challenge of determining the characteristics of a bilingual student. The CEFR was selected as the ideal framework because of its accessible description of language proficiency and also for its flexibility for use across Canada, where education is the responsibility of each province (Canadian Parents for French, 2011).

In 2013, the province of Ontario published a new, French as a Second Language curriculum document, based on the CEFR. The goals of the new curriculum document are: students will use oral language to communicate effectively in French; they will learn about the culture of the two official languages; understand the values inherent to another language; and “develop adapting and coping skills to create relationships and interact with others in a positive way” (p. 6).

In the Core French classroom, although teachers use many approaches to promote language learning, such as interactive games, drama, music, dance, as well as paper and
pencil activities, they predominantly develop the learners’ oral communication, reading, listening and writing skills. In order for learners to understand the values inherent to another language and the culture of the two languages, in addition to developing skills that will help them interact with others in a positive way, they will have to develop cultural awareness, i.e., the promotion, understanding, and respect for other cultures. Cultural awareness involves the recognition and understanding of similarities and differences among societies and cultures and helps the learner understand that the opposite-intolerance- ‘could bring violence and social instability’ (Lussier, 2007).

**E-mail Communication in L2 Classroom**

E-mail communication is the most common network medium used by first and second language teachers because it enhances students’ work quality (Schwartz, 1986). In the language classroom, in addition to improving students’ writing skills, studies have shown that e-mail communication develops cultural awareness when the interactions happen with peers from another country, through the Internet (Avots, 1991; Cononelos and Oliva, 1993; Hubatsch & Hofmann, 1994; Lunde, 1990; Liaw & Johnson, 2001; Sanaour & Lapkin, 1992; Underwood, 1987). Since culture is an active part of each individual’s life (Robin-Stuart & Nocon, 1996), collaborating with peers from another culture provides the opportunity to learn about that culture from the experts’ point of view and gives the learners the opportunity to reshape their own values and beliefs as they identify other ways of seeing the world (Liaw & Johnson, 2001).

Teaching culture in the foreign language classroom, through cross-cultural e-mail communication, has been used in previous studies to foster the development of the linguistic and socio-linguistic competences, as well as culture acquisition (e.g., Soh &

Chun’s (2011) study focused on learning how computer-mediated communication (CMC) can contribute to the development of ICC. The participants of the study were university students: 23 American students enrolled in a German course and 23 German students enrolled in an English course. The exchange took place over a 10 week period. The data produced by the students were analyzed in three ways. First, numerical tallies of the number of words written in the asynchronous online forums and in the synchronous text chats were made. Second, macrolevel tallies of statements and questions and mean length of these statements and questions were calculated in order to compare discussion with chat. Third, a finer grained microlevel discourse analysis, investigating the language used to show interest and curiosity and to perform facework (e.g., hedging, avoiding conflict, and expressing disagreement) were analyzed because these types of behaviours could contribute to the development of ICC. The results showed that students demonstrated evidence of ICC. They showed curiosity and interest in the other culture and reflected on their own culture; they appeared to maintain a conversation, avoiding conflict, and performing facework; and they also stated they had positive interaction because it was an authentic communication and their counterparts showed interest in them.

E-mail writing makes personal cultural interaction achievable and cultural learning contextualized, promoting understanding and acceptance of the other culture. There are however, problems with individual e-mail exchange. Differing class size and student ability can make the choice of partners difficult, especially for young second language students like the ones in my study. Also, enthusiasm may diminish after the
initial messages, as a result of lack of topics to share with partners. Nonetheless, the speed in which communication is exchanged may be an advantage because students have the opportunity to have immediate feedback to their comments, but may also be a disadvantage, as messages may become superficial with little detail in the constitution of language or thoughts. In order to curtail the disadvantages, educators have used whole class exchange, rather than individual exchange, focusing on content-based curricular objectives (e.g., Avots, 1991). Involving the whole class promotes collaborative interactions among the participating students, as they become co-creators of authentic text using the target language. Avots (p.129) emphasizes the necessity of guidelines to organize the interaction: (1) clear, curriculum-based goals, (2) a time line with a definite ending, (3) respect for needs and cultural differences of the partner classroom, (4) facility of students with technology, (5) flexibility, and (6) involvement of students in the evaluation process. My students were at diverse ability levels and we did not have an easy access to the computer lab at the school; therefore, based on Avots’ suggestions and guidelines, I decided to have a whole class e-mail exchange.

Summary

In this section, I described research that recognized the teaching of culture as the vehicle of language teaching in today’s globalized world. I reviewed the importance of teaching ICC to young learners in order to fulfill the goals of the new Ontario FSL curriculum and shared the use of cultural exchange through e-mail as a way of helping students develop ICC, but identified a paucity of empirical studies in FSL developed with young students. It is necessary to investigate Grade 4 perceptions of their peers and attitude towards learning FSL to examine whether or not they develop ICC.
In the next chapter of this thesis, I review relevant literature about qualitative research methods for conducting research on perceptions of peers from Francophone community and attitudes toward learning French with young students. Following the methodological review, I describe the current study’s research design.
Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, research methods are described and explained in connection with the purpose of the study: to identify how a cultural exchange activity affected a group of Grade 4 students beyond the learning of the mechanics of the French language, through the description of the students’ perceptions and attitudes towards a group of students from a Francophone community. The methodological framework for choosing a qualitative, action research approach is outlined to explain why this was the most appropriate way to collect data to answer the questions that define the scope of the research. Next, I expand on the context in which the study took place, and the background of the participants. The design of the study is then described; followed by data collection methods and organization of data. Data trustworthiness and data analysis are also discussed. Finally, known limitations to the methodology of the study are described.

Rationale for Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is a method of inquiry which seeks to interpret and understand social and cultural phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). The qualitative approach investigates an individual’s or group’s perception of reality as they understand it. In qualitative research, behaviour is studied as it takes place, by the researcher who acts as an observer or interviewer and takes into consideration the participants’ point of view (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Reality is constructed from the participants’ perspective and may represent multiple views of the truth, since people experience the same events in different ways. This study was conducted in a classroom setting—a natural environment.
for the students—where the researcher (the teacher), collected the data through interviews, an observation checklist of task-related behaviour, and a questionnaire. The interview gave the participants an active voice during the study, as they shared their views of the Francophone group and about the experience of having a cultural exchange in French class. A qualitative study that seeks to “gather experiential data more than measurements” (Stake, 2010, p.19) is appropriate when the researcher’s goal is to investigate the lived experiences of elementary students’ participation in an intercultural exchange facilitated by e-mail.

This qualitative research study used the action research approach to identify how a cultural exchange activity that happened via e-mail, during Core French instruction, affected a group of Grade 4 students beyond the learning of the vocabulary/mechanics of the French language, through the analyses and description of the students’ perceptions and attitudes towards a group of students from a Francophone community.

Stringer (2008) suggests that action research is an important approach when investigating issues that are directly related to learning in the classroom, while seeking ways to enhance teaching or aiming to enable and improve students’ learning experiences. In the classroom, action research is more than a formal process of research; it is also a tool for professional learning and development.

Whitehead (1985) explains the process of action research: It begins with a problem experienced by the researcher-educator, who creates a plan to solve the problem, puts the plan in action, and evaluates the outcomes of the experience, to acquire a better understanding of the problem and creates possible solutions as the result of the evaluations. Magos (2007) developed a qualitative case study with nine teachers. He
wanted to investigate the contribution of action-research to training teachers in intercultural education. The teachers’ participation was voluntary which has been highlighted as having a positive impact on teacher’s personal and professional development (Judah & Richardson, 2006). The study investigated changes of attitudes and beliefs of the cultural and ethnic differences between the Greek Orthodox majority teachers and their students of Muslim minority, as well as their intercultural sensitivity. Qualitative research techniques such as semi-structured interviews and participant observation were instruments used by the researcher to collect data. The findings showed significant changes in the ways the teachers perceived their roles. They widened their teaching to include new ways of treating the cultural differences in the school where the values of intercultural dimension in education would play a fundamental role.

My problem as a French as a Second Language teacher in a small rural school in an English-speaking community, arose from my own anecdotal data, collected over time, which suggested that many young students disliked French because they did not see any use for the language in their lives. As an educator, I believe that the acquisition of a second language, in addition to increasing students’ opportunities for employment in Canada and in the world, may also help students to develop a more positive attitude toward foreign people and cultures.

The cultural exchange that was central to this action research study was set up to inquire if such an experience would improve both my students’ attitudes toward learning French and their perceptions of Francophone peers. If this change to my practice was successful, I would see my Anglophone students demonstrating an improvement with respect to self-described perceptions about their Francophone peers through showing
indications of three of the five savoirs suggested by Byram and Doyé (2005): Savoir être, related to attitude and curiosity about the group; savoirs, related to knowledge or awareness of the existence of Francophone communities in the province of Ontario and recognition of differences and similarities in behaviours, from both groups; savoir apprendre, related to the use of appropriate behaviour when interacting with members of the target culture, avoiding conflicts. These indicators are in agreement with the Ontario Curriculum French as a Second Language curriculum expectations for Intercultural Understanding of Grade 4 students who are expected to “identify French-speaking communities in Ontario, find out about aspects of their cultures, and make connections to personal experiences and their own and other communities” (p.126). Students’ attitudes towards learning Core French would show that they participated more actively during the instructional activities, by asking more questions and sharing more thoughts in class and their on-task behaviour would improve, as they became more engaged and positively connected to the content and process of learning. My evaluation of perceptions and attitudes of the Anglophone students resulted from the analysis of the data from the three instruments: questionnaire, observation checklist of task-related behaviour, and semi-structured interviews.

With the above in mind, I sought possibilities for dynamic and evolving actions, following Waters-Adams (2006) statement that “analysis within action research is about possibilities, not certainties,” that would fulfill my professional goal in the classroom to improve my students’ view and utilization of the French language, while simultaneously facilitating the development of my students’ intercultural competence.
In the next section, I will first provide context selection, followed by descriptions of participant selection and background, as well as the steps taken to plan and implement the cultural exchange activity. Finally, data collection and analysis procedures are outlined.

**Research Design**

**Exchange Context Selection and Introduction to Cultural Activity**

The school in which the study took place is part of a publically-funded district School Board in southeastern Ontario, where I teach Core French from Kindergarten to Grade 4. I have my own classroom, which is highly unusual for a Core French teacher because most are usually itinerant, rotating among regular classrooms to teach French. I teach all my students daily, in regularly timetabled class periods that are 50 minutes long. My classroom has long lunch tables because it is also a lunchroom, instead of desks, and students sit in groups to learn. The classroom is equipped with one computer that has internet access, a SmartBoard™, and a data projector, which allow me to contact the outside world and present Worldwide-web-based information to my students without having to move to other parts of the school. Having continuous access to these technological tools made the implementation of my study possible.

Before my study began, I sought ethical clearance from the Education Research Ethics Board (EREB), General Research Ethics Board (GREB) at Queen’s University, and the local school board (Appendix A). I also approached my school’s principal and shared with her the information that I was pursuing a Master’s degree, concomitantly explaining the goal of my study and requesting permission to conduct the research with my students in the Grade 4 classroom because they were my oldest group of students and were best
equipped to understand the e-mails received from their Francophone peers and the most capable to create e-mails using the French language. To find a teacher to be my partner in the study, I asked a Francophone colleague if she knew a teacher who taught at a school that was a member of our local school district, but located within a Francophone community, who might be interested in exchanging e-mails with my classroom. My colleague suggested Mrs. Adams (pseudonym), a Core French teacher at Majorcatown P. S. (pseudonym). Before sending Mrs. Adams an e-mail, I searched Statistics Canada (2012) on the internet for information about the community and found out that over 50% of the local population is Francophone. The school is situated 206 km away from our school and is close to the Quebec border. I sent Mrs. Adams an e-mail to ask if she would like to participate in the e-mail exchange with one of her classes and she agreed. She chose to work with her Grade 5/6 students. Our school board did not require ethics clearance for Mrs. Adams because we were both employees of the same board and we used our cultural exchange as a regular pen pal class exchange activity as part of our classroom instruction and professional growth plan. A letter of information and a consent form were then forwarded to Mrs. Adams (Appendix B), to be signed by her and mailed back to me. The forms were signed and sent back to me through our School Board’s mailing system. Mrs. Adam’s students did not need a letter of information or consent form to participate in the study because even though they were participating in the inter-class cultural exchange, their data (in the form of e-mail correspondence) were not going to be used in the study.

On May 28, 2012, before school began, I talked to my school’s Grade 4 teacher, Mrs. Perkins (pseudonym), about my study and explained to her that I was going to ask her students to be participants in my action research project. In addition, I asked her to
keep any signed parental consent forms until June 15, the deadline for submitting the last report card assessments of the year, to the principal. Since I was still teaching and evaluating the students while the study was occurring, every step needed to be taken to ensure that their participation or non-participation did not impact their grades. Mrs. Perkins understood the power imbalance in the relationship between the students and me, the teacher-researcher, and agreed to keep the forms. On the same day, during French class, I talked to the Anglophone Grade 4 students about my research study. I handed out a consent form and a letter of information (Appendix C) to each student and asked them to take the forms home and talk to their parents. If they were interested in participating in the study, I explained that they were to give their signed consent forms and those of their parents or guardians to their classroom teacher, Mrs. Perkins, who in turn, would give them to me after report card assessments were given to the principal.

The cultural unit consisted of five 50 minute lessons that took place between June 1 and June 14, 2012. I had originally planned eight lessons for the cultural-exchange, however, due to the many last-minute, year-end activities that took place during the regularly scheduled Grade 4 instructional periods, my timetable was disrupted, resulting in fewer than anticipated classes, and higher-than-usual absentee rates in my French classes.

Although I did not know the identities of those students who were the official participants in the study (because of the signed parental consent), I began the cultural exchange unit as a regular instructional unit for all the students in the Grade 4 French class, on May 31. The unit began with a questionnaire (Appendix D) that I created to survey the students’ attitudes toward learning French in my classroom before the cultural exchange. The questionnaire’s content was designed to solicit data about students’ likes
and dislikes of the French course and did not have any confidential content, so I administered and collected it. Any teacher could use the same questionnaire at the beginning of the school year to assess students’ attitudes toward the French course in order to better select activities for the students.

