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The language graduate who never reads a professional journal and participates only minimally, if at all, in professional meetings, will stagnate. There is an onus on the profession in all areas to upgrade and keep abreast of current developments in the field. **– Peter Heffernan**

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Philip M. Donley

Language Anxiety and How to Manage It: What Educators Need to Know

Anxiety is a formidable obstacle that many students face when trying to learn a new language. This article is intended to provide teachers with basic information about language anxiety and how to manage it.

Anxiety and Its Effects on Learning and Performance

Lesse 1970, defines anxiety as a

> phenomenon experienced as a foreboding dread or threat to the human organism whether the threat is generated by internal real or imagined dangers, the sources of which may be conscious or unconscious, or whether the threat is secondary to actual environmental threats (p. 13).

Researchers (e.g., Spielberger, 1975) further define the anxiety construct by distinguishing between *trait anxiety* and *state anxiety*. Simply put, *trait anxiety* refers to a person's inborn tendency to have anxious feelings or not; *state anxiety* is considered to be transitory, caused by exposure to stressful experiences.

A number of researchers have examined the effects of anxiety in academic situations. Learners have been found to be anxious about test-taking (Sarason, 1980) and when studying specific disciplines, such as math (Tobias, 1978) and science (Mallow, 1981). Tobias (1986) suggests that anxiety interferes with learning by impeding the intake and processing of information and the retrieval of learned information. Test anxiety researchers Alpert and Haber (1960), however, assert that anxiety may in fact enhance performance (*facilitating anxiety*) or interfere with it (*debilitating anxiety*). It seems probable that a moderate level of emotional arousal (which does not necessarily equate with anxiety) is helpful in academic situations, whereas extremely low or high levels of arousal are not conducive to learning or performance.

What Is Language Anxiety?

Early studies (e.g., Chastain, 1975; Swain and Burnaby, 1977) conceive of language anxiety as a simple transfer of other types of anxiety, such as trait anxiety and test anxiety, to language learning. More recently, scholars have generally agreed that language anxiety is a special and distinct phenomenon caused by the unique stresses imposed on students in language classes. Researchers do not entirely agree, however, about the role that the various types of anxiety play in the language anxiety construct. In their landmark article, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) argue that language anxiety is related, but not limited, to communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation by fellow students and the instructor. Aida (1994) agrees with Horwitz and colleagues that communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation are important components of language anxiety, but suggests that test anxiety is an unrelated construct. MacIntyre (1999), however, concludes that language anxiety is not strongly related to other types of anxiety; language anxiety develops when students have a series of uncomfortable experiences during the language learning process (i.e., multiple instances of state anxiety) and begin "to associate anxiety arousal with the second language" (p. 31).

What Causes Language Anxiety?

In order to understand and manage language anxiety, it is helpful to know what causes it. Researchers have identified the following as possible causes of language anxiety.

Speaking and Being Called On

Many students feel anxious when speaking the target language or being called on in language class. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) assert that communication apprehension may cause anxiety in some students; they may feel uneasy speaking publicly in their own language, much less in a language in which they do not feel confident. Horwitz and colleagues note that some students fear that others will think less of them if they make mistakes while speaking, and they may feel frustrated about their inability to communicate their ideas and their personalities in the target language. Students may worry about their non-native accents (Price, 1991) and fear being "put on the spot" to answer questions in a foreign language (Young, 1990). In addition, anxieties about speaking the second language in class may be related to teachers' harsh error correction styles (Horwitz,

Horwitz, and Cope, 1986; Young, 1990; Young, 1991; Price, 1991).

Listening

Learners may feel nervous if they do not understand what they hear in the second language (Vogely, 1998; Campbell, 1999). They may feel anxious when the language is spoken to them too quickly (Vogely, 1998) or at great length (Donley, 1997). Vogely notes that students may have a similar reaction if the language they hear contains unknown vocabulary or difficult sentence structure, or deals with an unfamiliar topic. Anxious listeners may approach the listening task in unrealistic ways, believing they have to decipher the input word for word (Vogely, 1998). Students who have listening comprehension difficulties may also feel isolated because they cannot understand what their classmates understand, and they may fear that they will miss the instructions they need to complete assigned tasks (Donley, 1997).

Test-taking

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) note that nervousness about tests is a part of many students' experience of learning a new language. Students may feel anxious

- if diligent study before a test doesn't produce the desired results,
- if they are not familiar with an examination's format, or
- if they are tested in a way that does not reflect how classroom time is utilized (Young, 1991).

Reading

Reading in the second language may be linked to language anxiety. Lee (1999) posits a spiraling process in which anxiety siphons cognitive resources away from the reading task, causing reduced comprehension, which in turn causes even higher levels of anxiety.

Lee notes that educators and students commonly approach academic reading tasks in ways that may be counterproductive. He points out that students are typically asked to read a passage individually or at home, then answer a list of comprehension questions. This may cause anxiety by limiting the students' familiarity with the text (they may know only enough to answer the comprehension questions), and students may feel isolated as they struggle through a reading without the help of their classmates or instructor. Students may feel frustrated if they try to read in a word-for-word, linear way, and they may engage in all-or-nothing thinking, castigating themselves when they do not understand every aspect of the text.

Writing

Some learners may feel anxious when required to write in the target language. Teachers may force students into a defensive position by treating writing assignments as a test of grammar knowledge rather than as a communicative venture in which students meld language and ideas (Leki, 1999). Leki also suggests that students may find writing to be a daunting task because they lack strategies and procedures for the *process of writing*.

Learning grammar

Grammar learning may also be related to language anxiety. VanPatten and Glass (1999) note that learners may feel overwhelmed by the amount of grammar they are expected to master. Students may feel uneasy, VanPatten and Glass believe, if their evaluation is heavily based on their ability to use grammar correctly, or if classroom activities focus on communication, but tests elicit only grammar knowledge. VanPatten and Glass also state that students may feel nervous if they expect grammar to be a substantial part of learning a language but are enrolled in a course that downplays its importance.

Learning style issues

Anxiety may result if students' learning styles are not congruent with their instructors' ways of teaching. Oxford (1999) mentions several teacher-student style clashes that may produce anxiety. For example, students may be anxious if they dislike ambiguity but their instructor prefers a loosely structured class atmosphere. It is also possible that introverted students will feel threatened by an extroverted teacher and that students who are not detail-oriented will feel pressured by a teacher who is a stickler for detail. In addition, students may feel anxious if they have strong sensory preferences (e.g., learning by seeing or doing, rather than by simply listening) that are not taken into account by their instructors.

Competitiveness

Competitiveness is a personality factor that may contribute to language anxiety. Competitive students may be overly concerned about the performance of others, comparing their own achievements in a very self-deprecating way with those of their classmates (Bailey, 1983; Young, 1991).

Unrealistic beliefs

Learners may feel anxious because they have unrealistic beliefs about the language learning process. For example, students may believe they should avoid speaking until they can speak perfectly and that they shouldn't guess the meaning of words they don't know (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986), or that they simply lack the aptitude that they need to learn a new language (Price, 1991).

Native language problems

Sparks and Ganschow (1991) believe that students who have difficulties with the systems of their native language will have similar problems when trying to learn a second language. They assert that

> low motivation, poor attitude, or high levels of anxiety are . . . a manifestation of deficiencies in the efficient control of one's native language (p. 10).

What Does Language Anxiety Do?

Language anxiety can have an impact on students in the psychological and physical realms, and it can affect their academic performance as well.

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) note that anxious language students may display a variety of physical and psychological symptoms, including impaired concentration, nervousness, increased perspiration, and palpitations. Students may also "freeze" when asked to speak in language class and inexplicably forget information when taking tests or during oral practice.

A number of researchers have investigated the relationship between anxiety and performance in language classes. Although some scholars (Dunkel, 1947; Chastain, 1975; Kleinmann, 1977) have suggested that anxiety may not always be harmful, it has been linked to diminished performance on

- oral interview examinations (Young, 1986; Phillips, 1992),
- oral examinations (Scott, 1986), and
- reading tasks (Oh, 1990).

Researchers have also linked anxiety to lower course grades (Horwitz, 1986; Aida, 1994; Saito and Samimy, 1996) and to performance decrements on a variety of measures of achievement (Gardner, Smythe, and Brunet, 1977; Sánchez-Herrero and Sánchez, 1992).

