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# Teaching in a French Immersion Setting: A Review of the Who, the What and the How

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## Abstract

The French immersion (FI) program has been offered for over 50 years in Canada. Given that more than five decades brings changes to context and understanding, this review focuses on the foundation of the program and its present iteration. In particular, we focus on and identify past and current student populations (the who), program design (the what), and approaches and practices (the how) in FI programs in Canada. Research used for the development of this literature review was limited to Canadian-based empirical studies published in peer-reviewed journals and book chapters between 2012 and 2022 as identified through the use of ERIC-EBSCO and ÉRUDIT databases, with the exception of certain foundational articles (Cummins & Swain, 1986) to the study of FI in the Canadian educational context which surpass the 10-year parameters set out for this literature review in addition to the inclusion of more dated references to support statements.

## Keywords

## 1. Introduction

The French immersion program was established in Canada in the mid-sixties. With over fifty years of implementation, the program has evolved from its inception. Changes have been noted in the student population (the who), the program (the what), and the means of delivery (the how). Transformations to the program as described by Swain and Johnson (1997) were noted in Swain and Lapkin's (2005) review. Over 15 years hence, we explore recent studies to examine if and how the program and its students have changed over time.

Grounded in Canadian empirical studies from 2012 to 2022 and seminal articles, this review explores the past and present delivery of French immersion in Canada. Given that more than five decades also brings changes to understanding, it is important to provide clarification of certain terms that will be used throughout this literature review. Within the context of initial research exploring FI, first language (L1) was often used as a generalized term understood to refer to the English language, with use of the term second language (L2) when referring to French. While these terms are sometimes still used when discussing the various aspects of FI programs and instruction, it is of note that we use French to refer to the immersive language and L1 to include the language(s) students bring with them to the school context. Such shifts in language reflect the growing diversity of the student population in FI programs across Canada and their linguistic repertoires.

## 2. Foundations of FI

### 2.1. The Who

At the time of its initial delivery in 1965, in keeping with the context of the time, FI was designed as an education program to be offered to Anglophone students. During this time, without the same recognition being applied to Indigenous languages, Canada began to adopt a model of official bilingualism, with the two official languages being English and French. This period in Canada's history is often referred to as the Quiet Revolution (la révolution tranquille), a time that, among many political changes, prompted changes to education in Quebec. It was within this context that Anglophone parents in St. Lambert, Quebec advocated to have their children provided with learning opportunities that would allow them to attain a conversational level of French (Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Swain, 2000). With that in mind, the FI program was created, in response to parental demand, with the goal to support students in becoming functionally bilingual with high levels of proficiency in English and French alike (Nikula & Mård-Miettienen, 2014). The Anglophone students were offered an additive language experience where French was the language of instruction offering minimal, if any, threat to English that was used at home and valued in the community. The FI program was also created to be inclusive of students of varied needs with the initial proposal explicitly not limiting enrolment to certain students with specific characteristics such as giftedness for example (Melikoff, 2016).

### 2.2. The What

At the outset, the FI program was created to be delivered starting in Kindergarten with continued delivery with French as the sole language of instruction for the primary years introducing English in the junior division. With a view to support enhanced FSL learning, the FI program was designed to provide students with the opportunity to learn French as a second language (FSL) through the study of other subjects using French as the conduit language to that subject

matter. Subject area content in FI aligned with the corresponding subject curriculum offered in English, requiring the delivery of the same content, and addressing the same learning outcomes of the prescribed curriculum content within their respective jurisdictions but with French as the language of teaching and learning.

### 2.3. The How

At the commencement of the FI program, Francophone teachers were hired to deliver the curriculum through French. A content-based approach to learning was adopted where students were engaged in learning through subject matter, not just related to French language arts, but also other subject areas (e.g., math, science, social studies). Given the innovation the program represented at the time, the established direct method was used as a foundation for subject content delivery and language development, mimicking L1 development (Cummins, 2007). The teacher was the language model and used French to the exclusion of English as was also reflected in the audio-lingual, audio-visual approaches of the time where instruction was teacher-centred with focus on delivery and understanding of a message over a focus on form (Dressler, 2018).