After the questionnaire, I introduced the Francophone community and the partner school to my students using the information I had compiled from the School Board website. On May 31, Mrs. Adams’ class began the cultural exchange and their e-mail talked about the students’ favourite places. Mrs. Adam’s and I had talked on the telephone the week before and I had asked her that we began writing the e-mails using familiar topics, such as: the students’ favourite places and activities at school, sports and hobbies, which according to Liaw and Johnson (2001), would give students the opportunity to exchange considerable cultural information. In addition to the e-mail, Mrs. Adam’s class sent us photographs of the different places in their school and of each student in the Grade 5/6 Core French class (Appendix E). Although the other students were older than mine, the e-mails were written in collaboration with the teachers, consequently there was no language barrier. The students shared information about the school population, the cafeteria where they ate lunch on the second floor, the visual arts and the music classrooms, and the library, the schoolyard, the gymnasium and the computer laboratory. They also talked about their favourite places and why (e.g., “j’aime le gymnase parce qu’il y a beaucoup d’espace”. I like the gymnasium because there is a lot of space). They ended the e-mail by asking the question: “What is your favourite place at school?” My students and I met the next day, June 1, during our regular class time, to see the pictures and read the e-mail we had received from the students from the Francophone community.
Research Context

This study was conducted at a small, rural, public school located in a small community that is part of a township in southeastern Ontario. The township covers an area of 612.51 square kilometres and has 9,277 inhabitants. According to the Statistics Canada, 2011 census, 95% of the population declared English as their mother tongue, 2% French and 3% non-official languages (Statistics Canada, 2011).

This school in which my action research project took place is an elementary school with 319 students, who range in age from 4 to 12 years old. The majority of the students and a few staff members are native to the area and they seem to know each other well. I am the only person on staff who was born in another country and whom the students see, and interact with on a daily basis. Although the school receives students from a large geographical area, many students live within walking distance. Students are enrolled in one of two programs: a French Immersion program, with 111 students, and a Core French program, with 208 students. I did my research study in the only Grade 4 Core French which had 23 students and for whom I was the French instructor. Fifteen of the 23 students, nine girls and six boys, had parental consent to participate in the study.

The partner school for the cultural exchange has 440 students, in Kindergarten to Grade 8, ranging in age from 4 to 14 years. At the partner school, students are also enrolled in two programs, French Immersion and Core French. Teaching staff are from both English and French backgrounds and the student population is heterogeneous, with 16.5% designated as English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. Twenty-seven Grade 5/6 Core French students took part in the cultural exchange.
The School Board for whom I work requires that Kindergarten (KG) to Grade 9 students learn FSL (French as a Second Language), in the Core French program, for 40 minutes a day. By the time students reach Grade 4 (the context of my study) they will have learned French for approximately 600 hours, assuming that they have attended school for 194 days (the duration of the school year). The expectations from KG to Grade 3 for Core French are based only in the students’ development of oral communication. In Ontario, teachers do not have a curriculum document to follow during those first years. At my School Board there is a K to 3 Guideline, but its use is not widely used by the Core French teachers. In Grade 4, however, students are expected to develop writing, reading, listening, and speaking skills following the curriculum expectations of the Ontario FSL Core French policy document. The expectations are explicitly stated and students are expected to show their language knowledge through different modes of communication.

During French class my students typically participate in many different activities, ranging from daily conversations and paper and pencil activities, to skits, drama, visual arts, singing, watching Youtube videos, presentations, and games using the Smart Board™. Based on my anecdotal data as an FSL teacher over time, some of my students seemed to enjoyed being in the spotlight and thrived during presentations and other activities during which they could demonstrate their oral French skills, while others preferred written activities or large group activities during which they were not expected to speak very much. Overall, my students’ favourite activity was playing French games on the Smart Board™. The games are created using the Notebook™ software that has virtual spinning wheels, dice, and other gadgets that can be used to make games to practice verbs, vocabulary, and texts, to name but a few examples. Using Notebook™, it is possible to
create “Jeopardy” type games or other “Concentration”-like memory-matching games for the Smart Board™. The games are projected onto the interactive Smart Board™ and the students touch pictures and words and try to answer the questions asked; it is rote learning, aimed at developing automaticity with vocabulary and language conventions, but it is in the form of a game and, in my experience, students seem to enjoy the activity. It seems to me that, during the times that instruction incorporated interactive whiteboard technology, most of the students were focused and eager to have a turn, which, in my opinion was not standard for other instructional approaches.

**Participant Selection**

The 15 students who participated in the study were in my Grade 4 Core French class and had acquired parent approval. On June 15, after the report card assessments were submitted to the principal, Mrs. Perkins, the Grade 4 classroom teacher in my school gave me the consent forms that she had withheld since the beginning of the study. At that time, I learned that out of a total of 24 students, 15 (nine girls and six boys) returned consent forms signed by a parent or guardian, thereby becoming participants of the study. All students were Anglophones, whose age ranged from 9 to 10 years, and who lived locally.

Below, I present a brief description of each of the 15 participants in the study. The descriptions are based on the observation checklist, the short notes that I recorded in a blank area on the right-hand side of the checklist, the interview, and my observations during the study.

*Table 1: Student Description*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student’s Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vicky</td>
<td>During the study, Vicky usually participated in conversations, sharing her thoughts and also asking and answering questions. According to the observation checklist, she did not volunteer to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaylee</td>
<td>During the study, Kaylee volunteered to participate in class frequently, even if not sure of how to say a sentence in French. She had a leadership role in the classroom as she inquired about the students from the Francophone community and contributed with ideas to the e-mails we wrote. According to the observation checklist, she interacted with teacher and peers everyday of the cultural exchange.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamie</td>
<td>Jamie began the study without showing much interest; he doodled and looked bored. However, when I asked him questions, he answered them in English but in context. The observation checklist showed that during the last two days, he participated in class, sharing his thoughts voluntarily. He participated in the study encouraged by his mother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buster</td>
<td>For the first four days of the study, Buster was off task. He had difficulty understanding the language, so he talked to his friends instead. On the last day, he participated in class, when called by teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>Sally did not begin to learn French until Grade 3, but was already at a high achievement level. She always volunteered to participate in class, making sure she pronounced words properly. She participated actively throughout the study, contributing with ideas to the e-mails we wrote, asking questions when in doubt and sharing her thoughts with her peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cristina</td>
<td>Cristina regularly volunteered to share her thoughts in class, speaking French at all times. She had a very active role during all five days of the exchange. She showed interest in learning more about the other students, contributing with ideas to the e-mails we wrote, asking when we were going to get another email, and also saying that it would have been nice to have continued the exchange as a pen-pal activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bea</td>
<td>Bea had difficulties learning the language, according to my assessment prior to the study, but did not give up. The observation checklist showed that she only participated on day #4 of the exchange. She was off task on day 2, but on the first, third and last days she answered questions when prompted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie</td>
<td>Charlie liked to talk with his peers during class, but also liked to learn. He often volunteered to speak in class and sometimes told me he liked French. He did not participate much during the exchange. According to the observation checklist, he was off task during the first two days, but showed improvement in the last three, contributing with ideas to the e-mails we wrote, and answering questions when called upon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dennison</td>
<td>Dennison had difficulties learning the language, according to my assessment, and did not show interest in learning. He made inappropriate comments in class to get his peers’ attention, seldom volunteered to speak, and often said he did not like French. He was curious to see what the other school and students were going to look like and participated in class on the first day of the exchange. However, he was off task for the remainder of the activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aleana</td>
<td>Aleana usually volunteered to participate in class, trying to speak in full sentences in French, asking questions when in doubt and sharing her thoughts on the subject. She interacted with teacher and peers during the five days of the exchange, showing interest in the other group, asking for more e-mails, contributing with ideas to the e-mails we wrote, and wanting to communicate for a longer period of time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Paige was not very confident in class and often said she did not understand French, but often volunteered to participate in class and asked questions when in doubt. On the first day of the exchange she participated when prompted by the teacher or her classmates. During the last four days, she had a more active role, volunteering to answer questions I asked about the e-mails received (e.g.; Où est-ce que les élèves mangent leur dîner? Where do the students eat their lunch?).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cam</td>
<td>Cam is Jamie’s twin brother. During class, he used mostly English when asked to speak, and liked to talk to his peers instead of paying attention. During the exchange, he was off task for three of the five days, talking to his peers during class. During days 3 and 4, however, he answered questions when called upon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>Martin considered French to be an easy course, but did not volunteer to speak in the classroom. On the first day of the exchange, he made some inappropriate comments about the other students and did not pay much attention. For the remainder of the activity, he contributed to the conversation with his thoughts, but only when he was called upon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karla</td>
<td>Karla always participated in all classroom activities, volunteering to share her thoughts, and using French as the language of communication. She participated in class during the five days of the exchange. She asked and answered questions, and also contributed with ideas to the e-mails we wrote.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>Alice constantly said in the classroom that French was hard and she did not like to learn it, but spoke French when called upon. Her participation in the cultural exchange was intermittent. On the first day she made inappropriate comments about the other students’ clothes, but became more positive on the second day, when she volunteered to answer questions and share her thoughts, in English. On the third day she was off task, talking to her peers and showing...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Five Lessons

On June 1, my students walked in the classroom and sat at the tables. As usual, we had a conversation in French for 15 minutes, talking about how they were feeling that day, the date and the weather. Following, I told my students we had an e-mail from our partner school and explained, in French, the content of the e-mail. We read it together and I explained the new vocabulary. Since the other students had asked us about our favourite places at school, I suggested that we walked around the school and I would photograph the places they wanted to share with their peers. On the same day during recess, and for the next three days, I photographed my students’ favourite places (Appendix F). I also took pictures of different places at our school to send to the other students and uploaded all the pictures on a Word document to show my students.

We did not receive a new e-mail on June 2, 3 and 4, so my students attended regular French class, following the curriculum expectations.

On June 5, my students arrived for their French class, sat at the tables and we interacted for 15 minutes, talking about the date, weather and, since we were ready to write the e-mail, the topics that we were going to address when writing to the other students; we organized our ideas on chart paper before we began to write the e-mail. I used the computer and a white screen to project all the photographs I had taken with the students and by myself. On our e-mail, we wrote below each photograph as we introduced our school, each student and their favourite places. The students also asked questions about the e-mail received showing curiosity about the other group. For example, the
students asked about the painting and the decorations in the library and why they were important. They also asked about the food in the cafeteria.

During the cultural exchange, in addition to our daily conversation and the reading and writing of the e-mails, I also kept track of my students’ behaviours and their participation in class, using the observation checklist of task-related behaviours.

On June 6 and 7 my students either had curriculum-related French classes, or missed class to attend other curricular or extracurricular activities.

On June 8, the students entered the classroom asking if we had a new e-mail and were very excited to find out that, we did. They sat at the tables and we began to read the new e-mail. The second e-mail talked about the food served in the cafeteria, their outdoor classroom, and the sports played during physical education. My students learned about hand-ball and showed an interest in learning how to play it. As I read the e-mail to my students, I highlighted what we thought was important information. After reading, I opened a Word document and we begin to write, checking topics highlighted on the e-mail received, while answering the questions asked and adding our own questions to the other students. On our e-mail, we talked about the sports and games my students played during physical education, such as “Ship-Shore-And-Rescue,” and “Fishy-Fishy,” both of which are local tag games. In “Ship-Shore-And-Rescue,” two people are ‘it’ and when the ‘its’ yell “ship,” the other students run to a predetermined wall of the gym while the ‘its’ try to catch them. If “shore” is called, the students run to the opposite wall and avoid getting caught. If “rescue” is called, they run to the line that divides the gymnasium in half which is also the “home” of the ‘its’. If a player is caught, he is ‘out’ and must sit to watch and to cheer for the friends who are still playing; the game goes on until only one or a few
students are left, and those students win the game. “Fishy-Fishy” has a player who assumes the role of a ‘shark’ who tries to eat the other class members (who are ‘fish’); students try to cross from one side of the gymnasium to the other and if the shark touches any fish, he either becomes a shark and helps to catch the others, or they are out and sit to watch the game; it will depend on the teacher discretion. The last fish alive wins the game.

On our first e-mail, my students had shared with their peers that the girls had attended a Girls Inc. gathering. The students from the other school did not know what it meant because they did not have that organization in their community, so we explained to them what the organization did.

On June 9 my students did not attend French class because they went to visit the local grocery store which was having a celebration and had invited the school to attend. On June 10, my students had the habitual curriculum-related lessons.

On June 11, we received our third e-mail. After my students entered the classroom and sat at the tables, we began to read the e-mail. We learned about the teacher’s and the students’ favourite pastimes and I noticed that my students were really focused on that day. We used the same strategies we used on June 5, highlighting the important information and using it to help compose our e-mail. I, once again, used a Word document to write the e-mail, projecting it on the white screen, in order to promote students’ participation in the writing process. We answered the questions asked and added new topics as the students suggested. My students shared their pastimes and how surprised they were that some of the students from the Francophone community did the same.

---

1 Girls Inc. inspires all girls to be strong, smart, and bold through life-changing programs and experiences that help girls navigate gender, economic, and social barriers. Girls Inc. nonprofit organizations serve 136,000 girls ages 6 - 18 annually across the United States and Canada (retrieved from: girlsinc.org).
On June 12, we had a band performing at our school, which conflicted with the French instruction; consequently, students did not come to class. On June 13, my students went to Queen’s for the day, and did not attend French.

On June 14, we received two e-mails from our partner school. The students entered the classroom, sat at the tables and we began to read the e-mails. We read the fourth e-mail first and we found out that the parents of seven students from the other school were born in different countries. We also learned about their end-of-the-year school trip to the Museum of Civilization and my students said they would like to have a similar end-of-the-year trip. Mrs. Adams was going to be away the following week, so the class sent us another e-mail telling us about their plans for the summer and bidding us farewell. As we read the e-mails, we highlighted the important information, as usual. Following the e-mail reading, I then opened a Word document and we talked about our plans for the summer, the students became aware of the new vocabulary and we constructed our sentences to write the e-mail. My students also bid their farewell to their peers from the Francophone community and many of them shared the wish to continue the exchange, as a class or as a pen-pal exchange, but their wish did not materialize.

All the e-mails were written in French, by Mrs. Adams and me, but the content and context of questions and comments originated from the students, as a group.

