Living in Two Worlds: The Phenomena of the Language Immersion Experience

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Living in Two Worlds: 
The Phenomena of the Language Immersion Experience

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the 
University of New Orleans 
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy 
in 
Curriculum and Instruction

by
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B.A. DePaul University, 1996
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May 2018
Dedication

With great humility and love I dedicate this dissertation to my family. To my parents for never giving up on me or the idea that this was possible even when I waivered in my commitment. To my sister for countless hours of moral support. To my children for growing from unwitting participants in this grand experiment to thoughtful, helpful, and insightful interlocutors. To my husband for your tireless commitment to reading endless drafts of my work, for almost twenty years of healthy intellectual rivalry, and for helping me to find my own intellectual voice. I could never have gone on this journey without you.
Acknowledgements

When I started this project, I had just returned to the United States after spending a year in Sénégal and was not at all sure what I should be doing with myself. For so many years I had welcomed foreign teachers to my country and to my school, helping them weather the shock of living in a new country and working as a teacher in a very different pedagogical environment. For years I helped them pack up their lives at the end of their time in this country, and did my best to help, not fully understanding the anxiety they faced at the prospect of moving back home, having to transition to living and teaching in a place that should have been familiar and yet somehow might not be--because they were no longer quite the same person who had left. Now I was the one returning home, and unsure of where to turn. Into that moment of fear and uncertainty stepped Dr. Richard Speaker. It is hard to imagine a more perfect mentor. Without his intellectual curiosity and inspiration, I would have never have accomplished this project. I am profoundly grateful to have had the opportunity to learn from and work with him over these seven years.

All my committee members played an important role in shaping my thinking and refining my work. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. John Barnitz, Dr. David Beriss, and Dr. Michelle Haj-Broussard, each of whom provided unique perspectives which were invaluable during this long process. I am grateful to have received your insight, guidance, and even push-back about theory, methodology, and research.

I would also like to acknowledge my school family near and far. You have given me the courage to take risks, pushed me to learn more, challenged me about my assumptions, and have patiently forgiven my mistakes. This project would not have been possible without you.

I would like to extend a special thank you to Karla Cochran for her graphic design assistance; Frédérique Jouret for her French language editing; Nathalie Adams and Gael Ravet...
for assisting me with data collection and transcription; Lucia Hammer for engaging in this data with me and being an important interlocutor in this process; and Melanie Tennyson for giving me the opportunity to do this and so much more. Je remercie toutes les personnes impliquées et leur témoigne ma reconnaissance.
Abstract

As Vygotsky (1986) concludes in his seminal work *Thought and Language*, “A word relates to consciousness as a living cell relates to a whole organism, as an atom relates to the universe. A word is a microcosm of human consciousness” (p. 246). Even without an in-depth understanding of science and only the most popular appreciation of the police procedural be it Sherlock Holmes or CSI, it is easy to see how a single cell can relate to the whole organism. But how can a word be a microcosm of human consciousness? The purpose of this study was to explore exactly that premise: whether words reflect the lived experience of not only a person, but of a group of people, by documenting the lived experience of children in the phenomena of foreign language immersion in school (FLIIS). Using corpus linguistic techniques to analyze the nature of these children’s lexical development as well as the relationship of the perceptions of their fluency on their second language (L2) production, this study found that in order to understand the essence of what it means for a child to express him/herself fluently in his/her L2, one must understand how language functions as a transparent medium for these children and shift one’s thinking from an additive idea of language (L1, L2, L3) to the idea of interlingual consciousness.

Keywords: interlingual, language immersion, lived-experience, lexical development
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<tr>
<td>CE1</td>
<td>Cours élémentaire 1 in the French educational system is equivalent to second grade in the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CM2</td>
<td>Cours moyen 2 in the French educational system is equivalent to the fifth grade in the United States.</td>
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<tr>
<td>EL</td>
<td>English Learner</td>
</tr>
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<td>FLIIS</td>
<td>Foreign Language Immersion in School</td>
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<td>HSL</td>
<td>Home Language Survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>Native Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td>Language that is not the native language, usually the language of instruction in an immersion setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lg.I</td>
<td>Language Ideology, the concept that beliefs about language become unconscious and removed from their origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCK</td>
<td>Third Culture Kid</td>
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Chapter One: Introduction

De là viendrait que le sens plein d’une langue n’est jamais traduisible dans une autre. Nous pouvons parler plusieurs langues, mais l’une d’elle reste toujours celle dans laquelle nous vivons. Pour assimiler complètement une langue, il faudrait assumer le monde qu’elle exprime et l’on n’appartient jamais à deux mondes à la fois.¹

—Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phénoménologie de la perception (1945)

Often educational policy makers and even educators declare the goal of developing students into adults that will be globally aware and competitive in a global marketplace. Learning a foreign language continues to be one of the ways that this goal is attempted. Among the most interesting and effective innovations in second language education during the last three decades have been the immersion programs developed in Canada.

The first immersion programs were developed to provide Canada’s majority-group English-speaking students with opportunities to learn Canada’s other official language. Since that time, immersion programs have been adopted in many different areas of North America, and alternative forms of immersion have been devised (Genesee, 1994).

Through the social and linguistic process of negotiating meaning in a classroom where content is taught in a second language (L2) that is not the students native language (L1), immersion students develop the vocabulary and sentence structures needed to achieve high levels of functional proficiency (Punchard, 2011). But what does it mean to be proficient in a language?

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1, The New Oxford Annotated Bible Revised Standard Version). What comes to be

¹ “The full meaning of a language is never translatable into another. We may speak several languages but one of them always remains the one in which we live. In order completely to assimilate a language it would be necessary to make the world which it expresses one’s own and one never does belong to two worlds at once.”
translated as “the Word” is a somewhat wanting translation of the Greek word *logos*, which is derived from the verb *lego*, meaning "to count, to tell, to say." In this verb there is the implication of a partnered discourse: teller of story and listener. For human beings, the “earth was without form and void” (Genesis 1:2), and there was darkness before the story. The Divine is the great Story-Teller who created a partner, made in the Story-Teller’s own image (Genesis 1:26) to tell the story to. Without an interlocutor there could be no Word, no *logos*. Thus, each subsequent generation has replicated the act of creation, remaking in our own image listeners for stories. Simple transmission and reception of stories is not sufficient. The relationship of giver and receiver of stories is an active, often painful transmission achieved through struggle.

Chapter 32 of Genesis tells an intriguing tale of one man’s night-long struggle with a mysterious other. Having placed his family out of harm's way, Jacob is said to have wrestled with a man until dawn. At the break of day, the mystery combatant pleads with Jacob to let him go, but Jacob refuses until he is blessed. The mystery other blesses Jacob, giving him a new name, because, he says, “you have struggled with the divine and with men, and you have prevailed” (Genesis 32:22). Like Jacob, who through his struggle becomes Israel (which is not just a person or geographic delineation, but a *people*), the receiver of stories is transformed from an isolated individual into a member of a community through an encounter with that community’s stories, which is to say its epistemological inheritance. Although Jacob is born into that society—after all his father is Isaac and his grandfather is Abraham—he is required to struggle on his own in order to acquire the blessing, just as the receiver or learner must come to terms with the epistemological traditions or stories that are given to him by his society.

The Hebrew tradition is not unique in its use of the wrestling metaphor. In book four of Homer’s *Odyssey*, another man also wrestles with the divine. Here it is Menelaos who must
wrestle Proteus. Menelaos, husband of Helen and king of Sparta because of that marriage, is told that Proteus will be able to give him “course and distance for [his] sailing” (Fitzgerald, 1984). Proteus proves to be a formidable opponent, shifting shape. In both the Classic Greek stories related in the Odyssey and stories of the Hebrew Scriptures, one finds repeating patterns or recursions of the grappling for information between giver and receiver of stories. To draw on my own example, in becoming a Doctor of Philosophy I move from being a simple individual receiver of stories, to a member of a community of shared stories, to a teller of these stories, to a creator of new stories as participating member in a research-oriented discourse community.

Part of my responsibility as a member of this research discourse community is to continue to value the stories of the participants in my research. Hence, the theoretical framework of my study is phenomenological. I am focused on the lived experience of schoolchildren, more specifically the experience of expressing themselves in written form. The phenomenon I sought to understand the essence of, is what it means to a child to be fluent when becoming bilingual through an academic immersion setting.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe the lexical development of primary school immersion learners, who are acquiring bilingualism exclusively in an academic setting, in order better to understand their experience and the essence of what it means for a child to express him/herself fluently in his/her L2 (second language). My methodology was to construct bodies of linguistic data using corpus linguistics techniques, and then interview the participants to understand their interpretations of their own experience.

An individual's language proficiency may be assessed through non-productive modes of communication such as reading and listening comprehension, and in productive modes such as written and oral communication. There is a great deal of research on the academic achievement
of L2 immersion students compared to their L1 monolingual peers, as well as on their deficits when it comes to their productive language skills—such as speaking and writing—as compared to native speakers of the L2. This research indicates that they consistently perform better than their monolingual peers on standardized measures of achievement. Research also shows that while immersion students can demonstrate fluency and native-like competence in listening comprehension and reading skills, they generally fall behind native speakers in their productive language skills (Bornstein & Hendricks, 2011; Genesee, 1987; Swain & Lapkin, 1986).

By better understanding the essence of what it means for a child to express him/herself fluently in his/her L2, teachers and curriculum developers may be more able to facilitate a child’s productive language. An exploration of how a child’s lexicon develops in the L2 through the examination of a children’s corpus drawn from authentic written production, collected in the immersion setting, may provide a better way of understanding L2 fluency.

My research questions are therefore:

• What is the nature of the lexical development of the immersion learner from second (CE1) to fifth grade (CM2)?
• What is the relationship of students' perceptions of their fluency to their L2 production (and performance in a range of settings)?

According to the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), the growth of language immersion programs in the U.S. has been exponential (see Figure 1). Since their inception, immersion programs have been well studied.
Figure 1. Growth of language immersion programs in the U.S. 1971-2011.

through immersion: A review of U.S. Programs." What these studies have not focused on to date is what it means to the child to express him/herself fluently in his/her L2 in written form. Nor have these studies made extensive use of corpus linguistic techniques in their collection of data.

All of this research has led to a better understanding of immersion pedagogy. Its well-documented benefits have led to both an increased desire for and growth in these programs. The next step is for the research to provide more targeted information to support teachers in the classroom. Certainly, the Association canadienne des professeurs d'immersion (ACPI) database of spoken language helps, but even that has its limitation when you remove it from a Canadian context. Individual states, such as Louisiana, have had to create a reference for language immersion, such as the Référentiel de compétences linguistiques pour les premiers apprentissages en classes d'immersion (Louisana Department of Education, 2013) because one of the issues immersion teachers have faced is not knowing what level students should have progressed to at a particular time. Despite addressing both written and spoken language in this document, it was not derived from the research. Qualified and experienced educators worked on this document, but their anecdotal conclusions could be affirmed or revised based on a corpus such as the one I have started. A research-based point de départ is critical for teachers so they have a general idea of where students need to be.

Two terms that are integral to my research, immersion and corpus, are often used in different contexts: In order to avoid misunderstanding, both are defined here. I have used The Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) core characteristics of immersion education to define this term. An immersion program is one in which:
• additive bilingualism with sustained and enriched instruction through the minority language\textsuperscript{2} (L2) and the majority language\textsuperscript{3} (L1) is promoted,

• subject area instruction through the minority language (L2) occurs for at least 50% of the school day during the elementary school years,

• teachers are fully proficient in the language(s) they use for instruction,

• support for the majority language is strong and present in the community at large,

• clear and sustained separation of languages during instructional time.

As Figure 2 shows, in one-way immersion programs, the student population consists of majority language speakers with limited to no proficiency in the immersion (minority) language, e.g., English speakers in U.S. schools. Exposure to the immersion language (minority language) takes place primarily in the classroom and school.

![Figure 2. One-way immersion progression.](image)

The term corpus refers to a collection of language (oral and/or written) that has become a database for analysis of patterns that recur in language performances (Bennett, 2010; Kennedy, 1998).

\textsuperscript{2} A minority language is a language other than the one spoken by the majority of people in a given regional or national context, for example, Spanish in the U.S., Basque in Spain, English in Japan, etc. (CARLA Immersion FAQs)

\textsuperscript{3} A majority language is the language spoken by the majority of people in a given regional or national context, for example, English in the U.S., Spanish in Spain, Japanese in Japan, etc. (CARLA Immersion FAQs)
The program in which I collected data is considered a full immersion program. The vast majority of children entering this program at five years old are monolingual Anglophones. While this school contains both a Spanish language and French language track, I have only studied the French language track. Children enter the program in kindergarten, where they spend approximately 90% of daily instruction in the French language (only enrichment activities such as P.E., art, and music may take place in English). This continues into first grade. Children in this program learn to read in the French language. In grades 2–5, students spend approximately 80% of their daily instructional time in the target language. Math, science, social studies, are all taught in the French language, as well as French language arts. English language arts is added for 60 minutes a day. In Middle School (grades sixth through eighth), approximately 25% of a student’s time is spent in the immersion language. English becomes the language of instruction for social studies and science. Mathematics remains a subject taught in French. Students take both French language arts and English language arts in equal amounts.

The school is not considered an école homologue [an approved or affiliated school] by the French government and follows Louisiana’s state standards, making no attempt to conform to the French Ministry of Education’s standards or progression for core content subjects, Les programmes de l'école élémentaire. Additionally, I worked with students in a community where there is no real meaningful interaction in French language outside of school.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945) claimed that the full meaning of a language is never translatable into another because it would require the speaker of the language to make his own the world which it expressress. He contends that this is impossible because one can not live in two worlds at once. For children living and learning in the specific context of a 90-10 French
language immersion program in New Orleans, Louisiana, that is exactly what they do. The
evidence of this is found within the corpus of their written and spoken language.
Chapter Two: Review of Literature

“It is a sound practice to attempt to address the phenomenological meaning of a phenomenon on one’s own first. However, sooner or later one must test one’s insights against those who belong to the tradition of one’s subject of study… In this way the work of others turns into a conversational partnership that reveals the limits and possibilities of one’s own interpretive achievements” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 76)

Foreign language instruction has been a key component of education for centuries. The reasons for studying modern foreign languages have varied widely, as have teaching methodologies. The body of research into the goals, methods, and effectiveness of foreign language immersion is extensive, from the seminal research done by Cohen (1976) and Genesee (1979), to Swain and Lapkin (2013). More recently, Ellen Bialystok published a comprehensive review of the research detailing the consequences and effects of bilingual education on young children and concluded that while

…there is no single factor that can override the deep complexity of children’s development and prescribe a solution for an individual child, let alone a solution for all children. For both gifted children who are certain to excel and children who face challenges… The over-riding conclusion from the available evidence is that bilingual education is a net benefit for all children in the early school years. (Bialystok, 2016, p.11) I did not, therefore, seek to affirm or prove immersion as a valid pedagogical method, as this has been well documented, nor did I seek to add to the extensive research that bilingualism is vehicle to improve intelligence (Engel, Cruz-Santos, Tourinho, Martin, & Bialystock, 2012) or even that immersion programs can raise test scores and serve minority populations (Haj-Broussard, 2005). There are plenty of studies that have demonstrated, quantitatively, that there is a positive impact in phonological awareness for children who enter into school monolingual, but because they are educated in a bilingual environment and become bilingual, that they outperform their L1-only
peers even in the L1 (Kovelman, Baker, & Petitto, 2008). Rather I sought to document the lived experiences of the children who experience the phenomena of foreign language immersion in school (FLIIS).