## 3. Current State of French Immersion in Canada

### 3.1. The Who

The FI program has come to be known as one where students develop functional French skills (e.g., Public Service Commission of Canada, 2005) while developing their English (e.g., Turnbull, Hart, & Lapkin, 2001) and other subject skills (e.g., Reeder & Bournot-Trites, 2001) at the same rate or better than their peers in English programs (e.g., Turnbull, Hart, & Lapkin, 2003). With the established success of the program (Genesee, 2007; Lazaruk, 2007), the popularity of FI programs has grown substantially since its creation (Canadian Parents for French, 2021). More specifically, as of 2021, the province of Ontario reported a consistent 5% growth in enrollment to its FI programs over a 16-year period (Canadian Parents for French Ontario, 2022). Whereas two student groups may have been excluded from FI more frequently in the past, English language learners (Mady, 2018a) and students with learning difficulties (Mady, 2018b), are contributing to the growth in the program as Ontario strives to develop a more inclusive approach. Given the increased diversity of students in Canada, student diversity in FI has also increased thus prompting changes to the program. The original goal of bilingualism has expanded to include functional multilingualism, appreciating that many students enter the program having a language repertoire to which they are adding French and English. In their review of FI characteristics over time, Swain and Lapkin (2005) identified that while FI classrooms were initially composed primarily of students with English as their L1 (Swain & Johnson, 1997), more cultural diversity in public schools as a result of continued and increased immigration throughout Canada contributes to a context where mul-

tiple languages are represented at school. When examining the role of French in this FI context, French remains an additive skill to students' language repertoires, English, however, could be subtractive within English-focused schools and communities.

Although not created as an elite program, as highlighted above, FI has often come to be identified as such due to the exclusion of some learners from the program (Arnett & Mady, 2017; Bourgoin, 2014a; Cobb, 2015; Mady, 2018a) despite research showing their performance to be on par with their peers (Mady, 2015, 2017). In support of a return to the origins of FI where the program was intended for all, the Ontario government, the province with the highest population in Canada, encourages the inclusion of students with learning difficulties with their policy document *A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013) and accompanying support document, *Including students with special education needs in French as a second language education programs* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015). Similarly, the Ontario government supports the inclusion of English language learners (ELL) in FI as acknowledged in *Welcoming English Language Learners in French as a Second Language Programs* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). It is worth noting that despite these initiatives being in place, there continue to be parents of both ELL and students with learning difficulties who are being counseled against enrolling their children in FI programs, with little known improvements in school boards across Ontario to address the imposed barriers to the FI program (Canadian Parents for French Ontario, 2022).

## 3.2. The What

Though initially developed as a one-way, early years (beginning in Kindergarten or Grade 1) FSL program, Nikula and Mård-Miettienen (2014) noted that different models of FI have since been developed, categorized based on student age of enrolment (early, middle, late) and the percentage of the day in which instruction is done in French (total, partial). The first FI programs adopted in Canada were those of early, total immersion, beginning in either Kindergarten or Grade 1, depending on the school's jurisdiction, students would attend school with 100% of their day being immersed in French instruction and learning. In the majority of programs currently being offered across provincial jurisdictions in Canada, the FI program is designated as such where a minimum of 50 percent of their learning day is offered in French (Swain, 2000), with optional enrolment from Kindergarten to Grade 12 (Nikula & Mård-Miettienen, 2014), and depending on the jurisdiction, choices to enroll at primary, junior or in the intermediate divisions.

With education being a provincial responsibility with regions having multiple, varied demands, different provincial jurisdictions across Canada implement various forms of FI within their public-school systems (Swain, 2000), more than imagined at its conception. All of these FI programs, however, possess the same ultimate goal, as in the past, which is to provide students with a content-based

approach to L2 learning following the corresponding curricular documents for the English stream, allowing them to gain a high level of oral competency, fluency, and proficiency in the French language (Dicks & Genesee, 2016).