Moreover, students' attempts to avoid anxiety-provoking situations (e.g., skipping class, not completing assignments, avoiding opportunities to speak in class) may deprive them of opportunities to learn (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986). In fact, Horwitz and colleagues believe that some anxious students may avoid language classes altogether by choosing degree plans that don't require foreign language study.

Identifying Students Who Have Language Anxiety

Teachers and schools have an obvious stake in identifying students who suffer from language anxiety in order to provide them with appropriate assistance and support.

Educators should be aware of the verbal and non-verbal ways that students communicate their feelings. Sometimes students speak to their teachers privately about their anxieties; such conversations may be initiated by either party. Students may also leave messages about their feelings on work that they turn in to the teacher. Instructors should be attentive to outward signals of anxiety (e.g., blushing, trembling, stammering, "freezing") and should also watch for anxiety-related avoidance behaviors (e.g., skipping class, avoiding eye contact with the instructor, sitting on the back row).

Those who prefer more formal means of gauging their students' language anxieties may want to use scales developed specifically for this purpose. Probably the two best known scales for measuring situation-specific language anxiety are the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz, 1983b) and the French Class Anxiety Scale (Gardner, 1985). The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) is a 33-item instrument that asks students to rate their degree of agreement with statements related to language anxiety. The validity and reliability of the FLCAS have been established (Horwitz, 1986). The French Class Anxiety Scale is a 5-item questionnaire in which students indicate their degree of agreement with statements about speaking French in the classroom (Gardner, 1985).

Managing Language Anxiety

Because of the many negative consequences of language anxiety, Horwitz and colleagues (1986) conclude that

> if we are to improve foreign language teaching at all levels of education, we must recognize, cope with, and eventually overcome, debilitating foreign language anxiety as a factor shaping students' experiences in foreign language learning (p. 132).

Here are some of the suggestions that researchers have made about managing language anxiety.

Skill-building

Several researchers believe that students' anxieties will decrease as their knowledge of the language and strategic sophistication increase.

Foss and Reitzel (1988) suggest that students may feel less anxious if they are allowed to speak the second language in a structured context. Specifically, Foss and Reitzel advocate oral interpretation based on rehearsed material, believing that students will build confidence as they master the linguistic and cultural nuances of the material. Similarly, Lucas (1984) recommends the teaching of dialogues, language patterns, and gambits, reasoning

that students will be able to use them to manage communicative situations more effectively.

Skill-building is also addressed in Beauvois' (1999) suggestions about implementing real-time computer chat on local area networks. Students gain valuable practice in communication during target language computer chats; at the same time, anxiety is reduced because students have time to process incoming language and plan their responses. Also, as Beauvois notes, learners who participate in computer chats develop a reassuring sense of community.

For students who have native language coding deficits, skill-building may be particularly important. Since such students may have problems with phonology, Ganschow, Sparks and colleagues (1994) advocate

> multisensory structured language approaches focusing on direct teaching of the sounds and symbols of the foreign language (p. 52).

Workshops and outreach programs designed to increase students' strategic sophistication and improve their study skills may help alleviate language anxiety. An anxiety workshop given at the Defense Language Institute (Campbell and Ortiz, 1991), for instance, provided instruction about language learning strategies (e.g., circumlocution, paraphrasing, guessing the meaning of words from the context), and workshop participants were asked to discuss their own successful strategies for language learning. Educators may also want to investigate the various university outreach programs described by Cope Powell (1991). These programs, designed to teach time management, build language skills, and reinforce good study habits, include support groups, adjunct classes, and a written course supplement containing learning tips and information about language anxiety.

Self-regulation of anxiety

Several scholars have advocated teaching students to control their own reactions to anxiety-provoking events. McCoy (1979) and Foss and Reitzel (1988), for example, suggest that the principles of rational-emotive therapy be used to manage anxiety. Foss and Reitzel recommend that students identify the thoughts or beliefs that make them feel anxious, analyze the logic of these cognitions, and substitute thoughts that are more logical and productive. McCoy (1979) and Schlesiger (1995) note the benefits of systematic desensitization; students can be taught to imagine stressful events and then associate them with relaxing thoughts or images of handling the stressful event successfully. Teachers may also wish to encourage students to manage their own anxieties by distributing Donley's (1996) list of 10 ways to cope with anxiety (e.g., discussing their feelings, getting enough food and rest, being prepared for every class, and keeping the language class in proper perspective). Other suggestions for self-regulation of anxiety, including progressive relaxation, deep breathing, meditation, self encouragement, and being aware of how one's body registers physical and emotional discomfort, are detailed in Oxford (1990).

Raising students' awareness about language learning

Since students may have inaccurate, anxiety-provoking beliefs about language learning, Phillips (1991) advises teachers to help students form realistic expectations about language learning. This can be accomplished by informing students that second language acquisition is a gradual process in which errors are to be expected, that language acquisition follows predictable patterns, and that what they learn about the language may not be immediately transferable to spoken and written communication (VanPatten and Glass, 1999).

Educators may also wish, as Phillips (1999) suggests, to administer Horwitz' (1983a) Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory and use students' responses as a springboard for discussion. Phillips (1999) notes as well that students' responses to Horwitz' (1983b) FLCAS can be used to make students aware that they are not alone in their anxieties and to generate discussion about their feelings.

Changing classroom procedures

A number of recommendations have been made about changing classroom procedures in order to reduce students' anxieties about speaking, listening, reading, writing, test-taking, and learning grammar. Some advice has also been offered about minimizing anxiety caused by learning style conflicts between teachers and students.

Speaking

Making mistakes in front of others is some students' greatest fear. For this reason, teachers' treatment of oral errors is important. Phillips (1999) recommends that teachers remind students that errors are a natural part of language learning. Phillips also encourages teachers to employ gentle error correction techniques, noting that modeling correct forms may be more effective than overt error correction, which draws unpleasant attention directly to the student who produces an incorrect form.

Some students feel anxious when they are called on in language class. To reduce this type of anxiety, Daly (1991) suggests calling on students in a predictable

order or allowing students to volunteer to answer questions.

Students may also feel less anxious when participating in enjoyable, non-threatening classroom activities. With this in mind, Young (1990) recommends classroom discussion of engaging themes; she also suggests employing group activities because they don't single individual students out. Phillips (1999) advocates and gives examples of several kinds of affectively oriented oral activities:

- recognition activities that require students to understand but not produce targeted forms,
- cued response activities that give students possible answers while still permitting original responses,
- task-focused (not form-focused) information gap activities in which each person has part of the information necessary to complete the task,
- interviews and surveys that ask students about things they are familiar with, and
- role play activities which inject an element of humor into the class.

Listening

Vogely (1999) lists several ways to reduce listening comprehension anxiety. She recommends that teachers make students aware of regional pronunciation variations so that they will understand individual speakers better. Vogely also advocates making listening input more comprehensible by offering advance organizers and activating students' prior knowledge. Since listening tasks that require students to listen for more than one thing may provoke anxiety, Vogely suggests using concise and structured tasks in which students listen for very specific information (see examples in Vogely, 1999). Vogely also notes that students may find listening comprehension less stressful if they are aware of specific listening strategies (e.g., guessing through context, listening for specific information, listening for the main idea, recognizing cognates) and if teachers make use of visuals (e.g., photos, videos, posters, expressive body language) during listening tasks.

Reading

Several ways that teachers can minimize students' anxieties about reading are proposed in Lee (1999). Lee counsels against relying solely on comprehension questions to gauge students' understanding of a text; he suggests that teachers use a variety of activities that allow students to interact with the text. Lee recommends that students not be isolated during reading tasks: they should be allowed to work cooperatively with other students and with the teacher. Students should, Lee believes, be reminded that comprehension is never absolute and that reading is not a linear, word-for-word activity. Lee also notes that students may benefit from employing strategies like skimming, scanning, recognizing cognates, identifying the structural features of a text, and examining illustrations and photographs for clues about meaning.

Writing

Leki (1999) discusses a number of ways to address anxiety about writing in language class. So that students will have clear expectations, Leki advises teachers to let students know to what extent their grades are based on correctness of form rather than on content. Leki suggests that students will feel more comfortable if they learn more about *how to write*: students can become more skillful writers by participating in a full range of process writing activities, including brainstorming, freewriting, outlining, drafting, and peer editing. Leki also notes that students' confidence may grow if they are assigned sequenced writing projects in which each step of the project builds their knowledge of a particular topic and the language needed to write about the topic.