In doing so, however, I had to engage in a conversation with other researchers which helped inform my research questions. First, in order to understand the nature of the lexical development of the immersion learner I reviewed the growing body of research related to corpus linguistics to support corpus linguistics as a tool that is appropriate for studying second language acquisition in an immersion context. Second, because I wanted to explore what relationship, if any, there is between a student’s perception of his/her "fluency” on his/her L2 production, the second set of literature reviewed in this chapter is related to the construction of culture and identity in a language immersion context in order to connect this body of research to the language immersion experience.

**Analyzing Actual Language-Corpus Linguistics**

The *Routledge Handbook of Corpus Linguistics* provided me with extensive and important information, like how to build and design a corpus, what the key considerations should be, and the basics of corpus analysis. It even provided essays on what a corpus can tell us about language and how to use a corpus for language research. In his essay on what software can reveal about language development, Xiaofei Lu makes several important points. According to Lu, the first way that a corpus can be useful in understanding second language development is as a “data-base for describing the characteristics of the interlnguage learners at known proficiency levels” (as cited in O’Keeffe, 2012, p. 189). Lu goes on to suggest that collection and sharing of large-scale child and second-language development data, which encodes richer information about the children producing the data, is an area for future development (p. 191). Lu rightly
points out that education researchers and language researchers have devised different systems for annotating the data they collect which makes the sharing and comparison of this data difficult. He insists that both fields would benefit from a similar annotation scheme.

Lu seems to affirm the need for the research that I would like to conduct in this essay. Additionally, Lu identifies as appropriate the uses of a corpus for understanding second language acquisition for the purposes that I would like to use it, to “understand objective measures of accuracy, fluency, and complexity that can all be used to index levels of second language development or the learner’s overall language proficiency” (as cited in O’Keeffe, 2012, p. 190).

Lu’s mention of characteristics of interlanguage was also interesting in light of Philippe Prévost’s (2009) discussion of interlanguage grammar. In his book, The Acquisition of French, Prévost looked at the development of French acquisition in different learning situations, such as L1 French by typically developing monolingual children, bilingual children, and children with Specific Linguistic Impairment (SLI), as well as L2 French by children and adults. The conclusions he comes to are fairly significant, especially in affirming this idea of an interlanguage grammar. If universal grammar (Chomsky, 2007) remains accessible to L2 learners, the process of language acquisition between monolinguals, child L2 learners, and SLI children could be viewed as very similar. Prévost also recommends that future research using non-spontaneous production is very important. In the research that I would like to conduct in a classroom setting, the language would be elicited production, which would be “extremely useful” (Prévost, 2009, p. 422).

Rachelle Vessey demonstrates in her paper, “Corpus Approaches to Language Ideology” (2015), how corpus linguistics and more specifically corpus-assisted discourse studies can assist in understanding beliefs about language. Language Ideology (Lg.I) refers to the concept that
these beliefs become unconscious and removed from their origin. While Vassey focuses her efforts on news media as a source of Lg.I, one might also include educational materials. Just like journalists who adopt linguistic norms, so to do publishers of educational material. If a child is acquiring an L2 in a purely educational setting where there is highly controlled input what might be the impact on a child’s output of that language and the child’s lexical development?

Although Vessey was a living and working in the United Kingdom at the time of this study, her research is conducted in a Canadian context. Vessey earned her bachelor's degree from Mount Allison University in New Brunswick, Canada, and so the choice of French and English Canadian newspapers makes sense as a focus of her research.

Two newspapers in English and French were selected from each of Canada’s regions as well as national English- and French-language newspapers. All articles, editorials, and columns from these newspapers were collected using news databases during a three week period in the summer of 2009. Frequency, concordance, and keyword functions of corpus linguistic programmes were used to collect the data so it could be analyzed. Many statistical tests were conducted, for example via the KeyWord tool which establishes which words are statistically significant high/low frequency words. It is important to note that downsampling using dispersion plots was also done to account for the fact that corpora of different languages cannot be compared against one another directly using the KeyWord tool. In conclusion, Vassey’s results indicated that words of high, low, and statistically significant frequency can help in the identification and exploration of Lg.I (Vassey, 2015).

After reviewing the literature, it became evident to me that developing an immersion learner corpus in the tradition of corpus linguistics would provide needed insights into the nature of the lexical development of the immersion learner, as well as the impacts of students’
perceptions of their fluency on their L2 production and that understanding this is significant in understanding the phenomena of foreign language immersion in school (FLIIS).

**Language Immersion**

More recently *Measuring L2 Proficiency Perspectives from SLA* provided eleven different articles attempting to bring together concrete ideas on identifying and measuring L2 proficiency from different areas of second language acquisition research (Lecercq, Edmonds, & Hilton, 2014). Lecercq et al., address both the previous research in the field as well as new areas of focus. As Lecercq and Edmonds point out in the introduction, the “models of L2 competence—that is, models of what constitutes L2 proficient—have undergone numerous changes over the past several decades” (Lecercq & Edmonds, 2014, p. 5). The increasing importance of communicative competence, not just mastery of grammatical structures, has played an important part in this evolution. *Measuring L2 Proficiency Perspectives from SLA* is divided into three parts: General Considerations for L2 Assessment, Language Processing and L2 Proficiency, and Focused Assessment Instruments. Each contained information relevant to my research. The questions I was asking, and that these researchers were asking, were not dissimilar. Like the researchers in that book, I also wanted to understand the nature of second language acquisition and how we understand proficiency. Because ideas of proficiency vary, it has become difficult to evaluate it.

That volume contributed a great deal to the general field and asked important practical questions such as: “What kind of language test is appropriate for the assessment of L2 learners’ comprehension?” (Gertkin, Amengual, & Birdsong, 2014; as quoted in Lecercq & Edmonds, 2014). An equally important question was: “What constructs do norm-referenced language test tap into?” (Zoghlami, 2014; as quoted in Lecercq & Edmonds, 2014). The variables of
complexity, accuracy, and fluency have become the increasing focus in terms of measuring progress in language learning (Lecercq & Edmonds, 2014). The field of applied linguistics, however, has not always welcomed this focus.

That collection does important work on defining key concepts, such as validity and assessment. It also introduces arguments for the use of corpus-based work. For me, this provided important confirmation that I am in fact on the right track in terms of using corpus linguistics as the methodology for my own research. When I initially began to explore this as my methodology, there was very little to support such an approach except Tagnin’s (2006) article, “A Multilingual Learner Corpus in Brazil.” For example, the article by Callies, Díez-Bedmar, and Zaytseva (2014) discussed using learner corpora for testing and assessing L2 proficiency, which is essentially what I have done in my research.

What none of these researchers addressed, however, is the specific experience of immersion learners. Additionally, all the subjects discussed are older second language learners. Often the median age of the subjects was twenty-one. As Callies et al. point out, “LCR [Learner Corporea Research] has so far typically focused on L2 writing at advanced levels of proficiency” (Callies, Díez-Bedmar, & Zaytseva, 2014, p. 72).

Language and Culture

The relationship between language and culture is inseparable. Alvino Fantini (1991) discusses how bilingualism represents not just a tool, an ability to do something, but rather influences how one constructs a vision of the world. Linguistically, the ideas of linguistic determinism and relativity are discussed. Language determinism is the idea that people’s native, “mother tongue” language influences the way they construct their vision of the world. Bilinguals,
because they use two different languages, have access to differing visions of the same world and therefore develop what is termed *language relativity*.

According to Fantini, languages orient their users to a specific way of knowing or viewing the world. This idea was formulated by Benjamin Whorf (1956; from Whorf & Carroll, 2011) and is not wholly accepted but does provide support for my general premise of a distinct culture that grows out of language immersion environments. One of the arguments that Fantini makes is that,

individuals exposed to a second language must develop a differing or an expanded vision of the world. This development is affected by the different constructs of the world inherent in each language system, as well as the differing interactional strategies used by the speakers of each system (Fantini, 1991, p. 114)

Additionally, the psycholinguistic distinctions between “compound” vs “co-ordinant” bilingualism are addressed. Compounding bilingualism refers to the idea of learning the L2 with and through the L1, as in a typical second language classroom. Co-ordinate bilingualism, on the other hand, is a result of acquiring the language directly, under a separate context without reference to the L1, what should occur in an early total immersion environment, or another setting requiring immersion in the L2 without recourse to the L1 such as daily life in an L2 majority speaking country. This is an important distinction to consider with immersion classroom research.

One of the key testaments to the universality of language immersion outcomes is the geographical and linguistic range of immersion projects covered in the literature. Like studies of other immersion programs, the studies of Irish-language immersion programs in Ireland have shown that the students in these programs achieve higher levels of proficiency and
comprehension than students in traditional language study, taking Irish as simply a subject in school. Students were also found to demonstrate the same weak productive language skills and did not reach native speaker levels in their L2 speech. Duibhir (2011) conducted a study of the features of Irish spoken in Irish-immersion settings. This research was based on speakers from a full range of schools and encompassed many student views on their language use, as well as the origins and maintenance of certain features of Irish.

Duibhir’s three research questions for this qualitative study were: (a) What are the students’ opinions of the variety of Irish that they speak? (b) Do the students notice errors in their own and in their peers’ speech and are they able to correct those errors given time to reflect on them? (c) Why do the students use non-target language–like forms when they know more accurate forms? (Duibhir, 2011). His subsequent findings shed light onto the impact of the constructed environment of immersion classrooms, which create very purposeful interactions in L2. Students in Duibhir’s study clearly monitor their output more carefully when speaking with a teacher than when speaking with peers. One of the things that may actually be affecting output may be incorrect speech from peers. The research highlighted the critical role of the teacher, as the students are not exposed to native speakers outside the school. This is supported by research by Lyster and Ranta (1997). In many instances, Duibhir found that English syntax had clearly been mapped on to Irish. Duibhir expresses concern that if this isn’t addressed, Irish immersion students will continue to produce incorrect forms, that may become embedded, and lead to a degree of permanency (Duibhir, 2011). This hybridity of language is not entirely problematic from my perspective. It is rather a natural change to the language produced within the constraints of immersion. Languages are dynamic expressions of human need. If this is how the language is being used it is seems just as valid an expression as any other creolization.
A related concern was the pressure to communicate in the L2 in immersion language learning. MacIntyre (2007) sought to explore the ambivalence about communicating among adolescent French immersion students. Here the centrality of the demand to communicate in the L2 in the immersion classroom highlights the need to understand the psychological processes that underlie L2 communication. Over a six week period, students completed a questionnaire and worked in journals using focused essay techniques. Students had to detail up to six situations in which they were most willing to communicate in French and up to six situations in which they were least willing to communicate in French.

It was found that students were both willing and unwilling to communicate with teachers, family, friends, and strangers. They were, in fact, willing and unwilling to communicate with students whose skills were more and less advanced. Students were both willing and unwilling to receive error correction. The most prominent context mentioned was communicating at school with teachers and peers, where issues of perceived competence, autonomy, and relatedness emerged as key themes (MacIntyre, 2007).

One of the most interesting findings was that students felt most comfortable communicating in French in the immersion classroom setting with fellow immersion students. I found it interesting that within the classroom there was an intrinsic motivation to use French. Not surprisingly, students expressed a level of discomfort speaking French around issues that were related to autonomy and individuality. One important thing to note is that students reported difficulty in negotiating a sense of personal identity vis-à-vis their role as an immersion student and often felt embarrassed as being identified that way by peers or in public (MacIntyre, 2007).

It was also interesting to note the relationship of the students to their teachers in MacIntyre’s study. Here the researchers found that students and teachers form lasting relationships that satisfy
the need for relatedness and that this relationship affects the willingness to communicate (MacIntyre, 2007).

Not surprisingly, these adolescent students expressed willingness to communicate when they were excluding someone who did not understand French. Here they expressed having great willingness to communicate and a desire to speak in authentic communication. Adolescent immersion learners’ communication in the L2 is influenced by personal, familial and social conflicts. Again, it is not surprising that adolescent immersion students like speaking French if it is part of some secret club involving exclusion, but not so much if it will bring unwelcome attention (MacIntyre, 2007).

Broner and Tedick (2011) systematically study role of L1 and L2 in the immersion classroom. They found that students in immersion programs abandon exclusive use of the target language especially for social interaction. So, despite the continued research that demonstrates one way in which foreign immersion education produces students who perform successfully on academic measures of achievement in the L2 and L1, the near native-speaker proficiency acquired in receptive language skills is not matched in productive language skills. Broner and Tedick ask: What languages (English L1/Spanish L2) do students use in peer-peer and student-teacher communication? And what factors (interlocutor, task factors, context, individual characteristics, etc.) impact student language choices?

After a two-month period of observation, three students were selected (with teacher input) by the researchers (Broner & Tedick, 2011). Data collection was during the Spanish portion of the day through audiotapes and field notes, as well as interviews. Questionnaires were also given to the students, their families, and the teacher. Classroom observations took place once a week for 23 weeks. All audio files were transcribed. A sociolinguistic perspective was adopted to analyze
the factors that may influence the language choice of focal students. This assumes that language choice will be conditioned by extralinguistic as well as linguistic variables (p. 170).