## 3.3. The How

High levels of acquired fluency in French are attributed to the structure of the FI program. In Dicks' (2022) most recent writing, he highlighted the temporal pillars associated with the success of the FI program: intensity, frequency, and extensiveness. Learners are exposed to and instructed in French for multiple hours each day providing for intensity. The frequency of this exposure was and remains on a daily basis, spanning over an extended amount of time (possibly from Kindergarten to Grade 12). In addition to the amount of time spent on learning French, the effectiveness of FI programs is associated with their content-based approach to language learning. In this way, students are motivated to use the language as a means of further learning in and understanding of a particular subject matter (Lyster, 2019a; Ryan & Sinay, 2020). These characteristics remain pillars of the FI program today.

### 3.3.1. Teaching in the FI Program

Different than when Francophone teachers were hired into the FI program in the 1960s, today there have been changes to the teacher population necessarily expanding beyond Francophones to include graduates of the FI program as well as graduates from other FSL programs in an attempt to meet the demand for the program (Early et al., 2017). Universities across Canada offering teacher preparation programs recognize the responsibility of preparing teachers not only in terms of pedagogy related to the profession, but also providing opportunities for L2 speakers to engage and use French (Smith et al., 2023). The Second Language Research Institute of Canada (L2RIC), housed within the University of New Brunswick, has recognized this need and begun offering "séance franco" sessions for pre-service teachers as an opportunity to not only interact with others in French (their L2) but also build capacity in terms of their use of certain forms of the language (Le Bouthillier & Kristmanson, 2023a, 2023b).

Further to developing and/or maintaining their own skills, throughout the implementation of the FI program, teachers, administrators, and researchers alike have recognized that teaching in the FI program places additional demands on educators in terms of the knowledge and skills required to teach French as a second (or additional) language, which sets the program apart from other L2 or traditional English settings (Cammarata & Haley, 2018). Tedick and Fortune (2012) found that in addition to theoretical and pedagogical background knowledge which is the focus of initial teacher education programs, FI teachers must also develop knowledge and skills related to L2 learning and acquisition, allowing them to effectively teach students content-based disciplines in French. From its origins to present day, educators and parents alike require the reassurances brought through research that FI programs meet objectives both in terms of

language learning and development as well as the assigned curriculum content. Of note, research has shown that FI students, after an initial lag, obtain the same level of content knowledge as that of learners in English programs (Lyster, 2019a), develop higher levels of competency than students in other L2 programs, and gain, at least, comparable levels of English competency (Au-Yeung et al., 2015; Dicks & Kristmanson, 2017).

### 3.3.2. Changes in Pedagogy to Support Improved Language Output

The successful results of FI are often associated with the origins of the FI program modeled after L1 development with the corresponding extensive focus on providing input in French, a recognized critical factor in L2 acquisition. Learners need exposure to high-quality language input in order to develop their language skills. This can include exposure to a variety of authentic materials, such as books, movies, and podcasts, as well as opportunities to interact with fluent speakers of the language. Gass (2018) described language acquisition as a process beginning with comprehensible input and "culminating with integration of new linguistic information into an existing linguistic system, output then being the manifestation of newly integrated or acquired knowledge" (p. 4). While it remains essential for language learners to be presented with significant amounts of "rich comprehensible input" (Swain, 2000: p. 201), weaker student production (speaking and writing) results (Erdos et al., 2014) in FI have highlighted the need for multiple and frequent opportunities for learners to use their French in meaningful and authentic ways. Quiring (2020) noted that while grammatical and lexical forms are to be taught explicitly in the FI classroom, this knowledge becomes internalized through students' practice and use of these concepts in real life. Output, consists of production and interaction, with corrective feedback also playing a crucial role. When students are producing language in their L2, they are cognitively engaged in activities which allow them to refine their production, convey meaning, and consolidate linguistic knowledge (Swain, 2000). Similarly, when students are engaged in oral language activities that promote interaction, they are not only practicing the use of grammatical rules but also the development of syntax. Such forms of oral production facilitate language learning as students negotiate meaning through the production of comprehensible output (Gass, 2018). The more opportunities students are provided to use French in the class, the more proficient they become (Quiring, 2020).