In this study I focused on pastimes and favourite places at school because my goal was to expose my students to some of the cultural patterns of this particular group of students in a Francophone community. According to Glesne (2010), accessing members of
a determined social group and their perspectives about some phenomena, “can begin to say something about cultural patterns of thought and action for that group” (p.8).

Although we as a class could not reach the original goal of having a minimum of six and a maximum of eight e-mail exchanges with our partner classroom, due to the busy schedule in June, communication went very well because the content of the e-mails was rich and informative, giving my students an idea of what the students from the Francophone community do at school and for entertainment.

**Instrument Development and Data Collection**

Data was collected using the following three methods: (a) an observation checklist of task-related behaviours, (b) a student questionnaire, and (c) Five semi-structured group photo-interviews.

**Observation Checklist of Task-related Behaviors**

Using a checklist I recorded nine behaviours that were represented by letters. Each student’s name was written in a small box where I wrote the letter corresponding to the behaviour noticed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“P”</td>
<td>Student is on task and participates voluntarily in class, indicating proactive behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“P-“</td>
<td>Student is on task and participates voluntarily in class, speaking English and French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“P+”</td>
<td>Student is on task and participates voluntarily in class, speaking only French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“?”</td>
<td>Student asks questions related to the topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“X”</td>
<td>Student is off task, talking or doing things that interrupt the lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“N”</td>
<td>Student is called upon, by the teacher, to answer a question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“N-“</td>
<td>Teacher asks student a question and the answer is in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“N+”</td>
<td>Teacher asks student a question and the answer is mostly in French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“A”</td>
<td>Teacher asks student a question and the answer is all in French</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
By using the checklist, I was trying to keep track of student behaviour and also their understanding of the French language. I developed this instrument based on The First District Regional Education Service Agency’s (RESA) (2001) “Observation Tool 10[:]
Managing the Learning Environment” created by Teacher Support Specialists from the state of Georgia, USA, with the objective of observing specific tasks based on suggestions made by the Georgia Teacher Evaluation Program (GTEP). The rationale for using this instrument, according to the Teacher Support Specialists, is that this tool is useful in the classroom during instruction, helping the teacher to identify deficits and strengths in students’ behaviours, such as their interaction in class or interruptions. The teacher observes students individually and assesses them while teaching. In evaluating the data, the teacher is able to tell who participated and if the participation was voluntary or responsive (i.e. needed to be prompted by the teacher).

I thought such a tool would be ideal for me because during my teaching day, I have 40 minutes for lesson preparation and 40 minutes for lunch, but I have no breaks between lessons; when one group leaves my class, there is another waiting at the door to come in. Therefore, I needed a tool that helped me assess my students’ behaviour during instruction without having to spend a lot of time writing notes. Moreover, I feared that my memory would not be sufficient for me to reports the interactions that occurred while I taught the Grade 4 class after I had taught other groups.

During the five, 50 minute lessons, reserved for the culture exchange, my Anglophone students and I gathered to read the e-mails sent by the Francophone students and to generate whole class responses. According to Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001), in Action Research, the observation stage may lead into reflections that can generate
revisions and changes in classroom activities, based on a combination of theoretical and practical learning derived from student-participant observation. During the cultural exchange, I used the observation checklist of task-related behaviours, described above (Appendix G), in addition to writing short descriptive and analytic notes about students’ perceptions of the French group. I also used descriptive notes to document their attitude toward learning Core French in such a context (e.g., if they asked when we were going to write to the other students, or if we had a new e-mail). According to McMillan and Schumacher, descriptive notes describe in detail the interaction taking place as the researcher looks for patterns, or repeated relevant information found in the data that could serve as a “framework for reporting the findings and organizing the reports” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p.378). Analytical notes, also called observer comments, are records of feelings, problems, and ideas that occur to the researcher during or after participant observation (Glesne, 2010).

In this study, the observation checklist of task-related behaviour helped in refining the interview questions for the student group photo-interview and also during data analysis, to confirm attitudes and perceptions shown by the students during the interview.

**Student Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was created to better understand my students’ attitudes toward learning Core French before the cultural exchange. I wanted to collect data that I could compare to the interview data that I collected after the cultural exchange. The questionnaire had eight questions and investigated students’ perceptions of their own listening, reading and writing abilities, their use of French outside the classroom, their feelings about listening to people speaking French, their interest in learning the language,
and their opinion about the language teaching approach. The first six topics were related to their attitude towards the language and the culture because if they wanted to learn more or felt capable of performing certain skills it meant they wanted to communicate with members of the other culture. The questionnaire did not show evidence of the reasons why they would want to communicate with members of the other culture, because those topics were the subject of the interview, when they would discuss regular classroom activities in comparison to the cultural exchange approach. The findings were used as a guide to develop questions for the interview, as well as for comparison with the other methods, the observation checklist of task-related behaviour and the semi-structured photo-interview, to check recurrence of patterns (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010), that could answer the research questions. The initial questionnaire was created based on the study by Heining-Boynton and Haitema, (2007) in which they investigated students’ attitudes toward French language instruction through a ten year longitudinal mixed-methods study because they believed that students’ attitudes toward second language learning influenced their level of achievement. The research was comprised of two studies. The first, a quantitative study, documented a large population of students in two school districts in North Carolina for six years. The pilot survey was developed by a team of 25 French teachers, administrators and consultants for KG and Grade 1 students. It consisted of questions “answered by marking a smiling or frowning face on the students’ answer sheets after the teacher read the prompt” (p. 152). The second, a qualitative study, was a follow-up study that focused on a group of 13 high school students who participated in the first study. Questions for the survey were created according to certain themes: children’s appreciation of the French language study, confidence in language ability, and interest in continuing the French language study. I
combined the idea of the smiling and frowning faces and adapted it to the ideas from the themes to create the questionnaire for my Grade 4 students.

**Semi-Structured Group Photo-Interview**

The questions for the semi-structured group photo-interview were reproduced and/or adapted from two pieces of literature that were related to my study. Garbati’s (2007) study guided the questions about student’s attitudes toward learning FSL. I used sections from the three interviews she had with a language-minority learner as she tried to learn about his experiences while learning Core French in Canada. Questions were related to feelings about learning French; purpose of learning French; interaction with the French community; participation, challenges, and attitudes in French class; and opinions of French (Garbati, 2007). Byram and Esarte-Sarries’s (1991) investigation guided the questions about students’ perceptions. Questions were related to students’ impressions and ideas of the French people (e.g.; what they eat, wear, appearance, differences and similarities). In addition to the questions based on Garbati’s (2007) and Byram and Esarte-Sarries’s (1991) studies, photographs from the Francophone school were used as prompts for my students to describe what they learned from the e-mail exchange with the students in the other community. A few questions that were not part of the interview guide arose from the conversation about the students from the Francophone community.

**Photo Elicitation.** Cappello (2005) states that in qualitative research, when the participants’ perspectives and intentions are important data, photography has been demonstrated to be a useful tool, especially when the participants are children because they have limited powers of recollection and language skills, and may feel intimidated by the school setting. The use of photography in qualitative studies is called photo-elicitation.
Photography is a relatively new tool to research and its role still controversial (Luttrell & Chalfen, 2010). The most prominent questions about the role of photography in research are related to the purpose of the photographs, since they can be used to portray or exclude the surroundings. It is argued that although photographs may have their own voices, they are useful in communicating or complementing the participants’ ideas (Luttrell & Chalfen, 2010). Some advantages of photographs are: they prompt participants to attend to ideas they might have talked or thought about (Bunster, 1977; Orellana & Hernandez, 1999); they focus the interview (Collier & Collier, 1986; and Wagner, 1979); they serve as a memory check (Bunster, 1977; Collier & Collier, 1986; and Wagner, 1979); and, they function as member checking for researchers drawing conclusions from data (Bunster, 1977). In addition, cameras and photographs are purported as tools of engagement because they sustain interest (Mathews and Tucker 2000) and promote genuine curiosity about the research agenda (Cappello, 2005).

Photo-elicitation is one of the most widespread uses of photography for qualitative enquiry (Bunster, 1977; Cappello, 2005; Collier & Collier, 1986; Preskill, 1995; Secondulfo, 1997; Wagner, 1979). It has also been used to bridge cultural boundaries (Harper, 2000; Harper and Faccioli, 2000) and help participants understand that differences in perception can be defined, compared and eventually understood to be socially constructed by both parties (Harper, 2000).

The use of photography in interview provides additional data source and allows researchers to take inquiry further. Secondulfo (1997) tells us, “This ability to ‘freeze’ pieces of reality in forms to which other, subsequent, methods of research can easily be applied is an advantage of photography which cannot be renounced” (p. 34). However, the
The greatest advantage of photography, according to Cappello and Hollingsworth (2008) and Wagner (1979), is its ability to be a source data as well as a tool for eliciting data when employed as stimuli during the interview.

When the research participants are children, studies have shown that photo-elicitation interviewing is an effective data collection method because of its informal structure, it helps children remain engaged and feel empowered as an active part of the process (Cappello, 2005). Cappello and Hollingsworth (2008) gave disposable cameras to their second and third grade students while inquiring literacy through photography. During the 20-30 minute interviews with their students, Cappello (p. 447) perceived that pictures enabled students to engage in analysis with the researcher, which provided a means for getting to a deeper view of the their perspectives. Hollingsworth (p. 447) noticed that through the photo-interview, students were able to express their perceptions and ideas more clearly. As they reflected, they told stories about their own relationship to what was in the images and what was left out of them. There is little doubt that photography can enhance students’ responses. During an interview the goal of the researcher is to obtain rich and authentic data and photography is an instrument that can be used to achieve this goal.

During the last two days of school, I conducted five 45 minute semi-structured photo-interviews, with groups that ranged from two to four participants, in response to a request of the Grade 4 homeroom teacher. The students were presenting projects and she decided who was going to leave and when.

During the semi-structured interviews, I asked the participants questions following a predetermined interview guide (Appendix H), that was created based on previous studies.
(Byram & Esarte-Sarries, 1991; Garbati, 2007), but did not stay restricted to the guide because, while talking to the students new questions were needed to address their understanding. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), in the interview guide approach, topics are chosen in advance, but the researcher determines the order and wording of the questions during the interview in order to increase comprehensiveness. I also used the participants’ statements, during the interview, to probe beyond the pre-established questions (Berg, 2009) in an attempt to obtain a better understanding of their answers.

The interview guide was designed to elicit my students’ perceptions of the students from the Francophone community, and their attitudes toward learning French as a Second Language after the cultural exchange. The interviews were broken into two sessions of 20 minutes, separated by a five minute refreshment break, as suggested by Morgan, Gibbs, Maxwell and Britten (2002), to encourage interactive discussion among the students. My goal as the researcher was to examine the participants’ perceptions and experiences after their cultural interaction.

For the interviews, I requested a personal day off from the school Board and did not teach on that day. I interviewed my students at our school, during school hours, in an empty classroom that was located at the end of the hallway. We did not have to deal with a lot of distractions because of our location, which helped the students stay focused during the interviews. Before each interview, I explained to the students what was going to happen, trying to help them relax and understand that it was going to be a positive experience. I reminded them about the duration of the interview, 45 minutes with a snack in the middle; made clear they knew the interviews were going to be audio recorded with
the assistance of the iPad to record the conversation; explained that if they felt
uncomfortable with any question they did not have to answer; and also asked them not
comment with their friends about the interview because the content of the interview should
be confidential. Groups ranging from two to four students, according to their availability to
leave the homeroom classroom, joined me for the interviews. Photographs of students’
favourite places from both schools were used during the interview to give participants the
opportunity to be active in the interaction (Mathews and Tucker 2000) while providing
data about their beliefs and perceptions of the students from the Francophone community,
as well as of their learning of French as a Second Language through a cultural context.

Data Analysis

“Qualitative analysis is a relatively systematic process of coding, categorizing, and
interpreting data to provide explanations of a single phenomenon of interest” (McMillan &
Schumacher, 2010, p. 367). The data gathered from the questionnaire, interview, and
observation checklist of task-related behaviours were analyzed through the use of
inductive analysis. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) define inductive analysis as “the
process through which qualitative researchers synthesize and make meaning from the data,
starting with specific data and ending with categories and patterns. In this way, more
general themes and conclusions emerge from the data, rather than being imposed prior to
data collection” (p.367). In my study, through inductive analysis, I had the opportunity to
look for common themes that emerged from the participants’ responses. Moreover, I was
able to analyze each participant’s attitude towards learning French as a Second Language
through a cultural approach and their perceptions of the other group. Although the analysis
of the data was done in an inductive manner, I was aware that the literature review
influenced, indirectly, the recognition of patterns and categories. Even the research questions, themselves could have influenced the wording of the categories. In reality, inductive data analysis, the way it is defined, needed to be done prior to the reading of the literature; however, I did not consciously transfer any themes from other studies into mine.

Specifically, I began to transcribe the interviews verbatim three days after they took place, on June 24, 2012. When reading the transcripts line by line, I highlighted with different coloured markers those sentences that appeared to have similar meaning and tried to code the data in my search for themes, patterns, and processes that would support possible answers to my research questions. After colour coding each sentence, I analyzed the data for the initial codes that derived from the data. An open-coding system was used to find emerging topics. I met with my supervisor and committee member and together we reviewed the codes that were emerging from the data.

I gave participants pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality. All data were retained in a filing cabinet accessible only to me.

Through the use of inductive analysis, codes, categories and patterns, primarily and tentatively, emerged from the data, and were constantly revised as the data analysis proceeded. Coding was done using the template analysis style whereby codes are created, based on the data, and applied to the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) state that the ultimate goal of qualitative research is to find patterns that provide an understanding of people’s situations, mental processes, beliefs, and actions, while examining the data in as many ways as possible. The patterns I found while analyzing the data helped me understand my students’ view of their
peers from the Francophone community, as well as how this view influenced their learning of French as a Second Language.