The data showed that despite individual differences, all three students used more Spanish when the task was creative writing. When the goal of the task included focusing on the L2, students used L2 more, regardless of other factors. The interlocutor influences students’ choice of language, as do certain individual factors. The impact of vernacular and cultural references also greatly impacts the students’ choices. This study does provide some evidence of Tarone and Swain’s (1995) hypothesis that immersion classrooms become diglossic.

In the study, "Appropriating Written French: Literacy Practices in a Parisian Elementary Classroom," Rockwell (2012) tries to recast prevailing explanations that assume that reflexive mastery of written French requires severing links with an oral-practical language. Rockwell finds that certainly the prevailing ideological practices are present in practice in the classroom. These are appropriated into the CM2 (fifth grade) classroom in this Parisian (low income/immigrant) public school and can inhibit interplay between oral and written language. Certainly, the way in which written French is taught can be understood as “an expression of a regime of language, a specific historically constructed language ideology that is deeply ingrained in French schooling and indeed in French culture” (p. 400). The pedagogy of the teacher in this classroom tended to reaffirm this ideological separation between the oral and the written language. The ideology of French language instruction may in theory foster integration of all children (immigrants, etc.), but in the end, according to Rockwell, “gate keeping” measures ensure the reproduction of the French class system. As Rockwell points out, few of these students made it to *general lycée* [high school]. Most were channeled into secondary schools attended by the working class and immigrant classes (facing a lot of discriminatory practices along the way). Even the most capable
of the students followed by Rockwell were oriented toward vocational or professional schools (not university).

The more I read about language immersion and culture, the more I reflected on immersion and the intersection of language and culture and it became clear that there was something deeper happening. While language immersion researchers discussed the importance of culture and of teaching language through content, I began to see the social space of the immersion classroom as, in the terms of Raymond Williams (1977), an “emergent cultural formation.” It seemed to me that a separate, distinct, and new culture was forming in these various immersion classrooms. A third space was created through the multi-axis relationships and de-centered identity that was occurring at the intersection of language, culture, identity, and community in the immersion classroom, which subsequently was creating an immersion culture entirely its own.

**Hybridity as a Paradigm for Understanding Emergent Immersion Culture**

Providing a perspective on “hybridity” as a method for organizing learning as well as a theoretical framework for understanding diversity is what Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, and Tejeda (1999) explore in their article "Rethinking Diversity: Hybridity and Hybrid Language Practices in the Third Space." In this qualitative, ethnographic study, the authors seek to illustrate how “productive cultures of collaboration can create hybrid activities, roles, and practices that lead to productive contexts of development” (Gutiérrez et al., 1999, p. 289) over a six week period in a second-third grade combined two-way Spanish immersion after-school program. As they find, a narrow range of language practices is often employed in the classroom. The use of hybrid language practices allows for greater mediation and consequently intellectual development. The study authors provide transcribed conversations, as well as organizing these
conversations into tables (official space, third-space and unofficial space), which help to demonstrate what is happening within the classroom. Roy Lyster’s recent study in Canada comes to a similar conclusion (although conducted with French-English immersion students in Quebec) (Lyster & Ranta, 2013). The key, according to both Lyster and Gutiérres et al. is the strategic organization and use of the diversity (both linguistic and cultural) by the teacher in order to create a third space for the student’s learning to occur. Gutiérres et al. do conclude that making use of hybrid language practices can help educators negotiate the diverse and conflicting environment that is often the urban classroom (Gutiérres et al., 1999).

The idea of hybridity surfaces also in Karanaja (2010). This article explores the post-colonial notions of hybridity and the third space to interrogate ways in which Urban Kenyan youth have challenged the established codes of their identities, and negotiated their ambivalences in a third, hybridized space that is fluid and shifting. In an attempt to bridge the ethnic divide, and the divide between what they perceive to be traditional values and the urban, modernized values, Kenyan urban youth have developed a “hybrid” language called Sheng. According to Karanaja, this language (Sheng) has opened up avenues for the renegotiation of identity and cultures, moving these urban Kenyan young people beyond unitary, fixed identities, as well as the binaries of traditional versus urban, and local versus global. Despite its lack of data, and a limited number of narratives, it does speak to the same idea in terms of using the post-colonial/post-modern framework for the understanding of language and cultural identity.

Hybridity and the idea of third spaces brought to light the connection between Third Culture Kids and immersion students. I began to think that the immersion classroom allowed for an identity formation not unlike the Third Culture created by foreign nationals attending international schools far away from their passport country.
The term Third Culture Kids (TCK) first appears in the literature in 1963 in an article by the Unseems. Their article, *Belonging, Identity and Third Culture Kids* (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004), reviews the history of the idea of TCK. They use D.C. Pollack’s definition of TCK as:

An individual who, having spent a significant part of the developmental years in a culture other than the parents’ culture, develops a sense of relationship to all of the cultures while not having full ownership in any. Elements from each culture are incorporated into the life experience, but the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar experience. (Pollock, 1988; as quoted in Fail et al., 2004)

In their article, a portion of a larger study, which examined the life histories of some former international school students, was explored. The original research examined a variety of issues that emerged from the literature on TCK. Fail and her colleagues focused on "a sense of belonging" and "identity" as two important themes that emerged out of the research. The theme of feeling at home everywhere and nowhere appeared again and again. As noted by Fail, multiple studies over almost fifty years have found that TCKs are children that feel a greater attachment to relationships than to a country of origin (Fail et al., 2004). What is interesting is the amount of hand-wringing such a conclusion seems to produce, simply because these children do not fit into a carefully constructed identity box, especially nationally.

In "Confused or Multicultural: Third Culture Individuals’ Cultural Identity," Andrea Moore and Gina Barkerb take a fresh look at the cultural identity of TCK (Moore & Barkerb, 2012). Using a qualitative approach, they interviewed 19 participants from six different countries.
with varied intercultural experiences. This data was used to explore their perceptions of identity, sense of belonging, multiculturalism, intercultural communication competence, as well as positive and negative factors attributed to their experiences of a life on the move. Their results showed that TCK are more apt to possess multiple cultural identities, or a multicultural identity, rather than a confused cultural identity, as previous research had indicated. Additionally, their results suggested that while these individuals lack a clear sense of belonging, they are competent intercultural communicators and perceive their experiences as mainly beneficial. One thing that was notable was that between 2004 (Fail et al.) and 2012 (Moore & Barkerb), one begins to see a shift in the literature, namely an acceptance that the alternate subject position of TCKs not as a liability, but rather an asset.

It is this argument in favor of "intercultural personhood," that Young Yun Kim emphasizes in his study, "Intercultural Personhood: Globalization and a Way of Being" (Kim, 2008). Kim argues that, through prolonged and cumulative intercultural communication experiences, individuals around the world can, and do, undergo a gradual process of intercultural evolution. Furthermore, that emerging intercultural personhood is characterized by two interrelated key patterns in self-other orientation: individuation and universalization. Empirical evidence for this theoretical argument is offered through publicly available data, personal testimonials and biographical narratives. In Kim’s exploration of the complex and evolving nature of identity, one can see how the creation of a third and independent culture, and possible linguistic community, can grow out of K-8 immersion settings.

Children are not the only ones who exhibit the creation of a third and independent culture. The literature also explores this phenomenon among teachers. In "The Cultural Identities of Foreign Language Teachers," Fichtner and Chapman conduct a fascinating study that explores
not only insofar foreign language teachers affiliate with more than one culture, but also how this cultural identity affects their classroom practice (Fichtner & Chapman, 2011). Foreign language teachers are often migrants. They have traveled and lived in other countries either to learn or to teach a language. Central to the research are the questions: (a) To what extent do foreign language instructors claim multiple cultural identities? (b) What advantages and disadvantages do foreign language instructors experience in the classroom in respect to their cultural identities? (c) To what extent do foreign language instructors feel their cultural identity is relevant in the classroom? The results of this study showed that foreign language instructors engage with their cultural affiliations intellectually, by embracing—but not embodying—the “other” culture. Such a decentralizing of self is central to my research question, not only in regard to students, but to teachers in immersion environments.

Likewise, in Bartlett and Erben’s (1996) study of students in a teacher education program in Queensland, Australia, issues of identity formation within the context of an immersion program are explored. The future teachers in this study were primarily Anglo-Australian yet took up to 80% of their university coursework in Japanese, in preparation for careers as teachers of Japanese. This paper analyzes issues related to the identity formation of these students as they struggle to become proficient in Japanese language and culture, while simultaneously training to become primary school teachers.

It was Leela Gandhi’s *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (1998), which maps out the important connections between postcolonial theory, poststructuralism, postmodernism, Marxism, and feminism, that finally helped me tie all these pieces together. Like the immersion classroom itself, the study of immersion language acquisitions should draw on multi-dimensional models. Linguistic, cultural, and post-colonial theoretical approaches have each operated
independently of one another but are in need of a convergence. I wondered to what extent long-term immersion education classrooms (kindergarten through eighth grade) builds a third culture, as opposed to simply adding awareness of a second culture through the construction of hybrid identities.

As Vera Regan makes clear, “The L2 learner ...builds up or constructs a new identity (or identities), in tandem with learning a new language” (Regan, 2010, p. 21). In her study she goes on to quantify why this process is more complex than that of L1 acquisition. Regan conducts a mixed method study employing both qualitative and quantitative data. Her argument is essentially that the “variation patterns” in the L2, which one might consider one of the ways in which fluency is measured, are “closely related to the multifaceted social identities which speakers create when they acquire another language” (p. 22).

Three studies are looked at, (a) a study of Vietnamese and Cambodian speakers of English (L2) in which male identity is the focus; (b) a study of Irish English speakers of French (L2) in which the identity of being young and French is the central theme; and (c) a study of Irish immersion speakers of Irish (L2) and French (L3), where English is the L1 and the identity being developed is that of “Young East Coast Irish.” A combination of quantitative and qualitative data was collected.

Regan begins with a classic variation study. For example, in the second study the variable was the deletion of ne in French. So, for example, in this group of students the deletion rate was low prior to a year abroad experience and after reached native speaker rates. The interesting thing was that the L2 speakers overgeneralized this constraint. As Regan notes, “the L2 speakers … used [lep] (je sais pas) and [sepa] (c’est pas) extensively, as if they were using this as a sort of shorthand for being native and deleting ne as they had heard so frequently in the input. It
certainly seemed that they had identified this strategy with a native French identity” (Regan, 2010, p. 27). Interestingly despite re-instruction and teacher pressure by teachers to construct sentences with grammatical precision, the young people held fast to their new “cool” French identities.

Second, ethnographic data were also collected over a year, for example, in the third study. The researcher spent time in the school during the school day chatting informally with students as well as conducting sociolinguistic interviews. It is here that one can see the distinct discourse markers and creative code switching employed by bilinguals. Here immersion speakers used variation patterns, such as the insertion of the English quotative *like* not the Irish equivalent *mar*, which is different Regan points out than bilingual Montrealers who appropriate *comme* instead of *like* in their French. Interviews and conversations with these adolescents revealed a very clear sense of identity, not a language deficit, in the choice to use resources from both languages to actively construct an identity, as “young urban, trilingual speakers… rejecting the canonical representation of 'Irishness' offered by establishment sources, teachers, schools, books, etc.” (Regan, 2010, p. 32). Regan suggests that a dynamic view must be taken into account which is where I see my research question related to the impacts of students’ perceptions of their "fluency" on their L2 production fitting in.

Tae-Young Kim and Yoon-Kyoung Kim take this a step further in their quantitative study, "A Structural Model for Perceptual Learning Styles, the Ideal L2 Self, Motivated Behavior, and English Proficiency" (Kim & Kim, 2014). Their research questions were:

1. To what extent are perceptual learning styles, imagination, the ideal L2 self, motivated behavior, and English proficiency related among elementary, junior high, and high school students?
2. What is the structural relationship between perceptual learning styles, imagination, the ideal L2 self, motivated behavior, and English proficiency among Korean EFL learners?

They demonstrate that for elementary students there is an overall positive and significant correlation between the construction of an L2-self and the students L2 proficiency. One of the recommendations that Kim and Kim make for future research is the exploration of the developmental process of the self-related to among other things the student’s perceptions of his or her language proficiency (Kim & Kim, 2014). It was this research that lead me to think about how one might actually be able to do this, to explore the development of an L2 self over time.

What I learned from the research is that there is much to be gained from documenting the lived experiences of the children in immersion schools through their written expression. It is also critical to interview these students. The students themselves need to give voice to their own experience of the phenomena of which they were a part. If we want to continue to not only improve language proficiency for L2 students, but also continue to develop meaningful educational experiences for students in immersion environments, we need to understand the phenomena of foreign language immersion in school (FLIIS).
Chapter Three: Conceptual Framework and Methodology

Il nous faut donc redécouvrir, après le monde naturel, le monde social, non comme objet ou somme d’objets, mais comme champ permanent ou dimension d’existence.  

—Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la Perception* (1945)

When conducting research, one has three options: quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods. The choice to conduct a qualitative research study begins with an ontological assumption about the nature of reality as multifaceted. The implication for the researcher then is to describe and report on those perspectives. Qualitative researchers take the axiological position that one cannot escape, remove, or sanitize research of bias and therefore openly discuss one’s own subject position and that of the participants in a recursive process in order to create what quantitative researchers call *validation* or *reliability*. Not surprisingly, there are many perspectives on the terms used in qualitative research. For example, the term *validity* does not seem appropriate because qualitative researchers are not really dealing with the accuracy of measurement. If used it has a very different connotation from the way that term is used in quantitative research. As Creswell (2013) illustrates, authors from LeCompte and Goetz to more recently Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba have sought a better way to both conceptualize and name this part of research not simply as a parallel qualitative equivalent but really to understand the function of this process. As Wolcot claims, “the term *validation* does not capture the essence of what [a qualitative researcher] seeks. That the goal is rather 'plausible interpretation'” (Wolcot; as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 247). Like reality itself, qualitative researchers have many different perspectives and terms for how to accomplish the same outcome, that is to provide enough information for the reader to come to the conclusion that the researcher’s interpretations are plausible. Moustakas (1994) recommends that one provide the conceptual framework for the

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4 “We must therefore rediscover, after the natural world, the social world, not as an object or sum of objects, but as a permanent field or dimension of existence.”
study, inclusive of the theory, concepts, and processes being used, as well as the methods and procedures (methodology). Chapter three is therefore that conceptual framework.