### 3.3.3. Error Correction

In connection with encouraging quality student output, the FI program has evolved in its addressing of student production errors from its conception where there was a priority on message to one where there was a stressed focus on form (Arnott et al., 2019) to today where there is a more balanced approach. Studies that have been conducted since as early as the 1970s have shown that FI students often acquire high proficiency levels of comprehension (receptive) skills, while their proficiency in terms of their production remains lacking (Allen et al.,

2017). In particular, it has been found that their French is often less complex, lacking specificity, and variety in terms of their use of vocabulary and grammatical accuracy (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012; Nikula & Mård-Miettienen, 2014). These results prompted a shift to an additional focus on quality output that has influenced the focus of instructional practice among FI teachers. Rehner et al. (2021) reported that while FI teachers were previously placing a great deal of attention on form, such as sentence structure and error correction, more recently an increased emphasis on real life situations in which students apply various competencies to accomplish language tasks in French including a focus on the sociolinguistic competencies necessary to understand and produce cohesive and coherent output including correct grammatical constructs has become a focus of instruction.

A balanced approach to encouraging quality output has underscored the importance for teachers to provide corrective feedback to learners. Research has identified different types of effective corrective feedback strategies that can be applied to support continued language learning (Lyster, 2018; Swain, 2000). These strategies include:

- Recasts,
- Explicit corrections,
- Elicitations,
- Metalinguistic clues,
- Clarification requests, and
- Repetitions of error.

Depending on the instructional situation, educators use their judgement and knowledge of their learners to determine which strategy should be used in providing corrective feedback. Lyster (2018) noted that reformulation strategies such as explicit correction or recast provide the proper form that should be used when speaking and are most frequently the strategies used by educators. However, he argued that applying prompting strategies as a means of providing corrective feedback allows students to correct their forms by accessing existing knowledge they already possess.

### 3.3.4. Teaching Approaches to Improve Quality Output

Another important element of instruction to promote quality French output within the FI classroom is the integrated approach through which students are concurrently and systematically attending to both general learning outcomes and language. In the context of FI programs, curricular integration involves integrating French language instruction with other subject areas, such as math, science, and social studies. Beyond the provision of input emphasized in the original program design, particularly within the context of FI programs, integrating explicit French language instruction with other subjects can help students to develop their French language skills in a more authentic and natural way. A reactive approach to integrating language and content includes scaffolding techniques such as elaboration questions and corrective feedback in response

to students' language production that serve to support student participation while ensuring that classroom interaction is a key source of both content learning and L2 development. A proactive approach to integrating language and content entails planned instruction that interweaves noticing and awareness activities with opportunities for practice. A combination of reactive and proactive approaches is crucial to classroom learners who would otherwise be required to process the French exclusively through content and meaning-based activities where incidental interaction is too brief and too perfunctory to convey sufficient information about certain grammatical subsystems, and thus unlikely to make the most of content-based instruction as a means for learning language (Lyster, 2019a).

In one study that examined the use of integration in FI classrooms, researchers found that students who participated in integrated activities demonstrated greater proficiency in French and were more likely to use French for communication than students who participated in traditional language-focused activities (Collins & White, 2011). However, it is important to note that content teaching does not necessarily lead to enhanced language knowledge and needs to be complemented and manipulated in ways that enable students to notice form-meaning mappings in the L2 (Swain, 2005). Cammarata and Haley (2018) reported that believing that L2 acquisition will occur naturally without explicit teaching within an integrated approach to instruction has been found to yield underdeveloped language proficiency, both in oral and written production. To this end, educators are now encouraged to effectively, strategically, and simultaneously integrate multiple instructional objectives (content, language, and literacy) into their lessons (Cammarata et al., 2018). Moreover, these efforts need to be proactive, intentional, and explicit. Cammarata and Haley (2018) reported that creating and implementing well-balanced lessons which simultaneously integrated content and language instruction was found to be the primary pedagogical challenge experienced by FI teachers.

Until more recently, there were few concrete instructional models developed as means of supporting these integration efforts among FI teachers (Lyster, 2016). In response to FI teacher challenges, ways to promote the integration of language and content have been developed. Lyster (2019a) highlights a functional approach emphasizing the ways in which linguistic features of discipline-specific language construe particular kinds of meanings. This involves making students explicitly aware of: 1) the academic language functions they need to understand and communicate in specific academic disciplines (e.g., describing, comparing, explaining, hypothesizing, predicting) and 2) the conventional text structures or genres that are characteristic of particular disciplines (e.g., science reports, historical accounts, math problems, essays) (Lyster, 2019a). Another strategy is to use Content Based Language Teaching with Technology (CoBaLTT) unit and lesson planning models as well as Lyster's (2016) integrated instructional sequence model, which was recently formalized. Lyster's (2019b) task sequence model offers an example of how teachers can focus on raising students' aware-

ness of language and help them use that language in context. Counterbalanced instruction requires teachers to shift the instructional focus between language and content. This approach gives language and content objectives complementary status, but it does not necessarily mean that there is an equal or balanced focus on language and content. The notion of counterbalance aims to prevent one factor or orientation from exercising a disproportionate influence, diffusing dichotomous views of form versus meaning orientations, and instead conceptualizing them as complementary options that optimize L2 learning. Cammarata (2016) developed the content-language-literacy curricular framework to support FI teachers in their efforts to bridge the teaching of content, language, and literacy. This framework includes additional considerations for the integration of academic language, thinking processes, and academic literacy, which are interconnected and crucial elements in second language teaching. Teacher participants in this study were provided with time to co-construct lessons and develop pedagogical materials to support those lessons (i.e., handouts, slides, modified texts) to meet both the curriculum outcomes as well as diverse language learner needs. Teacher participants initially struggled to determine which aspects of language and literacy to focus on, often relying heavily on developing and expanding vocabulary. The struggle was particularly pronounced when teachers were planning to integrate language skills into courses other than language arts, such as mathematics. The second round of planning and implementation, however, saw immense improvement, with teachers often being able to identify grammatical structures or specific literacy skills to focus on during their integrated lessons (Cammarata & Haley, 2018).

### 3.3.5. Focus on Tasks

Piccardo (2014) noted that these shifts in instructional approaches to language teaching have prompted a shift in the role of the language teacher. Teachers are no longer educators who simply follow and apply a set of strict rules designed by experts; they are expected to draw on principles and techniques to prepare activities and design learning that is adapted to the needs of learners thus promoting the ultimate goal of students gaining the ability to use language meaningfully and accurately in specific real-life situations. She purports that the action-oriented approach emphasizes the importance of authenticity in language exchanges as identified in the above discussion of authentic input and output, allowing learners to engage in meaningful real-life situations and conversations (Germain-Rutherford, 2021). Language tasks under this approach primarily focus on meaning, while guiding students towards accurate language use. The teacher's role is crucial in supporting language fluency and guiding students towards precise language use (Bourgoin & Le Bouthillier, 2021). By having the learners play active roles in the language learning process, the action-oriented approach creates an environment within the FI classroom that supports the development of lifelong learning skills, such as critical and creative thinking, resilience, and autonomy (Germain-Rutherford, 2021). "The action-oriented task seeks to break

down the walls of the classroom and connects it with the outside world" (Piccardo, 2014: p. 28). However, there are challenges in implementing this approach effectively. For example, while some students may contribute actively to classroom discussions, others will produce very little L2 output or engage sparingly in these interactions. Therefore, it is crucial to focus on the types of tasks proposed to language learners to ensure that communication activities are authentic and engaging (Bourgoin & Le Bouthillier, 2021). According to Germain-Rutherford (2021), "communication is not the goal but the means to achieve the task" (p. 92). If learners are actively and authentically engaged in tasks requiring them to solve real-life problems in French, their knowledge retention and content understanding are simultaneously being enhanced (Germain-Rutherford, 2021).