**Credibility and Trustworthiness**

The ultimate goal of a study is to present the reader with information that will be accepted as credible. Glesne (2010) explains that if we believe that “concepts are socially constructed” (p.49) we cannot create criteria to prove that something is “true” or “accurate.” In light of this debate, some researchers use the concept “trustworthiness” to determine whether or not the work has credibility. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest four criteria they believe should be taken into consideration by a qualitative researcher when seeking for trustworthiness or credibility of a study: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility for this study was established through peer debriefing and triangulation. As a graduate student my research supervisor and the committee member provided peer review and debriefing as they helped me with coding decisions and identification of categories. Berg (2009) explains that each method of data collection reveals slightly different facets of the same symbolic reality; the combination of the methods is called triangulation. This research collected data through three different methods: a) an observation checklist of task-related behaviour, b) a student questionnaire, and 3) five semi-structured group photo-interviews. The data acquired was constantly compared and contrasted looking for similarities and disparities in the patterns that appeared in the data.

Transferability is the ability to use the findings from one study to other situations. Such ability is reached through detailed description of the steps taken to get to the results obtained by the study. During my study I wrote detailed descriptions of the circumstances
that were being investigated: I informed the reader of the reason for the study, the literature that was supporting the study, the context of my study, the steps I took to develop the study, as well as how I gathered and analyzed the data to reach the study’s findings. If another person wants to develop a study in another environment, and see similar participant behaviour, he or she will be able to use my study’s findings to explain what is happening in the other situation.

Dependability is reached when the same study can be repeated by another researcher, with the same group and he or she will obtain the same results. For this to happen, the development of the study and its methods must be reported in detail. To create dependability of my study, I explained in detail the research design and its implementation, the data collection methods, and data analysis.

Confirmability is also reached through triangulation; by combining multiple methods I constantly compared and contrasted the data looking for similarities and disparities in the patterns that appeared in the data, aiming to better understand the data and reach conclusions that were legitimate to the data collected.

**Summary**

This chapter described and provided details of the method of the study. First, the rationale for the qualitative, action research approach was described. Next, the research design outlined the process for obtaining ethical clearance, ensuring the safety and the privacy of the participants. It also included steps in the implementation process, the context of the study, participant selection and participant background. Data collection methods, which included an observation checklist of task-related behaviours, a student questionnaire, and 5 semi-structured group photo-interviews were described next. The
organization and analysis of data were explained, and finally, credibility and trustworthiness were articulated. The method of the study, for which details were provided in this section of the thesis, was chosen carefully by the researcher to ensure the most accurate and realistic data possible were collected and that participant perspectives were shared.
Chapter 4: Presentation of Data

This chapter presents the study findings and discusses the data derived from the interview with 15 Grade 4 students attending a public school in Eastern Ontario, a student questionnaire, and observation checklist of task-related behaviour, which I used to document students’ behaviour during the cultural exchange. The findings seek to answer the following two research questions posed by the study: How did the cultural exchange activity influence the Anglophone students’ perceptions of their peers from the Francophone community?; and, How did the cultural exchange activity impact the Anglophone students’ attitudes toward learning Core French?

Human actions are strongly influenced by the settings in which they occur, consequently, the study of behaviour without taking into account the context would be incomplete (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010). In this chapter, I will present the data collected through the themes that emerged from three instruments: 1) small group interviews, 2) a student questionnaire, 3) observation checklist of task-related behaviour.

Four overarching themes emerged from the data: ignorance and stereotypes, ethnocentrism, perceptions of the peers from the other group, and French language learning approaches. After presenting each theme, I will write a short summary to highlight the key findings that emerged from the data related to the theme.

The data from the student questionnaire and the observation checklist of task-related behaviour were used to complement the interview data as a way of supporting and validating the findings from the three instruments. The combination of all the data provided insights regarding the students’ perceptions of a group of peers from a
Francophone community and their attitude toward learning French as an L2 during the cultural exchange.

When using quotations from participants’ interviews I will use their pseudonym and the page from their interview transcript; for example (Charlie, p. 3). I also use the code [ ] for my own explanatory or supplementary remarks of the excerpts from the interviews and from the notes taken during the study.

Qualitative research, although displaying regularity shown by a certain group or individual, varies by time, space and circumstances (Patton, 2005). Consequently, the results from this study are not representative of all Grade 4 students who learn Core French through a cultural exchange. They show the findings of a specific group at a certain place, time and situation and their feelings about having a cultural exchange as an instructional approach.

I used the questionnaire that I created based on the study by Heining-Boynton and Haitema, (2007) to learn about the students’ attitudes towards their French learning. The questionnaire was created on a dichotomy scale that gave the students the choice to agree or disagree with the statements by drawing a circle around the chosen answer (e.g., I like learning French 😊 😊). The results showed that 67% of the group like to learn French, but only 60% like to hear people speaking French. When talking about reading and writing skills, the group showed confidence: 100% of the students said they can read words in French, while 87% said they can write in French. Seventy-three percent of the students declared they do interesting things in French class, and 60% said they wanted to learn more French. Most students, 67%, said they understood when I spoke to them. Only 47% used French at home or with their friends.
Table 2: Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement:</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I like learning French</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I like to hear people speaking French</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I can write some words in French</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I can read some words in French</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. We do interesting things in French class</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I want to learn more French</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Most of the time, I understand what my French teacher is saying.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Sometimes I use French at home or with my friends</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The group felt confident about writing and reading (on questions #3, all 15 students or 100% declared they can write some words in French; and in question #4, 13 or 87% of the students declared they can read some words in French), but showed less confidence when asked about applying their knowledge to real life experiences (on question #7, 10 or 67% of the students said they understand what their French teacher was saying most of the time; and in question #8, seven or 47% of the students said they sometimes use French at home or with their friends). The reason for these results rests perhaps on the fact that the students do not have many opportunities to meet French speaking people and/or to engage in a conversation in French. As mentioned earlier, these students live in a very small community where contact with other cultures is almost non-existent, leading them to believe that they will only use French in the classroom. The lack of opportunities to use French in communication may lower the students’ confidence. For example, only nine or
60% of the students said they like to hear people speaking French—according to question #2; and seven or 47% of the students use the language at home or with friends—according to question #8. Lower confidence could develop a potential disinterest in learning the language, although students thought they had opportunities to do interesting things in French class (11 or 73% of the students, according to question #5).

Table 3 shows the results of my observations of student engagement during the cultural exchange. The results add to the context of student’s attitudes towards learning French through a cultural exchange.

**Table 3: Observation checklist of task-related behaviour**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>June 1st.</th>
<th>June 5th</th>
<th>June 8th</th>
<th>June 11</th>
<th>June 14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student participates in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>class (proactively)</td>
<td>6 (40%)</td>
<td>7 (47%)</td>
<td>7 (47%)</td>
<td>9 (60%)</td>
<td>8 (53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student off task</td>
<td>4 (27%)</td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher called on student</td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cultural exchange, being the context of my study, happened during five 50 minute French classes. Over the course of each class, I used the observation checklist to document the students’ behaviours by checking the boxes related to the behaviours seen, and writing short notes about how they viewed the other group and how they behaved in class. My objective with the checklist was to inquire about whether or not the students
would become more engaged as the cultural exchange progressed. At the end of the study, I made a table showing how students participated in class, ranging from being proactive which means to share ideas voluntarily, to not volunteering in class but still being able to answer questions when asked, and finally to being off task.

Table 3 shows that, as the cultural exchange progressed, students became more interested in the activity and participated more in class. On the first day, June 1st, 40% of the students were proactive in class and 33% needed to be redirected to the lesson upon my calling. On that day, my students were introduced to the photographs of the other students from the Francophone community and their favourite places in the school. As we looked at the pictures, the students and I looked for similarities and differences between the two schools. On the last day, June 14, 13% had to be redirected to the lesson, and 53% were proactive in class; I marked them proactive on the observation checklist of task-related behaviour as they raised their hands to say something related to the conversation, asked or answered a question.

The study ended on June 14, only 10 days before the end of the school year. There were many extra-curricular activities happening at our school such as outdoor sports, guests coming to the school, and field-trips, which made students less focused in class. Table #2 shows that students became more proactive in class as the culture exchange unfolded and on the last day, the percentage of proactive behaviour decreased: on the first day (June 1\textsuperscript{st}), 40% of the students were proactive; on the second day (June 5) 47%; on the third day (June 8), 47%; on the fourth day (June11), 60%; and on the last day (June 14), 53% of the students were proactive. Moreover, I noticed the percentage of students off task, which had decreased during days three and four of the activity, had an increase on the
last day: on June 1st, 27% of the students were off task; on June 05, 33%; on June 08, 20%; on June 11, 20%; and June 14, 33%. The analysis of these data, associated to the events that were taking place at school around that time of the year, led me to believe that the students were excited about the approaching summer vacation and were no longer interested in learning.

The day the students participated the most was June 11 (60%), day four, when they learned about the other students’ favourite hobbies and sports and found out that some of them shared similar interests with the other group. During the interview, Sally commented “I really like the class exchange. I learned a lot from [them]. What [they do that is] different [from us] and what [they do that is] similar.” (Sally, p. 2). They also found out that some students of the other group did some unusual and very exciting activities, such as riding a unicycle and playing handball. The students showed interest in learning handball, a sport they had never played before. Martin even suggested that I taught them physical education so I could teach the class how to play handball (Martin, observation checklist June 11, 2012).

In the section below, I will summarize the 4 main themes derived from the five group interviews that I led with my 15 Grade 4 students.

**Ignorance and Stereotypes**

Students showed limited knowledge of French people. Some said that before the cultural exchange they had no idea there were French communities in Ontario; they thought French people lived in Quebec, and sometimes in big cities. Sally said “I didn’t know that there were French speaking communities in Ontario. I just knew that [they lived] around Ontario, like Quebec and stuff like that.” (Sally, p. 5). Sally, like most of her
classmates, connected Francophones with Quebec. Cristina also declared “No, I did not
know that [there are French communities in Ontario], I thought that in Canada most of the
Francophones lived in Quebec and the others lived in the US and all over Canada, but I did
not know there were so many in Ontario.” (Cristina, p. 5).

In Grade 4, students have very limited knowledge of Canada’s geography because
that is when they are first introduced to the provinces (The Ontario Curriculum, Social
Studies Curriculum Grades 1 to 6, p. 104) and they learn that in Quebec the majority of the
population speaks French. In order to learn that there are French communities as well as
many French speaking people residing in Ontario and in other provinces besides Quebec,
they will have to expand their knowledge through school and life experiences.

During five days, my students experienced the cultural exchange, which was an
activity that combined life skills and curriculum, because while learning French, they
learned about another cultural group directly from the primary source. The students were
exposed to real life communication using a language they had little knowledge of, but this
obstacle did not stop their curiosity about the group or their openness toward the group.
During the length of the study, before class began, the students asked me daily if we had a
new email from the other school (notes from Observation Checklist of task-related
behaviour, June 5th, 8th, and 11); in addition, some students also demonstrated the desire to
continue the experience through a pen pal exchange (note from Observation Checklist of
task-related behaviour, June 14). Activities such as the cultural exchange could motivate
students to want to learn French and begin to develop their savoirs (Byram, 1997), which
is the knowledge about the other social group that enables individuals to understand
similarities and differences between their world and the other world.
All the students in the study stated they had met French people while camping, travelling, at school, and other places. Their description of a French person, however, was anyone who spoke English with an accent, or who spoke French. At times, they were confused about their assumptions of who was or was not French. Alice said “there is one [a French student] in our class. She doesn’t talk French but she was born in China.” (Alice, p.8). Karla’s answer to her comment was “But she is not French. Actually, I met a lot of French people because of all of the past French teachers I had and other people” (Karla, p.8). Karla and Alice were part of the same group interview. Alice’s statement shows that when she says French she actually means foreigner because she knew the girl was born in China and did not speak French. Karla immediately corrected her; however, her statement also showed some confusion as to what meant being French; she attributed being French to being able to speak French and not to belonging to a different cultural group.

A group of five students shared a negative view of the French people. They stated that some French people can be rude, and at least one of them shared an example that was not experienced by himself, but by a relative. Charlie said:

I think sometimes French people can be rude because my uncle, there are some French people that he works with and when he is talking to them, they get kind of rude sometimes. Because he knows some French, he knows what they are saying and sometimes they get rude to him (Charlie, p. 8).

The lack of language knowledge can create misunderstanding between members of two groups and develop feelings of animosity. Kaylee said “French people are rude because some people shout a lot… And I think some people are not trying to be rude, it’s
just sometimes you don’t know what the other person is feeling” (Kaylee, p.6). Dennison also shared the same feeling, when he stated:

Like Charlie said, French people can be rude when they want to be, but sometimes, like us, like when they are talking to you and you don’t really know what they are saying and they can get frustrated; and they are like “answer my question” (Dennison, p.8).

Some students mentioned that the students from the Francophone community were different, but not in a negative way. They pointed out that: They dressed differently, they put banners in the library, painted murals at school, played different games, ate unusual foods, and did peculiar things, such as riding the unicycle. Bea said “… they are a lot different from us because more people speak French there…” (Bea, p. 5). Dennison mentioned that “I like that they had [an] outdoor classroom [and a] cafeteria, which we don’t have. And how they are different than us, and how they paint murals and stuff, and they play different games than us.” (Dennison, p.6).

These 10 year old students already have assumptions of what it means to be French. They uttered these characterizations during their interviews and also in class, according to my notes on the observation checklists, confirming that stereotyping of the French people is present in the students’ minds. Although there were negative and positive beliefs of the French group, those assumptions influence the students’ perceptions of the group and potentially affect their attitude toward learning French as an L2.

**Ethnocentrism**

During the interviews and through my observations these Grade 4 students already showed evidence of ethnocentrism, the lack of acceptance of other groups and their
cultural diversity. On the first day of the cultural exchange, when the students saw pictures from the other school and the students, some students showed signs of ethnocentrism as they noticed things about the other group that they thought were unusual. Martin’s comment when he saw another student’s picture was that his clothing were different “Look at that boy’s shirt, it is too big on him and looks weird” (Martin, note taken on June 1st, 2012). Alice also commented on how one of the students was dressed; she said “what is that, a dress (laugh)? I think it is really ugly” (Alice, note taken on June 1st, 2012). Aleana commented on how she liked our library better than theirs. She said “Their library is nice, but ours has the cake [a small stage] that is much better because we can present stuff.” (Aleana, note taken on June 1st, 2012). Some first impressions were negative and students behaved as if they were seeking the atypical as a way of asserting their superiority in relation to the other group. As the study continued and my students had the opportunity to learn more about the other students, their behaviour in class showed improvement and their observations became more positive as they became more curious and accepting of the other students.