Test-taking

Educators can take several common-sense steps to help students manage their anxieties about tests. Teachers may, for example, wish to inform students about the format of each test and the number of points allotted to each section of the test; students are less likely to feel anxious if they know how they are going to be tested and what to study. To defuse anxieties about testing formats, teachers can distribute short sample tests. Moreover, teachers should ensure that examinations test what students are being taught and that they correspond to the types of activities students do in class. In other words, there should be no surprises: "test the way you have taught."

Learning grammar

The use of processing instruction involving structured input has been suggested by VanPatten and Glass (1999) as a way to deal with students' anxieties about heavy grammar loads as well as a lack of explicit focus on grammar. VanPatten and Glass believe the structured input should focus on a single form and function at a time, require the student to focus on both meaning and form, and progress from the sentence level to the paragraph level. VanPatten and Glass recommend the use of both oral and written input

> in any combination across activities or within the same activity if it contains various steps/stages (p. 99),

and they stress that the learner should process the input in a meaningful fashion. Also, VanPatten and

Glass recommend that teachers ensure that students attend

> to the grammatical feature rather than to some other part of the utterance when cues are in competition (p. 100).

Learning style conflicts

As Oxford (1999) notes, there is no "magic bullet" that will eliminate anxiety about learning style conflicts. Oxford simply recommends using a variety of activities that will appeal to students' sensory modalities (e.g., visual, auditory) and learning styles (e.g., analytic vs. global, intuitive-random vs. concrete-sequential).

CONCLUSION

There is little doubt that anxiety plays a role in many students' language learning experiences and that its role is multifaceted and complex. However, as teachers become familiar with the language anxiety literature, they will feel empowered to help anxious students understand and address their fears. As a result, language learning may become a more enjoyable process, and ultimately a more successful one.

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On Campus and In the Field: Theory and Practice in French Second Language Teacher Education

The critical link between theory and practice in teacher education is elusive. An interactive model allowing for principled learning, meaningful application and guided reflection helps to bridge the theory-practice gap.

INTRODUCTION

In his seminal book, Educational Renewal, John Goodlad (1994, p. 1) asks the following question: "What comes first, good schools or good teacher education programs?" Finding the right mix of theory and practice in teacher education, or perhaps more to the point, bringing future teachers to an awareness and appreciation of the complementary roles of theory and practice has always been difficult. In this regard, this paper has three main aims:

1. to examine three models which describe the theory-practice relationship,
2. to explore, with reference to these three models, the theoretical and practical nature of various methods courses; and
3. to share key insights into the process of implementing a university-school collaborative methods course in French as a second language (FSL).

One explanation for the difficulty in bridging the theory-practice divide lies in the nature of the environments in which university professors and teachers work. Crookes (1997) argues that the worlds of the teacher and the researcher are often quite distinct. Teachers function in classrooms where they must make "real-time" decisions about what to teach, when to teach, and how to teach. Educational researchers, on the other hand, usually work in university settings where tenure and advancement are directly linked to furthering theoretical understandings about the teaching and learning act.

Ellis (1998) notes that this theory-practice dichotomy is best captured by the distinction between technical knowledge and practical knowledge. The following table (Table 1) outlines the major defining characteristics of each type of knowledge according to Ellis (1998).

Teachers, like other professionals, are to a large extent concerned with particular cases. In the multiple unplanned and often spontaneous decisions that teachers make every day, they clearly draw upon practical knowledge. However, it is not exclusively practical knowledge that is involved in the act of teaching. Teachers also use technical knowledge when they plan lessons,

Characteristics of technical and practical knowledge

Technical knowledge
explicit - exists in a declarative form that can be codified
can be examined analytically and disputed systematically
acquired deliberately by reflecting or empirical investigation
well-defined set of procedures to test validity and reliability
general in nature - broad statements not easily applied to specific cases

Practical knowledge
implicit and intuitive: fully expressible only in practice
often unaware of what one knows
acquired through actual experience
procedures are poorly understood
proceduralized - can be drawn upon rapidly and efficiently for particular cases

Table 1

engage in curriculum development, decide upon evaluation procedures, and determine specific teaching strategies to use in given situations. According to Van Lier (1991, p. 47), in any given lesson, planned and improvised actions and interactions may be tightly interwoven.

However, it is also true that such actions and interactions are often haphazard and incohesive. Many teachers, and particularly beginning teachers, have difficulty in integrating technical and practical knowledge. The vital link between theory or research on the one hand, and teaching practice on the other hand is often elusive.

Legendre (1998) describes three models of theory and practice which correspond roughly to Weiss's (1977) tripartite typology. Within each of these models, the-

ory and practice assume different

Legendre (1998)

1.	applying theory to practice
2.	deriving theory from practice
3.	interaction between theory and practice

Weiss (1977)

1.	the knowledge-driven model
2.	the decision-driven model
3.	the interactive model

roles and relative degrees of importance. In the following section, each model will be described with reference to students' reactions to generic and French as a second language (FSL) methods courses. Then, after describing a collaborative venture between a Faculty of Education and a French Immersion school, the third model will be revisited. The students' comments on methods courses were collected over a six year period from anonymously completed course evaluation surveys. The comments on the collaborative methods course were collected using an anonymously completed survey questionnaire administered at the end of the course.

THREE THEORY-PRACTICE MODELS

Model 1: Applying theory to practice (the knowledge-driven model)

In this perspective, which Schön (1983) also calls the "applied science" model, professional knowledge is perceived as the simple application of fundamental principles to practical problems. It is essentially the application of theory to practice with emphasis placed on the theoretical. Merseth (1996) refers to this as a "technical approach" to teaching involving the application of appropriate principles and theories to the situation. In this model, theory is clearly more important than practice, and teaching is a scientific act. The classroom becomes the laboratory where theoretical principles, previously learned, are finally put into practice. Clearly, there is little room here for the personal insight or intuition associated with practical knowledge.

Examples of this model would include teacher education programs that largely focus upon providing students with basic theoretical principles in their university courses, then sending these students "to put these principles into practice" at the end of the program. The following are comments from students enrolled in a French second language methods course that had rather substantial theoretical components related to second language acquisition and curriculum development.

> My only suggestion is that the lesson plan format we used be looked at ... I find it more "theoretical-based" than a practical guide for daily teaching.

> Overall the course was informative, sometimes there seemed to be a little too much theory.

> I think more emphasis should be placed on the teaching of French, not so much on the types of programs; e g., the National Core French Study. I think this course should be made more practical and less theoretical.

> I found the course to be too much theory and not enough practical/methods information. I'll be interning and need some more ideas/variety and what to do/not to do when teaching French.

These comments appear to illustrate these students' preoccupation with the practical, and reflect their difficulty with this knowledge-driven model.

Model 2: Deriving theory from practice (the decision-driven model)

According to this second model, theory emerges from practice as a result of a process of organisation and classification of experience (Merseth, 1996). The classroom teacher does not teach according to a pre-determined set of principles and theories, but rather, relies upon his or her own insights and intuitions, which result from an accumulation of experience and wisdom. In this perspective, teaching is more an art than a science. Theoretical principles have little place in this model where practical knowledge dominates, and where particular cases become the bases for building knowledge and know-how. Consequently, teachers may develop personal "theories" but there is little opportunity for the systematic and rigorous building of common knowledge.

One historical example of this in teacher education is the "normal school" or teachers' college where the focus was mainly if not entirely upon practice. A modern example in university faculties of education involves generic methods courses which prepare students for student teaching experiences and the practicum. These generic methods courses, which are not tied to any particular discipline or body of knowledge, are to a large degree focused upon practical knowledge - the "nuts and bolts" of teaching. It is interesting that these generic, "internship preparation" courses produce very positive comments from students; comments which underline the practical knowledge value of these courses:

> The course itself was very practical. It provided us with many of the necessary details that will make our transitions to teachers more effective.

> I think the course is good. It pro-

vides us all the necessary things that we have to know as a teacher. I especially like preparing unit and lesson plans.

The information and content of the course was good. It was directly relevant to teaching and I know I will use much of what I learned in the future.

I greatly appreciated the practical nature of the course.

This course was one of the most useful ones this term. The material we discussed in class was put into use when we went into the schools on Tuesday.

The course is probably one of the more useful ones because it finally makes you get up and teach. (Isn't that what we should be learning?)

Model 3: The interaction between theory and practice (the interactive model)

This third and final model attempts to draw equally from theory and practice. (1983) has discussed the need to go beyond the theory-practice or dichotomy to a perspective whereby each is viewed as a necessary and complementary component of professional competence. Both elements need to be integrated in teacher education programs: theory informs practice and practice informs theory. In this perspective, one does not favour theory over practice or vice-versa. Rather, each component is valued for its specific importance, and at the same time each is regarded according to its limitations as well.