**Research Stance**

An individual conducting phenomenological research is concerned with the lived experiences of the people involved with the issue or phenomenon being researched (Groenewald, 2004). As Moustakas (1994), widely considered the father of phenomenological research (Creswell, 2013; van Manen, 1990), outlines, phenomenological analysis includes:

- **Immersion**: the researcher is involved in the world of the experience
- **Incubation**: as space for awareness, intuitive or tacit insights, and understanding
- **Illumination**: active knowing process to expand the understanding of the experience
- **Explication**: reflective actions
- **Creative synthesis**: bringing together to show patterns and relationships

A phenomenological research stance allows for an exploratory design, which seeks to understand the interpretation of human interaction through phenomena. The purpose of phenomenology is to grasp the very nature of things (Van Manen, 1990) by distilling individuals’ lived experiences with a phenomenon.

It is important to place phenomenology, as a research stance, in a historical context in order to understand why it is the most appropriate for me to use. German philosopher Edmund Husserl wrote in 1935 in *The Crisis of European Sciences* about both “irrationalist barbarity” as well as “spiritual rebirth through an ‘absolutely self-sufficient science of the spirit’” (as quoted in Eagleton, 1983). Husserl argues that all thought is “pointing toward” some object. It is Husserl who first discusses the notion (so familiar to qualitative researchers) of locating or exposing one’s biases and immediate experiences and then placing them in brackets, since it is impossible
to find some “objective” place outside of them. Phenomenology is the term coined by Husserl for his philosophical method, because it is concerned with the science of phenomena.

But what are these phenomena that Husserl speaks of? As Eagleton (1983) points out, they are a “system of universal essences,” not simply random individual experience. “what is presented to phenomenological knowledge is not just, say, the experience of jealousy or the color red, but the universal types or essences of these things, jealousy or redness as such” (Eagleton, 1983).

Phenomenology was the best research stance for me since it aligns both with my epistemology stance as well as what I intended to research. I believe that knowledge systems shape our perceptions and that one cannot exist outside a knowledge system. Structuralism divided the sign from its referent, and post-structuralism goes one step further, dividing signifier and signified, so that meaning (knowing) is then dispersed and scattered along a chain of signifiers. Knowledge therefore cannot be completely pinned down as it is never fully present in one sign alone.

While knowledge cannot be completely present in one sign alone, that does not exclude the possibility of some level of universality. If the human brain does have a universal grammar (Chomsky, 1968, 2007) and a universal space in which similarity is generated, then it would seem to follow that there is a degree of universality to knowledge. While a great deal may be universal and based on our brain chemistry and DNA, in every instance, we must, both as a society and as individuals, construct that which is rooted in our biology in a new way. Human beings have a protocol to walk and yet every infant must learn again to do so.

It is this epistemological stance that leads to an ontology in which reality is apprehended through the senses, but immediately interpreted, and pre-judged as well. Knowledge is not
discovered, it is created, and phenomenology is not concerned with a specific knowledge or form of knowledge, but rather with what lived experience/reality made that knowledge possible—which makes it well suited as my research stance. Foreign language immersion within an educational context is a phenomenon, which can be observed and understood through its participants, but rarely is. Outcomes of the phenomena of foreign language immersion in school (FLIIS) have been studied, i.e., the academic achievement of students who are bilingual or in FLIIS, the fluency of students acquiring their L2 via FLIIS as compared to native populations, but the phenomena themselves—the essence of what it means for a child to express him/herself fluently in his/her L2—is not widely represented in the immersion research. Exploring the experience of students living the phenomena of FLIIS, in order better to understand their experience, may yield a better understanding of whether students' perceptions of their fluency has a relationship to their L2 production (and performance in a range of settings). Such an examination of the phenomena of the immersion setting can also shed light on the lexical development of the immersion learner.

Context of the Phenomena

The hyphenated me

I must also approach the observer, myself, as part of the total set of phenomena under study.

From the phenomenological point of view, to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings. And since to know the world is profoundly to be in the world in a certain way, the act of researching-questioning-theorizing is the intentional act of attaching ourselves to the world… (Van Manen, 1990, p.5)
Fundamental to my understanding of self is my sense of hyphenation. I am an Anglo-Francophone-Jewish-Marxist-post-colonial-feminist-education worker-parent who even hyphenates her name, Adelman-Cannon. It is hard to think of a time in my life when I wasn’t aware of having multiple selves. As a child I knew I had an English name, and a Hebrew name, and three countries for which I felt some direct connection: The United States, Israel, and Canada. A sense of singular identity seems impossibly foreign. In a post-colonial view, a decentering of normative ethnic/national/religious identities requires a decentering of the self, so essentially my default position is hyphenation. What could certainly impact my research is the tangled web of relationships in which I operate. One of the strands of this web is professional: I am employed in an administrative capacity at the school where I am collecting some of my data.

It is also important to acknowledge that many of the teachers I am working with are my friends. These same teachers are also the teachers of my children, which also makes me a parent at this school. But this is the world I live in every day. We all navigate these complicated relationships on a daily basis. This bias has already essentially shaped my research in my decision to analyze the language of immersion learners in French and English.

*Me as L1-English, L2-French*

Like my research subjects, I speak two languages. Unlike my research subjects, I did not acquire my second language until adulthood. In the spring of fifth grade (1985) my elementary school took CTBS testing (Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills). This standardized measure, similar to the ITBS (Iowa Test of Basic Skills), or LEAP (Louisiana Educational Assessment Program), measured students’ basic skills in reading and mathematics against a national norm. I scored in the forty-first percentile in Total Math and in the twenty-ninth percentile in Math Concepts and Application. Despite scoring in the ninetieth percentile in Vocabulary and other
language related skills, it was my math scores, according to district protocol, that determined my fitness for entrance into French classes, which started the following year. For want of a good score on my math test, I was tracked out of language, not just in junior high, but in high school as well. It had been determined some years earlier, in 1981, by my elementary school’s “Pupil Services,” that I had a learning disability. For some reason, this fact seemed to disqualify me from learning any language other than English for the rest of my educational career, including my Bachelor's degree.

It might surprise some of my former teachers and the educational professionals that made up the Pupil Appraisal Team, if they learned that today I am an adult with the same learning disabilities and ADD but have in fact taken French as a second language through level 2.1, have taken and passed my DELF A1 exam and have qualified to take the DELF A2 exam. They might also be surprised to learn that language acquisition itself has become the area of greatest interest to me and the subject of my PhD research.

In July 2010, I left the United States with my husband and children to spend a year in Dakar, Sénégal, petrified of how I would function in a Francophone country. The reality was that if I wanted to buy groceries, take a taxi, ride a bus, have social contact with anyone beside my husband and children, basically if I did not want to spend a whole year inside my apartment, I was going to have to learn to speak French.

Before we left the states, I began basic studies of rudimentary French through a couple of different means, but it wasn’t until I was actually immersed in a Francophone environment—coupled with formal class work—that I began to acquire proficiency more rapidly.

So in October of 2010, I enrolled in the level-1 course at L'Institut Français Léopold Sédar Senghor so that I could move beyond the most basic politesse that I had acquired from
working at a school with Francophone faculty for the previous four years and living for three months in France (just prior to departing for Sénégal). I began my formal instruction in the French language, in a Francophone country, with a French teacher who spoke no English, and classmates who were Slovakian, Spanish, Polish, and from other West-African Nations such as Guinea-Bissau (where they speak Portuguese as well as many African languages also common in Sénégal). I threw myself into the deep end of the pool much like I had thrown my own son in five years earlier, when I enrolled him in a French-immersion pre-school program at age three. It was sink or swim and my basic survival instinct told me I didn’t want to sink.

Eventually I felt confident enough to widen my circle of interactions, both socially and professionally. I even secured a job teaching English as a second language at a business school. Even though the job was teaching English, all my interactions with my colleagues and the staff at the school were in French. I had to take a taxi, negotiate the fare, and provide directions for the driver. With each interaction I gained confidence in my ability to function successfully in French both personally and professionally.

Me as the parent of immersion school bilingual kids.

Like so many other researchers, my desire to research this area has grown from a very personal place, the language development of my own bilingual children. So, one of my own children is included in the research.

Me as critical theorist.

It is this self that helps me to move beyond the identity politics of hyphenated subject positions into the conceptualization of the complex relationship between the "-izer" and the "-ized." Through postcolonial theory one gets to the heart of the matter: the paradigm shift from knowing many different things (people, cultures, languages, subject positions), to knowing
“differently” (Gandhi, 1998). It is this postcolonial, post-Cartesian “I” that allows me to see the interplay of the languages (English and French) and how they create the formative interaction that enables a new subject position, beyond the non-hyphenated subject.

**Plans for Access/Description of Access**

As a parent and administrator at the school I had different levels of access. As a parent, other parents who were interested in my research and who know me socially donated examples of their children’s work to me. I also kept all of my own child’s work. As the school’s former Director of Curriculum and Instruction, teachers provided me copies of student work throughout the year. We use these materials in-house to explore student writing, create rubrics, align grading practices, etc. Students knew me and saw me in and out of the classrooms on a regular basis. At the time of the data collection, I was a principal within this organization, but not at the specific campus where my subjects attended. I did not view my closeness to the subjects of my study as an impediment. My presence was a non-event for them, as I was often observing teachers or working with students. Students wouldn’t have found it strange to let me see their writing or to speak with me about their writing.

**Description of Types of Informants to be Sought**

For this study, the students sought were ones with L1-English and L2-French, who had been enrolled in French immersion since kindergarten. It was important to me that the school environment was a public school and that it contained a diverse mixture of students: racially, geographically, socio-economically. This diversity was beneficial for my inquiry because the phenomena of language immersion is what I aimed to capture, not other factors that might be indicative of socio-economic or racial differences.
The school in which I conducted my research is an open admissions public charter school located in Orleans Parish of Louisiana, also known as the city of New Orleans. This cohort of students were not required to complete any type of testing to gain admission into the school. Admission was gained through lottery only. In 2013, when this cohort was in second grade, the school demographics and lunch program eligibility (51.8% eligible) reflected the kind of diversity I sought (see Figure 3).

![School Demographics](http://www.charterdiscovery.com/schools/detail/32/International-School-of-Louisiana)

*Figure 3. School Demographics when data collection began in 2013; obtained via [http://www.charterdiscovery.com/schools/detail/32/International-School-of-Louisiana](http://www.charterdiscovery.com/schools/detail/32/International-School-of-Louisiana)*
Sampling Method

This study used purposeful sampling. It was essential to the study design that all participants were experiencing the phenomena of FLIIS. My research objective was to understand the essence of this specific experience. There are numerous variations in what is labeled “immersion,” therefore it was important to make sure that all the individual participants have experienced the same program model (in terms of time spent in the L2 and content taught in the L2). They were all officially designated as L1-English speakers by their parents when they were enrolled in the school. All were enrolled, by their parents into the French language tract and therefore are L2-French. In a typical case, purposeful sample participants are selected to be illustrative, not definitive. It is hoped that the carefully selected individuals will provide insight into general patterns across a larger population. Purposeful, typical case sampling is particularly well suited for understanding phenomena (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2013).

Priori Observational Techniques

I started collecting student journals, as well as other educational material during the 2013-2014 school year. This was done informally in my professional capacity, as a parent, and then more formally under the auspices of a previous IRB for a research project under the direction of Dr. Richard B. Speaker, Jr., “French-English Bilingual Development Corpus Research.” The project resulted in a joint paper presented at WERA (World Education Research Association) in November of 2015, entitled “A Language of Our Own: The Development of a Corpus of Anglophone/Francophone Oral and Written Language Production in Immersion School.” This cohort of students was in second grade/CE1 when this data was collected. I
continued to collect material through the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years. I completed collecting data during the 2016-2017 school year.

**Procedures for Conducting the Study**

Tagnin discusses in her article, “A Multilingual Learner Corpus in Brazil” (2013) how a learner corpus can provide useful data to detect specific difficulties of language learners and consequently inform the production of pedagogic material to address these problem areas. Developing an immersion learner corpus is a way to analyze the linguistic dimensions of the immersion student and can be a way of collecting data that can then be analyzed in order to understand the essence of an immersion learner’s language—and, subsequently, identity formation. Corpus Linguistics seeks to place the emphasis on performance or, in the language of Ferdinand de Saussure, *parole*, versus simply competence. In Corpus Linguistics the aim is to, “describe language use rather than simply identify linguistic universals” (O’Keeffe, 2012, p. 15). Certainly, the patterns that are uncovered through corpus evidence (texts derived from instances of *parole*) provide insights into Saussure’s *langue* (his notion of the abstract, systematic ideal of language underpinning *parole*) as well. This aligns well will my overall theoretical stance of phenomenology.

Van Gelderen, 2002; Kragh & Lindschouw, 2013; Lahousse, Lamiro, & Goethem, 2010; Lindstromberg, 2010; Prévost, 2009; Prévost & Paradis, 2004; Salkoff, 1980, 1999; Suihkonen, Comrie, & Solovyev, 2012; Verspoor & Sauter, 2000) and newer corpus linguistics (Aijmer, 2009; Aston, Bernardini, & Stewart, 2004; Behrens, 2008; Boulton, Carter-Thomas, & Rowley-Jolivet, 2012; Díaz-Negrillo, Ballier, & Thompson, 2013; Farr & O’Keeffe, 2011; Flowerdew & Mahlberg, 2006; Hasko, 2013; Kawaguchi, Takagaki, Tomimori, & Tsuruga, 2007; Tono, Kawaguchi, & Minegishi, 2012). Analyses can examine variations in form and production on the following linguistic levels: phonological/orthographic, lexical, grammatical, syntactic, propositional semantics, and memes for cultural, rhetorical, pragmatic, and disciplinary semantics. However, for the purposes of this study, I will only be conducting linguistic analysis on the lexical level. This linguistic level consists of analyzing the oral and written words produced and lends itself to counting and providing examples of how many words were produced: What types of words were produced? What related words were produced? What words were repeated?

**Processes**

In a qualitative study the key to achieving *plausible interpretation* is recursion or multiple passes through the data. For this study I developed two streams of data. The first was a corpus of the written work of the immersion children. These were journals (both prompted and unprompted), creative pieces and constructed response essay type questions. Writing that was not included was short written answers to reading comprehension questions (fill in the blank). These were compiled via donated samples. Figure 4 is an example of the type of donated archival written work that was collected and the analysis that was completed.
The second data stream was from interviews conducted with the immersion students. Appendix B details the “interview protocol” that was used. In addition to the interviews, member checking also occurred with the writing samples. Children were asked if they remember a piece of writing that was donated and asked to speak about it to gain further insight into what was being experienced. Interviews were transcribed by a research assistant and reviewed for accuracy by myself. Most importantly they were notated so that themes can emerge. The interviews became part of the corpus of text that was analyzed. Figure 5 depicts an excerpt from the next
step in the process which was the memoing or notation process. It is through this process that themes emerged which allowed for the description of the phenomenon.