During the study, Aleana was an active participant. According to the Observation Checklist, she showed proactive behaviour during the five days, asking questions when we read the emails, sharing her thoughts about the other students and the study, and showing interest in the other students. Martin and Alice also showed some improvement, according to the Observation Checklist. Martin, who was noted to be off task on the first day, became more focused during the remainder of the study. Alice did not show much interest on the first day, but improved on the second day and shared ideas voluntarily; on the third day
she was off task, but improved again during the last two days, not as a proactive student, but answering questions when asked.

After the study had ended and the interviews began, Aleana was asked if she would like to meet the other students and she said “Yeah, it would be a total pleasure for me to meet with one of these people, because I can kind of communicate with them because I know some things about them and I know French.” (Aleana, p.3). This demonstration of curiosity and interest about the other students was contradictory to her first reaction, when she first saw the other school’s library and commented that her library was better than theirs (note from Observation checklist of task-related behaviour, June 1st), showing ethnocentrism. This reaction shows that young children can be curious and still open to learn about other cultures, although a feeling of ethnocentrism is already instilled in them.

During the cultural exchange, according to my notes on the Observation checklists, Vicky participated in class asking questions and sharing her ideas with the class. During the interview, when asked if she would like to meet the other students, her answer was “…. I would not really want to, because it’s not like they are Polish and they have like a total different way of dressing, of talking and using their words, … but it would have been probably cool.” Vicky was very curious about the other students when the study first started; she saw pictures of the students from the other school and learned about them through the emails, which gave her the opportunity to realize that in general, they dress, talk, and behave like her; consequently, meeting them did not seem as special as meeting people from a culture that she believed was very different. Vicky compared the behaviour of the students from the other group to the one of her own group and realized that the other
students seemed to lead a similar life. Since there did not appear to be anything special about them, she was not curious to meet the other students.

Vicky’s thoughts about Polish people were very different from what she thought about the students from the Francophone community. I believe she had never seen or talked to Polish people before, but she already had a stereotypical idea of the group when she depicted them as talking and dressing differently. When students are exposed to members of other cultures they are able to see and hear things themselves and have the chance to eliminate stereotypes. At her young age, Vicky has not been exposed to members of many cultural groups and has developed a stereotypical view with regards to some groups.

The cultural exchange gave Vicky and Aleana the opportunity to begin to develop more tolerance and acquire more knowledge of the other group, a step to developing intercultural understanding and communication, which is a process that could last a lifetime because the more we interact with a group, the more we discover about them and about us and the more we understand and accept others.

Jamie did not participate much during the cultural exchange. According to the Observation Checklist, he showed signs of boredom during the first interactions and just became proactive during the last two classes. The signs of boredom shown by Jamie were the following: he did not ask questions or say anything in class; he doodled on his notebook or just sat at the desk without showing interest in what was going on. During the last two days, he started sharing his thoughts with the class about the other students’ pastimes and the things the students at our school did that were similar and different.
During the interview, when talking about what the students had learned from the cultural exchange, Jamie said “I would say not really anything, but I would say [I] like the banner and the little art thing and all the years [a mural where they marked every seven years of the school’s existence]; every seven years.” (Jamie, p.8). He also showed no interest in meeting any of the students; his response was “No [he would not like to meet them] because it’s just like meeting another person.” When asked if he was not curious about them, his answer was a straight “No.” (Jamie, p.9).

Jamie has had friends from Quebec since he was very young. He visits his friends and sometimes even speaks a little French with them (Jamie, p. 3). Besides the language, he sees no difference between the Francophone and the Anglophone groups. When asked if Francophone people were different from Anglophone, he answered “No, not at all. They are not different. The only difference is that they speak a different language and they may live in a different way.” (Jamie, p.5). Perhaps his disinterest in participating in the cultural exchange during the first days resulted from having a relationship with members from the Francophone group and thinking there was nothing new to learn. Jamie’s response to meeting the other students was very similar to Vicky’s; he did not see any reason to meet the students from the other community because he already knew what they were like. Since his group is his favourite, a sign of ethnocentrism, there was no need to meet people from a similar group.

Aleana, Martin, Alice, Vicky, and Jamie, as well as the other Grade 4 students in my class, were introduced to a group of students from a Francophone community and learned about their pastimes and their favourite places at school. This was a short and casual interaction that did not expose my students to the other students’ intrinsic values.
and beliefs which are ingrained in their culture and represent the qualities that a group sees in things. These values and beliefs form the platform for understanding another culture, and the more social interaction a person has with members of another culture, the more he or she has a chance to identify and understand the intrinsic values of that culture. Perhaps, a longer cultural exchange would have helped my students begin to understand the intrinsic values that are important to the other students, seeing that the longer they spent with their peers, the better chances they would have had to understand and accept their culture.

**Perceptions of the Students from the Other Group**

My students perceived the students from the Francophone community in different ways, although they all participated in the same cultural exchange. Some students considered the other students different, because their school looked different, they had unusual pastimes, and played a different sport. “They are different, but not in a bad way.” (Karla and Martin, p. 10). “Like, some of them riding the unicycle.” (Karla p.10). “Some of them ride the unicycle, they play different games but, I have no idea how to ride a unicycle [n]or have I seen one.” (Alice, p. 10). Charlie said:

“A little bit [different] because some of them can also speak English and they have different cultures. Like, some of them do different sports than us. Like, I have never played handball and they do at the other school, so I would like to learn that…” (Charlie, p. 7).

Although the other students performed activities that were unfamiliar to my students, they enticed my students’ curiosity about them and they shared a desire to learn more about those pastimes. According to my observation notes, on June 11 Martin
suggested that I went to their gym class to teach them handball. During the interview, Aleana said “I learned that they have some games that we don’t know about and I would like to try them.” (Aleana, p. 3).

They were also interested in learning about the student who rode a unicycle. Cristina said she wanted to “know a bit more about how he learned it, why he learned, stuff like that.” (Cristina, p. 4). Sally added “He could teach us how to [ride the] unicycle; it would be so cool.” (Sally, p. 4).

Charlie and Bea showed interest in learning about the other group’s culture. Charlie said “I would like to meet some people from that class because they could teach us to do the cultures they do.” (Charlie, p. 5). Bea suggested a real cultural immersion; she indicated that “… it would be cool to exchange, like the kids from there could go here and the kids from here go there, and the teachers could teach us different things that we may not learn [at our school].” (Bea, p. 5).

The cultural exchange provided my students with the opportunity to acquire some knowledge of the other group’s favourite activities and also to realize that different can be good. The realization of being different as positive was shown when my students indicated a desire to learn different activities and even aspects of the culture they believed uncommon. Such behaviour showed that although the other group was perceived as different, my students expressed acceptance of their differences which could be translated into a positive attitude toward that specific group.

A few of my students noticed that, in addition to differences there were also similarities between the groups. Cristina noticed physical similarities between a girl she knew and a girl from the partner school, she also noticed the similarities in pastimes
because “one girl said she likes horseback riding and I like it too.” (Cristina, p.2); Buster said “It’s really interesting that some of the stuff is totally different and some are the same.” (Buster, p.5) People who speak a different language can be regarded as different and a feeling of incompatibility can be developed. However, when people are exposed to members of the unfamiliar group, they have the opportunity to invalidate those negative perceptions and develop a new and more positive understanding of that group. Cristina’s and Buster’s demonstrations of surprise, after they found similarities between the two groups, as well as their positive feelings towards the group, corroborates the thinking that a cultural approach to language teaching can make students more accepting of another group while learning their language.

During the interview, Cristina (p.2) shared how much her perception of the other group had changed after the cultural exchange. She said:

When you showed the pictures of the other kids, I thought they were going to look so different, but they look similar to the kids in the school [our school], because there is one girl [I saw the picture] she looks like a girl I used to know. And their pastimes are close to what we do…Some of the games they play are exactly the same as us.

The cultural exchange, even though brief and virtual, gave my students a chance to analyze and compare aspects of the two cultures that helped them discover, independently, characteristics of the other group that were similar and different from theirs. As they identified other ways of seeing the world they showed openness to the differences and demonstrated acceptance of otherness, as they seemed interested in learning the new skills.
French language learning approaches

Question number five of the questionnaire surveyed the students’ perceptions of the French class before the study began. 73% of the students said they did interesting things in class (see Table 1). I wanted to find out what they considered interesting, so during the interview I asked my students which were the activities they enjoyed the most.

One student declared he did not like to learn French and said: “I find French boring.” (Jamie, p. 1), but when asked about interesting things in French class, he declared that “Probably using the computer and the Smart Board” (Jamie, p.1). Jamie was an average student who came to class regularly and did his work, but his motivation was not in learning French. The participants’ two most favourite activities were playing French games on the interactive whiteboard, (Charlie, p. 1; Alice, p. 1; Karla, p. 1; Buster, p. 1), and performing plays (Martin, p. 1; Alice, p. 1; Karla, p. 1; Cam, p. 1; Buster, p. 1). These two types of activities target linguistic fluency and possibly, awareness of another culture, but lack in offering students the opportunities to learn about the other group’s cultural beliefs and develop acceptance of those beliefs and a positive attitude toward them.

A group of eight students mentioned, during the interview, that they also liked to learn about other people and their culture. Karla (p. 1), Sally (p. 1), Cristina (p. 1), Page (p. 4), Bea (p. 1), Kaylee (p. 1), Vicky (p. 1) and Dennison (p. 1). These young students are displaying signs of curiosity toward other groups and cultures, a characteristic that can be explored as a result of teaching language through a cultural approach, so they will become more open and accepting of other cultures, and less monocultural and ethnocentric as they grow older. Canada has two official languages, English and French, and at least two very distinct major cultural groups; therefore, preparing students to become more accepting of
other cultures is preparing them to live in a diverse world where people need to learn to accept differences in order to live in peace.

During the interview, I asked the students what they thought about having a cultural exchange with the students from the Francophone community. I wanted to find out how they valued this new type of activity and was particularly interested in finding out whether the cultural exchange would change Jamie’s attitude towards learning French.

The responses I received from the students were very positive. Charlie (p. 1) said: “I want to do it again. It was really fun talking back and forth with that class”. Sally (p. 2) said: “It’s like really speaking with them, so if you meet somebody who is French speaking and they don’t know English, you can communicate with them.” Bea (p. 1) said: “I like to learn about other people and how they live and what they do and the differences between them and us.” Dennison (p. 2) said: “You can learn new words from them and you can learn how other French cultures are.” Cristina (p. 1): “I really like the class exchange. It was really good getting to know them and I learned a couple of things.” Kaylee (p. 1): “I thought it was really nice, because it is fun to get to know other people that you can’t always go visit.” Their answers showed me that they appreciated the cultural exchange because they had the opportunity to communicate with the other students. The cultural exchange created intercultural communication among the members of both groups that encouraged my students to want to learn about the other group and at the same time learn more French. Their curiosity and interest in the other group showed openness toward them and willingness to communicate, characteristics of Byram’s (1997) savoir être, when students express interest in learning and accepting of different groups; and savoirs, the ability to learn about a culture and its practice.
Jamie said he found the exchange interesting and that “it is just like learning about different people and [a] different school.” Although he did not think it motivated him to learn more French, he said he learned “a couple of new words, like how to say e-mail in French.” (Jamie, p.1). During the study Jamie did not demonstrate any signs of cultural awareness of the other group, but he said that he liked the exchange and learned some vocabulary. Perhaps, learning French through a cultural approach would eventually increase Jamie’s motivation to learn French and help him see that learning French does not mean learning the mechanics of a language, but also learning about a group of people and their beliefs and behaviours that may differ from one’s own. In order to really learn a language you also need to understand and accept the cultural aspects of the language you are learning.

**Summary**

This chapter presented the data from the interview with 15 Grade 4 students that was compared and contrasted to a student’s questionnaire and observation checklist of task-related behaviour that were used in the classroom during the study. I researched my students’ perceptions of a group of peers from a Francophone community after communicating with them through an online cultural exchange, in addition to their attitudes towards learning French as an L2 through a cultural exchange. The data indicated that those young students already expressed ideas of racial stereotype and demonstrated feelings of ethnocentrism. It was also revealed, through the data, that after experiencing the cultural exchange; my students perceived their peers in a positive way and demonstrated a desire to acquire more knowledge of the group.
The findings showed that the cultural exchange fostered authentic communication between the groups, helped increase my students’ confidence in communicating in French, led them to want to learn new vocabulary. In addition, the cultural exchange helped my students analyze their culture and the other group’s culture, as well as demonstrate acceptance of the other group and the desire to incorporate some of the other group’s culture into their own.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

In this chapter I discuss the key findings and their relation to the literature, as well as the reflections and challenges experienced by the researcher while conducting the study. The purpose of the study was to explore how a group of Grade 4 students, from an Anglophone community, perceived their peers from a Francophone community, as well as their attitudes toward learning Core French when taught through a cultural context. The two questions that guided this research were:

1. How did the cultural exchange activity influence the Anglophone students’ perceptions of their peers from the Francophone community?
2. How did the cultural exchange activity impact the Anglophone students’ attitudes toward learning Core French?

In this chapter, the conceptual framework and literature review associated with the research questions will be used to facilitate the discussion. First, students’ perceptions of their peers from the Francophone community are discussed with the ICC as a guide. Second, students’ perceptions of the French group will be explored. Third, the students’ attitudes toward learning Core French through a cultural exchange are analyzed using the ICC model. Fourth, the researcher reflects upon the findings of this study and shares the limitations. Finally, I present the contributions of the study, the recommendations for future research and my conclusions.

Intercultural Communicative Competence and Student Perception of the Other

Byram’s Intercultural Communicative Competence ICC Model (1997), views culture as the focusing goal of foreign and second language education while concomitantly
developing students’ linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competences in the classroom. Based on his research, Byram concluded that intercultural competence fosters a positive attitude toward the other group and at the same time, knowledge of that culture that is known as the five savoirs: savoir être, savoirs, savoir comprendre, savoir apprendre/faire, and savoir s’engager.