According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), tasks are defined as actions performed by individuals who strategically utilize their cognitive, emotional, and volitional resources to achieve a desired outcome (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 9). Such tasks are rooted in the learners' lived experiences, socially and culturally situated, and tied to language learning objectives (Germain-Rutherford, 2021). Ellis et al. (2019) highlight that different types of tasks create opportunities for different types of real-world interactions that foster the processes involved in L2 acquisition. The real-world communication involved requires interlocutors to negotiate meaning and form as they work towards understanding one another and accomplishing the task at hand. Practically speaking, the pre-task stage in task-based language teaching aims to motivate learners by clarifying the procedures and outcomes of the task and ensuring that they possess the schematic and linguistic knowledge necessary to carry it out. The main task focuses on interaction that necessitates real-world communication, while the post-task stage provides opportunities for learners to repeat the task, address problematic linguistic forms, and reflect on the task and/or their or others' performance (Ellis et al., 2019).

This approach that specifies a focus on authentic input and output grounded in action-oriented tasks that allow for focus on form within the tasks is supported by Ontario's current CEFR-inspired documents that emphasize the importance of action-oriented language teaching in focusing learners "on what they want to communicate, what they need others to understand, and why" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014: p. 7). When tasks are set within an action-oriented approach, learners are encouraged to engage in communicative language activities to develop their competencies (Council of Europe, 2001). This is also supported by research within the FI context. Bourgoin and Le Bouthillier (2021) conducted a study to evaluate the effectiveness of using tasks to promote oral language production in French for young immersion students. The researchers found that tasks provided students with the opportunity to interact in French through role playing, writing, and description centers. The activities promoted oral language production in French while also enhancing student ownership of their learning experience. Special attention was given to scaffolding and linguis-

tic support necessary for students to engage in tasks with limited use of their L1.

### 3.3.6. Changes in Pedagogy to Support the Recognition and Use of Multiple Languages

Further to adapting program delivery based on student outcomes as revealed by research, changes to the student population, with an influx of students with varied language repertoires into the FI program, have also prompted changes to delivery so as to support student language acquisition and maintenance. Whereas in the past, FI teachers chose a monolingual, French, approach by monopolizing talk time, forbidding code-switching, and restricting group work options for example (Cummins, 2007). In recent years, there has been a shift in the traditional belief that a purely input-driven L2 learning experience is most effective, as advocated by proponents of FI programs (Cummins & Persad, 2014; Swain & Lapkin, 2013), to an increased focus on the examination of the role use a student's L1 can play in the language learning process (Davis et al., 2019; Fortune & Tedick, 2019; Mady, 2012; Mady & Garbati, 2014; Roy, 2015; Zaidi et al., 2022). Swain and Lapkin (2013) encouraged teachers to reflect on L1 use and to consider when and if its use supports student learning by facilitating comprehensible input. Zaidi et al. (2022), conducted a case study whereby FI students from Grades K-6 were exposed to multilingual literacy teaching through the use of Storybooks Canada platform. Findings from this study revealed that the use of such multilingual tools enhanced student engagement in their respective multilingual contexts and reduced isolation of newly arrived students who were able to comprehend the stories that were being presented in their L1. Similarly, Culligan (2015) found that student and teacher use of English in a FI high school mathematics class did not have a negative impact on student achievement. Students reported that using their L1 to negotiate meaning was a useful tool in the context of their mathematics course.

In recent years, there has been an increased focus on plurilingualism in education, an individual's multilingual capacities and their ability to speak multiple languages particularly in the context of FI programs (Piccardo et al., 2022; Taylor, 2013). To this end, rather than limiting language use to French as in the past with the direct method, educators are starting to acknowledge and value the linguistic and cultural diversity of students to support students in developing their plurilingual abilities. This includes recognizing and including students' home languages and providing space for their use in class (Piccardo et al., 2022). Prasad (2020), engaged in an arts-based study whereby culturally and linguistically diverse learners were asked to represent their experiences and understandings about plurilingualism. Collaging techniques were used as the mode for students to depict plurilingualism. These elementary students represented plurilingualism positively and recognized the opportunities afforded to them by learning French.