Figure 5. Excerpt of transcribed interview with memoing.

Creswell (2013) details the general analysis procedure of sketching ideas, taking notes, summarizing field notes, working with words, identifying codes, reducing codes to themes, counting frequency codes, relating categories, relating categories to analytic framework, creating
a point of view, and displaying the data (p.181). Linda Ball (2011) illustrates one method for identifying themes based on an approach described by Chesler, as seen in Figure 6.

![Cycle for analysis of interview transcripts to determine themes](image)

**Figure 6.** Cycle for analysis of interview transcripts to determine themes; figure taken from Chesler, 1987.

The data from these different streams were collected allowing me to analyze them in a spiral process. Van Mannen calls this “phenomonological reflection” (1990, p. 77). Using these different data streams allowed for triangulation which is a key aspect in creating the trust between writer and reader for there to be an agreement about the plausibility of the interpretation.

Lastly, debriefing with additional investigators also occurred. For example, while I was in the room for the interview excerpted in Figure 5, I was not directly conducting the interview. I
am not a native speaker of French and I have learned over the many years of working in an immersion environment that children need the conversation to be authentic. This is not inconsistent with MacIntyre’s 2007 findings that I referenced in chapter two. Since the subject’s L1 is English and my L1 is English it would have been inauthentic to conduct the interview in our L2. A teacher or another individual who the child identifies as an L1 speaker of French is a more appropriate person to conduct the interview. This also provided an opportunity to debrief with another individual about emerging themes. This step of debriefing serves much of the same function as interrater reliability does in a quantitative research. Throughout the entire process I continued to review my experience as it related to the phenomena.

In order to ensure ethical research, informed consent was used. Both parents and children affirmed a willingness to be a part of this study. This agreement outlined:

- that the child is participating in a research study,
- the purpose of the study, inclusive of the research questions,
- the time frame for commitment,
- the voluntary nature of participation,
- the child's/parents' right to stop the research at any time,
- the risks and benefits of participation in the research study,
- and the procedures used to protect confidentiality.

**Threats**

Threats are those things which could jeopardize my plausible interpretation of the data for the reader. The bias of the researcher is traditionally considered a threat, because bias is thought of as a systematic distortion, or an unfair treatment of the subject. Interestingly, the word *bias* can also refer to the indirect course taken by a ball as a result of its intentional irregular
shape. For a phenomenological researcher *bias* is not the dirty word of distortion, but rather the indirect course of a life due to its intentional imperfect essence. By bracketing my own experience as I have mentioned, including—not excluding—myself I have hoped to reposition my bias not as a threat, but as simply part of the data. Having a peer debriefer was another important way to mitigate the perceived threat of bias.

The nature of the context, the school and its curriculum, and the children that are there are also potentially threats to the *plausible interpretation* of the data and the movement from anecdotal experience to phenomena. Providing details about the school, its demographic make-up, its curriculum, and the children help to neutralize these as threats.

**Short Notes about Phenomena**

As mentioned previously, the school at which I conducted my research is a publicly funded school. Admission to the school in kindergarten and first grade is determined by lottery. Students are not required to have any prior knowledge of the target language, and at the time of the admission of this cohort of students about 98% of the students came from L1-English monolingual homes. The school maintains an at risk population (as determined by federal free and reduced eligibility criteria) of about 56%. The school follows a specific immersion progression:

- In kindergarten and first grade, students spend approximately 90% of daily instruction in the Target Language (only enrichment activities such as P.E., art, and music may take place in English; when possible these classes are conducted in the Target Language).
• In grades 2-5, students spend approximately 80% of their daily instructional time in the target language. Math, science, social studies, are all taught in the Target Language, as well as language arts. English language arts is added for 60 minutes a day.

• In middle school, approximately 25% of a student’s time is spent in the immersion language. English is the language of instruction for social studies and science. This is a shift from lower school. Mathematics remains a subject taught in the Target Language (French or Spanish). Students take language arts in both the Target Language and English in equal amounts. Additionally, middle school students begin a three-year sequence of Mandarin. Taken together this means that 35% of a student’s day is spent in a language other than English.

In 2009 a student of mine wrote, “We are in English class and yet I hear three different languages being spoken. French, Spanish and English. I guess that's pretty cool but I don't really think about it because it's normal at [this school].” This same spirit is reflected through student writing from another class where students wrote the following lyrics to a rap:

I'm sitting up so high (so high)
My skills you can't deny (deny)
Brillamos mas qu'el sol (qu'el sol)
Estamos en control (control)
Je touche les étoiles (étoiles)
Mais ça ne fais pas mal (pas mal)
That is unless I shhhhhhh
We flow en Español et en Français Of course Anglais.
I included these statements because I feel like they are reflective of the lived experience of students at this school and those statements are as descriptive any bullet-pointed facts detailing the number of minutes they spend in the target language.

Summary

In summary, I used two main data streams. The first consisted of donated student writing collected during second (CE1) and fifth (CM2) grade. Collection and transcription of these samples allowed for the creation of an immersion learner corpus (Appendix D). Better understanding the essence of an immersion learner’s language—and, subsequently, identity formation--was the goal of the analysis of this corpus. The second data stream was the transcribed interviews of the students at the end of their fifth grade (CM2) year. The transcribed interviews allowed for the students themselves to give voice to their experience in the phenomena, both through what they said and how they said it.
Chapter Four: Findings
For the child, the word is part of the thing.
-L. S. Vygotsky, Thinking and language (1986)

Overview

The purpose of this research study was to better understand the essence of what it means for a child to express him/herself fluently in his/her L2. I sought to better understand the nature of the immersion learner’s lexical development as well as the relationship of the learner’s perception of his/her fluency to his/her L2 production (and performance in a range of settings). A phenomenological research methodology was used because the goal was to better understand the individual lived experience of the learners within the phenomena of Foreign Language Immersion In School (FLIIS).

This chapter uses Moustakas’s (1994) outline for phenomenological analysis:

- Immersion: the researcher is involved in the world of the experience
- Incubation: as space for awareness, intuitive or tacit insights, and understanding
- Illumination: active knowing process to expand the understanding of the experience
- Explication: reflective actions
- Creative synthesis: bringing together to show patterns and relationships

as the framework for examining the data that I have collected, which consists of a corpus of written work and one to one interviews.

Immersion

As a qualitative researcher with a phenomenological research stance, I concerned myself with the lived experiences of the subjects I am researching. It was my goal to explore the experience of students living the phenomena of FLIIS in order to better understand their experience. The world of students living the phenomena of FLIIS is my world too. As the principal of an immersion school, as well as the parent of two immersion students, the
experience of students living the phenomena of FLIIS has been far more than a discrete academic exercise.

When I started this project during the 2013-2014 school year, my daughter was in second grade (CE1) and I was the director of curriculum and instruction at that school. I began by scanning and transcribing the journals kept by the students in two French classrooms at my school. Out of the approximately forty student journals scanned and collected through my work at the school, I was able to obtain permission to use the journals of ten students (including that of my own daughter) for research purposes.

The school where the samples were taken is a racially and socially diverse school, allowing for a sample of students from different racial and social backgrounds (see Table 1, Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reported Race of Student</th>
<th>Percent of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>61.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>23.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/African-American</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1. Racial Breakdown of Student Sample*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lunch Status</th>
<th>Percent of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pay</td>
<td>69.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced</td>
<td>15.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free</td>
<td>15.40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2. Socio-economic status of student sample as defined by Free and Reduced Meal eligibility.*

These journals were transcribed and initially analyzed simply for features such as the number of words, number of sentences, unique words, multiple morpheme words, orthographical mistakes, and grammatical mistakes (see Figure 4). I was joined in my work in the summer of 2014 by a research student from Rennes, France (Céline Chanteau) who had come to New
Orleans to work on a research project and was interested in exploring students who were learning a foreign language in an immersion environment in school. Working with Céline in this way allowed for there to be multiple passes through the data, even in these initial stages, and important debriefing with another researcher about what we were seeing.

When the students were in fifth grade (CM2), I obtained additional writing samples. These samples were donated by parents. I hoped that by analyzing this new corpus for the same features listed above, I would gain insight into the nature of the lexical development of the immersion learner from second (CE1) to fifth grade (CM2).

Over the course of the four years between second and fifth grade, not only did my role at the school change, but so did the quantity and type of writing the students were doing. Students were no longer keeping journals as they had done in second grade. Almost all the writing that was done in fifth grade was related to discrete assignments of a more analytical nature and often very prescribed. There was nothing similar to the kind of journal writing I had been able to obtain in second grade, with writing ranging from the personal, “what I did on my vacation…” to responses to class work. The fifth grade work was more aligned with the academic demands of the newly implemented state standards and the demands of state testing, and was therefore more genre-specific: literary analysis or expository writing. This writing was still collected, transcribed and analyzed (see Figure 7).
Figure 7. Example of transcribed fifth grade (CM2) student writing tabulating word count and average words per sentence with memoing.

It was clear that lexical development had taken place in the three years between the samples. On average, students went from writing nine words with one to two orthographic mistakes and one to two grammatical mistakes per sentence, to fifteen words per sentence with less than one orthographic or grammatical mistakes per sentence.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level &amp; Assignment Types</th>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Average words per sentence</th>
<th>Sentences written</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second grade/CE1; over the course of one year of journal writing</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth grade/CM2; between four different assignments</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3. Lexical development.*

In second grade/CE1 averages were arrived at through far more samples. Students wrote the whole year. Each day a student might write only one or two lines. For example, in the journals there were pages and pages such as the one in Figure 8.

*Figure 8. One page of second grade/CE1 student journal writing.*

A journal was filled with approximately thirty-three pages. In fifth grade/CM2, however, I was able to collect fewer samples, only four individual assignments per student (see Figure 9).
While the nature of the assignments was different, one could see the sentences become more complex. A typical sentence in second grade (CE1) has the sequence of subject, verb, and predicate. Consider the following example. The French, included on the left-hand side of the page below, is quoted directly from the student. The English translation, on the right-hand side, is provided by me. See Example 1.

1. “Ont mange à 11:00.” We eat at 11:00.

By fifth grade (CM2) we see a greater incidence of compound sentences (example 2).

2. “Dans une le salon il y a un Télévision, une canapé brun, et un chaise.” In the den there is a television, a brown couch, and a chair.

The sentence has a greater level of detail (the brown couch), and a more complex sentence structure. It begins with a prepositional phrase and continues to an independent clause.

**Incubation**

From the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year, when I began the data collection, until the end of 2017, when the last data were analyzed, four years had elapsed—a good span of time for appropriate incubation. During this time my position changed from director of curriculum
and instruction to principal. It was during 2016-2017 that interviews with the students were conducted and transcribed. Students also took two sets of standardized exams at the end of the year. The first was the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP), which is a criterion-referenced set of tests administered by the State of Louisiana for the purpose of documenting a student’s mastery of key content for their grade level. The second was the Diplôme d'études en langue française (DELF), which is a set of tests corresponding to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and administered by the Ministry of Education of the Government of France for the purpose of documenting proficiency in French as a Foreign Language. The test given to the fifth grade students was the A2-level exam.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>LEAP 20016-2017</th>
<th>DELF 2016-2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English Lg. Arts</td>
<td>Speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1422</td>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1433</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1423</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1424</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1425</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1426</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1427</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1428</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1434</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1435</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1430</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1431</td>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1432</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Student scores on the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) and Diplôme d'études en langue française (DELF) A2.

All students passed both assessments. It is interesting to note that even for a student who scored at the highest level, Advanced, on the LEAP, and at very high level, 97.5/100, on the DELF, expressive language (Speaking and Writing) were lower than receptive language (Listening and
Reading). In fact, overall, all students scored lower—by more than ten percentage points—on expressive language (see Table 5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>83.69%</td>
<td>93.23%</td>
<td>94.31%</td>
<td>80.77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5. Average student scores on the Diplôme d'études en langue française (DELF) A2 by area.*

This is consistent with previous findings that immersion students demonstrate “fluency” and native-like competence in listening comprehension and reading skills (receptive language), yet generally fall behind native speakers in their expressive language skills, such as speaking and writing (Bornstein & Hendricks, 2011; Genesee, 1987; Swain & Lapkin 1986). Despite being aware of this long-established understanding of immersion, it was still remarkable to see this reality appear in such a striking way in my own data.

**Illumination**

My initial reaction to my data was despair. It seemed a grave miscalculation on my part to have not accounted for the impact that different types of writing would make on the results I sought. I had erroneously assumed that more writing was going on in the classrooms than was actually happening. While this was a valuable insight as a school leader, it was not the insight that I had imagined I would find after hours of tedious transcription and analysis. However, my despair at not finding what I had hoped to find began to lift when I was able to see new and unexpected themes beginning to emerge from the data. Consider the following example.

Again, the French included on the left-hand side of the page below is quoted directly from the student. The English translation on the right-hand side is provided by me, see Example 3.

3. “Je sui alai a Chicago pour visité mon Grand-mère est mon Grand-père est mon I went to Chicago to visit my grandmother and my grandfather and my
tante, mon tante a une chien je suis alai au American Girle store.” aunt, my aunt has a dog[.] I went to the American Girl store.

While one can see nine grammatical mistakes in the French, there are also mistakes in English. Words such as American and girl are misspelled. One might find that unusual for an American second grade girl, who’s L1 is English. This was not an infrequent occurrence, especially the addition of the letter e at the end of a word in English that has no e, but whose French equivalent does end with an ‘e,’ such as la fille (girl).

One of the types of mistakes could be seen in a sentence like this (example 4):

4.“On a manger des hambérgér.” We ate hamburgers.

The word hamburger is misspelled (from both an English and French perspective), but the student seems to be making an effort to make the word as French as possible with the addition of the two accents. It is as if the student was saying well yes, sure hamburgers are American, but serving it on a baguette will make it French.

Another type of mistake occurs in second grade and also again in fifth grade, as in example 5.

5. “A la fin j’ai vu un parde qui s’appelle Red Bean’s and Ris.” At the end I saw a parade called Red Beans and Rice.