When the language learners are children, the context of my study, Byram and Doyé (2005) believe there are three aspects of intercultural competence that are appropriate to seek: savoir être, the attitude of openness and curiosity toward the other group; savoirs, the knowledge of social practices pertinent to both groups; and savoir apprendre/faire, the ability to use acquired knowledge to understand cultural differences and behave as a mediator of two cultures in real-time constraints. The development of the three savoirs encompasses all three domains of learning: affective, related to attitude; cognitive, associated with knowledge; and behavioural, focusing on the learner’s behaviour during the learning process (Paige et al., 2003). My students demonstrated, through their actions and testimonies, that learning through a cultural approach promotes not only linguistic competences in the classroom, but also intercultural competence.

Savoir Être, Savoirs and Savoir Apprendre

Savoir Être. As my students acquired knowledge of the other group, they demonstrated openness and curiosity toward the other group, which is inherent to the savoir être. When walking in the classroom, they routinely asked if there was a new e-mail. When reading the e-mails, my students always had questions about what they perceived as different; for example, there was a painting in the library that had a number of years painted on it and my students asked what those years meant. They asked if the other
students were going to have an end of the year school trip, what kind of foods they ate in the cafeteria, what kind of games they played during physical education, sports, and plans for the summer that was approaching. The enquiry was spontaneous, had little teacher input, and showed that students were engaged, curious and open to the other group. In addition to being curious, my students also showed acceptance of the other group. Their interest in learning how to play handball, their desire to continue the cultural exchange and to meet some of the students so they could learn more about them, showed acceptance of the other group. Acceptance of otherness is the foundation to developing effective communicators in the target language (Byram, 1997; Buttjes, 1991; Kramsch, 1993), which is the vision of the revised Ontario French as a Second Language Curriculum (2013): “Students will communicate and interact with growing confidence in French, one of Canada’s official languages, while developing the knowledge, skills, and perspectives they need to participate fully as citizens in Canada and in the world.” (p. 6).

**Savoirs.** The cultural exchange gave the students the opportunity to learn about cultural aspects of the other group, such as their pastimes, games played at school, what their school looked like, and the students’ favourite places in the school. These themes helped my students begin to develop their savoirs as they became aware of similarities and differences between the two groups. Cristina and Charlie shared that they were surprised to find out the other students did things that were similar to what they did because they expected them to be different. They both mentioned about having the same pastime as a couple of students from the Francophone community. Cristina mentioned that she thought the Francophone students were going to look physically different from the children in her school, and when she saw the photographs, she was surprised to see that they actually looked
similar to the students at her school. Buster also mentioned that they learned about similarities and differences from both groups. Buster said that “Lots of things are the same. From the pictures, lots of things look the same and other things look different.” (Buster, p.5) Other students saw differences that were positive: Karla, Martin, and Alice mentioned that riding a unicycle as a pastime was different but interesting. Bea’s remark about the similarities and differences was that it is good to try some of the different things. According to Liaw and Johnson (2001), students can transmit and receive considerable cultural information when the interaction focuses on topics of familiarity, such as “holidays, hometowns, school lives, family members and hobbies” (p. 8). The cultural exchange was a real interaction that gave my students the opportunity to discover on their own familiarities and differences between the two groups. This engagement promoted self-directed reflection of self and otherness, bringing awareness of aspects of the other culture that were similar, which removed the students from the ethnocentric position and led them to shift to a more ethnorelative (Bennett, 1993) state, as they became more accepting of the other group.

The new Ontario Curriculum FSL Core French Grades 4-8 (2013) has introduced Intercultural Competence as a learning expectation for all students, and the specific expectation for the Grade 4 reading strand C3.1 is that through the reading of various French texts, students will “find out about aspects of their cultures, and make connections to personal experiences and their own and other communities” (p.62). The ICC model fosters the exchange of authentic interactions between members of different cultural groups, based on the premise that the language learner becomes an intercultural mediator, having an active role which promotes the identification of other beliefs and values that are
distinct from their own. My students read e-mails, looked at photographs that were authentic, and responded to those readings developing an interaction that was meaningful and gave them the opportunity to identify other beliefs and values that were different from their own, as they interacted to the other students. They went beyond the curriculum expectations because in addition to making connections between their own and the other community, which fulfills the expectations of the Ontario curriculum for Core French, they were engrossed in “critical engagement” (Byram, 1997 p.71) and became aware that the other group had resources they lacked, such as the outdoor classroom, the cafeteria, handball and unicycle skills, that they would like to incorporate in their own culture.

During the cultural exchange, my students also learned about the Francophone community where the other students lived and were surprised to find out that there were French speaking communities is Ontario. Most students mentioned that they thought French speaking people lived in Quebec, others were confused about the meaning of French community and mentioned they saw French speaking people in Kingston, Ottawa, Montreal, and Toronto. Jamie, Kaylee, and Aleana reluctantly declared they knew but had forgotten. Cappello (2005) mentioned that the school setting and the presence of the researcher, who is perceived as a teacher, can be intimidating to children who could choose to say things to please the teacher and not what they really think. Perhaps Jamie, Kaylee and Aleana did not know about the existence of Francophone communities, but thought they should say otherwise. Most of my students were unaware of the existence of Francophone communities in Ontario. As part of the savoirs, an intercultural speaker possesses, but is not limited to, knowledge of geographical spaces in one’s own country, of regional identities, and of language varieties (Byram, 1997). Learning about French
communities in Ontario is also an expectation of the FSL Ontario Curriculum (2013), Listening strand A3.1 Intercultural Understanding, that says students will “identify French speaking communities in Ontario” (p.55).

**Savoir Apprendre.** This is the skill of discovery, during social interaction, of cultural dysfunctions and the ability to mediate the problem upon the use of existing knowledge. During the cultural exchange my students did not experience any conflicts. The structure and the length of the activity contributed to the inexistence of misunderstandings. The participants were young students who did not have much knowledge of the French language, therefore I chose to have a whole class e-mail exchange (Avots, 1991), which lacked the individual contact that could have provoked social misconceptions. Moreover, the duration of the study, only five e-mail interactions, did not expose my students to the other students’ intrinsic values and beliefs which are ingrained in their culture and represent the qualities that a group sees in things. These values and beliefs form the platform for understanding another culture and develop savoir apprendre/faire, a knowledge acquired through the frequent social interactions a person has with members of another culture; the more interaction, the more a person has a chance to identify and understand the intrinsic values of that culture. The skill of savoir apprendre/faire can be developed through face to face or virtual interactions, such as the e-mail exchange activity. Liaw and Johnson (2001) observed that some of their university students dealt with misunderstanding during their online cross-cultural exchange, but they still valued the opportunity to establish friendships and also to promote retrospection and help students explore their own cultural perceptions.
This section outlined the development of the three aspects of intercultural competence that Byram and Doyé (2005) stated are appropriate to seek when the learners are young children: *savoir être*, *savoirs*, and *savoir apprendre/faire*. Two aspects, *savoir être* and *savoirs* were shown by the students during the interviews, demonstrating that the cultural exchange had a positive impact on the students’ development of intercultural competence. The cultural exchange helped my students become aware of cultural traits, from the other group, such as the importance of Art in the school that is shown through the display of art work in the library, as well as their desire to give students the opportunity to get outside and experience nature, through the outdoor classroom. While discovering similarities and differences between the two groups my students had the opportunity to reflect on self and other and became more accepting of the other group and therefore, less ethnocentric. My students’ perceptions of the other group changed from negative, when on the first day of the cultural exchange some students mocked the way some of the other students dressed, to accepting, when students showed interest in meeting the other students and also learning some of their skills.

**Perceptions of the French Group**

**Ethnocentrism**

Babies are open to all cultures, but as they grow and become part of one particular society, the original openness becomes restricted and individuals become monocultural and monolingual (Doyé & Hurrell, 1997). My 9 and 10 year old students already showed characteristics of ethnocentrism: Martin and Dennison refused to imagine being born in Quebec; Vicky and Jamie did not show interest in meeting the other students; Alice said she did not like to learn French; Martin, Cam, Jamie, Alice and Dennison declared they
did not want to learn more French and did not like to hear people speaking French; and Aleana said she did not like to hear people speaking French. There were also some students who made rude comments on the first day of the cultural exchange when they saw the students from the other school. Ethnocentrism is the lack of acceptance of other groups and their cultural diversity, which could lead to negative stereotype toward other groups, as well as negative behaviours against the group members (Berry & Kalin, 1995). We live in a world where geographical distances are easily overcome by the modern communication network, and Canada is a bilingual country, consequently, we need to educate our children to accept cultural diversity and become effective Canadian and world citizens of the 21st century. The best time to begin teaching children awareness and acceptance of other cultures is during early childhood because according to Barret (2007), children from age 5-6 already show in-group favouritism, or ethnocentrism, but do not necessary denigrate out-groups, unless with respect to traditional enemies. My students, according to examples shared above, showed in-group favouritism through their refusal to get involved with the French language or members of the French community.

In Ontario, learning French is mandatory from Grades 4 to 9. Language and culture are inseparable; when children learn language through a cultural approach, they become more tolerant of the target group and their perceptions become more subtle (Byram & Esarte-Sarries, 1991) because students are exposed to the other culture’s values.

**Stereotype and Ignorance**

Stereotype is a simplistic way of making sense of the world, of describing people of whom we have very little or no personal knowledge (Kumaravadivelu, 2008). During the interview, students commented that French people can be rude, eat different foods,
play different games, and are very fashionable, among other things. Although they are very young, some of these students already had stereotypical ideas of the French people. There was a combination of positive and negative stereotypes; however, the fact that they saw notable differences between the groups could hinder the acceptance of members of the French group, as well as affect their attitude toward learning French as an L2.

Some Anglophone students had difficulty understanding the meaning of being French. Their definitions ranged from anyone who speaks French, to someone who speaks with an accent or has a darker skin colour. Ignorance of the other group was not mentioned in the research studies I reviewed in the literature. I believe the lack of knowledge of the Francophone group that emerged from the data analysis resulted from the age and location of my students.

In summary, by the end of the study, the findings showed that ethnocentrism and stereotypes are already ingrained in these young children. However, the perception of their peers from the Francophone community was different from how they perceived French people in general. As my students began to know their peers, they became more accepting and tolerant of their peers and the first negative comments became lost and replaced by acceptance and openness. The teaching of culture interweaved into language teaching promotes change in students’ attitudes and perceptions of the other group. Since at a very early age children begin to show ethnocentrism and stereotype, it is necessary that language and culture are taught together, beginning in elementary school (Byram and Doyé (2005), and Buttjes (1991)) because young children develop learner appropriateness, the intuitive ability to learn basic concepts of the humanities (Bruner, 1960).
Attitudes towards Learning French

The Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) model (Byram, 1997) views culture as the focusing goal of foreign language education, while simultaneously promoting students’ linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competences in the classroom. In the ICC model, relationships are the focus of knowledge teaching because they involve authentic communication, which promotes, concomitantly, culture awareness and language acquisition (Byram, 1997).

The cultural exchange encouraged authentic communication between members of two distinct cultural communities. Through e-mails, students learned about aspects of the other culture, geographic and cultural, as well as new vocabulary that was learned in context. Sally mentioned that through the exchange they really spoke to the other students, so if they meet other members of a Francophone community they will be able to communicate with them. This comment shows increase in confidence. In the classroom, students are exposed to several types of activities that could build their vocabulary or cultural awareness, but they are on paper or on the computer; even when they speak, sing or act, those are controlled situations in a controlled setting, they are not authentic interactions. The lack of authentic interactions in the language learning process can inhibit students’ capacity of communicating orally because they are not confident they can speak with members of communities that speak other languages.

Students mentioned that the interaction helped them learn new vocabulary in French, such as e-mail, and gave them the opportunity to meet new people. They were learning interesting things about people they did not know, learning the language and enjoying the activity. The ICC fosters the existence of communication between the learner
and the member of the target culture in order to achieve intercultural competence. In the new millennium, language teaching has been seen linked to “education for mobility” (Byram, 1997, p.64), which can be in the form of visits or exchanges, both real and virtual through the use of technology, and e-mail exchange is a method used to promote the development of ICC in students from a very young age. The cultural exchange not only promoted the acquisition of ICC, but also helped my students develop confidence in speaking the language.

Summary

This section discussed the findings of the study and situated them within the conceptual framework. The cultural exchange gave the Anglophone students the opportunity to develop a positive attitude toward a group of students from a Francophone community as well as promote linguistic competence in the classroom. In this discussion, I addressed the two research questions that were the foundation of this study. First, although students showed ignorance, or lack of knowledge of what meant to be Francophone—a member of a French speaking group—, used stereotypes to label the Francophone group and demonstrated characteristics of ethnocentrism, during the cultural exchange, as they became acquainted with the other students they became more curious and accepting of them; they began to develop ICC. Second, students considered the cultural exchange beneficial to their learning of Core French as they felt that when learning happens through authentic interaction it was more enjoyable. They showed interest in continuing the activity for cultural purposes, when they shared the wish to better know the other students, as well as linguistic purposes, when they declared it was a good way of learning new words in French. Although the study successfully addressed the two
research questions, there are limitations to consider. The next section discusses the
limitations of the study as well as the implications for practice and for future research.

**Study Limitations**

The current study investigated Grade 4 Anglophone students as they interacted
with peers from a Francophone community through an e-mail cultural exchange. The
purpose of the study was to elicit how a cultural exchange activity influenced students’
perceptions of their peers from the Francophone community, as well as how it impacted
the Anglophone students’ attitudes toward learning Core French. Although the results
answered the research questions, the study was limited in three ways: time of the year,
time frame, and teacher was the researcher.

*Time of the year.* June was a very busy month at our school. My students went on
day trips with their homeroom teacher, participated in sports activities that happened at
school and elsewhere, attended presentations in the gym, among other activities that
prevented them from coming to French class daily. The busy end of the year days could
have affected my students’ interest in the study. Having the study earlier on in the year
would have given me the opportunity to collect more “thick” data from a group that
possibly would have been more focused and interested in learning.

*Time Frame.* Originally, I had planned to have between six to eight e-mail
exchanges over the period of a month; however the activities that went on at school
hindered the length of the study. The short duration of the study contributed to the lack of
exposure of my students to the other students’ intrinsic values and beliefs which represent
the values that a group cherishes in things and situations and form the platform for
understanding another culture and developing *savoir apprendre/faire*. McMillan and
Schumacher (2010) say that one strategy to enhance the validity of a study is to sustain prolonged and persistent field work. Although my study was not long, the data collected provided “depth and detail through direct quotation and careful description of program situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviours.” (Patton, 1987 p.9). According to Patton, these characteristics represent strengths of qualitative data.