According to Schön (1983), teaching is at once an art and a science. Consequently, the teacher is constantly involved in insightful, intuitive action, and at the same time guided by rational thinking stemming from theoretical principles. In this model, the personal theory of the teacher is confronted by the more rigorous and systematic research-based theory. Similarly, theory derived from research is put to the test in the classroom and either validated or put into question. As a result, the teacher has no choice but to become a " reflective practitioner" who continually evaluates the relevance of theories learned and personal. And, who, eventually, will be able to integrate personal theories into a more meaningful and generalizable theory.

In teacher education programs, university course work with practical experiences woven throughout the program, including time for reflection upon the practical classroom experiences, are a step toward this interactive model. A collaborative methods course which provides students with the opportunities to learn basic principles and theoretical knowledge, to put these into practice in school settings, and to reflect upon this experience is another example of an interactive model.

In the following section, the content and nature of such a collaborative methods course, as well as several key insights gleaned from that experience will be described. The interactive model of theory and practice will be re-examined in light of this experience and students´ comments.

The Collaborative Course: Context and Description

This collaborative methods course grew out of a unique set of circumstances and a unique context. It involved three teachers and 54 elementary/middle years pupils in a small French immersion school located on the campus of a small francophone university, as well as one professor and 14 university students in a Faculty of Education specializing in French second language education.

Teachers and pupils benefited from the Provincial French Resource Centre on campus, from access to the Faculty of Education's multi-media centre, as well as access to the university's pool, arena, gymnasium, and theatre for special events. There was also the understanding that education students and professors would provide professional development activities for teachers and enriching activities for pupils in the school.

However, building partnerships with schools takes a lot of time and effort. Part of the difficulty in developing liaisons with schools lies in the basic theory/research-practice distinction which is at the heart of this discussion. Building upon this experience, as well as the experiences of others (Gibson, McKay, and Willson, 1997), I would like to outline five key insights gleaned from this experience that may be helpful to others wishing to implement a similar model.

Key Insights

1. Logistical Considerations

When planning the University timetable, the collaborative methods course must be scheduled during regular school hours. In this way the school experience is viewed as part of the regular University course schedule and not something extra. In our experience we were fortunate to be able to block out a time from 9:30 until 11:30 on Monday morning for students to work in the school. In addition there was a university based class for one hour and fifteen minutes one other day of the week. The two hour block on Monday morning was particularly helpful. It allowed the professor to meet with students in a central location before going to the school in order to answer any last minute questions and to take notes on particular things that would be

going on that day.

It was decided that all students would go to the school at the same time on the same day. In this way, the teachers (and equally importantly the students) knew that Monday morning was the university students' time. Teachers also greatly appreciated this regularity and consistency.

Another consideration was how to place students in classrooms. Four students were assigned to each class, and worked in pairs. In this way, each pair of student could work with half the class. Having a smaller number of children to work with was reassuring to these students - many of whom were in a classroom for the first time. Students could also share the tasks of lesson preparation and teaching. Moreover, each student was able to observe pupils while the other partner taught; and were able to give one another very useful feedback - a key component of reflective practice. The following students' comments confirm the value of working in pairs:

> I think it was a very good idea to work with a partner. We were able to share ideas as well as the workload. I found that working with half the class was better as we are in the process of learning how to teach. After this semester I feel ready to teach.

> The sharing of ideas and working together was very important. Together we were able to prepare more for the children and to have two opinions about the effectiveness of our lessons. It was also good to learn how to work with a colleague. Having half the class allowed us to do much more work with the children. It was also easier to control the group.

2. Building Trust

One cannot overestimate the importance of building trust between the professor and the teachers involved in such a collaborative initiative. This meant building a rapport with the teachers and , "easing one's way into the school". This was accomplished in a number of ways, for example:

- participating in school council meetings.
- helping out with after school activities.
- inviting teachers and pupils to functions at the university (a play, an art exhibit).
- offering services for in-class workshops
- supervising a student teacher
- providing teachers with research and ideas on multi-age classrooms.
- accompanying the teachers on a visit to a multi-age school

Much of this occurred in the first year before the collaborative methods class was in place, and was critical to the eventual success of the collaborative venture.

On another level, teachers must know that the students working in the school understand and appreciate the enormous difficulty of their job. This became apparent when in the first year, some students in the university-based methods course served as volunteers in the school. While the intent was to build rapport between the university and the school, this did not work as planned. Teachers didn't know exactly what students were expected to do. Students didn't know what teachers wanted them to do. Because involvement was on a volunteer basis, students sometimes missed days due to "being too busy"; "having to study for a test". This experience illustrated that for collaboration to work, student participation has to be obligatory. Thus, the decision was made to build participation into a required methods class.

3. Mutual Benefit

This notion of obligatory participation ties in to the second key insight - "mutual benefit". Both teachers and students have to perceive that there is a mutual benefit to this experience. By linking the experience directly to the methods course, this was immediately achieved for the students. Not only was one of their two weekly courses held at the school, 50% of their course grade was based upon assignments that they planned, carried out, and evaluated on-site.

Teachers, for their part, benefited from knowing that every Monday they would have a group of motivated pupils who would be exposed to a variety of interesting classroom activities. Teachers did not need to plan for that morning. The students did. For the teachers, also, a major advantage was the exposure to a wide variety of activities.

In this collaborative FSL course, the students were being informally evaluated on their teaching. The teacher's role in this situation is much more that of a mentor or guide Indeed, this informal feedback became an important and positive part of the teachers' and the students' experience. It validated the teacher's expertise without imposing the burden of a formal student-teaching evaluation situation. For their part, students could focus upon the formative aspect of the teacher's feedback without being concerned about evaluative judgments.

Finally, the university professor benefited greatly from being in an elementary school for a half day a week for a good part of the term. One positive aspect was the intrinsic satisfaction of seeing education students becoming excited about applying principles in a real setting with real pupils. In this regard, the professor is aligned with the practice side of the theory-practice dichotomy. A

second, more theoretical gain, was the opportunity to reflect upon this experience and eventually write this paper. These two benefits clearly illustrate the important roles of theory and practice in teacher education.

4. Communication

Communication in a collaborative school-university initiative is of prime importance. A portion of the university-based class on Tuesday afternoon was devoted to practical questions and discussion about the previous day's school experience and the upcoming one. Students were given the responsibility for meeting with teachers on Thursday after school in order to know what activities to plan for Monday.

This Thursday meeting with teachers generally worked very well. However, in any school there are inevitable unexpected events - teachers get sick; emergencies arrive with students; parents arrive who absolutely have to talk to the teacher. Similarly, students also have their own lives with their unexpected turns and twists. It is essential for students to assume the responsibility to meet with the teacher or call the teacher if necessary. An exchange of phone numbers is extremely important.

5. Flexibility and Modification of Course Assignments

The course instructor must also make adjustments when using a collaborative model. Having only half the time one would normally have in the classroom, content and assignments had to be modified. This meant giving up certain "crucial assignments". For example, a rather detailed experiential unit plan assignment gave way to a "learning centre" assignment whereby students prepared and organized student-centred materials that were left in the school. Class discussions focused on relating classroom observations and experiences to course readings and theories: for example, students' observations about helping individual students with learning difficulties, dealing with multi-grade classrooms and preparing for different levels of learning, facing discipline problems from the uncooperative to the too loving, and consulting with experienced teachers about what they feel will be best in a given situation. Consequently, course assignments focused more on the reflective practitioner model than the student planning model.

RETURNING TO THE THEORY-PRACTICE QUESTION

Traditionally, methods courses at the university tend to reflect either the knowledge-driven or decision-driven models of theory and practice. In the first instance, students learn a series of fundamental principles or theoretical knowledge which they will apply later in their . In the second case, students get to try out activities and lessons in a practical setting but have little opportunity to reflect on how these relate to fundamental principles or theory. Neither of these models appears to be particularly effective in forging strong links between theory and practice. The students' comments seen earlier, and experience with traditional generic methods and other methods courses, indicate that the link between theory and practice is at best a weak one . It would appear that an interactive model, whereby students are engaged in situations which create that cognitive conflict between theory and practice, and where theoretical notions can be tested and then debated, appears to make some strides toward forging stronger links in the theory-practice chain. The following comments are representative of those made by students at the end of the collaborative FSL methods course:

> The combination of a class with (the professor) and one at the school gave the time to reflect upon the lesson plans and the teaching methods I used.
>
> The most important learning was seeing the interaction between the students and the teaching methods. A very good experience to see a multiage class in action.
>
> Certainly more work than other courses but it is worth it because one learns so much: we not only hear how certain things should be done but we have the chance to live the experience.
>
> This experience helped me to always prepare several short activities with a lot of hands-on. Plus, it is important to build students knowledge from a constructivist perspective.
>
> I found that we learned more in this course because we were able to put theory into practice. One learns best by experience and this was an enriching experience.