Here the student is describing the New Orleans carnival krewe that parades on Lundi Gras called Red Beans and Rice. The student uses the word, ‘parade,’ (all be it misspelled in either language) which is the same in English and in French, but would a monolingual Francophone have chosen la parade over le défilé? The student does not attempt to translate "red beans" to haricots rouges, but does translate "rice" to riz (although misspelled as "ris"). It is unlikely that the student didn’t know the French word, since red beans and rice are served almost every Monday in the school
cafeteria for lunch and signs like this are a standard part of what a student in this environment might create and see in the classroom (see Figure 10).

Figure 10. Class poster about food served for lunch in the school cafeteria.

Student decisions about when to translate and when to retain the word in English as a unit of meaning began to strike me as significant.

Explication
During the 2016-2017 school year, the students involved in the research were all interviewed. These interviews took place at school, within the classroom setting, with the child’s
classroom teacher, and were conducted in French. The interviews were recorded digitally and transcribed. Interview questions are included in Appendix B.

Each interview was analyzed as an individual unit. Memoing and notating was conducted for each individual interview. After several passes through the data, a pattern emerged around the use of English words in the context of the interview. I categorized this usage into parts of speech or syntactic function (see Table 6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proper Nouns</th>
<th>Pseudo-Prop Nouns</th>
<th>Direct Objects (Nouns)</th>
<th>Adjectives</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21st Century</td>
<td>Break (les vacances)</td>
<td>fluent (couramment *)</td>
<td>confusing (compliqué)</td>
<td>teach (enseigner)</td>
<td>sometimes (parfois*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Quarter</td>
<td>jokes (les blagues)</td>
<td>bored (ennuyé)</td>
<td>learn (apprendre)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spraypaint</td>
<td></td>
<td>fun (amusant)</td>
<td></td>
<td>nice (gentil)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. English words used during the French interview categorized by syntactic function; French words not provided during interview indicated with (*).

What I noticed was that words related to feelings or specific experiences were not translated by students. It was almost as if there was a material difference between something being confusing and something being compliqué that went to the heart of how the student experienced the moment, not a matter of the need to relate or describe a universal emotion in one language or another. While a window might be interchangeable with une fenêtre, how one feels or what one experiences is not. Your best friend who speaks French and English like you, though your personal relationship is conducted in English, told you “a joke” even if you are talking about it to your teacher in French. Your teacher (where the relationship is conducted in French), however, “recounted une blague,” even if you are talking about your day to your Anglophone parents. This seemed to align very closely with Regan’s 2010 study in which she concludes that language identity, not a language deficit leads to these types of situations.
The other nuance to note about this last example is that a typical monolingual, English-speaking American, fifth grader is not going to use the word *recount* (she will say *told*). Likewise, a typical monolingual, English-speaking American, fifth grader will not use *recreation* (he will say *recess*), even though these are words in the English lexicon. FLIIS students will often use English words that, while not incorrect, seem rather uncommon in their usage as they are not part of colloquial speech. This word usage does, however, make total sense if you were to think of these students as French speaking and consider the words *raconter* and *récréation*.

After multiple passes through the transcripts organized by individual interview I reorganized them by question, so that all the answers from all the students to one question were listed together (see Figure 11). In this figure, bold type face indicates the interviewer.

![Figure 11. Excerpt of the transcribed interviews by question with memoing.](image-url)
This led to further insights and allowed me to see the questions and the student responses in a different way. Instead of focusing on the individual student, and how the individual student answered the questions, hence the individual experience, I was able to see if all the students answered a specific question in a particular way. It was easier to see if their responses were similar to each other which might indicate a shared experience within this phenomena of FLIIS.

My second research question was “What are the relationships of students' perceptions of their fluency to their L2 production (and performance in a range of settings)?” This question was largely answered by my data. Students overwhelmingly express confidence in their ability; see Table 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes/Oui</th>
<th>Sometimes and sometimes not/Parfois et parfois pas</th>
<th>No/Non</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 7. Student response to the questions, “As-tu l'impression de progresser vite quand tu apprends le français?” [Do you feel you progress quickly when learning French?].*

Even the student that expresses “non” does so in “fluent French.” It is interesting to consider what this student considers fluent and not fluent. The student sampled below is dubious of her own skills because she does not know all the words when she reads; see example 6.

6. “Parce que, comme j’ai dit, je ne pas comprends tous les mots et je sais pas qu’est-ce que les mots dit dans un livre ou chose comme ca.”

Because, as I said, I do not understand all the words and I do not know what words say in a book or something like that.

Interestingly this student is also the only student who scored Basic on fifth grade LEAP in English (everyone else scored Mastery, except one who scored Advanced). A student who scored Basic would still be considered fluent in English yet might struggle to know all the words when reading. It is interesting to consider this in the context of a student’s perception of what it means to be fluent. This student seems to be associating fluency with reading ability.
One of the themes that started to form as I reviewed the transcripts was that students didn’t seem to distinguish between L1 and L2. This pattern suggests that their L2 is equally as transparent a medium of expression to them as their L1. When asked, "Quelles matières étudies-tu en français à l'école?" [What subjects do you study in French at school?], one student responds as in example 7:

7. “C’est presque le même, juste c’est une différente langue.” It’s almost the same it’s just a different language.

Another student answers the same question in a similar way, seen in examples 8 and 9:

8. “Um...comment comme prononces les choses et écrire les chose” [interviewer interjects, et en Anglais], how to like pronounce and write things [interviewer interjects, and in English],

The student continues:

9. “Um...comment on prononce des choses, et écrire les choses, et conjuguer des choses.” how to pronounce, write and conjugate things.

In general students feel that to speak French is normal. When asked, "Est-ce que tu trouves que le français est difficile à apprendre? Pourquoi?" [Do you find that French is difficult to learn? Why?] Students respond with answers as in example 10:

10. “Ce n’est pas difficile à apprendre parce que Je ne sais pas.” It is not difficult to learn because I don’t know.

Students explain that they have been doing it (speaking French) since kindergarten, or that French is just like English, or that it is the same in French or English. They simply do not draw a hard separation between the two languages in their school life. This idea of language as a transparent medium, leads to the next theme, which is Bilingual Consciousness. Students
expressed a general comfort level in both the French and English languages and a real frustration in being required to translate something learned in French back into English. When asked, “Est-ce qu’il y a des choses que tu préfèrerais étudier, apprendre en anglais plutôt qu’en français?” [Are there things you would rather study, learn in English than in French?], a common response was as in example 11:

11. “Uh la science sociale [pourquoi?] c’est un petit peu difficile de dire toutes ces choses en anglais.”

Uh Social Studies [why?] It's a little bit difficult to say all these things in English.

The main concern here was that learning something in French became challenging as the student was then responsible for turning that knowledge around and demonstrating that knowledge in English (for standardized testing or even simply explaining to Anglophone parents what you did at school that day).

Several students expressed that they liked a certain balance in learning some things through French and an equal number of subjects in English. It had little to do with the subject matter, but more with an idea that things should be balanced, that it was fair to have a certain number of subjects in one language and a certain number in the other language.

Language as a transparent medium and a bilingual consciousness was summed up very beautifully by one student. When asked if students speak French outside of the classroom and, if so, in reference to what, she replied, (example 12):

12. “On juste comme parle.”

We just, like, talk.

Essentially, whichever language comes out, or whichever language one is moved to speak in, it doesn’t matter, we “just talk.” However, students readily admit that they mostly speak English with friends at recess; see example 13. The bold indicates the interviewer.
13. T’arrive-t-il de parler français avec tes amis à l’école dans la cour de récréation, par exemple?”

“Pas beaucoup parce que tout le monde autres, ils parlent anglais.”

Do you ever speak French with your friends at school in the playground, for example?

Not much because everyone else, they speak English.

The exception to this was rather interesting. This school has two language tracks, one French, and the other, Spanish. The other half of the students at a grade level are referred to as “Spanish,” meaning students who are in the Spanish immersion track. One student was very clear under which conditions French was used as the preferred language at recess (example 14):

14. Parfois, quand on veut pas les espagnols de nous entendre, oui.”

Sometimes, when we do not want the Spanish to hear us, yes.

Summary

A phenomenological research stance requires an exploratory design. In this study, I collected and analyzed data over a four-year period starting in 2013. I collected and transcribed journals from students in second grade/CE1, creating a corpus of written work to analyze. I acquired additional writing samples, donated by parents, four years later, when the students were in fifth grade/CM2. These samples were also transcribed and analyzed. Between second (CE1) and fifth grade (CM2) students grew in their lexical development. This was reflected not only in the number of words per sentence, but also in their use of prepositions in order to create more complex sentence structures. In addition, in the spring of the fifth grade/CM2 year, students were interviewed. The interviews were also transcribed and analyzed. This chapter outlined the initial findings of the data and the results of what I gathered. In the next chapter I will engage in a creative synthesis, bringing together the information in order to show patterns and relationships.
These patterns and relationships will form the basis for my interpretations, including the themes that emerged.
Studies consistently demonstrate that the word plays a central role not in the isolated functions but the whole of consciousness. In consciousness, the word is what – in Feuerbach’s words – is absolutely impossible for one person but possible for two. The word is the most direct manifestation of the historical nature of human consciousness.

—L. S. Vygotsky, Thought and language (1986)

Phenomenology is not concerned with a specific knowledge or form of knowledge, but rather with what lived experience made that knowledge possible. The purpose of this chapter is to see what can be concluded from an analysis of student writing and transcripts of interviews about the phenomena that take place in Foreign Language Immersion In School (FLIIS).

In my review of interview transcripts, I eventually stopped focusing on individual questions and answers, or even all the answers in response to one question and began to wonder what it meant for students to answer a set of related questions in a certain way. I took particular interest in a set of questions at the beginning and end of the total interview. Two pairs of questions seemed central to my purpose. While these paired questions (indicated as A and B) were asked sequentially, question pair A was separated from question pair B by seven different questions. Question pairs A and B (below) were designed to solicit information about preferences, in terms of subjects studied as well as the language in which they are studied:

**Question Set A**

Parmi les matières que tu étudies en français, (donc par exemple la bibliothèque et le maths tous ca avec on parle français) qu’est-ce que tu préfères? Pourquoi?

Parmi les matières que tu étudies en Anglais, laquelle tu préfères? Pourquoi?

**Question Set B**

Est-ce qu’il y a des choses que tu préférerais étudier en français plutôt qu’en anglais?

Among the subjects that you study in French, (so for example library and math are all classes in which French is spoken) which do you prefer? Why?

Among the subjects you study in English, which one do you prefer? Why?

Are there things you would prefer to study in French rather than in English?
Est-ce qu’il y a des choses que tu préférerais étudier, apprendre en anglais plutôt qu’en français?
Are there things you would rather study, learn in English than in French?

My first theme coalesced around these questions and the answers students gave to them. I noticed a theme, in the sense of conceptual tools. “Metaphorically speaking, [themes] are more like knots in the webs of our experiences, around which certain lived experiences are spun and thus lived through as meaningful wholes” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 90). The first theme that emerged was language as transparent medium.

Language as Transparent Medium

Students struggled to understand the sense/meaning of Question set A. The interviewer was compelled to add examples (in italics) of different subjects in which the language of the class was French, to distinguish from “French” as a subject. For example, one student responded as in example 15:

15. Je dois penses a ca [long pause] j’aime les adverbs. I have to think about it [long pause] I like adverbs.

While it could be that this student is a budding linguist, it seems far more likely that he associated the mention of French with the class devoted to French language arts, which is to say not registering, on some level, the specific language that classes like math, science, etc., were taught in (despite being in them every day). His use of a grammatical concept example (adverbs), rather than the storyline of a book or other common language arts activity, underscores his association of the word French with a formal study of the language, rather than an unself-conscious speaking or being in the language. Below is the back and forth between another student and the interviewer (example 16). The bold faced type indicates the interviewer:

16. Uh... Tous les classes ou tu as des professeurs de français, qui parlent French teachers, who speak in
If you are not bilingual, it might seem impossible to forget which language you’re using or used in a conversation yesterday. However, even after the addition of the examples, at least three students actually responded that they liked taking art in French, even though these students had never, since kindergarten, had an art teacher who conducted class in the French language, and at the time of the interview had a substitute teacher whose preferred language was Spanish. Could it really be that they were unaware of the language the class was being conducted in? Their inability to answer the question seemed particularly revealing.

There seems to be the same confusion when the opposite question is posed. When the interviewer asked, "Parmi les matières que tu étudies en Anglais, laquelle tu préfères? Pourquoi?" [Among the subjects you study in English, which one do you prefer? Why?], students answered as in example 17:

17. Um… j’aime le français Eh oui mais en anglais? ça c’est dans français. quoi? ce que tu étudies en anglais ohh anglais la ou les professeurs, ils parlent anglais, laquelle tu préfères? Oh, ok um… anglais Pourquoi? Parce que parfois on fait des choses chouettes, parfois on fait pas des choses chouettes. C’est juste ennuyeux.

The general impression one gets is that students like the subjects they like: art, P.E., math, etc., and that the language in which the class is taught is almost irrelevant.
With Question Set B the idea was to see if, again, language of instruction made a difference. Would students like to learn a particular subject in one language or the other?

Three students simply said no, or I don’t know. Others responded that they simply thought the distributions of classes taught through French and English should be “balanced” (see example 18):

18. Je pense que tout bon parce que je y'avait trois classes d'ang...qui en parle en anglais, trois classes ou on parle en français. Je pense que c’est équilibré donc

I think that all good because I have three classes of Eng ... who speak in English, three classes where we speak in French. I think it's balanced so

Another student responded:

19. um… comme quoi? je sais pas. Est-ce que tu préferais avoir des cours de sports en français plutôt que dans anglais? le cour de sports en anglais parce qu'il ya beaucoup de choses en français.

um ... like what? I do not know. Would you prefer P.E. in French rather than in English? P.E. in English because there are a lot of things in French.

One student did express the desire to switch the language of instruction from English to French, but didn’t really have a sense of why:

20. Umm la musique parce que je pense que en français ca m'aiderait plus qu’en anglais.

Tu sais pourquoi? Je sais pas pourquoi.

Umm music because I think in French it would help me more than in English.

Do you know why? I do not know why.

Language of instruction seems to vanish from students’ consciousness, which is to say their sense of language resonates with the theme of language as a transparent medium.

Interestingly, three students reported wanting to switch the language of instruction from French to English, in two different subjects, but for the same reason. Two focused on science and the other on social studies. All three expressed the same reason for wanting to change the
language of instruction. It was their reason that I found most interesting. In both cases the students say:

21. C’est un petit peu difficile de dire toutes ces choses en anglais  It's a bit difficult to say all these things in English

What students resisted was having to translate what they learned in French into English, as for English language assessments like standardized tests.

Science and social studies are both subjects that are tested by the State of Louisiana in English. It was clear that it was a challenge to learn concepts in one language and then have to demonstrate knowledge of these topics for standardized testing in English. This was not surprising as I have anecdotally experienced this with my own children. I have often asked my daughter what she learned in science only to be met with silence as she struggled to find the words in English. Only when I remind her that she could explain it to me in French do I get a sigh of a relief and a rattling off of a concept like le cycle de l’eau. Unlike an adult who learns a foreign language, who may have an already fully formed set of word meanings to attach new ones to, these students do not. They have never heard of the "water cycle" in English, so it doesn’t make the kind of automatic sense to translate it as it does for an adult who already held that fully formed concept. As Vygotsky (1986) points out, for an adult, language is a system of signs that corresponds point for point with a system of concepts that have already been acquired (p. 159). He referenes Édouard Claparède's assertion that the more smoothly one uses a relation in action, the less conscious one is of it. We, therefore, become aware of what we are doing in proportion to the difficulty of the experience in adapting to the situation. For a child who has acquired multiple languages at the same time, the need to move between them and translate in this way may create a cognitive dissonance that is unpleasant. This difficulty makes them more aware of what otherwise would have been unconscious.
Bilingual Consciousness

One of my first struggles in writing about my data was to distinguish in my thoughts which data I had encountered in French and which in English. It was easy to lose track of which language a certain idea had arisen in. Since translation is already an act of interpretation, it was a struggle for me to find the right balance. It wasn’t until it was pointed out to me that I needed to remember to translate the French words and statements consistently that I realized I was having a somewhat parallel experience writing about the phenomena as the students experiencing the phenomena.

Both in their writing and in the interviews, students used English words. Certainly, there are times when an English word substitution is made because a student is not familiar with a word, but what could account for the substitution when a child most certainly was familiar with the word? As discussed in chapter 4, despite knowing the term for “Red Beans” in French, the student chose not to use the word when describing the carnival organization that parades under that name. Les haricots rouges might be the thing one eats on Monday, but "Red Beans" were clearly the organization that paraded on Lundi Gras in the Faubourg Marigny of New Orleans. What could account for those kinds of choices?

Throughout the student interviews there were other examples. Words related to feelings or specific experiences were not translated. Table 6 in Chapter Four tracks the English words used during the French interview categorized by syntactic function. Words that appear in English rather than French during a French conversation often seemed to be connected to an experience. The experience related here is not dissimilar from what Susan Ballinger finds in her recent examination of peer language use. There she concludes, “the dynamic nature of [student] interactions or the translanguaging that they engaged in demonstrated the value that bilingualism
represented...being able to fluidly cross LoI boundaries represented a source of social capital...whether it was done to break rules or to gain or grant entry into social interactions” (Ballinger, 2017, p. 193). The experience of the students in this study and Ballinger’s, falls right in line with what MacIntyre reports in her 2007 study, that communication in the L2 is all about relationships.

Vygotsky discusses the idea of how experience and language connect in his summary of one of Jean Piaget’s experiments. “A child’s everyday concept, such as ‘brother,’ is saturated with experience. Yet when asked to solve an abstract problem about a brother’s brother...he becomes confused” (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 193). He goes on to rather colorfully expound that, “concepts do not lie in the child’s mind like peas in a bag, without any bonds between them” (p. 197). Vygotsky’s argument is that “thoughts and words are not cut from one pattern... The structure of speech does not simply mirror the structure of thought; that is why words cannot be put on by thought like ready-made garments” (p. 219). How much more complex, then, is the process of the child working within multiple languages, whose thoughts and words require an even more intricate sur-mesure. Students seemed to be experiencing their thought and the resulting language output in a less linear construct than a monolingual might. Vygotsky defines consciousness as the awareness of the activity of the mind: the consciousness of being conscious. In that sense this theme of Bilingual Consciousness is an awareness of that ever-present existence of the multiple.

In his 2011 novel Embassytown, China Miéville plays around with this idea, inventing an alien species called the Ariekei that can only understand their own language, called “Language.” Humans have created ambassadors that can speak “Language” through genetically engineered identical twins who share one mind, linked by technology. The Ariekei do not even
recognize unpaired humans as living entities. The duality is essential. They cannot recognize/conceive of individual consciousness. Two speakers; one mind. It is even represented on the page in the form of fractions, with the voice of the ambassador, who is the “cut,” as the numerator, and the other, who is the “turn,” as the denominator. We can see the language of *Embassytown* as a metaphor for bilingual consciousness, but with one body and multiple languages that do not operate independently, but always together.

**From Bilingual to Interlingual**

Individuals who have reached adolescence or young adulthood in only one language have framed the conversation about language from a binary perspective. Individuals have one language and that language is their mother-tongue, their native language, their first language, their primary language, their home language. Every other language acquired is somehow lesser, it is one’s second language. The basic assumption is that the linguistic path of the monolingual is the same path traveled for the bilingual. But how can that be? Especially if “different developmental paths, followed under different conditions, cannot lead to identical results” (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 159).

The binary view of language can have possibly damaging implications. It sets up a divided system that is not really reflective of the lived experience of individuals with more than one language. In a world where gender can now be understood on a spectrum, it is hard to imagine why language cannot also be viewed in that way. Think of what is denied to individuals because one language is set apart from the other.

In the United States, parents are asked to complete a home language survey (HLS) in order to determine if students are English Learner (EL) students. If a student is an EL student, then an assessment of that child’s proficiency in English is conducted, although no specific
assessment is suggested (Department of Education, 2016). Currently, Louisiana uses an assessment called ELPT (English Language Proficiency Test) to assess proficiency. You are considered proficient in English when you have scored at least a "4" in all domains (Speaking, Reading, Listening, and Writing), or achieved the score of BASIC two years in a row on the statewide standardized assessment (LEAP). What if English is your only language? If you don’t score BASIC two years in a row, you are not considered an EL student. English is still considered your native, primary, or home language, even if you are illiterate. We don’t deny these individuals ownership or identity as speakers of English. The lived experience of students who have become multilingual through an elementary school immersion program (FLIIS) reports that this other language, this L2, is also their language. Regardless of intellectual ability or academic mastery, these are individuals whose language development is not monolingual.

Students classed as EL may take the statewide math exam in their native language, for example. Why then can’t all students at an immersion school, who have only ever studied mathematics in a language such as French, take that same state exam in French? Why is it less their “native” language? Who speaks algebra at home? Complex mathematics is the domain of school, not home, and the language in which the child has been instructed should be the primary determining factor for the language to assess the child’s knowledge, not the language of parents, home-life, or country of birth. In many cases it can be one and the same, but the assumption that it always is, is as faulty an assumption as assigning gender identity strictly on the basis of biological sex. One child at the school where I am principal speaks Hebrew at his father’s house, Spanish at his mother’s house, and is in the French immersion track at school. In fourth grade he will only have had three years of English language instruction. English is only begun in second grade at this school, and only for one hour a day. Should he receive his state assessment in
Spanish? That is his mother’s language and the language in which he is spoken to at home when he is with his mother. Should he receive his assessment in Hebrew? That is his father’s language and the language he speaks at home with his father. He has, however, received a total of five years of instruction in the French language. That is approximately six and half hours a day for 178 days a year. Yet he must take the state assessment in English because he doesn’t qualify as an EL student. While this student’s situation may seem unique, it is not. There are students at my school who speak Spanish, Arabic, Japanese, and Vietnamese at home and are instructed in French at school. French is as much their language as any of the others are.

Consider the different approved templates a school may use to create a HLS (Appendix C). One problematic assumption is that the student lives in one home, and that everyone in a home speaks the same language. In addition, where a child resides does not necessarily indicate a primary caregiver. These are civil rights issues. Students have a right to receive services in what is considered their native language, but the problem is how we define native or primary language. If a child’s language of instruction in school is French and a child receives special education instruction for a Specific Learning Disability in Mathematics, doesn’t the child have a right to that instruction in French? Why does the child only have a right to it in English simply because English is spoken at home?

What might be a different way of understanding multiple language acquisition, especially FLIIS? A student who speaks French and English is not two monolinguals in one body, with a monolingually formed English and a monolingually formed French. This student is *interlingual* English and French. Inter-lingual, because the languages always exist and work together. As Phillip Prévost explains in *The Acquisition of French* (2009) one can understand language acquisition from the standpoint of L1 acquisition (for the monolingual), L2 acquisition (that
would be the second-language learner who learned that language when their L1 was fully formed, bilingualism and acquisition by children with Specific Language Impairments (SLI). Prévost defines bilingualism as learning two languages at the same time from birth, but often cites Genesee, who worked in a context of French immersion schools in Canada and was not only working with from-birth bilinguals. Prévost rightly raises the question of the interaction between the two grammars, “in the sense that some properties may transfer from one grammar to the other and that this may accelerate or impede the development of a particular linguistic properties” (Prévost, 2009, p. 9). His findings are essentially that:

1. Underlying grammars are constrained by Universal Grammar (UG) principles.
2. The evidence supports Strong Continuity Hypothesis for language development.
3. UG remains accessible to adult L2 learners.
4. The process of monolinguals, child L2 learners, SLI children is all very similar, but children adopt Structural Economy Principal5 whereas adult L2 learners follow the Categorical Uniformity Principle6. (Prévost, 2009, p. 414)

Additionally, his findings indicate that the kind of cross-linguistic influence we see in the students’ speaking and writing is not related to language dominance.

Think of a flower. Below is an image (Figure 12) that I created to try to illustrate the form that language acquisition takes for monolinguals and interlinguals.

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5 Uses the minimum of structure consistent with well-formed constraints
6 Assumes a unique Canonical Structure realization for a given semantic type
At the base is Universal Grammar, which everyone has access to. As a child encounters his/her L1 usually through hearing it spoken, a child begins to develop a Grammar. That is not the final grammar that the child will have, but an intermediate one. After all the many years the child eventually develops his/her final grammar in their L1. In the case of the interlanguage child, the child hears the L1 and starts to develop a Grammar, but then also begins to hear the L2. The intermediate grammar that is developed intertwinds the L1 Intermediate Grammar and the L2 Intermediate Grammar resulting in an Interlanguage Grammar or IL1, not just a G. This continues, both IL grammars developing with each other until in the end you don’t simply have two grammars a G1 and a G2, or and L1 and an L2, but rather a whole which is comprised of
both—an IL, or Interlanguage. Each is distinct. You can speak both, but you don’t switch one of and one on, they are both always at play creating a different total consciousness.

Limitations

There were many limitations to this study. One of the main limitations was not having the same type of writing in the later grades as was collected in second grade/CE1. The second grade/CE1 journals provided a much richer and varied body of writing to use. While they were prompted, the prompts allowed for more personal reflection. There was also simply greater quantity. Journals were kept for the whole year, which led to greater volume. By the time the students were in fifth grade/CM2, the type and quantity of writing had fallen off dramatically. I had a difficult time even collecting writing samples. Most writing was restricted to academic constructs, like a constructed response to a question about a piece of literature being read. This targeting of writing genre places limits on the range of vocabulary, since academic writing relies on specialized terms and formulas. One of the students in the study even addressed the lack of writing in French language arts explicitly. When asked, "Est-ce qu’il y a des choses que tu préférerais étudier en français plutôt qu’en anglais?" [Are there things you would prefer to study in French rather than in English?], he replies as in example 22:

22. uh comment écrire un essai oui par exemple voila. Est-ce que tu préférais écrire un essai en anglais ou en français et pas en anglais je veux écrire en français parce que je avais pas fait uh how to write an essay yes for example voila. Do you prefer to write an essay in English or French and not in English? I want to write in French because I have not done it.

Another limitation was that I did not collect the equivalent amount of writing in English. I think it is important to analyze English-language writing as well to see whether a student’s French influences her writing in English in the same way her English influences her French. I only have one example of a student’s writing in both French and English, which was used for a
project that resulted in a joint paper presented at WERA (World Education Research Association) in November of 2015, entitled “A Language of Our Own…” What I think was instructive with that sample was how non-native-like the English writing was, compared to what was produced in French at the same time. Had the English teacher also had her second grade students keep a journal, it would have been useful to compare what they wrote about, and how they wrote about experiences in both languages. In 2015 when the two samples were given to an elementary teacher in Rennes, France, the teacher viewed the writing of the child in French as indistinguishable from a second grade or CE1 student at her school even though that was the student’s L2, while she was shocked to learn that the piece done in English was done by the same child and that English was that child’s L1. It would be valuable to analyze the written production in both languages.

Lastly, this sample is small. I think that it needs to be understood in light of the limitation of the sample size. While the sample is small, I do think it is reflective of the lived experience of these students in this environment. As Van Manen points out, “most research we meet in education is of the type whereby results can be severed from the means by which the results were obtained. Phenomenological research is unlike other research in that the link with the results cannot be broken (Van Maven, 1990, p. 13). I think it would be valuable to conduct more research in this area as more and more students enter these types of programs and more and more school systems seek to set up immersion programs within schools so that all stakeholders understand the phenomena being created through engaging with the lived-experience of the students experiencing it.
Chapter Six: Revenons à nos moutons!  

I began my research with two questions in mind: (a) What is the nature of the lexical development of the immersion learner from second grade (CE1) to fifth grade (CM2)? And (b) what are the relationship of students' perceptions of their fluency on their L2 production (and performance in a range of settings)? My goal was to gain a fuller understanding of the essence of what it means for a child to express him/herself fluently in his/her L2 so that teachers and curriculum developers might be more able to facilitate that child’s language development. By examining a children’s language corpus drawn from authentic written production, collected in the immersion setting, I was able to explore aspects of lexical development in interlingual children. Through analysis of interviews with interlingual children I was able to see thematic structures of their experience living interlingually. Heidegger used the phrase “being in the world,” for the way people exist or are involved in the world. It seems to be an apt description of how these children engage with the world. They are not just a student or a child, but rather an interlingual child and an immersion student.

**Future Research**

There are many directions for future research both applied and basic. There is fertile ground in exploring what students are doing with their languages through a much larger oral language sample in both formal and informal settings. It would be valuable to look and see if there are developmental stages or markers that could be identified so that we could better understand how this interlingual grammar develops. While my research stretched over four years, I think this area is ripe for a longer-term study which would allow for a fuller picture of

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7 Literally, let’s return to our sheep, this French expression means let’s get back on track, or to the subject at hand. I use it here as a French equivalent of Husserl’s phrase in German Zu den Sachen, which means, let’s get down to what matters.
the language development of children in schools from entry to exit (for example kindergarten to eighth grade).

With all research one would like to see replication. This replication could take place in a similar environment, but in a different language, such as Spanish, or in another country. I mentioned in Chapter 5 that I had started to explore this option in an immersion environment in France, where the L1 was French and the L2 was English. It would be valuable to conduct the same type of research in this environment to see if the findings still hold true and the phenomena is the same.

In my research I did not focus on teachers. This is an important area for future research. How do teachers experience this phenomena of FLIIS? Is there a difference between teachers that are themselves interlingual through FLIIS? We will soon be reaching a point where more and more of these students are interlingual by way of FLIIS will be entering the workforce and may chose to return to teach in immersion schools. It is important to be prepared to support them with specific teacher training and methods course work related to interlingual development.

When many immersion programs started there was an assumption of universal L1 (such as English). In Canada, The Official Languages Act/Loi sur les langues officielles of 1969 created the context of two official languages, English and French. In the United States, while we have no official language, the de facto language is English, making everything else the L2. Unlike at least thirty other states who have laws making English their official language, albeit to varying degrees, Louisiana does not. Instead, the most recent Louisiana State Constitution from 1974, includes a statement acknowledging, “the right of the people to preserve, foster, and promote their respective historic, linguistic, and cultural origins” (Louisiana Constitution, Article XII, §4). An essential path for future research is to explore the language development for students who have
multiple home languages (neither of which is English) and are enrolled in a school language that is also not English. Increasingly at the school where this research was conducted, students come from interlingual homes where neither parent prefers English and they are being educated in still a different language. If the people of Louisiana do have a right to foster, preserve and promote all their respective historic, linguistic, and cultural origins, then there is good deal of research to be done on the best way to do that.

**Swan Song**

If you were born in south Louisiana before 1920 it is very possible that French was your native language. It was only in an effort to Americanize the population between 1920 and 1960, that the use of French was forbidden. Public school was the vehicle through which the state robbed children growing up during this time of their language. Children who spoke French at home and violated the English only language restrictions at school were punished, required to write lines such as, “I will not speak French on the school grounds” one hundred times. The abuse and traumatization of these children had its desired impact, generations of adults who could not and would not speak French.

By 1968 however, the tide was turning. It was in this year that the Louisiana State Legislature created a CODOFIL (Council for the Development of French in Louisiana). This agency was tasked with among other things the preservation the French language in Louisiana. By 2013 the pendulum had swung back so far that the Louisiana State Legislature passed Act 36 which created a process whereby parents could petition their local school boards to create language immersion pathways if none already exist. Fast forward to the 2017-2018 school year where there are twenty-six French immersion schools in eight parishes. Today a child is far more likely to see one hundred signs around her school reminding her “nous parlons français” then to
experience what her great-grandmother had to, writing one hundred lines in English reminding her not to speak French on school grounds.

Our modern liberal principles of self-determination and multiculturalism make us lothe to deny someone their heritage. If something is your heritage it is yours, no matter how imperfect. It is only when language is seen as a commodity, not heritage that it becomes easier to deny. If someone has acquired language in some other way, out side the home for example, there is a temptation to view it as a commodity. Then, like all other commodities it can then be regulated: certified and uncertified. The value of what you have can all of a sudden fluctuation in the marketplace.

When we view the languages of the interlanguage child as her heritage it seems impossible to deny that same child access to any of her preferred languages in her future educational and civic life. A child who has spent nine years in the phenomena of FLIIS is a child who is interlingual. In the case of the children in my research, they are speakers of French. French is their language, it belongs to them as much as English, or any other language.

If we are going to continue to create the phenomena of FLIIS we owe it to these children, who through this phenomenon have become interlingual, to continue to provide opportunities for them to work in their preferred language. It is important to understand that immersion does not produce full access to two distinct languages as the term bilingual might imply. Instead it produces an interlingual person who has a right to access her preferred language. Currently, there is no opportunity for interlingual children whose whole educational experience has been in French to take the required standardized tests in math, science and social studies in French. There is no coursework at the high school or the university level available in the French language, outside of literature classes. In addition to future research, I hope that there can be
genuine recognition of and commitment to access for interlinguals in their secondary, post-secondary education, and their economic and civic life as adults. Only then will be able to fulfil our right to the foster, preserve, and promote own historic, linguistic, and cultural origins.
Appendix A: Human Subjects Approval Form

University Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research
University of New Orleans

Campus Correspondence

Principal Investigator: Richard B. Speaker
Co-Investigator: Laura Adelman-Cannon
Date: October 18, 2016

Protocol Title: Living in two worlds: the phenomena of the language immersion experience

IRB#: 01Oct16

The IRB has deemed that the research and procedures are compliant with the University of New Orleans and federal guidelines. The above referenced human subjects protocol has been reviewed and approved using expedited procedures (under 45 CFR 46.116(a) category (7).

Approval is only valid for one year from the approval date. Any changes to the procedures or protocols must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Use the IRB number listed on this letter in all future correspondence regarding this proposal.

If an adverse, unforeseen event occurs (e.g., physical, social, or emotional harm), you are required to inform the IRB as soon as possible after the event.

Best wishes on your project!

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Robert D. Laird, Ph.D., Chair
UNO Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research
**Appendix B: Interview Protocol**  
(Interviews conducted in French for L1 English L2 French students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qu’est-ce que tu préfères à l’école? Pourquoi?</td>
<td>What is your favorite thing about school? Why is it your favorite?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quelles matières étudies-tu en Français? En Anglais?</td>
<td>Which subjects do you study in French? Which in English?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parmi les matières que tu étudies en Français, laquelle préfères-tu?</td>
<td>What subjects do you like best in French? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parmi les matières que tu étudies en Anglais, laquelle préfères-tu?</td>
<td>What subjects do you like best in English? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parle-moi de quelque chose qui t’es arrivé à l’école et qui t’as plu, que tu as aimé.</td>
<td>Tell me about something great or exciting that happened to you in school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te sens-tu à l’aise lorsque tu parles Français?</td>
<td>How comfortable are you speaking French? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trouve tu que le français est difficile à apprendre? Pourquoi?</td>
<td>Do you find French difficult to learn? Why?</td>
</tr>
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<td>As-tu l’impression de progresser vite lorsque tu apprends le français?</td>
<td>Do you feel you have progressed quickly in learning French?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Est-ce que tu apprécies tes enseignants Français? Pourquoi?</td>
<td>Do you like your French teachers? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penses-tu que le fait qu’ils soient Français d’origine est une bonne chose? Pourquoi?</td>
<td>Do you think that it is a good choice to have a native French teacher? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y’a-t-il des choses que tu préférerais étudier en Français plutôt qu’en Anglais?</td>
<td>What are some things you would rather to in French (than in English)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y’a-t-il des choses que tu préférerais étudier en Anglais plutôt qu’en Français?</td>
<td>What are some things you would rather to in English (than in French)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>En dehors de l’école, parles-tu beaucoup Français?</td>
<td>Outside of school, how much French do you speak?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avec qui parles-tu Français en dehors de l’école?</td>
<td>With whom do you speak French outside of school? Do you speak French when you are outside of school? Do you speak French with your friends at school outside of class time, during recess, for example?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De quoi parles-tu lorsque tu parles français en dehors de l’école?</td>
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<tr>
<td>T’arrive-t-il de parler français avec tes amis à l’école dans la cour de recreation, par exemple?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Sample Home Language Surveys
(Surveys provided by the U.S. Department of Education.)

SAMPLE #1

Home Language Survey

To make sure that all students receive the education services they need, the law requires us to ask questions about students’ language backgrounds. The answers to Section A below will tell us if a student’s proficiency in English should be evaluated and help us to ensure that important opportunities to receive programs and services are offered to students who need them. The answers to Section B below will help us communicate with you regarding the student and all school matters in the language you prefer.

Student’s Name: Date of Birth:

SECTION A: Please answer the questions below.

1. What are the primary languages used in the home regardless of the language spoken by the student? (Select up to three.)
   - English
   - Arabic
   - Burmese
   - Cantonese
   - Creole
   - French
   - Greek
   - Hmong
   - Haitian-Creole
   - Korean
   - Mandarin
   - Portuguese
   - Russian
   - Somali
   - Spanish
   - Toishanese
   - Vietnamese

2. What is the language most often spoken by the student? (Select only one.)
   - English
   - Arabic
   - Burmese
   - Cambodian
   - Cantonese
   - Creole
   - French
   - Greek
   - Hmong
   - Haitian-Creole
   - Korean
   - Mandarin
   - Portuguese
   - Russian
   - Somali
   - Spanish
   - Toishanese
   - Vietnamese

3. What is the language that the student first acquired? (Select only one.)
   - English
   - Arabic
   - Burmese
   - Cambodian
   - Cantonese
   - Creole
   - French
   - Greek
   - Hmong
   - Haitian-Creole
   - Korean
   - Mandarin
   - Portuguese
   - Russian
   - Somali
   - Spanish
   - Toishanese
   - Vietnamese

Parent/Guardian Signature: Date:

SECTION B: Please answer the questions below.

1. In which language do you prefer to receive written school communications? (Select only one.)
   - English
   - Arabic
   - Burmese
   - Cambodian
   - Cantonese
   - Creole
   - French
   - Greek
   - Hmong
   - Haitian-Creole
   - Korean
   - Mandarin
   - Portuguese
   - Russian
   - Somali
   - Spanish
   - Toishanese
   - Vietnamese

2. In which language do you prefer to receive oral school communications? (Select only one.)
   - English
   - Arabic
   - Burmese
   - Cambodian
   - Cantonese
   - Creole
   - French
   - Greek
   - Hmong
   - Haitian-Creole
   - Korean
   - Mandarin
   - Portuguese
   - Russian
   - Somali
   - Spanish
   - Toishanese
   - Vietnamese

You can access Tools and Resources for Providing ELS with a Language Assistance Program at:
http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/otfa/english-learner-tools/index.html

Tools and Resources for Providing ELS with a Language Assistance Program
SAMPLE #2

Primary/Home Language Survey for All New Kindergarten and Incoming Students

Instructions for schools in completing the survey:

1. Interview the parents or guardians of ALL new kindergarten and incoming students in grades k–12 and record all information requested.
2. Provide interpretation services whenever necessary.
3. Check to see that all questions on the form are answered.

Student Information (The parents or guardians should complete this section.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Name:</th>
<th>Last Name:</th>
<th>Date of Birth: (Month/Day/Year)</th>
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</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions for Parents or Guardians</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What language(s) is (are) spoken in your home?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which language did your child learn first?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Which language does your child use most frequently at home?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Which language do you most frequently speak to your child?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>In what language would you prefer to get information from the school?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Parent or Guardian’s Signature: ____________________ Date: __________

You can access Tools and Resources for Providing ELs with a Language Assistance Program at http://www.eld.gov/about/offices/list/ela/english-learner-tools/index.html

TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR PROVIDING ELs WITH A LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
SAMPLE #3

Complete this home language survey at the student’s initial enrollment in school. This form must be signed and dated by the parent or guardian. It must be kept in the student’s file. This form will be used only for determining whether the student needs English Learner services and will not be used for immigration matters or reported to immigration authorities.

School: ____________________________  Student ID #: ____________________________

Student’s Last Name: ____________________________

Student’s First Name: ____________________________

ENGLISH

1. Is a language other than English spoken in your home? □ No □ Yes ____________________________ (specify language)
2. Does your child communicate in a language other than English? □ No □ Yes ____________________________ (specify language)
3. Which language did your child learn first? ____________________________ (specify language)
4. In which language do you prefer to receive information from the school? ____________________________ (specify language)
5. What is your relationship to the child? □ Father □ Mother □ Guardian □ Other (specify) ____________________________

ESPÁÑOL (SPANISH)

1. ¿Se habla otro idioma que no sea el inglés en su casa? □ No □ Sí ____________________________ (especifique idioma)
2. ¿Habla el estudiante un idioma que no sea el inglés? □ No □ Sí ____________________________ (especifique idioma)
3. ¿Cuál fue el primer idioma que aprendió su hija? ____________________________ (especifique idioma)
4. ¿En qué idioma prefiere recibir comunicaciones de la escuela? ____________________________ (especifique idioma)
5. ¿Cuál es su relación con el estudiante? □ Padre □ Madre □ Guardián □ Otro (especifique) ____________________________

FRANÇAIS (FRENCH)

1. Parlez-vous une autre langue que l’anglais chez vous ? □ Non □ Oui ____________________________ (veuillez préciser la langue)
2. Votre enfant parle-t-il une autre langue que l’anglais ? □ Non □ Oui ____________________________ (veuillez préciser la langue)
3. Quelle langue votre enfant a-t-il apprise en premier ? ____________________________ (veuillez préciser la langue)
4. Dans quelle langue préférez-vous recevoir les communications de l’école ? ____________________________ (veuillez préciser la langue)
5. Quelle est votre lien de parenté avec l’enfant ? □ Père □ Mère □ Tuteur □ Autre (veuillez préciser) ____________________________

You can access Tools and Resources for Providing ELS with a Language Assistance Program at: http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osa/english-learner-tools/index.html.
## Appendix D: Excerpt From the Corpus

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Vita

Laura Adelman-Cannon has been a school teacher and administrator for 20 years in traditional and charter schools in Illinois and Louisiana. She lives with her husband, children, chickens, and cat in the Faubourg Marigny, where she has lived since 1999.

Ms. Adelman-Cannon spent the 2010-2011 school year in Sénégal where she had the opportunity to consult with the US Embassy Public Affairs Section Regional Language Office, leading workshops for Sénégalene teachers on technology, accommodating student learning differences, and effective teacher evaluation and management. Ms. Adelman-Cannon has published articles in *Rethinking Schools*, *The Times Picayune*, and *Within our Reach*. Her most recent publication, "International education in state funded schools settings," can be found in *Internationalizing Education* (2011).

While pursuing her doctoral degree, Ms. Adelman-Cannon continued to work as an educator and is currently the principal of a third through eighth grade school in New Orleans, Louisiana. She was awarded a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of New Orleans in 2018.