**Teacher as Researcher.** As one of the school’s Core French teachers, I had to perform my regular duties daily during the cultural exchange. The activities consisted of teaching classes before and after I taught the Grade 4 students, preparing lessons, and having recess duties. In the classroom, my role was to try to keep students focused in the learning, help them solve problems, and control behaviour. Therefore, time to write notes about their reactions to the exchange, during or after class, was almost nil. Since I knew I was not going to have much time for reflection right after each interaction, I opted to create the observation checklist of task-related behaviours to help me keep track of the students’ behaviours and performances in class during the cultural exchange activity. Perhaps, if I had had someone come to videotape the interactions, I would have seen more detail that would have contributed to the findings of my study.

Despite the limitations that occurred due to the time of the year, the time frame, and the teacher as researcher, the current study has implications for practice and for future research, which are discussed in the next section of the thesis.

**Implications of the Study**

The results of the current study suggest important findings for the teaching of Grade 4 Core French through a cultural approach which promotes in addition to linguistics, sociolinguistics, and discourse competences in the classroom, intercultural
competence, a positive attitude towards members of another group, and knowledge of the other culture. In the next section of this chapter, I first discuss the implications of the findings for practice. Next, the implications for research are discussed. This section concludes with a discussion of the significance of the study.

**Implications for Practice**

The results of this study suggest four important recommendations for the teaching of Grade 4 Core French. First, since young students already show in-group preferences, educators should promote intercultural competence, through the three *savoirs* suggested by Byram and Doyé (2005), as a regular part of language teaching. Through the cultural exchange, my students had the opportunity to learn Geography, when they learned about locations of Francophone communities in Ontario, were introduced to aspects of the other group’s culture, and made connections between the two cultures, which are curricular expectations for Grade 4 found in the Ontario Curriculum French as a Second Language, Core French (2013). Becoming aware of the other culture and comparing and analyzing both cultures promoted intercultural competence, as students became more accepting of the other group and the differences became more subtle. Consequently, acquiring intercultural competence will help students for their role as functional citizens of Canada.

Second, through their declarations during the interviews, my students stated they felt more confident in communicating orally with members of the other culture because the cultural exchange was like “…communicating to them in French, like really speaking with [the students from the Francophone community]” (Sally, p.2). Therefore, educators should promote prolonged authentic cross-cultural interactions. In five encounters my students were able to acquire substantial information about the other students and also learn new
vocabulary, but they expressed the desire to continue with the activity to learn more about the other students, and obtain deeper knowledge of the group. Through authentic interaction, which is not a controlled activity, my students had the chance to evaluate their knowledge of the French language and realize they could communicate with the other students. They felt empowered and confident to communicate with members of the Francophone community.

Third, e-mail writing promotes understanding and acceptance of another culture without leaving the classroom. However, from KG to Grade 3 the focus of teaching French in Ontario is oral communication; only in Grade 4 students begin to be assessed in writing. Consequently, educators should have whole class cross-cultural e-mail exchange because they will curb students’ frustration and disinterest for lack of language knowledge, and also physical difficulties such as access to the computer laboratory. Moreover, whole class e-mail exchange promotes collaboration among the students while they create authentic text using the target language.

Fourth, Secondulfo (1997) tells us, that photography has the ability to ‘freeze’ pieces of reality. During the e-mail exchange, photographs were used to stimulate dialog between the groups, as students saw samples of the other group’s world they were able to see similarities and differences between the two groups and begin to understand characteristics of the other group. In order to promote cultural awareness, educators should use photography as a tool help students better understand the life of the target group.

In summary, the findings from the current study suggest four recommendations for encouraging students to develop awareness and acceptance of the Francophone group, through the acquisition of ICC, which will promote a positive perception of the other
group and consequently, a more positive attitude toward learning Core French.

Recommendations include: (a) promotion of students’ intercultural competence, (b) promote prolonged authentic cross-cultural interactions, (c) have whole class cross-cultural e-mail exchange, (d) use photography as a tool help students better understand the life of the target group. The findings of the current study have implications for future research, which are discussed in the next section of this thesis.

**Implications for Research**

Qualitative research, using the action research approach, used small group interviews, an observation checklist of task-related behaviour, and a questionnaire to identify how a cultural exchange activity that happened via e-mail, during Core French instruction, affected a group of Grade 4 Anglophone students’ perceptions of students from a Francophone community, as well as their attitude towards learning Core French. A rural school, situated in South-Eastern Ontario provided the context of this study. Fifteen students, aged nine and ten, were involved in all research methods and steps, based upon receiving permission from their parents, therefore, there was no control over the choice of the participants.

The following implications for future research about students’ perceptions and attitudes in the Core French classroom should be considered. First, since this study was developed with a group of students from a rural school; future studies may be conducted with a group of students from an urban school. In addition, the e-mail exchange should not be limited to one Francophone community, but include several communities (e.g. Sudbury, Thunder Bay, and Timmins) to broaden students’ awareness and investigate their
perceptions of students from Francophone communities, as well as their attitude toward learning Core French after a cultural exchange.

Second, as a consequence of time limitations, this study consisted of only five cultural interactions; future studies may address this limitation and dedicate more time for the duration of the cultural exchange, which could elicit more compelling data.

Third, the present study took place during the month of June, when there are many extra-curricular activities happening in school that could have interfered with my students’ behaviour as well as their motivation to learn. Future research should be conducted in times of the year when there are not as many distractions to inquire if the students’ interest in the cultural exchange would increase.

Fourth, being the researcher and teacher did not give me the opportunity to write field notes because I had to perform two roles. In the future, when an educator conducts a study, he or she could use someone to videotape the interactions to be able to see details that were missed while they were performing other roles.

Last, before the study began, I asked my students to answer a questionnaire in order to learn about their attitude towards learning Core French. For future studies, an interview anticipating the study, inquiring about the students’ perceptions of the other students as well as their attitude toward learning French, and another interview after the cultural exchange will provide the researcher with details about the reasons that promoted the changes, if any, in the students.

**Significance of the study**

The current study contributes research that embeds cultural awareness in the teaching of Core French. Two aspects of teaching language and culture at the same time,
through a cultural exchange, were observed during this study: how the cultural exchange influenced the students’ perceptions of their peers from a Francophone community; and students’ attitudes toward learning Core French after having experienced the cultural exchange.

Although there is an understanding that intercultural competence should be taught to children in the primary years of school (Byram & Doyé (2005), and Buttjes (1991)), there is a lack of empirical studies that investigate intercultural competence in young learners (Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino & Kohler. 2003). Most studies that investigate intercultural competence are conducted in the high school or university contexts (Avots, 1991; Cononelos and Oliva, 1993; Hubatsch and Hofmann, 1994; Lunde, 1990; Liaw and Johnson, 2000; Sanaour and Lapkin, 1992; Underwood, 1987). The current study, conducted in a rural school, involved students in Grade 4 aged nine and ten. It adds a Canadian context to the existing research, suggesting that teaching Core French to young students, through a cultural exchange promotes the acquisition of certain aspects of ICC. If the learning of Core French is associated to the learning of intercultural competence, through authentic interactions that last a certain period of time, chances are students will become more engaged in the language learning process while acquiring cultural awareness and developing ICC, as they prepare to become effective citizens of Canada and the world.

Reflections

This research has been a valuable and rewarding experience. As a new French teacher, I began to notice that even some of my youngest students showed opposition to learning French. I tried to engage them through the use of several strategies, but without success. I completed two AQ, additional qualification, courses FSL part I and II, and after
many trials and readings, I decided to pursue a Master’s degree seeking to answer the biggest question: How to change the students’ attitudes toward learning French. As I reviewed the literature, I came across the ICC model and became very interested in investigating if my students would develop ICC through a cultural exchange; moreover, if their attitude toward learning French would change. Since I am an educator, I used action research as a framework for my study, because I wanted to bridge my daily educational practice to the theory available and the teaching with the research.

Fifteen of my 23 students participated in the cultural exchange. I was surprised with the high attendance but very thankful to my students for sharing their time with me. Collecting data was challenging because I was trying to be the teacher to the 23 students and researcher at the same time and felt that if I had had another person in the classroom to help me collect data, using a camera to record the students, it would have relieved some of the stress I experienced. Creating the checklist of task-related behaviour, and using it in the classroom during the cultural exchange gave me the opportunity to record important data that the interview and questionnaire would not have revealed. Actually, I have used that same checklist in the classroom to keep track of students’ behaviour and evaluate their oral communication performance.

The findings of the study offer insights about how exposing a group of Anglophone students to a group from a Francophone community changed the Anglophone students’ perceptions of their peers and also their attitude toward learning French. As the e-mail exchange unfolded, my students became more aware and accepting of the other group showing that they were acquiring ICC. The e-mail exchange not only promoted ICC, but also my students’ confidence in communicating with French speaking people because they
felt empowered by the activity. The development of linguistics, sociolinguistic and discourse competences is also a goal of the ICC and my students showed interest in communicating with the other group and also mentioned that they had learned new vocabulary words.

However, I still have doubts about how long and how often the cultural exchange should happen in the classroom, and what other activities can I use and still promote authentic communication, because through my study I learned that students need to be exposed to the other culture, in authentic communication, and for a long period of time. The learning of French through a cultural context should last a life time, because the more students are exposed to the target culture, the more interculturally competent they become and the more understanding and accepting citizens they become.

After my study, I understood that students need to be exposed to other cultures in order to develop ICC. It is the French teacher’s role to promote cultural awareness among students to give them the opportunity to learn about and identify different ways of seeing the world. Moreover, with understanding and acceptance of the other culture, students’ attitudes toward learning French will also change because the students will want to communicate with members of the target culture.

If I were to replicate this action research I would extend it. Perhaps two months would give my students the opportunity to develop savoir apprendre/faire. Instead of a class e-mail, I would group my students in groups of mixed abilities to promote autonomy in the classroom. I would have another person video-record the interactions while I concentrated only in helping my students compose their e-mails. Finally, I would interview my students twice; before and after the study to collect rich data about the
students’ attitudes toward learning French, and their expectations about the cultural exchange because I believe I would be able to notice more changes in my students.

I believe that my study’s findings are important for the teaching of FSL. The acquisition of ICC will prepare students to live in a globalized world, accepting differences and living in harmony with members of different cultural groups. Intercultural competence promotes peace in a world that is filled with social inequalities resulting from ethnic and racial tensions and we, French teachers, can help change this situation. We need to understand that our goal inside and outside the classroom is to prepare children and young adults to become citizens of Canada and the world, interculturally competent citizens, and we can do so if we teach French through culture.
References:


British Council (1999). The Education System. Retrieved from:

www.britishcouncil.org/flasonline-uk-education-system.pdf


Editorial Committee (Eds.), *Woman and national development: The complexities of change*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.


http://journals.sfu.ca/tesl/index.php/tesl/article/viewFile/948/767


http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1472586X.2010.523270


*Culture as the core: Perspectives on culture in second language learning.*

Greenwich, Connecticut: IAP.


103


The Ontario Curriculum, Social Studies Curriculum Grades 1 to 6, History and Geography Grades 7 and 8 (2013). *Understanding Context: Regions in Canada*, B3, 104


Appendix A: Letter of Information and Consent Form for Teachers

“Learning Core French through Intercultural Context: Perceptions and Attitudes of Grade 4 Students”

This research is being conducted by Taciana de Lira e Silva, a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario. This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines and Queen’s policies, and by the UCDSB.

Dear (Teacher’s name):
I would like to invite you and your students to join me and my Grade 4 students on a cultural class exchange. This exchange will be part of a research study, a requirement for my master’s degree. There will be no data collected from your students or yourself. None of the data will contain the name or the identity of your school, you, or any student. The school and students will be identified using general terms only.

**What is this study about?** The purpose of my study is to investigate students’ perceptions of the other group when interacting, in French, with students from a French community and how the interaction will influence their attitude toward learning Core French.

**What does this study involve?** Students from both schools will have a cultural class exchange for four weeks, exchanging messages twice a week. On the first day, we will brainstorm with the students about their favourite places in the school and will take photos of the places. On the second day, we and our students will write descriptive sentences of the photos, will create a PowerPoint presentation with photos and text, and will e-mail it to the partner class. The following interactions will constitute of questions and answers on familiar topics, such as school life and hobbies, aiming to acquire cultural information. At the end of the study, I will interview my students. I would like to ask your permission to use the photos you take for the class exchange during my students’ group-interview.

There are no known physical, psychological, economic, or social risks associated with this study.

Should you be interested, you are entitled to a copy of the findings.
What if I have questions and concerns? Any questions about study participation may be directed to me, the researcher, at 613-659-2216 or at taciana.de.lira.e.silva@queensu.ca, or the thesis supervisor, Dr. Lying Cheng at 613-533-6000 x 77431 or living.cheng@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at chair.GREB@queensu.ca or 613-533-6081.

Sincerely,
Taciana de Lira e Silva

Graduate student Faculty of Education
Queen’s University
Permission Form for Teacher in Partner School

“Learning Core French through Intercultural Context: Perceptions and Attitudes of Grade 4 Students”

Name (please print clearly):

_______________________________________________

1. I have read the Letter of Information and have had any questions answered to my satisfaction.

2. ☐ I agree to participate in the cultural class exchange as part of the study called Learning Core French through Intercultural Context: Perceptions and Attitudes of Grade 4 Students, conducted by Taciana de Lira e Silva. I understand that there are no known physical, psychological, economic, or social risks associated with this study.

3. ☐ I allow the researcher, Taciana de Lira e Silva, to use the photos I take for the class exchange.

4. Should I be interested, I am entitled to a copy of the findings.

5. Any questions about the study may be directed to Taciana de Lira e Silva at 613-659-2216 or at taciana.de.lira.e.silva@queensu.ca or the thesis supervisor, Dr. Lying Cheng at 613-533-6000 x 77431 or living.cheng@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at chair.GREB@queensu.ca or 613-533-6081.

Signature:________________________________________

Date:________________________

I would like to request a copy of the results of this study sent to the following e-mail or postal address below.