Despite this thrust for recognition of multiple languages in the FI class, given the success of the FI program being founded on sole use of French, FI teachers are frequently challenged to balance the role and space afforded to students' L1

within the classroom during instructional time with that of French use (Mady & Arnett, 2019). Research, however, shows that additional language competence is intertwined with students' cognitive, conceptual, and social development and should be supported by meaningful and challenging language use (Fortune & Tedick, 2019; Nikula & Mård-Miettienen, 2014); where the past strict separation of languages in FI has challenged the teachers' and students' abilities to make connections among languages (Cummins, 2007, 2014; Dressler, 2018). Beyond recognizing that L1 knowledge can be an asset for language learning (Mady & Garbati, 2014) whether overtly or internally, explicit inclusion of students' languages in class has been shown to promote their academic achievement and overall well-being (Zaidi et al., 2022). In the Canadian context, discussions about the extent to which "judicious use of the L1" (Swain & Lapkin, 2000: p. 268) can serve as a useful cognitive resource in L2 learning (Ballinger, 2013; Ballinger et al., 2017; Cummins, 2019; Swain & Lapkin, 2013) have broadened to discussions about the key role of translanguaging pedagogy (Fortune & Tedick, 2019; Jaspers, 2018; Otheguy et al., 2015). Translanguaging is defined as "the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named languages" (Ballinger, 2013: p. 283). Ballinger (2013) encourages schools to support natural translanguage ability rather than building boundaries between languages, acknowledging that using students' L1 to discuss complex concepts and navigate social situations can support language learning. Language learners and users, as social actors, decide which language they will use to accomplish a certain communication task according to the context. Similarly, teacher translanguaging involves switching languages of instruction based on the topic or context. Teachers and students may code-switch, play with language, and judiciously use L1s in the classroom during tasks which are more cognitively demanding (Zhang & Guo, 2017). Translanguaging, often resembling natural bilingual language use, can be a deliberate pedagogical choice made by the teacher. While there has been some debate into the value and efficacy of such strategies, many recent studies have found that these "strategies do not run counter to immersion pedagogy but rather provide an additive component" (Dressler, 2018: p. 179). This approach "aims to use the entire linguistic repertoire of bilingual students" (García, 2013: p. 2) and recognizes that bilinguals/multilinguals have a unified language system in which their respective languages are interrelated and interrelate dynamically (Lyster, 2019b). Support for the accepted and explicit use of multiple languages in FI classes is found in research where bilingual students' reading skills were found to develop interdependently across languages, and where reading instruction in one language was found to facilitate literacy in the L2 (Archambault et al., 2019). In addition to language development, L2 students learned math through gradual adoption of mathematical, linguistic, and social practices in language-positive classrooms that promoted explicit discussion, attention, and support for language learning and participation in math where students on various resources, including diagrams, gestures, genres, and multiple languages (Barwell, 2020).

### 3.3.7. Changes in Pedagogy to Support the Inclusion of Students with Learning Difficulties

Rather than a change from the original design of the FI program, means to support the inclusion, retention, and success of students with learning difficulties in FI represents a return to the origins of the program that was meant to be open to all learners. While FI has seen much success since its inception and adoption throughout Canada, continued efforts are being made to ensure that FI provides accessible and equitable French learning opportunities for all students with many researchers recommending the need for major innovations to be incorporated into the program in order to increase inclusivity (Bourgoin, 2014a; Cobb, 2015; Philp et al., 2017). Bourgoin (2014a), acknowledged efforts being made in the area of inclusion education in FI, including the acknowledgement of diversity, the use of diverse instructional practices, as well as the establishment of inclusive learning environments. However, she also recognized that continued improvements are still needed to provide teachers with relevant and ongoing professional development related to exceptional learners, as well as appropriate identification, assessment, and interventions for all learners (Bourgoin, 2014a). Similarly, Cobb's (2015) study found that there continue to be concerns about the inclusivity of FI programs throughout Canada as it relates to accessibility, the provision of supports, and the ultimate exclusion of students with diverse learning needs.

While some acknowledge changes to the program, Cummins (2014) argued that the program is "virtually unchanged" despite the many changes and advancements that have occurred across the country over the last several decades. He suggested that certain structural and systemic issues have to be addressed; in particular, changes would need to address the underlying mindsets, policies, and practices related to the use of only French in the FI classroom. He recommended the need for educators within the FI program to rethink the exclusive and monolingual use of the French in their instructional practices. He highlighted that assumptions related to avoiding translations, and siloed ways of viewing multilingual learners are problematic as they do not enhance or value students' languages (Cummins, 2014). In previous writing, Cummins (2007) noted that,

> students' L1 is not the enemy in promoting high levels of L2 proficiency; rather, when students' L1 is invoked as a cognitive and linguistic resource through bilingual instructional strategies, it can function as a steppingstone to scaffold more accomplished performance in the L2 (p. 238).

Furthermore, Cummins stressed that monolingual assumptions work to, in fact, exclude opportunities for language learning that could be enhanced by leveraging the linguistic resources available to students on a larger scale (Cummins, 2014).

With the view to support learners in FI and address the systemic issue of lack of support services (Genesee, 2004) for students with learning difficulties, research has examined means to identify difficulties and means to address them.

For instance, Erdos et al. (2014) and MacCoubrey et al. (2004) found that screening assessments completed in English can predict risks for reading and oral difficulties for students in early FI. MacCoubrey et al. (2007) then purported that French interventions that targeted French phonological awareness could help to support FI students with learning difficulties in particular. Likewise Wise and Chen (2010) found that bilingual interventions with the same phonological focus supported students' success. Similarly, Bourgoin (2014b) found that students needing additional support in learning to read in the French could be identified using early literacy indicators, both in their L1 (administered prior to beginning FI) and in their French (administered concurrently with L2 learning).

Despite the need to address systemic issues of support, Mady (2018b) in her observational study with FI teachers found that the teachers were adapting their instruction to the whole class by using multiple strategies in line with Universal Design (Rose & Meyer, 2002) principles, but were less likely to adapt to the needs of an individual. Similarly, teachers in Joy and Murphy's (2012) research used routines, scaffolding, repetition, group work, music, role-playing, demonstrations, and a token incentive program. Likewise, Le Bouthillier's (2013) study provided examples of supportive practice such as providing written feedback to accompany oral feedback and directions, using graphic organizers, and use of colour coding to encourage students to identify certain information in a text. In Pellerin's (2013) study, teachers used technology that afforded them time to support individual students. This use of technology allowed teachers to work with students individually and in small groups and diversify learning opportunities. At the same time, FI teachers have indicated a need for professional development opportunities to better understand how to meet the needs of exceptional learners in their classrooms and make their practice more inclusive and equitable (Mady & Muhling, 2017). Additional research is needed to enhance knowledge as to the most effective supports to be used in the context of exceptionalities in the FI setting.

## 4. Conclusion

Over five decades of time and research since the inception of the FI program has prompted changes to the program considering the learners (who), the design of the program (what) and means of delivery (how). While much research has been conducted over the past several decades, exploring the results of the program, there are still areas in need for further research, in particular how changes in delivery influence results, if at all. For example, further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of different pedagogical approaches and strategies for promoting language learning with students with learning difficulties and supporting plurilingualism in FI programs. Additionally, research is needed to better understand the role of L1 use in FI and how to effectively integrate it into instruction. While encouraged to consider the use of other languages in the FI class, for instance, teachers struggle to know the extent to which they should in-

clude languages other than French, if at all. Given that teachers have often conducted their classes all in French with success, including to diverse students (Mady, 2020), more specific, data-supported guidelines would be beneficial. By continuing to explore and refine our understanding of effective pedagogical approaches and strategies, we can support language learning and plurilingualism in FI students.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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