CONCLUSION

At the outset Goodlad (1994, p.1) was quoted asking: "What comes first, good schools or good teacher education programs?" In light of the comments made by students involved in the collaborative methods course, as well as those concerning generic and specific FSL methods courses, one might conclude that Goodlad's answer to his own question is accurate: "The answer is that both must come together." It would appear that collaborative methods courses, and presumably other initiatives based on an interactive theory-practice model, are one means of establishing better schools and better teacher education programs.*

*The author is particularly grateful to Gibson *et al* for their practical sugges-

tions regarding building relationships, time-tabling, the non-evaluative role of the teacher, and the pairing of students.

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Nadia Rousseau

A French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program: Perspectives of Students, Their Parents and Their Teachers

A descriptive case study providing a comprehensive profile of 13 learning disabled students' experience after one full year in a French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program in Canada.

In French immersion programs, the French language is used as the medium to teach subjects such as social studies, mathematics, and science to non-French-speaking students. In early 1960, the first program was piloted in Toronto, soon to be followed in 1965 by a program in the Montreal suburb of Saint-Lambert, Quebec. French immersion programs gained in popularity across Canada. In Alberta, over 28,000 students are currently enrolled in the program (Alberta Education, 1998). Parents of students enrolled in French immersion generally want their children to be bilingual for employment opportunities, but some are also motivated by the egalitarian ideal of unity in a bilingual Canada (Hammerly, 1989). There is a large body of research in French immersion, most of which deals with the level of academic achievement and the cognitive abilities of immersion students (Cummins and Swain, 1986; Hammerly, 1989; Lapkin and Swain, 1990).

> The hundreds of evaluations which have been conducted of different immersion programmes across Canada constituted an important step in reassuring educators and parents of their validity (Swain, 1996, p. 91).

Most research indicates that children enrolled in early total immersion programs ultimately perform as well as their English-instructed peers (Cummins and Swain, 1986).

The field of learning disabilities has generated interest for nearly two centuries, starting in the early 1800's (Lovitt, 1989), but we are just starting to acknowledge its presence in French immersion programs. Literature on the suitability of French immersion programs for all children is limited. As stated by Rousseau (1998), Bernhard (1993), Wiss (1993), Majhanovich (1993), and Lapkin and Swain (1989) very few studies have investigated the benefits of remediation services provided for children with learning disabilities in French immersion programs. Unfortunately, the limited studies available on the topic report contradictory results.

While Bruck (1978, 1979), Wiss (1987, 1992, 1993), Cummins (1984) and Siegel (1989) support the inclusion of children with learning disabilities in French immersion programs, others state that some children experiencing difficulties in French immersion settings would have a much more positive experience in a regular English classroom (Trites,1981; 1983; 1986; Trites and Moretti,1986, cited in Bernhard, 1993).

According to Trites' point of view, due to a maturational lag in the temporal-lobe regions of the brain, some children having difficulties in immersion would not experience such difficulties in their mother tongue. He states that learning difficulties are language dependent. It must be noted that Trites' research has been criticized for "various methodological and conceptual problems" (Bernhard, 1993, p. 5; Cummins, 1984).

On the other hand, in 1979, Bruck questioned the suitability of early French immersion programs for children with learning problems because all the available research results were based on group averages; this analytical approach did not indicate

> whether all children in immersion programs benefit equally from this educational experience (p. 86).

More than ten years later, Lapkin and Swain (1989) attested to the lack of research investigating characteristics, problems, resources, and services available for children having difficulties in French immersion:

> The research on access of students with special characteristics (learning disabled, gifted, etc.) to immersion has been scant, and although there have been recent attempts to study students transferring out of immersion, this is an area where much remains to be learned (cited in Campbell, 1992, p. 39).

What do we know about learning disabled children's transferring from immersion to regular English? Bruck's (1979) longitudinal study, carried out over an eight

year period with Kindergarten to Grade Three children at the McGill-Montreal Children's Hospital Learning Centre, indicated that children in French immersion who had specific problems benefited from the immersion experience in that

> they continued to develop facility in their first language; they learned their basic academic skills at the predicted rate; they exhibited no severe behavioral problems; and of most importance, they acquired competence in French (p. 88).

In a more recent study, Wiss (1993) presents similar results.

A second study by Bruck (1979) aimed at evaluating the academic, emotional and social consequences of program transfer of children with learning disabilities. Bruck conducted case studies of nine children registered in kindergarten to Grade Four, each of whom had transferred from a French immersion to an English program. This study indicated that removing children from immersion and placing them in a regular English program did not lead to better academic outcomes. According to Bruck,

> those children who experience academic difficulty in French immersion would experience academic difficulty in the regular unilingual program as well (cited in Wiss, 1989, p. 517).

Bruck explained that transferring the child may affect the child's self-esteem as well as give him/her the impression of failure, which in turn may aggravate any learning difficulties. Furthermore, if a child is transferred before the completion of Grade Three, this child will be behind his/her peers in the regular English program because English language arts is introduced later in the immersion program. Morrison (1989) also argues that,

> The transfer process may be a traumatic experience for those children who see themselves or are seen by their parents as having failed, in spite of evidence to the contrary (p. 3).

Similarily, Cummins (1984) found that many children who are transferred out of immersion programs experience feelings of frustration and unhappiness during the year.

> For some, self-esteem was low either because they had to repeat a grade, or because they felt that the English stream class was of lower status than the immersion class (p. 174).

Wiss' and Bruck's research, in favour of immersion for all children, presents some methodological problems in their chosen definitions of learning disabilities (or learning difficulties), because it is a rather broad definition. The lack of a clearly defined concept of learning disabilities (or learning difficulties) makes it difficult to draw comparisons between the two studies (Bernhard, 1993). However, commonalities of results between the two researchers indicate that immersion programs can be a very positive experience for children with learning disabilities (not taking into account the severity of the disability since it is not clear in the researchers' definitions). More importantly, Wiss (1987, 1989, 1993), Cummins (1984) and Bruck (1978, 1979) indicate that specific learning disabilities transfer across languages. This is based on the assumption that

> cognitive proficiencies in both L1 and second language are manifestations of the same underlying capacity (Bernhard, 1993, p. 8).

More recently, Obadia and Thériault (1997) examined the parents', school principals' and French immersion coordinators' views of the most frequent reasons for transferring a child out of French immersion. The authors most often state academic difficulty as the reason for dropping out :

> A full 87% of teachers, 62% of the coordinators, and 59% of the principals cited academic difficulty as one of the most important reasons for attrition (p. 513).

After a review of present research dealing with attrition, the same authors recognize academic difficulties to be the main reason for transfer. Most believe a switch to the English program may lead to better performance in English (Obadia and Thériault, 1997). Halsall (1994, 1998) also recognizes the lack of remedial help or special education services in the French immersion programs as a major factor contributing to attrition.

Other studies, such as Campbell's (1992) case study of 22 children who transferred from French immersion to an English program after completion of Grade Six, recognize Language Art difficulties to be one of the most common reasons for transfer. Teachers participating in Campbell's study recognize that

> more resource help for students encountering difficulties, more teacher assistants, and more print material at the students' level are needed in the French immersion classroom (1992, p. 213).

Teachers also believed that children with serious emotional and learning problems whose first language is not firmly developed should not enroll in French immersion.

Discussing second-language learners' difficulties, Frederickson and Cline (1996) report similar findings and they state that we need to differentiate between

> genuine learning difficulties rather than just a problem over language (p. 3).

Similarly Rogers and Pratten (1996) note that

> "this decision between the identification of learning needs and language needs is often fraught with difficult political and ethical considerations" (p. 77).

Therefore, the priority should be on finding the extent of the difficulties since it is highly relevant to intervention decisions (Frederickson and Cline, 1996). Also, according to Cummins (1984), in assisting the children, one should embed the skill to be learned in a context meaningful to the child.

Following his extensive review of the literature on special needs students and bilingualism, Cummins (1984) indicates that for most children experiencing difficulties in French immersion programs, similar difficulties remain when they are transferred into a regular English program. He therefore makes three recommendations for future research in order to address every child's needs:

1. provision of appropriate remedial services (in French) for students who encounter difficulties in immersion;
2. dissemination of information to educators and parents about the research data showing that neither immersion itself nor bilingualism contributes to children's academic problems;
3. ensuring that literacy and other academic instruction in immersion is such that students of both high and low ability are motivated to become intrinsically involved in learning (p. 176).

This article addresses the recommendation made by Cummins that appropriate remedial services be provided in French for students who encounter difficulties in French immersion. A two-year research study evaluated the effectiveness of a French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program as perceived by the children, their parents and teacher. The French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program is a short term transition program for students with learning disabilities in French immersion. It is expected that after two years into the program, the students will be able to return to regular French immersion classrooms. The program is largely based on strategy instruction, developing awareness of one's learning style, and promoting self-esteem. The transition program ran for two years for internalization of learned strategies and better self-perception. The following questions are addressed in this article:

1. What is the child's perception of his/her schooling experience in the French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program (FILDP)?
2. What are parents' perceptions of their children's schooling experience prior to entry and after one year in the French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program?
3. Are the teachers, and parents satisfied with the French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program and in what ways?

METHOD

A descriptive case study approach was used to collect the data. Because it is based on a pedagogy of communication, French immersion is best evaluated or investigated as it occurs through communication among the students, the teacher, and the parents. It is a design particularly suited to situations where it is impossible to separate the phenomenon's variables from the context.

French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program

In the first year of the study, September 1996 to June 1997, the program included 13 students in a transition classroom. During that year, all students received their instruction in that classroom. The four major components of the program were:

1. Strategy instruction based on each child's needs with a strong emphasis on organization, study habits, peer assisted learning, problem-solving, and proof-reading strategies;
2. Weekly Learning Disabilities Awareness session;
3. English reading intervention using the Early Reading Intervention Program, flashcards, Lindamood Auditory Discrimination, phonics, dictations and reading aloud;
4. Emphasis on communication between school and home including an introduction to the program, a review of the strategies used in class, suggestions on how the parents could maintain strategy use in the home as well as encouragement to ask any questions they might have throughout the program.

Participants

The participants for this study consisted of 13 children enrolled in a split Grade Three/Four Learning Disability French Immersion Program. All children were diagnosed with a learning disability in the spring of 1996, according to the Edmonton Public School Board's protocol that complies with the Association of Learning Disabilities of Canada's definition of learning disabilities. Criteria for identification include above average intellectual ability, discrepancies in performance, with both strengths and weaknesses evident, and minimal, if any, difficulties with attendance and behaviour. Assessment of learning disabilities was conducted in English and required the students to write, calculate and respond orally. Only

children who did not use French at home participated in the study. During the second year of the study, one child moved to another city. As a result, measures taken after June 1997 included 12 children.

All participating children were given letters describing the purpose of the study as well as consent forms to take home to their parents. The teacher and teacher aide were also provided with consent forms. Participants were ensured that information would remain confidential.

Data Collection

Parent Interviews and Survey

Audio-taped interviews of an hour in length were conducted with parents of each of the students. The interview was used as a

> conversational relation between two people, one in which they come to know as much about each other as they learn about whatever is the topic of the conversation (Weber, 1986, p. 65).

In this case, the subject of conversation was the parents' perception of their children's experience in French immersion. At the end of the school year 1997, the Learning Disabilities Program Review: Parents Survey was administered during a group meeting. Two additional questions regarding the children's overall changes during the academic year were added to the original survey. Parents were also encouraged to bring samples of their children's work since they first started in the French immersion program.

Teachers' Perceptions and Survey

An ongoing communication channel was maintained between the researcher, the teacher and teacher assistant participating in the study. Dialogue with the teacher and teacher assistant was directed toward their perceptions of their students' experiences, behaviours, learning processes, learning styles, and/or interaction styles. These dialogues between the researcher and the teacher and teacher assistant were audio-taped and/or noted on paper depending on when and where the discussions took place. The teacher and teacher assistant were asked to give their impressions of the French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program. At the end of the school year 1997, the Learning Disabilities Program Review: Staff Survey was completed by both teachers.

Child Interviews

The children were interviewed twice individually for approximately 40 minutes in their school. All interviews were audio-taped. Ellis' *Narrative Interview Schedule* (1994) was used to guide the interview. The narrative inquiry constitutes a "human" way of drawing out information about learning, behaviour and motivation.

Participant Observation

Observation was necessary to identify the contexts in which the children were learning and working with their different challenges. Participant observation occurred for several days in the months of September, October, 1996 and January, February, May and June 1997. Audiotapes of the children's self-awareness session and reading remediation activities were transcribed.

Learning Disabilities Program Review, Parent and Teacher Survey

The Learning Disabilities Program Review Survey used with the parents, children and teachers was designed by Edmonton Public Schools to assess parent and teacher satisfaction of the program. This information allowed for a better understanding of the reasons behind their assessment of the French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program.

Data Coding and Analysing

All audiotapes were transcribed using a micro-computer. The surveys, the teachers' interviews, as well as the parents' documentation (such as report card, drawings, activity books, etc.) were also transcribed.

After a thematic analysis of the data, a parent and the teacher were asked to give their interpretation of randomly selected sections of the researcher's interpretation of our dialogue. In doing so, the researcher ensures better reliability in the interpretation process (McCutcheon, 1981). Both parent and teacher felt at ease with the data interpretation.

Using qualitative analysis software (Padilla, 1991), all transcribed interviews, classroom sessions, parents' documentation and journals were coded using network analysis. This type of analysis involves the

> development of an elaborate system of categories by way of classifying qualitative data and preserving the essential complexity and subtlety of the materials under investigation (Cohen & Manion, 1994, pp. 212-213).

Methodological triangulation was achieved using multiple sources of data gathering on the same object of study (Cohen & Manion, 1994). In the data interpretation, only the categories that were most frequently identified by a majority of parents are presented.

Limitations and Implications

Given the small number of participants (i.e., 13 children, their parents and teachers), generalizations to all learning disabled children enrolled in French immersion programs cannot be made. However, the purpose of a descriptive study is to gain in-

sights into the participants' actual experience. These insights are crucial in understanding learning characteristics of second-language children. Furthermore, even though two people's experiences will not be identical, commonalties in the experiences will exist.

RESULTS

What is the children's perception of their schooling experience in the Edmonton Public School Board's French immersion learning disabilities program (French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program)?

Children's questionnaire

The children were asked to write about how they felt before they started in the program and how they felt one year into the program. Both questions were asked in June 1997. As shown in Table 1, the children moved from a negative perception to a much more positive attitude after one year into the program. Prior to the program, children reported feeling "afraid, crazy, and dumb;" "having horrible days and terrible days;" feeling "really little;" feeling "scared and like running away;" feeling "scared and frightened." One year into the program, they stated "Now, I'm not scared ;" "Now, I'm not frightened;" "I have learned that Learning Disabilities students have different problems;" "I can do more stuff like other kids; I've changed a lot and now I feel better than ever;" "I really feel better."

They also reported improvement in school related tasks: "my reading has improved;" "I'm much better at French reading ;" "it's easy for me to think of things to write;" "I'm very good in division;" "I know 1000x more than I did before;" "Now I can read better and spell better."

What were parents' perceptions of their children's schooling experience prior to entry and after one year in the French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program?

Table 1 Feelings expressed by 13 children

Prior to the FILPD	n	One year into the FILDP	n
Difficulties in specific tasks	11	Improvement in specific tasks	15
Being afraid and sad	9	Feeling clever	8
Feeling without control and not understanding what is wrong	9	Felling less scared and afraid	7
Feeling "stupid" or "dumb"	8	Feeling of well-being	6
		Good understanding of what a learning disability is and having a sense of control	6
		Feeling of great support	5
		Knowledge of strategies	2

n= number of responses in each category

Open-ended questions (June 1997)

Twelve parents responded to two open-ended questions accompanying the Learning Disabilities Program Review for Parents. The parents were satisfied with the program and talked in very positive ways about the help provided to their children. They also stated they were dissatisfied with the remedial help received before the program. The parents' comments can be classified into five categories:

1. the components of the program as they relate to classroom practices;
2. the children's changed behaviours;
3. an increased awareness of what learning disabilities are;
4. parents' concerns and suggestions; and
5. the context in which learning takes place.

Components of program as they relate to classroom practices

All 12 parents responding to the open-ended questions of the Learning Disabilities Program Review surveys believed the "small class size," the "provision of learning strategies," and the "focus on learning deficits" provided a better place for their children to learn. One child was "more at ease with schooling, and achievement as instruction and class size met her needs." Another child "seems to participate more in class because the class size is smaller and she doesn't feel so badly about not knowing something." Generally the program helped the children "enjoy and feel comfortable in school," and provided " the extra help needed by targeting the problem."

All parents also believed that their children's performance improved in mathematics, in French or in reading over the course of the school year.

The child's changed behaviours

Parents commented on their children's positive attitude toward learning and self-perception. They reported an increase in "confidence," in "positive attitude," in "self-esteem," and in "social aspects." According to the parents, the attitude shift facilitated a changed attitude toward a variety of school related activities: "She now enjoys coming to school." "She likes to read and write stories;" "She enjoys reading more now than ever before;" "The staff and resources made her previously awkward or lost feeling become a positive attitude;" "She seems to enjoy learning new things now whereas before she

dreaded new things and challenges;" "He has a great sense of accomplishment this year." According to the parents, their children were less frustrated and not as tired. As a result, homework or school related preparation did not imply a "fight" or "hell" anymore. The parents indicated that the increased self-esteem and positive self-perceptions result in a better sense of control and acceptance for these children. The children are perceived as being "more confident and eager," not "disadvantaged and no longer afraid to try new things;" and most of all "feeling good" about themselves.

An increased awareness of what learning disabilities are

Parents talked of their children's knowledge and understanding of their problems. They reported the children "admitting " the existence of "problems and feeling confident that they would be overcome." As a result, parents saw their children as being more able to "take charge of (their) own learning and control of (their) behaviour."

Parents' concerns and suggestions

Some parents indicated concern "about what happens at the end of next year?" They stated the Learning Disabilities program "must continue to be offered in French." They believed "more schools should be participating," that the program should be "available to the public," and be "offered in all schools." They also suggested that "other children in the school should be aware of what Learning Disabilities means."

The context in which learning takes place

According to the parents, the success of the program was mainly due to the support they received through the school, the compassionate teacher, and the context in which free communication took place: "Shyness is being overcome among peers so freer communication and trial and error is accepted." This atmosphere encourages the children "to participate , to try new things , to feel part of a group and not feel left out because of learning problems."

Are the teachers, and parents satisfied with the Edmonton Program and, if so, in what ways?

The Learning Disabilities Program Review Survey For Parents

The Learning Disabilities Program Review Survey was administered to 12 of the 13 parents in June 1997 (see Table 2). Overall, parents were satisfied with the program and the effects it had on their children's schooling. Most parents indicated that being in the French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program improved their children's academic skills, self-confidence, ability to cope with the learning problem, and understanding of their difficulties. The majority of parents were also satisfied with the help received in school as well as with the school's responsiveness to their concerns about their children. The parents were more satisfied with the French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program compared with the previous program. They believed that the strengths of the French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program reside in many variables such as the teacher/student ratio, the individual attention, the compassionate teacher, the caring environment, the provision of strategies and the self-esteem issues related. However, a few parents would have liked greater access to the program, increased attention on homework, more teacher support, and a non split-grade classroom. In total, 91.7% of parents indicated that the school had been their primary source of help in understanding learning disabilities. Parents were divided regarding the long-term support needed by Learning Disabilities children: 34.6% of parents believed the children would need long-term support, 34.6% of parents disagreed while 27.3% did not know.

The learning disabilities program review survey for teachers

As illustrated in Table 3, the teacher and the teacher aide responding to the Learning Disabilities Program Review Survey agreed with the parents with regard to the success of the program. They believed the children made significant progress in academic and non-academic tasks. They indicated that the French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program was effective in increasing the students' achievement, social skills, ability to manage their problem, understanding of their learning problems and interest in school. They also indicated that the integration of the students into regular classes was an important component of the program. It appears as if teachers would like to see more development opportunities, greater access to technology and teacher assistant support. However, both teacher and teacher aide were satisfied with the availability of resources, the access to consultants, the student/ teacher ratio and the support from the administration. They also emphasized the need for good attendance, as well as family and administrative support. Interestingly enough, both teachers could not compare the French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program with other programs offered by the district. They indicated the strengths of the French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program as lying in the size of the class, the support of the administration and of the par-

Table 2 **Learning Disabilities (LD) Program Review Parent Survey**

June 1997. French immersion LD class. n=12 (questions #28 to #32: n=2)

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements	strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree	undecided or don't know
1. being in the LD program improved my child's academic skills	58.3%	41.7%	0%	0%	0%
2. being in the LD program improved my child's social skills	0%	63.6%	9.1%	0%	27.3%
3. being in the LD program improved my child's self confidence	41.7%	50%	0%	0%	8.3%
4. being in the LD program improved my child's ability to manage his/her learning problem	45.5%	27.3%	0%	0%	27.3%
5. being in the LD program improved my child's understanding of his/her learning problem	41.7%	58.3%	0%	0%	0%
6. being in the LD program improved my child's interest in school	33.3%	50%	0%	0%	16.7%
7. the LD program should be offered only in designated schools	0%	16.7%	33.3%	41.7%	8.3%
8. the LD program should emphasize remediation in language arts and mathematics rather than providing the full program of studies	8.3%	0%	50%	41.7%	0%
9. integration into regular classes is an important component of the LD program	33.3%	50%	0%	8.3%	8.3%
10. most LD students require long term support	9.1%	27.3%	27.3%	9.1%	27.3%
I am satisfied with:					
11. the amount my child is learning	33.3%	58.3%	0%	0%	8.3%
12. the help my child receives	58.3%	41.7%	0%	0%	0%
13. the school's responsiveness to my concerns about my child	41.7%	58.3%	0%	0%	0%
14. the teachers' knowledge about learning disabilities	58.3%	41.7%	0%	0%	0%
15. the suggestions on how to help my child at home	41.7%	41.7%	8.3%	0%	8.3%
16. my child's involvement in planning his/her own program	33.3%	16.7%	0%	0%	50%
17. my involvement in planning my child's program	25%	41.7%	8.3%	0%	25%
18. the information I receive about my child's performance on formal assessments	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%
19. the consideration given to medical reports and information about my child	16.7%	66.7%	8.3%	0%	8.3%
20. help I receive in planning for my child's future	8.3%	83.3%	0%	0%	8.3%
21. the information received about the school and activities	33.3%	58.3%	0%	0%	8.3%
22. the number of students in the class(es)	75%	16.7%	8.3%	0%	0%
23. the amount of aide support	58.3%	25%	0%	8.3%	8.3%
24. the amount of integration	8.3%	50%	0%	0%	41.7%
25. the amount of homework my child has	16.7%	58.3%	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%
26. the computers and technology available	0%	58.3%	8.3%	0%	33.3%
27. the transportation arrangements	9.1%	54.5%	0%	9.1%	27.3%
If your child is now integrated into regular classes answer #28 to #32. If NOT, proceed to # 33 (only 2 parents responded).					
I am satisfied with					
28. the help provided in the regular class(es)	0	0	1	1	0
29. the regular class teachers' knowledge about learning disabilities	1	1	0	0	0
30. the provisions made for my child's learning problems in the regular class(es)	0	0	1	1	0
31. the range of options or courses available for my child	0	0	1	0	1
32. the amount of integration provided	0	0	0	0	2
<u>Before</u> my child was in the LD program, I was satisfied with:					
33. the help my child received in school	0%	16.7%	41.7%	16.7%	25%
34. the school's responsiveness to my concerns about my child	8.3%	50%	25%	0%	16.7%
35. the information I received from the school about my child's learning problems	8.3%	50%	16.7%	8.3%	16.7%
36. the knowledge of the teachers regarding LD	8.3%	8.3%	33.3%	25%	25%
37. the information I received from the school about program options for my child	8.3%	58.3%	0%	8.3%	25%
38. the help I received from the school in finding the LD program	16.7%	41.7%	0%	8.3%	33.3%

39. What are the strengths of the LD Program?

- teacher/student ratio (n=7)
- individual attention (n=6)
- compassionate teacher (n=4)
- caring atmosphere (n=4)
- delimitation of deficits and provision of strategies (n=4)
- self-esteem and deficits awareness (n=3)

40. What would you like to change about the LD Program?

- access (transportation) (n=2)
- access (language- French or other) (n=2)
- follow-up and increased attention on homework (n=2)
- more support to teacher (n=1)
- no split-grade classroom (n=1)
- concerns regarding services offered after completion of pilot (n=1)
- nothing (n=1)

ents. They would like to see more integration and greater access to inservice with other staff working in monolingual LD programs.

DISCUSSION

What is the child's perception of his/her schooling experience in the public French immersion learning disabilities program (French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program)?

The results indicated that the French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program was a very good experience. The children's self-image moved from a perception of being "scared," "stupid," incapable and "out of control" to one of a "sense of control," being more knowledgeable, aware and having a sense of well being. This change alone may result in a better learning disposition and attention capacities (Goupil, 1997). In turn, a more positive attitude toward learning and increased attention will enhance self-perception (Goupil, 1997). In itself, the improved self-image of these children is a successful outcome of the French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program. Furthermore, in regard to self-worth theory (Schunk, 1991),

> research shows that perceived ability bears a strong positive relationship to students' expectations for success, motivation, and achievement (Eccles and Wigfield, cited in Schunk, 1991, p. 243).

Applied to this case, it may be that the children's high effort led to some success which produced the perception of ability and therefore greater expectations for success, motivation, and achievement. And as explained by Hendrick, Schwartz and Seedfeldt (1993),

> Competence grows when children feel successful enough to keep trying and to risk challenges (p. 70).

Table 3 **Learning Disabilities (LD) Program Review Staff Survey**

(June 1997) Teacher (T) and teacher assistant (A). FILD program (n=2)

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements	strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree	undecided or don't know
1. the LD program is effective in increasing the achievement of the students	A	T			
2. the LD program is effective in increasing the social skills of the students		T A			
3. the LD program is effective in increasing the self esteem of the students	T A				
4. the LD program is effective in increasing the ability of students to manage their learning problems	T A				
5. the LD program is effective in increasing students' understanding of their learning problems	T A				
6. the LD program is effective in increasing students' interest in school	T A				
7. the LD program should be offered only in designated schools					T A
8. the LD program should emphasize remediation in language arts and mathematics rather than providing the full program of studies			T A		
9. integration into regular classes is an important component of the LD program	T A				
10. most LD students require long term support	A	T			
I am satisfied with:					
11. my assignment	T A				
12. the adequacy of my training for this assignment		T A			
13. the number of students in the class(es)	A	T			
14. the amount of teacher assistant support	A		T		
15. support from my principal	T	A			
16. support from other staff in the program	T A				
17. support from other staff in the school (not in the program)	A	T			
18. integration opportunities			T A		
19. parental support	T A				
20. parental involvement		T A			
21. professional development opportunities		A	T		
22. computers and other technology available		A	T		
23. instructional resources available		T A			
24. the access to consultants when needed		T A			
25. the help and information received from consultants		T A			

What are parents' perceptions of their children's schooling experience prior to entry and after one year in the French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program?

According to the parents, the children gained a lot of control over their disability and were now more able to be active learners. They became aware of their strengths and weaknesses and were not as afraid of failing as they had been. A parallel could be made between awareness of learning disabilities and awareness and understanding of chronic pain. Awareness of chronic pain has been shown to be helpful for patients to gain control and acceptance of their chronic condition. (Gross Rehabilitation Centre, 1997). Once patients know what is "bothering" them, they are better able to act upon it and work within acceptable limits of their capacities. In fact, a review of research concerning psychosocial adaptation to a variety of chronic illnesses and disabilities, conducted by Livneh and Antonak (1997), indicated that a number of phases go along with adaptation to a chronic illness. One of these phases, the "acknowledgment"

> is regarded as the first indication that the person has cognitively reconciled with...or accepted the permanency of the condition and the future implications stemming from the chronic illness or disability (p. 22).

It is during this phase that the individual assimilates the limitation resulting from the illness or disability. It is also during this phase that the individual builds a new cohesive self...

> the person who reaches this state
>
> 1. reestablishes a positive self-worth,
> 2. realizes the existence of remaining and newly discovered potentialities,
> 3. actively pursues and implements social and vocational goals, and
> 4. successfully overcomes obstacles encountered during the course of pursuing these goals (p. 22).

For children with a disability, it might be that the understanding and knowledge (or acknowledgment) of their condition is a good starting point with regards to goal setting, self perception, effective strategy use and acceptance of the disabling conditions. Chronic illness and disability, even if different in nature, "are common experiences in the lives of many individuals" (Livneh and Antonak, 1997, p.26). Recent research conducted by Chamberland (1998) indicated that adults with learning disabilities who were given information on their condition showed increased self-concept, greater self-affirmation, increased engagement toward learning, more realistic goal setting and self-acceptance. Similarly, Karp (1998) indicated that post-secondary students' knowledge and acceptance of their learning disabilities led to better school related attitudes and self-affirmation. Knowledgeable post-secondary students

> arriveront ainsi à mieux se comprendre et assumeront la responsabilité de défendre leurs propres intérêts (p. 15).

In the case of the French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program students, this awareness was primarily gained by the "learning disability awareness session" held by the teacher where children were encouraged to discuss their fears, feelings, success and questions regarding their difficulties. Based on analysis of the children's dialogue during the learning disability awareness session, the session not only developed a good knowledge of what a learning disability is but also increased metacognitive awareness of each child's learning styles, goals, strengths, and weaknesses. Metacognitive awareness is an important factor in developing autonomous and active learners (Lafortune and Saint-Pierre, 1996; Tardif, 1992). It is well documented that three types of variables influence metacognition: learner variables, task variables, and strategy variables (Schunk, 1991). Through the "learning disability awareness session" children were encouraged to discuss learner's related topics. However, task and strategy variables were introduced during instruction time where each child's learning strategy was adapted in function of his/her needs accordingly with his/her own learner's variables.

According to one parent, the development and "understanding of her difficulties, has reduced her stress and tension levels by quite a bit." The program "helped her understand what the problem is and how she can deal with it. She is not stupid, she just learns differently." The children will now "talk to friends and family about being in an Learning Disabilities program and feel comfortable in doing this" as well as recognizing they are not "the only one with difficulties" and that it is "all right." In other words, the children learned to discriminate between being "stupid" and having difficulties in certain areas and strengths in others.

Parents also talked of a positive classroom atmosphere: they use the term "free communication" where mistakes are allowed. We know classroom climate is important in the learning process (Lafortune and Saint-Pierre, 1996; Moore, cited in Harmin, 1961; Schunk, 1991). To promote effective thinking, Moore (cited in Harmin, 1961) recommended

> the use of a relaxed, supportive climate in which children feel free and secure.

The amount of research on the

role of classroom climate in the learning process has increased tremendously in the past 10 years (Marzano, 1992). Marzano distinguishes two views of the classroom climate. In one case, the class is described in terms of external factors such as

> resources available and the physical environment of the classroom (p. 20).

The second view is voiced in terms of internal factors such as attitudes and perceptions of the learners.

> If students have certain attitudes and perceptions, they have a mental climate conductive to learning (Marzano, 1992, p. 20).

According to Marzano, a sense of acceptance and comfort influences one's mental climate. Children need to be accepted by the teacher and their peers as well as feel comfortable in the physical arrangement and affective tone of the classroom. In the French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program, children seem to meet both internal and external factors to ensure a safe learning environment. They expressed a more positive attitude toward themselves, in addition to appreciating a well designed program in which resources are easily accessible.

Are the teachers, and parents satisfied with the Edmonton French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program and in what ways?

At this point, after one full year into the program, all parties seem to be satisfied with the French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program program. As indicated earlier, the children felt they had improved in academic and non-academic tasks. They demonstrated a much more positive attitude toward themselves and learning. Parents also believed that in addition to a gain in self-confidence, children acquired knowledge and control over the learning disabilities. They became more able to take action and by doing so were more receptive to learning. Parents were unanimous in their view that "the program is excellent;" it "has been a very positive experience." This in itself is a success. In previous studies (Bourassa-Tremblay, 1992; Campbell, 1992) parents reported the lack of resources available for immersion students with learning difficulties.

Conclusion

After one year into the French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program, all participants are very much satisfied with the efficacy of the program. All participants indicated an increase in the children's achievement as well as in their self-concept. They also reported gains in confidence level and in the children's abilities to manage their learning difficulties. The parents are pleased to see their children doing better in school and gaining a more positive self-image. The teacher and teacher aide are also encouraged by the results, recognizing in the French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program an effective program for immersion children facing learning disabilities.

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