Please sign one copy of this Permission From and return it to Taciana de Lira e Silva at (school’s name)
Appendix B: Letter of Information and Consent Form for Students

“Learning Core French through Intercultural Context: Perceptions and Attitudes of Grade 4 Students”

This research is being conducted by Taciana de Lira e Silva a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario. This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines and Queen’s policies.

What is this study about? The purpose of this study is to investigate students’ perceptions of the other group when interacting, in French, with students from a French community and how the interaction will influence their attitude toward learning Core French.

What does this study involve? You are going to learn about students who are the same age as you and live in a French community. You and I will talk about your favourite place in the school and I will take pictures of the places to send to the other students. We, as a class, will write descriptive sentences of the favourite places and will create a PowerPoint using the pictures and the text to send to our partner class. We will use the Internet to communicate with them. During the class exchange you are going to ask and answer questions in French; this is going to be a whole class experience and we can all help each other. Most of the time, this is going to be a learning unit on culture, which is required by the Ministry of Education as part of the curriculum. During the exchange I will be writing notes about your progress and feelings about the activity, which I already do on a regular basis.

The extra activity during this learning unit will be an interview. Upon your parents’ agreement, I will interview you and your classmates, in small groups of three or four for 45 minutes (two sessions of 20 minutes and a 5 minute break in between, with snacks), during school hours, but not during recess. The interview will be audio-recorded by me, and transcribed verbatim. The class exchange will happen twice a week, between May 28 and June 22, and the interview will be on the last week of school.
Is my participation voluntary?
Your participation is voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time, with no effect on your standing in school.
The researcher will maintain confidentiality to the extent possible for the entire study.
If you withdraw from the study, you may request the removal of all or part of your data.
You are not obligated to answer any objectionable or discomforting question during the study.
To withdraw from the research, just ask one of your parents to write a short note or e-mail and send it to (Grade 4 teacher’s name and e-mail address).

What will happen to my responses? The results of the study may be disseminated through publishing in professional journals or presentations at scientific conferences, but any such presentations will be of general findings and will maintain individual confidentiality to the extent possible. A pseudonym will replace your name on all data that you provide to protect your identity. Only my supervisor, the committee member, and I, will have access to the data. If the data is used for secondary analysis it will contain no identifying information.
In accordance with the Faculty of Education’s policy, data will be retained for a minimum of five years, after which time, it will either be destroyed or retained indefinitely.
Should you be interested, you are entitled to a copy of the findings.

Will there be any remuneration for my participation? There will be no remuneration for your participation.

What if I (or my parents) have questions and concerns? Any questions about study participation may be directed to me, the researcher, at 613-659-2216 or at taciana.de.lira.e.silva@queensu.ca, or the thesis supervisor, Dr. Lying Cheng at 613-533-6000 x 77431 or liying.cheng@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at chair.GREB@queensu.ca or 613-533-6081.

What do I do if I am interested in participating in this study? If you are interested in participating in this study, please sign the Letter of Consent and don’t forget to ask your parents to sign their consent. Put both consent forms in the envelope provided and bring them to school to (Grade 4 teacher’s name). Because there is a power imbalance in the
researcher-participant relationship, I have asked (Grade 4 teacher’s name) to keep consent forms and participants’ names from me until after report card grades have been submitted to (principal’s name), on June 15. If your parent or guardian wishes to withdraw your participation in the study or all or part of your data, he or she can also send a note/email to (Grade 4 teacher’s name).

Sincerely,

Taciana de Lira e Silva (Mme. Silva)
Consent Form for Students

“Learning Core French through Intercultural Context: Perceptions and Attitudes of Grade 4 Students”

I ________________________________ (print your full name) agree to participate in the study entitled Learning Core French through Intercultural Context: Perceptions and Attitudes of Grade 4 Students, conducted by Mme. Silva (Taciana de Lira e Silva), a graduate student at the Faculty of Education at Queen's University, in Kingston, Ontario. I have read and retained a copy of the Letter of Information and Consent Form, and had questions answered. I understand that the purpose of the study is to investigate students’ perceptions when interacting, in French, with students from a French community and how that interaction affects their attitude toward learning Core French.
I understand that the researcher, Taciana de Lira e Silva, will maintain confidentiality to the extent possible.
My involvement in the study consists of a 45 minute group-interview that will be audio-recorder by and transcribed verbatim.
I understand that participation is voluntary, and that I can withdraw my participation or all or part of my data with no effect on my standing in school.

☐ I agree to have the observation notes written about my perceptions and attitudes during the study, the data from my portfolio, e-mails and questionnaire, included in the study.

☐ I agree to participating in and having the data from the interview included in the study.

I am aware that if I have questions about my participation in the study I can ask Mme. Silva at school. My parents or guardians can also contact Mme. Silva at 613-659-2216 or at taciana.de.lira.e.silva@queensu.ca or the thesis supervisor, Dr. Lying Cheng at 613-533-6000 x 77431 or living.cheng@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at chair.GREB@queensu.ca or 613-533-6081.
I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THIS CONSENT FORM AND I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

Signature:________________________________________

Date:______________________________________________

I would like to request a copy of the results of this study be sent to the following email or postal address below.
___________________________________________________
___________________________________________________
___________________________________________________

Please sign this Consent Form and ask your parent or guardian to sign his or hers. Fold both forms and put them in the envelope provided; seal the envelope and return it to (teacher’s name), your classroom teacher.
Appendix C: Student Participant Questionnaire

Grade 4

Name:__________________________________________

Circle the picture (only one) that shows what you think about the sentences below:

1. I like learning French

2. I like to hear people speaking French.

3. I can write some words in French.

4. I can read some words in French.

5. We do interesting things in French class.

6. I want to learn more French.

7. Most of the time I understand what my French teacher is saying.

8. Sometimes I use French at home or with my friends

This questionnaire above was developed based on two pieces of literature. The study by Heining-Boynton, A. & Haitema, T. (2007). A Ten-Year chronicle of student attitudes toward foreign language in the elementary school. The Modern Language Journal, 91 (2), 149–168. DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-4781.2007.00538.x
Appendix D: GREB, and UCDSB research approval

June 22, 2012

Ms. Taciara de Lira e Silva, Master’s Student
Faculty of Education
Duncan McArthur Hall
Queen’s University
511 Union Street
Kingston, ON K7M 3R7

GREB Ref #: GEDUC-022-11; Romeo # 6007050
Title: "GEDUC-022-12 Learning Core French through Intercultural Context: Perceptions and Attitudes of Grade 4 Students"

Dear Ms. de Lira e Silva:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a Delegated Review, has cleared your proposal entitled "GEDUC-022-12 Learning Core French through Intercultural Context: Perceptions and Attitudes of Grade 4 Students" for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS) and Queen’s ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (article D.1.6) and Senate Terms of Reference (article G), your project has been cleared for one year. At the end of each year, the GREB will ask if your project has been completed and if not, what changes have occurred or will occur in the next year.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB, with a copy to your unit REB, of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (access this form at https://services.queens.ca/romeo_research/ and click Events - GREB Adverse Event Report). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementation of new procedures. To make an amendment, access the application at https://services.queens.ca/romeo_research/ and click Events - GREB Amendment to Approved Study Form. These changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Gail Irving, at the Office of Research Services or irvingg@queensu.ca for further review and clearance by the GREB or GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

Joan Stevenson, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair
General Research Ethics Board

CC: Dr. Lying Cheng, Faculty Supervisor
Dr. Lesly Wade-Woolley, Chair, Unit REB
Eric Wicklum, c/o Graduate Studies and Bureau of Research
Hi Taciana,

I am so sorry that no one got back to you!!

You are good to go! J

Please send us an update when your research is complete.

Thanks,

Cindy

Cindy Peters
Building 2020
Bienvenue à l’école publique de __________. Notre école est située entre ________ et ________. Qui dans votre classe est déjà venu ici?

Voici deux photos de notre école.
Il y a 440 élèves à l’école de... 

Voici la bibliothèque.
Voici ma classe.

Je m’appelle Brandon.
Voici notre laboratoire. Il y a 30 ordinateurs dans cette salle.

Nous avons une très grande cour d’école. Regardez les autres photos.
Il y a deux secrétaires qui travaillent au bureau.

La cafétéria est au deuxième étage. Nous mangeons notre dîner ici.
Nous avons un très grand gymnase.

La salle de musique est à côté de notre bureau.
La bibliothèque est au centre de l’école.

Nous avons une classe d’art visuel. Regardez notre travail.
Quelle est notre endroit préféré à l’école?

La classe de français est notre endroit préféré à l’école.

Esha

J’aime apprendre de nouvelles choses en français et j’ai beaucoup de livres de français à la maison.

Maria

J’aime lire en français.

Nafia

J’aime le français.
Blake

J’aime jouer au ballon chasseur.

David

J’aime le gymnase parce que je peux jouer au basket-ball.

Matt

J’aime le gymnase parce que je peux sauter.

Tyler

J’aime le gymnase parce qu’il y a beaucoup d’espace.

Genevieve

J’aime le gymnase parce qu’on peut jouer aux différents jeux.

Mercedez

J’aime le gymnase parce que je peux courir

(Absent) Jayden

J’aime le gymnase parce que je peux jouer.

(Absent) Ieuan

Je peux jouer au soccer.
Madison

La bibliothèque est mon endroit préféré parce que j’aime lire des livres.

Hailey et Shelby préfèrent la cafétéria parce qu’elles aiment manger.
Teah
J’aime aller à la classe d’art visuel parce que je peux faire de l’art.

Rosemarie
J’aime aussi aller à la classe d’art visuel parce que je peux faire de l’art.

Todd
J’aime aussi aller à la classe d’art visuel parce que je peux faire des projets.

Brandon
Quel est votre endroit favori à l’école?

La fin
Bonjour tout le monde!

TIES est une école grande aussi. Nous aimons beaucoup d’endroits ici à TIES et chacun de nous a plus d’un endroit préféré.

On n’a pas de cafétéria à TIES. Alors, on a des questions pour Hailey et Shelby. Qu’est qu’il y a pour manger à la cafétéria? Est-ce qu’il y a des nourritures spéciales?


Ci-dessous c’est notre salle de classe. Elle est l’endroit préféré de Katie, Jessie, Aizlyn, Cameron et Isabel parce qu’elle a un SmartBoard et tout le monde lit et apprend dans la classe.

Ci-dessous c’est le coin de lecture. Notre enseignante lit des livres pour nous.
La bibliothèque est l'endroit préféré de Timothy, Abbey et Katie parce qu'elle est silencieuse, on lit des livres et les ordinateurs sont là.

Ci-dessous c'est une partie de la bibliothèque où la bibliothécaire lit des livres pour nous et les filles de la 4ème, 5ème et 6ème année se rencontrent pour "Girls Inc."
Ci-dessous c'est le 'gâteau' un endroit où on présente des pièces théâtrales. Isabel aime cet endroit.

Jesse aime la bibliothèque parce qu'on travaille ici.
La cour d'école est l'endroit préféré de Matthew, Jonathan, Liam, Brandon, Chase, James, Owen, Payton et Sarah. Matthew dit que c'est parce qu'on peut suspendre la tête en bas. Payton et Sarah disent que c'est parce qu'on peut se balancer sur les barres de suspension. Jonathan, Liam, Brandon et Owen aiment jouer au hockey. Chase et James aiment jouer 'beyblades'.

Connor aime jouer au basketball.
Le gymnase est l'endroit préféré Kaeling, Brandon, Connor et Chase parce qu'on joue aux jeux et on pratique des sports.

Dans le gymnase on a une scène de théâtre. Aleasha pense que c'est le meilleur endroit de l'école.
Finalement, la salle de français est l'endroit préféré de Kaeling, Jessie, Isabel, et Payton parce qu'on parle et apprendre le français et on s'assoit aux tables. On aime aussi pratiquer des pièces en français.

À la prochaine!!
# Appendix G: Observation Checklist of Task-Related Behaviour

Date:  
Time:  

**Observation Checklist of Task-related Behaviour**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student’s name</th>
<th>Student’s name</th>
<th>Student’s name</th>
<th>Student’s name</th>
<th>Student’s name</th>
<th>Student’s name</th>
<th>Student’s name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P – Proactive (student shares ideas voluntarily)  
P+ mostly in French  
P- mostly in English  
X - Student off task  
? - Student asks question  
A - Appropriate response by student (all in French)  
N = Teacher called on non-volunteer and student responded.  
N+ mostly in French  
N- mostly in English

**Comments:**

This tool was developed based on “Observation tool 10 Managing the Learning Environment” created by Teacher Support Specialists.  
Contributed by Nelda Bishop, First District RESA. Retrieved from  
Appendix H: Student Participant Interview Guide

Attitude toward learning FSL:

1. How do you feel in French class?
2. What do you like about French class?
3. What do you dislike about French class?
4. Do you have any problems understanding French?
5. Who usually helps you solve problems in French?
6. Do you ever speak French outside the classroom? With whom?
7. How much French do you use in class?
8. What do you think your parents think about French?
9. Why do you think you learn French in school?
10. How do you think you will use French when you are older?
11. How does French class compare to your other classes?

Questions were reproduced and/or adapted from the following study: Garbati, J. (2007). Core French in Eastern Ontario: A language-minority student’s experience. (Master’s Thesis). Available from QSpace Queen’s Research and Learning Repository (http://hdl.handle.net/1974/654)
Perceptions of Francophone people:

1. Have you ever met any French people?
2. Did you try to speak French?
3. Do you think they are different from us? If so, how are they different from us?
4. What do you think when you hear people speaking French?
5. If I ask you to say in a few words about what French people are like, what would you say?
6. What sort of clothes do you think they wear?
7. What do they eat?
8. If you were a French boy (or girl) do you think you would be a different person?
9. How would you be different?
10. What do you think French people think of English people?
11. Do you think it is important to learn about how French people live as well as their language? Why?
12. Do you ever watch French movies or shows on TV?
13. Before our study, did you know we have French communities in Ontario, a province that is known as English speaking?
14. (Showing the pictures)What did you learn from our e-mail exchange with the students from (name of school)?
15. Look at the pictures and tell me, what did you learn about them that you think is cool?
16. If you had a chance, would you like to meet some or any of the students we had the exchange with? Why?

Questions were reproduced and/or adapted from the following book: